

Rethinking Impact: Reputation and Communication of Our Non-Profits

June 2023 - December 2023



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An aerial photograph of a large, multi-story residential building. The building features a dense grid of windows and balconies, creating a repetitive pattern of light and dark rectangular shapes. The balconies appear to have glass railings. The overall color palette is dominated by the warm tones of the building's facade and the dark blues and greys of the window openings.

Foreword

Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to share this report on the reputation, communication, fundraising and volunteer management of 35 leading non-profit organisations in Singapore. It is the result of a research project developed, implemented and completed with the invaluable support of graduate students from NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information's Master of Media and Communication programme. This research was conducted in partnership with CARMA, a research firm that combines technological innovation and comprehensive data collection with in-depth insights to deliver customised media monitoring and analysis solutions.

Non-profits, driven by passion and dedication to their chosen causes rather than profit, play an increasingly crucial role in society. The concept of non-profits can be traced back to 1833 with the establishment of the Anti-Slavery Society, recognised as the world's oldest human rights organisation, which campaigned relentlessly for the abolition of slavery. Today, renowned organisations like Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, the World Wildlife Fund, Save the Children, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace continue to exemplify the impact of the social sector.

In Singapore, the social sector thrives, with over 2,000 registered charities collectively receiving nearly \$3 billion in donations. However, these non-profits face significant challenges, including attracting quality talent, maintaining volunteer engagement, and bolstering donor confidence. A 2022 survey by Blackbox Research revealed that scandals involving charities and institutions of public character in Singapore have negatively impacted public trust, with 16% of Singaporeans reporting that they have stopped donating altogether. This erosion of donor confidence underscores the need for greater transparency in communication with stakeholders.

In addition to these challenges, non-profits struggle to recruit and retain volunteers, a problem exacerbated by the uneven appeal of different organisations (e.g., social service organisations attract more volunteers than those in the arts) and the lack of robust volunteer management systems. Both issues are intricately linked to the broader challenges of reputation management and effective communication.

This year's research project focused on how non-profits in Singapore navigate these challenges. This report aims to provide insights into how these organisations manage their reputation, communicate with stakeholders, and address the critical issues they face.



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Introduction



Singapore has a diverse and **active** non-profit sector.

The sector comprises more than 2,000 registered charities which attract nearly S\$3 billion in annual donations. Nevertheless, non-profits in Singapore face significant challenges including attracting quality talent and volunteers and strengthening donor confidence. A 2022 survey by Blackbox Research found that scandals surrounding charities and Institutions of Public Character in Singapore have impacted Singaporeans' decisions to contribute, with 16% saying they have stopped donating altogether. As donor confidence has been undermined, there have been calls for non-profits to demonstrate greater transparency in their communication with their stakeholders.

Separately, most non-profits are also finding it difficult to recruit and maintain volunteers. This has, in part, to do with the uneven appeal of non-profits (e.g. volunteers tend to favour social service organisations vs. arts organisations) and the lack of proper volunteer recruitment and management processes in place. Ultimately, both problems are linked to reputation management and communication initiatives of non-profits. For this research project, we were thus interested in studying how non-profits in Singapore manage their reputation and communication with stakeholders and how they were portrayed in the media.

Our research questions included how are non-profits in Singapore perceived by the media; what are some of the key activities used by NPOs to drive media coverage; how do they approach their reputation management; and which spokesperson has the most visibility.



Methodology



We aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the non-profit sector in Singapore. Non-profits in Singapore can be broadly categorised into seven sectors: **Health, Arts & Heritage, Women & Children, People with Disabilities, Animal Welfare, Environment, and Community.**

Within each of these sectors, we selected five non-profits to examine, totaling 35 organisations. Our selection criteria focused on achieving a balance in scale, encompassing large, medium, and small non-profits, and ensuring the availability of sufficient public information for analysis.

Health	Arts & Heritage	Women & Children	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Cancer Foundation• Dementia Singapore• National Kidney Foundation• Singapore Heart Foundation• SATA CommHealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Singapore Chinese Orchestra• Friends of the Museum• Checkpoint Theatre• Singapore Book Council• STPI	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Wishing Well• Singapore Children's Society• WINGS• United Women Singapore• Daughters of Tomorrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zero Waste SG• Nature Society (Singapore)• Waterways Watch Society• Centre for a Responsible Future• Singapore Environment Council
People with Disabilities	Community	Animal Welfare	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Movement for the Intellectual Disabled in Singapore (MINDS)• The Singapore Association for the Deaf• SPD (Society for the Physically Disabled)• Disabled People's Association• Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food from the Heart• Habitat for Humanity Singapore• Samaritans of Singapore• Singapore Red Cross Society• TOUCH Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPCA Singapore• Cat Welfare Society• ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society)• Save our Street Dogs• Causes for Animal Singapore	



The research approach comprised three key parts

Individual Case Studies

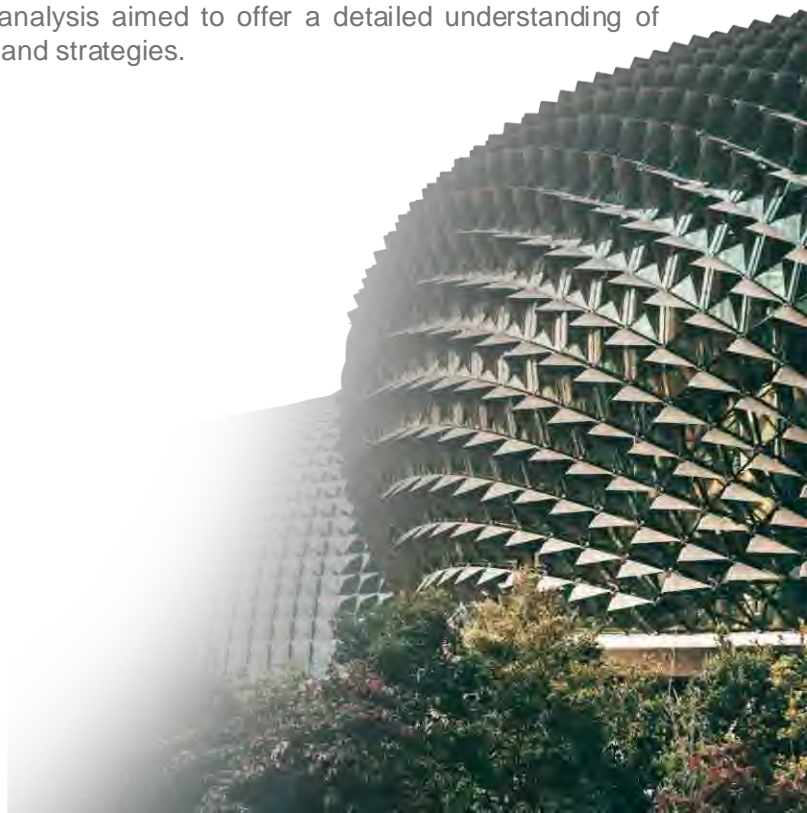
The first part involved developing individual case studies for the 35 non-profits. Our graduate students developed these case studies, which contained background information of each non-profit (e.g., what they do, whom they serve), their reputation (e.g., how they manage their reputation, how they engage with the media), and their communication initiatives (e.g., how they engage stakeholders, what communication platforms they use). We then conducted a thematic analysis of the 35 case studies to understand how non-profits in Singapore manage their reputation and communication.

Media Article Coding

The second part involved the coding of 1,000 media articles published between 1 June 2023 and 31 December 2023. CARMA Asia tracked and collected media articles that mentioned any of the 35 non-profits over the seven-month period. We sampled 1,000 of these articles and coded them based on various variables, including CARMA's favourability score, key narratives, coverage drivers, spokesperson, topics, sector, and value attributes. The intent of the coding was to better understand how non-profits in Singapore were portrayed in the media, what activities tended to drive media coverage, and which spokespersons had the most visibility.

In-Depth Analysis of Selected Non-Profits

The third part of the project involved a more in-depth look at seven specific non-profits out of the initial 35. We chose to feature seven selected non-profits to provide a more nuanced picture of the situation. This in-depth analysis aimed to offer a detailed understanding of these organisations' unique challenges and strategies.

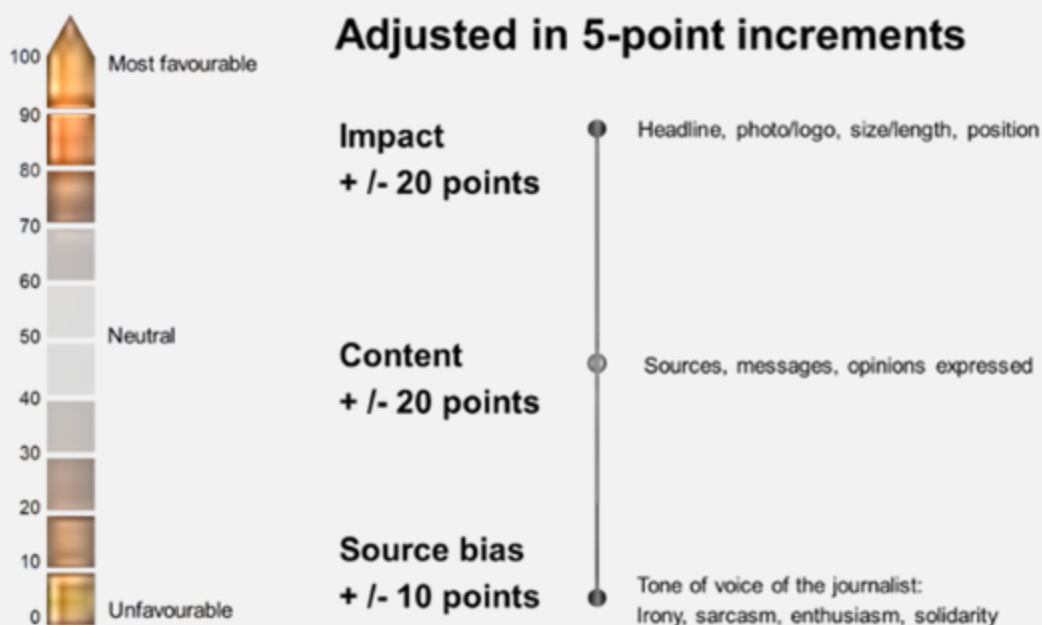


CARMA's favourability rating system – ensuring accuracy of impact measurement

The CARMA Favourability Rating System is based on a predetermined set of criteria designed to eliminate subjectivity and will be applied to every relevant piece of coverage. In gauging the favourability of an article, we consider the headline; the length and placement of the story; accompanying photos, number and quality of sources; positive and negative messages; and the general tone of the article.

The methodology behind this coding scale is the strongest and most accurate in the industry. It measures the tone and impact of coverage. It is a 21-point scale which runs from zero (catastrophically negative), through 50 (neutral) to 100 (perfect communication).

Because it outputs as a numeric value it is perfect for showing as a trend and benchmarking, which we know is important.





Project Findings

Reviewing Communication Strategies of 35 Non-Profit Organisations

Regardless of sector, non-profits face significant challenges in communication and reputation management. Most do not have a dedicated communication department, and the communication function is left to one or two individuals. Very often, the communication function is subsumed under outreach, community engagement, or partnerships. Many also struggle to recruit or retain staff (and volunteers). The non-profit organisations (NPOs) are often dealing with immediate operational programme needs and so, combined with resource constraints, are unable to craft a clear communication strategy or plan in place, and any plans developed tend to be short-term.

What complicates the situation is that these NPOs often have very diverse stakeholders to engage with. Their internal stakeholders comprise not only employees, but also board members, advisory panels, volunteers and donors. External stakeholders are equally complex and may comprise beneficiaries, prospective volunteers and donors and sponsors, government agencies, and community partners. For instance, Dementia Singapore regards the following as its stakeholders. The list does not include members of the general public whom Dementia Singapore would also reach out to, in order to raise awareness of dementia.

Dementia Singapore's Key Stakeholders

Clients	Community Care Partners
Families and Care-Givers	Hospitals
Corporate Partners	Other Social Service Agencies
Funders (Government)	Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning
Foundations	Ministry of Health
Sponsors (Corporates)	Agency of Integrated Care
Donors (Individuals)	Other Relevant Government Agencies
Volunteers	

Engaging Diverse Stakeholders: The Role of Social Media in Raising Awareness

All 35 non-profit organisations (NPOs) studied have integrated social media into their communication strategies, though the rationale and effectiveness of its use vary widely. Most NPOs create social media accounts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, where they believe their target audiences or the general public are active. This has led to significant variation in follower numbers across and within sectors.

For many of these NPOs, maintaining a social media presence is driven by the perceived need to appear active and relevant in the digital space. However, due to resource constraints, their communication on these platforms is often sporadic and ad hoc, which can dilute their messaging and engagement with followers.

Beyond simply raising awareness, some NPOs view social media as a critical channel for delivering their programs and content. This is particularly true for Arts & Heritage organisations, which relied heavily on platforms like YouTube and Facebook Live during the COVID-19 pandemic to broadcast performances when live events were not possible. Additionally, organisations such as Nature Society (Singapore) and Friends of the Museum use social media as a forum to engage directly with volunteers and enthusiasts. For instance, Nature Society (Singapore) not only operates an official Facebook page but also manages a community page with 72.7k members who actively share content like bird sightings and nature events. This highlights how social media's utility can vary significantly across different NPOs, depending on their specific needs and goals.

The communication objectives of these NPOs also differ by sector. While raising awareness of their causes is a universal goal, organisations in the Women & Children sector also prioritise advocacy. United Women Singapore and Daughters of Tomorrow, for example, leverage social media to advance their causes by releasing research and public reports that address issues such as gender equality, the gender gap in STEM, and domestic abuse. These organisations use these platforms and publications to advocate for policy changes and greater protection for their beneficiaries.

Partnerships also play a crucial role in amplifying the reach and impact of NPOs. Collaborations with corporate and industry partners enhance visibility and extend outreach efforts. For instance, TOUCH Community Services has established partnerships with Citi Singapore and Facebook, while the Singapore Heart Foundation has collaborated with pharmaceutical companies and e-commerce platforms like Shopee to gamify heart health awareness and extend their public health campaigns.

Media Analysis



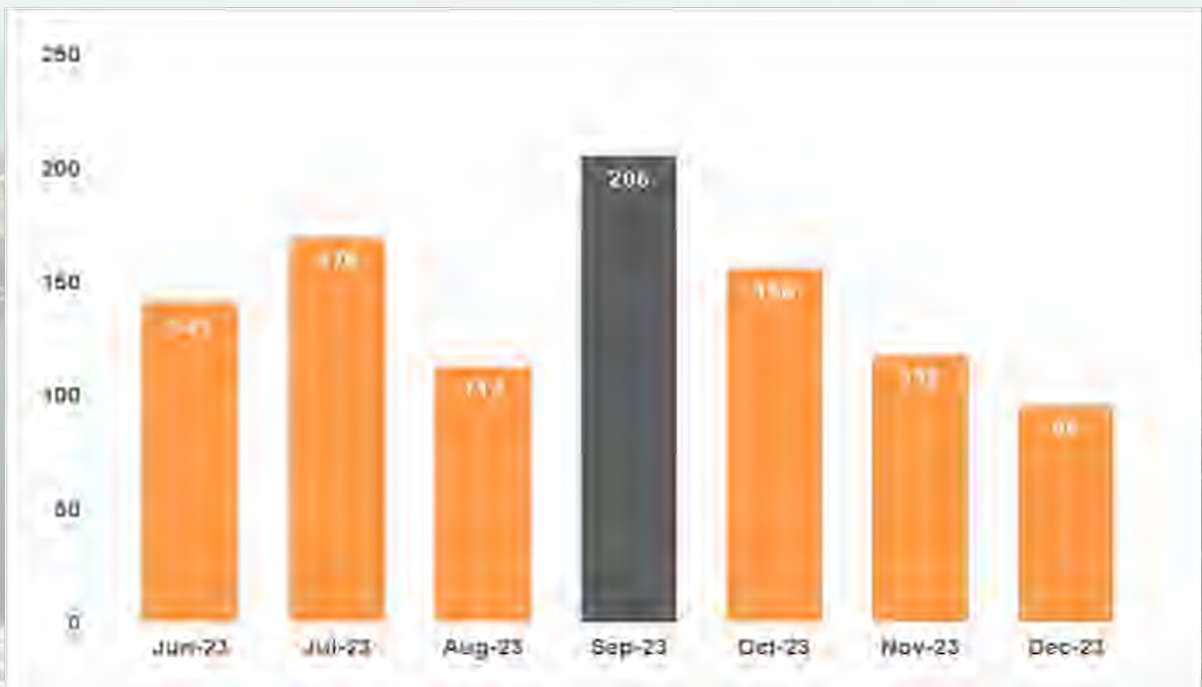
General Findings

Overall, NPOs were perceived positively or neutrally in the media, with none receiving negative mentions during the study period.

Most NPOs in this study were mentioned at least once in the media during the seven-month period. Only four NPOs had zero media mentions: Causes for Animal Singapore, Centre for a Responsible Future, Friends of the Museum, and WINGS. The average number of media mentions per NPO was 34, with a median of 18.

July and September were key months for media coverage, with September having the highest volume of coverage across all NPOs. Specific highlights include:

- SPCA, Dementia Singapore, and Samaritans of Singapore generated the most coverage in September.
- ACRES saw a spike in coverage in July due to a rare sighting of a tapir in Punggol Park Connector.
- In September, stories on animal abuse, adoptions, and SPCA's interventions, along with other animal welfare organizations, were frequently reported.
- Dementia Singapore received coverage for its poll on caregivers of dementia patients and for Michael Leams to Rock raising awareness for Dementia Awareness.
- Samaritans of Singapore consistently generated high volumes of articles across all months, as key stories about mental health and suicide often mentioned them as a resource for public access.



General Findings

Attributes of NPOs

Attribute	Health	Community	Arts & Heritage	Women & Children	Animal Welfare	People with Disabilities	Environment
Contribution to Society	28	34	2	7	32	10	9
Effectiveness	1	2	1	0	19	2	4
Financially Sustainability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Innovativeness	8	1	9	0	0	3	0
Prestigious	2	2	24	2	1	1	6
Sustainability	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Transparency	0	1	0	0	3	1	0
Trustworthiness	1	2	0	0	2	0	2

We also looked at eight different attributes (i.e. contribution to society, effectiveness, financial sustainability, innovativeness, prestigious, sustainability, transparency, trustworthiness) and coded them based on positive or negative mentions. There were scant negative mentions; i.e. non-profits were rarely mentioned in a negative light. NPOs were usually associated positively with their contributions to society and their effectiveness. Arts & Heritage NPOs were also viewed positively in terms of prestige. This was often because the media coverage for Arts & Heritage NPOs would mention a specific achievement or prominent individual that they were working with, which would add to the perceived prestige of the NPO.

Coverage Quality

Prominence

Moderate mention	198
Minor mention	874
Dominant mention	105
Feature story on company	35

Most media mentions were minor mentions (i.e. the NPO was listed as an example, or the NPO was listed as a resource). Feature stories on NPOs were few-and-far-between. Dementia Singapore had the most feature stories largely because of its fundraising efforts during the period of study. It had launched a major fundraising event that featured a global rock act and as a result, multiple media outlets opted to do a feature article on Dementia Singapore featuring the organisation and its programmes. Similarly, Food from the Heart was featured several times in the media for its partnership with Resorts World Sentosa on its RWS Eat Well @ Community Shop initiative.

In terms of placement, NPOs seldom featured in the headlines and most were mentioned in the latter portions of the article. For instance, the hotlines of Samaritans of Singapore, TOUCH Community Services, ACRES and SPCA were often featured at the end of an article.

General Findings

Media Outlets

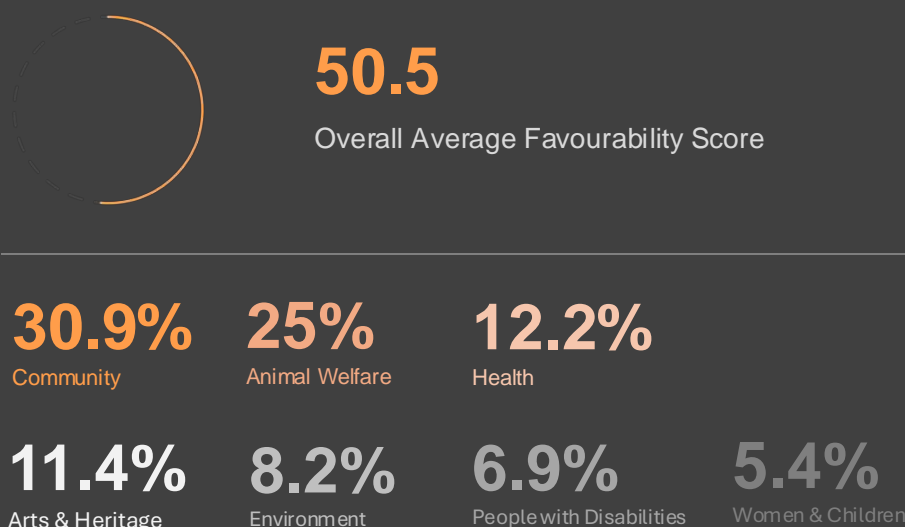
Media Outlet	Article Count
The Straits Times Online	176
CNA (SG)	60
AsiaOne	54
Mothership	50
Must Share News	47
The New Paper Online (SG)	39
The Straits Times - Stomp Online	38
Today Online	31
Lianhe Zaobao Online	22
Berita Mediacorp	21

Mainstream local media were the top media outlets that published articles about NPOs. The top media outlet was The Straits Times, followed by CNA, AsiaOne, Mothership, Must Share News, The New Paper, TODAY Online, Lianhe Zaobao, and Berita.

Trade publications also tended to publish articles related to relevant NPOs. For instance, lifestyle outlets like Time Out Singapore would publish articles featuring NPOs from the Arts & Heritage sector, while Eco-Business would feature Environment NPOs.



Share of Voice by Sector



Share of voice by sector

In terms of share of voice, NPOs in the Animal Welfare and Community sector tend to get significantly more media mentions than other sectors. This is often because of the very work that they do. For instance, ACRES and SPCA are regularly called upon by members of the public when wild animals are spotted or when acts of animal cruelty are suspected. As such, a large amount of media coverage covering animal incidents (e.g. python found, abused cats or dogs) will make reference to either organisations either as a point of resource (e.g. ACRES hotline is provided to readers) or to document what these NPOs did in the incident (e.g. ACRES captured and released the python). Similarly, for Community NPOs like the Samaritans of Singapore and TOUCH Community Services, they are often mentioned in the media as resources for members of the public to call should they require counselling. Most, if not all, articles that touch upon mental health issues or suicide would feature the contact numbers for both NPOs. This gives these NPOs media prominence and establishes their credibility as good resources for the public to turn to.

Apart from being listed as a resource, NPOs may see an increase in media mentions due to prominent events. For instance, for the period under study, Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the National Kidney Foundation, and Dementia Singapore had slightly more media mentions. This could be attributable to specific events that were happening at the time. In the case of Dementia Singapore, it received extensive media coverage from its fundraising concert featuring Danish soft rock group Michael Leams to Rock. The Singapore Chinese Orchestra was involved in various performances for the Mid-Autumn Festival, which led to a spike in media mentions. The National Kidney Foundation, on the other hand, was mentioned more often in the media because of its links to a \$ 2.8 billion money laundering case in which the alleged suspects had made donations to various charities including the NKF. Though the incident was a negative one, NKF was not mentioned in a bad light.

Media sentiment

NPOs by and large are perceived positively or neutrally in the media.

For the period of study, none of the NPOs were mentioned negatively. NPOs were usually associated positively with their contributions to society and their effectiveness.

What's driving the media coverage?

	Environment	Health	Community	Arts & Heritage	Women & Children	Animal Welfare	People's with Disability
Third-party issue involving NGOs	51	26	66	6	16	196	9
Programmes Organised by NGO	22	61	55	87	15	58	20
External event	17	53	61	42	32	32	44
Quoted as a resource	1	5	178	0	1	28	3
Donation Drives	6	32	35	0	20	19	9
Interviews	7	21	19	6	8	16	11

Coverage Drivers

To identify key activities driving media coverage, we analysed 1,000 articles and categorised them by various coverage drivers, including donation drives, external events (such as NPO partnerships with other entities), interviews, NPO-organised programs, third-party issues involving the NPO, and being quoted as a resource. Donation drives and interviews were found to contribute the least to media coverage.

Third-Party Issues: Animal Welfare NPOs, such as ACRES, Cat Welfare Society, and SPCA Singapore, frequently gained media coverage through their involvement in third-party issues, such as animal abuse cases or wildlife and pet regulations. Similarly, Community and Environment NPOs also received media attention due to third-party issues, though to a lesser extent. For example:

- Nature Society (Singapore) was featured in articles related to environmental impact assessments, like those for the Southern Islands.
- Zero Waste SG appeared in articles about Singapore's recycling initiatives.
- TOUCH Community Services was quoted in discussions on mental health and counseling issues.

NPO-Organised Programmes: Arts & Heritage NPOs often received media coverage for the events and performances they organised. NPOs also garnered significant media attention from external events—initiatives they coordinated with other entities. Examples include:

- SPD was featured in an article about its CSR activities with Exyte Singapore.
- Disabled People's Association was highlighted for its collaboration with Certis to map barrier-free accessibility routes in Singapore.
- Singapore Red Cross Society was mentioned in connection with the President's Challenge 2023.

Quoting as a Resource: Community NPOs, particularly Samaritans of Singapore and TOUCH Community Services, frequently appeared in media as credible resources. Articles on mental health or suicide almost always contain a list of resources for the public, with these NPOs commonly featured. Their frequent inclusion as resources contributes to their positive reputation and reinforces their position as trusted authorities on mental health issues, enhancing their visibility and recall among the public.

Topic Analysis

Media discussions on NPOs primarily focus on their core work and community support, with topics often driven by direct involvement in key issues or active event promotion. In examining the types of topics the media reported on in relation to NPOs, we identified 19 potential topics, including awareness, community support, donors, fraud, government support, volunteer issues, regulation, and NPO-related work.

Direct Work

Our findings indicate that media coverage of NPOs most often directly relates to their work, particularly in the Animal Welfare, Community, and Arts & Heritage sectors. For instance, organisations like ACRES, SPCA, and the Cat Welfare Society were frequently mentioned in reports about animal incidents. Similarly, Community NPOs like the Samaritans of Singapore and TOUCH Community Services were commonly cited in articles discussing counselling or mental health issues. These mentions were typically not initiated by the NPOs themselves but occurred because they were directly involved in incidents or were prominent in the relevant issue spaces. Conversely, Arts & Heritage NPOs, such as STPI, demonstrated more active media engagement, with their coverage primarily consisting of event listings and previews, indicating a proactive approach to publicising their performances and events.

Raising Awareness of Cause

Beyond direct NPO-related work, media articles often focused on raising awareness for their causes and showcasing community support efforts. For example, Environmental NPOs were frequently mentioned in connection with sustainability and environmental awareness, while Health NPOs, like the National Kidney Foundation, were often cited in articles on specific diseases or health issues related to their mission. Media coverage in this sector also highlighted how these NPOs supported the community, such as the National Kidney Foundation's announcement in October 2023 of five new dialysis centres to meet growing demand or SATA CommHealth's services for Singapore's aging population.

Topic Analysis

Donors and Donations

Another top topic involved donors and donations. This included publicity for the NPO's fundraising initiative (e.g. United Women Singapore's BuyToSave Charity Sale in August 2023 or MINDS Festive Fundraiser in December 2023), large charity donations from major corporations and individuals (e.g. Amazon's donation to local NPOs in December 2023, Chinese tycoon's donation to Dementia Singapore in October 2023), and partnerships for fundraising (e.g. the Income Eco Run that raised money for the Singapore Environment Council). During the period under study, the \$2.8 billion money laundering case in which several charities had received donations from the suspected individuals also led to an increase in media coverage for the implicated charities.

Volunteers and Regulation

Other salient topics that gained media traction included issues with volunteers and regulation. For the former, the articles concerned the profiling of different volunteers and the listing of different volunteering opportunities. For instance, Mr Nadim van der Ros (Singaporean singer Stefanie Sun's husband) was featured in several articles for his volunteering work with organisations such as the Singapore Red Cross Society. Likewise, Ms Chin Bottinelli, Board Member of Food from the Heart spoke about her motivations for volunteering with the non-profit in a media interview. For the latter topic on regulation, the articles concerned the NPOs involvement in discussing government policies such as the reversal of the HDB cat ban and the wish for increased policing on bird feeding.



Analysis of Key Narratives

Based on our initial desktop research, we developed the following nine different key narratives that we expected to see across the media coverage.

NPO's top key narratives

The top key narrative that appeared the most was the promotion of education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices. The table below lists the ranking of the various narratives in order of frequency of mentions.

Rank	Key Narratives
1	Promote education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices
2	Promote collaboration and partnerships with external entities to enhance the reach and impact of non-profits, creating mutually beneficial relationships.
3	Create a positive impact to Singaporean society
4	Forge community that is aligned with mission
5	Engage with society to attract new volunteers and donors
6	Engage with public to improve reputation
7	Remain agile in adopting new technology and strategy to stay relevant and effective in their mission
8	Enforce responsible fund utilisation to ensure that initiatives are impactful, and benefit both the beneficiaries and communities.
9	Maintain transparency in their communication with stakeholders and the public.
10	Adopt good corporate governance and practices in management of funds and donations

Analysis of Key Narratives

NPOs leverage media narratives to educate the public and highlight partnerships, demonstrating their impact on society and managing their reputation, all while fostering informed public discussion.

NPOs across various sectors leverage media coverage to **promote their causes and educate the public**, encouraging informed decision-making. For example:

- Animal Welfare NPOs aim to educate the public on proper ways to interact with wildlife and care for pets.
- Health NPOs focus on raising awareness about healthy practices to prevent diseases.
- Environment NPOs promote sustainable behaviors and provide guidance on appreciating nature.
- Community NPOs encourage discussions on mental health and provide information on supporting the underprivileged.
- Women & Children NPOs use media to empower the public by educating on how to identify and report child or domestic abuse.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

The second most frequently mentioned narrative is the role of collaborations in enhancing reach and impact. Media coverage often increases when NPOs partner with other entities. For instance:

- In September 2023, the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped partnered with Hyundai Motor Group to research assistive mobility solutions.
- MINDS collaborated with Dell Technologies to host InnovateFest, a competition aimed at developing solutions for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Health NPOs, such as the Singapore Heart Foundation, benefited from coverage of their partnerships, such as their World Heart Day 2023 collaboration with 22 prominent landmarks to raise awareness.
- Dementia Singapore also gained significant media attention for its fundraising concert featuring Danish band Michael Learns to Rock.

Impact on Society and Community Building:

The third and fourth most mentioned narratives focus on the societal impact of NPOs and their efforts to build communities around their causes. Examples include:

- SATA CommHealth's Doctors-On-Wheels initiative, which addresses the needs of patients not covered by Singapore's Ministry of Health homecare services.
- Habitat for Humanity Singapore's Project HomeWorks, which aims to support compulsive hoarders, an underserved segment of society.

Analysis of Key Narratives

NPOs also leverage media narratives to manage a diverse set of stakeholders, showcase innovative solutions to societal issues, and demonstrate their commitment to corporate governance standards.

Volunteer, Donor and Reputation Management

The fifth and sixth most mentioned key narratives relate directly to the NPOs' reputation management. Arts & Heritage NPOs would make the most use of its media coverage to enhance their reputation. This often involved highlighting the achievement of their group or their members (e.g. a show featuring an acclaimed musician or artist).

The second aspect of reputation management concerns how the NPO would seek to attract new volunteers and donors. Health and community NPOs tended to make the most use of media coverage in this regard. For instance, the articles would include features of their volunteers, or would feature different ways in which the public could donate to the NPOs.

Innovation:

The seventh most mentioned narrative involves showcasing innovation. NPOs in sectors such as People with Disabilities, Community, and Health highlight their use of new technology and partnerships for innovative solutions. For example:

- In July 2023, Google announced its collaboration with Samaritans of Singapore and TOUCH Community Services on the YouTube Priority Flagger Programme.
- SATA CommHealth integrated a new digital brain function screen into its health screening packages.
- SPD, in collaboration with SG Enable, launched Tech Able to promote assistive technology for people with disabilities.

Corporate Governance:

The remaining key narratives center on corporate governance. Among the 1,000 articles analysed, only 29 covered responsible fund utilisation, transparency, and governance. This may indicate a high level of trust between NPOs and Singaporean society, reducing the need for publicising governance practices. This is supported by the NTU IN-Cube Panel Surveys conducted in June 2023, where trust in non-profit organisations scored a mean of 3.23, higher than trust in fellow Singaporeans (3.19) and business owners (2.94), but lower than trust in the Singapore government (3.64) and people you work or study with (3.35).



Senior Leadership

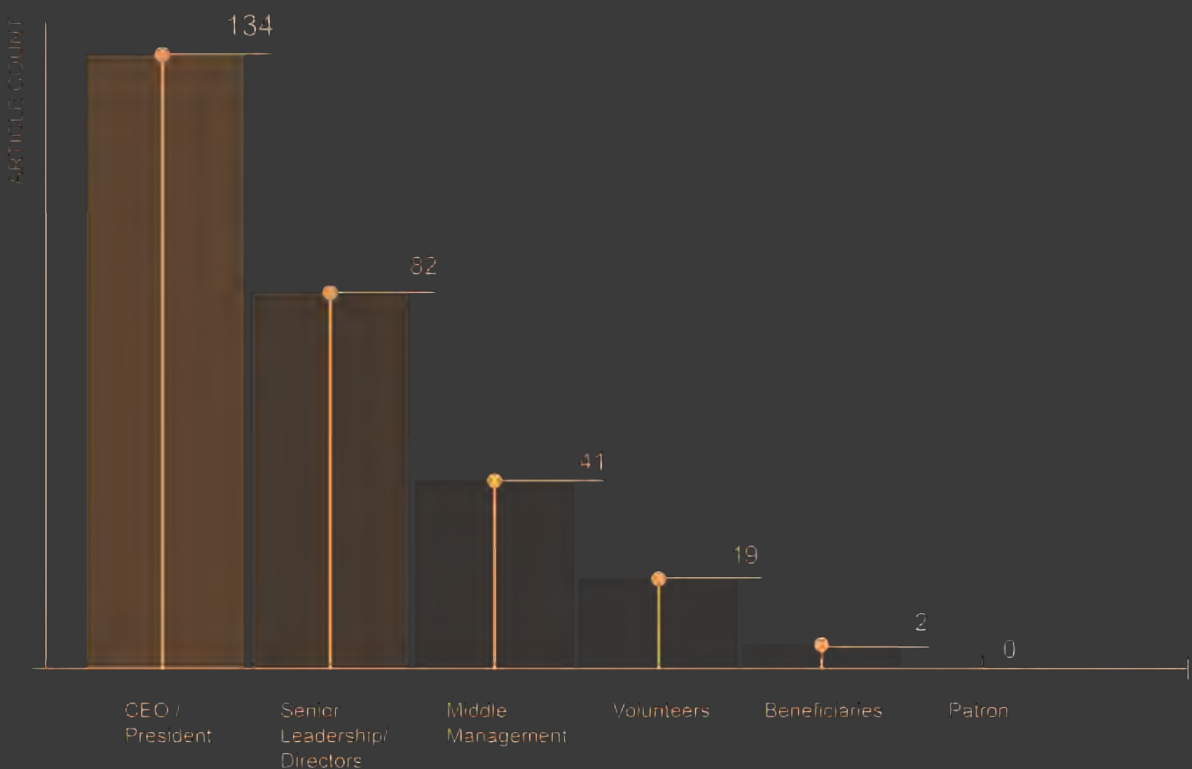
as an extension of the organisation

Senior leadership as an extension of the organisation

Effective communication of an organisation’s key messages is crucial for maintaining a strong and coherent brand presence. Senior leadership plays a pivotal role in this process, as their communication acts as a direct extension of the organisation’s brand. By representing the organisation in media interactions, senior leaders help to shape public perception, reinforce strategic messages, and enhance credibility. Their visibility in media coverage not only reflects their personal authority but also signals the organisation’s commitment to its core values and objectives.

We also analysed the media coverage to evaluate the various types of spokespersons quoted. Out of the 1,000 articles, only 278 featured direct quotes from spokespersons. The CEO or President emerged as the most frequently quoted spokesperson, followed by senior leadership, middle management, and then volunteers and beneficiaries. **Surprisingly, Patrons did not appear in any of the articles despite their high profile.**

Among the most visible spokespersons in our study were Ms. Aarthi Sankar, Executive Director of SPCA Singapore; Mr. Kalal Vanan Balakrishnan and Ms. Anbarasi Boopal, co-CEOs of ACRES; Ms. Thenuga Vijakumar, President of the Cat Welfare Society; Mr. Huzir Sulaiman, Co-founder and Joint Artistic Director of Checkpoint Theatre; and Mr. Gasper Tan, CEO of Samaritans of Singapore.

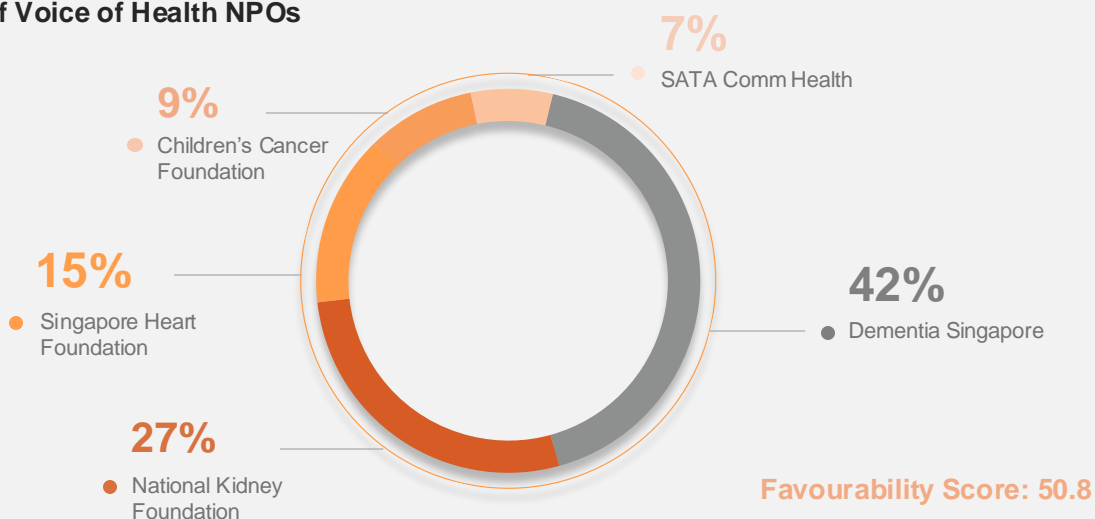


Individual Sectors



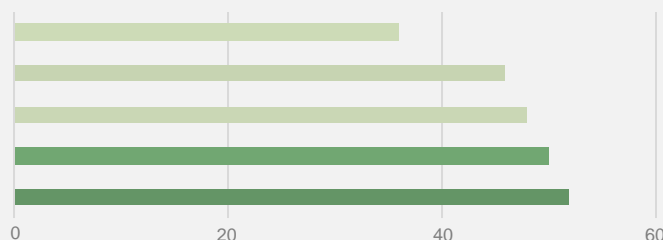
Health

Share Of Voice of Health NPOs

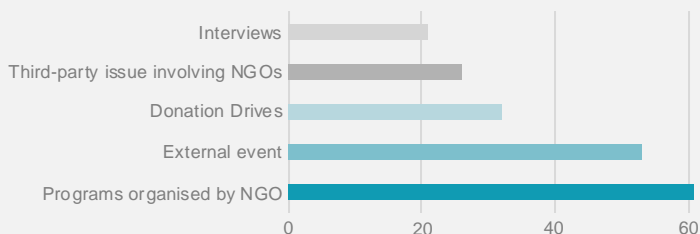


Key Narratives Mentioned Most

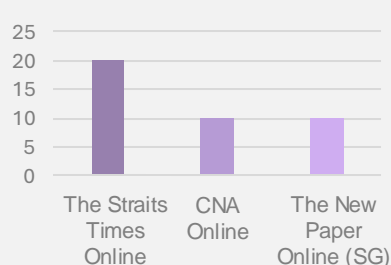
- Engage with society to attract new volunteers and donors
- Promote collaboration and partnerships with external parties
- Forge a community that is aligned with their mission
- Create a positive impact to Singaporean Society
- Promote education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



For NPOs in the Health sector, they often have to deal with an incredibly diverse set of stakeholders that includes patients, caregivers, government agencies, hospitals and other healthcare institutions, community partners, and the general public.

By virtue of the type of work that they do and the services that they provide to society, these NPOs are often viewed as extensions of the government as they help the government to focus on specific niche areas (e.g. heart disease, kidney disease). The content of their public communication is multi-faceted and can include more 'strategic' forms of messaging pertaining to the branding of the organisation to more 'tactical' type of information pertaining to event updates, information on diseases, etc.

Due in part to the diversity of their stakeholders, most NPOs in this sector have retained more 'traditional' types of communication such as newsletters and brochures while adapting to new forms such as TikTok videos. The use of more communication platforms is also due in part to the amount of complex information that needs to be disseminated. No matter the platform, transparency is a key emphasis for all the NPOs. All five NPOs that we looked at in this sector engaged the media actively and all, perhaps due to their larger scales (i.e. more resources), have dedicated or sizeable communication departments.

Case Study:

National Kidney Foundation

The National Kidney Foundation Singapore (NKF) is dedicated to the betterment of kidney health. Its core mission is twofold: to provide vital support to individuals battling kidney failure through the delivery of quality dialysis and integrated care services, and to enlighten the broader community on the significance of kidney health. The prevalence of kidney failure is alarming, with over 500,000 individuals in Singapore suffering from chronic kidney disease. NKF operates 41 dialysis centres island-wide, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive kidney health initiatives.

Core Values and Philosophy

NKF aspires to instill life and hope through the provision of affordable, sustainable, and high-quality renal care. Guided by the acronym NICE (Nurturing, Integrity, Compassion, and Respect), its values serve as the bedrock of NKF's mission. These values collectively foster an environment where individuals are nurtured to their fullest potential. Honesty and sincerity prevail, compassion is actively demonstrated, and differences are respected and celebrated.

Strategic Approach, Stakeholder Engagement and Funding

NKF's approach is characterised by a two-pronged focus on short-term and medium-to-long-term goals. In the short term, NKF aims to continue its work but with improved efficiency, emphasizing patient empowerment and a sustainable cost structure. In the long term, NKF is dedicated to curbing the progression of chronic kidney disease in Singapore. This involves active engagement with the community, schools, and healthcare partners, as well as a commitment to improving the quality and effectiveness of renal care.

NKF actively engages with a diverse set of stakeholders, including patients and families, donors and funders, healthcare professionals, government agencies, and community partners. The primary objective of any non-profit is to assure long-term sustainability by generating sufficient funding to advance its causes. NKF pursues this goal through multifaceted engagement efforts, exemplified by a range of initiatives designed to create awareness and foster support, including the Kidney We Care Movement, the Kidney Discovery Centre, and Kidney Health Education Buses. Leveraging these programs, NKF effectively reaches a broad audience, fostering a sense of community and garnering support for its mission.

Funding comes from diverse sources, including donations and corporate sponsorships. Additionally, NKF generates income through dialysis services, conference and seminar fees, as well as interest revenues from investments and rentals. The organisation also benefits from significant grants and government subvention. In 2022, NKF reported an income of \$170 million.

Social Media Presence

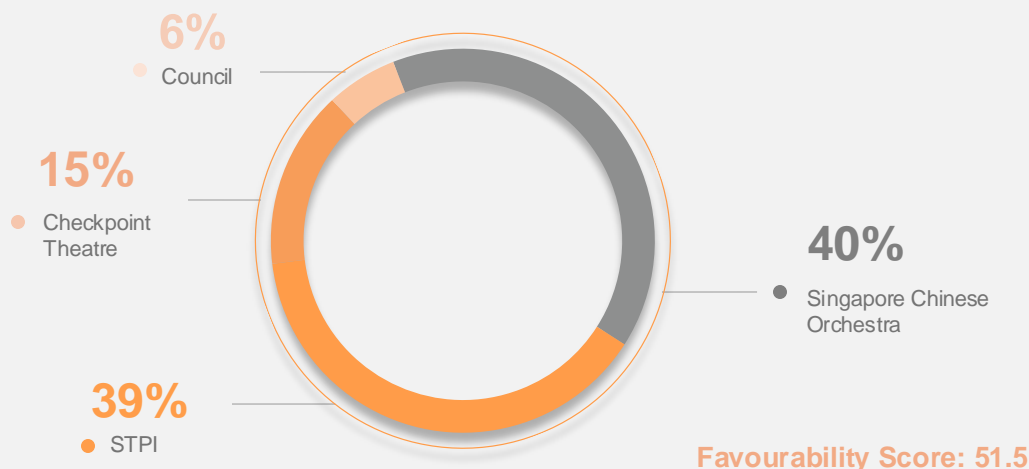
NKF maintains an active presence on several social media platforms. Its Facebook page boasts 19,000 followers, with regular posts covering engagement efforts and health tips. However, despite these regular updates, the level of interaction remains relatively low. On Instagram, NKF has approximately 4,300 followers. Similar to Facebook, content is consistently posted but sees limited engagement. On YouTube, NKF offers an extensive library of videos, which resonate strongly with audiences.

Historical Challenges and Governance Reforms

In 2005, NKF faced a crisis due to malpractices and mismanagement of funds by its former CEO, leading to public outrage and a significant loss of trust. Subsequently, the Ministry of Health intervened, implementing governance reforms to enhance transparency and accountability. In 2016, NKF dismissed its CEO following personal misconduct and appointed Tim Oei, who spearheaded policy and operational reforms to restore trust. Today, NKF remains steadfast in its mission to provide hope and support to kidney patients, guided by principles of transparency and accountability.

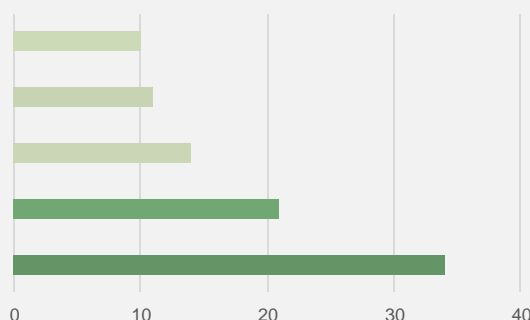
Arts & Heritage

Share of Voice of Arts & Heritage NPOs

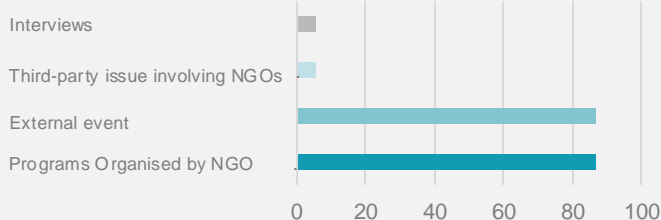


Key Narratives Mentioned Most

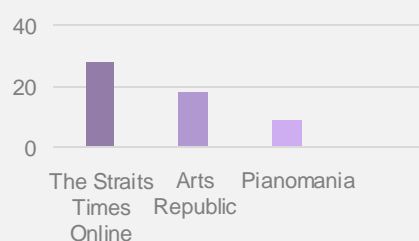
- Forge community that is aligned with mission
- Create a positive impact to Singaporean society
- Engage with public to improve reputation
- Promote collaboration and partnerships with external entities to enhance the reach and impact of non-profits, creating mutually beneficial relationships.
- Promote education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



For NPOs in the Arts & Heritage sector, the size of the communication teams are considerably smaller.

Often, there is no dedicated communication team or person, except in larger NPOs like the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. The public communication and outreach for NPOs in this sector, while targeted at the general public, often ends up becoming more niche. This is due to the specific causes championed by the NPOs. Booklovers and readers, for instance, would be more naturally drawn to Singapore Book Council while theatregoers would be more receptive to Checkpoint Theatre. As such, we often find that for these NPOs, there is a strong sense of community in their social media and their stakeholder engagement. This is especially so for smaller NPOs where

their communities look a bit like 'fandoms'.

NPOs in this sector also often use social media differently as compared to other sectors. Social media is used not only to raise general awareness of the NPO and its activities, but may also be used to deliver actual programming (e.g. showcasing a theatre or music performance). As such, for NPOs in this sector, the social media channels form and function matters (e.g. text vs. audio vs. visual). Another unique aspect of Arts & Heritage NPO communication is their tendency to mention and highlight accolades, particularly international achievements.

Case Study:

Checkpoint Theatre

Established in 2002, Checkpoint Theatre is a multidisciplinary collective dedicated to storytelling across stage, print, and screen. The company produces and develops works that resonate with both local and international audiences. Serving as a hub for new Singapore playwriting, Checkpoint Theatre fosters the growth of the next generation of theatre-makers. It engages with diverse stakeholders, including corporate sponsors, donors known as Checkpoint Champions, government funders like the National Arts Council, as well as corporates such as Bizibody Technology and BEAM Space. Checkpoint Theatre has performed in countries such as the USA, Australia, and Japan.

Mission and Values

Checkpoint Theatre provides equal opportunities for young practitioners alongside established artists, fostering their confidence to lead the arts scene. Its mission involves creating a vibrant canon of Singaporean content that embraces diverse voices, with a vision for everyone to experience the impact of original Singapore writing and to share unique stories. The foundation of Checkpoint Theatre's artistic practice is built on values such as curiosity, openness, and humility, which drive the exploration of challenging questions without necessarily providing answers. Creativity thrives through an artist-led process, while courage is essential for creating honest and nuanced work. Compassion guides the engagement and portrayal of characters, and community outreach is emphasised to find connections within Singaporean stories.

Leadership and Artistic Direction

Led by Huzir Sulaiman and Claire Wong, along with Faith Ng, the team contributes to the artistic endeavours and development of Checkpoint Theatre. Performances that highlight the particularities of Singaporean culture and experiences are a cornerstone of its productions, emphasising shared challenges and allowing subtle messages of universality to shine.

Reputation Management and Stakeholder Engagement

Checkpoint Theatre manages its reputation by ensuring that every production fulfils its mission to engage and inspire audiences. It offers publications for sale, including play anthologies

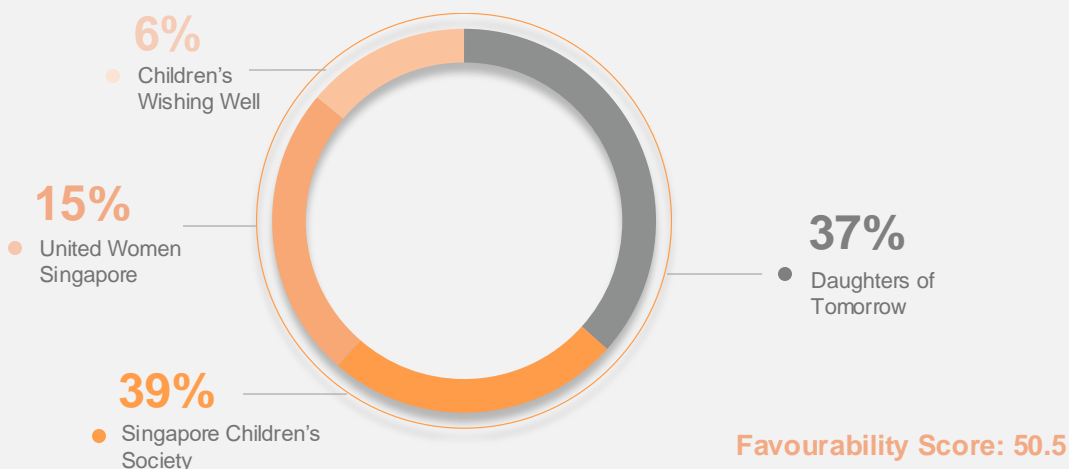
and books, and collaborates with the National Library to host free events. Demonstrating social media savvy, Checkpoint Theatre engages with stakeholders through platforms like Instagram and Facebook, regularly posting updates with eye-catching aesthetics. When interacting with the public, Checkpoint Theatre uses electronic direct mail, fundraising events, and other more personal engagement methods. It also engages with traditional media outlets such as The Straits Times and Channel NewsAsia. Checkpoint Theatre's openness and tailored communication strategies effectively engage each stakeholder group, contributing to its reputation in the arts. This approach has also fostered a sense of belonging within its community, cementing its role as an organisation that promotes the intricacies of Singaporean identity.

Volunteer Management and Internship Programme

Checkpoint Theatre's volunteer management is rooted in a robust internship program with art universities in Singapore, which offer courses requiring paid internship experience. Students often form a strong personal connection with the company during their internships, frequently leading to ongoing volunteerism. The program attracts a diverse cohort of pre-university students and university graduates for ten-week internships, providing a hands-on, holistic experience in all critical aspects of performance theatre.

Women & Children

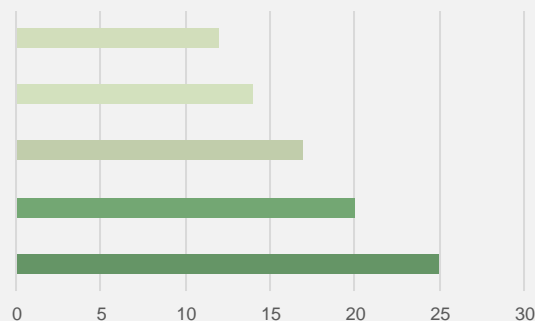
Share of Voice of Women & Children NPOs



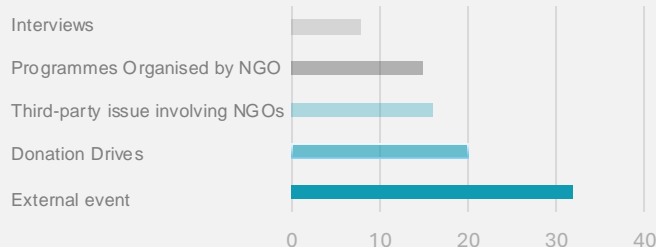
Key Narratives Mentioned Most

- Forge community that is aligned with mission
- Engage with society to attract new volunteers and donors
- Create a positive impact to Singaporean society
- Promote education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices
- Promote collaboration and partnerships with external entities to enhance the reach and impact of non-profits, creating mutually beneficial relationships.

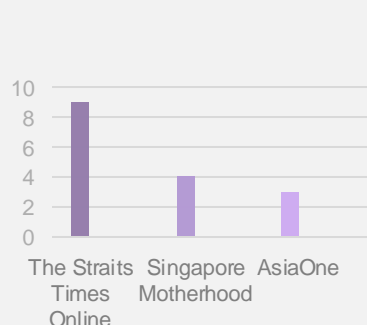
Women & Children



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



For the Women & Children sector, we see varying levels of sophistication in the way they approach their outreach and communication.

Most of the NPOs we looked at in this sector did not have a dedicated communication team or person. Public communication across the board tended to be sporadic or more ad hoc, and media engagement by these NPOs was very much personality-driven. For example, Ms Georgette Tan, President of United Women Singapore, is its key spokesperson and the organisation often obtains media coverage because of her

involvement in other public events. NPOs in this sector, particularly those that deal with issues concerning women, also tend to be more vocal in advocacy and part of their communication involves some form of lobbying for change and better protection for their beneficiaries. Another unique aspect of NPOs in this sector concerns the use of research. These NPOs often conduct their research, either on their own or by partnering research firms, and use the findings to help anchor their advocacy and supplement their programming (e.g. they use the insights to refine their programs).

Case Study:

Daughters of Tomorrow

Daughters of Tomorrow (DOT) was founded by Carrie Tan in 2011 as a social enterprise in India, offering craft training and a means of subsistence to rural women and those freed from human trafficking. Since then, DOT has evolved significantly. In 2014, DOT was registered as a charity with IPC status under the Charities Act of Singapore. The charity now complements and supports existing training and workforce-related agencies by connecting volunteers and community resources to provide individualized support to underprivileged women.

Vision, Mission, and Values

DOT provides hand-holding and individual coaching to help each woman reach regular and sustained employment, enabling them to regain confidence in themselves and gain a social support network that helps them through their difficult times. Its beneficiaries are women aged 20-60 from ultra-low-income families, mostly living in government-subsidised rental flats, and facing multiple stressors. Since its incorporation, DOT has impacted more than 1,400 women.

DOT's vision is to empower women and enable families. Its mission is to facilitate livelihood opportunities for underprivileged women and support them in building financially independent and resilient families. DOT values enabling, mindfulness, being people-focused, open-mindedness, willingness to lead, enterprising, and responsiveness. The organization's budget exceeds \$3 million, and its stakeholders include board and committee members, sponsors and donors, beneficiaries, employees, volunteers, social service offices, family service centres, and employers. DOT employs 22 staff members and is supported by close to 450 volunteers.

DOT's holistic approach is highly practical. It provides women with post-employment advice to improve their self-competitiveness, enabling them to better adapt to and respond to market demands after assisting them in finding work prospects. DOT aims to raise awareness and educate women about opportunities available to them while also working to attract donors. In 2021, the President's Challenge funded the start of a new DOT programme, Broaden Horizons, designed to link young, low-income women with businesses that offer better wages and prospects.

Reputation and Partnerships

The work of DOT has earned it a strong reputation. Supported by NCSS and the Lee Foundation, as well as corporations such as Accenture, Chanel, and Great Eastern, DOT remains committed to upholding its reputation as a dependable and efficient organisation. It has built solid relationships with employers, enabling it to connect disadvantaged women with reachable employment opportunities.

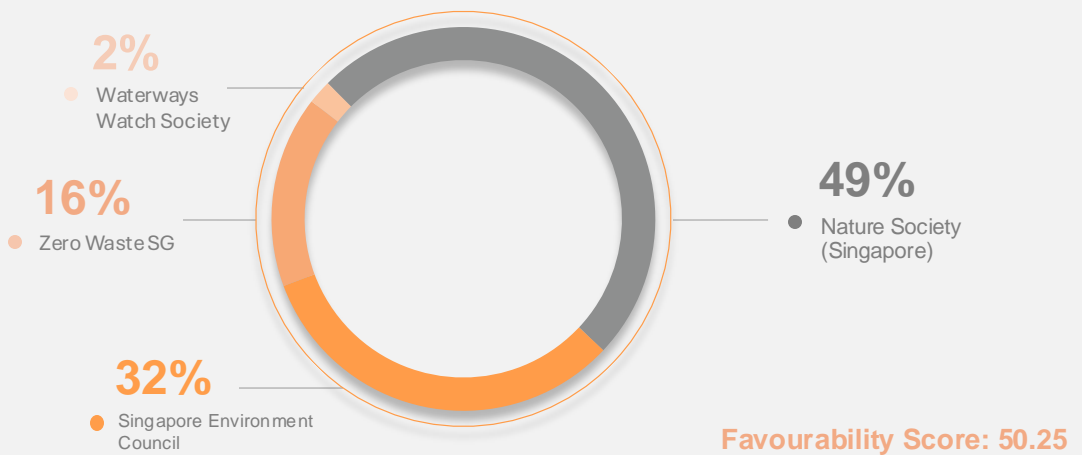
Communication Strategy and Social Media & Community Engagement

DOT successfully conveys its goals and principles by sharing the experiences of its beneficiaries and volunteers. It engages with viewers through social media, encouraging them to leave messages, comments, likes, and more. DOT posts content on a variety of topics, such as career development, family education, and health, leveraging stunning images and graphics to draw a larger audience and more effectively communicate the organisation's diverse values.

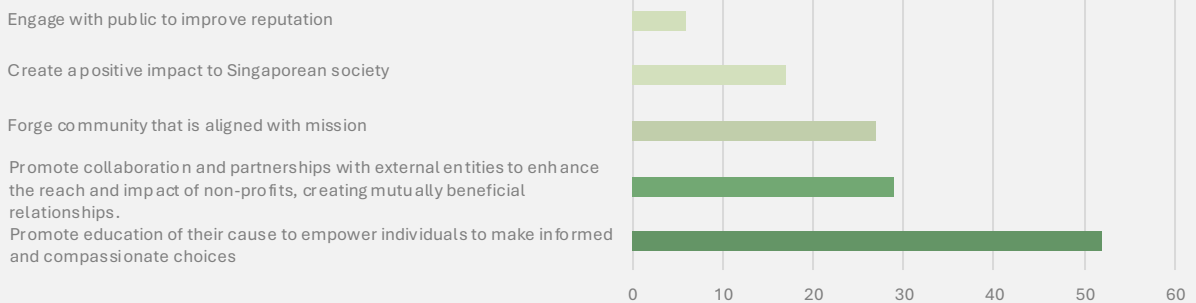
DOT has a dedicated webpage and the DOTTERS online community, offering a safe and secure setting for peer support and ongoing education. This platform gives women a chance to communicate with and support others. The DOTTERS magazine is a biannual community-run publication. In addition, media platforms play a significant role in facilitating DOT's work. Over the past few years, DOT has built a strong following on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, which features short interviews showcasing real stories of female representatives.

Environment

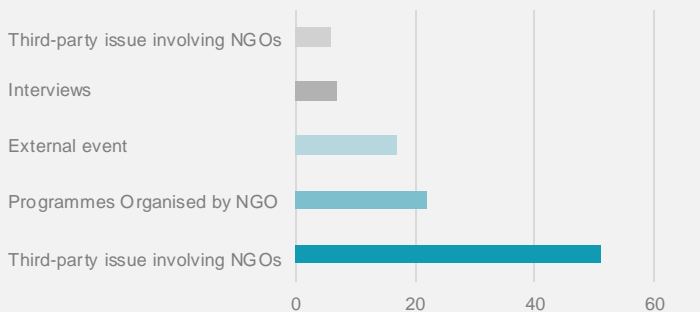
Share of Voice of Environment NPOs



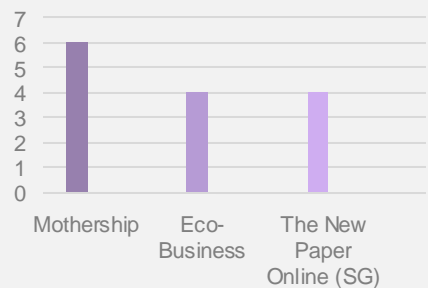
Key Narratives Mentioned Most



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



Environment NPOs tend not to have dedicated communication teams or persons.

These NPOs tend to engage with niche audiences and their resulting public communication often appears to be minimal and quite targeted. Waterways Watch Society, for instance, has a very community-based approach in its engagement as they connect mostly with those with an interest in the local waterways. Similarly, Nature Society (Singapore) is dependent on its community of nature-lovers, who connect regularly online to

engage in discussions of bird sightings or other nature events.

Some of these NPOs are involved to some extent in advocacy work and do participate in government consultations on specific issues. The Nature Society (Singapore), for instance, is usually involved in Environmental Impact Assessments with Singapore's urban planning agencies. One unique aspect of NPOs in this sector is that consultancy services is a source of significant income for most of them.

Case Study:

Waterways Watch Society

Founded in 1998 with only 27 members, Singapore's Waterways Watch Society (WWS) has grown significantly to include approximately 700 volunteers, ranging in age from five to 80 years and coming from diverse backgrounds. Inspired by the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's efforts to clean up the Singapore River and Kallang Basin, WWS initially aimed to keep Singapore's waterways clean and safe by organizing voluntary clean-up patrols on weekends. Today, WWS's mission has expanded to promote appreciation for and conservation of the environment, particularly Singapore's waterways.

Stakeholders and Mission

WWS's stakeholders include volunteers, donors, sponsors, and the Singapore government. Volunteers are the cornerstone of this non-profit group, playing a crucial role in achieving WWS's mission of promoting the conservation of Singapore's waterways and nature. The organisation relies heavily on donations and sponsorships to fund its missions and activities, which aim to motivate people to take action to protect the environment. Schools and corporate organizations are also key stakeholders, with WWS working closely with them to educate and spread awareness about the importance of waterways and the dangers of litter and pollution resulting from irresponsible behaviour.

Reputation and Partnerships

WWS has built and maintained a strong reputation through its clear mission, accountability in its actions, and consistency in its messaging. The organisation partners with corporations to showcase its water protection efforts, such as volunteer events with BOC Aviation and American Express, effectively leveraging these partnerships to increase visibility. Additionally, WWS gains attention by highlighting its initiatives during special events, such as the Water For All Camp during Singapore World Water Day.

Public Engagement and Media Presence

WWS raises public awareness and inspires action through insightful and emotional personal stories. Eugene Heng, CEO and founder of WWS, regularly shares unique perspectives

during interviews. WWS also features stories like that of a foreigner who found a sense of belonging through volunteer activities. These exclusive insights capture media attention and foster a positive image of WWS and its supporters.

According to its annual report, WWS does not allocate any money for advertisements or paid publicity. Most of the information shared by WWS is centralised on its website, supplemented with additional content through social media. It also relies on earned media to disseminate its messages.

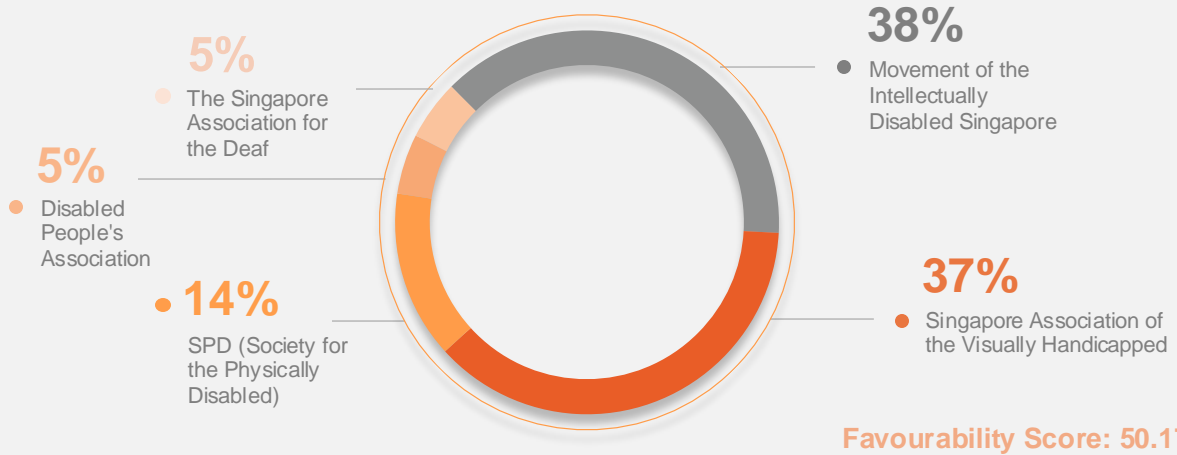
One of WWS's key objectives is to raise awareness about how individuals can make a difference. To accomplish this, it conducts community outreach programs and workshops that promote the importance of cleanliness and biodiversity in Singapore's waterways. WWS maintains a social media presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, where it has, in the past, posted interesting snippets and educational content on water conservation and environmental sustainability.

Challenges in Social Media Engagement

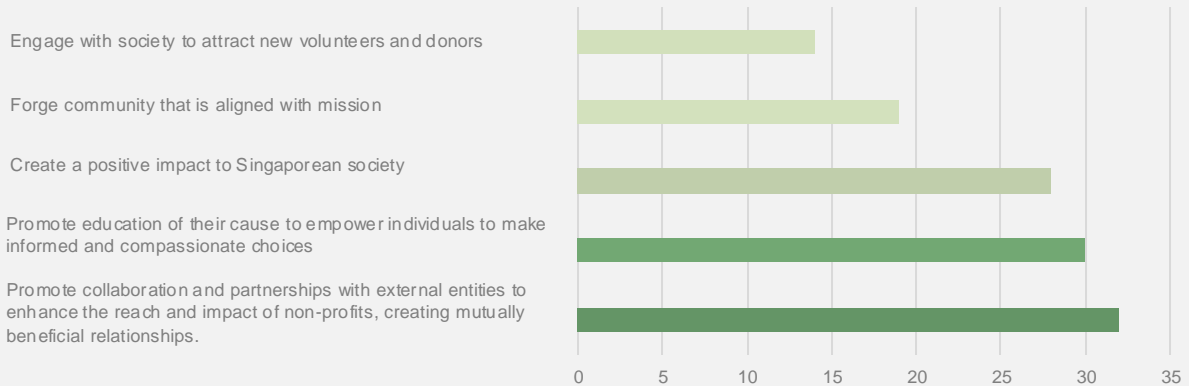
However, WWS's current social media presence shows a significant drop in activity. Its most recent Facebook and Instagram posts date back to September of last year, and the last YouTube video was posted two years ago. This inactivity may explain its relatively low number of followers and likes. WWS is urged to consider re-strategising and revitalising its entire digital communication approach, including social media content creation, updating videos, and exploring ways to engage with individuals and organisations interested in its mission and activities.

People With Disabilities

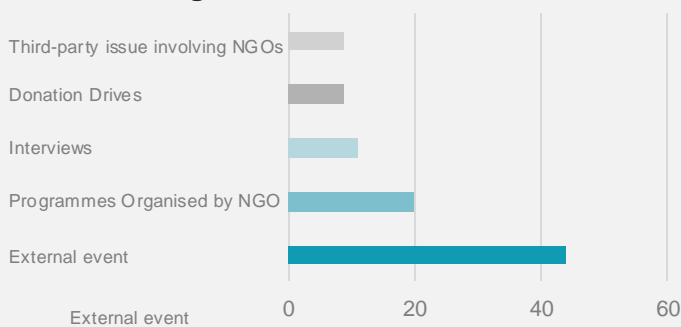
Share of Voice of People with Disabilities NPOs



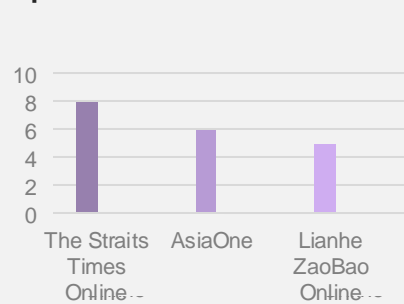
Key Narratives Mentioned Most



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



For NPOs in the People with Disabilities sector, we found that their public communication was much more targeted and was aimed at the communities they served rather than the broader general public.

The NPOs don't seem to do much active media engagement (media engagement seems to be done more on a reactionary basis). They tended not to use a wide range of social media platforms though this might be

due in part to their reduced resources as many of the NPOs in this sector did not have big communication teams (many had at most two persons working on communication). Storytelling is a key feature in their public communication as their content often spotlights a volunteer or a beneficiary's journey. One unique aspect for NPOs in this sector is their use of a Flag Day fundraising event.

Case Study:

Disabled People's Association

Since its establishment as the Singapore Chapter of Disabled People's International in 1986, the Disabled People's Association (DPA) has stood as the sole cross-disability non-profit organization (NPO) in Singapore operated by individuals with disabilities. Founded by Ron Chandran-Dudley, who lost his sight at age 19 due to a sporting accident, DPA is driven by the belief that progress within the disability movement necessitates the inclusion of people with disabilities (PWDs) in decision-making processes. This principle is encapsulated in DPA's poignant slogan, About us, but not without us.

Mission and Stakeholders

DPA's primary mission is to ensure that PWDs are active participants in decision-making processes that affect them by collaborating with and influencing political, commercial, and educational leaders. Additionally, DPA endeavours to foster an inclusive and accessible society through the training of both PWDs and the general public. The organisation aspires to address the needs of all PWDs and their communities by empowering their voices and providing a platform for expression, particularly for those who encounter difficulty in articulating their concerns. DPA's stakeholders comprise PWDs, its members, volunteers, donors, partners, and the broader community.

Reputation Management and Communication Strategies

In the realm of NPOs like DPA, there is a growing awareness of the significance of reputation as an intangible asset, crucial for successful fundraising and volunteer support. To safeguard and augment its reputation, DPA has delineated a clear mission and vision that align with its actions and communication strategies. The organisation strives to manage stakeholder expectations by upholding transparency and accountability, regularly disseminating information about its initiatives through its website, reports, newsletters, and various social media platforms. Furthermore, DPA ensures adherence to relevant regulations to uphold ethical standards.

Engagement Through Social Media and Public Outreach

Utilising social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, DPA communicates with stakeholders regarding its progress and initiatives.

Additionally, it provides training to enable PWDs to engage with mainstream media through programmes like DisOrdinary Love. Distinguishing itself from similar organisations, DPA emphasises its unique status as Singapore's sole cross-disability NPO representing PWDs and advocating for A Voice of Our Own. Moreover, it actively participates in international forums to promote disability rights and inclusion, including the ASEAN Disability Forum and the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Tailored Communication and Financial Management

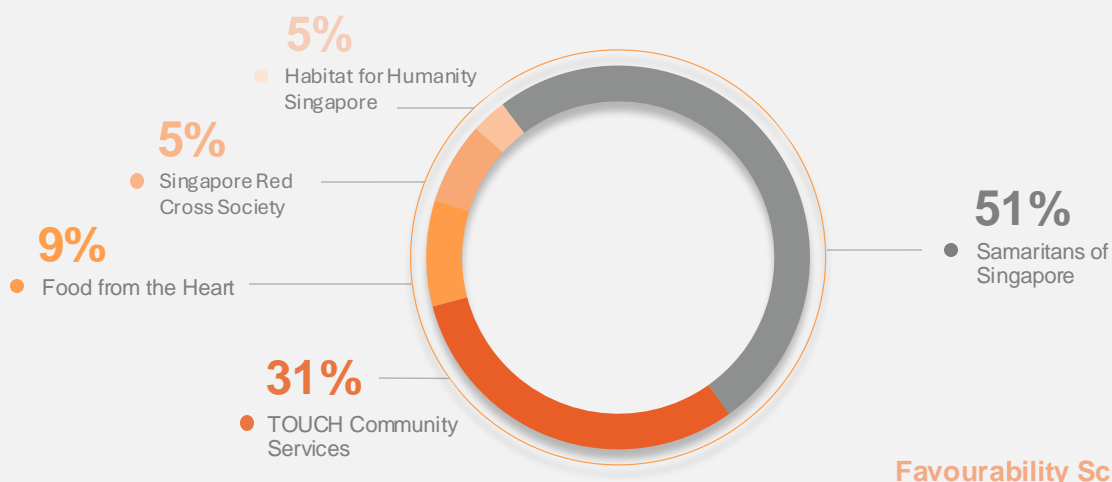
DPA tailors its communication to cater to different stakeholder groups. For its members, the focus lies on providing assistance and gathering feedback on potential initiatives beneficial to PWDs. Operating within a modest budget, DPA is known for its prudent financial management, relying on fundraising efforts targeting potential sponsors and donors, supported by volunteers. DPA also conducts public education and awareness-raising programmes and organises events such as the Let's Chat series in collaboration with the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) between 2017 and 2019.

Ongoing Initiatives and Programmes

Continuing communication initiatives at DPA encompass the Inclusion Ambassadors and DisOrdinary Love programmes. Through the DisOrdinary Love initiative, DPA endeavours to create a safe environment for PWDs and their partners to engage in discussions surrounding disability, sexuality, and relationships. Workshops, counselling sessions, and social media outreach serve as primary communication channels for these important conversations

Community

Share of Voice of Community NPOs



Favourability Score: 50.2

Key Narratives Mentioned Most

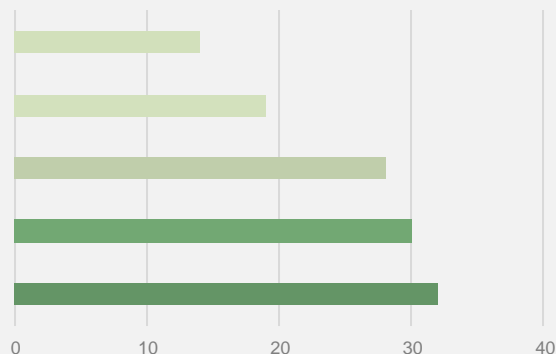
Engage with society to attract new volunteers and donors

Forge community that is aligned with mission

Promote collaboration and partnerships with external entities to enhance the reach and impact of non-profits, creating mutually beneficial relationships.

Create a positive impact to Singaporean society

Promote education of their cause to empower individuals to make informed and compassionate choices



Media Coverage Drivers

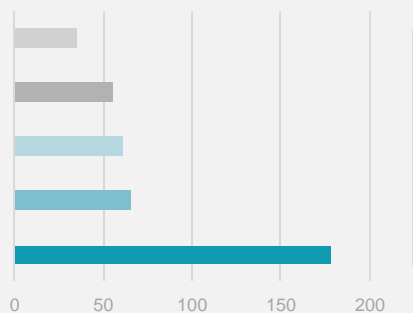
Donation Drives

Programs Organised by NGO

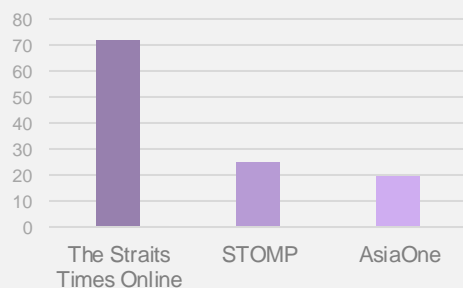
External event

Third-party issue involving NGOs

Quoted as a resource



Top Media Outlets



Community NPOs, by virtue of their type of work, tend to be quite active in their media engagement.

Most of the NPOs in this sector tend to have a dedicated communication team. Partnerships are often key to their work and help raise their visibility. TOUCH Community Services, for instance, has partnerships with Citi Singapore and Facebook while Food from the Heart has partnerships with the Fairprice group and

Resorts World Sentosa. For some of the NPOs under study, their brand recognition comes more naturally either because of their links to a global brand (e.g. Red Cross Society and Habitat for Humanity), or because of the work that they do (e.g. Samaritans of Singapore suicide hotline). A unique aspect of NPOs in this sector is that programme income is a major revenue stream.

Case Study:

TOUCH Community Services

Officially registered in 1992, TOUCH Community Services (TOUCH) has been a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) since 1994. Initially established as a service for latchkey children in Clementi and Jurong, TOUCH has since evolved into a multi-service organisation with an integrated network of services spanning various parts of Singapore. Its mission is to inspire hope and impact lives, recognising the value of each individual. Guided by its Vision 2030, which envisions *Strong Families; Caring Generations; Enabled Communities*, TOUCH serves individuals from diverse backgrounds, including children, youth, families, persons with special needs, and the elderly.

Stakeholders and Partnerships

Key stakeholders of TOUCH include the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), NCSS, the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), and the Media Literacy Council. Equally important are the close to 300,000 beneficiaries, its nearly 14,000 volunteers, and other supporters, including donors. TOUCH's private sector partners include DBS, CapitaLand, Sun Life, Changi Foundation, Rockwell Automation, and Citi Singapore, among many others. TOUCH's executive leadership team consists of 10 people, and according to its 2022 annual report, the organisation's income surpassed \$40 million. TOUCH has long enjoyed a strong reputation in Singapore, recognised as a well-established and respected NGO for its significant contributions to social welfare, healthcare, eldercare, family support, and various other community-related initiatives.

Communication and Media Engagement

TOUCH effectively communicates its impact on Singapore society through proactive engagement with traditional media. By sharing compelling human-interest stories, success narratives, and relevant case studies, TOUCH highlights the impact of its work, often resulting in articles published in *The Straits Times*, *Business Times*, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *CNA*, and other media outlets. Additionally, TOUCH leverages its social media presence on platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to disseminate information. Its official website features *TOUCH Point News* and

Homefront columns, which offer the elderly practical resources to maintain physical and mental fitness, as well as guidance for families to foster resilience, strengthen marital bonds, and enhance parent-child relationships.

Digital Engagement and Social Media Presence

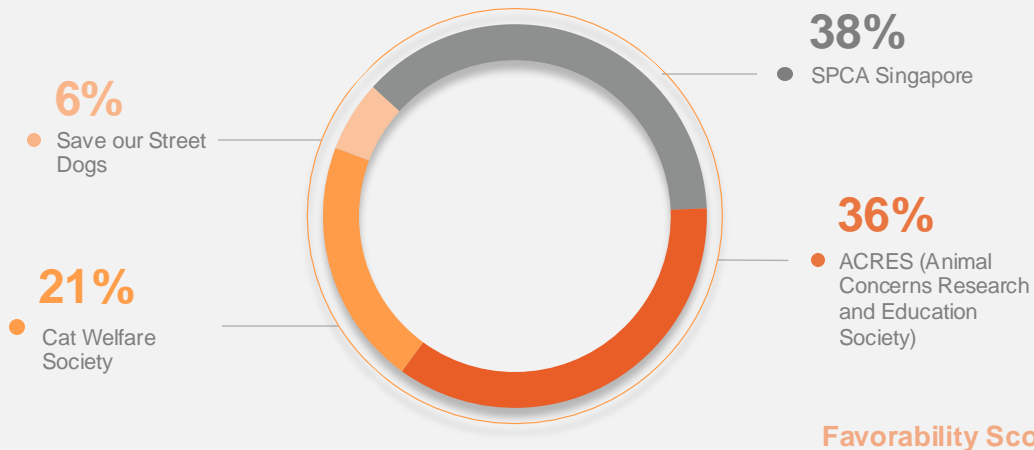
TOUCH's digital platform engagement is moderate, with a strong emphasis on Facebook, where it has over 14,000 followers. On other social media platforms, it maintains an average following of around 5,000. TOUCH uses these platforms to promote volunteerism, fundraising, communication outreach, and public awareness. It maintains a social media update frequency of one post every three to four days on Facebook and one post every other week on LinkedIn.

Recognition and Governance

TOUCH has been lauded for its transparent communication and governance. In 2023, TOUCH won both the Charity Governance Award (CGA) and the Charity Transparency Award (CTA). These awards aim to promote good governance in the social sector by acknowledging the excellent work of charities and inspiring others to adopt best practices.

Animal Welfare

Share of Voice of Animal Welfare NPOs

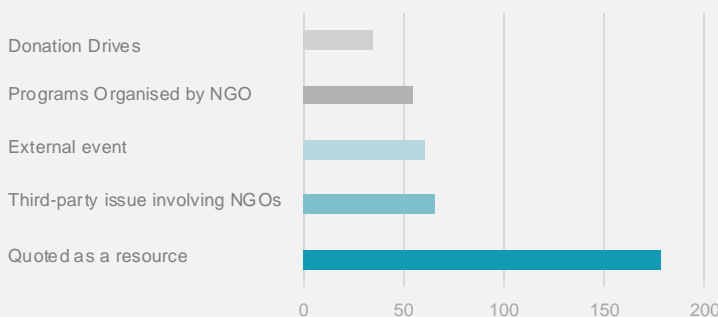


Favorability Score: 50.4

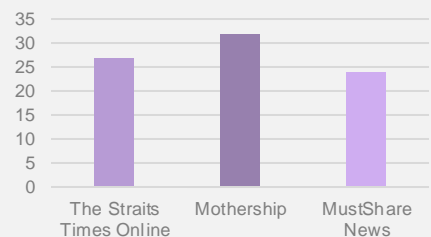
Key Narratives Mentioned Most



Media Coverage Drivers



Top Media Outlets



Animal welfare NPOs typically lack dedicated communication teams, with the responsibility often falling to other departments, such as outreach and partnerships, or senior management.

These organisations operate with lean resources and rely heavily on volunteers. They are not eligible for NCSS (National Council of Social Service) membership, which limits access to certain grants available to other NPOs. Due to their structure and limited resources, their communication tends to be more reactive and ad hoc than strategic.

Despite these challenges, some NPOs, like ACRES and SPCA Singapore, regularly receive media attention for their work in wildlife and animal abuse cases. Such coverage frequently highlights their efforts. Many NPOs have also built distinct reputations—Cat Welfare Society, for example, serves as AVA's mediator for cat-related issues, while ACRES is the only NPO dedicated to wild animals. However, some face persistent misperceptions, like SPCA Singapore, which is often mistaken for a government entity and wrongly believed to euthanise animals.

Case Study:

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Singapore (SPCA)

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Singapore (SPCA) traces its roots back to colonial times and was re-established as the Royal SPCA in 1947. Transitioning into an independent local organisation in 1959, SPCA Singapore has since operated autonomously, dedicated to its mission of promoting kindness and preventing cruelty to animals through education, advocacy, and action. Its vision is to foster a compassionate society in Singapore where all animals are treated with dignity and care.

Services and Stakeholders

SPCA offers a comprehensive range of services, including a clinic providing free or subsidised treatment for dogs, cats, and other small animals from diverse backgrounds. Recently, it initiated an ambassador programme aimed at fostering advocacy and empathy, particularly among the younger generation. The organisation engages with various stakeholders, including sponsors, donors, volunteers, and governmental agencies, to fulfil its annual funding requirement of approximately \$3 million. SPCA's prudent financial management ensures operational sustainability, crucial in navigating the uncertainties of public donations influenced by economic fluctuations.

Operations and Collaborations

Employing a staff of 50 individuals alongside some 400 volunteers, SPCA actively recruits skilled individuals capable of offering professional expertise beyond animal care. Setting itself apart as the sole provider of end-to-end animal welfare services—from rescue and rehabilitation to rehoming—SPCA operates a clinic and shelter under one roof. Furthermore, it prioritises education and advocacy, collaborating with government bodies like NParks' Animal & Veterinary Service and fellow animal welfare organisations such as the Nature Society (Singapore) and ACRES for various campaigns, including the *Say No to Whale Sharks in Captivity* initiative.

Challenges and Reputation Management

Despite its esteemed reputation, SPCA faces challenges, including the public's high expectations for resolving cases promptly with limited resources, and persistent misconceptions, such as being mistaken for a governmental entity. To mitigate risks to its reputation, the organisation employs transparent communication via owned media channels and actively engages with journalists. In response to rumours and publicity in 2021, SPCA launched a comprehensive public relations campaign to address false accusations of inhumanely euthanising healthy animals.

Communication Strategy and Future Goals

SPCA tailors its communication campaigns to address local needs, with ongoing initiatives focusing on educating children about pet bullying and advocating for the indoor safety of cats following an increase in accidents. While primarily utilising social media for communication, SPCA adopts a reactive approach due to resource constraints.

Looking ahead, SPCA aims to broaden its impact by implementing innovative ideas, such as establishing volunteer networks in neighbourhoods and decentralising its services to reach more beneficiaries. Additionally, investing in long-term reputation management strategies is crucial to dispel misconceptions and uphold its standing as a leading advocate for animal welfare in Singapore.

Reflections



Communication

It appears that most NGOs in Singapore struggle with communication issues. Many allocate limited financial and human resources to the task of communicating effectively with their stakeholders. Only a few have dedicated communication departments, and the function is often managed by one or a few individuals, who often have additional responsibilities. The function is sometimes submerged in outreach, community engagement, partnerships or marketing and fundraising. This leads us to conclude that communication is not viewed as a strategic function at either the board of directors' level, or the top management level.

To illustrate the above, in 2016, Bain & Co, in collaboration with the Centre for Non-Profit Leadership, published the report *Unlocking the Power of Singapore's Nonprofits*. They noticed that in 2014 NGO leaders rated themselves just average (although slightly better than in 2010) on 'effective communication across or with organisation' which we understand to mean external and internal communication. They also identified resource gaps in several functions; most of all in marketing and communication, which they considered increasingly as a key gap. It is noteworthy that the word 'communication' does not appear in the written report at all.

We believe it is time for nonprofits to take communication more seriously. This starts at the board level. Next, we recommend that management takes a snapshot of the NGOs' reputation, ability to attract talent and volunteers, effectiveness in fundraising and engagement with government bodies. These disciplines are crucial tasks for any NGO's CEO. This research is perhaps best achieved by hiring an independent firm.

The results can then be used by engaging a communication consultancy (usually referred to as a PR agency in Singapore) to help develop a coherent strategic plan to improve communication. Certainly, this will have consequences as additional financial and human resources will need to be allocated.

There is a not-often-enough used alternative: there are many communication professionals who would be happy to volunteer, as well as consulting firms willing to charge minimal rates for their work or do it without any payment at all.

One area where many NGOs could improve immediately, would be to be more open to engage with interested individuals, students and professionals who approach them and have questions they would like to have answered, or suggestions to be considered. During our research, it often proved difficult, if not impossible to contact CEOs or even their communication executives. Emails went unanswered. Completed and submitted 'contact us' forms on websites were ignored.

Board of Directors

Our research used publicly available information only. The subject of governance did not emerge often. In itself this is disappointing, as boards of directors play (or should play) an important role in NGOs. Their individual and combined networks can have significant impact on the nonprofits, especially in terms of fundraising and partnership development.

The largest nonprofits, which according to the CNPL/Bain & Co, dominate fundraising, have excellent well-diversified boards. For example, in 2012 one seasoned independent director described the Singapore Chinese Orchestra as an example of an NGO with a board with firepower. That said, many nonprofits, especially the mid-size and smaller ones, should take a hard look at their board composition and review gender diversity and other aspects to check if important disciplines such as management expertise, fundraising prowess, finance, legal, marketing and communication knowledge and expertise are covered adequately.

Positioning

Certain NGOs are viewed by the public as being too close to the Singapore government. This may not be true, but we need to recognise that perception is reality in our fast-moving modern society. Another issue, we believe is that many people active in the social sector believe their role in society may be important, but less so when compared to the private and public sectors. They are wrong. NGOs should partner with corporates in particular and government agencies on the basis of equality. The purpose of nonprofits is clear and compelling, and if the social sector would disappear tomorrow, Singapore would face immense problems.

Stakeholder Management

All, but a few well-managed nonprofits would benefit from engaging in this important aspect of management in a systemic way. We came across NGOs that managed volunteers, one particularly critical stakeholder group, well. Nonprofits need to be more creative and treat volunteer management more seriously. According to various sources, it appears to be increasingly difficult to attract individuals to volunteer and even harder to keep them. There are many ways NGOs can do this, as described in an attractive booklet, *101 Ideas to Enhance Your Volunteers' Experience*, created and published in 2022 by a group of four final-year students of NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

Our research showed nonprofits engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, including internal ones such as the board of directors; employees; and volunteers, as well as external individuals and organisations, in particular beneficiaries; donors and sponsors; government agencies; and community partners.

In the private sector, stakeholder management is usually a task of the chief communication officer or the chief marketing officer. They often use sophisticated stakeholder identification; prioritisation; and management tools and techniques. Some of the largest and most successful NGOs in Singapore, may already engage in this. We believe those that don't should consider paying more attention to this important task.

Partnership Development and Management

The CNPL/Bain & Co 2016 report also found that private sector participation was relatively untapped. We have not found evidence that suggests that there has been any significant change since. Singapore's leading corporations, as well as the multinationals which have selected Singapore as their regional headquarters, and/or have a significant presence here, have many resources, beyond the obvious financial support they can give, to benefit nonprofits. The private sector remains an attract albeit untapped resource. NGOs should look into which private sector organisations might be able to partner with them in meaningful ways, and then approach them with invitations for discussions on how both the company and the nonprofit can benefit. These discussions should focus on potential links between the two; the company's CSR objectives and programmes; and how the company's employees might participate.

Social Media

While all the NGOs studied in our research use social media, the reasons for their use and the effectiveness vary. Some use social media mainly to raise awareness of the issue they are concerned about, while others use it as a tool for education; for delivering programmes; or for engaging with specific communities. The reach and engagement on social media also vary significantly, even within the same sector.

Some of the NGOs reviewed use social media on an ad-hoc basis, others sparsely and a few seem to have forgotten about them altogether. We fear mid-size and small NGOs in particular have boards of directors and managers who do not ask important questions, such as: “Have we sought expert advice? What exactly are our objectives when using social media? What is our strategy? Do we have the resources to implement social media campaigns and engagement and, finally, do we measure the impact of our social media engagement?”

Traditional Media

Our NGO media analysis from June to December 2023 revealed several key insights. First of all, NPOs in the Community and Animal Welfare sectors received the most media mentions, mainly due to their involvement in high-interest public issues, such as mental health and animal welfare incidents. In contrast, Women & Children NGOs surprisingly had the least coverage.

The nonprofits generally enjoy positive or neutral media coverage, with no significant negative mentions. The Arts & Heritage sector stands out slightly better in terms of favourability, largely due to the nature of its media coverage that highlights achievements and prestigious collaborations. Most NGOs were mentioned in passing and feature stories were rare,

with exceptions like *Dementia Singapore* and *Food from the Heart*. NGOs were often mentioned towards the end of articles, particularly when listed as resources, which although not prominent, helps establish their credibility.

The most common topics were related to the NGOs’ core activities and efforts to raise awareness. Coverage often linked them directly to their mission, especially in sectors like Animal Welfare, Health and Community. Education is often selected as a primary narrative. The most frequent narrative across sectors was the promotion of education to empower the public, followed by collaboration with external entities and creating a positive societal impact.

NGOs, while generally well-regarded in the media, largely gain visibility through incidental mentions related to their involvement in broader societal issues or through proactive efforts like organising events and partnerships. However, solid media strategies focusing on education, partnerships, and reputation management could further enhance their visibility and public perception. NGOs might also start using their patrons and even members of their board as spokespeople, given their potential to draw attention and raise awareness of both the organisation and the cause.

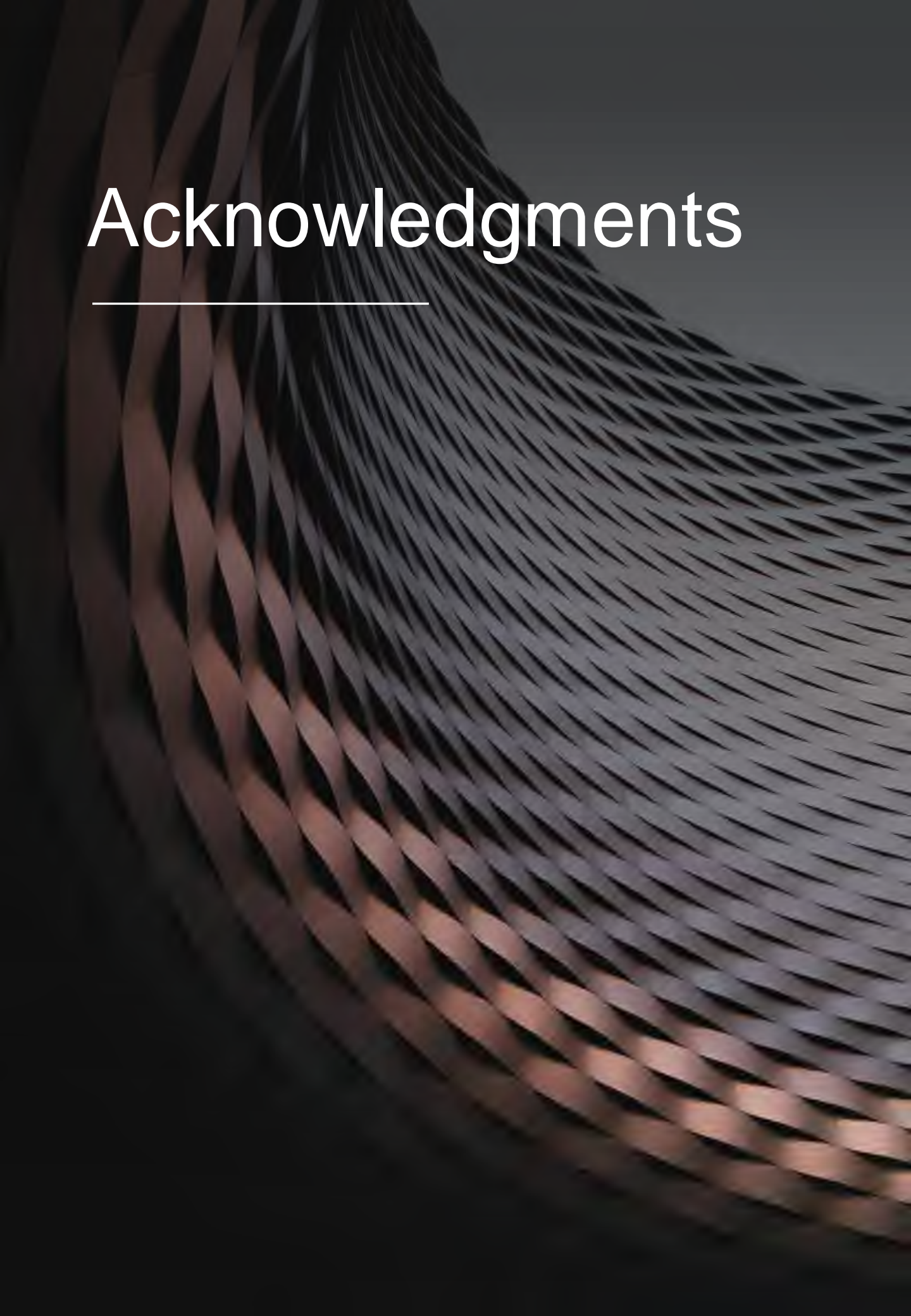


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