

Communicating on the Countryside: Challenges and Lessons Learned From Rural Nonprofit Marketing

Brandon Shepard

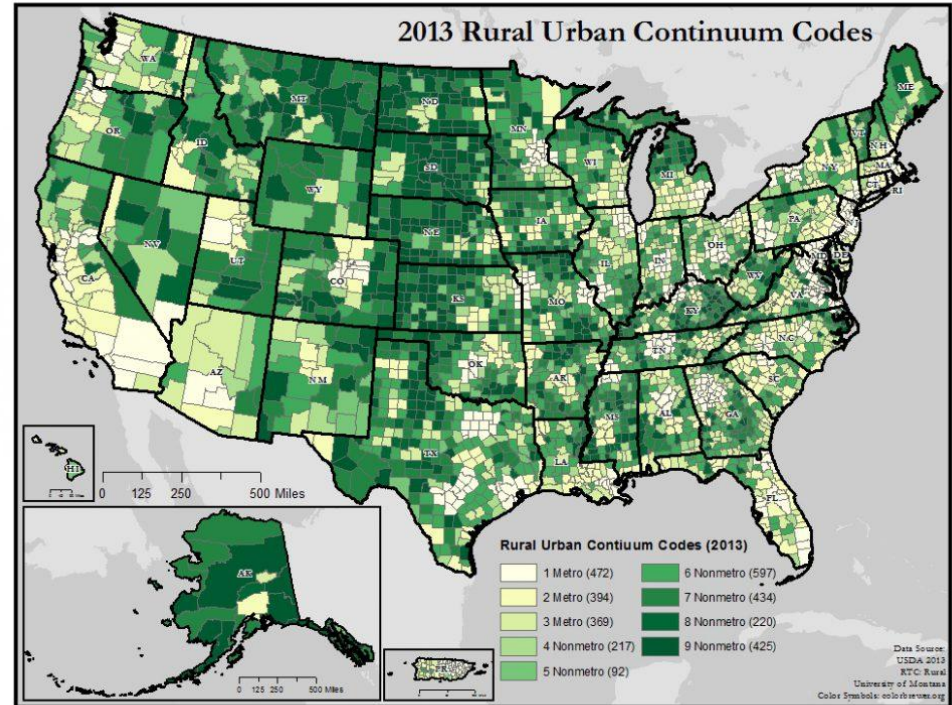
Nonprofit Data Analysis - Capstone

Spring 2021

Instructor: Marco Tavanti

Introduction

- This project is aimed at understanding how rural nonprofits communicate to different stakeholders.
- I look at their unique challenges they face and how they apply that to their marketing and how nonprofits overall can learn from rural nonprofits.



OBJECTIVES

What are the challenges facing rural nonprofits when they market themselves?

How do rural nonprofits have effective marketing given their circumstances?

I want to....

1. To shed light on a region of the country that has been looked over
2. To show the power of what good marketing and communications can do to an organization

METHODS AND APPROACHES

1. Literature Review
2. 4 Expert Interviews
3. 24 Survey Respondents from 16 different states

**Northside
Neighborhood
House**



a hand up through education and assistance



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

GIBSON COUNTY CASA

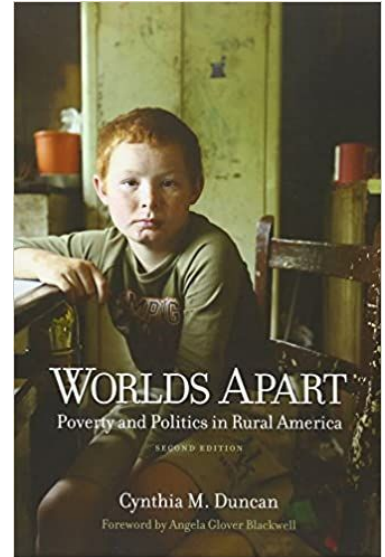
Mission minded

Literature Review - Challenges in Rural America

- 15 active definitions of the word “Rural” in the federal government
- Rural America accounts for **18%** of the nation’s population and **21%** of those who live in poverty
- **23.7%** of rural residents had underlying health conditions compared to only **3%** of urban residents
- **34 million Americans** lack an affordable and reliable broadband connection and of these, **23.4 million** live in rural areas
- **Rural Brain Drain**
 - Educated individuals leave their small town for the urban areas, thus leaving their town with one less-educated worker

Literature Review - Rural Nonprofits and Rural Marketing

- Rural philanthropy only accounts for **6.8%** of giving by the nation's top 1000 foundations
 - Only **.23%** of philanthropic dollars are awarded to Native-led nonprofit organizations
- National foundations tend not to consult local rural nonprofits to understand the priorities or circumstances before investing in those communities
- Rural markets tend to be more wary of outsiders.
 - "They put ideas in there head" - Excerpt from *Worlds Apart*
- **75%** of rural residents prefer to get news and other recommendations from friends and families
- Rural residents respond to regional activities and branding the best



Literature Review - Nonprofit Marketing Main Concepts

- **Social Marketing** consists of focusing on the consumer's needs as a member of the public, rather than selling them on the idea of what they need to generate profit for a private company.
- If you prioritize **Fundraising**, you are likely to place a bit more emphasis on events, direct mail, PR/media relations, and email and a bit less on websites/blogs and social media.
 - If you prioritize **Volunteering levels**, you will likely place a bit more emphasis on email, events, and your website/blog, but less on direct mail.
 - If you prioritize **Public Awareness** of your mission, you are less likely to use direct mail.
 - If you prioritize the **Growth** of your nonprofit, you will likely put more emphasis on your website/blog, email, and social media and less on events, direct mail, and PR/media relations

Interview Results

The two most important tenets of nonprofit branding are **focus** and a subset of that is focus on **why it matters what you do**, and focus on the **audiences that are most important to you**

Sarah Moore
Mission Minded

The landlords in the community are **donors and supporters** of the NNH, but at the same time, the landlords are the ones who are **evicting individuals in the community**

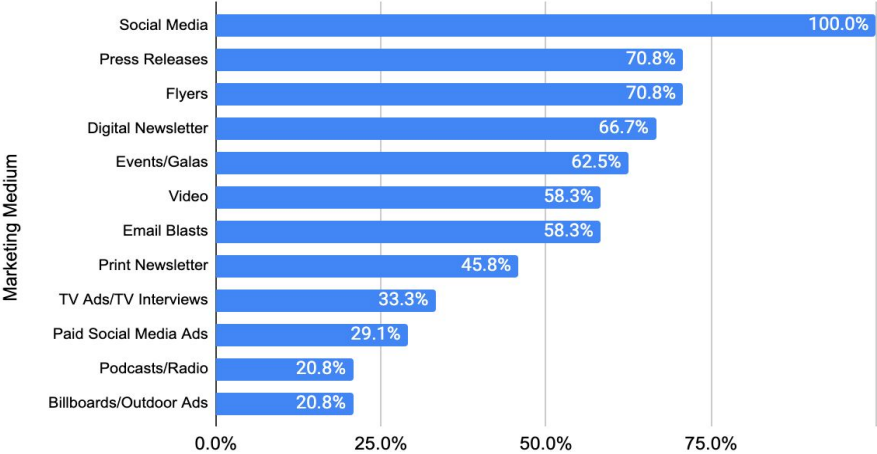
Megan Creecy
Northside Neighborhood House

Interview Results

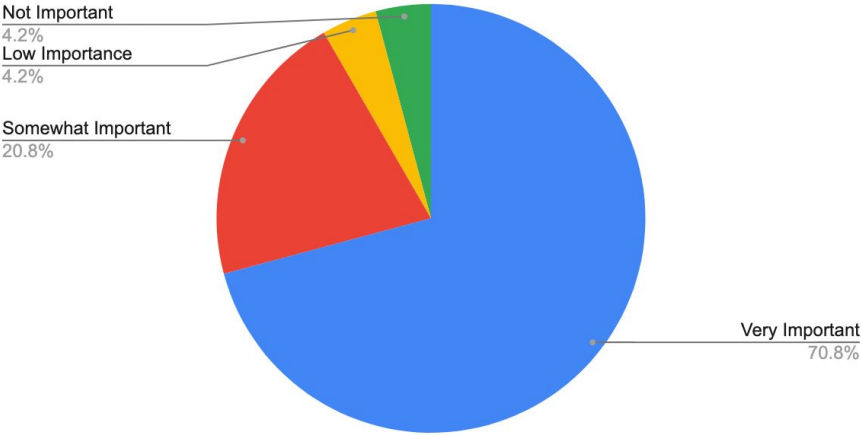
I think one of the really cool things about **rural nonprofits** is that they have **limited resources**. And they somehow find a way to do the work. They somehow find a way to make do with what they have. I think in terms of marketing, what you're seeing is that they don't have a lot of time, and they don't have a lot of money. But somehow they're able to get people to give to them to donate their time. **So they're doing something right**. Certainly there's many that are struggling, but there are many who are not. And they're finding a way to, to muddle through without that expertise”

Dr. Jayme Walters

Rural Nonprofit Marketing Medium Usage

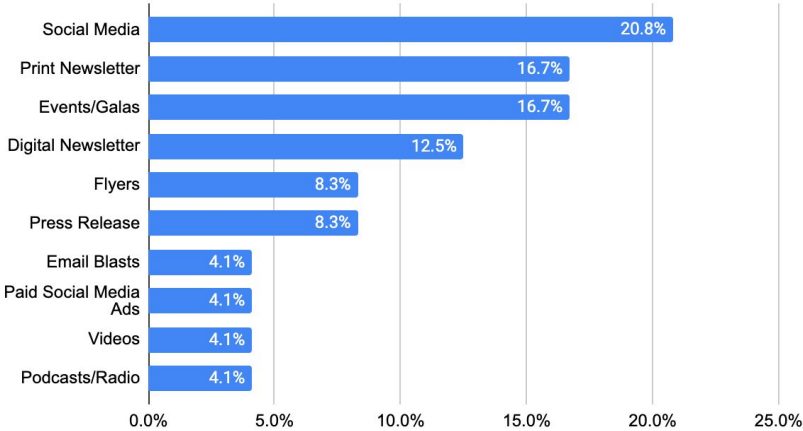


How Important is Relationship Building for your Nonprofit's Marketing?



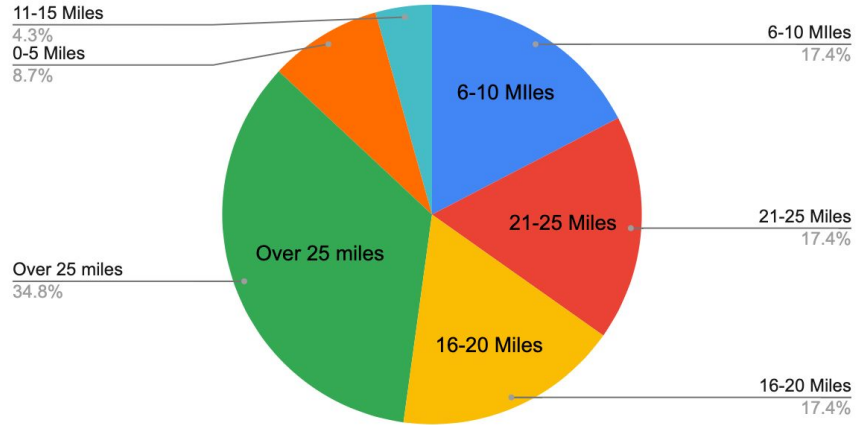
Survey Results

What marketing medium do you think your nonprofit does best?

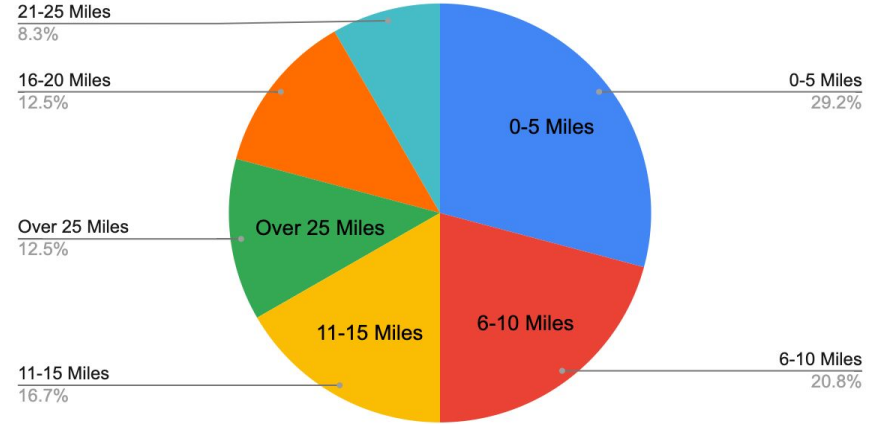


Survey Results

On average, how far do you believe your donors are from your nonprofit?

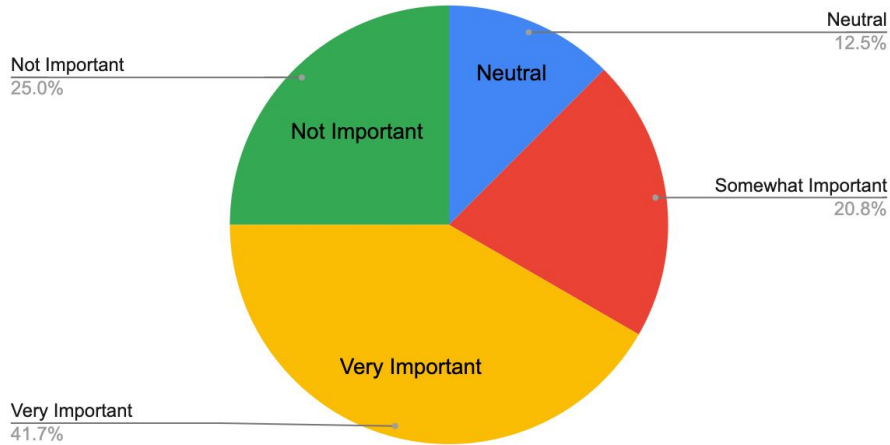


On average, how far do you believe your clients travel to receive the services of your nonprofit?

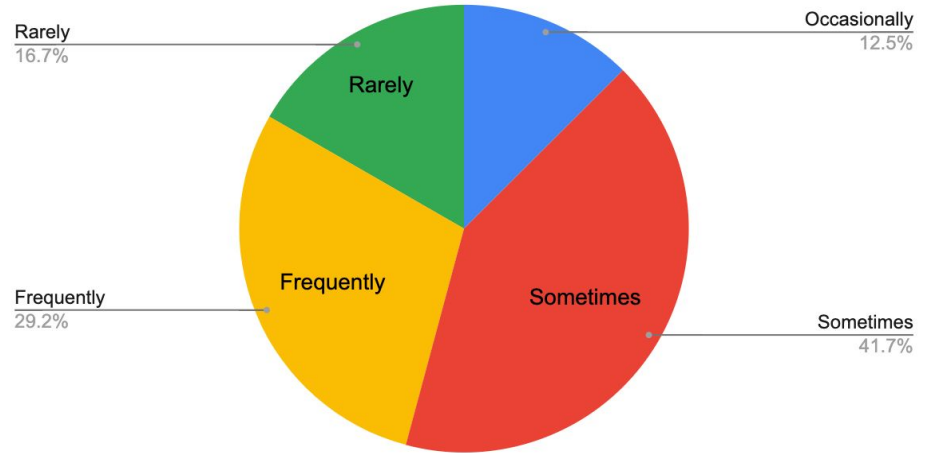


Survey Results

How important to your nonprofit is it to localize the language your nonprofit uses while marketing itself?



Has the digital divide been a factor when communicating to stakeholders?



IMPLICATIONS

- Localize Your Language
- Duality of Identity
- Social Marketing
- The Digital Divide is Closing
- Build Meaningful Relationships



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. “Relationships matter almost more than marketing and branding” - Sarah Moore
2. Recognize your important stakeholders and be cognizant of their relationship to your nonprofit
 - Duality of Identity
3. Create local marketing materials that appeal to your stakeholders and use language and imagery that appeals to them
4. Incorporate more digital marketing

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COMMUNICATING ON THE COUNTRYSIDE CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM RURAL NONPROFIT MARKETING

Brandon Shepard MNA - Master of Nonprofit Administration - Capstone Project
Master of Nonprofit Administration Capstone

SUMMARY

- Rural areas tend to be more persistently impoverished
- Rural nonprofits are underfunded
- Marketing of nonprofits can increase visibility in rural areas
- Nonprofits' awareness of the importance marketing is increasing

PURPOSE

To shed light on a region of the country that has been looked over, and to show the power of what good marketing and communications can do to an organization

RESEARCH

What are the challenges facing rural nonprofits when they market themselves and how do they have effective marketing?

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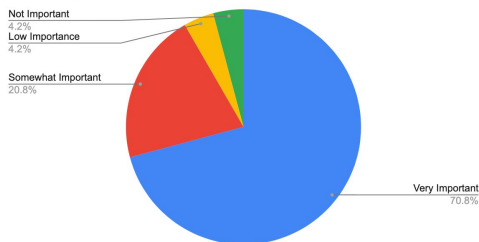
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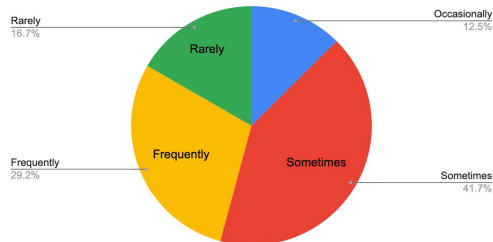
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DATA AND ANALYSIS

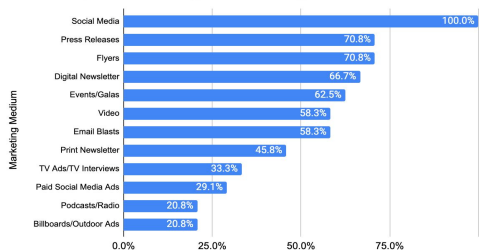
How Important is Relationship Building for your Nonprofit's Marketing?



Has the digital divide been a factor when communicating to stakeholders?



Rural Nonprofit Marketing Medium Usage



RESULTS



RECOMMENDATIONS

- "Relationships matter almost more than marketing and branding"
- Recognize your important stakeholders and be cognizant of their relationship to your nonprofit
- Create local marketing materials that appeal to your stakeholders
- Incorporate more digital marketing

METHODS

- Literature Review.
- Survey with 24 respondents
- 4 Expert Interviews