

Community Organisations, Social Media, and Membership:  
Exploring Facebook's Potential

Robert Edward Geary

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Principal Supervisor: A/Prof Mary Griffiths  
Co-supervisor: Dr Ying Jiang

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## Abstract

The thesis analyses how Rotary International (RI), a non-profit organisation with a community service focus, uses Facebook to influence membership recruitment and retention; and along with user findings, presents an evidenced argument about the current lack of success.

First-hand observations, as a visitor to community organisations in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia had suggested that many had an ageing and declining membership, and thus a sustainability problem. Anecdotal evidence suggested that generational differences were making traditional club structures and communication channels less attractive to younger members, and that social media might provide the interactive format and informal context needed to recruit and retain younger members. A subsequent extensive review of the scholarly literature revealed that few were reporting on Facebook uses in community organisations.

The resulting project used staged progressive focusing with content analysis of RI district and club newsletters and Facebook pages providing sub-questions for investigation. The online survey, conducted over four months, used a restricted number of self-selected respondents from RI clubs with a Facebook page in one of the three South Australian districts. Survey responses were statistically analysed, providing details of fall-off, demographics, Facebook usage, including generational differences, social capital development, recruitment and retention.

Thirteen informants then participated in semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, exploring key survey themes, as well as changing membership profiles, members' needs, the development of social capital, and the potential of Facebook to change recruitment and retention rates. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed using NVivo. To allow further exploration of issues relating to Facebook page content and the lack of interactivity, each informant was asked to provide Facebook export data, including all posts made over the duration of the surveys and interviews. A typology was designed to describe these posts, and used as the basis for further NVivo analysis.

The research found that the initial content analysis of each eligible club's Facebook page (n=72 in 2013), completed prior to the online survey, showed that the number of contributors and the level of interactivity were low. However, the Most Popular Age (MPA) of those engaging with their club's Facebook page, was almost 20 years younger (35–44 years), than the average club member (55–64 years), thus providing a potential source of younger members for recruitment. Most respondents noted that their club's Facebook page had no role in their own recruitment, which predated its establishment. It

was found that few clubs were using their Facebook pages in the interactive, community-building manner that might have been expected; and that the branding of organisational Facebook pages, with logos, was counter-productive, resulting in lower levels of engagement.

However, those engaged with club Facebook pages were younger than the average RI member. This study argues this group provides the potential for rejuvenation by recruitment and retention. The argument concludes with practical recommendations for future uses of Facebook in community organisations.

**Statement**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Robert Edward Geary

Dated: 13 July 2015



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I have benefited enormously from Associate Professor Mary Griffiths's excellent academic guidance as my principal supervisor. Without her encouragement, inspiration and constant help, I would not have been able to complete this thesis. She has been both positive and patient, while my narrative skills have been developing. My co-supervisors Dr Ying Jiang and Dr Mike Willmore have provided valuable advice, with Dr Mike Willmore providing access to his undergraduate media research lectures in my first few months.

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**Glossary of Acronyms**


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<b>Acronym</b>	
CAQDAS	computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software
ER	engagement rate
IP	Internet protocol
MPA	most popular age
MPW	most popular week
NPCO	non-profit community organisation
PTAT	people talking about this
RI	Rotary International
ROI	return-on-investment
SIT	social identity theory
SNS	social networking site
SOC	sense of community
SOVC	sense of virtual community
TAM	technology acceptance model
URL	uniform resource locator

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Inspiration for Study**

This research, undertaken with predominantly South Australian service clubs, was inspired by my first-hand observations of many apparently ageing and declining community organisations in the Adelaide Hills region. A commonly held view among local community officials is that generational differences are making traditional club structures and communication channels less attractive to younger members, and that new ways need to be found to engage this under-represented demographic.

While many community organisations, such as service clubs, are being threatened by closure or amalgamation of local branches, as a result of an ageing and declining membership, these outcomes may have been delayed for some by an influx of 'empty nesters' and retirees. With this in mind, many are seeking to recruit members, especially those known as Generation X, now in their mid-thirties to early fifties. As social media is now ubiquitous, especially among younger adults, could adoption of social media as an engagement tool assist non-profit organisations to increase their interaction with this segment of the community? In doing so, could opportunities to recruit younger members and retain them be increased by building social capital and creating a sense of virtual community (SOVC)?

### **1.2 Aim and Scope**

This study explores the use of social media by a non-profit community organisation (NPCO) as it pertains to membership recruitment and retention, and offers a close analysis of Rotary International's (RI) members' attitudes to social media use in the organisation.

Beyond the core survey and interviews, the study was sufficiently grounded to allow additional enquiries to be followed as opportunities arose; such as content analysis of club Facebook pages, searching club and district newsletters for Facebook-related content, analysis of club branding, and levels of interactivity on their Facebook pages. Triangulation from these multiple sources allowed a broader, more detailed understanding of the principal research question (PRQ): How does the use of social media by a community organisation influence membership recruitment and retention?

RI was chosen for this study, as one of the few member-based community organisations in South Australia with sufficient social media-aware clubs to provide a large enough sample, and with a common structure and goals (charter), to allow collation of data. In many ways, it is typical of other member-

based service clubs that also have hierarchical structures and large volunteer and charity components in their community work, and thus allows generalisations to similar community organisations. Facebook was chosen as the most popular social networking site (SNS), adopted by 59% of the RI clubs; young adults, the target for most club recruiters, are universally active on Facebook, and users' data is readily accessible using the Facebook Insights App.

### **1.3 Setting and Context**

RI has tenured office-bearers, who share the administrative workload within a hierarchical governance structure. Contact with these officers is through well-established communication channels, and needs to be respected if cooperation is not to be jeopardised. Within RI on a state basis, the hierarchy begins with district governors, of which there are three in South Australia, who each liaise with about 45–60 club presidents, each of whom independently leads their club, while keeping within the RI Charter.

In adopting a broad, cross-disciplinary approach, this study integrates new perspectives from a wide range of research areas within the social and behavioural sciences, such as information sciences, media communications and management, and in doing so, seeks novel solutions to a problem of considerable community concern. Due to the breadth, only theoretical concepts needed to develop the methodology and understand the new perspectives were investigated in depth, although a particular effort has been made to review relevant social media research since 2004, the genesis of Facebook at Harvard.

The initial design proposed a small number of interviews with expert informants, to be identified by a small paper-based survey distributed by senior managers and office-bearers to key personnel. However, selection of SurveyGizmo as the online survey instrument, with conditional branching and skip logic, allowed additional questions to be added to the survey without significantly increasing the survey duration, and permitted expansion of the survey from an anticipated 20 to over 100 respondents. The increased sample size allowed a valid search for correlations between the demographic and social media use attributes of the respondents, and their views about recruitment and retention.

### **1.4 Significance of Study**

Social media research has been growing exponentially since the early 2000s (Wilson et al. 2012, p. 207), but relatively little organisation-based research has occurred with smaller NPCOs, and even less

with older adults, the largest demographic in most community organisations (Valentine 2011). Previous investigations, mainly with large Fortune 100<sup>1</sup> organisations, have not yet been validated with smaller NPCOs, as the latter use social media differently and are often seen more positively by the Facebook community, because of their smaller size, and perceived ability to communicate on a person-to-person basis (van Osch & Coursaris 2013; Waters & Feneley 2013). An ever increasing, but still very limited amount of research links generational differences, social media use and technology acceptance, but there still appears to be no research which relates this body of knowledge to recruitment and retention of members by NPCOs.

Many NPCOs have established and manage SNSs such as Facebook, assuming that these will act as magnets for new and younger members. There is as yet no evidence that this is so. Thus, this study explores Facebook use by one long-established NPCO, looking for evidence which might challenge or support a commonly held perception.

#### 1.4.1 Social Media Usage in Australia

Social media, or Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis, Flickr, and the SNS Facebook are web-based applications that can facilitate the connection and collaboration of users, and the sharing, finding, curating and reusing of content (Cinco et al. 2011, p. 5). Social media can be ‘misused’ by merely broadcasting information, as with a static website, so that their interactive and collaborative potential is not reached, and this is the danger that many community organisations’ Facebook pages risk.

While Internet use by Australians still decreases slightly with age, there has been a dramatic increase in use by those older than 50 from 2013–2014, showing that the large age differences which occurred only a few years ago, no longer exist—Internet use is now almost universal and the ‘digital divide’ fast disappearing. Use by females has increased faster than for males, in the same timespan (Sensis 2013, p. 8; Sensis 2014, pp. 111, 18–19, 24).

Year	Australians %	Females %	Males %	< 50 yrs %	50–64 yrs %	65 + yrs %
2014	99	99	98	100	98	96
2013	86	82	91	100	84	60

Table 1: Internet Use in Australia by Age Group (Sensis 2013, 2014)

<sup>1</sup> The **Fortune 100** is an annual list compiled and published by *Fortune* magazine that ranks the top 100 U.S. public corporations by their [gross revenue](#) (Wikipedia), accessed 9 February 2015)

Many community organisations are establishing social media sites, and for good reason; Sensis (2014, pp. 4, 17, 23) found that 69% [65% in 2013] of online Australians now use social media, a significant increase from the previous year, with 95% of these visiting a Facebook page, and spending, on average, more than 8.5 hours per week. While the percentage visiting a Facebook page has not changed from 2013, young adults are shifting to other sites such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Google+, and being replaced by an increasing number of older Facebook users, with the highest users being those over 50, reaching 100% for those over 65. As of January 2015, Facebook has over 13,800,000 unique Australian users, exceeding other social media, except for YouTube (13,500,000), by a large margin. This means that almost 60% of Australians, in 2015, have a Facebook account, an increase of 10% since 2013, which is even more impressive when it is realised that both the very young (less than 13 years) and very old users are not included in the Facebook totals (Cowling 2013, 2015).

The popularity of different social media sites varies enormously with age, and although Facebook is universally popular, with more than 92% of all age groups using Facebook, the frequency of social media use generally reaches its lowest for those above 65, with 68% having never used social media. This is particularly relevant for service clubs, such as Rotary, where 50% of members fall in the 65 plus age range, and where average age is 55–64 years. Patterns of use, such as time of day, vary by as much as 50% by age group and 14% by gender, but with beginning and end of the day being the most common, there is a potential benefit for administrators to make two posts daily to maximise their audience (Sensis 2014, pp. 13, 15).

Social media users enjoy interacting with SNSs; overall, 30% [25% in 2013] of social media users have provided online ratings or reviews, with peaks of 34% and 39% for age groups 50–64 and 65+ years old. While the number of ratings provided per year has decreased by half in the 14–19 years age group, from 20 in 2013, it has doubled for those 65 or over to 12, reversing the trend of previous years. This is a significant trend for organisations with a high percentage of older members, showing that a large proportion of members are no longer afraid to interact (Sensis 2013, p. 45; Sensis 2014, pp. 50, 51).

### **1.4.2 Facebook: its Suitability and Problems**

Facebook pages are of two types: organisational and personal. Over 10% of the South Australian Rotary clubs with Facebook pages have established personal pages, even though organisational fan pages were also available. Business pages have a better feature set for non-profit organisations,

including search engine optimisation (SEO), the possibility of multiple administrators, and ability to monitor user interaction, using the facilities of the Facebook Graph API (Facebook 2014).

Since Facebook allowed organisations to establish pages in 2006-2008, there has been a trend away from visiting traditional organisational websites, and instead users are visiting organisational/business Facebook pages (Kistner et al. 2011). To reduce the impact, many clubs are beginning to promote their websites using Open Graph, a Facebook utility which allows organisations to integrate Facebook with their existing websites, allowing users to 'Like' a club's web page content and recommend it directly to Facebook friends (Wilson et al. 2012, p. 214). This focus on Facebook suggests that the multiple communication channels (website, Facebook page, digital newsletter, and occasionally Twitter) that most RI clubs maintain may be an unnecessary duplication and a waste of resources for some.

Not everyone is enthusiastic about the benefits of Facebook for community organisations, with some criticising the commercial nature of many sites, lack of control available to site administrators, and high maintenance cost compared to a website. Mulhern (2009) questions the benefits of social media, especially Facebook, as the frequent content changes, determined by the news feed, are beyond the organisation's control, unlike traditional websites, where administrators may control both the nature and age of the content. This view is supported by Barnes and Mattson (2009), who emphasise the inability of organisations to customise Facebook pages to suit their users, so enforcing uniformity, which works to their disadvantage. They emphasise the priority given to organisational websites by search engine algorithms, compared to SNSs, making websites more accessible (Waters & Feneley 2013, pp. 221–226).

Waters and Feneley (2013, p. 216) found that large non-profit organisations overwhelmingly prefer to use their website for many functions related to stewardship<sup>2</sup>, although their level of interactivity is often low, and that their Facebook page often replicates their static website. This contrast with small non-profit organisations that lack the funds to develop interactive websites, and often attempt to use Facebook to combine both interactive and static functions. Bernoff and Li (2008) argue that, while relationship development using social media may have a low financial establishment cost, it has a high maintenance cost, as staff or volunteers are needed to monitor conversations and provide prompt

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<sup>2</sup> Stewardship has been identified as an important relationship cultivation strategy. The four dimensions of stewardship—reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing—consist of one-way and two-way messaging strategies that can be carried out in a variety of manners on the Internet using both Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technologies.' Waters and Feneley (2013, p. 216).

responses. Non-profit organisations which are membership based can often use volunteers to do this, hence the attraction.

Vorvoreanu (2009, p. 67) has highlighted the transition undergone by Facebook since late 2007, with increasing emphasis on business use and advertising, which is often seen to run counter to the pre-2007 Facebook culture of person-to-person communication in a space where people can 'digitally hangout'. Use of Facebook by corporate organisations to communicate with users has the potential, if done insensitively, to be labelled as spam<sup>3</sup>, and ignored, as many Facebook users have little desire to interact with large organisations. This dislike does not apply to small business, non-profits, and most community organisations, which usually communicate on a person-to-person basis (p.79), and hence fit the pre-2007 culture.

If Facebook pages are to be attractive to community and club members, high levels of interaction, resulting in frequent content updates, are likely to be important. Much research, undertaken to discover why people use Facebook, has categorised the motivations as due to either external pressures, such as media reports and peer group pressure, or internal motivations, such as the need for social engagement (Wilson et al. 2012, p. 209). This need to maintain contact with Facebook friends often develops social capital, shown by strong ties (bonding social capital) with a few close friends, and weak ties (bridging social capital) developed informally with the rest (Burke et al. 2009; Steinfield et al. 2008). Others have suggested that 'social-grooming', such as gossip and small talk, may be facilitated by Facebook, and help individuals to maintain social bonds, but for many, Facebook is used to relieve boredom or just to pass time (Steinfield et al. (2008); Dunbar (1998); Gosling (2009) in Wilson et al. (2012)).

Sensis (2014, p. 41) survey results have shown that Facebook users gave more reasons for visiting than in previous years. Although the number declined with age, the most popular reasons for visiting Facebook were catching up with friends and family, sharing photos or videos, obtaining news, and coordinating social events, with social media becoming more popular as a personal research tool in the past year. Younger adults, of club age, had similar reasons to older adults but were more likely to want to coordinate social activities, while older adults were likely to want to research holiday destinations and travel deals. These activities are the ones that community organisations need to encourage on club Facebook pages, if they wish to attract new members.

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<sup>3</sup> Spam is defined as unwanted or intrusive advertising on the Internet.



While there has been a slight decrease in the percentage (31%) of Facebook users following brands or organisations, they were more likely to read posts from businesses they follow. This should encourage NPCOs to actively seek 'followers' and 'likes'. While far fewer people contribute content than read, these 'influencers' are an essential for any social media page and need to be cultivated by club Facebook administrators (Sensis 2013; Sensis 2014, p. 41). Organisations want to maintain relationships, make new ones, interact with stakeholders, and educate others, but many are not yet reaching their full potential (Waters et al. 2009, p. 106).

The success of social network sites like Facebook depends on content sharing and sociability. Motivations, usage patterns and skill levels vary with the ages of users, as does the social capital developed from interaction with other Facebook users. Younger users are more susceptible to social pressures, from both peers and older adults, and when attempting to maintain their privacy, may conform to avoid these pressures. Social capital in offline communities, considered synonymous with sociability by many researchers, has been shown to be less likely to develop when concerns about privacy are high (Brandtzæg et al. 2010, pp. 1006, 1010–1011; Karahasanović et al. 2009).

Social conformity theory (Ash 1952) has shown that conformity is likely to occur when an individual's behaviour is exposed to other members of the group, as happens in a SNS such as Facebook, and in the process, behaviour is modified in response to increased self-awareness. This effect can be reduced by private messaging, or the setting of privacy controls within Facebook, and although older adults have less familiarity with these controls, they are more conscious of the need for appropriate settings (Karahasanović et al. 2009). Hoofnagle et al. (2010), surveying a broad sample of Americans found that older adults had very similar views about privacy issues as younger adults, although they appeared to be better informed about the lack of protection from privacy legislation, and less prepared to take risks for the benefits to be gained from social networking.

With the media frequently highlighting identity theft, cyber-bullying, stalking, child grooming and a variety of online scams (Bonneau et al. 2009), users have become increasingly cautious, especially with the many and complex changes to Facebook privacy policies over the last few years. Personal observations suggest that these privacy fears are well entrenched, creating negative perceptions of Facebook, and discouraging many from using established club Facebook pages. Madden (2012, p. 2) has shown that, since 2009, there has been a significant increase in editing of SNS profiles by users, who typically delete friends, comments and photo tags. Privacy settings appear to differ little between

age groups, but do differ with gender, with women more likely (67%) to have privacy settings, which prevent all but their friends viewing their profiles.

Facebook settings theoretically allow users to specify with whom they share information, for example, with friends, friends-of-friends, everyone, using a 'recommended' set or individually selected, but navigational difficulties often prevent these settings being found and applied effectively. Indeed Catanese et al. (2012, p. 315) and Bonneau et al. (2009, p. 3) have shown that less than a quarter of Facebook users adequately set privacy controls to prevent strangers from accessing their friend-list or profile. The overlap of diverse groups able to view a user's Facebook page makes the setting of privacy controls even more complex, but no less important (Lampinen et al. 2009).

In the physical world, users are able to keep their different social groups separate in terms of both time and space, but on Facebook this is more difficult to achieve, as the different social identities of the user must sometimes coexist, without the privacy barriers that normally prevent 'strangers' and closest friends sharing the same information (Donath & boyd 2004). For Rotarians, business, Rotary and family identities may sometimes overlap and need to be managed in the same space. This perceived loss of control could be so threatening that many will either discontinue using Facebook, or adopt privacy controls so rigid that the interactive features of Facebook are compromised. Recent privacy and disclosure research (Wilson et al. 2012, pp. 215–216) with Facebook has shown that these risks can be reduced by restricting access, sharing less, and in the extreme, by not having an account. This is important for organisations, with members fearful of a loss of privacy, as it shows that better privacy controls are within the reach of most. Overall, 58% of users have profiles only visible to friends, with some even varying levels of privacy between groups of friends (Lampinen et al. 2009).

While the mining of personal profile data is an obvious threat to privacy<sup>4</sup>, organisational Facebook pages might appear to have so little private information, that there is no perceived threat. This is not necessarily so, as even organisational pages allow the extraction of relationship data, showing users and their friendship links, which may facilitate access to public personal profiles and group data (Bonneau et al. 2009, p. 2).

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<sup>4</sup> Madden (2012, p. 5) in defining privacy, refers to choices users make to restrict the information shared through their profile.

### **1.4.3 Interactions**

The last seven years, since 2008, have given community organisations opportunities to engage with stakeholders in highly interactive, popular and low-cost environments, in contrast to the static, often expensive, organisational websites of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. This is especially so for SNSs such as Facebook (Waters et al. 2009), which provide a rich platform for the public to become fans of organisations, and in so doing become part of a community through exchanging private messages, posts, likes, shares, and uploading videos and photos to the Timeline. Organisations not taking advantage of this opportunity risk being seen as 'old-fashioned' and miss the chance to interact effectively with stakeholders (Waters & Lo 2012, p. 299). Although there has been little research to characterise the level of interactivity of non-profit Facebook pages, this study shows that many community service clubs, such as Rotary, are yet to successfully make the transition from a traditional static website to a highly interactive social media networking site.

Bandura and McClelland (1977) consider behaviour is the result of social learning, and propose that the environment, with its social influences, is an important determinant of behaviour, along with generalised personality traits. They believe that learning by observation is the key to a person's ability to learn quickly, without resorting to extensive trial and error, and that cognitive and self-regulating influences are most important in controlling behaviour. Social learning is particularly relevant in the context of a SNS, where users can model their behaviour on others, but with sites of low interactivity and infrequent posts, little learning happens and few new contributions occur. Burke et al. (2009) found that newcomers engaged by friends on Facebook with photo tags, chats and status updates were more likely to contribute, and that new users were motivated by the feedback received, and the perceived size of their audience.

## **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis has six chapters, followed by Appendices and Bibliography.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The **Introduction** (Chapter 1), describing the inspiration for the study, research problem, aim and scope, setting and context, significance of the study, and the structure of the thesis is followed by the **Literature Review** (Chapter 2), which draws from two main disciplines: social science and behavioural science. It adopts a broad cross-discipline approach, with the major themes: social media and online participation; social capital and online communities; generational differences; recruitment and retention. The **Methodology and Methods** (Chapter 3) begins by discussing and justifying the general methodology used to address the research questions, changes in direction encouraged by a grounded approach during the study, and ethical considerations. It is followed by a description and justification for the research design, including methods used for collecting and analysing the three primary data sources: survey, interviews and content analysis. The **Results** (Chapter 4) are discussed, with each section providing data from different but related perspectives and contexts. Where findings disagree with or confirm previous studies, or fill gaps identified in the literature, these are highlighted. Section 4.2 focuses on a brief content analysis of club newsletters. Section 4.3 presents data collected from the online survey of club members, which helped preselect informants and contributed to the interview schedule, the results of which are examined in Section 4.4. Finally, Section 4.5 explores the results from a content analysis of Facebook pages, emphasising participant interactivity. The **Discussion** (Chapter 5) provides a synthesis and triangulation of findings, relating each to specific research, as discussed in the literature review. A major focus is to determine whether the research questions are supported by this study. The **Conclusions** (Chapter 6) provides suggestions for future research, and outlines some limitations of the study and implications for community organisations.

This chapter (Chapter 1) has introduced the inspiration for and significance of the study, provided the setting and context, and outlined the principal research question—how the use of social media by a community organisation influences membership recruitment and retention (See Appendix 10: Research Questions). The next chapter (Literature Review) provides an overview of existing scholarship, critically evaluates findings, emphasises research that has shaped the design of this study, and highlights gaps in knowledge.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As this exploratory study seeks potential solutions to a practical problem of sustaining community organisations potentially through social media, the literature review is broad, covering a wide range of disciplines, journals and authors. Social media research has developed exponentially in the last few years, yet there are few specific journals in this field currently. Researchers come from adjacent disciplines to communication.

Keyword searches (concept-centric) increased cross-discipline coverage, and have captured a diverse (470) range of scholarship. The search results were summarised in a concept matrix, later used as a framework to facilitate selection and synthesis of the 177 articles cited in this thesis, following the methods of Webster and Watson (2002). As each article was reviewed, it was tagged with relevant keywords, which were then grouped to form major concepts, such as social media, members' needs, participation, social capital, community organisations, decline of community organisations and marketing (Appendix 1: Literature Review Statistics ).

### **2.2 Online Participation**

Online participation by users is an essential ingredient for a healthy and sustainable social networking site (SNS) such as Facebook. Researchers in the fields of social response and socio-technical theory have made valuable contributions, which have helped to suggest ways to maximise participation.

#### **2.2.1 Social Response Theory**

Huang and Lin (2011, p. 1963) suggest that the success of a Facebook page depends not only upon the number of new users joining, but also upon their continuance intention ('sticking'), measured by user departures. They extend social response theory<sup>5</sup> (Moon 2000), which proposes that people treat computers showing social cues as social actors, to predict continuance intention in SNSs. Their findings show that social capital development at organisational level, including social interaction, trust and shared codes, induces emotions ('arousal'), which in turn encourages users to continue to engage in

knowledge sharing<sup>6</sup> and social support<sup>7</sup> behaviours. This concept, they suggest, is supported by transaction cost theory, which indicates that making a psychological investment to a SNS, by giving advice and sharing knowledge, is likely to result in continued use (Huang & Lin 2011, pp. 1963–1967). In a SNS context, knowledge sharing and social support are characterised by high levels of interactivity, recognised by frequent posts and views, which are likely to encourage the retention of users (Butler 2001; Huang & Lin 2011, p. 1970).

Butler (2001, p. 347) proposes a resource-based model, using resources, benefits, and group structures, to explain the sustainable social structures, which might attract and retain members. Moreland and Levine (1982) propose that sustainability of social structures depends on user benefits, such as personal relationships, companionship and group identity, outweighing the cost of membership. In turn, the provision of member benefits depends upon the availability of resources, which have been transformed through social activity, and often determined by the size of the membership (Mc Pherson 1983).

'Lurkers', which Preece et al. (2004, p. 209) define as 'someone who has never posted in the community to which he/she belongs', are often seen in a negative light by administrators, but not by the online community itself. While this group is difficult to identify, and highly variable in size, it is an important group (Nonnecke & Preece 2000), which sometimes constitutes as much as 99% of a community. For this reason administrators frequently do their best to integrate them. When this group is only a small component of the community, it may cause few problems. If there are only a few posters, as often happens in club Facebook pages, then it can lead to a lack of sustainability, as users fail to get any satisfaction from the conversation. Such online communities 'more closely resemble digital ghost towns than communities' and fail to communicate with members. Preece et al. (2004) recommend that Facebook administrators should actively encourage 'lurkers' to participate by providing them with better skills and support and by an education program that alleviates privacy and technology acceptance concerns. They support an online statement (Preece et al. 2004, p. 216) which encourages members to contribute, and explains why contributions are important to the community. Administrators are also encouraged to post topics that they know will stimulate interest, nominate 'greeters' who will welcome

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<sup>5</sup> 'The social response theory proposed by Moon (2000) describes how social cues arouse user responses to information technology (IT) via a computer screen.' (Huang & Lin 2011, p. 1963).

<sup>6</sup> 'Knowledge sharing is defined as the degree to which a member shares knowledge to facilitate action, such as giving advice or information [to] each other; those forms bend [sic] [depend] on helping the person perform some act to enhance the persons' efficacy.' (Huang & Lin 2011, p. 1967).

<sup>7</sup> 'Social support includes behaviors that focus on compassion to help a person regulate internal emotional distress, such as helping a person feel loved, accepted, or understood.' (Huang & Lin 2011, p. 1967).

newcomers and encourage further contributions, and invite new members to introduce themselves online. While Facebook does not allow the direct rating of posts, it does encourage viewer comments and likes, which can serve a similar purpose.

### **2.2.2 Socio-technical Theory**

Shipp and Phillips (2013, p. 37) have suggested that high levels of perceived interactivity, along with the usefulness and ease of use of the site, increase user satisfaction, and the use of online social networks. Recognising that little research has been done that links interactivity, and the resulting satisfaction, with socio-technical theory<sup>8</sup>, they extended the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of Davis (1985), which links the technical with the behavioural, arguing that social networks can be better understood by considering both the technological and social aspects. Their research shows that technology and marketing are important in attracting and retaining SNS users, and that the user's level of interaction and focus, along with the ability to feel in control and not be dominated by the technology, were important in facilitating this.

One of the priorities, often ignored by site administrators when establishing a Facebook page, is to quickly develop sufficient quality content to make it worthwhile for users to visit (Burke et al. 2009). Key variables, which have been shown to encourage visitation, include the amount and quality of the content produced, consumed or shared, the contributors and consumers themselves, and the level of interaction between them. Without visitors, club Facebook pages can never be influential in recruiting and retaining members.

To increase content, site administrators are often forced to 'seed' such sites to generate enough momentum, so that self-generation of content and interactivity occurs, but this is only a short term 'fix'. Early identification and recruitment of 'starters', individuals who generate posts to which others link, (Mathioudakis & Koudas 2009, p. 3), and 'influential' users, defined as those whose posts generate many votes (Ghosh & Lerman 2010) or in the Facebook context, Comments, Likes or Shares, should be given a high priority. With a reward system as simple as a 'like', these content generators will soon stimulate others to interact and contribute to Facebook activities.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Socio-Technical theory relates to technological systems and the importance of the consideration of fit between the technological and social dimensions.' (Cherns 1976).

## 2.3 Social Capital and Communities

### 2.3.1 Social Capital, the Internet and Community Organisations

'Social capital refers to an individual's collection of social ties that provide access to resources, information or assistance, and from which one can derive market and non-market benefits (better social status, better educational and professional achievement, more happiness).' (Pénard & Poussing 2010). This is similar to Putnam's definition (2000) 'Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.' (Junghee & Hyunjoo 2010). In the context of this study, the development of online social capital has the potential to encourage potential members to join an organisation, and is the basis for its inclusion in this literature review. Any detailed review of the origins and definitions of social capital should include the writings of Putnam, Bourdieu, Coleman, Loury, and Fukuyama but this will only briefly be attempted here, especially in view of recent criticism about the value of the concept due to its breadth (Ellison et al. 2007, p. 875; Portes 1998). Bjørnskov & Sønderskov (2013, p. 1225) conclude that social capital, a term first used by novelist Henry James in his novel *The Golden Bowl*, and later by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993), is not a good concept as it is multi-dimensional, overlapping other established concepts, such that its meaning is often confused between disciplines and contexts. They emphasise that differences exist between Putnam's functionalist definition, which applies to large sets of people and that of Coleman's and Bourdieu's, which views social capital as a personal resource. Among the negatives of social capital as a concept, Bjørnskov and Sønderskov (2013, pp. 1226–1240) emphasise the lack of depth, coherence, and the way it overlaps and potentially damages existing concepts, such as social trust. From my perspective, the development of social capital, emphasising the importance of social ties, is an important precursor for community organisation recruitment, which traditionally has relied upon word-of-mouth and personal recommendations.

Neves (2013) describes social capital as a multidisciplinary concept favoured both by sociologists, who emphasise social ties and resources, and by political scientists, who see its value in encouraging civic engagement and trust. Like Bjørnskov and Sønderskov (2013, pp. 1226–1240), Neves argues that the concept has been broadened too far by the inclusion of what were once the autonomous concepts of social trust, norms, and civic engagement, and she challenges whether their inclusion is appropriate, as research has shown low levels of association, which might suggest they are independent concepts. She emphasises the importance of social relationships in most definitions of social capital, and how social



capital, both bonding and bridging, as popularised by Putnam (2000), is measured by the quantity and quality of the social network ties.

Neves (2013, pp. 603–605) has reviewed studies that investigate the relationship between the Internet, in particular frequency of use, and the increase or decrease in social capital. She found that the majority of studies showed that the Internet had a positive effect on social capital, with increases resulting from increased usage and decreases with age. While some recent studies have found that both bridging and bonding social capital can be generated by Internet use, Williams (2006) has emphasised the increased likelihood of weak ties, and supports the time displacement hypothesis of Nie, 2002<sup>9</sup>, which has been discounted by some (Alessandrini 2006; Neves 2013, p. 607; Neves 2012). While weak bridging ties with existing community organisation members are less likely to encourage potential members to join than strong bonding ties, increased time displacement is likely to increase potential recruitment, due to greater opportunity to develop ties.

The Internet, in the form of the SNS Facebook, allows networking with completely new friends as well as with friends of friends, and does this in a manner that promotes and maintains bridging social capital. Burke et al. (2011) found that the degree of Facebook interaction with other users was positively associated with bridging social capital, but that Facebook use, per se, had no association with bonding. Brandtzæg (2012) found that SNS users scored more highly in terms of face-to-face interaction, number of acquaintances and bridging social capital. In the context of this study, users of a club Facebook page need to interact rather than 'lurk' if bridging social capital is to develop and friendships, which might lead to recruitment, are to grow.

Since the mid-nineties, there has been discussion about the relationship between social capital and the level of civic engagement in non-profit organisations, most of which are dependent on volunteers and members for their existence. Putnam et al. (1993, pp. 163–186) asserts that social trust and associational membership, accompanied by activity, are interrelated components of social capital. However, social capital literature often assumes that this is a one-way process with active membership of voluntary associations developing social trust, but not in the reverse direction. In contrast Sønderskov (2011, p. 419) has shown that trust can increase membership of associations producing benefits for the community, such as service organisations. His literature review has found that trust is more likely to develop within an organisation if there is face-to-face interaction, often associated with the high levels of

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<sup>9</sup> The time displacement hypothesis of Nie, 2002 proposes that time online replaces time spent face-to-face with family and friends (Neves 2013, p. 607).

cooperation experienced with voluntary work. Following this logic, and substituting online interactions for face-to-face, users of club Facebook pages, might be expected to develop trust through their interactions, especially if these are community service orientated, and as a result join the host service club. The membership benefits are likely to be even greater if the interactions are international, rather than just local (Sønderskov 2011, p. 422), which suggests an opportunity to maximise interaction for RI.

More recently, researchers (Burke et al. 2011; Steinfield et al. 2008) have been seeking to decide whether social media enhances or diminishes social capital, for as Lam and Riedl (2012) state 'social capital is the vital currency that forms the basis of enduring relationships'. Their results 'suggest that increasing Facebook use did cause increases in bridging social capital'. Research by Tomai et al. (2010) has shown that online communities can promote high levels of offline social capital, both bridging and bonding, although non-profits 'virtually neglect' their stakeholders, according to Waters et al. (2009). Research has shown that an organisation's Facebook page can be an effective niche-marketing tool, and in addition provide valuable feedback to organisations (Dholakia & Durham 2010).

While some have seen social media as the cultivator of an increasing public-organisation relationship, this view has not been universal, with several researchers, Kent (2008), Vorvoreanu (2009), Hearn et al. (2009), remaining sceptical. Waters and Feneley (2013, p. 217) suggests that organisations must forfeit much of their website control, when they adopt a SNS as their main communication channel, and doubt whether this loss is worthwhile. While admitting that SNS permit interactivity in ways that a static website rarely can, Nielsen and Norman (2000) suggest that it is possible to increase the positive experiences by updating regularly, allowing users to subscribe to updates by RSS feed<sup>10</sup>, and having a user-friendly interface. Liu (2003) adds that while website interactivity can be further increased by asking for contact information and using surveys and polls, unlike SNS, this is seldom a two-way process, with the possible exception of forums, and chat rooms.

Kelly (2001) in Waters and Feneley (2013, p. 219) argues that showing respect and gratitude to an organisation's Facebook contributors for their involvement is an important way of balancing the relationship between the user and the organisation, which can build loyalty and foster relationships. Waters and Feneley (2013, p. 220) emphasise that previous research has shown that online relationship building is usually poorly done by most organisations, and that there is little measurable Return-On-Investment (ROI).

Erickson (2011), exploring the role of Facebook in developing social capital in individuals over 65 years, found that Facebook presented powerful negatives for older adults, such as a lack of trust in the platform, fear of loss of privacy, and lack of technical competency. Despite this, some informants acknowledged the benefits, including the development of a sense of community (SOC), and universally, the ability to keep informed about what friends and family were doing. She found that her interviewees unanimously agreed that Facebook was not a safe place to divulge personal information, and recognised that their lack of knowledge of the privacy settings was a major contributing factor to the lack of security experienced. They also found it difficult to share personal information and to seek and give help online, such that for serious personal matters, they often used more traditional channels, such as the telephone and email, to make contact. All felt that they could do without Facebook, and if access was lost would experience little impact upon their lives. This is of significance to many community organisations, with a large demographic of over 65s, many of whom are new to Facebook, and are looking for advice on privacy issues. It also partly explains the lack of participation that administrators have observed, and no doubt the lack of social capital development, both bonding and bridging, that interviewees reported.

Erickson (2011) does however identify an important overlap between online and offline interaction, with some interviewees making face-to-face contact after 'lurking' on a Facebook page. Her review of literature found that Facebook might facilitate bonding social capital (Putnam 2000), the type that occurs between close friends and family, and bridging social capital, the weaker type that we form with individuals in the wider community. She found that staying connected to family and friends has health benefits, and that SNS, such as Facebook, have the potential to strengthen and maintain these relationships (Blanchard & Horan 1998; Ellison et al. 2007; Wellman et al. 2001). Blanchard and Markus (2004, p. 23) have shown that members of virtual communities are less likely to feel that they have influence over other members, but are more likely to have weak ties, when compared to face-to-face communities.

Social media has been found to increase social networks and establish a sense of virtual community (SOVC), resulting in higher levels of social capital and the maintenance of both online and offline relationships (Brandtzæg 2012; Hampton et al. 2011).

The development of social capital in an organisation is important if members are to be retained and has been described as 'the glue which holds society together' (World Bank, credited by some to Putnam in

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<sup>10</sup> A Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed automatically provides the user with updates to a website.

Portes (1998)). Social capital can be categorised as either bridging (weak) or bonding (strong), but it is bridging social capital that features in SNS such as Facebook (Ellison et al. 2007; Ferlander 2003; Steinfield et al. 2008; Valenzuela et al. 2009; Wellman et al. 2001, p. 438).

Social capital development requires that members' needs, similar to those required for developing a SOC (McMillan & Chavis 1986, p. 9), are met, which in a service club context might include:

- developing a sense of belonging, feelings of prestige and satisfaction
- providing challenges, including opportunities for self-improvement
- offering opportunities for fellowship, and the sharing of emotions
- being able to influence others, and in turn be influenced by them

While SOC, and especially SOVC, have been studied comprehensively, little has been done (Ellison et al. 2007, p. 1144) to investigate if the social capital present in these online communities can be transferred to offline relationships, as might be experienced in the traditional face-to-face meetings of community service clubs. However, research by Sensis (2014, p. 7), with an Australian sample, has shown that the proportion of online Facebook friends seen face-to-face reaches a high point of 55% in the 50-64 year age group, falling only slightly to 45% in those 65 and over, and varies little by gender, which might indicate that the opportunity does exist for the transfer of social capital.

Hampton et al. (2011) investigated whether social media directly increased the diversity of people's social networks and found this to be true, but not in the specific case of local neighbourhoods, where there was a local reduction in ties. They argued that social networks, with the assistance of the social media 'may be more diverse than at any other time in recent history.' Brandtzæg (2012) found that social network users scored more highly than non-users in three measures of social capital; face-to-face interactions, number of acquaintances, and bridging capital, but surprisingly, in the case of males, also in terms of loneliness. Females visited SNSs more often than males, interacted more socially, and did not feel lonely. Their research, over the last 10 years, has shown that the Internet, and more specifically SNSs, have helped users maintain their existing relationships, both offline and online, rather than weaken them, as had earlier been reported. No longer is there support for the idea that time spent online, harms offline relationships (Brandtzæg 2012, p. 471).

Previous analysis of SNSs has often looked at usage from a frequency or intensity perspective, and failed to recognise the diverse ways in which a SNS can be used to build social capital. Brandtzæg et al.

(2011) found that, of the user types<sup>11</sup>, 'Socializers' and 'Advanced' accumulated the most social capital, which supports the hypothesis that the more active the participants are in a SNS, the greater the social capital they will accumulate.

Thus while there has been varied research on the role of social media in the development of social capital, little research, other than the work of Valentine (2011), has been done with older adults; and none, on the role of social media in recruitment and retention in member-based community organisations.

### 2.3.2 Communities

#### Definition

A single definition of 'community' is difficult to establish as both place-based and interest-based communities occur, although the first is most commonly used (Blanchard & Markus 2004, p. 3). A similar difficulty occurs with virtual communities that must not only reflect a high level of interaction between the members, but also show the development of affective bonds, known collectively as a SOC (Jones 1997).

In an Australian context, Lyons (2001) defines community organisations as 'the small non-profit organisations that are formed and owned by members of a community of place to pursue a shared interest such as a hobby, sport, preserving a cultural tradition, providing a neighbourhood, protecting the environmental or public advocacy on an issue of concern.' Alternatively, while acknowledging that a concise and agreed definition for a community organisation does not appear to exist, the Report of the Steering Committee (2007)

has focused upon non-profit organisations .....whose activities span—but are not limited to—community welfare, the environment, sport and recreation, community arts and culture, adult and community education, employment and health services, community housing, peak bodies and advocacy groups.

Further distinctions are sometimes used to separate community organisations; those that are narrowly member-orientated e.g. a golf club, from those that serve the wider community, those with small turnovers from those with much larger turnovers e.g. Australian Red Cross, and those with different purposes. In the USA, about a third of the non-profit sector can be defined as non-profit membership

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<sup>11</sup> Based on the Media User Typology (MUT) of Brandtzæg, 2010

associations<sup>12</sup> (Knoke 1986) or mutual benefit organisations, as they exist to serve members' interests, without payment for their participation (Tschirhart 2006, p. 523).

For the purpose of this study, community organisations will be taken to be non-profits, irrespective of overall size, provided they are composed of small chapters or branches, dependent on members or volunteers for their existence.

### **Decline of Community Organisations**

Putnam (2000) in his controversial book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, along with many others who supported his ideas, argued that many community organisations were in serious decline, and this soon became a popular topic for discussion. But this proposition had been already challenged, most prominently by Ladd (1999), who argued that while decline was certainly occurring in some traditional organisations, there were many non-traditional organisations replacing them, such that overall there was no alarming decline in civic engagement. Putnam's opponents emphasised that decline is a normal part of organisational evolution, and that as one traditional organisation disappears another non-traditional takes its place, such that disappearance of a specific organisation need be of little concern. They were sure that volunteering was actually on the increase, but in turn these surprising statistics were also challenged, and it was argued that many of the so-called non-traditional organisations did not actually have any active members in the traditional sense, as these 'members' were merely donors to various causes ...and that the volunteers were not really volunteers, but rather students fulfilling compulsory course requirements.

Tschirhart (2006) reported that studies of non-profit association membership trends since then are still generating considerable controversy. While Putnam (2000) suggested a loss of social capital and decline in civic engagement during the last third of the twentieth century, as shown in certain types of non-profit membership associations, others such as Baer et al. (2001) argued that membership has remained stable in a wide range of countries during this time, and may have even increased in some cases. However, even America's much touted pre-eminence as a country of voluntary association members (de Tocqueville 1835) can be challenged, when religious and union memberships are removed from the statistics (Curtis et al. 2001, p. 784). Some have suggested that the decline in civic engagement observed in some community organisations might not be the result of generational

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<sup>12</sup> Knoke (1986:2) defined a membership association as 'a formally organized named group, most of whose members—whether persons or organizations—are not financially recompensed for their participation.'

differences in commitment to volunteering, but rather due to changes occurring as result of the membership ageing. This life-cycle controversy is yet to be resolved.

Putnam considered many of the theoretical explanations for the decline in civic engagement such as 'increased female participation in the labour force, declining extended family networks, greater demands on people's time and money, the rise of the welfare state, greater use of television (and, more recently, home computing), and generational effects', but discounted all of these but television and generational effects (Baer et al. 2001, p. 251).

Curtis et al. (2001, p. 788) found in their review of voluntary association membership research that positive relationships existed between voluntary involvement and education level, men were more likely to volunteer than women, married more likely than single, older more likely than younger, and that middle-aged were most likely to join. Their own research confirmed these expected relationships with the exception of single people, who equalled married in terms of memberships. In the context of Australian Rotarians, we might expect to find a large cohort of well educated, middle-aged, married men, which is indeed reflected by current Rotary demographics.

In Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010), participation rates in volunteering from 2000–2006 increased by 3%, but by 2010, rates had stabilised at 36%, which was not significantly different from 2006, with the exception of the 55–64 year old age group, the average age range for Rotarians, where there has been a significant increase. As volunteering is more common in the middle age groups (35–74), most welfare and community organisations have a significantly older membership, with people aged 65 years and older more likely to be volunteers, and women (25%) more so than men (18%).

However, care will need to be taken to avoid generalisations about participation rates across community groups, as van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found that the type of community organisation could have a significant impact. They found that membership of leisure-based associations remained constant from 1975–2005, while those related to sport increased, and those, which were hobby-based, declined in participation rates. Berg et al. (2012) found that many individuals had moved from voluntary associations, with hierarchical structures, to more informal leisure groups. More recently, the Internet has encouraged the growth of new associations by improving access to potential members, and allowed the grouping of those with similar interests.

Professionals, Rotary's primary recruitment target, volunteer the most (51%). Of these, the 18–24 years old 'early career' group has the highest rate (62%), which then drops in the 25–34 years old 'young family' group, to grow again through to the 55–64 years old 'pre-retirement' age group. Volunteering rates are higher in regional areas (41%) than in the major cities (34%), and might be expected to contribute to increased club sizes outside of city areas, but this is just one of many factors. Of welfare and community volunteers, 16% were employed and 29% had retired from work, the highest of any of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) organisational types.

Wodon (2013) claims that RI membership worldwide has been stable, but has declined by 16% in America over the last 20 years, as clubs fail to replace members lost by attrition. Wodon and Wodon (2014, p. 15) list six factors that could possibly explain the decline:

- lack of resources: 'times are tough'
- lack of time: busier, commuting further, longer working hours
- loss of usefulness or prestige: more alternative networking opportunities
- loss of vitality: ageing membership, format 'old fashioned', 'out of touch' with youth
- lack of size: increased workload, restricted networking, limited service opportunities
- loss of interest in communities or service: controversial

My research supports the lack of time, vitality and size factors, but offers no evidence either way for the others.

Organisational decline often goes unrecognised until it is almost too late. Weitzel and Jonsson (1989, p. 94) state that 'organisations enter the state of decline when they fail to anticipate, recognise, avoid, neutralise, or adapt to external or internal pressures that threaten the organisation's long-term survival'. Oliver (1992) used the term 'deinstitutionalization' to describe, among other things, the decline of an organisation and the political, functional and social factors that can predict the decline. She includes conflicting internal interests, increasing innovation pressures, changing stakeholders, increasing competition for resources, changing societal values and governmental regulations, and disruption to historical continuity caused by mergers. These can be further split into intra- and extra-organisational. Her research sheds light on reasons for resistance to change that is experienced in many organisations when prized traditions are rejected, and members feel a loss of identity, coherence and security. Any organisation attempting to introduce a social media campaign to arrest membership decline will need to be aware that changes to time-honoured recruitment methods may be resisted and require member re-education.



Even worse than going unrecognised, some community organisations are in denial, steadfastly continuing along the same pathway they have been following for the last 50 years, failing to recognise the changes that have occurred during this time, and lacking the expertise to prevent the downward spiral. A lack of succession for office-bearers, diminishing numbers, which restrict the level of organisational activities, and the ageing of their membership, should be enough to bring about change, but initiating and bringing about change is often difficult (Minahan 2011).

Others, heeding the early signs, have established Facebook pages, but without any evidence that such a move will produce positive results for their organisation, and without realising that a social media campaign, without sufficient planning and maintenance, can be counterproductive (Personal observation, 2010). These observations were later confirmed by this study's interviewees and respondents.

### **Virtual Communities**

Virtual communities have been described since the early nineties, with that of Rheingold (1994) being one of the first.

Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks.

Since then Ridings et al. (2002) have defined virtual communities more simply as 'groups of people with common interests and practices, who communicate for some duration in an organised way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism' as experienced in club Facebook sites.

Features which might sustain non-profit virtual communities include the concepts of perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness, inherent in the TAM, and these in turn are affected by information, service and system quality. Both online and offline interactions, and content management, have been shown to be important for sustainability (Lin 2007). Other researchers, working with profit-oriented virtual communities, have shown that sustainability requires that people not only visit the site, but also that social interaction, loyalty, and most importantly, a SOC, along with 'perceptions of usefulness, trust, and commitment' must exist (Kim et al. 2009). Their ideas are supported by Howard (2010) who suggests that there are four core principles, 'RIBS', necessary for the sustainability of online communities:

- Remuneration: ‘positive return on the investment of time and energy’
- Influence: ‘a voice in the community and control over how their voice will be heard’
- Belonging: ‘strong emotional attachment to others in the community’
- Significance: ‘to be seen as significant. .... to be respected.’

Research by Brace-Govan (2010) suggests that members’ use of social media can provide opportunities for all four of Howard’s ‘elements’ to be realised, and if coupled with a marketing campaign to identify members’ needs, is likely to have a significant impact on organisational recruitment and retention.

While virtual communities have the potential to increase membership of face-to-face organisations, the governance and power structures of a virtual community can be quite different from those of a traditional face-to-face community, requiring managers to adopt different approaches (Smith & Kollock 1999). Furthermore, as much of the relevant research has been with online communities of young adults, such research cannot be applied directly to the older populations common in most community service organisations.

### **Sense of Community**

SOC has been an important psychological concept in the study of communities since the 1950’s. McMillan and Chavis (1986), defined SOC as ‘a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together’. They state that ‘SOC leads to satisfaction and commitment and is associated with involvement in community activities and problem-focused coping behavior’. Their definition (p. 9) had four components, which can also be applied to online communities (Abfalter et al. 2012, p. 402).

- Membership: the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness
- Influence: a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group, and of the group being able to influence its members
- Integration and fulfilment of needs and the feeling that members’ needs will be met by group resources
- Shared emotional connection, through shared experiences

In face-to-face communities, SOC has been shown to be ‘an essential feature of well-functioning, healthy communities’ (McMillan & Chavis 1986; McMillan 1996) and for this reason Welbourne et al. (2009) believe it is an important feature of online groups (Blanchard & Markus 2004; Koh & Kim 2003).

Abfalter et al. (2012, p. 401) emphasise that virtual communities, while having many similarities, also have many differences from offline communities, and that for this reason some early measures of SOC, such as the Sense of Community Index (SCI) McMillan and Chavis (1986) have been shown to be invalid when applied as a measure of SOVC. They did however find that SOVC was very important to participants in an online community, and suggest that managers need to be aware of the importance of online activities in the creation of SOVC, and in so doing, reduce the prevalence of lurkers, those that watch but do not participate, and thus increase the sustainability of the community (Blanchard 2008). In the context of a community organisation's social media page, administrators could delegate members as 'greeters' to interact with visitors and new members.

The concept of SOVC, based upon SOC, and defined by Blanchard and Markus (2004) 'as members' feelings of identity, belonging and attachment with others in their online group', can help to explain the sustainability of successful online communities. They propose (p. 2) that a SOVC requires the exchange of support, creation of identities, making identifications, and the production of trust (Blanchard 2007, 2008; Lin 2007). Welbourne et al. (2009, p. 33) have shown that informational and emotional support can develop SOVC, which they explain using the social exchange theory SET<sup>13</sup>, which is closely related to reciprocity, one of the fundamental building blocks of social capital.

### **Drivers in the Adoption of SNS**

Quinton and Fennemore (2013, pp. 42–43) found that the use of social networking by the charity sector was often driven by a desire to play an active role in the conversations about them, perceived pressure from other similar organisations, and the need for new audiences, beyond those reached by the almost ubiquitous organisational website. There were also many office-bearers who felt compelled to establish an official Facebook page in response to well-meaning members, who had begun personal club Facebook pages, and were seen to be misrepresenting the organisation's message.

The need to know how their brand is perceived in the community is a strong motivator for adopting social media, as it provides the opportunity to identify particular segments, which are missing from the conversation, and to target these groups to raise understanding and awareness. Gomes and Knowles (2001) believe that SNSs can build communities and strengthen relationships with non-profit organisations, although Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 47) acknowledge that this occurs infrequently.

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<sup>13</sup> SET 'explains why people help each other, and why they exchange information, support, and love among other commodities' (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005).

While they assert that it is widely recognised that social capital can be developed through SNSs, the authors suggest that UK charities are not yet maximising engagement levels. They found that most charities were more concerned about the challenges that a potential loss of control of the conversation presented, perhaps resulting in a loss of brand reputation. Difficulties created by the need for transparency and openness, the lack of social media skills, confused allocation of managerial responsibility, if at all, and the minimal resources often allocated by an ill-informed management, all have a negative impact upon engagement. They suggest (p.47) that openness and transparency, which are highly regarded by social networkers, may require a cultural change in charities before they can be adopted.

Quinton and Fennemore (2013, pp. 44–47) found that most charities had begun their Facebook pages in an experimental mode, as has been confirmed in this study. They report that there has been an unwillingness to maximise the potential that SNSs offer, and that many charities have fallen behind that of peers. They believe that most can see the organisational potential of SNSs, but lack the informed leadership to plan at a strategic level, and the skills necessary to engage with their communities. They believe (p.39) that social network analysis software has advanced to the stage that non-profit organisations should now be mapping their social network traffic, identifying influencers and 'listening' to conversations, both positive and negative. They found that many charities made poor use of the free statistical tools available, feeling that a detailed analysis was too demanding of scarce resources. This prevented them from strategically targeting potentially 'profitable market segments' and from developing the trust and rapport necessary to build communities.

As confirmed by this study, they found that there was little awareness of the need to build online communities, nor of the importance of communities for growth. While recognising the role of opinion leaders, evangelists, champions and influencers in moderating negative comments posted, few charities had made an attempt to engage with them.

## **2.4 Generational Differences**

### **2.4.1 Adoption of New Technologies**

Wang et al. (2012) have shown that the TAM of Davis (1985), which adopts a social-psychological approach, is a useful theoretical basis for understanding technology adoption and user participation, and they emphasise the importance of the 'perceived usefulness' in determining the level of use of

SNSs. Other variables, which they have shown to be important in technology acceptance, include Internet self-efficacy<sup>14</sup>, community environment<sup>15</sup>, and most importantly intrinsic motivation<sup>16</sup>.

Intrinsic motivation is particularly relevant to social media users, whose participation is voluntary, with few externally imposed incentives. A wide range of researchers have found important motivators to include 'information acquisition and exchange, relational development and maintenance, social and emotional support, and entertainment'. Importantly, they emphasise that the perceived friendliness of the online environment is a key prerequisite in determining usage (Wang et al. 2012, p. 787).

A high level of online community<sup>17</sup> participation is an important prerequisite for the development of social capital and the SOC, which may follow. Online participation depends upon the adoption of Internet technology by all members of the community, especially by the older members, who traditionally have been shown to be slow uptakers of new technology, but now appear to be leading the uptake of social media (Wang et al. 2012).

'Social influence', the way in which an individual believes others will view their use of technology; 'facilitating conditions', the support they believe they will receive from other members of their organisation; and 'effort expectancy', the ease with which they expect to use the technology, can determine whether a person adopts a new technology. These are moderated by the gender, age, experience, and habit of the user (Venkatesh et al. 2012, p. 161).

The modified UTAUT2 model (Venkatesh et al. 2012) can be used to anticipate difficulties associated with the introduction of new information technologies, and allows managers in community organisations to provide appropriate skill training and awareness raising opportunities for those who might be resistant to change, such as the older members of the organisation.

This support is particularly important for older users and younger women, who are much more likely to try new technology, if they know that support is available. Other researchers, in support of their findings, have concluded that age, gender and technology experience, all have an impact on the level of support

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<sup>14</sup> 'Internet self-efficacy is defined as an online community member's perception of his or her ability to use the Internet and web-based tools to participate in various community activities.' (Wang et al. 2012).

<sup>15</sup> 'Community environment is defined in this study as the information and technology systems, as well as their users, in the context of online community.' (Wang et al. 2012)

<sup>16</sup> 'Intrinsic motivation is defined as the motivation that is internal to online community members rather than that provided by external reward.' (Wang et al. 2012)

needed, particularly for women, and that this need increases with age (Hall & Mansfield 1975; Morris et al. 2005; Notani 1998).

## 2.4.2 Age Differences

'Baby-boomers' appear to be distinct from young adults in their different experiences, perceptions and expectations about the Internet; in many ways, more interactive and more attached to their online communities. (Chung et al., 2010; Zaphiris & Sarwar, 2006; Solomon, 2009; Jaeger & Bo, 2009).

In their investigation of older adults online, Chung et al. (2010) used the TAM of Davis (1985), but introduced four additional external variables relevant to Internet applications and shown to lead to an increase in user participation: Internet self-efficacy<sup>18</sup>, website quality<sup>19</sup>, technology affordance<sup>20</sup> and privacy protection, with age shown as a moderating factor.

Adoption of a technology is influenced by the opportunities it provides, and in the case of Facebook, by the opportunities for social networking. While privacy is an important factor for all age groups in deciding whether an Internet application will be adopted, generational differences about the nature of the privacy may affect the decision. Chung et al. (2010, pp. 1676–1681) hypothesise that generational differences in the definition of online privacy, prevents older adults from participating in online communities. They found that age was negatively related to two of the additional variables they had used; Internet self-efficacy and website quality, which might suggest that these become less important with age and user Internet experience. This contradicts the commonly held perception that 'older adults often think that they are too old to learn' about computers, lack the necessary skills, and because of fear, are less likely to want to learn. A partial explanation for this discrepancy could be varying social pressures, and levels of access to the Internet, which are not currently included in the TAM, may influence different age groups in different ways.

Australia's population profile is changing, as birth rates have declined, resulting in an ageing population, which is reflected in most community organisations. 'It is predicted that the percentage of the population aged 65-plus will climb to about 25% by 2040, while growth in the traditional workforce age range (18–

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<sup>17</sup> 'An online community is essentially an information technology-enabled social and communicative space.' (Wang et al. 2012)

<sup>18</sup> Internet self-efficacy, a measure of an 'individual's self-perceived confidence in using the Internet' (Eastin and LaRose 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Perceived quality, as shown by a user friendly-interface, (Barnes and Vidgen, 2003; Belanger et al., 2006; Kim, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Technology affordance, which can provide perception of 'new opportunities and potential benefits' (Bradner, 2001; Norman, 1988).

60 years) will slow to almost zero.’ (McLennan & Birch 2005). Many organisations have recognised that generational differences exist within their organisations and that changes will be required if their organisation is to survive. Other organisations, usually controlled by the ‘older generations’, cannot see why they should make changes just to satisfy the ‘younger generations’, when things have gone so well in the past.

Wilks et al. (2006) suggest ‘that organisations wanting to engage certain generations look to their sociocultural patterns to reform practices and approaches to target, attract, and retain the interest of selected groups.’ Marketers have characterised each generation in ways that distinguish it from the preceding, for example ‘Generation Y’ or ‘The Millennials’ or ‘Digitals’, born from 1983–1995, ‘Generation X’ from 1964–1982, ‘Baby Boomers’ from 1946–1964, and ‘The Silent Generation’ from 1925–1945. Each generation has distinctive thinking patterns, values and beliefs, developed during their formative years, reflecting differences in social and economic conditions, which they suggest should be used to generate strategies to recruit and retain members of each generation. While this approach of using age cohorts to understand differences between member groups is very useful to researchers, by its very nature, it is stereotyping. There are significant dangers in researchers publicly stereotyping membership groups, as not only can members become offended and ‘offside’, but also the terminology can be perceived as unnecessary jargon by older members (Personal observation, 2011).

## **2.5 Recruitment and Retention**

### **2.5.1 Recruitment**

There is little literature that focuses specifically on recruiting active members to non-profit organisations. Most research concentrates on paid employees and volunteers of large non-profit organisations, and while there are differences between these volunteers and the members of non-profit service organisations who volunteer as part of their community service, there are enough similarities for the distinction to be ignored in this study.

Marketing is a term, which usually describes interactions with customers, but when used in a member-volunteer context would involve identifying, satisfying and keeping members by building strong member relationships. Recruitment and member marketing would therefore appear to have similar goals, but for many non-profit organisations this can be a difficult partnership, as few want to be seen to be actively searching for new members, which could be taken as a sign by others that their organisation is ‘struggling’.

Waters et al. (2009) have observed that community organisations often make poor use of the SNSs they have, with most 'not taking advantage of all the options the site had to offer their relationship cultivation efforts,' such as interactivity and public relations. Few have the resources required to constantly update their social media sites, a process that is critical to recruitment, and it is suggested that they should call upon their younger members to assist. In conclusion, Waters et al. (2009) found that non-profits need to do more to involve stakeholders, and to enhance their information dissemination. They observed that little research has been published about SNSs, but indicated that the work of Kent and Taylor (1998) that focused on building dialogic relationships was still relevant.

Berg et al. (2012) have shown 'that people become club members through their social networks, and frequent club activities increase social network size.' With this in mind, it would not be surprising to find that social media, rich in social networks, could have a positive effect on recruitment. Individuals need to be provided with incentives by any social media campaign, and convinced that there will be some clear benefit in joining an online group. Nielson (2007), in a global Internet survey, found that 78% of consumers have greater trust in the recommendations of other consumers than any other form of advertising, such as static organisational websites. This is important for community organisations, which are trying to recruit, as SNSs such as Facebook are ideal for word-of-mouth advertising between users (Quinton & Fennemore 2013, p. 38).

Falling membership and equal opportunity legislation have encouraged the removal of 'front door' barriers to entry such as occupation, sponsorship requirements, and gender, previously common in many service organisations (Tschirhart 2006, p. 530). Economic barriers to membership still persist, and will continue while many clubs continue to have relatively expensive weekly lunch meetings, and members are expected to contribute financially to local and international service projects, Wodon (2013, p. 2) estimates that in Rotary Zone 33, which covers parts of the eastern coast of USA, annual expenditure often exceeds US\$2000, especially in more affluent areas.

### **2.5.2 Members' Needs**

Every organisation needs to meet the needs of its stakeholders or it will cease to exist. Community organisations are no different, and bringing value to their members and stakeholders is critical to their survival. With such a diverse range of community organisations, a member's needs will vary significantly between organisations, between generations, and over time. While volunteers in a 'Meals on Wheels' kitchen will have many different needs to those participating in a youth leisure club, they are also likely to have many psychological and social needs in common.



Tschirhart (2006, p. 528), in her review of literature, suggests that members join non-profit associations for one of three reasons:

- Cost-benefit; a calculated self-interest decision, based upon gaining benefits that exceed the cost of membership
- Demographic and social-psychological; to be with people, similar to those by whom they were recruited, as a result of shared 'values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors'
- Environmental; 'in response to disturbances in their environment' Truman (1951)

By knowing these needs, it should be possible to develop social media communication strategies, which will encourage members to communicate with each other, to learn about the organisation, and in so doing, better retain existing members, and recruit new. Meeting the needs of both potential and current members is critical to the success of any communication strategy.

Everyone likes to feel that his or her contribution is valued, and for many being valued is critical to their retention as members. Social media gives the opportunity for positive feedback and rewards to occur more often, but it does mean that traditional governance structures may need to be dismantled to enable the empowerment of members (Schneckenberg 2009).

### 2.5.3 Reputation, Identity and Image

The concepts of reputation, organisational identity, social identity and organisational image are closely related, and while their definitions may be similar, they can be distinguished by whether the concepts are held and communicated by internal or external stakeholders. All four are important factors in the recruitment of new members and are defined by Henderson and Bowley (2010, p. 245) as:

- **reputation** is based upon 'the perceptions .... held by external stakeholders about an organisation' (Brown et al. 2006; Helm 2007) and 'are based on the organisational identity, which is a shared set of beliefs about the values, standards, purpose, practices and distinctiveness of an organisation' (Brown et al. 2006; Scott & Lane 2000).
- **organisational images** are communicated 'to external stakeholders, [by organisational members] via advertising and promotional activities... in an attempt to build a positive reputation with stakeholders.' (Scott & Lane 2000). Gioia and Thomas (1996, p. 372) have noted that organisational literature defines organisational image as 'how members believe others view their organisation'.
- **social identity** is defined as the 'part of one's self-concept derived from such membership in groups or organisations' (Boezeman 2009)
- **organisational identity**, as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985), 'equated organisational identity with members' shared beliefs regarding the question 'Who are we as an [organization]?' The concept is 'specified as the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other [organisations].' (Whetten 2006)

Boezeman (2009) argues 'that social identity theory (SIT) is particularly relevant to the recruitment of volunteers, because SIT addresses non-material outcomes—such as feelings of self-worth—as motives for group attraction' which are particularly important for volunteers. SIT postulates that people will want to belong to groups where their social identity is boosted, and that these are usually groups in which members show pride and respect, or in the case of potential members, anticipated pride and respect, which is especially important in determining the attraction of non-members to the group, and hence in recruitment (Barsness et al. 2002).

Intuitively, few people are likely to want to either join or remain in an organisation whose public image or reputation is poor, and where members feel a lack of pride or perhaps, even a level of embarrassment. While an effective social media campaign could be expected to produce significant gains in public image and reputation, a poorly resourced campaign could have adverse effects upon identity and image, and be difficult to reverse.

#### **2.5.4 Relationship Marketing**

Relationship marketing, which builds long-term relationships with stakeholders, is a necessary precursor for the recruitment of new club members (Kim & Rader 2010), with social media providing the tools for encouraging the two-way communication needed to develop these relationships. Studies (Berman et al. 2007; Taylor et al. 2001; Jo & Kim 2003 in Waters et al. 2009) have found that full organisational disclosure, usefulness of content, and interactivity, were key strategies in developing relationships with stakeholders. Many clubs, which continue to rely upon static websites, will be experiencing a significant decline in visitors (Kistner et al. 2011), but this will be potentially matched by an increase in the level of interaction on their Facebook page, which should encourage them to reassess ROI and redirect resources.

When Haigh and Brubaker (2013) conducted content analysis of Facebook pages from for-profit organisations, they found that there was little difference between their results and those of Waters et al. (2009) for non-profit organisations. They found that most organisation's Facebook pages discussed programs and services, achievements, and awards, but most importantly, also provided the opportunity to comment about posted video files and photos; an important advantage over the traditional website.

This data would suggest that there is considerable opportunity to boost the interaction occurring on many Facebook pages, by seeking additional content which will attract Shares, Comments and Likes,

and by encouraging known 'influencers' to interact. Waters et al. (2009) found that this also applied to the non-profit organisations they had surveyed, commenting that they too were not taking full advantage of the interactive features available on their Facebook pages.

Haigh and Brubaker (2013) found that stakeholders who interacted with an organisation's Facebook pages increased their positive perception about the organisation's level of corporate social responsibility and corporate ability, two of the major goals of relationship marketing and of vital interest to RI. To maximise impact, an emphasis upon corporate responsibility should be a major theme of any club page (Haigh & Brubaker 2013, pp. 64–65).

### **2.5.5 Volunteer's Role in Recruitment**

Those who join an organisation and pay dues are members, but in many community organisations not all members are active due to illness or infirmity, and hence not all members can be volunteers. Volunteers work in an organisational or group context, unpaid and without any obligations, for the benefit of others and society, by donating time, service or skills (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010, p. 3). They work irregularly, usually for only a few hours at a time, with few incentives, and although being unpaid, obtain a high degree of job satisfaction by relating socially with other volunteers and stakeholders. Many non-profit organisations have members who are effectively community volunteers because of the service nature of their organisation.

The non-profit organisations, with which many volunteers work, often lack the resources to run extensive recruitment campaigns, and therefore often depend upon traditional word-of-mouth recruitment (Boezeman & Ellemers 2009; Boezeman & Ellemers 2014, p. 74). Organisational reputation, and the way it treats its volunteers, are critical to an organisation's ability to attract new volunteers (Turban & Greening 1997).

Fisher and Ackerman (1998) found that recognition of a volunteer's contribution to the organisation, and awareness by the volunteer of its need for their help were significant factors in encouraging them to recruit other volunteers. They suggested that recruitment of new volunteers by existing volunteers via their social networks was more likely to be successful if they felt they had psychological ownership of the organisation. Boezeman and Ellemers (2014, p. 77) were able to provide supporting evidence that volunteers were more motivated to recruit when they felt an organisation was 'theirs', and if they were treated with respect, provided with support, and felt pride in their organisation. According to Pierce et al. (2001), these feelings of psychological ownership are more likely to occur if potential volunteers

perceive that their organisation is receptive to their ideas, and is willing to act upon their suggestions. Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2002) suggest that both recruitment and retention are dependent upon the prospective volunteer feeling that working for the organisation is going to be worthwhile ('participation efficacy') and that they are being kept well informed ('communication quality').

Boezeman and Ellemers (2014, p. 81) predict that organisations searching for new volunteers, may find it difficult to attract these prospective volunteers, especially if they target under-represented groups, such as women or younger adults, who may see themselves as potential outsiders. They suggest that individuals from these groups may be more attracted if they are told they have a unique skill set that the organisation needs, and that the organisation welcomes diversity. They emphasise that every public event should be seen as an opportunity to recruit, but that in so doing, recruiters should not over emphasise the successes of the organisation, as showing a need is an important motivator. They suggest that target groups at which non-profit organisations aim their services are a good source of potential recruits, as is the general public, and that this approach is likely to be particularly fruitful if an organisation's attractiveness can be improved by emphasising the pride and respect that new members might feel.

Additional research shows that employees can be encouraged to recruit on behalf of the organisation, if their efforts are recognised (Peloza et al., 2009; Peterson, 2004).

### **2.5.6 Retention**

For any organisation, retention of members is just as important as recruitment. Each member's needs, which include being recognised as a worthwhile contributor to an organisation, and being able to generate social capital during membership, must be met. They will remain members of an organisation only if they can see a clear benefit in doing so.

Generational differences can accentuate conflict within an organisation, making them less pleasant places to be. This can be especially true when organisational age profiles have changed so that there are no longer sufficient younger members to form a like-minded social group. Many other factors can have a negative impact, resulting in resignations from the organisation, but these should not become the sole focus of efforts to increase retention.

McLennan et al. (2009) reveal that volunteer-based fire agencies have retention rates of about 92% of their membership each year. To investigate this small loss, they conducted exit surveys of volunteers who had just resigned, and found that the reasons for them leaving 'were

- Work/ Family needs, 51%
- Moved from the area, 38%
- Age/Health issues, 28%
- Dissatisfaction with the volunteer role, including poor brigade leadership 25%.

Their research reveals that organisational climate and leadership were the most important determinants of member satisfaction. Other items that were important to members included learning new skills, being valued as a member of the community, helping others, establishing community networks, prestige, pride in what they do, and career options. Similar statistics probably apply to many other organisations with volunteer workers, and point to the need to improve governance and leadership, using a social media strategy to provide the impetus to make some of the required changes.

In contrast to McLennan's sample from volunteer-based fire agencies, overall retention rates (2003–2006) from a sample of 102 Australian RI clubs reported in 2006 (Rotary International 2006) were between 76–80%, with 80% considered a satisfactory benchmark by RI. New member retention (less than 3 years membership) was about 67%, and as a percentage of total terminations was about 44%. Quite rightly this is of concern, and is the focus of internal research by RI.

Wilks et al. (2006) have reported that Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 'the largest voluntary community-based service organisation in Australia' is struggling to retain younger members, many of whom belong to the 'Y generation' (born between 1982 and 2000–02).

Phulari et al. (2010) have 'examined the formation and maintenance of social capital in social network sites' and have proposed a new form of social capital, which they call 'maintained social capital'. They use this term to describe one's ability to stay connected with members of an online community. 'Maintained social capital' is an essential concept to understand why people might remain members of an organisation, and if social media can contribute to building this, then it is likely that social media might increase member retention.

Recruitment and retention may occur for different reasons, with commitment leading to greater participation, and vice versa. Commitment is determined at both the organisational and member levels,

with the quality of member interaction being an important factor. Cress et al. (1997) found that those with higher participation rates and commitment, paradoxically, were more likely to leave, which they explained by suggesting that demands on the more active could result in competitive pressures.

In some organisations, where seniority may be rewarded by privileges, long-term membership may provide incentives to remain. Strong internal networks reduce losses, those with strong external connections are more likely to leave, and those with fewer similarities to other members are least likely to remain. The most common explanation is that members make choices in their own best interests from the competing opportunities (McPherson et al. 1992; Popielarz & McPherson 1995; Tschirhart 2006, pp. 531–532).

Rothenberg (1988, p. 1129) highlights the imbalance between recruitment and retention research, with the factors deciding retention often inadequately investigated and discussed. No doubt part of this problem is the difficulty of conducting longitudinal research, of contacting those who have left, and a lack of exit surveys. However, retention is not being ignored by organisational leaders, with many focusing strongly upon incentives to retain members, avoiding actions which might antagonise current members, and encouraging rank-and-file participation in the decision making process.

The key to creating a successful organization can be summarized simply: entice potential members to join, keep attrition below the rate at which replacements can be found, and establish a core membership (Rothenberg 1988, p. 1129).

Rothenberg (1988, p. 1132) proposes (*theory of experiential search*) that potential members often join to increase their knowledge of an organisation, and once this has been achieved may leave if the outcomes (*cost-benefits*) are not as they expected. Alternatively, they may decide to continue, while they learn more, although it is recognised that the amount of experiential learning will decrease with each membership renewal period, reducing the likelihood of departure. This suggests that spending scarce educational resources upon established members may be less productive than upon newer members, who are actively seeking organisational information, and making decisions on whether to leave based upon the information received.

Governance in non-profit organisations may have a significant impact on retention, especially when there are multiple levels of membership, staff who may not promote policy positions that could lose membership and when voting does not occur on a one-vote-one-member basis, but may have a hierarchical distribution (Tschirhart 2006, p. 534).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This literature review has been used to guide the research design (Chapter 3), which will investigate 'How does the use of social media by a community organisation influence membership recruitment and retention?' (Appendix 10: Research Questions p. 124) and to support the discussion (Chapter 5).

The introduction to this chapter indicates that the literature review has been broad ranging, and this is indeed the case, with research from the information systems/sciences, media/communications, management, psychology, marketing and ICT disciplines, having the most relevance to the research question, with non-profit/volunteering and computer-mediated communication making a significant contribution. In support of this assessment, the most frequently cited journals in this study cover the subject fields of human behaviour, public relations, computer-mediated communication, new media, non-profit organisations, volunteering, community psychology, cyberpsychology and sociology (Appendix 1: Literature Review Statistics).

Little could be found, until recently, that investigated older populations, the focus of this study, with most research sampling 'college' and university students. Recruitment literature focused on employees and volunteers, rather than the members, who form the backbone of community service organisations; and member retention was rarely mentioned, perhaps due to the need for longitudinal studies to thoroughly investigate the topic. Only recently has research begun to recognise that the 'digital divide', which once separated our 'senior citizens' from Generations X and Y, is rapidly disappearing.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the common perception that many community organisations appear to be ageing and in decline; and investigates the role of Facebook as a possible solution. It argues that Facebook has the potential to build a sense of community (SOC) among younger users, increasing recruitment and retention, and suggests why this often does not happen.

The Principal Research Question focuses upon how the use of social media by a community organisation influences membership recruitment and retention.

Further subsidiary questions to be investigated include:

1. How does this organisation use social media to interact with current and potential members? (RQ1)
2. What are current members' needs? (RQ2)
3. How can social media be used to meet current and potential members' needs? (RQ3)
4. How do senior managers and office-bearers in this organisation feel that social media has influenced the recruitment and retention of members? (RQ4)
5. How do members, both new and long-term, in this organisation feel that social media has influenced their recruitment and retention? (RQ5)

### 3.2 General Methodology

This applied research study used a staged progressive focusing approach Stake (1981) in Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) during the literature review, and aspects of the inductive approach of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1968) during the fieldwork. It took a mixed methods approach to collect, analyse and triangulate data, both qualitative and quantitative from four sources: a survey, semi-structured interviews, and club Facebook pages and newsletters, facilitated by the use of both online and stand-alone software.

To assist in partially controlling the variables in these sources, samples were selected from the South Australian members of a single organisation (Rotary International), which aims for a uniform culture across the globe, established and promoted by a Charter. Further controls were imposed by using uniform selection criteria, such as membership of a Rotary International (RI) club with ownership of a



club Facebook page to determine each sample population, and using demographic data, such as years of membership, Facebook usage, role in club and age, as additional filters.

The survey was used to collect demographic and Facebook usage information, which was then used to select the interview sample and develop the interview schedule. Data collected in the surveys was triangulated during the interviews, allowing a more open-ended approach, placing poorly developed concepts in context, and providing examples to illustrate earlier findings. By combining analysis from all sources; Facebook pages, newsletters, the survey and semi-structured interviews, it was possible to identify both the unique and common features for each, and in so doing, understand social media use and its value in this community organisation.

### **3.2.1 Changes in Direction**

There have been no major changes in direction since the study commenced, although changes have regularly occurred as the result of unexpected opportunities to improve protocols and methods such as:

- the survey sample was increased in size, beyond the small number required to select 10–15 interviewees, to a much larger number, with the potential size to allow quantitative analysis.
- the study broadened from being solely exploratory, with only interviews, to mixed-methods with the survey and content-analysis becoming major components.
- the availability of conditional branching in the online survey allowed more information to be collected, within the same timespan and hence allowed more questions to be asked.
- analysis tools built-in to the online survey software were used to select and automatically invite interviewees, avoiding delays and obtaining immediate commitment.
- new software tools became available which were used for advanced content analysis of the Facebook pages.
- communication protocols were changed so that most respondents were contacted via district and club communication channels, rather than directly through their club's Facebook page.

Early survey results indicated that initial perceptions about the interactivity levels of club Facebook pages may have been misleading so, using a grounded approach, these were supplemented by a more detailed content analysis, and for comparison, a limited analysis of a comparable service organisation (Lions International) was done.

Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012, p. 819) describe the 'systematic narrowing and refinement of the research focus which often occurs during fieldwork' as 'progressive focusing'<sup>21</sup>, and propose that CAQDAS<sup>22</sup> is particularly suited to this role, mediating the 'iteration between theory and data', which often takes the researcher away from a linear and deductive approach. They contrast this with the traditional linear, six stage sequential model, which is common in many textbooks, and which they suggest lacks the flexibility required. As I began with a broad literature review, in contrast to that of grounded theory, I found that 'progressive focusing' (Stake 1981) with its non-linear approach, refined by constant re-evaluation and re-negotiation of research boundaries, resulted in a reduction in breadth and increase in precision, and allowed me to concentrate on emerging issues.

### 3.2.2 Ethical Considerations

The invitation to participate in this study was initially sent to each district governor with a request that they pass the request to their club presidents. Follow up requests, with the permission of district governors, were sent directly to either presidents or secretaries, and included optional templates that could be used to promote the survey using a variety of communication channels. While the temptation was to contact members directly via the club's Facebook page and bypass the traditional, and slower, communication channels and decision-making processes, this could have been short-sighted, as the success of the survey was shown to be dependent upon the support of district governors, and committee members such as the president, newsletter editor, web masters and Facebook administrator(s) using traditional means such as email, newsletters and announcements at meetings. Only where the response rate was particularly low, or non-existent, were invitations posted directly to club Facebook pages.

Participants in the study were guaranteed anonymity, and to achieve this were identified by a numerical code, allocated automatically by the online survey software. Club presidents were provided with the following guarantee in accordance with HREC Approval<sup>23</sup>.

Please note that all personal information provided by members will remain confidential, and neither individual members, clubs nor districts will be identified, in the final report. Contact information will only be used to arrange interviews,....

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<sup>21</sup> Progressive focusing requires that the researcher be well acquainted with the complexities of the problem before going to the field, but not too committed to a study plan. It is accomplished in multiple stages: First observation of the site, then further inquiry, beginning to focus on the relevant issues, and then seeking to explain (Stake 1981, p. 1)

<sup>22</sup> CAQDAS: Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software. Any software that is specifically designed to analyse qualitative text.

<sup>23</sup> Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Approval No.: HP-2012-060, Dated: 20 August 2012

Following the interviews, the administrators from each of the informant's clubs provided anonymous Facebook Insights summary data (both posts and pages). Once collected, this data was analysed using NVivo, to help explore the differences between clubs with the highly interactive Facebook pages, high People Talking About This (PTAT) scores, and those with low PTAT scores.

### **3.3 Research design**

#### **3.3.1 Survey Protocols**

##### **Survey Instrument and Questions**

The RI survey was designed to collect cross-sectional, demographic and analytic information, about respondents' Facebook use, and their views about recruitment and retention, using both open ended qualitative and Likert scale quantitative questions. This information was used to identify suitable informants, and to personalise their interview questions. SurveyGizmo (2014) as the survey instrument, offers both basic and custom survey questions, advanced branching and skip logic, scripting controls, automated emailing based on responses, advanced data export and reporting capabilities. It is also compatible with mobile devices and tablets, an essential feature for a survey, which was expected to reach a younger audience.

The survey provided respondents with the opportunity to download background information and the questions, in a variety of formats, which covered the four major topics (See Appendix 2: Survey Questions):

- Demographics
- Facebook Usage
- Recruitment
- Retention

Initial filtering of responses was performed online to ensure that all respondents were Rotary or Rotaract members, 18 years or older, that their club had a Facebook page, and that they gave consent to the conditions required for participation. Checking of computer IP addresses by the survey software prevented multiple responses from the same computer.

The survey questions were trialled by a small group (7) unrelated to the project, who estimated the time required to complete the survey, tested readability, ease of understanding and checked for ambiguity. The aim was a survey of less than 20 minutes, which has generally been accepted as optimal (Henning 2013), and for this reason the survey was restricted to 23 questions, covering respondent demographics, Facebook usage, recruitment and retention. Selecting the correct number of questions is important, as research (Chudoba 2011) has shown that the longer the survey, the less time respondents spend on each question, and the greater the roll-off, with a typical roll-off of 11% for a survey of 21–25 questions<sup>24</sup> and increasing to 20% for surveys longer than 7–8 minutes. To reduce the number of questions, this survey used skip logic<sup>25</sup> so that those who had not visited their club's Facebook page, were able to bypass the 13 questions that related to their club Facebook experience. Some researchers have found that increased roll-off occurs if respondents are unaware of the length of the survey instrument, so to avoid this difficulty, respondents were warned in advance that the survey could take 15–20 minutes, and were given a progress indicator at the bottom of each survey page (Fielding et al. 2008).

Most questions provided the opportunity for open-ended responses about beliefs and opinions related to their club's Facebook page, member recruitment and retention. Some of the questions (Appendix 2: Survey Questions) were further developed in the interviews, and as the informants were a subset of the survey respondents, this allowed questions in the interview to be personalised, using information supplied in the survey. With the availability of branching and skip logic to reduce participant fall-off, it was considered best to put the demographic questions first, to reduce the number of questions to be answered by those who were not site administrators, and to allow the exclusion of potential respondents, who did not meet eligibility prerequisites (Appendix 3: Interviewee Selection Criteria).

### **Sample Selection and Access**

To reiterate, RI clubs were chosen because of the relatively large number in South Australia with Facebook pages, compared to other community organisations, and for the uniformity in club culture that their Charter encourages. Cluster populations, consisting of all 170 RI clubs in the three Rotary districts which overlapped South Australia, and which had a Facebook page ( $n = 72$ ), were asked to participate in the online survey by email, firstly to RI district governors, then to club presidents and finally posted to club Facebook pages, and then if there had been no response were re-invited (12 April 2013).

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<sup>24</sup> The typical SurveyMonkey question, used to provide this data, is multiple choice.

<sup>25</sup> Adding skip logic to a survey lets the designer choose which question the respondent sees next, based on their answer to the current question.

Non-probability, and probably unrepresentative, cross-sectional sampling was used, (Fielding et al. 2008, pp. 217–235; Jensen 2013, p. 243) with the sample self-selecting on the basis of having received their invitation through internal communication channels, their willingness to take part in the survey, and exposure to the club's Facebook page. The survey sample included office-bearers, Facebook administrators and members.

### **Response Rate**

While many club members may have seen the invitation to participate in the study via an internal club document, and refused the invitation, it is difficult to know if this occurred in the un-represented clubs. All three district governors distributed the request to club presidents, but even they admitted that due to a high level of club independence, they could not guarantee distribution of the invitation to all club members.

In an attempt to increase credibility, I established a study-specific Facebook page, which included my contact details and photo, and used this to 'like' the targeted clubs, seek 'friends', message site administrators, and post survey requests, which were then distributed via Facebook news feeds. To boost the response rate further, those who failed to complete the survey, were emailed an offer of help, and encouraged to try again, using the link provided. Completion rates were further increased by having a progress indicator, as was provided internally by the survey software, (Bryman 2012, p. 247; Couper et al. 2001) and by having a low percentage of open-ended questions.

Albaum and Smith (2012, p. 179) state that while there is no strong experimental evidence about which method is best for encouraging a survey response, 'pre-notification, follow-ups, and the use of a monetary incentive', especially if sent with the invitation, may work in particular circumstances. I used follow-ups and pre-notification to ensure that all club communication channels were used, but did not use incentives. Finally, short (5 min) meeting presentations were made to six clubs, whose response rates were particularly low, giving a brief introduction to the study and inviting participation. This often provided an informal opportunity, to discuss with key informants the success or otherwise of their Facebook site. The decision-stage model for response to surveys (Green et al. 2004) described in Albaum and Smith (2012, p. 180) usefully summarises the various ways in which a non-response can occur, including not receiving the request, rejecting the request without consideration, postponing, and stopping before completion.

### **Instrument Reliability and Validity**

Communication protocols limited access to the full membership, restricted access to internal emails and newsletters, and limited the frame population<sup>26</sup> in an unknown manner from club to club. With no accessible sampling frame for RI Facebook users, it was difficult to determine whether respondents were representative of the total population, and therefore whether generalisations would be valid.

Although lack of access to the Internet can reduce the reliability of online surveys, this factor was not relevant in this case, firstly, because access was a prerequisite for knowledge of their club's Facebook page, and exclusion on this basis increased validity rather than diminished. Secondly, age is no longer the key factor which influences the reliability of an online survey, as access to the Internet has increased to almost 100% for older adults, matching that of younger adults.

While the survey did not allow the opportunity to directly give more importance to the answers of informed respondents, filters, based on patterns of Facebook usage revealed by the survey respondents, were used to select interviewees with a high level of Facebook experience, and so increased the validity of the interviews (Appendix 3: Interviewee Selection Criteria).

### **Survey Analysis**

Using CAQDAS, variables were applied to survey answers to provide an operational measure of concepts, such as familiarity with their club's Facebook page, and these were then given attributes<sup>27</sup>, used later to categorise respondents. The numerical values of the attributes were made proportional to frequency of such visits or, in the case of survey question SQ 6, duration of visits, so as to give appropriate weightings. Appendix 4: Survey Variables: provides details of the independent, causal and dependent variables.

After three months, data from the online survey was analysed using the in-built reports (charts, tables, summary, cross-tab and comparison) provided by SurveyGizmo. Later more detailed analysis was performed using Wizard for Mac, which as a user-friendly alternative to IBM SPSS Statistics, is well suited to the level of statistical analysis required. While this analysis provided valuable qualitative data, sample size limitations prevented the verification of any causal relationships, which might have existed between the independent and dependent variables.

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<sup>26</sup> The frame population is that portion of the target population that the survey materials or devices delimit, identify, and subsequently allow access to (Wright and Tsao, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> IBM SPSS Statistics compatible scores

### 3.3.2 Interview Protocols

#### Interview Methodology

Interviews of 45–60 minutes duration were held with senior managers and office-bearers, who were responsible for the delivery and planning of their club's social media communication strategy, and with members both new (1–4 years) and long-standing (> 4 years), who might be able to comment upon the role of social media in either their recruitment or retention as members. Age ranges sampled were: 35–44 years (n = 2), 55–64 years (n = 7), 65+ years (n = 5) (See Appendix 3: Interviewee Selection Criteria for more detail).

Rather than use phone or video interviews, which would have allowed interviews over a wider geographic area, I decided to use mainly face-to-face interviews (See Appendix 5 for technology details). Semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were chosen as, although they have a high cost in terms of researcher time, they do have the advantages of:

- a high response rate
- higher quality data due to more effective probing
- more spontaneous answers
- more complex questions
- increased interviewer-interviewee rapport

(Bryman 2008, pp. 613–626; Economic and Social Research Council 2007, p. 2)

Each interview was preceded by two emails, the first, an invitation, sent automatically by the survey software at the conclusion of the online survey, and the second sent a few days later to confirm availability, and request specific club demographic data. A phone call was made, a fortnight before, to arrange a suitable time and place, to answer any remaining questions, and to continue rapport development.

Interviews were conducted at a time and place suitable to the interviewee, in several cases requiring travel to country locations, and in one case a Skype interview. Private locations were chosen where the interviewee would feel comfortable, and where there was a minimum of background noise to facilitate recording.

As all interviewees had completed the online survey and already given consent, much of the information, normally sent to interviewees in introductory emails, had already been provided. A standard introduction was given to each interviewee stating the purpose of the interview, the aims of the project, and emphasising the ethical considerations previously outlined in the survey.

Heeding advice from other researchers (Gideon & Moskos 2012) the following were re-emphasised at the beginning of the interview with the purpose of maximising trust and improving the quality of data:

- the confidential nature of the interview
- safeguards to privacy
- protocols for choosing to terminate the interview
- the purpose of the research

Although the interviews were guided by an interview schedule, which contained a series of pre-determined questions (Appendix 6: Interview Schedule), grouped by topic, and which were shaped by the preceding online survey and the research questions, interviewees were able to raise new issues which could then be incorporated into the interview schedule, and used with later interviewees, but in general, the same questions were asked in the same sequence, and with the same wording. The addition of later questions to the interview schedule was justified on the basis of the first subsidiary research question: How does this organisation use social media to interact with current and potential members? (RQ1), which allowed considerable flexibility. While this level of informality often encouraged interviewees to digress from the question, partly motivated by a desire to be seen as social media 'literate', this was not considered a major disadvantage in view of the exploratory nature of the interviews (Gideon & Moskos 2012, p. 111). At the end, interviewees were asked if they had any questions, whether they were aware of anything relevant that had been omitted from the interview, and whether they could nominate additional key informants for interview. The interviewees were then thanked, and provided with a brief explanation about how the data would be used, and how feedback would be provided.

### **Question Development**

The interviews offered the survey respondents the opportunity to expand upon their answers from their earlier survey (SQ4, 7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18), and allowed the opportunity to look for consistency in their answers, and to probe for further data to allow a more analytical approach. The opportunity for



associative analysis of relationships was provided by many of the interview questions (IQ5–11, IQ15–16, IQ19–24).

Interview questions were of three types, as defined by Charmaz and Belgrave (2002)

- Open-ended IQ1–4, 12, 13, 15,17,18, 19, 22, 23
- Intermediate IQ5–11, 14–16, 20, 21, 24
- Ending IQ25, 26

and included questions about values, beliefs (IQ4,6,14), roles (IQ12), relationships (IQ5, 7,8,11), and emotions (IQ9,10) set in the context of the survey themes: changing membership profiles, members needs, the development of social capital, and the potential of Facebook to change recruitment and retention rates.

Each question had a series of supplementary questions (See Appendix 6: Interview Schedule), which were asked to refocus interviewees if needed, clarify unfamiliar terminology or misunderstandings, and to encourage more detailed answers. When the opportunity arose, informants were encouraged to explain statements made. I particularly sought to understand and clarify the informant's interpretations of Facebook-related events in their organisation.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The sampling process for the interviews was multistage, with filters firstly being applied to select the survey respondents, and then a second level of filtering being applied to select interviewees from within this group. The initial invitation process was automated by the online survey software, SurveyGizmo, which was able to send preliminary invitations to possible interviewees ( $n = 17$ ), immediately upon completion of the survey, based upon their intensity of club Facebook use ( $\geq 5$  mins per week), and distance from Adelaide ( $\leq 150$  km). For logistical reasons, the interview sample was restricted to a 150 km radius of Adelaide, which meant that while both city and country locations were sampled, financial and time costs were kept low, and this was further assisted by the grouping interviewees from nearby locations for interview on the same day.

The ability to send automatic invitations was a valuable step, as it gave me the opportunity to immediately thank potential interviewees for their participation with a personalised email, so initiating rapport, providing a time frame for the upcoming interviews and giving the opportunity to opt-out, reducing unnecessary administration and allowing for early substitutions. After detailed analysis of

survey data, a second email invitation was issued to those considered most able to answer the research questions (purposive sampling), and convenient dates and suitable venues established for the interviews by phone. All 16 of the potential interviewees contacted by email responded positively, and of these 13 were later interviewed (Appendix 3: Interviewee Selection Criteria).

## **Analysis**

### **Choice of NVivo**

NVivo allows the iterative analysis of data, and using this facility, open coding<sup>28</sup> was begun with the first interview, and continually refined as more interviews were completed. NVivo allows demographic data (attributes), collected from the initial surveys, to be integrated with audio and transcripts from the interviews, and for this data to be axially coded<sup>29</sup> and visualised, using the in-built modeller. Complex relationships, revealed as a result of simultaneous searches of text, coding and attributes, can be visualised in matrices, and the data easily sorted and arranged (Auld et al. 2007, p. 47; Bringer et al. 2006, p. 5).

NVivo was chosen to 'increase the efficiency of the analysis providing greater capability to do more sophisticated comparisons', although Auld et al. (2007, p. 47) suggest that this may result in the loss of context, sometimes gained by hand coding, and some loss of efficiency, due to the steep learning curve required, especially with less than 20 interviews. While first time users need to invest proportionally more time, the opportunity to learn sophisticated analysis software, which was likely to have application elsewhere, made hand coding less attractive.

A further advantage is the ability to easily document all stages of the collection and analysis, creating a transparent audit trail which can then be used as evidence of a logical and systematic process, similar to that expected in quantitative research, but not at the expense of the ability to adopt 'dynamic, progressive and non-linear process in qualitative research' (See Appendix 7: NVivo Interview Memo IQ22; Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012, p. 838) for further detail.).

### **NVivo Methodology**

Ongoing analysis in NVivo was performed as interviews were transcribed, providing the opportunity to explore new perspectives within the open-ended questions of later interviews.

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<sup>28</sup> Open coding is the process in grounded theory which starts with dissecting the data into discrete parts, examining the data for similarities and differences, and grouping together conceptually similar data to form categories (Bringer et al. 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Axial Coding, brings coherence by making new connections between categories, concepts representing real-world phenomena, and represents a higher level of abstraction (Strauss & Corbin 2008).

As coding was performed in an iterative manner, and the sample size small, it was difficult to get a feel for the rate of thematic saturation, which might have been measurable with a larger sample. Initial broad categories (e.g. IQ3 changes to club membership since Facebook establishment) were split to provide more specific coding (age and size trends) as more data was analysed. This process was documented by NVivo memos (Appendix 7: NVivo Interview Memo IQ22), which defined how each of the codes was being used. As the number of transcripts was relatively small (14), automatic coding, which requires transcripts to be strictly formatted, was not deemed to be necessary or to be productive, especially as the interviews were semi-structured and had open-ended questions, which sometimes resulted in the raising of new issues.

The NVivo coding structure of nodes was initially determined by the semi-structured interview questions, many of which were developed from the survey questions, replicating, expanding upon, or seeking new information. These were reviewed as coding progressed, with the addition of new nodes to make the coding more specific. The degree of detail in the coding allowed more complex analysis, but the trade-off was greater time spent in coding. As the interview schedule was already highly structured, using input from the preceding surveys, neither the open coding technique nor the inductive coding analysis approach proposed by grounded theory exponents was used, and instead the initial coding was based on this structure (Strauss & Corbin 2008).

This is in contrast to grounded theory, which encourages the emergence of codes from the collected data, rather than from the prior knowledge of the researcher, often derived from a detailed literature review. Strauss and Corbin (1990,1998) believe there is a danger that the researcher will not be open-minded if preconceived ideas are allowed to interfere with the analysis, and while this is no doubt true in some situations, I reviewed the coding several times to minimise this issue (Bringer et al. 2006, pp. 11–12). Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) suggest that CAQDAS is particularly suited to the progressive focusing approach, which I followed, by facilitating the documentation, development and analysis of the collected data.

Using the ability of NVivo to search across sources, each node was then carefully reviewed to see if there were additional common codes, which could be applied to the text. Once coded, axial coding was used to group the codes into distinct theoretical themes following the method of Eisenhardt (1989) and then they were examined for possible relationships, before being grouped once again into even more abstract themes. While the frequency of passages coded to each node can be listed,

Nickname	Name	Description	Sources
01woa	IQ01_WorkOutsideArea	Statement that the decline in numbers is due to members working outside club boundaries.	1
02	IQ02	2. How has your Club's age profile changed over the last 5 years?	13
	IQ02_AgeChangeReasons	Reasons for changes to age profile	9
Age	IQ02_AgeProfile	Comments about the age distribution within club.	8
	IQ02_AgeTrends	Comments about changes to club's age profile over the last 5 years	13
	IQ02_AgeTrends (Associated) IQ02_AgeChangeReasons		0
	IQ02_SinceFB AgeTrends	Comments about changes to age profile since FB page was established.	3

Figure 1: NVivo Interview Codebook Example

and NVivo facilitates the recognition of gaps in coding by the use of coding stripes, it is recognised that the importance of a node is not measured directly by node frequency, (Bringer et al. 2006, p. 17).

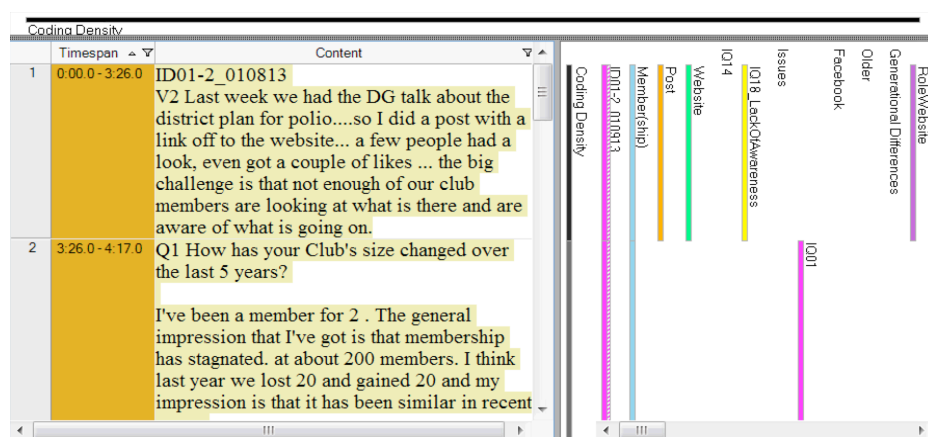


Figure 2: NVivo Coding Stripes

Memos were used to explain the choice of passages to be used as quotes within the thesis, alterations to the category names, and the addition or deletion of nodes, and were then grouped into similar collections, which became the source of new higher-order categories and the basis of conceptual and theoretical reflection (Bringer et al. 2006, pp. 14, 16, 35; Appendix 7: NVivo Interview Memo IQ22).

NVivo provides a variety of tools to facilitate interpretation of data. Using the hierarchical (tree) node structure, sub-categories of the parent category can be mapped and visualised using the coding stripes (See Figure 2: NVivo Coding Stripes). Overlapping stripes may suggest relationships or perhaps the need to merge codes, and conversely, the lack of overlap may suggest that ideas are not related. Once

coded, node searches (intersection and union) and matrix tables can be used to search for, and display complex linkage patterns.

### **Development of Categories**

Bryman (2008, p. 543) notes that Strauss and Corbin (2008) distinguish three different coding approaches:

- **Open Coding**, which yields concepts, then grouped and turned into categories
- **Axial Coding**, which brings coherence by making new connections between categories, concepts representing real-world phenomena, and represents a higher level of abstraction
- **Selective Coding**, which systematically relates the central issue to other categories, which are then validated, and refines and develops further categories

I initially coded broadly, following the predetermined structure expected of a semi-structured interview. The codes were then refined and split, in contrast to the procedure suggested by Charmaz (2006), in which she suggested coding should initially be very detailed, line by line, and then more focused, with many of the initial codes being dropped or amalgamated. Her view also differs from those of Bryman (2008), who has suggested that codes relating to pre-existing categories and concepts should be used, rather than inventing new ones. He recommends that, whenever respondents indicate that they see possible relationships, even causes between concepts, then these need to be characterised and coded. Referring to the work of Ryan and Bernard (2003), he suggests a series of strategies for developing themes, such as looking for repetition of topics, local expressions, similarities and differences, and missing data and linguistic connectors, which may indicate causal links in the minds of respondents.

Following this advice, redundant nodes and those with different names but similar content, were merged or grouped into major themes, assisted by NVivo coding stripes (See above: Figure 2: NVivo Coding Stripes). A detailed codebook, providing a list of nodes and their descriptions, was used to facilitate consistency (See Figure 1: NVivo Interview Codebook Example).

### **3.3.3 Content Analysis**

#### **Definition of Content Analysis**

In defining content analysis, Berger (2011, p. 205) quotes from Charles Wright's (1986) *Mass Communications: A sociological perspective* (pp. 125–126) 'Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories.' Bryman (2008, p. 282) describes how content analysis requires

categorisation of the phenomenon or phenomena of interest, which could be latent, or even missing, and that these categories should be mutually exclusive and complete, in their coverage of the dimension.

### **Scope**

Initially, an informal content analysis of a small selection of community organisation's Facebook pages had been completed in October 2012, to assist with the design of the research questions, but this had been confined to the number of posts, photos, comments, likes, and the duration of Facebook membership. The aim was to determine page activity levels in a variety of member-based community organisations, such as Lions International and Country Womens Association (CWA), and to decide the feasibility of a study based entirely upon Rotary Facebook sites. While the CWA had too few Facebook pages to offer a suitable sample, Lions had a much larger number, with a similar activity level to Rotary's, but ultimately the choice was made on the basis that Lions had only half the number of Rotary's pages.

Later, content analysis was performed in three different ways to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participating club's Facebook culture, and to allow a degree of triangulation:

- a text search for 'Facebook' in online district newsletters
- recording of PTAT, ER<sup>30</sup> and MPA<sup>31</sup> scores, publicly available on the 34 participating Facebook sites
- using private Facebook data, forwarded by club administrators

### **Choice of Measuring Instruments**

Facebook's PTAT score measures page engagement from unique users and their friends on a rolling seven-day basis. 'PTAT brings everything together by measuring all of the individual Facebook users who have engaged with a page's content and 'created a story' in their news feed and their friends' News Feeds in the past seven days.' (Fazal 2012). While very useful and publicly available, this metric does not include clicks on photos, links and video plays and hence underestimates the actual number of engagements, unlike the ratio Engaged Users/Total Reach, but these parameters are not available except to site administrators (Mishra 2012).

To confirm the validity of Facebook's PTAT score for determining the interactivity level for each Facebook page, it was compared with the ratings provided by two free online content analysis websites

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<sup>30</sup> Engagement rate ER = PTAT/Likes.

<sup>31</sup> Most Popular Age (MPA)

(Simply Measured and LikeAlyzer), for each of the 34 clubs participating. With no correlation between the results produced by the three algorithms, and their analysis only possible for the clubs that had set up business Facebook pages vs. personal profiles, a compromise between availability and accuracy was needed. With this in mind, I decided to base the rating entirely on Facebook's PTAT score, which is publicly available on all business pages, used by all except three of Rotary clubs, and is well understood and verifiable by other researchers, by simply viewing each club's Facebook home page.

### Analysis by NVivo

A typology (Table 2) that classified each post by purpose was established for the Facebook Insight data received from interviewees, and this was then used within NVivo to allocate multiple codes to each post, allowing comparison between clubs by cross-tabulation, and to establish both the number of posts and coverage of each type.

Rotary	PR	Youth Service	YS
Business Networking	BN	International Service	IS
Connect with Friends	CF	Member Recruitment	MR
Provide Information		Organise Event or Group	OE
Seek Information	SI	Join Event or Group	JE
* Report Event	RE	Highlight Minorities	HM
* Report Meeting	RM	Facebook Marketing	FM
* Report News	RN	Rotary Admin	RA
Community Service	CS	Recognition	RC

Table 2: Facebook Post Typology

This methodology was expected to provide evidence as to whether the lack of engagement and interaction mentioned in the interviews had a factual basis. For this reason, three nodes from the typology were of particular interest, due to their potentially interactive nature (Connect with Friends, Join Event or Group, Seek Information).

### 3.4 Conclusion

This mixed methods study has been facilitated by the use of a wide range of both online and computer based software, such as SurveyGizmo and NVivo, which has permitted sophisticated analysis of data collected from a broad range of sources, allowing the research questions and data to be explored from a variety of perspectives, and providing the valued triangulation. Although each of the research techniques (survey, interview, content analysis) has required a different method of data collection and

analysis, this has been made manageable as a result of the software, which has been used to highlight themes, facilitate comparisons, seek relationships and to allow participants to fully explain their perceptions and observations. While some methods of collecting data, such as surveys and interviews are well known, technology has made them more user-friendly, more investigative, and less labour intensive, while other research techniques such as content analysis have only recently been applied to new contexts such as social media.



## **Chapter 4 Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The research design originally had only two components; an online survey, to collect demographic data about potential expert informants, and a small number of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with these experts. However, adopting a grounded approach, I decided to complete a limited content and network analysis of the eligible clubs' Facebook pages and district newsletters, to assist in the design of the survey questions, and the interpretation of the results. The results of the analysis were unexpected, and provided new perspectives to assist in the interpretation of the survey and interview data.

### **4.2 Newsletter Content Analysis**

Almost all RI clubs and districts have a digital newsletter, which is published weekly or fortnightly, or sometimes monthly. In most cases, this newsletter is distributed physically at meetings to those who lack Internet access, but most members receive it by email as an attachment, or as a link (URL) provided to its location on the club or district's website. District newsletters contain an obligatory District Governor's column, details of club, district, regional and international events, training and leadership opportunities, projects, awards and grants, and administrative requests and announcements. While the proportion of clubs with Facebook pages is increasing, content analysis of district newsletters shows that there does not appear to be a strong impetus at the district level to promote social media and in particular Facebook. Only 11 items, excluding those related to this study, appeared in the 21 district newsletters published over a six month period in 2013, and these contained a total of 16 uses of the term 'social media' and 26 of 'Facebook'.

### **4.3 Survey**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

A sample population, consisting of all Rotary International (RI) clubs in the three districts which overlapped South Australia, totalling 170 clubs in 2013, and which had a Facebook page ( $n = 72$ ), were contacted and asked to participate in the online survey, with 75 self-selected respondents completing the survey ( $n = 1170$ , total clubs 34).

### 4.3.2 Data Quality

Initially, it was hoped that the sample would be in the range 200–400 to allow predictions about the larger RI population to be made reliably from the survey data collected, but while this number was not reached, the sample ( $n = 75$ ) was much larger than the usual 20–30 needed for exploratory research, and provided excellent qualitative data. Initial calculations suggested that the response rate had been only 6.3% ( $\text{total respondents}/\text{total club membership} \times 100$ ) of club members, but it was soon realised that total club membership data was not an appropriate measure of the frame population, and that the true response rate could only be estimated within a range (9–22%)<sup>32</sup>, as the number of members, who had been contacted was unknown, as was the proportion of these with the Internet access needed for the online survey.

As survey respondents were asked to name their club, it was possible to determine the response rate for each club, which varied widely, and seemed to reflect rapport built with club officials, by using personal communications, previous associations, phone calls, attendance at meetings, and regular updates of survey response. The club response rate was 21%, which compares favourably with other internal RI surveys, especially as Bryman (2008, p. 670) reports that, in contrast to the earlier research of Sheehan and Hoy (1999) and Sheehan (2001), recent research has shown that response rates for email surveys have been falling.

By the survey close (July 2013), 134 people, from 34 clubs, with 22 of these having only 1 respondent, had used the URL link provided in publicity to visit the online survey site, with their responses categorised internally by SurveyGizmo as 75 complete responses, 35 partial (attempted), and 24 disqualified<sup>33</sup>.

Once the survey link was clicked, the online survey software (SurveyGizmo) recorded both the duration and question number reached before respondent termination, but could not of course tell if answers were being randomly completed, or whether answers were being rushed. Time spent completing the questions was used as an indirect indicator of the data's quality, along with the number of open-ended questions completed and the number of characters in each answer. Those who took longer to finish the survey, completed more of the open-ended questions with longer answers, and together these were considered to be indicators of quality answers (Fielding et al. 2008, p. 186).

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<sup>32</sup> Calculated by extrapolation from the participation rates of Facebook and Internet users of different age ranges, using the age ranges of club members.

Several respondents sent feedback concerning specific survey questions, and some offered to provide additional detailed information about their club's use of Facebook. Those with a role in the establishment, administration or championing of their club's Facebook page (survey question SQ4) took about 50% longer to complete their answers which, considering their more detailed knowledge and interest, is understandable.

While it was not a prerequisite that respondents had visited their club's Facebook page before commencing the survey, questions SQ6–18, which related to Facebook usage and opinions about the page, assumed that this had occurred. To increase the quality of answers, and to ensure that only those with personal experience of their club's Facebook page answered these questions, the questions in this section were hidden, if triggered by a 'never' answer to SQ5 *How often do you visit your club's Facebook page?* Self-reported data (SQ5) from the survey showed that less than 77% of respondents had visited their **own** club's Facebook page.

#### **4.3.3 Fall-off**

Fall-off per cent (also known as roll-off) indicates the percentage that fail to click the Next button at the bottom of a particular page. High fall-off usually has an explanation, such as too many questions on a page, the survey taking too long, personally intrusive questions, or pages with questions that require answers outside the experience of the respondents. Those who failed to complete the survey included those who exited on the first page, and those attempting the survey, who were unaware that their club had a Facebook page, and accordingly were terminated from the survey, as this was a prerequisite for eligibility. Many of those who were terminated, successfully completed the survey at a later stage with help.

It seems unlikely that the duration of the survey (median 11, mean 14 minutes) was a factor in increasing the fall-off, as the survey was well within the 20 minutes limit considered acceptable for an academic survey. Despite this, 59 respondents left without completing the survey.

#### **4.3.4 Survey Demographics (SQ1-SQ3)**

Of the total survey respondents ( $n = 83$ , including second round participants), the average age range was 55–64 years, with most being either 'baby boomers' (47%) or the older 'silent generation' (40%).

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<sup>33</sup> Those disqualified did not meet at least one of the three prerequisites: over 18, club member, club has Facebook page.

Section 5.2.1 discusses membership trends in more detail and provides a comparison of RI Survey respondents' and members' ages (See Table 3: Generational Categorisation, as of 2013.).

The membership of respondents is very stable with 76% having been members for at least 4 years, and conversely only 7% have been members for less than a year. This is of some concern, as previous RI research has shown 20-24% of members leave each year and are not being replaced. This implication is discussed in more detail in Section 2.5.6

The lack of succession is a real problem for RI, as 60% of surveyed members have already been office-bearers during their membership, with 55% fulfilling this role for at least four years, and of those surveyed, more than 75% have been members for more than four years, and have an average age of 55-64 years. Solutions and explanations for the decline of organisations are still an area of active research.

#### **4.3.5 Facebook Usage (SQ4-SQ18)**

##### **Duration and Frequency of Visits**

Data for Australians shows that 36% of Facebook users visit 1–7 times per week, and a further 60%, more than 7 times per week, in contrast to the visitation frequencies of the RI members surveyed, whose rates were 33% and 15%, respectively. The number of visits per week varies with age group, but little by gender, with the most frequent occurrence, 33 times per week, occurring in the 20–29 age group, steadily declining to 10 times per week for those 65 plus.

While 24% of respondents had never visited their club's Facebook site, it is highly likely that this percentage is much higher amongst club members in general, as survey respondents were more likely to be interested in their club's Facebook page, and to have visited in preparation. To this number should be added the 11 (9%) potential respondents, who falsely believing that their club lacked a Facebook page, a prerequisite for taking part, were automatically disqualified and those, who having not bothered to click the survey link, were never registered. This survey data supports previously unsubstantiated reports from informants who believe that only 10–50% of members have ever visited their club's Facebook page, and that the development of awareness-raising strategies are essential.

### Usage by Clubs and Respondents

Social media, predominately Facebook, has been adopted by the majority of RI clubs in the surveyed districts, with 92 of the 157 (59%) clubs now having a Facebook page (June 2015), although there is considerable difference between districts, with one of the three having only half the Facebook sites of the other two. While the proportion of clubs with Facebook pages is increasing, content analysis of district newsletters shows that there does not appear to be a strong impetus at the district level to promote social media.

Using the Facebook Graph API, the Most Popular Age<sup>34</sup> (MPA) of those engaged with a club's Facebook page could be determined. For the 34 clubs participating in the survey, the MPA corresponded to the 35–44 years old age range, which is 20 years less than the clubs' mean age range of 54–65 years. The significance of this difference will be commented upon in Section 5.2.2.

Each respondent's club Facebook activities, which occurred at least once a week, were ranked, showing that adding content (posting a video, photo, contributing an article) was well down the rankings for the RI respondents. This is consistent with comments from many respondents, that they were dissatisfied with the lack of contributions made by others to club Facebook pages.

Respondents' Activity Rank	Activity	%
1	Reading Posts and Comments	51
2	Like, Tag, Mention or Share a Post	37
3	Watching Videos and Looking at Photos	37
4	Posting a Photo, Video or Comment	35
5	Searching for Specific Information	26
6	Sending a message to a Club Friend	16
7	Answering Someone's Question or RSVP'd	16

Table 4: Respondent's club vs Bernoff & Li's Facebook Activity Rankings<sup>35</sup>.

Using a modification of Bernoff and Li (2011) Social Technographics Ladder<sup>36</sup>, which allowed a more specific Facebook focus rather than a general Internet focus, I classified respondents so that they could be meaningfully grouped for analysis (Appendix 8: Respondent Typology).

1. **Producer** (L&B's Creator) Posted a photo, video, comment or event

<sup>34</sup> Most Popular Age (MPA) scores for the 36 participating clubs averaged 4.3 on a scale of 2–7 corresponding to the age group 35–44 years, and an approximate age of 40 years.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Q7\_FB\_How\_ofTEN\_Activities (exported from SurveyGizmo 2013)

<sup>36</sup> Appendix 8: Respondent Typology

2. **Interactor** (L&B's Conversationalist) Sent a message to a Club Friend; Liked, Tagged, Mentioned or Shared a Post; Answered Someone's Question or RSVP'd
3. **Watcher** (L&B's Spectator) Searched for Specific Information; Watched a Video or Looked at Photos; Read Posts or Comments
4. **Inactives**:<sup>37</sup> neither create nor consume Facebook content

Using the typology described in Appendix 8: Respondent Typology, usage data based on survey attribute scores was collated, averaged and ranked showing that Watchers were most frequent, followed by Interactors and lastly by Producers, which is consistent with Table 4 above.

Rank	Type of User	Attribute Score	Number of respondents	% Time Spent
1.	Watchers	290	39	56%
2.	Interactors	182	19	27%
3.	Producers	88	30	43%
4.	Inactives	0	18	26%

Table 5: Usage data, based on attribute scores

Of course, individuals usually belong to more than one category, and on average, any single respondent was a Producer for 13% of their time, Interactor for 26% and Watcher for 61%.

### Generational Differences

People Talking About This (PTAT) data I collected in 2013, the updated Engagement Rate (ER) from 2015, and MPA scores from 36 club's Facebook pages were shown to be unrelated (PTAT correlation test,  $p = 0.258$ ; ER correlation test,  $p = 0.183$ ), which was unexpected, as it is generally well known that younger people are more active users of social media than older. The independence of PTAT, ER, and MPA, was also supported by a more detailed statistical analysis of respondent data which showed that the age range of respondents (SQ1), which matched that of club members, was independent of the time spent on their club's Facebook page, frequency of visits, type of activity (e.g. watching, producing, conversing) (SQ5–7) and personal needs satisfied by their club's Facebook page (SQ12).

### Market Segmentation

Some of those consulted raised doubts that there was really a need to recruit young members, arguing that a steady influx of 'empty nesters'<sup>38</sup> and retirees, would sustain their organisation, albeit at a higher

<sup>37</sup> Inactives were automatically excluded from answering questions about their Facebook usage and therefore have not distorted respondent statistics.

<sup>38</sup> 'Empty-nesters' are parents whose children have grown and left home (American Heritage Dictionary).

average age than had previously existed. They argued that, as the young adults were a relatively small proportion of their target recruitment population, they would require a disproportionate effort and hence provide little ROI<sup>39</sup>. A few administrators have begun to manipulate social media content to attract favoured segments of membership, such a young adults (Gen X & Y) and women, often by omitting photos that highlight the scarcity of these segments in their clubs. Subconsciously, they try to de-emphasise the negative images, which they often feel the public has about their organisation (See Section 4.4.2).

### **Respondents' Suggested Improvements (SQ10)**

Between 31–47% of the respondents have had at least one Facebook organisational role within their club, either as a champion, advocate, or in the setting up, building, or administering of their Facebook site. This is higher than would be expected with a random sample of club members, and while less representative, has resulted in more informative answers.

Of reassurance to RI Facebook administrators trying to discover ways to improve the low level of interaction seen on their Facebook pages, are the self-reported observations of most members that they exhibit about the same or greater activity level on club Facebook pages compared to other Facebook pages they visit, with the exception of sending fewer messages to friends. This would seem to suggest that the low activity level is associated with the members, rather than any deficiency of the site.

When given the opportunity to explain their different usage further, about 10% justified their different usage on the basis that their site was new (mean duration 1.35 years), with 10% expanding on this by stating that their club Facebook pages lacked sufficient content. Five per cent commented that their site lacked features, had insufficient contributors, was duplicated by other internal communication channels, and of particular interest, that club Facebook pages served a different purpose from other Facebook pages they visited. A further 5% of respondents commented that they never visited other Facebook sites, and another 10% indicated that they were Facebook administrators, hence their different site usage.

When asked (SQ10) how their club's Facebook page could be improved, a large percentage either agreed, or strongly agreed that key improvements would be:

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<sup>39</sup> ROI = Return on investment

<b>Key Improvements</b>	<b>Support %</b>
<b>More encouragement to participate</b>	79%
<b>More comments, likes, mentions and tags</b>	71%
<b>Greater relevance to younger members</b>	71%
<b>More news, photos and video</b>	68%

Table 6: Suggested Improvements

Those who chose to answer the open-ended question (SQ11), which asked what would encourage them to use their club's Facebook page more often, suggested having 'More Contributors' (31%) was the most important encouragement for members to use their club's Facebook page more often, followed by 'More News' (19%), 'More Photos' (12%) and 'Do Nothing' (19%). Attempts to increase usage have not been effective over the duration of this study as both the club's Most Popular Week (MPW) and PTAT score seem to reflect little recent improvement.

Informants reveal that many clubs are working at an experimental level (Fennemore 2012, p. 14), with volunteers and ad hoc policies, little integration with other club management roles such as recruitment, no budget for paid adverts, little authority, and administrators with high levels of enthusiasm for social media, but who often feel unsupported. Content is frequently not user generated, often uncoordinated, and usually event driven. Thus, community building is rarely a focus, with most postings consisting of an album of photos with captions, with little attempt to engage current or potential members, and often no awareness of the need to engage users. Interviewees have suggested that careful selection of photos to include prominent community members, along with engaging captions, has been helpful.

Those clubs with longer experience, or administrators more familiar with social media, occasionally report a more cautious approach, especially if they are aware of the dangers of negative comments spreading virally. In some cases, they have established an informal censorship policy, often self-imposed, with the referral of contentious text or images to colleagues for a second opinion. Most report that they have not needed to impose censorship, no doubt partly due to a lack of user content, but also due to a general awareness of the need for member privacy, the special requirements for publicity containing images or names of children, and the possibility of humour being misread. A few administrators, with a marketing background, have begun to promote international and local projects with a community focus, being aware that community service is one of the main reasons for the public joining service clubs.

Some clubs have established separate Facebook pages for particularly prominent annual events such as Art Shows and significant community services such as bookshops and 'op' shops. They feel that



keeping a low club profile is more likely to promote recruitment, and that a social networking site (SNS) rich in organisational text and logos, may scare away potential members. Other regional-based clubs strongly believe that promoting community events and being a responsible community citizen is of more importance than promoting their organisational image and marketing the benefits of membership. They emphasise their community focus by giving their geographic location more prominence than their RI affiliation at the beginning of their organisational name. They may have a large 'Friends' community, who pay no fees, attend no meetings, and yet participate fully in the management of many community events, held only nominally under the umbrella of RI club management.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Facebook meets the needs of different people in different ways. Most important of these, as reported (SQ12) by respondents, are Opportunities to influence others (70%), Opportunities for community service (63%), Sense of belonging and fellowship (60%), Feeling valued (34%), and Opportunities for self-improvement and challenge (27%). These motivators should encourage users to participate more by contributing content, interacting with posts and by developing and maintaining relationships with fellow users, which might include face-to-face contact.

There is little support (SQ13) from respondents for the proposition that Facebook has increased club recruitment (16%) or retention (10%), with disagreement, respectively 33% and 40%, although the majority is neutral on this issue. This probably reflects the early stage of development of most club Facebook pages, their lack of awareness of the page, the lack of recruitment records which indicate the mode of recruitment, and the long membership of most respondents (90% greater than 1 year, with only 5% less than 2 years), which means that most joined before the advent of their club's Facebook page (average duration 1.35 years).

Only about 10% (SQ16) thought that their club's Facebook page had encouraged them to become a member by

- Being made to feel welcome
- Reading posts and comments
- Developing new online friendships
- Learning about your Club's activities

with about 45% being neutral, and a further 45% thinking that it was unlikely. More members (17–30%) felt that their club's Facebook page was likely to have encouraged them to remain (SQ17), but the number being neutral (33–42%) or stating that it was unlikely (27–30%) remains high.

Of those (16%, SQ14) who thought that their club's Facebook page influenced recruitment, most thought this occurred by increasing community awareness and attracting a younger market. Of those (10%, SQ15) who thought that Facebook increased retention, most thought that this was because members were kept better informed. Most respondents (59%) were satisfied with their club's Facebook page, even though only 33% felt they had received personal benefits, but dissatisfied (67%) that few members were participating in the page interaction. For many (50%, SQ18), the 'jury was still out' on whether the club was receiving sufficient return on investment, but for others (33%) there was a level of dissatisfaction.

Analysis of respondents' answers showed that there were some correlations between those who felt Facebook met some of their personal needs, provided personal benefits, and those that thought that these might increase recruitment and retention. Increased organisational image did not appear to be correlated with recruitment.

<b>Personal Needs, Benefits and Image derived from Facebook Usage</b>	<b>Recruitment</b>	<b>Retention</b>
Feeling valued	X	√
Increased prestige and social status	√	X
A sense of belonging and fellowship	√	√
Personal benefits gained	√	√
Benefits from social networking	√	-
<b>Organisational image, as measured by PTAT score</b>	X	-

Table 7: Survey Correlations with Recruitment and Retention

#### 4.3.6 Conclusion

The survey provided valuable data about club demographics and the Facebook usage of members. Using this information, the age of respondents was shown to be independent of their Facebook usage patterns, which was unexpected, considering the generally accepted assumption that young users are more active. This observation will be explored later in Section 5.2.2, by investigating whether survey respondents are atypical of the Australian population, and if so, why? Linked to this are the observations that club members and respondents are similar in age, but that both groups are almost twenty years older than the PTAT age of those visiting the site. Of some concern, discussed later in Section 5.3, is

the observation that club Facebook pages did not appear to be growing in their ability to engage the public, and that their MPWs were often in the distant past.

In Section 5.2.3, I explore correlations between the opinions of respondents about the benefits gained from Facebook, including their organisation's resulting image, and the recruitment and retention of themselves and other members. In most cases, it is their retention but not recruitment, which is discussed, as almost everyone had joined RI prior to the establishment of their own club's Facebook page.

## 4.4 Interviews

### 4.4.1 Introduction

The interviews provided information about the informants, their club's use of Facebook, its significance as one of the club's communication channels and their views about its future. Demographic data from the survey was used to select the expert informants (interviewees), provide the opportunity to personalise the interview schedule, and increase rapport, as all expert informants had previously exchanged emails and spoken with me by phone. The data also allowed triangulation, with the survey, and content analysis forming the other components.

Expert informants and their clubs have been only been identified by their survey ID, so that they remain anonymous, as guaranteed in preliminary survey documentation. Where more than one informant has commented on a topic, only the more relevant are listed.

### 4.4.2 Club Demographics (IQ1-IQ6)

In the three RI districts surveyed, there are 160 clubs with an average club size of 29 having 4584 members (as of October 2014), representing a decrease of 500 members (-10%) over the last five years (Rotary International 2014).

Districts	Membership 30/6/09	Membership 10/10/14	Membership Decrease	% Decrease
District A	1478	1219	259	18.0
District B	1535	1405	130	8.5
District C	2071	1960	111	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5084</b>	<b>4584</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>9.8</b>

Table 8: Membership Statistics 30/6/2009–10/10/14

Of more concern is the decrease in the average club size from 47 to 31 since 1970, with approximately 50 of the 160 clubs (31%) now below what is considered to be the minimum viable size of 20. While this is a significant decrease overall, it is not consistent, as in some districts almost as many clubs increased in size as decreased. Similar declines (Charles 1993) have been reported in United States amongst prominent service clubs such as Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis.

Overall retention rates (2003–2006) from a sample of Australian RI clubs reported internally by Rotary International (2006) were between 76–80%, with 80% considered a satisfactory benchmark by Rotary. New member retention (less than 3 years membership) was about 67%, and as a percentage of total terminations was about 44%. Quite rightly, this is of concern and is the focus of current research by RI.

Half the interviewees (e.g. ID109, ID122, ID13) indicated that their clubs<sup>40</sup> were currently experiencing a decline in numbers, while the other half (ID01-2, ID16, ID115, ID51, ID73, ID77, ID80) claimed to be in equilibrium, with losses, through death and transfer, being balanced by gains in new members, many of these being of retirement age, or occasionally younger women. Only one club (ID127), a Rotaract (18–30 year olds) club, was experiencing substantial gains, which they attributed to their involvement with the youth leadership program RYLA<sup>41</sup>, which was recognised by several other clubs (ID127, ID115) as an important source of younger recruits. Many clubs are at or below the minimum size (20) needed to maintain their Rotary Charter and this is of concern to them (ID122).

Facebook has begun to have a small impact upon recruitment, with two of the interviewees (ID01-2, ID80) reporting that members had been recruited through their club's Facebook page, although several others (ID109) suggested that it was too early to expect any effect. Others (ID10-2) expressed optimism that Facebook would 'come to the rescue', partly due to the way in which it was able to promote 'the projects we support and the funding that we give.'

Many (ID122) of those interviewed were concerned that, without a strong nucleus of younger members, their clubs would continue to age, as recruitment and especially retention, relied upon younger members having a significant group of friends within the club, with whom they were able to mix socially. While some younger women were joining (ID43, ID80), so lowering the average age, this was counterbalanced by an influx of older retirees (ID13), and 'empty nesters' resulting in a wider age spread than has historically occurred. As members age, informants (ID109, ID43) report that there is a

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<sup>40</sup> Informants were asked to bring current club membership data along to the interviews.

<sup>41</sup> RYLA is a seven-day residential leadership seminar for aspiring leaders aged 18 to 25 years, sponsored by Rotary International.

decrease in their involvement in community and international causes, and this can have an impact on new member recruitment and retention. Lack of involvement in the local community, due to employment elsewhere, can also affect recruitment (ID109), as potential members see a lack of activity as detrimental.

As women have only been allowed to join RI since 1989, and while two clubs in SA still have no female members as of 2013, many clubs are trying to overcome this imbalance by positive discrimination, such as unobtrusively filtering their Facebook posts (ID43), with a view to making them more attractive to female recruits. Clubs are especially sensitive to their perceived 'pale, male, and stale' image (ID115), the result of an ageing, predominantly white, male membership.

#### **4.4.3 Social Capital Development (IQ4-13)**

Many Facebook administrators could not name their personal needs, such as a feeling of belonging and fellowship, and were at a loss to explain how these might be met by visiting a Facebook page. They confused their needs with the service goals of Rotary, struggling to relate concepts like 'feeling valued' to their Facebook use. Several (ID10-2, ID16) felt that they were currently unable to influence others through their Facebook posts, but that this might occur in the future. While not directly attributable to Facebook, several others felt that Rotary provided personal challenges at both a local and international level, and 'enormous satisfaction' from 'doing good in the world', both of which were important reasons for their membership. One member mentioned that prestige and pride in Rotary were important personal needs for him, which could be developed by a Facebook page, which highlighted community, youth and international service events.

Only about half the respondents (ID02, ID109, ID115, ID122, ID127, ID73) acknowledged that Facebook had increased their sense of fellowship and belonging, key Rotary goals with which they were all familiar, and which helped strengthen personal relationships. Several (ID109) related that they had built relationships with international exchange students, even before they arrived in Australia, and had maintained these long after their return home. However, in general, relationship building was not seen as a strength of Facebook by many informants, although many (ID02, ID13, ID80) thought that Facebook had improved connections with groups such as sponsors, local traders, their local Council, including local governments Youth Advisory Council (YAC), and with other Rotary clubs.

Several (ID01-2, ID109) explained that the development of trust in other members through Facebook exchanges was difficult as there was so little between users; although when it did occur, Facebook was said to offer the tools for this to occur. Hope (ID10-2, ID77) was expressed that this would occur as club sites matured.

Many administrators (ID10-2, ID109, ID115, ID16, ID43) had not been aware of the opportunity to 'share emotions' on Facebook, but were favourably disposed to do so when this was suggested. Others (ID115) saw this as 'inappropriate' on a Rotary site, which could explain the lack of interaction these clubs experience. Only a few clubs post birthday congratulations, share links to personal YouTube videos, place obituaries or recognise family events such as weddings and births, but this has recently begun to increase, now that these possibilities have become known.

Most of the administrators (ID01-2, ID02, ID109, ID122, ID127, ID77, ID80) get positive satisfaction from the likes and comments they receive from their posts or from just seeing the interaction that their page is generating, with some (e.g. ID16) admitting that they can never receive enough positive feedback. Often the 'likes' and 'shares' are the result of solidarity from members of other clubs, and between the women in a club (ID43).

With 23% of respondents having never visited their club's Facebook site, and another 10% of respondents being automatically disqualified from completing the survey because they were in error when they claimed that their club lacked a Facebook page, at least a third of respondents are unaware of the potential opportunities and benefits that their club's Facebook page has to offer. None of the respondents visited their own club as often as a non-club Facebook page, which supports the assertion that, in general, club Facebook pages are poorly developed, and infrequently used by club members.

#### **4.4.4 Facebook Usage (IQ13-IQ19)**

##### **Lack of Contributions**

Most administrators (e.g. ID77, ID13) commented that one of their biggest disappointments was the lack of contribution from club members. They estimated that that only 5–10%, and certainly less than 50% had ever visited, and on a regular basis, this figure was much smaller.

Few administrators see any need to engage with contributors, and with so few contributors other than themselves, this means that both PTAT scores (mean 4.3) and ER<sup>42</sup> scores (mean 7.1) are often low, although this may also be the result of the Facebook Filtering algorithm, EdgeRank, which restricts the average number of fans who see administrator posts to about 16%. Most administrators see their role as posting club news from meetings, rather than engaging with contributors, and many fail to recognise the different level of interaction expected from a website and a social media site, although this could be generational, as only three administrators (ID10-2, ID127, ID51) were younger than fifty. PTAT can be increased by posting potentially viral content, such as acknowledging members and community leaders who have recently been recognised publicly for community achievements (Aamplify 2013).

Duplication of communication channels is a possible explanation for the lack of use of club Facebook pages. Most clubs have a website, and a newsletter, in addition to Facebook, LinkedIn and occasionally Twitter, and while the newsletter is sometimes digital and sent by email, in other cases it is still printed and handed out at meetings, at least to the few members without the Internet. For many, there is no desire to change the way they get information about their club, but it does not need to be this way. One Rotaract club uses Facebook as its prime communication channel, and only sends a fortnightly email with advance notice of coming events, updates and notices. Between these fortnightly emails, all notices are posted to Facebook.

### **Return on Investment**

Most of the Facebook administrators, who are all volunteers, reported that only a small percentage of their members were visiting the site, but despite this, they were willing to spend extra time, which varied from a few minutes to a few hours each week, in the hope that more members would eventually visit, and that engagement would increase. Using Facebook Insights, they are able to monitor user response to each post they make, which enables fine-tuning by a trial and error approach, and allows progress to be measured.

Administrators indicated that their club's Facebook page allowed members who were unable to attend meetings to remain in touch, provided positive exposure to the community, gave the opportunity to promote events, provided a forum for potential members, and provided a return-on-investment (ROI). Many (e.g. ID115, ID127) felt that having a Facebook presence is essential to engage with and to recruit younger members.

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<sup>42</sup> 'To calculate the ER, take the total PTAT (people talking about this) and divide by the total number of likes. PTAT is a rolling 7-day period, updated every 24 hours, and includes all page likes, post likes/comments/shares, @ tags, wall posts and event RSVPs' – Mari Smith July 27, 2012 [Facebook](#). This calculation has been replaced by PTAT/Reach.

Some now provide 'catchy' photo captions, and invite feedback such as 'likes' and 'comments'. Only a few have been using Facebook Insights data, available free-of-charge to administrators within Facebook, to analyse interaction and determine user demographics, but those who are doing so have soon become addicted to the feedback as it provides the incentive to improve postings, often when little other feedback is available. With little evidence of increased membership, community project involvement or even member visitation, many doubt that their ROI is high enough to be sustainable. For others, the volunteer nature of the administrator role, and the enthusiasm generated by the novelty of social media, is sufficient recompense for key performance indicators (KPI's) not being reached. Only one administrator surveyed had experimented with paid posts to encourage the business community to attend luncheons, with the hope that there might be a flow-on to club membership.

### **Generational Differences**

Few administrators were able to offer any evidence-based perspective on how different age groups used their clubs Facebook page, although many intuitively felt that the majority would be younger than their clubs' average age (55 – 64 years), particularly due to the frequent use by Exchange students, and the community in general. This lack of knowledge indicates a lack of awareness of the wealth of data that Facebook Insights provides, such as MPA, which can provide the answer to this question. Many thought, although without supporting evidence, that their younger members were more likely to have visited, interacted and would be spending more time than their older members. MPA data from the Facebook Insights of many clubs supports this, with an average age of 15–20 years younger than their club average. 'Older members don't understand the interactive nature of Facebook pages and the need to share.' (ID51).

Administrators (e.g. ID10-2, ID13) report that many of their older members are fearful of using Facebook, no doubt due to negative reports in the media, false information from friends, and misconceptions. This fear prevents them from contributing to their club's Facebook site, as posting requires Facebook membership, and for this reason many administrators recommend education programs and mentoring to allay privacy fears, remove ignorance and increase participation. They (ID16) report that some members, who were once resistant, are becoming enthusiastic as they see the success of Facebook, and though they rarely contribute, are at least viewing.



## Recommendations

Club Facebook administrators, most of whom are novices, admit to learning many lessons since beginning their sites, and are willing to share these. They emphasise that club pages should be established as organisational pages rather than personal pages, to allow access to the Facebook Insights data that is so essential for monitoring, and hence improving user engagement. They recommend that to increase exposure, the club's Facebook link should be added to all promotional materials, office-bearer's business cards, email signatures, and to both the club's and district's websites.

They have learnt that engagement can be increased by actions such as:

- posting lots of photos, which are tagged with members names, to get responses from their friends
- making sure there is a representative sample of photos from each event
- posting photos involving significant community members such as the local mayor
- inviting comment by adding quirky captions to photos
- promoting causes
- keeping status updates short

They realise that frequent updates are needed, especially when posts scroll quickly to the bottom of users' newsfeeds, and that they (ID43) often miss the opportunity to leverage sponsors and their supporters. They (ID16, ID77, ID80) suggest that each club should review protocols for all its communication channels, but especially for Facebook, which in many clubs is a duplicate of the club's static website, failing to recognise Facebook's strong interactivity and marketing potential.

Many emphasise that Facebook is not a replacement for their club website, which they believe should:

- be a source of static documents that are linked to the Facebook page
- contain links to the club's social media pages such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter
- remain an archive (repository) for club newsletters, photos and history
- contain private information such as contact details, which require a member password
- be the portal for Google searches
- be a promotional tool for recruitment
- be the location of the club diary and rosters

Some have realised that, with most users of their Facebook page not being club members, their target audience is really their local community, and for this reason posts full of Rotary jargon are likely to be

unintelligible and probably counterproductive. Putting this into practice, some clubs have set up separate Facebook pages for significant annual events, such as art shows, book shops and major fund raisers, and on these pages made Rotary's sponsorship low key. Their logic is that, by making Rotary's presence less prominent, they will avoid any impression of a 'hard sell', and as a result, are more likely to encourage participants to remain, and eventually become members.

Despite the time needed to maintain a large number of separate event pages, the use of the Facebook Events application has the potential to be an excellent tool for promoting events, accepting RSVPs and administering announcements related to these events by messaging everyone who has 'joined' the event. Experience has shown that reliable attendance numbers cannot be predicted from the number of people joining an event via Facebook, and several administrators (ID13) advise that only RSVPs via email should be accepted, but that even these are unreliable. Several have experimented with paid Facebook adverts, and have found difficulty in targeting the right audience, although they report that the cost is not excessive, compared to adverts in the local press.

Forming a closed Facebook group for the club Committee or Board is one way to ensure that everyone receives important messages, as not all posts reach the newsfeed of 'fans', and those that do, may scroll to the bottom before being seen. Posts to the club's page from anyone else, other than the administrator, are unlikely to be received, unless the person posting is a friend of the page owner.

Most administrators report that they are now working to increase the number of posters, level of engagement and interactivity of their Facebook pages, although prior to these interviews, this need was poorly understood.

#### **4.4.5 Recruitment (SQ19-SQ21, IQ20-IQ24)**

Few clubs have a protocol for recording recruitment methods (ID115), as historically recruitment has been done exclusively by a referral or a face-to-face approach from an existing member. Despite the advent of the Internet in the last twenty years, which allows initial contact to be made via a club's website and by email, meeting a potential member face-to-face, followed by an invitation to join other members at a weekly meeting, is still the most popular recruitment method. Facebook offers the opportunity to increase the number of direct approaches from community members, shortening the traditional recruitment process, and increasing the opportunity for potential members to gain knowledge about other club members, the club's culture and projects.

Despite the lack of knowledge of recruitment sources, which makes it difficult to provide anything but anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of Facebook, many clubs (ID115), even those clubs with very recent Facebook pages, are optimistic, with at least one Rotaract club (ID127) having convincing evidence that recruitment via Facebook is effective. Few interviewees were able to say that Facebook was instrumental in their own recruitment, but this is not surprising in view of the membership longevity of those interviewed and the relatively recent establishment of their Facebook pages.

Informants report that their reasons for joining Rotary included:

- providing community support
- participating in International projects and causes
- giving back to the club for previous support
- making a difference, and doing good in the world
- fellowship
- social networking
- receiving education from speakers

Many of these reasons provide focused targets for recruitment campaigns, although business networking, which would have once featured high on this list, is no longer important to many retired members.

### **Image and Identity**

Most informants (ID01-2, ID02, ID109, ID122, ID13, ID77, ID80) see their Facebook page as an important part of their modern identity, and if missing, believe it would create a negative image about their club's ability to adapt to change, and reinforce the negative images that some have of Rotary members as being unrepresentative of their communities and conservative (ID115). Without a Facebook page, Rotary would lack one of its most important promotional tools for 'cement[ing] credibility in a local community' (ID16) and would isolate it from younger potential members. 'You can't have a marketing strategy without it.' (ID77). Despite these positive comments, there was some concern that a Facebook page done poorly was worse than not having one at all. Of interest is the observation by one administrator that some of younger members of his community are actually resistant to older people joining their Facebook page.

#### 4.4.6 Retention (SQ22-SQ23, IQ23-IQ24)

While most of the members joined before their club established a Facebook page, many clubs have now had Facebook for several years (average 1.35 years in 2013), which should be long enough to begin seeing an impact on member retention. While social media might be less important to older members than to the small cohort of younger members, Facebook is rapidly gaining acceptance amongst older members with Internet access (ID80, ID51). Facebook's ability to keep people informed will be invaluable for clubs moving from weekly to fortnightly meetings, and for older members with limited access to meetings (ID13, ID10-2).

Interviewees report that their reasons for remaining are:

- fellowship
- payback to the community
- International events such as conferences
- keeping busy
- diversion from work
- learning skills: running meetings, marketing, keeping to deadlines

While no particular Facebook feature encourages retention, the interaction, sense of belonging and recognition, which are facilitated by Facebook are relevant (ID13). Being well connected and staying in touch should increase the likelihood of a group of friends remaining together. Administrators (e.g. ID13) reported that sense of pride felt by many in having a club Facebook page could also have a positive effect on retention.

#### 4.4.7 Conclusion

The interviews, which evolved from the surveys, provided important information about club demographics (Section 5.2.1) and social capital development, as well as the Facebook usage of the expert informants. Lack of contributions from members, low ROI, and generational differences were recurring key themes, frequently reported by administrators.

While recruitment and retention were acknowledged as possible outcomes of club Facebook pages, many reported that low user numbers, coupled with a low ER, and the early stage of development of their sites, were inhibiting their potential usefulness (Section 5.2.2). The recruitment and retention potential of Facebook is more fully developed in Section 5.2.3

As the preliminary content analysis, the survey, and the interviews, consistently reported a lack of contributors to club Facebook pages, I decided that a detailed analysis of the content of the participating clubs' Facebook pages, to confirm and attempt to quantify their observations, was warranted. These results are described in the next Section 4.5.

## 4.5 Facebook Content Analysis

### 4.5.1 Introduction

Preliminary content analysis of club Facebook pages prior to the semi-structured interviews suggested that there was little interaction between members, and that most posts were by the Facebook administrator, replicating the format typically used on many clubs' websites. The reasons for the lack of interaction was explained in the interviews, when it became clear that interaction and engagement were not considered a high priority, and that many administrators had not even considered the need.

To investigate this in more depth, informants were invited to send both post and page level Facebook Insights data collected over a five-month period (June–October 2013), and 9 of the 11 clubs did so. A typology was then established which classified each post by purpose, and this was then used, within NVivo, to allocate multiple codes to each post, establish the number of posts and percentage coverage of each type, and to permit comparison between clubs.

This methodology was expected to provide evidence as to whether the lack of engagement and interaction suggested in the interviews had a factual basis. For this reason three nodes were particularly of interest, due to their potentially interactive nature: **Connect with Friends** (CF), **Join Event or Group** (JE), **Seek Information** (SI) although interaction is also possible within several other nodes. This was indeed the case, with CF (0%) and SI (2%) being low down in total percentage coverage <sup>43</sup>and the third, JE (57%) moderately high. Posts coded for this third node rarely contained RSVP responses from users, but were mainly invitations, hence their frequent occurrence, but low interactivity.

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<sup>43</sup> Coverage is a measure of the percentage of the total characters on a club's Facebook page that relates to the particular node or topic.

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Node Rank	Nodes	Description	Coverage Range %	Total Coverage %
1	RM	Report Meeting	2–67	168
2	CS	Community Service	5–50	166
3	PR	Public relations	3–36	107
4	RA	Rotary Administration	3–17	73
5	RE	Report Event	3–29	71
6	IR	International Service	2–23	71
7	RC	Recognition	3–19	68
8	RN	Report News	3–17	57
9	JE	Join an Event or Group	2–20	57
10	YS	Youth Service	2–16	45
11	BN	Business networking	2–8	17
12	OE	Organise an Event or group	1–8	14
13	MR	Member Recruitment	2–12	14
14	FM	Facebook Marketing	4	4
15	SI	Seek Information	2	2
16	HM	Highlighting Club Minorities	0	0
17	CF	Connect Friends	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>933</b>

Table 9: Node Descriptions

Coverage for a particular node varied widely between clubs, and not all 17 nodes were present for each club. The top three post types (nodes), as shown by Total Coverage<sup>44</sup> were reporting of meetings, community service announcements and public relations.

Total Coverage % (sum of all nodes) also varied widely between clubs (#1–#9) (Table 10: Code Coverage by Club), most likely due to differences in the way that each club’s Facebook administrator viewed their administrative role, and the goals that they, or their committee, felt were important for their Facebook page. This interpretation was supported by the interviews.

Club	BN	CS	FM	HM	IR	JE	MR	OE	PR	RA	RC	RE	RM	RN	SI	YS	Grand Total
1	3	5		0	2	2		1	17	3	17	14	59	3		5	128
2		19				12		8	17	9	3	16				3	86
3		50				17								17			83
4		25			22	2			6	8	19	3	5	13		2	105
5	3	17								17			17	17			70
6		10			23				3	3	10		67			13	130
7	2	17			11	20	12		20	14	3	9	20			16	145
8	8	11			5	2	2	2	8	8	13	2	2	5	2		68
9		11	4		7	4		4	36	11	4	29		4		7	118
GT	17	166	4	0	71	57	14	14	107	73	68	71	168	57	2	45	933

Table 10: Code Coverage by Club (#1–9) June–October 2013

<sup>44</sup> Total coverage is the aggregate coverage for a particular node for all clubs (pages) coded or of all nodes for a particular club.

#### 4.5.2 PTAT Scores and Code Coverage

When the average PTAT scores from Facebook Insight data exports, taken on monthly basis, were analysed (Table 11: Average PTAT scores by Club), only one club (#2), which was a Rotaract club, showed an increasing PTAT score, while two (#3 & 8) had plateaued, and six (#1, 4, 5,6,7,9) were decreasing. This variation suggests that while PTAT scores are dynamic, varying by as much as tenfold from day to day, trends due to changing levels of interaction and engagement can be identified, and could be used for diagnostic purposes.

While not unexpected, there was no correlation between average monthly PTAT scores, a measure of engagement, and total code coverage for clubs, a measure of the content as characterised by the typology, partly due to a lack of standardised weighting for key post types (Table 9: Node Descriptions and Table 11: Average PTAT scores by Club).

Club #	Monthly PTAT (av.)	Monthly PTAT Range	Total Code Coverage
3	2	0–6	83
9	7	1–10	118
5	9	5–12	70
6	17	11-19	130
7	33	23–44	145
1	34	13–48	128
4	40	26-60	105
8	47	29–59	68
2	67	21–115	86

Table 11: Average PTAT scores by Club (#1–9) taken on monthly basis June–October 2013

Each of the typology's post types, also known as codes or nodes, listed in Table 9: Node Descriptions, have been grouped by theme and described below (Sections 4.5.3–4.5.6).

#### 4.5.3 Service (CS) (IR) (YS)

Three nodes, with links to service, were explored on club Facebook pages. As might be expected from the goals of Rotary, **Community Service** (CS–rank #2) featured prominently on all club Facebook pages, with over 60 posts and an average of almost 20% coverage. This node is characterised by the promotion of fund raising events, either organised by RI or by others, and usually sponsored by Rotary. Rotarians are often asked to help with the organisation of these events, and with the sale of tickets,

which they usually promote on Facebook with highly engaging photos from last year's events. This is an ideal opportunity to promote Rotary to the community and to recognise key organisers and volunteers.

**International service** (IR–rank #6) is one of the cornerstones of the Rotary Charter and therefore it is difficult to understand that only six of the nine clubs posted about international projects and events, such as polio prevention, in the six months of data collection. While the percentage coverage can be as high as 23%, perhaps due to the interest of key Facebook personnel or office-bearers, it can go as low as 2% in some clubs.

Providing **Youth Service** (YS–rank #10) is one of the major goals of Rotary but this is not reflected in the number of posts, with only six of nine clubs engaging with youth. Within these clubs, the average coverage is less than 10%, which does not augur well for the rejuvenation of an ageing membership, which is so dependent on a continual influx of younger members.

#### **4.5.4 Rotary Administration (RA) (OE) (JE)**

Most administrators use their club's Facebook page to disseminate information (RA–rank #4) about meetings, call for volunteers, provide information about fund raisers, promote ticket sales and request RSVPs. They use it to organise rosters, promote District events, and report the visits of Rotary dignitaries. While almost all use it for this purpose, the total coverage varies enormously, ranging from 3% to 17%.

Facebook should be an excellent tool to organise events, increase engagement and interaction. Despite this, very little attempt to organise events (OE–rank #12) via Facebook has occurred within clubs, with only four of the nine doing so, and when they have, the coverage has been less than 8%.

Posts coded under Join an Event or Group (JE–rank #9) are those which invite users to purchase tickets or take part in an event such as a fund raiser or conference. Often such posts invite non-members to attend a future meeting, which is an ideal use of Facebook due to its wide reach, with some club administrators estimating that less than 10% of users are actually club members.

The Facebook applications Groups and Events do not appear to be well used. There are no public invitations to join a group amongst the posts of the nine clubs analysed, although this could be because this feature has to be secret. This is surprising as Groups, which can be Open, Closed, or Secret, offer



the opportunity to facilitate the distribution of information to all group members, with no risk that posts will scroll off the bottom of the list. 'Events' is another Facebook application, which offers the opportunity to promote club events and to automate RSVPs for events. Only one of the nine clubs appears to be using this application. Events can be exclusive to a group, in which case everyone in the group can be sent an invitation 'Invite All' or it can appear on the group's wall.

#### **4.5.5 Member Recruitment (MR) (PR) (BN)**

Considering the importance of recruitment to many clubs, and their acceptance that Facebook has the potential to increase recruitment, it was unexpected that only two of the nine clubs raised issues relating to Member Recruitment (MR–rank #13) directly on their Facebook pages. One club made a significant number of mentions (12% of coverage), but without success according to an informant, and another club, which had the biggest membership increase in the district, made no direct mention of recruiting on its Facebook pages at all. This apparent contradiction may be explained by the lack of accurate records of the origin of recruitment leads.

Most clubs promote Rotary as an organisation (PR–rank #3), on their Facebook pages, with the average coverage being 11% of their pages, but with only 17 references from nine clubs over a four month period, it is an area which could be increased, especially as so many of the users are not members and may not necessarily be aware of RI's contribution to the community, but perhaps this is intentional.

Some administrators intentionally try to keep RI's branding at a low level on their Facebook page, believing that the focus should not be RI but rather their community, either not including the logo at all (11/74, 14%) or using a small size (23/74, 30%). Others include a large RI wheel logo (33/74, 42%) on all of their posts and feature RI signage prominently in the banner. The prominence of RI signage appears to be negatively correlated with ER score<sup>45</sup> with those clubs having the most prominent RI signage having the lowest ER score (mean 4) and those with the least, the highest ER (mean 15) which supports the 'gut feeling' of many Facebook administrators. This finding would also appear to support those clubs that have separate Facebook pages for high prominence community activities such as art shows, drama productions and book exchanges where the RI association is down played. This appears to be counter-intuitive and would benefit from further investigation.

The number of Page Likes appears to show a positive correlation with the amount of RI signage, with those Facebook pages showing no RI signage having the lowest number of likes, in contrast to that for ER.

Signage	Number of clubs	Percentage	Mean PTAT	Page Likes	Engagement Rate (ER)
Large RI logo	30	41	6	153	4
Small RI logo	21	28	8	146	6
Local logo	2	3	23	321	8
No RI logo	11	15	14	85	15
Inactive	10	14	0	0	0
<b>Total/Average</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 12: RI Club Signage data (19 January 2015)

Mean RI ER ( $n = 78^{46}$ ) is  $6.5 \pm 3$  and this varies from 3.3–9.3 between districts and from 6–16 between organisations (Rotaract, Rotary International, Lions International) (mean  $6.8 \pm 2.8$ ). The number of Clubs with inactive pages also varies between districts. Mean Page Likes vary significantly (392, 145, 102) between service organisations, with Rotaract having the highest, and also the lowest average age. Page Likes and PTAT scores correlate positively (correlation test,  $p = 0.009$ ), hence although there is no proof of causality, it would appear that increasing the number of Likes for a club Facebook page is associated with increases in interaction, although the engagement rate ( $ER = PTAT/Likes$ ) does not correlate with Page Likes (correlation test,  $p = 0.52$ ).

Unexpectedly, there is no correlation between, either the LikeAlyzer LA PTAT or ER score recorded back in 2013, and the current PTAT or ER scores. Maybe some of those with lowly PTAT scores in 2013 have improved their engagement levels, while others have lost their enthusiastic administrators, or have been convinced that there was inadequate ROI, and reduced their input.

Business Networking (BN–rank #11) was once a key motivator for Rotary recruitment, but it no longer assumes the same importance, with only 11 posts (coverage 2.2–8.1%) over four months from four clubs ( $n = 9$ ). It has been suggested by interviewees (ID109) that an ageing membership, with most members now being retired or late in their careers, means that this is no longer a member priority. Only two of the nine clubs specifically held community business networking meetings, and while these were seen as opportunities to recruit new members, their main purpose was to promote Rotary to stakeholders.

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<sup>45</sup> Recorded 19 January 2015, from publicly available data on club Facebook pages.

#### 4.5.6 Facebook Interaction (CF) (HM) (RC) (SI)

The content analysis of club Facebook pages revealed a lack of engagement and interaction, supporting the preliminary analysis, surveys, and interviews. To assist this analysis, six nodes, with a potentially interactive focus, were selected from Table 9: Node Descriptions, and ranked for closer examination. Of the six supposedly interactive nodes, four (FM, SI, HI, CF) were used the least of all the seventeen nodes used by posters.

- i. **Provide Information.** Reporting occurs in three common situations: for an Event (RE–rank #5), a Meeting (RM–rank #1) or News (RN–rank #8). Together, these make up almost a third of club Facebook posts, with some clubs reaching coverage of 75% and others less than 10%. Most clubs report on past events, meetings or club news by using captioned photos, some use video, and others link to the web.
- ii. **Recognition.** Some clubs make a substantial effort, with often as much as 19% of coverage, to recognise (RC–rank #7) members' achievements both inside and outside the club. They proudly publicise achievements such as the winning of District Rotary prizes, long service awards, and the appointment of new office-bearers at the annual change over, with obituaries becoming more common. Recognition of volunteers and organisers of events occurs frequently, but this is often via captioned photos rather than a specific post. Often this type of post results in a large number of comments, likes and shares and so contributes greatly to the interactivity of a club's Facebook page.
- iii. **Facebook Marketing.** Only one club attempted to use its Facebook page to promote Facebook (FM–rank #14) to its members or offer awareness raising opportunities, even although many administrators had suggested this was essential. With so many administrators complaining about the need to educate members about Facebook, this was a lost opportunity, which is difficult to understand
- iv. **Seeking information** (SI–rank #15) is a very effective method of increasing interaction but is very poorly used, with only one club seeking a response from users, and only on one occasion. Conversely, users apparently do not feel free to seek information via club Facebook pages, or perhaps do not feel that there will be a response, which is a pity, as users providing answers to enquirers are an established method of building a community.
- v. **Highlighting Club Minorities.** Most Facebook administrators said they consciously tried to emphasise club minorities (HM–rank#16) such as women and younger members. They did this

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<sup>46</sup> Sampled 19 January 2015

by including additional photos, whenever available, and by favouring related content. The fact that only one specific mention occurs in the postings of nine clubs over four months is perhaps an indication of the sensitivity of the matter.

- vi. **Connecting with Friends.** There was no mention of using Facebook to connect with friends (CF-rank#17), such as past Exchange students or those involved in international projects, in any club's Facebook page, although this would have been a good way to increase interaction.

#### 4.5.7 Content Analysis Conclusion

Content analysis of each club's Facebook page, prior to the survey, showed that the number of contributors, the level of interactivity, and contributions (likes, comments, shares, friend requests) were often few in number. In many cases, clubs had simply replicated their website as a Facebook page without a strategy to generate the high level of interactivity observed on many successful social media sites. There is however a wide diversity in the 'quality' of club Facebook pages and examples of 'good practice', as shown by high ERs, abound.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter describes the results from the preliminary studies, such as the RI newsletter content analysis, and then explored primary data from RI collected in the core survey, interviews and Facebook content analysis components. In so doing, it has revealed some unexpected ageing and membership differences, between individual clubs within organisations.

Facebook usage has been shown to be higher than expected among older RI club members, while club Facebook pages have been shown to attract users who are younger than the club average. Despite this, interaction on club Facebook pages has been lower than expected, with social capital development limited, as a result. Views about the ability of a club's Facebook page to increase recruitment and retention have been mixed, with the recency of most club pages and the lack of interactivity being suggested as adverse factors.

Content analysis of Facebook pages has shown a surprising low number of interactive posts, with most posts related to reporting of meeting and events, and few related to member recruitment.

The following chapter will explore these results further, discussing significant findings, implications and recommendations.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

So far the thesis has argued that, while the common perception is that many non-profit community organisations (NPCOs) are experiencing either an ageing or declining membership, with some experiencing both, Facebook has the potential to build a sense of community (SOC) among younger users, increasing recruitment and retention. More specifically, this multi-discipline study explores whether high levels of Facebook engagement can help meet personal needs, develop social capital, and evolve a sense of virtual community (SOVC).

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion about significant findings, which include RI membership trends, levels of user engagement in club Facebook pages and member recruitment and retention. Next I discuss the implications and recommendations from the findings, including the application of the findings to community organisations, Facebook usage recommendations, return-on-investment (ROI) and best practice for forming a networked community. Finally, I discuss the study's limitations, generalisations from the findings, speculation about the findings, and relevance to contemporary debates. Throughout this discussion, I refer frequently to related research reviewed in Chapter 2 Literature Review.

Investigations included surveys and interviews of club members, along with content analysis of club Facebook pages. The survey not only provided demographic and Facebook usage data along with opinions about the relevance of Facebook to recruitment and retention, but was also used to select the interviewees. These were invited to expand upon the information they provided in the survey, and to supply additional demographic data about membership trends in their club.

A formal content analysis of club Facebook pages and newsletters was not originally part of this study, but became necessary when both the surveys and interviews produced unexpected results, which could best be explained by obtaining a better understanding of club Facebook culture. Limitations to the earlier research included a lack of a suitable index to measure social capital, and the difficulties of self-reports, although these were to some extent overcome by triangulation. This additional data collection fitted well with the project's first subsidiary research question: How does this organisation use social media to interact with current and potential members? Content analysis of club Facebook pages allowed the categorisation of posts by type and content, and permitted basic network analysis.

The demographic data collected from clubs revealed that, Rotary International (RI) in South Australia did indeed have a declining membership, but that this decline was not universal among RI clubs.

## 5.2 Significant Findings

### 5.2.1 Membership Trends

There is a general perception in the community that many community organisations are declining in size, providing further evidence that Putnam's analysis<sup>47</sup> in his controversial book Putnam (2000) has popular acceptance. To test Putnam's observation in a local context, I collected data from two primary, and one secondary source; a survey, face-to-face interviews, and RI membership reports. The interviews conducted with RI members did not report any growth, with half admitting that their clubs<sup>48</sup> were currently experiencing a decline in numbers, while the other half reported stability, with losses, through death and transfer, being balanced by gains in new members. Many new members were of retirement age but there was an occasional younger adult.

RI data (Section 4.4.2), collected directly from monthly membership reports to district governors, clearly supports the public perception, but despite this, interviewees appeared to have been reticent to admit declining membership. This may be counter-productive, as Boezeman and Ellemers (2014, p. 81) have shown that people are more likely to volunteer if they believe their contribution is needed.

As longitudinal age data is not publicly available for RI, it is difficult to decide if the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) recorded increase in volunteering since 2006 for the pre-retirement age group, 55-64 years, which also happens to be the average age of Rotarians, has had any impact on RI membership. Overall, the volunteering rate in Australia has stabilised since 2006 at 36% (2010), and does not appear to explain the decrease in membership experienced by many South Australian Rotary clubs.

The size of an organisation is determined as much by retention, as it is by recruitment. McLennan et al. (2009) found that volunteer-based fire agencies lose only 6.8–8.3% of their membership each year, compared to a much higher 20–24% for RI, with 44% of these losses being new members. Their research, using exit surveys, provides reasons for member losses, which, if addressed, could allow RI to reduce their attrition rate.

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<sup>47</sup> Refer to Section 2.3.2 Communities / Decline of Community Organisations for further discussion.

<sup>48</sup> Informants were asked to bring club membership data to the interviews

Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit a community organisation recently in South Australia will be aware that many of those attending appear to be 'seniors', which is supported by the average age of 55–64 years from a sample of RI club members. Table 3 compares the ages of RI survey respondents with RI club members. While the increase in the number of Silent Generation members and a decrease in Generation Y's are most pronounced with RI club members, emphasising their seniority, both have a large component of Baby Boomers. This is understandable as survey respondents are more likely to be Internet users and younger than the average RI club member, and both will have many middle-aged 'empty-nesters'.

<b>Years</b>	<b>Age Range (years)</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>RI Survey Respondents %</b>	<b>RI Club Members %</b>
<b>1925–1945</b>	68–88	Silent Generation	31	40
<b>1946–1964</b>	49–67	Baby Boomers	45	47
<b>1965–1980</b>	31–49	Generation X	20	12
<b>1981–1990</b>	18–31	Generation Y / Millennials	4	1
<b>Totals</b>			<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3: Generational Categorisation, as of 2013

Data for the 65 years and over age group, collected from both RI respondents (36% of sample, n = 83) and their clubs (49% of sample n = 513), show that both samples have already exceeded Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) projections for the Australian population, 65 years and over, for 2012 (14%) by a large margin, and even estimates for 2061, (22%) and 2101 (25%), but whether this process is accelerating could not be determined from available club archives, which lack member ages. It is likely that with the life expectancy of Australians continuing to improve, the average age of members is likely to continue to increase as they continue in an active membership role beyond that of previous generations, and if recruitment continues to be largely 'baby boomers', will be accompanied by a reduction in membership, as 'baby boomers' become older and fewer (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, pp. 4, 18).

This predominance of older volunteers among RI members is not unexpected, as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) has found that volunteering is more common in the middle age groups (35-74), although within the Professional category, an important source of new members for RI, those in the 18-24 year old 'early career' group have the highest rate of volunteering. The observation that the middle-



aged are more likely to volunteer is supported by Curtis et al. (2001, p. 788) in their review of voluntary association membership. Wilks et al. (2006) suggest that organisations that want to correct this imbalance should segment their marketing strategies to engage the younger generations, using the stereotypic core traits of each age group, and in this context, Facebook is likely to be the ideal medium to communicate.

## 5.2.2 Facebook Engagement

### Respondent Profiles

The self-selected survey sample was not expected to be fully representative of the RI population, as only those interested in Facebook and with Internet access were expected to participate, and this subgroup was expected to be more computer and social media literate, and perhaps younger than the membership as a whole (Sensis 2014; Smith 2014). Counter-balancing this expectation, the business background<sup>49</sup> of most RI members, the more recent data (2013 vs 2009) collected in the survey, and the high proportion (47%) of Facebook administrators in the sample, were expected to contribute to an older respondent profile. The respondent profile was indeed found to be younger, with an average age (58) four years less than the average age (62) of members from 12 of the 34 clubs sampled.

Using Australian social application data for the 55 + age group from Bernoff and Li (2011), it was possible to compare the survey's Producer<sup>50</sup> (43%) and Inactive (26%) categories, with the equivalent Creators (14%) and Inactives (38%), although this is an imperfect match. RI respondents are more likely to interact with their club's Facebook page, and to contribute content, than typical 55+ year old Australians, as sampled by Forrester Research (2009), but it should be realised that the survey only considered Facebook use, while Bernoff and Li's 'groundswell' covers a much broader range of 'social applications', and was taken four years earlier, before social media became as popular in the older age groups. More recent social application data for Australia, which might reflect changes to the activity of the Creator and Inactive categories, is not publicly available from Forrester Research (2009).

### Member Engagement

A key focus of this study was to explore how organisations use Facebook to interact with current and potential members (RQ1). The online surveys, interviews and content analysis conducted show that few RI clubs have been effectively using their Facebook pages to maximise interaction with their members

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<sup>49</sup> Appendix 9: Object of Rotary International

<sup>50</sup> Producers are likely to have posted a photo, video, comment or event.

and the public, although there has been significant improvement<sup>51</sup> in engagement rates (ER) over the duration of this study. Content analysis of club Facebook pages, using NVivo, shows that reports of meetings, with multiple annotated photos, giving frequent recognition to prominent attendees, is the most popular type of post, followed by reporting of community service events. Known areas of interest to potential volunteers, such as international projects and youth sponsorship, appear to be largely ignored on many Facebook pages. This is contrary to the research of Haigh and Brubaker (2013, pp. 64–65), who find that a positive perception about an organisation's level of corporate social responsibility<sup>52</sup> and corporate ability<sup>53</sup> are two of the major goals of relationship marketing, and should be major themes on any club page.

Research by Waters et al. (2009), and others, has reported that most non-profit organisations 'virtually neglect' online relationship building, and are poor at engaging their stakeholders, as this study has confirmed. This need not be the case, as many older adults, interviewed by Erickson (2011), acknowledge the benefits of Facebook, including the development of a SOVC for some, and universally, the ability to raise awareness by keeping informed about what friends and family were doing. Her review of literature found that Facebook might facilitate bonding social capital (Putnam 2000), the type that occurs between close friends and family, and bridging social capital, the weaker type that we form with individuals in the wider community.

Analysis of club Facebook comments and likes shows that they usually originate from a very small number of dedicated members and, in some clubs, solely from the administrator, despite having the potential to involve a large number of members and the public. The social learning theory of Bandura and McClelland (1977) suggests that low levels of interactivity do little to provide positive models for inactive users, who might otherwise have been motivated by feedback they received (Burke et al. 2009). For this reason, researchers suggest that the early identification and recruitment of 'starters', individuals who generate posts to which others link, and 'influential' users, defined as those whose posts generate many votes, should be a high priority for administrators (Ghosh & Lerman 2010; Mathioudakis & Koudas 2009, p. 3). In my judgement, this is powerful advice, which could prevent many sites from stagnating or becoming a burden for administrators.

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<sup>51</sup> Engagement Rates: 2015, 68 clubs, mean 8.5; 2013, 60 clubs, mean 6.6

<sup>52</sup> 'CSR [corporate social responsibility associations] are based on consumers' perceptions about a company's social obligations as a member of society' (Kim & Rader 2010, p. 60).

<sup>53</sup> 'Corporate ability associations are "associations a consumer has with an organization regarding its expertise in product and service quality"' (Kim & Rader 2010, p. 60).

While an ever increasing number of clubs have Facebook pages, these are often replicas of their club's largely static website, which although it may provide a continually updated archive of club information, is not usually designed to interact with its audience, as is the case with a social media page. This is not unexpected, as often Facebook administrators do not fully appreciate the advantages of interacting with users, even though many admit its potential to develop a sense of belonging and fellowship. Many are unaware that engaging users via the Internet can develop social capital, and that this has the potential to develop a SOC, resulting in recruitment and retention. They admit to being discouraged by members, who publicly resist the use of Facebook, and from a lack of support from other club officials.

One of the most disappointing aspects of many SNSs, as reported by the Facebook administrators surveyed and interviewed in this study, has been the low level of member participation, with few members visiting the site and large numbers of suspected 'lurkers', who do not contribute to the conversation, fearing that Facebook will invade their privacy, and who resist attempts to encourage them to interact on their club's Facebook page with fellow members and the public. Researchers have found that if the proportion of lurkers becomes too high, the lack of conversation can threaten the sustainability of the social networking site (SNS). Few members seem to be aware that their club's Facebook page offers the opportunity to meet some of their personal needs, and partly for this reason, seldom visit (Bonneau et al. 2009; Karahasanović et al. 2009; Preece et al. 2004).

For those who have visited their club's Facebook page, the small amount of time spent can be partly explained by the duplication of communication channels within clubs, the lack of recent content, the lack of contributors and the lack of strong positive views about the value of their club's Facebook page, expressed by many respondents<sup>54</sup>. Sensis (2014) found that Australians expressed 'lack of interest' and 'personal dislike' as their most frequent reason for not using SNSs, followed by 'not enough time', security and privacy concerns, and lack of computer skills. With less than 40% of respondents spending more than five minutes a week visiting their club's Facebook site, it was difficult to find more than fourteen interviewees who met the selection criteria, and therefore would be able to offer informed views about their club's Facebook page and their own usage. With so many of the more interactive social media skills poorly developed by respondents, it is less likely that social capital will develop online and hence recruitment and retention may not occur.

When given the opportunity to explain their low usage of Facebook, respondents justified their low usage on the basis that their site:

- was new<sup>55</sup> (mean duration 1.35 yrs as of July 2013) (10%)
- lacked sufficient content (10%)
- lacked key features they needed (5%)
- had insufficient contributors
- was duplicated by other internal communication channels
- served a different purpose from other non-club Facebook pages they visited

Perhaps the lack of interactivity of club Facebook pages, while not consciously observed by users, may have differentiated club pages from others they visited, and may have subconsciously contributed to the low usage. Vorvoreanu (2009, p. 67) has emphasised the dangers of posts from large organisations being labelled as spam, and therefore ignored, as many Facebook users have little desire to interact with large organisations, although they are willing to do so with smaller NPCOs that can communicate on a one-one basis.

While there are many reasons given by members for not using their club's Facebook page, researchers such as Wang et al. (2012), Chung et al. (2010), and Venkatesh et al. (2003), investigating the adoption of new technologies, have found that the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of Davis (1985), which adopts a social-psychological approach, is a useful theoretical basis for understanding technology adoption and user participation. They have identified many important drivers<sup>56</sup> for the adoption of social media by community organisations, which should form the basis of any effective social media strategy. Quinton and Fennemore (2013, p. 47) emphasise the importance of a strategic digital marketing plan, supported by an adequate budget allocation, and the recruitment of volunteers with the necessary social media skills, to both monitor and analyse this key communication channel.

However, the success of a Facebook page depends, not only on the engagement of new users, but also upon their retention, which is determined by the psychological investment they have made, such as knowledge sharing and social support behaviours. Sustainable social structures, such as SNSs, are dependent upon user benefits being greater than the cost of membership (Butler 2001, p. 347; McPherson 1983; Moreland & Levine 1982)

### **MPA, Club Age and Engagement**

Using the Facebook Graph API, the Most Popular Age (MPA) of those engaged with a club's Facebook page could be determined, and for the 34 clubs participating in the survey, this corresponded to the 35–

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<sup>54</sup> See survey question SQ9 and SQ10

<sup>55</sup> About 15% of respondents Facebook pages, were less than four months old.

44 years old age range, which is 20 years younger than the club mean age range of 54–65 years. As it is assumed that not all users are club members, the 20-year age difference supports the view that Facebook is a potential recruiting ground for younger members from the public, especially as these younger users are more likely to be frequent users of Facebook (Sensis 2014, p. 22).

To determine if the age of users on club Facebook pages had any impact upon the level of engagement observed, both the People Talking About This (PTAT) data (2013), and the updated ER (2015), were measured for each of the 36 clubs, which had publicly available MPA data. The age of users on a club's Facebook page, as represented by MPA, was shown to be unrelated (PTAT correlation test,  $p = 0.258$ ; ER correlation test,  $p = 0.183$ ), to the level of engagement measured. Younger people have been shown to be more active with social media than older people (Sensis 2014, p. 22), and yet this does not appear to be the case for users on RI Facebook sites. This lack of relationship can best be explained by realising that respondents, while representative of the age distribution of club members, were not representative of typical users, due to the large number with a role in establishing or maintaining their clubs' Facebook page, such as page administrators.

### **Members' Needs**

This section of the study investigated two questions:

- What are current members' needs? (RQ2)
- How can social media be used to meet current and potential members' needs? (RQ3)

Respondents indicated that their top three motivations for becoming club members were, to make new friends (social networking), to help others (community service), and to increase business or professional networks. The last has become less important for many, as 60% of members are now 60 years or older, and often retired. Without meeting these, and other needs, in a way in which the benefits exceed the costs, any organisation will cease to exist.

Despite the small number of members visiting, many of those surveyed felt that their club's Facebook page offered the opportunity to provide a sense of belonging and fellowship (SQ12), although for ID47 this was a potential opportunity '\*Potentially\* provides these needs, not actually.' They suggested improvements (SQ10, SQ11), such as 'more contributors' (ID50), 'If more of our club members were on Facebook themselves' (ID88) and 'If I could get others to start using it' (ID122), adding content more frequently 'more news' (ID52), optimising the use of existing interactive features, improving the

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<sup>56</sup> See Section 2.4 Generational Differences: Adoption of New Technologies

relevance of posted content to younger people 'more interesting' (ID61), and directly encouraging active participation 'Encouragement to use more often' (ID53), by using dedicated 'page welcomers'. Research has shown that Facebook can help develop bonding and bridging social capital, allow users to maintain and seek new friends, and meet the need for social engagement (Burke et al. 2009; Steinfield et al. 2008; Wilson et al. 2012, p. 209).

To ensure needs are met, Brace-Govan (2010) suggests that marketing strategies, which may seem on first appearances to be a poor fit for a non-profit organisation, will at least provide a way to identify levels of 'customer satisfaction', reveal 'customer demands' and allow organisations to 'be responsive to customer needs and wants'. Meeting members' needs is critical if members are to be retained and the organisation is to grow or at least maintain numbers.

### **Promoting the Uptake of Facebook**

While the proportion of RI clubs with Facebook pages has slowly increased from 36% in 2012 to 59% in 2015, content analysis of district newsletters, and annual conference programs, shows a lack of articles and links<sup>57</sup> promoting the clubs' Facebook sites and Facebook in general. This is consistent with the difficulty reported by some Facebook administrators in obtaining awareness-raising opportunities at weekly meetings, even though a large percentage<sup>58</sup> of members are unaware of their club's Facebook page, and an even greater percentage have never visited. This process is not helped by the high percentage of organisations that lack a social media strategy, and have a low budget allocation for social media purposes (Sensis 2014, pp. 8-9).

While 24% of respondents had never visited their club's Facebook site, it is highly likely that this percentage is much higher among club members, as survey respondents were more likely to be interested in their club's Facebook page, and to have visited in preparation. To this number, should be added the 9% of potential respondents, who were automatically disqualified, falsely believing that their club lacked a Facebook page, a prerequisite for taking part in the survey, and the others, who never bothered to click the survey link, and therefore were never registered. This low Facebook usage, is comparable with social media data collected by Sensis (2014), which reports that, while the 'digital divide,' for older Australians, is slowly diminishing with 96% of those over 65 years using the Internet, 68% have never used social media. Of those who do use social media, 97% of those between 55–64

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<sup>57</sup> Only 11 articles, excluding those related to this study, appeared in the 21 district newsletters published over a six month period in 2012-2013, and these contained only 16 uses of the term 'social media' and 26 of 'Facebook'.

<sup>58</sup> From personal observations made, while attending club meetings.

years<sup>59</sup> old are using Facebook, while for those 65 and over<sup>60</sup> this figure rises to 100%, the highest of all age groups, although the intensity of use of these age groups is the lowest (Sensis 2014, pp. 11, 18–19, 24).

Respondents report that privacy concerns and the presence of other contributors can determine whether they visit a Facebook site. This is consistent with the external pressures, such as media reports and peer group pressure, along with internal motivations, such as social engagement, and the development of social capital, which researchers report appear to be driving the increased use. They found that user participation by older adults could be increased by increasing the perceived usefulness of the site, making it more user friendly, and by increasing the potential benefits; recommendations of which site administrators seem unaware (Chung et al. 2010).

Despite the current lack of promotion, administrators have a wide range of ways to drive traffic to their Facebook pages, such as:

- links from their website
- mutual subscriptions to other clubs' social media channels
- the traditional email, with a signature link
- advertising on Facebook and other traditional media
- competitions, which require visiting the club's Facebook page
- a link and Facebook logo in all publicity

### **Signage and Engagement**

Several Facebook administrators reported in their interviews that a high level of site branding might be counter-productive for recruitment and community engagement. This is a significant belief as it encourages clubs to set up 'independent' Facebook pages in the hope that they may engage more fully with their communities. Taken further, RI Facebook pages would be unidentifiable as Rotary communication channels and instead assume the identity of their local communities. Several regional Facebook sites may have already begun this process, by changing their page titles to de-emphasise their Rotary origins, placing their community name first and Rotary last, unlike the majority, who have named their page 'Rotary Club of ....'.

This perception would also appear to be the reason for some clubs having separate Facebook pages, with little RI branding, for prestige community activities such as art shows, drama productions, and book

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<sup>59</sup> 55–64 is the average age of RI members

<sup>60</sup> Those 65 and over, make up 50% of membership

exchanges. While this appears to be counter-intuitive, my content analysis (See Section 4.5.5, Table 12: RI Club Signage data) shows that the prominence of RI signage<sup>61</sup> on the club Facebook pages appears to be negatively correlated with ER score<sup>62</sup>, with those clubs having the most prominent RI signage having the lowest ER score and those with the least, the highest ER. This correlation does not imply causation, and could be explained by other factors such as the proportion of non-RI members composing some of the committees, which organise these signature events.

### 5.2.3 Recruitment and Retention

#### Facebook's Role

A major goal of this study is to discover how members, including office-bearers, both new and long-term, feel that social media has influenced their recruitment and retention, and that of other members (RQ4 & RQ5). Only a small number of survey respondents (10–13%) believed that their club's Facebook page encouraged them to become members, although a much higher percentage (29–39%) believed their club's Facebook page encouraged them to remain a member, with 96% of respondents not likely to be leaving in the next year, and with 76% still likely to be members in another 5 years. When considering other members, there is little support (SQ13) for the proposition that Facebook has increased either recruitment (16%) or retention (10%), with disagreement at 33% and 40% respectively. The majority of respondents are neutral on this issue, which probably reflects the early stage of development of most club Facebook pages, their lack of familiarity with the page, the lack of recruitment records which indicate the mode<sup>63</sup> of recruitment, and the long membership of most respondents (90% greater than 1 year, with only 5% less than 2 years), which means that most joined before the advent of their club's Facebook page (average duration 1.35 years). Many think that social media is yet to have significant impact, with traditional methods, such as recommendations from current members and word-of-mouth, still overwhelmingly the most effective.

Their positive views, about the role of Facebook in retention, correlated with the view that their club's Facebook page could increase prestige and social status, a sense of belonging, fellowship, and feelings of being valued. They felt that being made to feel welcome, reading others posts and comments, developing new online friendships (social networking), and that learning about club activities, had the potential to influence both recruitment and retention, especially as Internet users would place more trust

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<sup>61</sup> RI signage was considered to be present if the Rotary 'wagon wheel' appeared in the banner on the club Facebook page.

<sup>62</sup> Engagement rate ER = PTAT/Likes. Recorded 19 January 2015, from publicly available data on club Facebook pages.

<sup>63</sup> Recruitment modes include face-to-face, member referral, website, Facebook page, community events, local newspapers and flyers.



in the word-of-mouth recommendations of other users rather than any other form of advertising (Nielson 2007).

While respondents were unconvinced that Facebook would be the saviour of community organisations by increasing recruitment and retention, research<sup>64</sup> is more unequivocal, showing that Facebook can develop social capital and transfer it to offline communities, while at the same time maintaining existing relationships both online and offline (Brandtzæg 2012, p. 471; Burke et al. 2009; Burke et al. 2011; Erickson 2011; Steinfield et al. 2008; Tomai et al. 2010). Those who socialise the most online accumulate the most social capital and at the same time are more likely to find opportunities to meet personal needs, which can be targeted by marketing campaigns, resulting in recruitment and retention (Brace-Govan 2010; Brandtzæg et al. 2011). Support for a Facebook relationship marketing campaign is provided by the social identity theory (SIT), which suggests that reputation, organisational identity, social identity and organisational image are all important factors in recruitment. This should encourage administrators to integrate corporate responsibility into posts, and to seek 'likes' and 'followers', as users are more likely to read posts from organisations they follow (Barsness et al. 2002, pp. 146–149; Boezeman 2009, p. 92; Haigh & Brubaker 2013, pp. 64–65; Quinton & Fennemore 2013, p. 47; Waters et al. 2009, p. 106). Berg et al. (2012, p. 854) found that people become members of clubs through their social networks, which are increased through frequent club activities and SNSs.

### **Importance of Traditional Methods**

With so few members believing that Facebook has a current role in recruitment and retention of members, one possible explanation, suggested by respondents, is the poor development of many club's Facebook pages. Of those who believed it had a positive effect, 25% thought that this would occur as a result of increased community awareness and by attracting a younger market. Traditional methods of recruitment, such as word-of-mouth and personal recommendation are still the most important for the members surveyed, especially as 75% of respondents joined their club more than four years ago (pre-2009), when none of their clubs had a Facebook page. Other explanations for lack of a recruitment and retention role include the recency of many club's Facebook pages (45% less than 12 months, average 1.35 years in 2013), the deterioration of some sites, and the large number of respondents (23%), who do not visit their club's Facebook page at all.

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<sup>64</sup> See Sections 1.4 Facebook: Its Suitability and Problems; 2.3.1 Social Capital, the Internet and Community Organisations for more detail.

The data provided by survey and interview questions (SQ22–SQ23, IQ25–IQ26) is somewhat reassuring in the short term, as it shows that 96% of members are not likely to be leaving in the next year, with 76% still likely to be members for another 5 years, which suggests that the objectives and activities of the Rotary clubs surveyed are still providing for the needs of current members. As clubs have an average age in the range of 50–64 years and 73% are currently at least 55 years old, many clubs will need to modify their service programs and activities to accommodate the large number of retired or about to retire members. In the next 5 years, a further 33% of members will either be approaching retirement or newly retired, and may no longer be able to participate in the more active of club activities.

## 5.3 Recommendations

### 5.3.1 Research Recommendations

This research is the first time that RI in South Australia has had access to a thorough analysis of how members use their club's Facebook pages. While Facebook Insights, is readily available to administrators, and provides an enormous amount of data about users and their interaction with their page, it does not allow administrators to easily separate the habits of members, who make up only a small proportion of users, from the rest. Nor does Insights provide detailed information about the categorisation of posts, nor about those engaged, and their reasons for being engaged.

This study's findings outline improvements that can be made to the content of club Facebook sites, many of which do not meet the needs of users, lack the high levels of interactivity needed to develop social capital, and fail to evolve a SOC. Clubs should consider giving high priority to the following practical recommendations, which will help develop and maintain sustainable online communities and increase recruitment and retention:

- a strategic digital marketing plan, which is supported by an adequate resource allocation, including an adequate number of volunteers with the necessary social media skills (Quinton & Fennemore 2013, p. 47)
- a social media strategy and protocols, so that development is no longer experimental
- an assessment of the need to establish independent Facebook pages, without prominent RI logos, for large annual events, such as art shows, and charity shops, which this study shows could result in higher ERs
- suitable Facebook education programs, at both club and district level, which raise member awareness, reduce fears, and increase skills, and at the same time support administrators, who have seldom received any social media training
- greater use of 'starters', 'influencers' and dedicated 'greeters', who by their example encourage other users to make posts, 'share', 'comment' and 'like'

- Facebook administrators who carefully curate the content of their pages to include:
  - annotated photos, catchy captions, and tagged photos
  - feature articles about prominent community identities, such as the local mayor, to whom others will link
  - community service projects, both local and international
  - youth projects, such as exchanges
  - links to other community organisations' Facebook pages
- establishment of a social media 'committee' to share the workload

### 5.3.2 Return on Investment

Facebook is an interactive communication channel, which differs from the traditional static website in ways that many clubs have either chosen to ignore or have been unaware, and as a consequence, have not maximised their return-on-investment. At this early stage in the development of most club Facebook pages, there is little evidence, that the return-on-investment (ROI) warrants the many hours that some administrators spend curating content for their Facebook pages. Most administrators admit that they perform the role for personal satisfaction, rather than ROI, and hope that once protocols are established and refined, that the role will be less demanding. Others report that they spend very little time, which may reflect a higher skill level, successful delegation to others, or even a lower quality<sup>65</sup> page content. There is anecdotal evidence that many of those clubs currently without a Facebook page may feel that the establishment of a SNS would be a poor investment of precious resources. However, it is likely that a club not having a social media communication channel may soon be regarded in the same light as one not having a website 10 years ago (Fennemore et al. 2011, p. 25).

This study has shown that the age<sup>66</sup> of those visiting club Facebook pages is almost 20 years less than the average club age (55–64 years). As the average age of club members participating in the survey did not differ significantly in age from club averages, this may indicate either that, there are a large number of younger community members engaging with club pages, or that a similar large number of younger club members, who did not participate in the survey, are active users. The former, have the potential to be recruited, while the latter, through their active involvement in their club Facebook page, have the potential to increase the engagement of this younger group, increasing ROI.

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<sup>65</sup> 'Quality' is ill-defined, but in this context might indicate a high ROI, as measured by a high engagement rate, and ultimately by increased recruitment and attendance at community events.

<sup>66</sup> Age as measured by Facebook's, publicly available, MPA, available on most club pages.

While ROI would ideally be measured by increased recruitment and attendance at events, the effectiveness of social media strategies are often poorly measured by non-profit organisations, even though there are a variety of methods, which could be tried: (Sensis 2014, p. 73).

- monitoring online responses
- asking new members how they discovered their club
- analysis of Facebook Insights statistics

With Facebook use becoming almost universal among older social media users, the ROI is likely to increase, making club Facebook pages an invaluable communication channel. Teenagers are leaving Facebook for other forms of social media, but older Australians are replacing them, so Facebook will remain the dominant social medium in the short term.

## 5.4 Conclusion

### 5.4.1 Study Limitations

There were several major aspects of this study, which limited the findings.

The first was the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample of RI members to complete the survey and interviews. The self-selected survey sample not only contained a high proportion of expert informants such as Facebook administrators and advocates, who constituted 47% of respondents (RQ1), but also contained a high proportion of users (24%) who had never visited their club's Facebook page before, and were therefore ill-prepared to contribute to the discussion. A stratified sample with responses from each age group and from members with different durations of membership would have been better, but this was not possible due to lack of access and administrative limitations.

Unlike telephone and postal surveys with established directories, which can be sampled randomly, Internet-based surveys depend upon invitations, usually in the form of an URL link, distributed internally by email or posted to SNS such as Facebook. Without direct access to the mailing list, it has not been possible to guarantee that all members have received an emailed invitation with an URL link, and at worst, each member may have only received a hard copy of their club's newsletter, with a brief description of the study and an invitation to participate, but there is no guarantee that they have even seen the article, let alone read it. While it was tempting to send repeat requests seeking publicity for the survey, etiquette and the need for future support from club officials discouraged me from doing so.

The original intention was that quota sampling would be the preferred method used to select interviewees from survey respondents, with age group, distance from Adelaide, intensity of Facebook use, gender, years of membership, club size and Facebook page interactivity (PTAT score) being the active filters. However, as the number of respondents available ( $n = 75$ ) was limited, this meant that, after secondary filtering, there were insufficient interviewees to provide full coverage for these criteria, so instead purposive sampling was used to select interviewees based upon their Facebook experience and age. The size of the final sample ( $n = 13$ ) meant that any valid statistical comparison between these filter groups was not possible. (See Section 3.3.2 Table 2: Interviewee Selection Criteria by Respondent ID).

The second limitation to my research was the low level of engagement generated by club Facebook pages, which reduced the development of social capital, SOC and social networking, considered necessary to meet users' needs (RQ2 & RQ3) and to encourage recruitment (RQ4, RQ5). The low interactivity, the long duration of most memberships, which often pre-dated Facebook, and the high percentage of members, who had not visited their club's Facebook page made it difficult to determine the influence of club Facebook pages upon recruitment and retention. This also meant that senior managers and office-bearers were basing their responses upon club sites, which often lacked the required level of engagement necessary to produce any impact on membership.

Thirdly, while the Facebook Insights summary data (both posts and pages) provided by club administrators included only publicly accessible information, it did include the names of contributors, and for this reason only summaries have been provided here. While it is possible to use pseudonyms in an attempt to protect the identity of contributors, direct quotes from online sources such as Facebook have not been used, as web search engines, using archival data, can use these to identify the contributor. Facebook, and other online sources, provide challenges to traditional principles of informed consent and privacy, partly because users are often not aware that their publicly available data can be downloaded and analysed, and partly because it is logistically difficult to contact SNS users to obtain consent (Flick 2014, p. 460).

Lastly, the survey software was not able to capture data showing how many of the 75 responses were completed on a mobile device. While not so important for this survey, where most of the respondents were older adults, not known for their high use of the mobile platform for web browsing, a lack of mobile coverage in other contexts has the potential to invalidate an otherwise random sample. Online surveys

have the disadvantage that they are only accessible by those with an Internet connection, but as Internet access is almost universal now, this was not a factor likely to affect the sampling frame.

#### **5.4.2 Generalisations**

This study investigates only one group of member-based NPCOs, South Australian RI clubs, although the conclusions would be expected to apply to other similar non-profit, member-based service clubs, such as Lions International and Kiwanis, and possibly to many recreational clubs. Indeed, informal comparisons showed that Lions International Facebook sites, PTAT and MPA scores were similar.

RI, which recruits members largely from business and the professions, has a relatively low female membership, and a hierarchical structure guided by a Charter, similar to many other community organisations. Its membership is composed largely of 'seniors', who, although typical of other community organisations, prevent this study's generalisation to younger adults and teenagers, as might be found in Rotaract and Interact<sup>67</sup>. Lack of direct access to club membership for sampling, an unknown frame population, and the need to rely upon self-selection, prevented a random sample of members, and therefore limited the validity of any assumptions about the wider RI membership. As many of the respondents and interviewees were Facebook administrators or advocates, their views are unlikely to be representative of the general membership, which is known to contain a high percentage of members, who do not use social media.

While research from the Internet and social media was reviewed, this study only applies to Facebook, which is used by the vast majority of community organisations, and used by almost 100% of older social media users.

#### **5.4.3 Speculations about the findings**

Reasons for the low levels of engagement, as revealed by the Facebook pages of one typical non-profit member-based service club (RI), and as confirmed by respondents and expert informants, have been described in previous chapters. While not all clubs have a low level of interaction, it may be that those clubs which strictly adhere to a traditional hierarchical governance structure, with its formal channels of communication, may be less likely to have a high level of participation. Social media places all contributors on the same level, allows posters to bypass normal communication channels, and permits

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<sup>67</sup> Interact is a school-based organisation, run under the auspices of RI, from which members usually graduate to Rotaract for the period 18-30 years and then to RI.

negative and controversial views to be aired for non-members to see, and for some office-bearers, this may be a position they are uncomfortable to adopt. This may explain why some clubs are not encouraging participation in Facebook, and are failing to offer opportunities to administrators, who wish to raise awareness. These clubs' Facebook pages may often be recognised by contributions from only one or two senior office-bearers, such as the Facebook administrator and perhaps the club President, indicating that others may feel unwelcome.

#### **5.4.4 Relevance to Contemporary Debates**

With the Internet being adopted by almost all Australians, and Facebook by almost all of those using social media, topics of casual conversation often include the impact of Facebook upon society. This study, which focuses mainly on older Australians, provides insights into topics such as loss of privacy, generational differences in use, and friendship development. It explores ageing and decline in one well-known Australian community organisation, and finds some support for aspects of Putnam's influential, and somewhat controversial study, which looked at the decline of community organisations in American society.

This study has raised questions about whether younger members are needed. Older members of ageing organisations sometimes debate whether their organisation really needs younger members, who often have different needs, and are often dissatisfied with current organisational structures and meeting formats. Some older members argue that, with a steady stream of 'empty nesters' and 'grey nomads'<sup>68</sup> wishing to join, the contribution from younger members, who often find it difficult to contribute their time due to family and professional commitments, may not justify the efforts to recruit them. They argue that changing the structure and timing of club meetings to meet the needs of a minority of younger members, when 60% of members are 55 years and over, does not 'make sense'. Many argue that, while their club's average age is certainly older than when they first joined, 30-50 years ago, it may not be increasing currently, as many leaving, who are 70-85 years old, are being replaced by 'younger' members, aged 55-64 years.

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<sup>68</sup> This group includes those who have usually retired, with their children having left home, and as a result have lots of free time on their hands.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of Main Outcomes

This study provides confirmation<sup>69</sup> of the commonly held perception that community organisations are in decline. However, statistics from clubs show that this decline is not universal, and is reversible, sometimes in association with effective use of social media.

To reach this conclusion, a large number of clubs' Facebook pages were analysed, providing valuable insights into how Rotary International (RI) in South Australia currently uses Facebook to engage their local community and members. This data, supported by a survey and interviews with club members, reveals that low levels of interactivity are common, and that few members visit club Facebook sites, although there is evidence that this is improving. The ages of those visiting club Facebook sites were found to be much younger than average club ages, and this offers the potential to recruit younger members, by using appropriate social media strategies.

Analysis of club newsletters, conference programs, and reports from administrators, shows that Facebook has low visibility among RI members, which may be preventing higher levels of engagement. Respondents and expert informants, supported by recent research, were positive about the opportunity that Facebook offered to develop a sense of belonging and fellowship.

With only a few able to give examples of recruitment via their club's Facebook page, there is little support for the proposition that Facebook has increased either recruitment or retention, although many indicated that the social networking features of Facebook had the potential to do so as sites matured.

### 6.2 Resolution of Aims

This study's principal research question (PRQ)<sup>70</sup>, seeks to explore how the use of social media by community organisations might influence recruitment and retention. While there is considerable optimism that engagement with the local community on Facebook has the potential to improve both, few are able to provide evidence of this happening.

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<sup>69</sup> Using data collected from Rotary International clubs in South Australia.

<sup>70</sup> A list of the research questions can be found in Appendix 10: Research Questions or Section 3.1.1



A key component of the study (RQ1) was to investigate how Facebook is used to interact with current and potential members. This was explored using content analysis of club Facebook pages, a survey of members, and interviews with expert informants, with the conclusion that there was still much to be done in many clubs before achieving a high level of engagement. Many Facebook pages are still in their infancy, with sites in an experimental mode. However, as more posts occur, and more users visit sites, interaction is predicted to increase.

Researchers have shown that these high levels of engagement, and site sustainability, will only occur if users' needs are met during their visits to their club's Facebook page. Respondents and expert informants appear to have limited knowledge of their personal needs (RQ2), confusing these with often publicly stated reasons<sup>71</sup> for joining RI, although some mentioned that an interactive Facebook page offers opportunities to provide a sense of belonging and fellowship.

Research shows that Facebook can help develop bridging social capital, allow users to maintain and seek new friendships, and meet the need for social engagement (Brandtzæg 2012; Burke et al. 2011; Lam & Riedl 2012). Respondents suggested that this was most likely to occur if interactivity was increased from the current low levels, by encouraging members to visit using an awareness-raising program, by adding content more regularly, and having official 'greeters' and 'influencers' model appropriate behaviour (RQ3). Many appear to be unaware of important differences between a static website and an interactive Facebook page, making limited use of the user statistics provided by Facebook Insights, which could help them design a better Facebook page in response to this feedback.

The final two research questions (RQ4 & RQ5) explored senior managers' and office-bearers' views about the role of social media in the recruitment and retention of members. This group of expert informants revealed in their interview answers, that there is little evidence for the proposition that Facebook had increased either their own, or others', recruitment or retention, although several were able to cite instances of this occurring. Most adopted a neutral stance on the issue, on the basis that it was too early in the development of their web page to have conclusive evidence. They indicated that a lack of recruitment records which indicate the mode<sup>72</sup> of recruitment, and the long membership of most club members, including themselves, who joined before the advent of their club's Facebook page, made definitive answers difficult.

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<sup>71</sup> Social networking, working with youth, community and international service, and creating business or professional networks.

<sup>72</sup> Face-to-face, member referral, website, Facebook page, community events, local newspapers and flyers.

## 6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

### 6.3.1 Gaps in Research

Background research for this study reveals that most social media research evolved from Internet studies beginning in the mid-eighties and mid-nineties. In the last few years, the number of Facebook articles published has increased exponentially, and although the focus initially was upon young adults in a university or 'college' environment, older adults have featured recently. Research with older adults has been conducted in the context of technology acceptance, with generational differences and the 'digital divide' being a major focus, but this research is rapidly becoming outdated, as older Australians become the fastest growing Facebook age group. Early research covered the role of the Internet in the development of social capital, in the development of a sense of community (SOC), and whether the Internet, and more recently social media, influenced face-to-face relationships. Lately, there has been a focus upon the role of social media in relationship marketing, and how business might benefit by engaging with the public.

There has been little or no attempt to investigate the role of social media in the recruitment of members to non-profit community organisations (NPCO), linking to earlier research, which investigated the development of social capital and SOC. There has been considerable research investigating the recruitment of donors and volunteers to large NPCOs, but these often lack the active member-based structure of most service clubs, and therefore the research is of limited value.

Those contemplating the use of their Facebook page to recruit new members would find it invaluable to know how to best facilitate this, and whether their efforts will be productive.

- Does a high level of user engagement result in greater recruitment?
- Which features of an organisation's Facebook page encourage greater engagement?
- Are the new members recruited through a club's Facebook page, younger than other recruits?
- Does a club's Facebook page provide adequate return-on-investment (ROI)?

Recruitment has traditionally been by word-of-mouth, with few other options, and for this reason there has been little attempt to document the source of recruits. While there have been some documented instances of recruitment via Facebook pages, these have been insufficient to complete any analysis, although with the number of club Facebook pages and user engagement increasing, this is likely to

change. Knowing the source of all recruits would make it possible to determine if there was a correlation between recruitment levels and Facebook engagement rates (ERs).

Detailed content analysis of club Facebook pages, using Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) and network analysis software, can be initiated by using Microsoft's Excel plug-in Power Query to directly import publicly available Facebook Insights data, which would allow comparison of the Facebook pages having both high and low ER. This would provide administrators with guidelines to assist them to increase ROI and recruitment.

With detailed records of club recruits' ages, it would be possible to investigate whether those originating from Facebook are younger. This would provide an incentive for those wanting a younger age profile in their organisation to continue with a Facebook recruiting campaign.

While many Facebook administrators admit that they are not concerned by the current low ROI, this may not be the case in the future, as clubs commit more resources and expect higher returns. It would be useful to quantify the level and type of resources expended, and to compare this with the number of recruits, to see if there is any correlation.

### **6.3.2 Practical Applications**

One of the more significant findings of the study was that the level of branding, as indicated by the presence and size of the RI wagon wheel logo on RI Facebook pages, was negatively correlated with the ER of the page.

Many clubs have established independent Facebook pages for major community events and activities, which they directly or indirectly sponsor, perhaps intuitively realising that the logo, and other RI signage, could adversely affect community engagement with the site. Several informants indicated that they felt recruitment was more likely to occur if the marketing of RI was given a low profile, and the event itself, such as an art show, drama production or bookshop, was given greater prominence on the site. This view was also supported by those who felt RI's involvement in their local community, and its facilitation of local events, was more important than any advantage that RI might gain by having its logo prominently displayed on advertising flyers.

### 6.3.3 Implications for the Field

#### Confirmed Findings:

- Non-profits neglect relationship building and are poor at engaging stakeholders (Waters et al. 2009)
- While Internet use is high, and social media use is lower among seniors, Facebook is popular and club usage is increasing (Sensis 2014, p. 22)
- Some South Australian service clubs are in decline (Putnam 2000; Rotary International 2014)
- Facebook can provide a sense of belonging and fellowship (Burke et al. 2009; Steinfield et al. 2008; Wilson et al. 2012, p. 209)

#### New Findings:

- Branding of organisational Facebook pages, with logos, may be counter-productive, resulting in lower levels of engagement.
- Those using club Facebook pages are significantly younger, as shown by Most Popular Age (MPA), than the mean club age range.

#### Unexpected Findings:

- The MPA of club Facebook page users, is not correlated with ER nor The People Talking About This (PTAT) scores, both measures of the level of interactivity. Previous research (Sensis 2014, p. 22) has shown that younger age groups are likely to be more active.
- RI survey respondents (average age 58) were more likely to interact with their club's Facebook page, and to contribute content, than the over 55 year segment of the Australian population, as surveyed by Forrester Research (2009).

### 6.3.4 Study Improvements

A more representative survey sample, with a greater proportion of younger members, and fewer highly committed Facebook users, would have increased the validity of the data. The self-selected sample, obtained indirectly through traditional club communication channels, had a very high proportion of Facebook administrators, advocates and club officials. If repeated, this study would be more valuable if a broader sample could be obtained, perhaps by encouraging club presidents to be advocates for the study, and then inviting members by personalised emails, with a survey link and the president's endorsement included. Greater opportunities to invite groups missing from the self-selected sample would have been helpful. While I sent several reminders to club officials, posted to club Facebook pages, when I received no response, and presented at meetings to follow-up non-participating clubs,

these were short, low-key presentations, simply to explain the purpose of the survey, and reissue invitations. I was conscious that my study had a low priority in the broad agenda of club presidents and members, and did not want to breach traditional communication protocols. As no data was available to explain a low participation, it could have been worthwhile to follow up those who did not participate, although many would no doubt find this intrusive, and the negative feedback could be counter-productive.

Of major concern to all involved in the study was the low member and community ERs being experienced by most club Facebook pages. This had a major impact upon the study, as it is well known that high levels of interactivity are needed to generate social capital, a SOC, and to meet the needs of users, which are prerequisites for member recruitment. As the survey and interviews were commenced in 2013, when most club Facebook pages had only been recently established (mean, 1.35 years), many respondents and informants indicated that it was too soon to be expecting a ROI, but that they anticipated that this would improve with time. If the study was repeated today, it is likely that a different result would be obtained, partly because of improved social media strategies, partly because of improved ERs (already observed in early 2015), and partly because of the rapid uptake of Facebook by older Australians, who make up the major component of most community organisations.

### **6.3.5 Future Research**

Analysis of the posts from the surveys, interviews and Facebook pages has suggested several promising questions for future research:

World War II was followed by a steep increase in both birth and immigration rates for Australia, resulting in the demographic bulge known as the 'baby boomers', born from 1946 to 1964. This group now constitutes the largest proportion of RI's membership, with less than 10% (2013) coming from younger cohorts.

Will this continue? Are those community organisations that are not currently diminishing in size being sustained by the recruitment and retention of 'baby boomers', and can we predict their decline in the next few years as the 'baby boomer' cohort passes through? (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013).

Facebook and YouTube are the most popular social media sites in Australia, and both have the potential to be highly interactive, and in doing so create the social capital needed to recruit and retain members.

Which types of social media are most effective in building the social capital needed to increase recruitment and retention, especially by those who find the formality and structure of club hierarchies unattractive?

Traditionally, many organisations such as RI have had feeder youth groups, such as Interact and Rotaract, which are often the source of new members. However, when these younger members join clubs dominated by the 'baby boomers' who are several generations older, they often feel the generation gap is too great and are not retained. Given that my research indicates that many clubs are decreasing substantially in size, potentially ageing, and are currently dominated by senior members, a valuable future research question would be:

With the changing characteristics of the generations from 'silent generation' to 'baby boomers' and 'millennials', do organisational structures and governance need to change to remain relevant, perhaps by providing 'clubs-within-clubs' with a youth focus?

### **6.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that social media, in particular Facebook, plays a significant role in the health of society, as illustrated by Rotary International clubs within South Australia. The Internet is now part of the lives of most members, and of those who use social media, Facebook features prominently, providing social connections with both club members and the local community. Interaction with stakeholders is critical to the sustainability of non-profit community organisations and Facebook provides this, especially for younger people in the community, who potentially may become new club members as a result of their Facebook engagement.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Literature Review Statistics

Major Concepts	Searched Keywords	Articles
<b>Social Media</b>	social network, SNS, Facebook, Web 2.0, Internet, social media, ICT, CMC, computer-mediated, new media, social web, online	<b>706</b>
<b>Members' Needs</b>	uses and gratifications (UGT), motivat(*), needs, satisfaction, volunteer(*), identity, well-being, member(ship), influenc(*), benefit(*), friend(*), sense of belonging, trust(*)	<b>545</b>
<b>Participation</b>	E-participation, engage(*), interact(*), collaborat(*), face-to-face, participat(*), lurk(*), user-generated	<b>404</b>
<b>Social capital</b>	trust, reciprocity, bonding, bridging, link(*), social relationship, social ties, social capital	<b>391</b>
<b>Community Organisations</b>	association(*), branch(*) Rotary, voluntary, non(*), community organi(*), not-for-profit, club, NGO, Third sector, NOT voluntary sport, Rotary	<b>367</b>
<b>Decline of Community Organisations</b>	attrition, recruitment, retention, ageing, aging, population demographics, exit surveys, member(*), signalling theory, continu(*), change management, decli(*), amalgamat(*), closure	<b>325</b>
<b>Marketing</b>	brand(*), market(*), eWOM, join(*), relationship marketing, social media marketing, word-of-mouth, recruit(*), market segment(*)	<b>252</b>
<b>Generational Differences</b>	digital divide, older, generation(*), senior(*), youth, ageing, aging, succession, older, young(*), baby boomer, adults, millennial(*), silent generation, generation X, generation Y	<b>199</b>
<b>Sense of Virtual Community</b>	sense of community, virtual communit(*), sense of virtual community, SOVC, SOC, online communit(*)	<b>183</b>
<b>Philosophers and Pioneers</b>	Putnam, Coleman, Bourdieu, de Tocqueville, Fukuyama, Portes, Loury, Kent and Taylor, Li and Bernoff, Rheingold, Davis, Bandura and McClelland, Krippendorf, Charmaz, Glaser, Corbin and Strauss, Venkatesh, McMillan and Chavis, Grunig	<b>117</b>
<b>Identity</b>	image, reputation, identity, organisational (), self concept, identification, eWOM, signalling, institutional theory, POI	<b>68</b>
<b>Recruitment and Retention</b>	recruit(*), retention, resign(*), attrition, exit survey or interview, retain	<b>86</b>
<b>Technology Adoption</b>	technology acceptance, TAM, socio-technical theory, perceived usefulness, PEOU, PU, perceived ease of use, UTAUT, behavioural intention, self-efficacy, change management	<b>45</b>
<b>Total Unique</b>	<b>As of 21 October 2014</b>	<b>1042/3688</b>

Literature Review Concept Matrix, ranked by number of articles reviewed.

ageing associations Australia Australian blogs **bonding social capital** Bourdieu branding **bridging social capital** case study change management civic engagement civil society coding **Coleman collaboration** commitment **communication** **community** community organisation **computer-mediated communication** **content analysis** de Tocqueville decline digital divide email **engagement** face-to-face interaction **Facebook** generational differences governance grounded theory ICT identity interaction **internet** interview literature review marketing measurement **membership methodology** millennials mixed methods motivation motivation for joining nodeXL **non-profit non-profit organisation** **nvivo** **older adults** online **online community** organisation organisational identity **participation** personality **privacy public relations Putnam** qualitative analysis qualitative research reciprocity **recruitment** relationship research **retention** review Rheingold **Rotary International** seniors sense of community (soc) sense of virtual community sociability **social capital** social identity social interaction **social media** social network social network analysis (sna) **social network site (SNS)** social networking **social networking site** **social networks** Social sciences sport statistics survey survey methodology surveys technology acceptance model (TAM) **trust** twitter uses and gratifications **virtual community** voluntary associations **volunteering** **web 2.0** word-of-mouth young adults

Tag cloud for reference library from Bookends (where relative size reflects frequency)

## Appendix 2: Survey Questions

### Demographics

Questions with a \* require an answer.

#### 1) Please select one of the age ranges below.\*

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65+

#### 2) Personal and Club Information.

My Rotary International or Rotaract Club's Name\*: \_\_\_\_\_

#### My Club has a Facebook page\*

- Yes    No

#### Years of membership in this Club\*

- Not a current member
- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 4 years
- Greater than 4 years

Title\* \_\_\_\_\_

First Name\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name\*: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gender\*

- Male    Female

Name the town or suburb where Club meetings are held\*: \_\_\_\_\_

State\* \_\_\_\_\_   Rotary District\* \_\_\_\_\_

#### Distance from Adelaide of your Club venue\*

- Up to 150 km
- More than 150 km

Your Email Address\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Mobile or Home Phone\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Home Postcode\*: \_\_\_\_\_



You may select more than one role.

**3) For each Club role you currently fulfil or have fulfilled, for how long have you done so?**

	Less than 1 year	1 - 4 years	Greater than 4 years
Office-bearer	( )	( )	( )
Director or Chair of a Committee	( )	( )	( )
Employee	( )	( )	( )
Member Only	( )	( )	( )

**Facebook Usage**

**4) Did you or do you have a Club Facebook organisational role?**

	Yes	No
Champion or Advocate	( )	( )
Set up or Build	( )	( )
Manage or Administer or Moderate	( )	( )

Questions with a red \* require an answer.

**5) How often do you visit your Club's Facebook page?\***

- ( ) More than 7 times per week
- ( ) Between 1 and 7 times per week
- ( ) Between 1 and 3 times per month
- ( ) Between 1 and 11 times per year
- ( ) Never

**6) On average, what is the total time you spend visiting your Club's Facebook page each week?\***

- ( ) Less than 5 minutes
- ( ) Between 5 minutes and less than 1 hour
- ( ) Between 1 hour and less than 5 hours
- ( ) More than 5 hours

An answer for each line would be appreciated.

**7) Thinking back over your visits to your Club's Facebook site, how often have you done each of the following?**

	More than 7 times per week	Between 1 and 7 times per week	Between 1 and 3 times per month	Between 1 and 11 times per year	Never
Searched for specific information	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Posted a photo, video, comment or event	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Sent a message to a Club friend	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Watched a video or looked at photos	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Read posts or comments	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Liked, Tagged, Mentioned or Shared a post	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Answered someone's question or RSVP'd	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

8) How does your Club Facebook activity level compare to other Facebook pages you visit frequently?

	Less Often	About the same	More often	Not applicable
Search for specific information	( )	( )	( )	( )
Post a photo, video, comment or event	( )	( )	( )	( )
Send a message to a Club friend	( )	( )	( )	( )
Watch a video or look at photos	( )	( )	( )	( )
Read posts or comments	( )	( )	( )	( )
Like, Tag, Mention or Share a post	( )	( )	( )	( )
Answer someone's question or RSVP	( )	( )	( )	( )

*This question relates to Q8.*

9) If your Club Facebook usage is different from others you visit, please explain why.

10) My Club's Facebook page could be improved by having

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
More news, photos and videos	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
More comments, likes, mentions and tags	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
More encouragement to participate	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Greater relevance to younger members	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

11) Which one thing would encourage you to use your Club's Facebook page more often?

*Your answers to all questions will be kept confidential and will not be identifiable.*

12) Which of your personal needs does your Club's Facebook page help to provide, either directly or indirectly?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Feeling valued	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Opportunities for community service	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Opportunities to influence others	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Opportunities for self-improvement and challenge	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Increased prestige and social status	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Sense of belonging and fellowship	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

*Questions with a red \* require an answer.*

13) I think my Club's Facebook page has increased the recruitment or retention of Club members?\*

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Recruitment of new members	( )	( )	( )
Retention of current members	( )	( )	( )

*This question depends on your answer to Q13.*

**14) If it has, how do you think your Club's Facebook page has influenced member recruitment?**

\_\_\_\_\_

*This question depends on your answer to Q13.*

**15) If it has, how do you think your Club's Facebook page has influenced member retention?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**16) Did any of the following aspects of your Club's Facebook page encourage you to become a member?**

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neutral	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
Being made to feel welcome	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Reading posts and comments	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Developing new online friendships	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Learning about your Club's activities	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Being made to feel welcome	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Reading posts and comments	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Developing new friendships	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Learning about the Club's activities	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

**17) Do any of the following aspects of your Club's Facebook page encourage you to remain a member?**

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neutral	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
Being made to feel welcome	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Reading posts and comments	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Developing new friendships	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Learning about the Club's activities	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

**18) Overall, how satisfied are you with the**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Not Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Appearance and features offered by your Club's Facebook page?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Personal benefits you gain from your Club's Facebook page?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Level of Facebook participation by Club members?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Return on investment (ROI) your Club gains from its Facebook page?	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

## Recruitment

*Your answers to all questions will be kept confidential and will not be identifiable.*

**19) Which of the following motivated you to become a club member?**

*You may select more than one.*

- To increase my business or professional network
- For career or professional development
- To make new friends (social networking)
- To help others (community service)
- To experience leadership opportunities
- To learn new things
- To work with international partners
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**20) Which of the following encouraged you to join your current Rotary International or Rotaract Club?**

*You may select more than one*

- Your Club's Facebook page
- Your Club's Web site
- A Rotary membership recruitment campaign
- Word-of-mouth
- A Rotary community service event
- Referral by a current member
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**21) Have you personally encouraged a potential member to join your Rotary or Rotaract Club?**

- Yes  No

**Retention**

*Your answers to all questions will be kept confidential and will not be identifiable.*

**22) For how much longer are you likely to remain an active member of your Club?**

- Less than 1 month
- Between 1 and 6 months
- Between 7 months and 1 year
- More than 1 year and less than 5 years
- More than 5 years

**23) Please rate how important each of the following membership benefits will be in deciding whether you will renew your Club membership:**

*Click the appropriate star to show your rating.*

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	Rating (1= least important 5= most important)
Business networking	
Professional and career advancement	
New friendships (Social networking)	
Helping others (Community service)	
Leadership opportunities	
Learning new things	
Using your Club's Facebook page	
Working with international partners	

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### Appendix 3: Interviewee Selection Criteria

To facilitate the selection process for the interviewees, a respondent summary sheet was exported from SurveyGizmo, which included the question attribute ranges, for relevant questions.

Using this data, potential selection criteria were devised and tested, including:

- **Diversity:** some criteria have been more flexibly applied than others e.g. PTAT
- **Sample Size:** due to the relatively small sample size ( $n = 13$ ) an even distribution across variables was not possible
- **Club's FB PTAT<sup>73</sup> Ranking:** should include both high ( $\geq 3$ ) and low ( $< 3$ ) scores, although the cut-off is subjective
- **Position on Social Technographics Ladder<sup>74</sup> of respondent (Q5–7):** spread required (Q5–7, maybe only Q7)
- **Distance from Adelaide:** ( $< 150$  km) for logistical reasons
- **Time Since FB Establishment:** want clubs with both new ( $\leq 6$  mos) and old ( $> 6$  mos) FB pages
- **FB Role in Club:** spread required of administrators, advocates, users (Q3, Q4)
- **Age of Respondent:** sampling from each age range wanted (Q1)
  - GenSG 68–88 yrs The Silent Generation (1925–1945)
  - GenBB 49–67 yrs The Baby Boomers (1946–1964)
  - GenX 31–49 yrs Generation X, (1964–1982)
  - GenY 18–31 yrs Generation Y, = Millennials (? 1982–1995)
- **Years of Membership:** need a spread 1–4,  $> 4$  yrs (Q2)
- **Time Spent Answering:** longer the better (Hidden data)
- **Recruitment or Retention:** influence of club's FB page (Q16, Q17, Q23)
- **Intensity of Facebook Use:** Low (0–249)  $n = 25$ , Medium (250–999)  $n = 18$  or High ( $> 1000$ )  $n = 15$ . Aggregate of (Q5, Q6, Q7)

The final selection criteria were:

- Within 150 km from Adelaide
- Well developed club Facebook page (content analysis, PTAT score  $\geq 3$ )
- Uses club's Facebook page for at least 5 mins/wk (Scale  $< 5$ min = 3, 5min–1hr = 32, 1–5hrs = 180,  $> 5$ hrs = 300)
- Spread of years of membership (Scale  $< 1$ yr = 1, 1–4 yrs = 2,  $> 4$  yrs = 3)
- Has Facebook establishment or maintenance role Yes and No (Scale:0–3)
- Spread of younger and older members (Scale  $< 18$  = 1, 18–24 yrs = 2, 25–34 yrs = 3, 35–44 yrs = 4, 45–64 yrs = 6,  $\geq 65$  yrs = 7)

These were then used to select the interviewees, whose criteria are summarised below.

<sup>73</sup> PTAT=People Talking About This. This is a measure of Facebook engagement by the audience.

<sup>74</sup> Bernoff and Li (2011, p. 43)

## Community Organisations, Social Media, and Membership

Criterion for Selection	ID 2	ID 13	ID 16	ID 43	ID 50	ID 73	ID 77	ID 88	ID 90	ID 109	ID 115	ID 122	ID 127	Total of IDs
≤150km	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
PTAT ≥ 3	5	14	5	14	7	6	9	2	27	7	4	16	2	13
FB Use ≥ 5mins/wk	300	3	32	32	180	32	180	180	3	32	32	32	180	13
Service 1–4 Yrs							2					2	1	3
Service > 4 Yrs	3	3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	3			10
Age: < 55 yrs (≅X&Y)											5		2	2
Age: 55–64 yrs (≅BB)		6		6	6	6	6			6		6		7
Age: ≥ 65 yrs (≅SG)	7		7					7	7					4
FB Role	3	3	2	0	3	1	3	1		2	3	3	3	13
Invitation sent	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	13

Interviewee Selection Criteria by Respondent ID

## Appendix 4: Survey Variables

SurveyGizmo allows attributes (IBM SPSS Statistics compatible scores) to be assigned to variables and then analysed using in-built statistical software. As an example, the frequency of visits to a club's Facebook page can be assigned the following attributes and then respondents compared.

SQ7 How often do you visit your club's Facebook page

Attribute	Range
400	More than 7 times per week
208	Between 1 and 7 times per week
24	Between 1 and 3 times per month
6	Between 1 and 11 times per year
0	Never

Independent or causal variables of potential significance included:

SQ1	Age Range
SQ2	Personal Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Years membership</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Meeting Venue Location and Distance from Adelaide</li> </ul>
SQ3	Role in club (OE)
SQ4	Club Facebook organisational role (OE)
SQ5	Frequency of visits to club's Facebook page
SQ6	Time spent per week
SQ7*	Actions when on page (OE)
SQ12*	Personal Needs met (OE)
SQ13	Role in recruitment and retention
SQ18*	Satisfaction with page
SQ20	Method of recruitment (OE)

Dependent variables of potential significance included:

SQ9*	Explanation for differences between SQ7 & SQ8 (OE)
SQ10	Suggested improvements to page (OE)
SQ11	Most important improvement (OE)
SQ14	Influence on recruitment (OE)
SQ15	Influence on retention (OE)
SQ16	Role in own recruitment (OE)
SQ17	Role in own retention (OE)
SQ19*	Motivation for joining (OE)
SQ22	Intended duration of membership
SQ23	Importance of membership benefits for retention (OE)

Legend:

OE = open-ended question      \* = explored further in interviews

## Appendix 5: Interview Technology

The interview audio was recorded in duplicate, firstly by using the in-built iPad microphone and the iOS application *Pearnote*, which enabled the interview schedule, imported as a pdf, to be simultaneously viewed by the interviewer, and automatically synchronised with the audio for replay. This application also allowed notes to be taken during the interview, which could be then be used as an index, along with the interview schedule, to locate the relevant section of the audio and to explore the context. As suggested by other researchers, the first few minutes after the formal interview were often invaluable, as they sometimes provided spontaneous information which the interviewee had not felt was relevant during the interview, but which provided context for their answers, and for this reason was recorded.

Secondly, a high quality external voice recording microphone, *iRigCast* (IK Multimedia), was added to the earphone socket of an iPhone, itself mounted on a stand, and the iOS application *iRig Recorder* (IK Multimedia) used to record the interview in high quality .wav and in the more common .m4a format. This application enabled the speech recorded to be optimised for transcription, the background noise reduced, the cataloguing of audio files by interviewee/date/time, and the export of high quality audio for transcription.

To provide a basic level of structure, the semi-structured questions, along with the prompts for additional information in the open-ended questions, were pre-loaded on to the interviewer's computer and integrated with the audio recording software to facilitate transcription and coding. Gideon and Moskos (2012, p. 113) suggest that while audio recording can appear more formal than using a pencil and paper, and perhaps inhibit responses, it does permit the interviewer to listen more carefully and to maintain the eye contact needed to develop rapport. As there is always a risk of equipment failure, the audio recording was duplicated, and a quiet interview room was sought to improve the audio quality. If it became obvious that the audio recording was inhibiting the interviewee's response, a hard copy of the interview schedule was available, so a paper and pencil interview could have been conducted, but this was not needed.

Transcription was accomplished by importing high quality audio files from the interviews into the online application *Transcribe* (<https://transcribe.wreally.com/>), which is an online audio player with a split screen that has a text editor, tightly integrated with the audio. Transcribed text was saved locally, rather than online, to increase the security of data. *Transcribe Pro* was chosen because of its ability to control the audio with a variety of single key presses, insert time codes, upload in a variety of audio formats,



use templates for frequently used phrases, automatically auto-save and auto-resume, and export in the .doc format. Both the response and the question were included in the transcript to provide the researcher with first-hand context, with the question being highlighted in bold. The transcription process converted the 13 hour-long interviews, into 45,737 words, approximately equivalent to 182 pages of double-spaced A4 text, which was then analysed using NVivo.

## Appendix 6: Interview Schedule

Each question had a series of supplementary questions (shown in italics below), which were asked to refocus interviewees if needed, encourage more detailed answers, and to clarify unfamiliar terminology or misunderstandings.

### Demographics

The first 3 questions explore any changes to your club's membership over the last 5 years.

1. How has your Club's **size** changed over the last 5 years?

*Why do you think this is so? Have there been any recent changes to trends? What is the likely explanation?*

2. How has your Club's **age profile** changed over the last 5 years?

*Why do you think this is so? Have there been any recent changes to trends? What is the likely explanation?*

3. What changes have you noticed since your club's Facebook page (FB) was established?

*In age profile or size? Remind of the establishment date if needed. Why do you think this is so?*

### Member's Needs

Continued membership of an organisation usually depends upon some of the member's deep-seated needs being met. The next question looks at your personal needs.

4. Which of your **personal needs** are met by your membership of Rotary?

*Self-improvement, Influence, Challenge, Prestige, Belonging, Feeling valued, Fellowship? Are your personal needs changing as you become older? If so, how?*

### Social Capital

The next 7 questions relate to the building of social capital, which is often described as the "glue" which holds an organisation together, by interacting with your club's Facebook page.

5. Has your club's FB page allowed you to develop new, or strengthen old friendships?

*Either online or face-to-face, with individuals or groups? Describe these?*

6. Has your use of your club's FB page allowed you to increase your trust in fellow Rotarians?

*Can you give some examples?*

7. Has your use of your club's FB page allowed you to better develop a sense of belonging to your Rotary club?

*Explain*

8. Has your club's FB page allowed you to influence other Rotarians, and in turn, be influenced by them?

*Can you give some examples?*

9. Do you get positive satisfaction from the feedback (comments, shares and likes) that others make about your FB posts?  
*Explain*
10. Does your membership of your club's FB community ever result in any shared emotional feelings as a result of interactions with others?  
*Can you give some examples?*
11. Overall, do you think that your club's FB page has increased the strength of your connections with individuals and groups?  
*Explain*

## Facebook Usage

The next 4 questions only need to be answered if you are one of your club's Facebook administrator(s).

12. ADMINISTRATORS ONLY Describe the **role** you have had in either the establishment or administration of your club's FB page (SQ4)  
*Variables: champion, advocate, builder, manager, administrator, or moderator*
13. ADMINISTRATORS ONLY What experiences have you had in your organisational role with your Club's Facebook page that could provide important lessons for other Clubs considering FB pages?  
*Likes: to whom, with whom? Resistance, generational differences, lack of engagement*
14. ADMINISTRATORS ONLY Explain whether your Club gets value (ROI) from its FB page, considering the time spent maintaining it? (SQ18)  
*On this basis, would you recommend a FB page to other clubs? How should it be administered to maximise value?*
15. Do you notice any differences in the way different age groups use your Club's FB page?  
*Describe these. MPA?*
16. On your visits to your Club's FB page you may choose to participate in only some of the possible activities. Can you explain why you choose these and not others? (SQ7)  
*Explain how these reflect and help meet your needs. Do you consciously try to engage with others? Is there a club policy to engage new members?*
17. Could your Club's FB page be improved, and if so how? (SQ10)  
*Do you think these are achievable? How would you go about making these changes? Are there lessons to be learnt from it? Is your Facebook page sufficiently different from you website, to avoid duplication? Remind of answers given in survey, if necessary*
18. What do you think could be preventing some current and potential Rotarians from contributing to your Facebook page?  
*Variables: age of members, privacy fears, lack of skills, lack of time, poor Internet connection, duplication of channels, lack of personal rewards from participating, just seen as another marketing method*

## Recruitment

The next 4 questions focus upon the possible role of Facebook in recruitment of new members.

19. How do you think your Club's FB page has influenced member **recruitment**?

*On a personal basis, did you visit your Club's FB page, if available, before joining, and if so, did it help you decide, based on your reasons for joining? Which of these might apply? Re-establish friendships, increased community awareness, give RI a younger face, welcome potential members*

20. Is having a high quality FB page an important part of Rotary's **image and identity**?

*Should all Rotary clubs have one? What are the consequences for image of not having a FB page?)*

21. Do you think having a club FB page is a valuable asset for recruiting and retaining **younger** prospects and members? (SQ13)

*Why do you think so? Can you think of any new members who may have joined as a result of viewing your club's FB page?*

22. Have there been **negative** aspects associated with establishing a club FB page?

*Explain. Resistance from members? Complaints?*

## Retention

The next 2 questions focus on the possible role of Facebook in retention of members.

23. How do you think your Club's FB page has influenced member **retention**?

*On a personal basis, has your Club's FB page influenced whether you will remain a member, and if so, how?*

24. Describe the **appearance and features** of your Club's FB page that might encourage people to **remain** members? (SQ17)

*On a personal basis, has your Club's FB page influenced whether you will remain a member, and if so, how? Which of the following might apply? reinforce links between members, keep informed, allow increased participation.*

## Conclusion

The last 2 questions give the opportunity for you to mention anything relevant to recruitment and retention, and the role of FB that we may have missed.

25. Is there anything else we haven't mentioned, perhaps from your survey responses, that you think is relevant to this research?

*Discussion of survey. Possible discussion of network connectivity, bridging and bonding, generational attitudes and altruism.*

26. Are there any new members or others in your club who might have additional insights into the impact of FB on recruitment and retention, whom I could contact?

*Email address or phone number?*

## Appendix 7: NVivo Interview Memo IQ22

Memos are a multi-purpose to record events such as modifications, their explanations, and to generally document collection and analysis.

### Example of NVivo Memo giving a Code Summary for Node IQ22

**Name:** IQ22\_FBResistance

Any resistance from members to Facebook is an "opportunity to lift awareness" (i ID01-2)  
Others did not receive any resistance (ID109, ID77).

Some of younger members of the community are actually resistant to older people joining Facebook<sup>ii</sup>

Some members don't see the value of Facebook and they fear its negatives, such as online safety, (ID10-2) as promoted in the media.

Others who were once resistant are now enthusiastic as they see how successful it is and although they are not contributing yet, other than the occasional like, but they are viewing (ID16).

Resistance has been due to distrust and ignorance, with the club very resistant to going into Facebook (ID16)

Some members regret the passing of emails will take a while to adapt (ID80).

Some members show passive resistance by not viewing

### See Also Links

<sup>i</sup> Internals\\Interview Audio\\ID01-2\_010813 but that is just an opportunity to lift awareness.

<sup>ii</sup> Internals\\Interview Audio\\ID02\_150713

There seems to be a resistance from the 18-25 years olds of old people getting on Facebook. They almost resent it. They feel it's theirs.

### Linked Item

Nodes\\InterviewQuestions\\IQ22\\IQ22\_FBResistance

## Appendix 8: Respondent Typology

Respondents were classified according to the following typology

1. Administrators (SQ4)
2. Facebook Use (frequency and duration) (SQ5 & SQ6)
  - High use
  - Medium use
  - Low use
3. Creators
4. Lurkers
5. Membership Duration (SQ2)
  - Long
  - Medium
  - Short
6. Age Range (SQ1)

## Appendix 9: Object of Rotary International

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

1. The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service
2. High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society
3. The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life
4. The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service

Source: Rotary International (2015)

## Appendix 10: Research Questions

**Principal Research Question:** How does the use of social media by a community organisation influence membership recruitment and retention? (PRQ)

**Subsidiary Questions:**

1. How does this organisation use social media to interact with current and potential members? (RQ1)
2. What are current members' needs? (RQ2)
3. How can social media be used to meet current and potential members' needs? (RQ3)
4. How do senior managers and office-bearers in this organisation feel that social media has influenced the recruitment and retention of members? (RQ4)
5. How do members, both new and long-term, in this organisation feel that social media has influenced their recruitment and retention? (RQ5)

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