

**Pawfessional Performance:
Evaluating Social Media Engagement in a Dog Adoption Social Media Campaign**

Cadence Lommori

Graduate Assistant
806-742-2816
calommor@ttu.edu

Jessica Dammers-Hemphill

Project Manager for Center for Agriscience Communications at Texas Tech
806-834-4946
jdammers@ttu.edu

Dr. Laura Fischer

Assistant Professor
806-834-0630
laura.fischer@ttu.edu

Dr. Courtney Meyers

Professor and Graduate Studies Coordinator
806-834-4364
courtney.meyers@ttu.edu

Department of Agricultural Education and Communications
Texas Tech University
Box 42131
Lubbock, TX 79409

Introduction

Social media remains tenacious in today's digital world, with approximately 71% of American adults active on Facebook and 50% on Instagram (Gottfried & Park, 2025). Utilizing these dominant platforms can create a cost-effective tool for businesses and organizations to organically share content or apply paid media strategies to further their audience reach. Harris et al. (2023) posits non-profit social media use has a positive impact on donations and fundraising efforts and suggests non-profits should invest in an active social media presence "to cultivate an engaged social media audience" (p. 685). A non-profit setting in constant circulation, where an active social media presence can be essential to its success, is animal adoption. In 2025, roughly 2.8 million dogs entered shelters and rescues across the United States (Shelter Animals Count, 2025). Animal Defense League of Texas and Operation Kindness are examples of these non-profit rescue organizations that leverage social media to create awareness and share valuable information about animals available for adoption (Animal Defense League of Texas, n.d.; Operation Kindness, n.d.). Similarly, through Texas Tech University (TTU) Canine Olfaction Lab and a behavioral training class, students and faculty worked with local shelter dogs to train and prepare them for adoption. An adoption event was organized for the trained dogs, which was then promoted through a social media campaign. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of this social media marketing campaign to encourage adoption of the *Pawfessionally Trained Pups*.

Conceptual Framework

To understand the effectiveness of the social media campaign, this study drew from social media engagement principles and best practices. Social media engagement is defined as "an umbrella term for actions that reflect and measure how much your audience interacts with your content" (Sprout Social, 2025, para. 4). Through the review of engagement metrics, such as likes, views, and follows, the organization can identify types of posts that are performing well with their audience (Sprout Social, 2025). These metrics are interpreted as key performance indicators (KPIs), which are critical to the social media campaign evaluation process (Ochoa, 2024). McLeod-Morin et al. (2020) and Corry et al. (2023) explored differing social media techniques and found frames, types of spokespeople, and meaningful advertisements can be effective outreach and promotion tools. These studies demonstrated the relevance of social media research and recommended additional studies on social media to improve its use and performance. Specifically, Morrison et al. (2024) recommended more research on animal shelter social media engagement to determine how information presented impacts engagement and adoption. Understanding social media campaign metrics and how they boost engagement can not only optimize future performance, but give advantage in today's digital world (Ochoa, 2024).

Methods

This study evaluates the performance of a social media campaign promoting a local dog adoption event using a retrospective, pre-post campaign evaluation study design. The social media campaign was active for 23 days leading up to the adoption event. Social media performance data were collected using Meta Business Suite, a native analytics tool gathering page-level and post-level performance for Facebook and Instagram (Meta, n.d.). We collected the following metrics to evaluate the social media campaign's performance: visits, views, follows, engagements (e.g., likes, comments), shares, and reach. To establish a reference point

for comparison between equivalent timeframes, analytics were pulled from the 23 days prior to the social media campaign launch. Following data collection, metrics were retrospectively analyzed in Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics calculated the frequency and percent change for each metric to determine performance differences before and during the campaign.

Results

The pre-post evaluation revealed increases in social media engagement on both Facebook and Instagram across all measured campaign metrics, as seen in Table 1. On Instagram, reposts increased from $n = 2$ pre-campaign to $n = 77$ during the campaign (3,750.00%). Post engagements for Instagram increased from $n = 42$ to $n = 414$ (885.71%). On Facebook, reposts increased from $n = 2$ to $n = 49$ (2350.00%), and Facebook views increased from $n = 866$ to $n = 18,952$ (2088.45%) throughout the duration of the social media campaign. Facebook post engagements increased from $n = 34$ to $n = 401$ (1,079.41%).

Table 1
Audience Engagement for Dog Adoption Campaign by Platform and Time Period

| Metric | Facebook | | | Instagram | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| | Pre <i>f</i> | During <i>f</i> | % Change | Pre <i>f</i> | During <i>f</i> | % Change |
| Engagements | 34 | 401 | 1,079.41% | 42 | 414 | 885.71% |
| Follows | 7 | 53 | 657.14% | 42 | 49 | 16.67% |
| Reach | 770 | 6,442 | 7,362.00% | 807 | 12,605 | 1461.96% |
| Reposts | 2 | 49 | 2,350.00% | 2 | 77 | 3750.00% |
| Views | 866 | 18,952 | 2,088.45% | 5,362 | 47,745 | 790.43% |
| Visits | 125 | 1,762 | 1,309.60% | 125 | 440 | 252.00% |

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

Many studies have explored social media best practices, but limited research has examined the performance of actual social media campaigns. Along with informing the literature regarding the evaluation of social media campaign performance, this study can inform future content strategy for non-profit animal rescue organizations. Ochoa (2024) explains the next crucial step for ensuring your campaign resonates and evolves with your audience is turning insight into action. Future research can focus on the implementation of changes based on insight analysis or the testing of different content types (i.e., reels, message frames, platforms). TTU Canine Olfaction Lab’s activity on social media prior to this campaign was low, which could have led to the exponential increased reach on Instagram and higher engagements on Facebook. While this can inform platform specific content strategy, continued research is needed to monitor metrics post-campaign. Based on the extensive use of social media and the awareness it builds for non-profits (Harris et al., 2023; Gottfried & Park, 2025), we recommend non-profit organizations monitor campaign performance through social media analytics and adjust content strategy accordingly. Due to the success from our campaign for a small-scale organization, we specifically recommend organizations leverage social media campaigns and evaluate their content to improve strategy, optimization, and overall campaign effectiveness.

References

- Animal Defense League of Texas. (n.d.) *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved January 28, 2026, from <https://www.facebook.com/adltexas>
- Corry, R., Taylor, W. R., Holt, J., Bittles, H., Campbell, B. L., & Campbell, J. (2023). Flower power: testing social media advertising strategies for floral products. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 107(3). <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.2485>
- Gottfried, J. & Park, E. (2025, November 20). *Americans' social media use 2025: Growing shares of U.S. adults say they are using Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and Reddit, but YouTube still rises to the top*. Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/44bHrje>
- Harris, E. E., Neely, D. G., & Saxton, G. D. (2023). Social media, signaling, and donations: testing the financial returns on nonprofits' social media investment. *Review of Accounting Studies*, 28(2), 658-688. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11142-021-09651-3>
- McLeod-Morin, A., Beattie, P., Rampold, S., & Telg, R. (2020). Exploring social media engagement of a mosquito control campaign: comparing engagement rates per content type and content frame. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 104(1). <https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.2299>
- Meta. (n.d.) *About insights in meta business suite*. https://www.facebook.com/business/help/700570830721044?id=765488040896522&ref=fbf_fbs_products
- Morrison, R., Maust-Mohl, M., & Ferry, T. (2024). Exploring factors that influence public engagement of adoptable pets on Facebook. *Animals*, 14(22), 3217. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani14223217>
- Ochoa, S. (2024, April 8). *Analyzing social media metrics for campaign improvement*. The Ad Firm. https://www.theadfirm.net/analyzing-social-media-metrics-for-campaign-improvement/#elementor-toc__heading-anchor-4
- Operation Kindness. (n.d.) *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved January 28, 2026, from <https://www.facebook.com/OperationKindness>
- Shelter Animals Count. (2025). *2025 Annual data report*. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/2025-report>
- Sprout Social. (2025, June 26). *Social media engagement: What it is and tips to improve it*. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-engagement/>