The use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland

Thesis presented by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma.

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ABSTRACT

The use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland has experienced rapid growth in recent years. But since the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, community organisations and initiatives have become even more reliant on the power of digital. Community development has long been an integral part of life in the harsh climate of the West of Ireland (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986), but the pandemic seriously threatened its tried and test methods. A lot of communities adapted and successfully turned to digital media to help raise awareness and raise money to promote the various community development projects in their respective areas. While rural Ireland also found opportunity in the pandemic, with the rise of working from home and subsequent digital hubs creating a new landscape of long-term possibility. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate and analyse in qualitative multiple case study form, how various communities in the West of Ireland are successfully using digital media in their community development efforts, with the aim of creating a policy and strategy of best practice for future use. The findings strongly suggest that digital media, when used correctly, can be a significant tool for communities in the West of Ireland to utilise in their community development efforts and that communities are creating digital strategies both by themselves and by third party digital agencies. The study also finds that more focus needs to put on securing long-term sustainability for digital hubs. The conclusion can be drawn that community development organisations should seriously consider implementing a strategic digital marketing plan to help promote community development, or if they have the resources available, that they should consider hiring a third-party agency to do it for them. A systematic case study approach was employed, triangulating and validating findings in this important study, which proposes some crucial digital media strategies and recommendations for community development organisations, in this period of rapid change.

Keywords: digital media, community development, social media, West of Ireland, digital hubs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1 Introduction

The use of digital and social media is significant as a tool in community development for things such as building relationships, improving communications and reaching a wide audience now more than ever in history (Ukomadu, 2018).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic struck in March 2020, it has accelerated communities' reliance on digital media in their community development efforts. Most of the traditional ways and means of raising money and awareness of these projects became redundant for a large period of time and more focus shifted into the digital world, a third of which are now adopting online fundraising (Ferrell-Schweppenstedde, 2020)

Community development can be defined as intentional action aimed at positively modifying social structures (Luloff, 1990). And in the West of Ireland, community development has always been hugely important in protecting, maintaining and retaining rural cultures and communities (Brennan, 2006). Digital media are the tools, platforms, channels and strategies that people and communities use to get, produce and share knowledge. From its infancy, the digital was defined by mathematics – entering numbers into a machine which performs mathematics – this is also known as the binary system. Today's digital capabilities stretch far beyond that, and are now in smart devices and platforms where large-scale networked connects, coordination and communications are automated and human-driven (Lindgren, 2017). Over the past number of years, community development efforts have been positively impacted by the embracing of digital media within organisations. But the reliance on digital software and social media has never been more important in shaping communities since the pandemic struck. Because of that we have seen an emergence of several successful digitally-led and focused

community development campaigns for projects that have re-shaped communities in the West of Ireland (Cooney, 2020).

Researcher Background

The researcher is a professional digital marketer working with a large sports retailer in Co Mayo in the West of Ireland. In addition, the researcher is also heavily involved in community developed in a voluntary capacity. Primarily through a large involvement in senior club football - playing and administration – and other voluntary community development projects.

The vast adaption of digital and social media usage in community development has grown at a rapid pace in the past two years and it has provided the inspiration for this research study. As the reliance on digital seems to be growing greater into the future, the researcher believed that creating a policy of best practice or simple strategy for future community development organisations to use, based on the evidence gathered from others, may have a lot of practical use in the future.

Research Objectives and Questions

This research paper assesses how a number of communities in peripheral regions in the West of Ireland are utilising digital media to promote community development.

It examines the uses of digital in various community development projects and initiatives including, for example, win a House in Westport, The Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkways Project, Croí Heart & Stroke Charity Raffle a Car, Online Bingo, virtual Church services and a Global Learning and Digital Hub in Connemara, among others. A multiple case study approach to the research has allowed real-life examples to be used along with multiple sources of qualitative evidence gathered. It became clear, following a review of the literature on community development, that there was a scarcity of research studies into

community development organisations employing digital media in the West of Ireland. This paper addresses that deficit in research and explores some of the following topics:

1. To examine the use of digital media in specific community development projects in the West of Ireland

2. To evaluate the various tools and methods being used across the various projects

3. To gather information that will help generate a policy or strategy for effective digital media use in community development.

There has been some notable research carried out on community development in the West of Ireland by Cearbhaill and Cinnéide (1986) and Brennan (2006) in Killala, which gives some important conclusions on the keys to success of community development in a small village in the West of Ireland. However, this study was undertaken before the era of digital media.

This research will use their findings and recommendations to provide contextual insights into what successful community development in the West of Ireland of requires and will build on the-wider research on the subject. Findings as far back as 1986 are still relevant to the modern-day world of community development in the West of Ireland. They include acronyms like LOCAL CORPS. That acronym represents the idea of people cooperating for the common good of building their community through Leadership, Organization, Community, Agencies, Liaison, Communication, Opportunities, Resourcefulness, Professionalism, and Self-help (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986). A number of themes have arisen in the literature with regard to promoting successful rural community development, but a scarcity was found in the literature with regard to community development employing digital technologies, in rural peripheral townlands in the West of Ireland.

Dissertation Structure Overview

The thesis is divided into five chapters:

- Chapter 1 Introduction: which briefly states the research purpose, objectives and questions.

- Chapter 2 Literature Review: which examines the academic work published in topics related to this research.

- Chapter 3 Methodology: describes the methodological approach used throughout this research to help reach the conclusions and recommendations.

- Chapter 4 Findings & Discussions: examines the semi-structured interviews before discussing, analysing and finding common themes throughout.

- Chapter 5 Conclusions & Recommendations: summarises the entire research project and concludes with some recommendations, along with exploring further research ideas.

A number of key themes were highlighted throughout the data collection in this research. Data was gathered via 9 semi-structured in-depth interviews with key individuals from each organisation. In addition to this, secondary data was collated from government reports, charity and community development organisation surveys and reports, private financial reports from organisations and additional analytical data. The in-depth interviews were carried out with senior management of each individual case study; some have high levels of expertise in the digital landscape while others are honest in their admissions that their digital skills are not at an advanced level.

In the findings, there has been a noticeable shift from the usage of traditional media methods in marketing toward the digital side, mainly due to being a cheaper, more effective model, one that has been accelerated by Covid-19 also. There has also been an emergence in communities

in the West of Ireland where they are contracting out the work for their digital campaigns in return for a fee. This would slightly contradict some of the learnings of Brennan (2006) and Cearbhaill and Cinnéide (1986), who found that community development is most likely to be successful when work is completed by people without ulterior motives.

There is also a thorough exploration of both organic and paid advertising digital campaigns and strategies from various projects, while the need for sufficient time and skill to successfully run a digital campaign is also explored. Analysis of the digital campaigns of the research participants to compare and contrast organic and paid strategies provided other sources of primary data towards the research. The research also finds that the strength of a brand or community organisation can influence the popularity and thus the success of a project and online digital campaign.

Given the growth of digital hubs and remote working across the country since the Covid-19 pandemic, the research explores digital hubs in the West of Ireland and discovers what is required for them to be sustainable in their community long into the future.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The United Nations defines community development as when a group of people come together to take collective action and develop solutions to problems within their own community. The end goal of these movements is to build stronger and more resilient communities (Community development, 2021).

Community Development is a worldwide movement completed in both urban and rural settings and there are many, many ways to conduct community development research (Luloff, 1999).

Community Development in the West of Ireland

Four decades ago, a case study was conducted on community development in a small, rural village in the West of Ireland, by O'Cearbhaill and O'Cinneide (1986) Community Development in the West of Ireland: A Case Study of the Killala Area, before being revisited 20 years later by Mark Brennan (2006). On a European level a significant research study on community development was researched by Janine Partington and Mick Totten (2012) in Community sports projects and effective community empowerment: a case study in Rochdale. While at a global level, you can read research by MA Brennan, Courtney G Flint and AE Luloff (2008) Bringing Together Local Culture and Rural Development: Findings from Ireland, Pennsylvania and Alaska.

The research conducted into community development covers a wide variety of topics and theories. This literature review will focus in on the research which is akin to this study, which focuses on rural community development, whilst also exploring reoccurring themes, hypothesis and literature gaps in relevant papers on community development. Themes explored included:

- What characteristics are needed for successful community development.
- How communities have adapted to meet their needs.
- Community collaborations.
- How culture can influence community development.
- How digital narratives can impact community development and the role of community sports development.
- What empowers community development.

What makes successful community development?

Community development in the West of Ireland is not a new phenomenon and there is research into successful community development that dates back to the 1980s when (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986) conducted a case study on the village of Killala in North Mayo. They found that highly motivated leadership at local level can be attributed as being one of the single most important facets of community development in a small rural area in the West of Ireland (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986).

The pair explored the main reasons how a village once ravaged by emigration turned it around and prospered in difficult circumstances, developing a strong sense of place.

The research paper looked at the Killala Community Council's (KCC) 'varied and successful programme of community-initiated development projects' and how they are 'without parallel in the West of Ireland' (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986). The KCC undertook a total of 20 community projects ranging from small (facilitating the filming of The Year of the French) to large (major district water scheme for 245 houses) and it is reported that the success of the KCC community development projects were a tremendous boost to local morale (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986). To be successful, they say, 'highly motivated leadership at community level might fairly be regarded as being fundamental' in the community development of Killala. They also argue that the role of the council, or committee, is another key element to the KCC being successful, with most of them having high levels of formal or informal education which serves elements such as initiative and enlightened attitudes (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986). While they add that, more importantly, the 'community itself' must be seen as the primary source of support for the developments. In essence, without the support of the community, the KCC would fail.

Twenty years later, Brennan (2006) returned to Killala with a goal of assessing the changes as well as trying to 'determine community characteristics that have persisted' as the area underwent a variety of socio economic and political changes. He found that a variety of positive and negative changes took place in the area that shaped the need for community action. The field research, conducted from a perspective 'where local interaction is the basis for community emergence', found that the KCC were still a major influence in community development in

Killala but 'its objectives of meeting the local needs have not changed dramatically over the last twenty years' (Brennan, P336 2006).

His study was also based on the premise that local residents acting together have the capacity to improve community well-being. He found that as community development progresses in Killala, there is a need for greater social interaction within the community and development itself can benefit for reaching out to other social groups, which also promotes awareness. However, he found that 20 years on, the findings of Cearbhaill and Cinnèide (1986) are still relevant and will be for another 20 years too.

The findings are shared in other research too, such as in The Doing of Rural Community Development Research (Luloff, AE, 1999) which finds that multi-involvement from the various community stakeholders is hugely positive as it promotes the 'well-being of the community as a whole instead of the sole interests of some special interest groups. There are other reasons for success, like a community acting on what it needs. Brennan, Flint and Luloff, (2009) state that 'The ability of communities to act is vital to the success of development efforts. To achieve development goals, it is critical to identify and study local social interaction and culture, both of which provide a linkage and common sense of solidarity for people'.

They also state that in terms of culture, the local GAA, church and other organisations served as catalysts for interaction (Brennan, Flint and Luloff, 2009). The role of sport on community development and empowerment is also explored by (Partington and Totten, 2012) in Community sports projects and effective community empowerment: a case study in Rochdale, which argue that co-dependent non-hierarchical partnership between citizens, communities and providers is crucial to securing success in community sports development projects. They find that 'activities that are developed spontaneously because the community wants them are more likely to succeed than an outside agency coming in and undergoing development. Much of that is also down to community ownership and identity. Partington and Totten (2012) found that community sporting development did strengthen community empowerment. One of Carter (2012)'s key conclusions were that to sustain community development in the long term, projects that stimulate interest and engagement are vitally important.

In Community Leadership Development: Process and Practice (1995), sum it up: "The basis of many current community leadership programs is a focus on a strong grass-roots involvement to meet the previously stated needs for community leadership."

Perhaps the most comprehensive analyses of what makes a successful community development project is Cearbhaill and Cinnèide's (1986) conclusion of ingredients for success, expressed using the acronym, LOCAL CORPS, which 'conveys the sense of people working together for the common purpose of developing their locality on the basis of leadership' (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, P205, 1986). It is broken down into: Leadership, Organisation, Community, Agencies, Liaison, Communication, Opportunities, Resourcefulness, Professionalism and Self-help.

Success in Rural Irish Community Development

A number of themes were found to determine the success of community development in rural Ireland (see table)

1. Brennan, Flint and Luloff (2009) found that a key to success in community development is identifying early on in the process, the local social interaction and culture, which provides a sense of solidarity

2. Cearbhaill and Cinnèide (1986) argue that 'highly motivated leadership' at community level could be fundamental to success

3. Brennan (2006) believes that successful community development cannot take place without singular involvement from people, who are first motivated to satisfy their own needs and simultaneously a wider community need

4. Brennan (2006) also concluded people do not get involved in community development out of vested interests, but in the case of Killala, years of poverty tough times formed a strong bond of support and a willingness to support each other

5. Partington and Totten (2012) found that community development taking place internally succeeds far more often than external bodies' efforts, of which is due to 'ownership and identity'

Table A Lit Review Common Themes on success in rural community development

Theme	Quote	Reference
Leadership	…" highly motivated leadership at community level might fairly be regarded as being fundamental…"	Cearbhail and Cinnéide (1986)
Community Engagement	…multi-involvement from the various community stakeholders are hugely positive as it promotes the "well-being of the community as a whole instead of the sole interests of some special interest groups"…	Luloff, AE (1999)
Community Action	…"The ability of communities to act is vital to the success of development efforts"…	Brennan, Flint and Luloff (2009)
Grass Roots	…" The basis of many current community leadership programs is a focus on a strong grass roots involvement"…	Langone and Rohs (1995)
Community Agency	…"freely interacting with others leads to community agency and highlights the fact that people are involved in community actions as a result of their own free will and, likely, without ulterior motives"…	Brennan (2006)
Communication	…"development efforts are important, but more s is the process of interaction, establishment of channels of communication that signal the development of a community"…	Brennan (2006)
Sustainability	…"projects that stimulate interest and engagement is vitally important"…	Carter (2012)
Ownership/identity	…"In response to poverty and other historical conditions in the west of Ireland, tight groupings of families, friends and neighbours have often formed strong informal support systems… such behaviour was consistent with the 'meitheal' tradition"…	Brennan (2006)

The role of digital narratives and communication

A common theme throughout the literature is the role of communication and narratives on successful community development through promoting engagement.

In a world dominated by digital media, our sense of reality is increasingly structured by narrative. Yet there is nothing natural or universal about it, more a form of expression. It is historically and culturally positioned to turn information and events structured for meaningful audiences (Fulton *et al.*, 2005).

A key element to long-term success is that the development is in line with the community's needs, while differing expectations can lead to disillusionment and difficulties in maintaining volunteer input, but according to (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008), the use of narratives can overcome these. They also find that new media tools such as digital storytelling might be valuable in the community engagement process. Digital storytelling is a gateway for locally created content to a digital platform to promote debate, engagement and to help community narratives (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn, 2008). That research focuses on urban planners using social sciences, arts and humanities for answers to achieve socially sustainable developments. The role of communication and its importance in community development is also explored in Community sports projects and effective community empowerment: a case study in Rochdale. Partington and Totten (2012) noted that a strength of Rochdale Community Sports was its ability to engage with stakeholders in their area which allowed it create a mass of support. Although this communication was not digital, it still helped serve the community's needs. That ability to engage with its stakeholders is important for effective communication as people are likely to take part in and remain committee to development efforts to which they are directly connected (Greenhalgh and Dove, 1989).

Community development is not solely based on the physical aspect but also on the social side which builds relationships with people within the community. From this perspective, development efforts are not important, but more so is the process of interaction, establishment of channels of communication that signal the development of a community (Brennan, 2006). In the 1980s, when Cearbhaill and Cinnèide (1986) were conducting their research on Killala, they did conclude how important effective communication can be in the success of community development. While digital narratives at the time were unheard of, they found that strong first-hand communication can be persuasive when lobbying elected representatives and nurturing

relationships of trust and credibility. Those skills were equally as important when informing the local community (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986) of news and developments.

In Bringing Together Local Culture and Rural Development: Findings from Ireland, Pennsylvania and Alaska, the importance of harmonious communication was emphasised in the exploration of the local culture and development process in Alaska. From an Irish perspective, they provided the example of local organisations like the GAA serving as catalysts for interaction, structure and united of a community. Brennan, Flint and Luloff, (2009) highlighted that due to conflict ingrained in a community's culture, which was due to bad communication and an unwillingness to resolve differences, development progress was slow.

There is also a 'need to develop digitally enabled services that are based on the social, cultural and economic needs of the neighbourhoods, requiring a combination of detailed local research and real efforts to consult with and engage local people as an essential prerequisite for capturing user needs and involving users in the design and delivery of new services, the start of the co-production process' (Carter, P188, 2012). This shows a need for positive communication and highlights the potential impact of conflict. These together suggest strongly that a strong and consistent digital narrative can help empower a local community.

What empowers community development?

A reoccurring theme throughout the literature explores why people get involved or feel empowered to take part in community development programmes. A lot of the research also focused on alumni participation in community development, alumni being former community members or some sort.

Langone and Rohs (1995) documented diverse alumni participation in community development and discovered that a broad range of community members have become involved in leadership activities because they feel responsible for what goes on after participating in a programme. This finding has much potential in a digital sense where an online community can be developed. Langone and Richard Rohs, (1995) also found that in the world of community affairs, alumni involvement and professional expertise were put to use depending on their personal interests, previous experience and the needs of a particular community. That suggests that participants will feel empowered by using their own skills or interests, which was outlined by Greenhalgh and Dove (1989) above.

Community development cannot take place without singular people getting involved. Brennan (2006) suggests that people get involved as it firstly allowed them to address their individual needs, while contributing to broader needs simultaneously. In Killala, Brennan (2006) discovered that the people involved in community development had very little vested interests in the community, but were involved in community action to meet a need for the people to engage in participated efforts. He also concluded that people freely interacting with each other in non-required activities shows that people are involved in community development out of their own free will and without ulterior motives. In the case of the West of Ireland, it was found that its history of poverty and other conditions promoted tight groupings of friends and families and neighbours, and greater community development participation comes out of a willingness and desire to support their neighbour (Brennan, 2006). If that can be applied in a digital sense, it opens up a much larger theme to be explored.

Digital Development in Communities

Communities using digital media and methods to inspire community development has been a popular initiative, particularly during times of economic uncertainty and weakness. While this research is focusing on rural community development organisations, the following research paper into community development in Manchester warrants being included, despite it being an urban area, due to its significance in community development. In 1991, The Manchester Host was launched in the English city, which was the UK's first worker cooperative Internet Service Provider. It was the UK's first locally based, globally accessible public access system offering email, bulletin boards and online databases, which focused heavily on community-based users and information providers (Carter 2012).

Manchester is seen as the 'original, modern' industrial city (Carter, 2012) but faced serious challenges in how to respond to a massive economic restructuring more than 50 years ago. In a study of a digital strategy initiative to develop local communities in Manchester by Carter (2012), a number of keys to success and lessons in digital community development were highlighted, which included:

- The need to develop digitally enabled services that are based on the social, cultural and economic needs of the neighbourhoods.

- That the stakeholders in the project demonstrate a long-term commitment to community engagement and capacity building.

- The need for ongoing evaluation strategy that identifies weaknesses and failures and recycles those results into future decision making.

- The importance of developing real exemplars that push the boundaries of what people know and stimulate their imaginations.

- The potential for generating added value from innovation and new investment into the area whilst at the same time focusing on existing investment within those locations.

There are also examples of community volunteer groups using digital technologies to develop networks of creatives, electronic arts initiatives and e-enabled community activities from the bottom up (Carter, 2012). Digital development in communities is a global initiative and plays an important part of the global economy, whilst promoting economic growth and development. It is also widely adopted that these developments positively influence the quality of life of individuals (Cruz-Jesus, Oliveira and Bacao, 2018). Very interestingly, Cruz-Jesus, Oliveira and Bacao, (2018) state that the importance of digital and ICT development is widely recognised but research in academia is not plentiful. Cruz-Jesus, Oliveira, Bacao and Irani (2016) found that two types of studies exist: one focused on measuring the digital divide; and one focusing on explaining what drives it, with the latter being of particular interest to authors.

Manchester Digital Strategy

As part of the Manchester Digital Strategy, which looked at the longer term sustainability of digital inclusion policies, one of its original ideas was to provide a sustainable digital development model which could be used to create social capital and community cohesion, building a 'sense of place'(Carter, 2012). And while a lot of this aimed at creating employment etc, it was still promoting community inclusion and development. The ever-accelerating development of digital technologies was highlighted as a major challenge and the aim of making Manchester a world-class sustainable digital city centred around four themes (Carter 2012):

- Sustaining economic growth, especially through the digital/creative sector with digital social enterprises and creating e-traders.

- Promoting digital inclusion.

- Continuing to transform public services through innovative uses of digital technologies.

- Promoting inclusive sustainability where digital technologies are used more innovatively to support… a greater quality of life generally.

Community Development & Covid-19

Community development has shifted massively over the past 12-months globally as the Covid-19 pandemic swept through communities all across the world. Westoby and Harris (2020) suggest that small communities may now come together to create 'mechanisms such as platform cooperatives: e.g., local people using digital platforms to cooperate and create local businesses in ways that delink from the global corporations such as Uber Eats, Uber and Amazon' (Westoby and Harris, P560, 2020) who they saw have profited hugely from this pandemic, to the expense of small, local businesses.

Verne (2020) writes how in the education system in South Africa, the majority of students have missed out on learning due to their inability to access connectivity. However, this has not been the case in the private schools. But this situation is also helping shift a move towards universal free access to the internet in the country and other digital technologies to ensure the masses are not left behind.

Rosie Meade (2020) wrote in Community Development Journal that as the world battled the realities of Covid-19, at a community level, volunteering has become the watchwords of the crisis. She writes that Covid-19 has the potential to break communities, but equally so the possibility of re-charging it, which corresponds with Westoby and Harris (2020). Sue Kenny (2020) writes in response to the pandemic, citizens are prepared to concede power at macro level, but have taken much more responsibility for their own well-being at micro level. She adds that in terms of community development, communities are involved in spontaneous efforts to shore up social connectedness'.

Digital Tools

New digital tools and types of technology are being designed and practiced by communities to facilitate the convergence of content and networks of people and to create new possibilities for them to develop and grow. The current literature also shows that communities have accumulated vast experience in using many different technologies (Brown, 2013).

However, research also suggests that a large gap exists between awareness of new digital tools and actually putting them in use, which can be attributed to the lack of knowledge, confidence or time to learn them (Paulus, Jackson and Davidson, 2017). The nature of digital media tools make them extremely helpful for community development and public relations but only a handful of studies explore their usage for community development initiatives (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009) and (Diga and Kelleher, 2009). The research that has been done shows that social media usage is beneficial for non-profit organisations for several reasons, such as deepening existing relationships. Predominantly it was found that social media is used to streamline management functions and educate the public but most are still not fully utilising it (Briones *et al.*, 2011). Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009) discovered that non-profit organisations are failing to fully utilise effective digital tools such as Facebook. Current research has also found that social media has become a popular digital marketing tool in order to connect audiences and using a digital marketing framework like RACE (Reach Act Convert Engage) is a popular aid for marketers to help organise and plan (Rautela, 2021). A later chapter will explore how the RACE framework can be used for community development organisations in the West of Ireland.

Gaps in literature

While there is a significant amount of research into community development therein lies a significant gap with regard to community development initiatives employing digital media. No study was found which analyses the use of digital media in community development in the West of Ireland. Additionally, there is little in the literature to explain how digital media can be used to support community development successfully and to promote empowerment.

A number of themes have arisen in the literature with regard to promoting successful rural community development, but a scarcity was found in the literature with regard to community development employing digital technologies, in rural peripheral townlands in the West of Ireland. More people than ever have become aware of the value of digital communication given that the world is now living in a pandemic. What was once considered the normal way of communicating is, for the present time, not possible. It means a new dynamic is needed to form communities, to bring people together and empower them to take part in community development, as those in rural areas tend to have lower engagement online (EC, 2020)

Important Reoccurring Concepts

Foth, Klaebe and Hearn (2008) explore how there is a direct need for digital narratives in their research and how it can be used in community development, but the study lacks insight into the practical steps or how it can be done.

They state that 'narratives provide a way of connecting with real identities and meaning, which is essential to the community engagement process' (Floth, Klaebe and Hearn, P2, 2008). They say that new media has been used in the community engagement for projects, because often difficulties can be encountered in maintaining volunteer input and technological sustainability. The use of digital narratives, may be one way of overcoming that (Foth, Klaebe and Hearn (2008). The ability to produce long term sustainability using digital media through a community development project is also an area that has not been explored. While Partington and Totten (2012) also indicate a need for more longitudinal studies and action research for the beneficiaries of community development. An opportunity to carry out that through digital media has plenty of potential. Digital media can also be used to assess the involvement of alumni in community development. Alumni participation and ex-pats form a key role in a lot of community development, but accessing them is often an issue.

A gap in the literature exists in the strength of digital storytelling and the use of digital media in empowering alumni and locals to get involved in community development. In the literature, Foth, Klaebe and Hearn (2008) highlight that it has the potential to narrate personal tales with expert guidance that will promote participation. While there also exists a major gap where digital tools, along with strategies like the RACE framework, however can be applied by community development organisations in the West of Ireland.

Surfacing Research Questions

A number of research deficits and issues yet to be explored were discovered while conducting this literature review.

Successful community development is a topic widely covered and researched, with findings from Killala from Cearbhail and Cinnéide (1986) and Brennan (2006), Pennsylvania and Alaska (Brennan, Flint, Luloff, 2009), and in England by Partington and Totten (2012). However, this review has identified a research deficit in particular, but not confined to, the

usage of digital media in community development projects both national and internationally. The issue of digital media in community development was researched in an urban environment in Manchester (Carter, 2013), however, there remains a major gap for rural areas, like the West of Ireland. The research there is limited to the ingredients of successful community development through a case study in Killala (Cearbhaill and Cinnèide, 1986). The positive impact digital media can have on rural areas has already been explored in global terms (Ukomadu, 2018), but applying those same learnings to a rural level in the West of Ireland still needs to be explored.

There is also plenty of evidence as to the role of digital narratives and successful communication in community development, such as Partington and Totten (2012) highlighting the need to engage your audience with informative messaging, and Cearbhail and Cinnéide (1986) in informing them of news. While Brennan, Flint and Luloff (2009) also emphasized the importance of exploring the local culture. This raises an interesting question on what communities are currently doing to engage their communities in a digital space. Brennan (2006) also found that the history of an area, in this case Killala on the West coast of Mayo, has a big influence in participation numbers for community development projects, in particular communities who have survived difficult pasts. As those in rural areas in Ireland tend to have lower digital engagement, mainly due to poor connectivity (EC, 2020), this raises an interesting question as to how community members engage in the project through a digital sense. Thus, there is little evidence in the literature to indicate that any studies were conducted into successful community development using digital media in small rural areas.

The research questions which have emerged from the gaps in this literature review are as follows:

1. To examine the use of digital media in specific community development projects in the West of Ireland

2. Evaluating the various tools and methods being used across the various projects

3. To gather information that will help generate a policy or strategy for effective digital media use in community development.

Summary of Literature Review

In essence, the literature shows why community development thrives in communities with active inhabitants who recognise the need for something and work together to get it done; through research the literature shows why individuals in communities get involved in community development and what motivates them to do so. A number of themes have arisen from the research, such as:

- The need for narratives to be developed in order to compliment the development.
- How the involvement of local people making decisions is preferred to over external groups.
- Communication is vital for success.
- An area's history and culture play a major influence on successful community development
- Digital strategies can be used to invoke a sense of community leadership
- Engagement and empowering local minds are crucial for sustainable community development

What the research does not cover is how all these fabrics of community development can be influenced by digital media and how it can be used to create empowerment and influence development in the West of Ireland, highlighting the major lack of exploration in this area. There is an evident gap in the topic for research exploring how digital media can be used to develop what we already know about community development, and how we might apply that to examples in the West of Ireland.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this research is to assess how a number of communities in peripheral regions in the West of Ireland are utilising digital media to promote community development.

It will incorporate multiple case studies with data gathered via qualitative instruments, on community development projects in the West of Ireland namely: The Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkways Project in Charlestown; Win a House in Westport 2; the Castlebar Community Sports Project; the Catholic Church streaming of Mass services, Croí Win a Car fundraiser, Connemara West Global Learning and Digital Hub. Other examples will also be referenced.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to generate a best practice model or policy for digital media community development projects. The second aim is to gather qualitative information on how community development projects are currently utilising digital media; and to evaluate the correlation between tools and techniques used across the various communities to empower development. Upon completion the research will generate a model or policy for effective practice which can be adopted by other community development initiatives.

Research Design

This research will address the literature gap on this topic, with the objectives of exploring the following research questions.

4. To examine the use of digital media in specific community development projects in the West of Ireland

5. Evaluating the various tools and methods being used across the various projects

6. To gather information that will help generate a policy or strategy for effective digital media use in community development.

This study will build upon current research on community development in the West of Ireland, most notably on the research by Cearbhaill and Cinnéide (1986) and Brennan (2006) in Killala. The value of this study is that it provides in-depth information on how communities are adapting to use digital media in community development projects during these times. It is the first study of its kind evaluating methods that, it is expected, will generate a model or policy for future community development projects and will make an important contribution to research as very little has been found in the literature about optimal digital community development initiatives. This study will be of particular interest to the Community Development Journal: https://academic.oup.com/cdj

A qualitative multiple case study methodology is employed. In the sampling criteria, provision was made for a potential snowball sampling effect. That was where initial participants interviewed made the researcher aware of experts in the field of digital community development, who could contribute significantly to the knowledge generated in this study, which allowed the researcher to adjust the sample to allow for the additional interviews to take place. A case study is a comprehensive examination of a single person, group, location, event, organization, or phenomena. In social, educational, clinical, and business research, case studies are frequently employed (Gerring, 2006). The multiple case study method allows the current

phenomena of the research to be studied using current real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence. In these cases, there are many real-life examples of digital media use in community development, due to the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on the research topic, as well as other factors. We have seen a large shift in community development organisations shifting their fundraising focus to digital as the conventional methods of doing so were no longer possible. The multiple case study strategy with the snowballing impact of data collection allowed a vast array of examples to be taken from within the industry in the West of Ireland. Engaging in a process of methodological triangulation, a variety of instruments were employed to collect data. The instruments included: a preliminary survey to identify specific participants for interview; semi-structured interviews; website analysis and journaling. The research focused on the digital media usage of each of the organisations. There were many different strands to each organisation in terms of their foundations, how they are funded, their outcomes, staff levels.

Researcher's Background

The researcher in this case is a 28-year-old male living and working in the West Coast of Ireland, in Castlebar Co Mayo. The researcher is working in digital marketing with a large sports retailer and is also studying a Masters in Digital Media and Marketing. He has also been involved in community development over the past decade, primarily with his local GAA club and other small community initiatives such as the Tidy Towns and other local fundraising events. The researcher has seen a wide variety of methods and ideas being utilised through the various forms of digital media and took a keen interest in what and how communities were adapting to the 'new normal'. Working and studying in digital marketing meant the researcher had a great deal of confidence in the potential of digital media on community development in the future. Being involved in community development projects himself, the researcher was

curious to collect the skills and techniques being employed by successful community development projects taking place in the West of Ireland in the hope of sharing these methods. He was curious to discover how the context and their backgrounds influence their various realities and experiences within the subject, in order to develop themes which, represent the data collected and would help address the research questions.

Population, Participants and Sampling Technique

Following formal ethical approval (refer to appendix C for ethical approval detail), A pilot study took place, to test the data collection instruments, with a community development project. Prior to contacting case study projects and in order to gather data, a pilot test was carried out to stress test the readability and a general understanding and acceptability of the questions being used in the semi-structured in-depth interviews.

It was a small-scale test of methods and procedures that were going to be used throughout the research, carried out before the main data gathering took place. The insights and experience gained in applying the various skills and tools used in the pilot study formed the basis for a lot of decision making before the main data collection took place, such as interview techniques, and technology used. It was conducted to assess the readability of the questions, the format of the interview and the workings of a semi-structured interview. They were recruited through phone contact. Issues involving coercion or feelings of obligation from the participants were addressed by emphasizing that their participation was optional and voluntary.

Interviews were conducted in person, where possible due to the Covid-19 government restrictions that were in place at the time. From March 2020 and continued into Autumn of 2021, government restrictions aimed at combatting the spread of Covid-19 varied from

lockdowns where people were not allowed meet up with others outside of their households, plus not leaving their homes more than 2-5km. So, Microsoft Teams was used in order to gather the qualitative information. In person interviews were first suggested, when restrictions allowed, but allowances were given to interviewees who wished to conduct it virtually. Interviews were recorded and, prior to the interview, interviewees were notified of the researcher's intentions to do so, with their consent. All interviewees were given a brief ten-minute introduction describing the aims and objectives of the project, details of researcher involvement and clarification in relation to confidentiality and anonymity of participants (refer to appendix C for full ethics documentation). The data gathering process and analysis was carried out over the course of 3-4 months.

Ethical Considerations

The main Ethical Considerations of the project included:

1. Confidentiality: documentary analysis, particularly around the organisation's finances, was an example of sensitive information which may have been considered a risk during this study. Thus, it was vital to reiterate the importance of maintaining confidentiality amongst participants. Within the introduction of every semi-structured interview, confidentiality and anonymity was addressed thoroughly in line with research policy.

2. Bias risk during case study: It was important not to include questions that are 'loaded' in the sense that they may lead to bias. The researcher ensured not to hint at any opinions they may have had, making sure to keep body language and facial expressions as neutral as possible.

3. GDPR: Because of the research taking place on a digital landscape where personal details such as email addresses may be available, assurances were provided in written form that all research will be done strictly in compliance with GDPR.

4. To combat any ethical concerns, the researcher offered to provide pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and also ensured data was stored securely and all references to names and identifiable details on transcripts were destroyed when the data was analysed.

Procedure

Approaches to the potential interviewees were made entirely by the researcher. They were initially done through a phone call, or where that is not possible, email, followed by a phone call. Face to face approaches were also made in one some circumstance and followed all where Covid-19 restrictions at the time (*Public health measures for COVID-19*, 2021).

Interviews were conducted via MS Teams, where participants were required to join an online group and were sent information in advance so they have time to access it. That was to ensure they had time to understand the material. It also helped in eliminating bias. This was also a low level of 'health and safety 'risk involved in this study as participants were not required to do anything which may affect their own safety. Participants were provided with a full breakdown of the research idea through a pre-prepared draft document and an interview brief was also given prior to the interview. No expenses or incentives were offered and written confirmation was provided on request. Confidentiality of private information was given in writing and in that same confidentiality agreement, detail regarding the stage at which a participant can withdraw their involvement in the data collection was provided. Participants could withdraw within 14 days of participating in the research. No participants withdrew. Proposed participants who were asked to take part in the research DID NOT have to take part if they so wish.

A preliminary survey of potential participants was administered to assess suitability of candidates for interview. However, scope for snowball sampling was also allowed if other

expert or potential interviewees emerged during initial interviews, which in fact, did occur. Information related to the scope and purpose of the study was provided to all participants prior to interviews and participation. This included name and details of researcher, purpose of study, what is required of participants, and information related to confidentiality. They were also informed that participation is voluntary and they have the ability to withdraw. They could do this by contacting the researcher by phone/email and consent forms were administered to participants prior to engagement in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Consent were also be recorded prior to the schedule of the interviews. Six out of the 9 in-depth interviews were conducted via MS Teams, where participants were required to join an online group and were sent information in advance so they had time to access the technology.

The in-depth interviews never exceeded 60 minutes in length and the structure of the interview remained the same as much as possible. The average length of interview was approximately 50 minutes, providing an average word count of between 4-5000 per interview transcription. Over 35,000 words were transcribed in total, with 6-8 themes emerging after several rounds of interview analysis. The participants in the research were all male over the age of 18 years-old. They were involved in senior organising committees of the various community development project in the West, which employs digital technology to enhance the reach of the development.

Covid 19 Restrictions: Impact on data gathering

Three interviews were conducted in-person, all by the interviewee's own wishes. In these circumstances, the questions of the semi-structured interview were sent to the interviewee in advance of the meeting so to familiarise themselves with the topics that were to be discussed.

Interviews took place during the time the Irish state was in the middle of the pandemic. It meant they were conducted on outdoor seating in a public place and all Covid-19 regulations in terms of social distancing and mask wearing were complied with (*Public health measures for*

COVID-19, 2021). All consent forms were sent via email as opposed to hard copies due to the pandemic and in the interests of public health.

In all 9 interviews, the interviewee was given opportunity to ask questions before, during and after. They were also asked if they would be willing to do a follow up interview if needed. Participants were also asked to provide their name, age, sex, address and contact details.

Participants

In total, the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with a total of eight different community development projects in the West of Ireland. The various projects were chosen as they were all having a major impact on their various communities, both online and on the ground. The eight different case studies do not provide a full representation of the whole of the West of Ireland, but each are successful, in the researcher's opinion, in their own ways and could provide much expertise and knowledge of their processes. Through the snowballing impact of the data collection, the researcher also carried out a semi-structured interview with a digital marketing expert who was working with two of the case studies in this research. His knowledge and expertise, the researcher believed, would provide strength to the data collected and aid in triangulating the various themes, codes and processes of the eight case studies in the West of Ireland. The researcher was also aware of a lot of digital marketing expertise working within the eight case studies chosen, which was felt would add further weight to the primary data. Consent was also sought from each of the nine participants within the research to use their name and title within the research paper. This consent was requested in written form and requested before and after the semi-structured interview took place.

Research Participants' Background

Dr Kevin Heanue (Connemara West)

Dr Kevin Heanue is the chairperson of Connemara West, a community development based in Letterfrack, Connemara, Co Galway that was established in 1971. It was initially developed to promote a self-catering tourism project at Tullycross and is now an integral part of the community. It has delivered projects such as a Community Radio, education and sports services, as well as most recently a pop-up remote working hub in the thatched cottages of Renvyle.

Mark Newcombe (Castlebar Community Sports Partnerships)

Castlebar Community Sports Partnerships was a community sports project in Castlebar, Co Mayo, set up to bring together three major sporting clubs for a joint fundraising effort. It planned and delivered a 'Night at the OsKars' and raised over €100,000 for the community sporting clubs, which was divided evenly, with donations to smaller clubs and also to charity. Mark Newcombe is a digital marketing manager in a large sports retailer by profession and was the sole volunteer digital marketer for the project.

Fr Charlie McDonnell (Westport Parish Priest)

Although Catholic Churches nationwide embraced the power of digital when Covid-19 swept the country, Fr Charlie McDonnell of Westport Parish, Co Mayo, has been embracing it for over a decade. What began with a simple message-led social media campaign, eventually evolved into a cross channel digital strategy managed and maintained by numerous volunteers.

Danny McLaughlin (Win a House in Westport)

Westport GAA Club in Co Mayo embarked on a mammoth fundraiser in 2019 to help raise money for a new GAA pitch to serve the demands of their rapidly expanding club. After winning an All-Ireland Intermediate title in 2017, their club expanded at a rate that saw them completely outgrow their current facilities. They have been me with some major challenges in terms of acquiring land in a busy cosmopolitan town like Westport, so €3 million needed to be raised. They did in a part by successfully raffling off 1000 tickets in a house fundraiser and followed that up with a second of which they employed the services of a digital marketing agency. Danny McLaughlin is the chairman of the committee.

Donal Healy (Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkway Project)

In 2020 Detective Garda Colm Horkan was on murdered in the line of duty and his death had a profound impact on his community, Charlestown, Co Mayo, of which he played a major role. The local GAA club embarked on an ambitious project to fundraise and build a GAA pitch and community walkway in his honour using a digital campaign. Donal Healy is a marketing manager and one of the marketing committee members.

Joe Kelly (IRD Kiltimagh)

IRD Kiltimagh was formed in 1989 to try and combat outward migration of the town and formulate a long-term development plan driven by the community in partnership with nationwide and local stakeholders. Chief Executive Joe Kelly has helped lead a number of major projects, including the state-of-the-art Cairn International Trade Centre in 2008 – a €7 million investment aimed at bringing remote working opportunity to the West.

Seamus Caulfied (Balla CRD)

Balla Community Resource Development was established in 1996 to encourage community development in the village of Balla, Co Mayo and to generally improve life for the community. One of the main, long-term income streams the CRD heavily relied on was the weekly bingo event, which attracted up to 200 people weekly. However, when Covid-19 struck that income stream ceased, until the CRD successfully rolled out a virtual bingo, led by manager Seamus Caulfied.

Pat O'Donnell (Croí Heart & Stroke)

Croí Heart and Stroke charity aims to lead the fight against heart disease and stroke in the West of Ireland particularly, and they rely heavily on fundraising monies to roll out their valuable services. Like most charities, when the pandemic hit in 2020 their typical income streams dried up, leading them to employing the services of a digital marketing agency to run a car raffle campaign. Pat O'Donnell is a volunteer fundraising committee member.

Colm Hanratty (SixTwo Digital)

Colm Hanratty is the Managing Director of SixTwo Digital, a strategic digital marketing agency based out of Co Louth in Ireland. Multiple community development organisations around the country have utilised their skills and expertise in their campaigns, including Win a House in Westport and Croí Heart & Stroke Charity. Colm Hanratty has over 18 years of expertise in the industry and the company has raised over €9 million for local community development initiatives, charities and clubs.

Case Study: Step by Step

Case study method is the most common method used by researchers interested in qualitative methods and research (Baskarada, 2014), this fact was an early influence on the decision to use the method in this research.

A qualitative case study is a research methodology that aids in the exploration of a phenomenon within a specific context using numerous data sources, and it does so use a range of lenses to show multiple sides of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As the researcher had access to multiple data sources, this definition provided the researcher with strong support for the case that this method was the correct one for this study. As case studies can be difficult to articulate in academia, the researcher endeavoured to follow the steps of doing a case study provided in the previously published paper *Case Study Method: A Step By Step Guide for Business Researchers* by Rashid *et al.* (2019). In the paper, a detailed guide is provided, split into two sections, which provides the key things for success in doing a case study.

The researcher in this paper mirrored the four steps provided:

      1. Foundation Phase

      2. Pre-field Phase

      3. Field Phase

      4. Reporting Phase.

The Foundation Phase

This phase involved familiarisation with previous literature and understanding the research philosophy, which is crucial as it builds the basis for how the researcher approached the research (Wilson, 2014). Previous literature was researched to help guide the decision that case

study research was the correct method to use, guidance was taken from Gerring's (2006) paper *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices.* Other methodologies were considered but deemed not suitable, and will be discussed further below.

The Pre-field Phase

The decision making process explored the operational details that were carefully designed and split into two steps – Decide and Case study protocols (Rashid *et al.*, 2019). The Decide phase helped the researcher ascertain that a case study was the suitable choice of method as the idea of a case study should be that the researcher can employ method allows him or her to observe in real time what is taking place and move freely between that and literature (Rashid *et al.*, 2019). – the primary and secondary sources of data.

Halinen and Tornroos (2005) define a case study as an intensive study of one or a small number of business networks, where multiple sources of evidence are used. In this research, a total of 9 case study examples were studied, along with using other sources of data. Case study protocols is the formal document capturing the entire set of procedures of doing a case study (Yin, 2009) of which all were adhered to. Themes generation and coding is the most recognised analysis method and was executed in this research. The key elements of a case study include:

1. Research question
2. Research method
3. Permission seeking
4. Ethical considerations
5. Interpretation process
6. Criteria for assessment

Field Phase

Rashied et al (2019) highlights that if doing a qualitative case study method, it is crucial that the researcher knows the cases and participants well before research gathering takes place as it

builds a rapport. The researcher in this case was familiar with all participants, and in the few cases that directly did not know each other, it was through the snowball sampling and a reference was provided. It was also recommended to follow semi-structured interviews and documentation collection, which were followed in this research.

Reporting Phase

The reporting of the case study is as important as collecting the data and a sound structure with a story-like flow is crucial (Rashied et al, 2019). The researcher has a background in journalism, which naturally helped with keeping aligned to the required steps of reporting a case study. Steps to follow include:

1. Transcribe Interviews
2. Cross Check Transcripts with Audio Recordings
3. Send to Interviewees and wait for feedback
4. Revise transcripts based on feedback
5. Develop themes and concepts from transcripts
6. Triangulate themes and findings
7. Document and report material/continuous observation
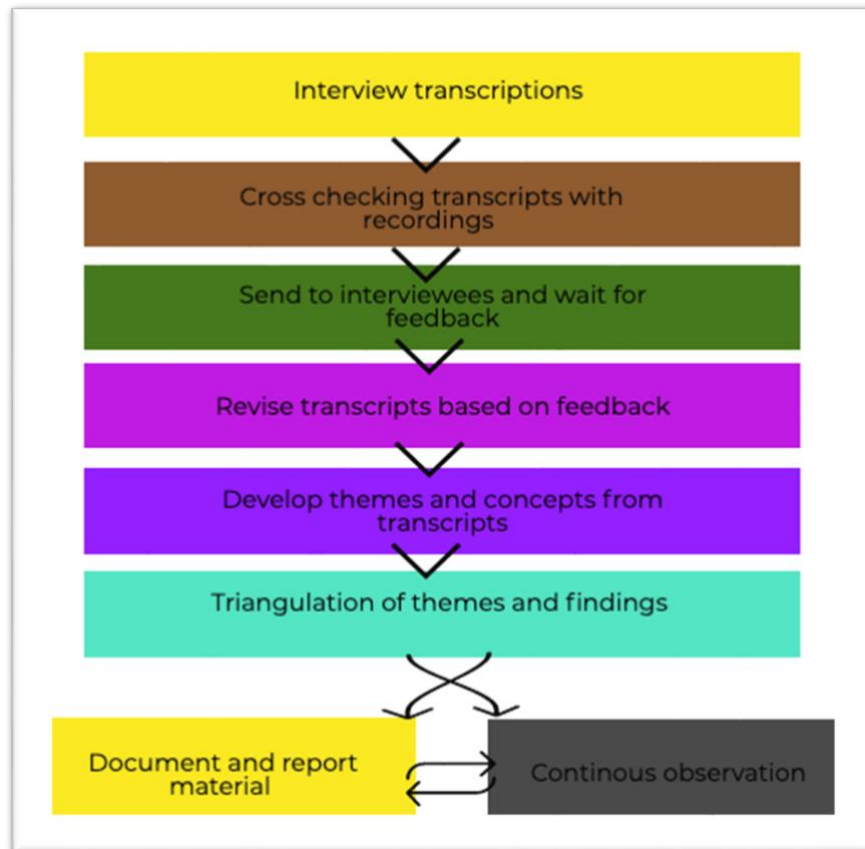
Figure 1 Material Interpretation Process (Ger Flanagan, MSc 2021)

The case study methodology provided the researcher with the scope to sample a wide variety of primary and secondary data sources in the one area, to explore the one phenomenon. Furthermore, the researcher was living and working locally and had a wide array of contacts in this research topic to explore the research questions. Added to that, the researcher was involved in community development and working in digital media, which were further elements that were essential to building the strong rapport needed with sources (Rashid *et al.*, 2019).

The reporting of data in qualitative case studies and the skills needed also complimented the researcher's background and provided confidence that a stringent, well-researched and thorough data collection and reporting could be executed. The researcher got inspiration from other research work such as the work by Sykes, Wills and Popple (2017) titled *The Role of Community Development in Building Critical Health Literacy*. In it, the researchers had

deemed the case study method appropriate as it satisfied how they wanted to explore questions that required a detailed understanding of social or organisational processes. It also allowed them to investigate a particular case in depth and produce rich data that helped in understanding the processes, which in this case was health literacy, and that relationship with community development (Sykes, Wills and Popple, 2017). The researcher also mirrored the approach of Sykes, Wills and Popple (2017) in its use of a sampling and criteria-based process when choosing data sources. Choosing multiple data sources allowed the researchers to triangulate the data and helped them gain a holistic and detailed pictured of the processes, of which appealed to this researcher.

Further inspiration to pursue a case study methodology was gained from Brennan's (2006) *Community Development in the West of Ireland: 20 years on in the Killala area.* Brennan (2006) revisited the North Mayo village and conducted a further case study that took place over three years and concluded in over 30 key informant interviews. Furthermore, the researcher also modelled his methodology on the design of Eversole, Barraket and Luke's (2014) research *Social enterprises in rural community development* published in the community development journal. The researchers choose a case study model to present a study designed to gain in-depth understanding of what role social enterprise played in community development in a rural area, the area being Tasmania. Qualitative case studies were carried out in three selected social enterprises in the region, which included a cross-section of industries, sizes, backgrounds and mission, all while not claiming to be totally representative of the area (Eversole, Barraket and Luke, 2014). These were all some key criteria this researcher felt mirrored the intentions of finding in-depth knowledge of community development and digital media projects in the West of Ireland. The underpinning commodity of the research by Eversole, Barraket and Luke (2014) was that, while the enterprises were different, they all had a clear social purpose. The team conducted a number of in-depth semi-structured interviews, lasting 30-120 minutes each. They

also reverted transcriptions back to interviewees and made follow up phone calls to strengthen data.

Other methodologies were considered in exploring the usage of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland. Action Research was considered initially as the methodology to assess a community development project the researcher was involved in locally in the West of Ireland. However, there were concerns that external forces threatening to delay the project could detract from the process of implementing problem solving actions on a digital landscape. There was also the interference of Covid-19 on the local community being suggested and whether that would impact the collaboration and engagement from community members. This kind of research done without the collaboration of the community members would be considered an 'outsiders findings' and would not be the catalyst for social change (Ozanne and Anderson, 2010). Following all of the considerations presented above, it was concluded that a case study methodology would ensure that research questions would be addressed appropriately and could provide the data to try and influence some sort of positive change for community development projects.

Further data considerations:

All data will be destroyed when the research process and the final dissertation examination process is complete. No further personal/sensitive data was requested from participants. No disclosure of information was needed.

Data Processing

All data was collected on audio files initially, before being transcribed into text.

After transcribing the interviews, the data analysis was broken into four parts: Codes; Categories; Themes and Theory. Dedoose qualitative software was employed to identify common codes that arose throughout each of the interviews. Codes centred around the semi-structured questions conducted during the interviews. Using Dedoose, these codes were then compiled together to identify common themes that occurred during the interviews. A bricks and mortar style of data analysis was also used by simply cross-checking notes and highlighting common themes. The researcher's journalism background meant he possessed the skill and experience to analyse large transcriptions to narrow down the focus. Each theme within it was highlighted with a different colour and pulled out separately (see below).

The researcher intends to publish this as a research paper, in conjunction with all community development projects and various stakeholders, in the Community Development Journal. Permission was sought from participants to do so. Because of that, detailed quality assurance was followed throughout the process. Strict and diligent transcriptions of the audio took place. Each interview was listened back fully and compared to the transcription before it was deemed accurate. The accuracy of all data and findings were checked with official sources and documentation were requested. Research journals, websites and public documents were also sourced and used such as *Public health measures for COVID-19* (2021), Ferrell-Schweppenstedde (2020) and the European Commission (2020)
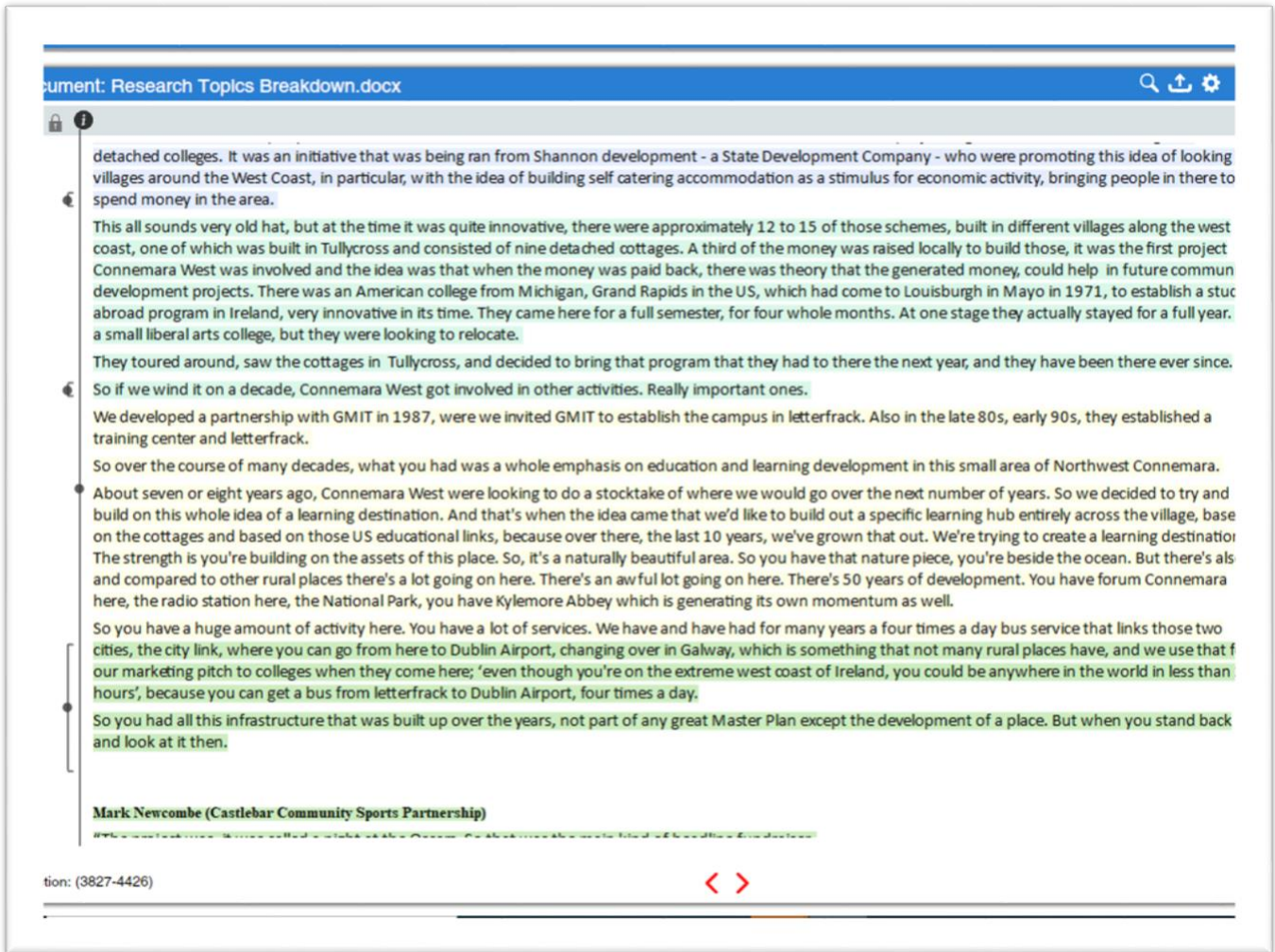
detached colleges. It was an initiative that was being ran from Shannon development - a State Development Company - who were promoting this idea of looking villages around the West Coast, in particular, with the idea of building self catering accommodation as a stimulus for economic activity, bringing people in there to spend money in the area.

This all sounds very old hat, but at the time it was quite innovative, there were approximately 12 to 15 of those schemes, built in different villages along the west coast, one of which was built in Tullycross and consisted of nine detached cottages. A third of the money was raised locally to build those, it was the first project Connemara West was involved and the idea was that when the money was paid back, there was theory that the generated money, could help in future commun development projects. There was an American college from Michigan, Grand Rapids in the US, which had come to Louisburgh in Mayo in 1971, to establish a stud abroad program in Ireland, very innovative in its time. They came here for a full semester, for four whole months. At one stage they actually stayed for a full year. a small liberal arts college, but they were looking to relocate.

They toured around, saw the cottages in Tullycross, and decided to bring that program that they had to there the next year, and they have been there ever since.

So if we wind it on a decade, Connemara West got involved in other activities. Really important ones.

We developed a partnership with GMIT in 1987, were we invited GMIT to establish the campus in letterfrack. Also in the late 80s, early 90s, they established a training center and letterfrack.

So over the course of many decades, what you had was a whole emphasis on education and learning development in this small area of Northwest Connemara.

About seven or eight years ago, Connemara West were looking to do a stocktake of where we would go over the next number of years. So we decided to try and build on this whole idea of a learning destination. And that's when the idea came that we'd like to build out a specific learning hub entirely across the village, base on the cottages and based on those US educational links, because over there, the last 10 years, we've grown that out. We're trying to create a learning destination The strength is you're building on the assets of this place. So, it's a naturally beautiful area. So you have that nature piece, you're beside the ocean. But there's als and compared to other rural places there's a lot going on here. There's an awful lot going on here. There's 50 years of development. You have forum Connemara here, the radio station here, the National Park, you have Kylemore Abbey which is generating its own momentum as well.

So you have a huge amount of activity here. You have a lot of services. We have and have had for many years a four times a day bus service that links those two cities, the city link, where you can go from here to Dublin Airport, changing over in Galway, which is something that not many rural places have, and we use that f our marketing pitch to colleges when they come here; 'even though you're on the extreme west coast of Ireland, you could be anywhere in the world in less than hours', because you can get a bus from letterfrack to Dublin Airport, four times a day.

So you had all this infrastructure that was built up over the years, not part of any great Master Plan except the development of a place. But when you stand back and look at it then.

Mark Newcombe (Castlebar Community Sports Partnership)

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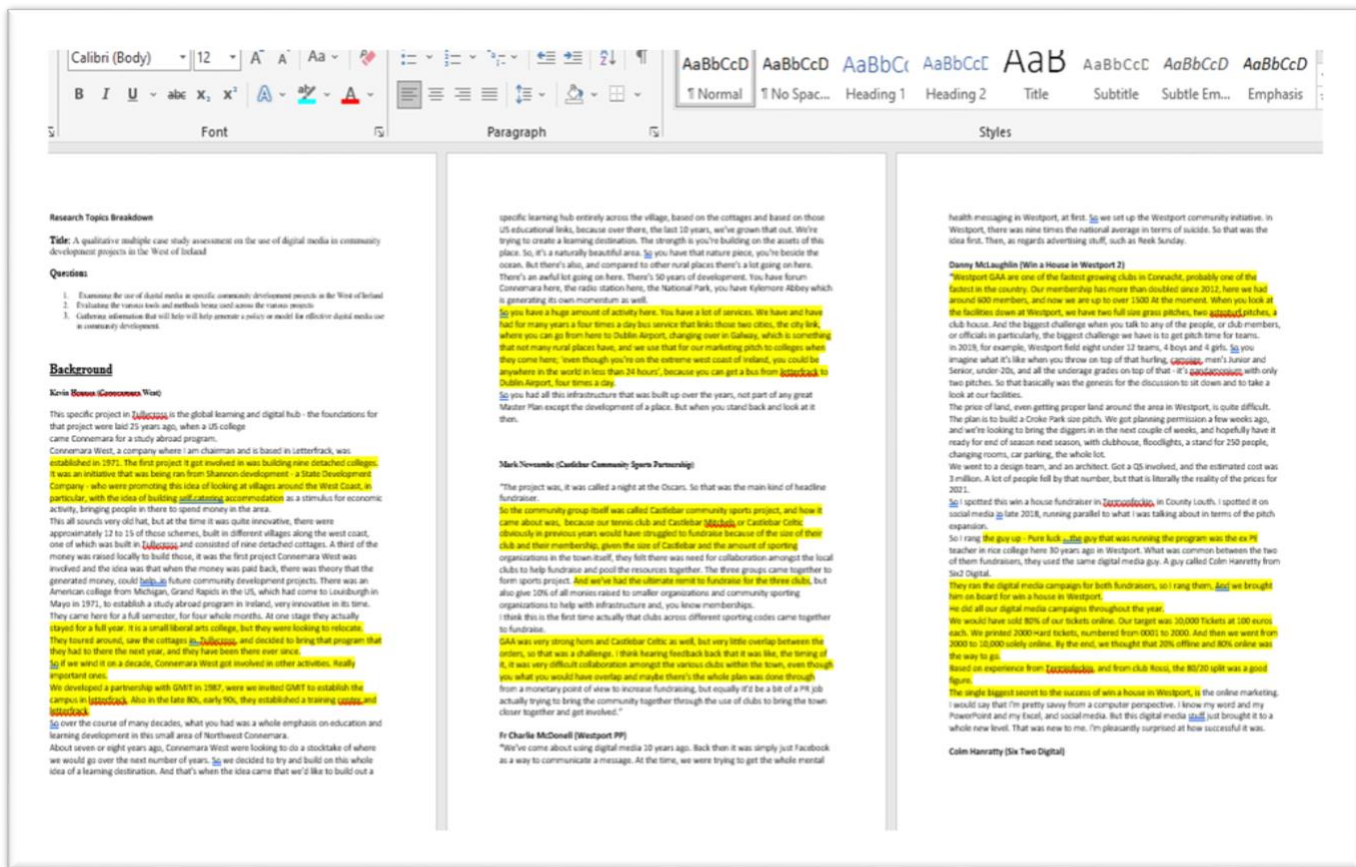*Figure 2 Dedoose Data Analysis Software*

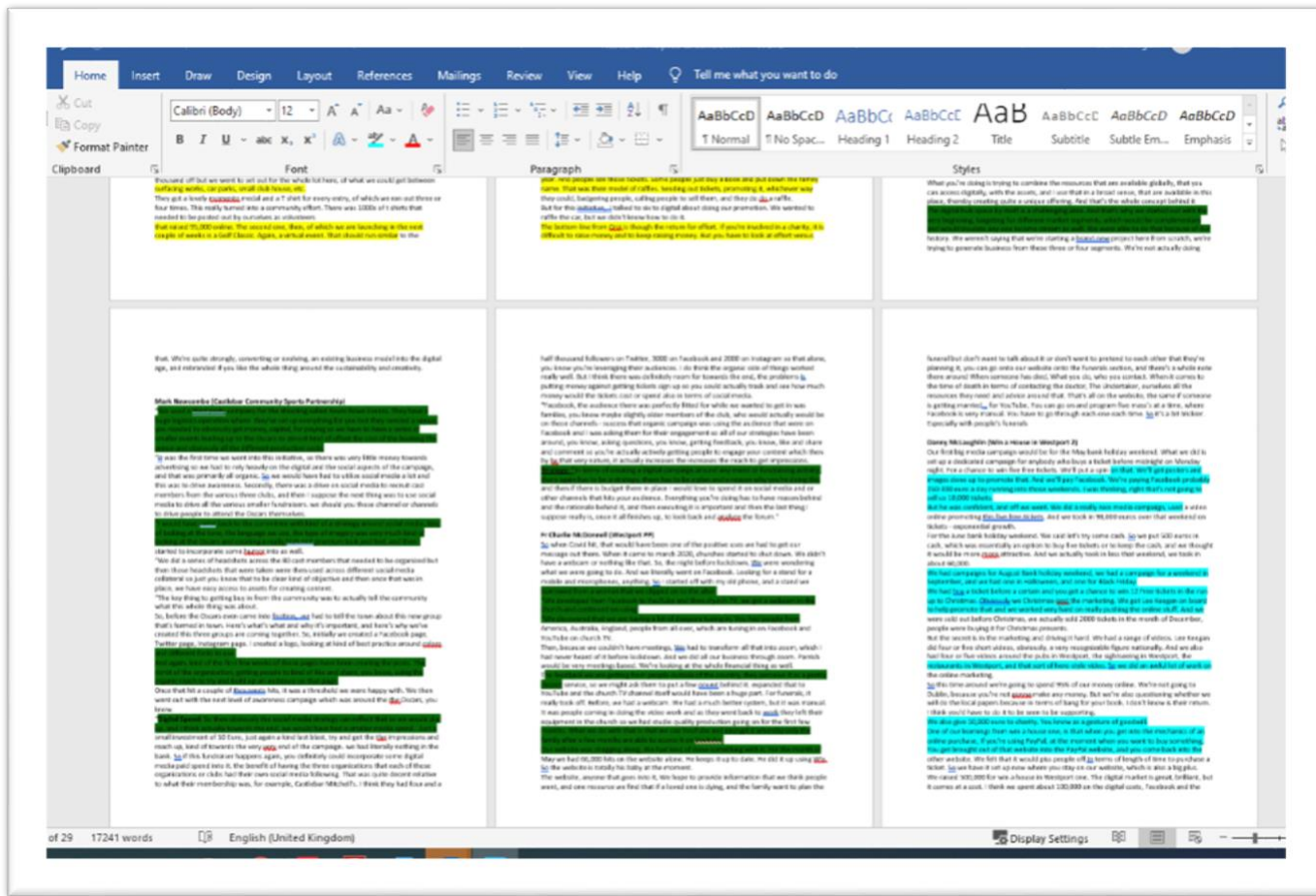*Figure 3 MS Word Data Analysis Themes Identification*

Figure 4 Data Analysis: Note themes in colours distinction

The figures above illustrate how the data analysis process was conducted, isolating and

identifying themes, before collating them, using software like Dedoose and Microsoft Word.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the findings which emerged following qualitative analysis of data that was collected during the semi-structured interviews of the multiple case studies. In addition, in line with case study methodology, it will also detail the commentaries, statistics and secondary research analyses, in the form of references alongside the direct quotations and references made by research participants, The findings and discussion have been drafted together and are broken down into various themes that were common across the case study interviews.

Overall, 9 semi-structured in-depth interviews took place where they were asked questions around digital media usage in community development and about their strategies, tools and techniques. The researcher will present the raw data and does not aim to draw any conclusions or recommendations during this chapter. These will be presented in the following chapter.

Analysis of Communities using Digital Media in the West of Ireland

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, communities across the world have been taking responsibility to shore up their social connectedness with many turning to social media as a connector (Kenny, 2020).

The same can be said for communities in the West of Ireland as they attempt to pursue their various community development projects, but with a difference set of tools available to them and different challenges. Research participant (RP), Dr Kevin Heanue, Chairperson of Connemara West, a community owned and managed rural development agency based in

Letterfrack, Connemara, Galway, believes the key challenge for community development projects, centres around raising capital to deliver the project or service.

As the process of fundraising has changed significantly since the pandemic began due to factors such as regulations around crowd capacities, communities in the West of Ireland have shifted their methods to digital media. Social media, in particular Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, along with virtual meeting software like Zoom, are being heavily utilised in fundraising efforts within community development projects. While rural areas are also stepping up their focus on the idea of remote working and learning. Digital media has not just become a new phenomenon either since the pandemic struck, it was heavily utilized previous to Covid-19, but its reliance has never been as important as post March 2020 with Covid-19 struck Ireland. These various themes and topics emerged from this exploration of the uses of digital media and digital strategy across various community development projects in the West of Ireland.

Strength of Brand leads to Success

In community development, the local identity or brand of a project will lend it strong credibility and acceptance and therefore enhance its chances of success (Partington and Totten, 2012).The strength of brand also leads to greater community engagement through digital spaces, which is being experienced in the West of Ireland.

Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkways Project is being developed in Charlestown, Co Mayo, in memory of Detective Garda Colm Horkan who was tragically murdered while on duty in June 2020. The death had a profound impact across a tight-knit community in East Mayo and across the country, with one of the organisers stating that 'everyone wants to be associated with this', in relation to fundraiser. RP Donal Healy of the organising committee that a virtual 5k fundraiser was taking place, mainly due to Covid-19, and it's reach online stretched worldwide. The committee partnered with members of the Irish

Defence Forces 62nd Infantry in Syria, who got in contact with them about doing a virtual 5k around their army base to help raise money, which resulted in €12,000. There was no direct connection between any member of the regiment to Colm or the club, but they expressed their interest and availability through digital space.

> *"The real selling point was the virtual side and I don't think it would have been anywhere near as successful as a physical one,"* RP Donal said.

He added that they had 8000 entrants. There were also 300 racers from Australia entered which helped raise over €50,000.

Croí Heart & Stroke Disease were enlightened to the true strength of their brand in their online auction of a Volvo car. They are leading heart charity in the West of Ireland, established in 1985, to fight heart disease and stroke. It was a novel fundraising effort by the charity and a step into the unknown. After an investment of €10,000 into advertising and a third-party digital agency, the charity was able to maintain a constant stream of ticket sales throughout the six months of advertising, which was 'beyond their wildest expectations'.

> *"The surprise for us was that it continued to sell,"* RP Pat O'Donnell said. *"We thought it might have slowed down or plateaued but it hasn't. And speaking to our agency, they were surprised at the strength of our brand. We would have felt Croí was a strong brand around Galway and the West of Ireland, but we've seen strong recognition nationally."*

Win A House in Westport 2 has also benefitted from a strong brand of location. Westport town was a former winner of the Irish Times Best Town in Ireland to Live and that has greatly enhanced their Unique Selling Point. What Win A House in Westport 2 and The Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch have in common is their linkage to the GAA. In Ireland, the GAA, church and other organisations serve as a catalysts for interaction, provide structure and

unite communities, with efforts in community development benefitting from the already established networks (Brennan, Flint and Luloff, 2009).

We have seen that the strength of a digital media campaign can only be as strong as the brand represents and how that message is conveyed remains critically important.

Shifting from traditional to digital media

The question of whether digital marketing is dominating and surpassing traditional marketing is constantly debated. Many experts believe that digital marketing has surpassed traditional marketing in importance. Others, on the other hand, believe that traditional marketing is still very much in use, and that digital marketing complements it extremely effectively (TODOR, 2016).

However, in 2020 advertising spend on the likes of Google, Facebook and other social media surpassed traditional media spend for the first time ever. The pandemic has also fast-tracked this trend even more, with traditional media such as television, newspapers, and outdoor advertising losing 20.7 percent of their market share (Barker, 2020). This trend is funnelling into community development projects in the West of Ireland too, as different initiatives and groups are losing confidence in the traditional forms of advertising and moving towards online spend.

Some of the main reasons in this shift toward digital spend were financial – better value for money – and, more trackable – digital tools now give huge data insights to conclude on success, or learnings for future spend. While the number of people reachable through digital platforms outweighed the traditional media reach. While this is evidenced in data for some initiatives, others it is anecdotal as well. For example, Research participant Fr Charlie McDonnell of the Westport Parish in Co Mayo admitted that they initially spent the majority of their advertising

budget on traditional advertising, but later found that 'social media was more effective and a lot cheaper'. This claim was anecdotally backed up when they started The Dawn Mass under St Mary's Church, which took place on Easter Sunday, at Murrisk, Westport, Co Mayo. In 2012, when it first began, traditional media, such as print and local radio, was used to advertise the event for the first two years and it had an average attendance of 150/200 people. From 2015 on, they choose social media to advertise, on Facebook primarily, and the attendance rose to 500, reaching on average of 600-700 up to pre-pandemic time.

The Win A House in Westport team, also research participants, also initially used a combination of traditional media and digital media in their initial fundraiser in 2019. In April 2019, they held an official launch event in the Westport GAA Clubhouse, where local media outlets in print and radio were invited. Chairman of the committee, Research participant, Danny McLaughlin, said that close to 150 people attended the night and despite lots of traditional coverage across the airwaves, only 24 tickets were sold. Their attempts to 'hard sell' also resulted in poor sales, such as setting up two 'ticket stands' in two of the major shopping centres in Dublin on the May Bank Holiday Weekend, attempting to sell tickets for €100. Their estimated costs for both stands were €4000 and 'very few' tickets were sold. A digital advertising screen was also purchased for €1500 for All-Ireland Final Day, full page ads in match programmes for all Mayo GAA championship games, costing €1000 were purchased throughout 2019, along with €2000 spent on an ad/editorial in the Irish Post newspaper based in England was spent.

While research participant Danny McLaughlin concedes that the traditional media did benefit the campaign in terms of 'awareness', the quantifiable return was 'poor'. Running parallel to them campaigns in 2019, they commissioned a 15 second 'hero' style video for the campaign and it amassed over 750,000 hits that year. Bank Holiday Weekend online giveaways were targeted as big selling opportunities, and €250-€300 was spent on paid social advertising each

day in the build-up to those weekends. Overall, in Win A House in Westport 1, their digital spend was estimated at €100,000, which included their third part agency fee who organised the campaign. But the metrics available to them showed they were making 90% return on each ticket sale, which was costing them under €10. This data resulted in the committee deciding that '95%' of their marketing budget for Win A House in Westport 2 would be spent on digital marketing.

RP Colm Hanratty of SixTwo Digital, the agency employed by Win A House in Westport to run their digital campaign, conceded that 'traditional marketing will generate sales', but the ability to see return of investment metrics in digital make it much more attractable to initiatives like in Westport. However, the research found that traditional media does still appeal to certain audiences.

RP Seamus Caulfield of Balla Community Resource Development, highlighted a successful example of a digital and traditional hybrid. Since Covid-19, Balla CRD run an Online Bingo community initiative over Zoom and, as their main audience is in the older demographic, they are still spending close to €500 a week on traditional forms of advertising. However, they also invested in a promotional video for use on their social media channels, which has been an evergreen advertising tool they've utilised, which Seamus Caulfield believes has attracted a younger customer, plus it reached players in 'America, UK, Australia, Beijing and New Zealand'.

Croí Heart & Stroke Charity has always employed traditional forms of fundraising and marketing in their efforts to raise capital. Some of these initiatives include a Christmas raffle where tickets are sold to traditionally to donors and an annual charity cycle also takes place.

But Covid-19 has forced them to shift towards the virtual space, according to RP Pat O'Donnell of their fundraising committee. He conceded that selling raffle tickets in person was time

consuming and limited, while organising a mammoth charity cycle each year was becoming more and more taxing in terms of resources needed.

> *"When you're involved in a charity you have to look at effort versus return when raising money and the old efforts didn't add up,"* he said.

Hence, they shifted to a virtual raffle where a Volvo car was up for grabs in return for €20, while they also branched out their annual cycle to a virtual one. Both were a resounding success and raised over €150,000 for the charity with minimal effort in comparison to their traditional methods. Going forward, Croí Heart & Stroke will be utilising a hybrid model in terms of their fundraising and marketing; adapting a smaller scale version of their walks and cycles with a virtual option. The physical element is not going to be discarded completely as they feel it adds a lot of 'awareness' to the brand even if it does not return as much monies.

The Use of Third-Party Digital Agencies

A survey conducted with marketing managers in Portugal back in 2011 found that they rely on digital marketing substantially to establish their brand (82 percent of surveyed managers ranked it as vital or extremely important), boost knowledge (78 percent of managers), and improve communication flows (70 percent of managers) (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014).

While also brands and brand management have been a major focus in the commercial sector for both marketing academics and practitioners over the last ten years, as the necessity for distinctiveness in an increasingly competitive environment has grown increasingly important. There are parallels being established between the business and charitable sectors in terms of environmental competitiveness (Hankinson, 2001). In rural areas in the West of Ireland, the competition between community organisations in competing from the same funding pool means having a strong brand to create better chances of raising income is hugely important.

This has resulted in organisations turning to digitally skilled people to establish their digital marketing campaigns. For some organisations, the role has been filled by volunteers. This, however, leads to time constraints as often too much work is expected from one person, although some communities are more fortunate in their ability to enrol the services of its community members. The research found that the West of Ireland is experiencing a rise in the trend of community organisations employing professional services from a third-party digital marketing agency to run their campaign. The results have been very successful.

Cost effective, time efficient and almost guaranteed results without the stress of doing the campaign in-house are some of the positive aspects reported by various organisations. Fundraising in Ireland broke new barriers around 2019 when a local GAA club in Co Louth, St Fechin's GAA Club, embarked on a novel new fundraiser where they would raffle a newly-built house to one lucky winner. The plucky title, 'Win a Feckin House' caught the imagination of the country and raised over €500,000 for the club, who employed a local third-party digital marketing agency to run their campaign (Spearman, 2021). The news of its success quickly spread to the West of Ireland, and Roscommon GAA organised a similar campaign, before Westport GAA, in Co Mayo, decided to do the same, to fund the construction of a new pitch.

> *"I heard about the 'Win a Feckin House' fundraiser after I did my research, found out about the digital marketing agency they used to run their campaign and brought them on board for 'Win a House in Westport',"* RP Danny McLaughlin, chairperson of Win a House in Westport said.

RP Colm Hanratty of SixTwo Digital ran the entire digital marketing campaign for Win a House in Westport, utilising Facebook and Instagram marketing tools, as well as their own website which served as the ticket selling engine. Of the 10,000 tickets old, 80% went through online. RP Danny McLaughlin admitted that a lack of digital skills in their committee helped

influence their decision to take the plunge and employ the third-party digital agency. Such was the success of using a third-party digital agency for their first campaign, Westport GAA decided to re-employ their services for their second campaign, but this time re-directed 95% of their budget towards online.

Croí Heart & Stroke Charity took inspiration from the Win a House in Westport campaign when researching for their latest fundraiser, raffling a brand-new Volvo car. RP Pat O'Donnell of Croí was attracted to the idea of employing a third-party digital agency for reasons such as the time and cost it will save the charity, both of which were at a premium. He did explain that there was some initial scepticism.

> *"There was definitely a lack of knowledge from our perspective in this area, where as a third-party agency knew this inside out,"* RP Pat O'Donnell said. *"After speaking to them [third party agency], I was baffled by how well digital can work and how targeted it can be. The big beauty for a charity like Croí was that you only pay in incremental amounts, small amounts as you go, so you don't need a big lump of money. It was a leap of faith for Croí but I told the head of the charity to 'trust me on this'."*

The digital campaign was a resounding success and raised money 'beyond our wildest dreams' according to RP Pat O'Donnell. He added, that there was little effort they had to do in-house, instead focusing their energy on other important issues. Such was the success, Croí are now engaging with other third-party agencies in their fundraising efforts to incorporate a more 'professional approach' to fundraising and thus easing pressure on their staff.

Balla Community Resource Development in central Mayo found themselves employing a third-party digital agency in 2020 to conduct their most valuable and popular income streams, Bingo. After Covid-19 forced the closure of the traditional and well-attended weekly event, running a virtual event was mooted but ultimately did not come to fruition for logistical reasons

and lack of confidence in the technology. They also felt the target audience was not suitable as they were of an older age demographic who would lack the digital skills required.

However, General Manager of Balla CRD, RP Seamus Caulfield, made enquiries and later discovered a third-party agency who can organise and run the logistics of the operation for a fee. After installing the required broadband updates and software, they were able to successfully roll out their weekly bingo virtually, using Zoom. Their income stream doubled due to less expenses on the operation and they continued using the format on a hybrid basis into 2021.

> *"Some of the big advantages of this was saving costs on electricity and heat and printing fees for books, as well as reducing your carbon footprint because you don't have 300 people travelling to Balla on a Monday evening anymore,"* RP Seamus Caulfield said.

Digital Strategies

Organic

Many community development projects in the West of Ireland are volunteer led, not for profit initiatives. Hence, capital funding or large budgets, if any at all, are rarely available to them for digital marketing etc. This has placed a large focus on organic social and digital media campaigns to limit costs and maximise funds towards the projects.

In Charlestown, East Mayo, Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Club are employing a fully organic social and digital strategy to raise money towards a new GAA pitch and walking track development, the Colm Horkan Memoria Pitch and Community Walkways. The committee's constant income platform is through their own website, created voluntarily, which allows users to log on and donate whatever they wish. The crowdfunding software they use is Stripe, which

RP Donal Healy of the committee says 'is great for processing, but lacks the marketing value of GoFundMe'. The website was launched in December 2020 through the organic social channels of Charlestown Sarsfields GAA and promoted through 3D model of the grounds created voluntary on AutoCad to drive awareness. To date is had raised surplus of €70,000, without anyone major promotion strategy.

Castlebar Community Sports Partnership (CCSP) adopted a similar strategy to their Night At the OsKars fundraiser, aimed to raise money for three major sports clubs in Castlebar, Co Mayo. It was the pilot event for the novel initiative, so the committee had no capital to pay for marketing costs. RP Mark Newcombe, PRO of the CCSP, devised an organic social strategy, utilising Facebook and Instagram, over a three-month campaign in the lead up to the event, which took place in February 2020. He derived a digital strategy using the RACE Framework (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage). While he also used planning tools such as a SWOT analysis to help identify an audience and their market. Through Facebook and Instagram organic content, they were used both for awareness of the project and event and also to recruit cast members to take part. The two aforementioned social channels were chosen as they appealed to the identified target audience of families and young adults.

> *"I was very much looking at the tone, the language and the imagery I was using on social, whilst looking at the Oscars and trying to create a really high-end premium look and fell, whilst incorporating humour,"* RP Mark Newcombe said.

In order to create the online assets for organic content, the committee organised a photoshoot of cast members that would be used over the coming months in posts.

> *"The very first few weeks of content was telling our audience who we are and what we're doing, and once we hit a couple of thousand followers, a threshold we were happy with, we moved on to promoting the night,"* RP Mark added.

The awareness of the campaign was helped significantly by leveraging the already large followings to the three various clubs, Castlebar Mitchels GAA, Castlebar Celtic FC and Castlebar Tennis Club. Facebook was chosen to help target the audience of local families and slightly older demographic of people. A lot of posts centred around engagement, so they were angled with questions, like and share requests and tag a friend giveaway. While Instagram targeted the younger audience and allowed for a much more visually pleasing product.

Paid Social Strategies

Solutions to community problems are seldom limited to the use of technology or information, but instead need the ability of diverse individuals to work together through sometimes complex problem solving processes, and that participation is necessary for success (Langone and Richard Rohs, 1995).

RP Westport GAA Club in Co Mayo's problem is a lack of sufficient playing pitches available to them to serve their rapidly expanding club that has over 1500 members. This problem brought a collaborative effort from various stakeholders to come together and thrash out a deal for land where the club will build a new state-of-the-art playing pitch pitch and clubhouse, with an estimated cost of €3 million. In order to help fund the development, the committee came up with the initiative of raffling a house in the town of Westport, utilising a third-party digital agency to driving the digital marketing campaign. Win A House in Westport 1 (WAHIW) was a huge success and raised €500,000 profit for the club, selling approximately 80% of their 10,000 tickets through their website. Such was the success, the club embarked on a second fundraiser, with the same third-party agency, SixTwo Digital, driving the marketing.

> *"The single biggest secret to the success of Win A House in Westport was the online marketing,"* RP Danny McLaughlin, chairman of Win A House in Westport said.

The WAHIW digital campaign was completed using Facebook, Instagram and a website, for which their tickets were sold. The campaign promotion was centred around Bank Holiday weekends and leading to Christmas, with paid advertising across Facebook and Instagram used. To help create awareness for the campaign, a 'hero style' video was shot of the best scenic shots Westport had to offer and used to create awareness, which was viewed over half a million times. Running parallel to that video, the committee also utilised well-known figures in the area, such as Mayo GAA star Lee Keegan to promote the campaign online. Christmas style promotion, including giveaways, both tickets and cash, proved very popular and over 2,000 tickets was sold at the time of year alone. Price of tickets were €100. While success was clear, it came at a price. RP Danny McLaughlin estimated the total spend across the board of €100,000, which went to the agency and advertising (25:75). But they acquired a cost-per-ticket of under €10, meaning a 90% profit on investment. Whilst the committee had a hypothesis that they would sell a large portion of tickets online to the Irish-abroad community, that was not the case.

> *"50% of our sales were online or in Mayo, 70% were in Connacht, 80% were in Connacht, plus Dublin; 90% were in all of Ireland, and 10% was outside the country,"* RP Danny McLaughlin highlighted as a learning for their second fundraiser.

Thanks to metrics from Facebook and Instagram, they were also able to whittle down their best performing audience: male/female over the age of 21 and living in Connacht.

> *"Our decisions are 100% data driven, which is a massive benefit of having a digital expert working with us,"* RP Danny McLaughlin said.

Sufficient Time and Skill Required For Success

While digital media has been widely utilised in community development projects in the West of Ireland, groups have discovered that it is a technology that requires certain time and skill to be executed successfully. For a long time, communities in the West of Ireland have been successful in bringing members together to work for the greater good of the community, displaying a 'meitheal' tradition – an old Irish saying which describes neighbours coming together to help with farming work (Brennan, 2007).

In 2021, this tradition has become more important for communities using digital media in their projects as the practice is time consuming and also somewhat overwhelming. In Castlebar, Co Mayo, RP Mark Newcombe highlighted how starting out with a clear and concise strategy can result in 'a lot being achieved'. But as the only person with the particular skills to execute the strategy in the committee, he found himself overwhelmed with the workload. As well as handling the bricks and mortar marketing tasks, he was also responsible for running two social pages and creating all the content for them, as well as the imagery assets for the campaign. He would spend 'two to three hours' after work, creating a 'very intense and time consuming' nature of the role. RP Mark Newcombe stresses that while there were other people willing to assist as it was a large project, finding the right person with the necessary skills was difficult.

> "*There's no point in getting somebody who thinks they're decent at social media posts, when that might not be the case. You have to reach out and find experts who will make things easier and more cost effective,*" he said, adding that poor content results in poor reach.

Pulling off an effective strategy with no budget requires people. RP Fr Charlie McDonnell of Westport Parish oversees a vibrant and active digital strategy across social media (Facebook & YouTube), a website and Church TV streaming services. He concedes to have been unable

to execute the strategy without four people working in unison across the different platforms, each of whom have their own experience built up over time on that platform. Facebook, he says, takes up the most amount of time.

Equally, RP Donal Healy from Charlestown in Mayo has expertise from his Marketing Manager Day-job to his role in the digital marketing side of the Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch and Community Walkway. His skillset allows him to create graphics and video work, while they also acquired the voluntary services within their community for a website developer and a digital architect.

> *"We have managed to utilise a lot of skilled people within our community and we haven't paid a penny for it,"* he said.

The availability of skilled people isn't always a possibility, however. RP Joe Kelly of IRD Kiltimagh, a non-profit community development organisation in East Mayo, admits that much time needs to be assigned to developing a strategy, but for individuals like himself who are not 'particularly comfortable' in the area, it can be difficult. They employ three full time staff and their roles are already stretched to the point that they cannot assign enough time to continuously work on their website or their social channels, even though they deem them of high importance. RP Joe Kelly stated that 'it's hard to find people who have the skill and interest in that digital space' with the resources they have available to them.

That's an issue RP Croí also encountered. As a non-profit charity, resources are also not plentiful and for a period of time they researched into employing a full-time digital media specialist to handle their fundraisers. RP Pat O'Donnell of Croí says that there were some concerns of employing a person due to the lack of a large salary on offer which could result in a poor standard of applications. They then were introduced to the idea of employing a third-

party digital marketing agency for a large fundraiser where they raffled off a car, which he described as a 'revelation' . RP Pat said for 'little effort, there is big return' and the idea of employing a digital marketer is no longer being considered.

> *"We're engaging with an awful lot more third-party companies like that, because charities are run by people who are understaffed and overworked, scrambling for money all the time. Whereas if you take a professional approach to fundraising, you introduce a strategy behind everything, you can really see the benefit of where your money goes."*

Utilising the skills available to you are crucial if the project is aiming to stay relatively cost free, such as the Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkways Project. RP Donal Healy of the committee highlighted that they have managed to establish a vibrant and technical digital campaign after 'utilising a lot of skilled people within our community'.

"We haven't paid a penny in terms of our web designer, graphic designer, marketing experts and architects," he said.

Sufficient time and energy are not only required for creative either, as RP Fr Charlie McDonnell noted. When you establish a presence and community on social media, commentary on those channels and forums grows. Often, he has found, the tone of the commentary can sway outside the boundaries of what is acceptable and into offensive, illegal and often libellous territory. While positive commentary can enhance a subjects' message on social media, negative and offensive commentary can weaken it significantly (Dounoucos, Hillygus and Carlson, 2019).

> *"I would stress that you need to keep an awful close eye on the comments,"* RP Fr Charlie McDonnell said. *"We've had mostly spam pornographic links, nasty comments and sometimes comments from people who may have mental health issues."*

66

He said that particularly during times of high traffic on their Facebook Live stream of Church services, negative commentary can and has offended people, especially those not savvy to the modern-day online forum. Negative experiences online will lead to parishioners and other attendees not returning in the future, he believes. Equally so, RP Fr McDonnell said that their Facebook page can receive high volumes of queries from users, some of which are harmless in nature just looking for information on services etc, but others can be people experiencing difficult times. They have had experiences with domestic abuse, suicidal individuals and other serious cases, which poses a challenge to the page administrators, who he says must be 'monitoring continuously', as well as being confident and informed in how to deal with such instances and able to relay their organisation's message. Such instances are rare, he says, but also possible and a strategy needs to be implemented in the event of it occurring.

RP Joe Kelly of Kiltimagh IRD has also experienced negative commentary on their posts, but considers it 'noise in the background' and something they 'generally ignore' as it is often coming from quarters who are ill-informed.

Remote Working and Sustainable Digital Hubs

The Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly transformed how people work and forged a pathway to normalising working from home or remote working. It has also provided rural Ireland with a new lifeline through the establishment of digital hubs and learning centres, as it struggles to keep pace with the rapid expanding urban areas.

Pre-pandemic there were already strategies put in place to help rural areas keep pace through digital learning centres and hubs through the pilot 'Smart Communities' Initiative in Ireland. The stated objective of the Initiative is to 'bring exposure to digital content and technology into the community and support the discovery of the value of digital technologies in the daily lives

of people' (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2019). It aimed to reduce the digital divide for rural areas, but some in the West of Ireland had been ahead of the curve in terms of remote working space. In Tullycross, Connemara, Co Galway, Connemara West's Global Learning and Digital Hub's foundations date back to the 1970s when the community availed of a scheme that promoted self-catering accommodation for rural areas as a stimulus for economic activity, according to RP Dr Kevin Heanue, chairman of Connemara West. Soon after the area enrolled in a very innovative study abroad programme with an American college based in Michigan, the USA, whose students travelled to the area for four whole months and took advantage of the self-catering accommodation developed in Tullycross. RP Connemara West then developed a partnership with Galway Mayo Institute of Technology in 1987 and a campus was developed in Letterfrack, which 'put a whole emphasis on education and learning development in this small area of northwest Connemara," according to RP Dr Heanue.

In the past decade, the organisation then decided to further develop those links and build a specific learning hub across the village to further enhance its potential as a global learning centre and a digital working hub or 'hot desking' facility. The introduction of fibre broadband to the area greatly reduced the digital divide and allowed them to develop packages that appealed to business retreats as well as academic programmes, such as a partnership with Harvard University in Boston, as well as the remote working hub. The academic partnership with Harvard allows students to travel and spend time in Tullycross and have an experimental element to their programme, whilst still being able to access their educational facilities.

The idea of combining the different market segments for the hub was doing around the 'whole idea of sustainability' and generating 'various income streams. *"The digital hub by itself is a challenging area,"* RP Dr Heanue admitted. He pointed towards finance challenges – raising the initial capital – and also finding the personnel and funding them to get the project off the ground.

"You have to pay someone to drive that digital hub or centre and that's fine if you have a pot of money from a funding source," he said. *"But if you're going to pay them through the income of the centre, that's unlikely to work. So, building the digital hub and learning centre is one part of the challenge, but it creates the even bigger one down to the road when communities have to try and sustain the grow the business over the next three or four years."*

Communities in the West of Ireland that are fortunate to have a community development organisation working on behalf of the area are able to maintain these digital hubs. Kiltimagh in Co Mayo is one of these communities, who boast Kiltimagh IRD, formed in 1989 in order to reduce the amount of forced migration from the area. RP Joe Kelly, company MD, says they now employ four full time staff, provide working space for over ten companies and own millions of rented properties in the area. Their biggest project to date is the Cairn International Trade Centre which they invested €7 million back in 2008 with the view of being able to provide digital hubs. "We were probably ten years ahead of the initial thinking of remote working and what it could potentially do for towns and villages in the West of Ireland," RP Joe Kelly said. But initially the space was slow to take off, mainly due to the downturn in the economy post the 2008 economic crash.

"It was hairy times and we never had more than three of the 15 spaces in the building occupied," he said. *"But thankfully the other income of the IRD was keeping the business afloat."*

After navigating those tough times, the ones highlighted also by RP Dr Kevin Heanue, Kiltimagh IRD and the Cairn International Trading Centre has now flourished to 100% occupancy with businesses and people looking for remote working locations.

Eleven kilometres over the road in a small village called Balla, their Community Resource

Development organisation has also been able to roll out remote working hubs. After investing in their broadband facilities as a necessity to roll out their Online Bingo, a main income revenue for them, a new market of remote workers opened. That has added an extra income stream for the community to use in enhancing community development projects and has increased the chances of long-term community sustainability using digital media.

Overview

In total there were 6 major themes identified in the findings, with various concepts forming out of each one. The themes included: How strength of brand leads to success in community development; the shift from traditional to digital media; the rise in use of third-party digital agencies; how sufficient time and skill is required to have digital success in community development projects; examples of successful organic and paid marketing strategies; and the challenge in making Digital Hubs sustainable in the long term. The concepts that help form the themes are similar to some of the concepts discovered in the literature review. The below tables show the themes and concepts found in the research collected in the semi-structured and in-depth interviews.

Table B Common Themes Arriving out of Findings (Ger Flanagan, MSc Dissertation 2021)

Theme	Concept	Quote	Reference
Strong brand helps success	A charity donation during fundraiser	"We donated €10,000 to charity as a gesture of good will."	RP Danny McLaughlin
Rise of Third-Party Digital Agencies	Saving time, resources and money	"Charities are under-staffed and over-worked as it is"	RP Pat O'Donnell
Time & Skill Required for success	Search community for members with required skillsets	"We managed to utilise a lot of skilled people… and we haven't paid a penny"	RP Donal Healy
Organic v Paid Strategies	Create engaging content for organic reach	"I was trying to create a really high-end premium look and feel…with humour"	RP Mark Newcombe
Shifting from traditional to digital media	Digital marketing is better return than traditional	"Social media was more effective and a lot cheaper"	RP Fr Charlie McDonnell
Ensuring sustainability of digital hubs	Digital Hubs will fund themselves in the future	"Building the centre is one part… but it creates an even bigger challenge down the road about how to sustain it over the next three or four years"	RP Dr Kevin Heanue

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter concludes the research by reiterating the purpose of the research, design and main findings. Before then presenting practical implications and recommendations drawn from the findings.

Conclusion Overview

The use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland has rapidly increased in the past number of years. However, it is the complexity of the strategies and methods in the way that is it being utilised that has changed so significantly. The Covid-19 pandemic has fast-tracked this change also in that his has altered peoples/organisations modus operandi in terms of community development campaigns, but it is not the sole reason either. While community development in the West of Ireland has been traditionally volunteer-led and continues to be so, the results indicate that communities are now more willing to contract out the work to a third-party agency in return for a fee.

Research participant organisations: Win a House in Westport, Croí Heart & Stroke Charity and Balla Bingo are three community campaigns that took the decision to contract an agency to run their digital campaigns. The benefits they have experienced are significant from having an experienced digital marketer to take the load off their shoulders, plus a high return for their investment. They also risk the chance of losing money on an investment - unlikely but still a possibility.

> *"The bottom line for Croí, is the return of effort it took us to raise the money,"* RP Pat O'Donnell of Croí.

It is a method for community development initiatives to consider, if they are embarking on a major fundraiser and if they possess a strong brand that will resonate with their customers and have a prize that will capture the imagination of the consumer.

However, many organisations are still keeping their campaigns in-house and are utilising skilled people within their community to organise and implement complex digital strategies that have yielded successful results. Findings from this study indicate, however, that the latter method is time consuming and requires knowledgeable volunteers willing to commit a lot of their time to the project.

> *"We had absolutely no capital budget behind our campaign, so we had to make sure we had a proper strategy and a plan and a reason and rational for everything we do,"* RP Mark Newcombe of Castlebar Sports Partnership said. *"That started with getting the right people involved."*

This has created a divide for some organisations who are not willing or cannot afford to employ a third-party digital agency to run their campaign, and those who lack the sufficient skills, time and confidence to use the digital tools available to them to run the campaign themselves. This research clearly illustrates that communities in the West of Ireland are using digital media significantly in their campaigns and are showing a strong desire to utilise all the tools available to them, but it also shows that there is still a lack of knowledge and confidence to immerse in the digital world also. Furthermore, while capital budget and funding are generally a major issue for most community development projects, keeping costs low is often paramount.

> *"We would have loved to use some money on digital advertising, but we felt it would take away from the fundraised money and that didn't sit right with us,"* RP Donal Healy of the Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch & Community Walkway initiative added.

Since March 2020, the idea of remote working has become a long-term possibility for many people and the subsequent rise of digital hubs from community development organisations as become to aid that has accelerated. However, the idea of building a digital hub is not as simple as erecting the building and cutting the ribbon, the research has found. The work to make it sustainable, the most important aspect of them all, happens after that.

Having regard to these conclusions, drawn from research findings, future community development initiatives must consider some of the following recommendations if they are looking to create a digital marketing campaign in-house, contract it out, or looking to build a digital hub. The data collected during this research contains extremely valuable information, from both highly experienced and skilled participants, for community development organisations and could be vital in turning their initiative into a success.

Recommendations

1. Integrated Digital Marketing Strategy & Toolkit

Findings from this study show that community development organisations are utilising digital media in their digital campaigns, but some do not have a structured digital marketing plan to support their initiatives. Findings also show that a clear, defined strategy is what helps to succeed. Time constraints and a lack of knowledge with the tools and techniques contribute to poor strategic decisions, the research has shown:

> *"Getting the expertise is crucial,"* RP Mark Newcombe said. *"You need to reach out to your community. There's no point in getting someone who can just put up some social posts, with the best will in the world. You need skilled people."*

The key to implementing this digital marketing strategy for community development organisations is to enlist a number of digitally-skilled personnel to the committee. They do not

have to be experts, but people with a basic knowledge of some of the standard digital tools available today is essential. A digital marketing strategy and toolkit, using the RACE Framework, which has been added to and further developed from the research findings (below), will help give community development organisations the required tools and methods to develop their own organic digital marketing strategies that will help promote community development in their area. The RACE Framework consists of 4 steps to help brands, or in this adapted case, community development organisations, to engage their customers throughout their campaigns.

As there are so many tools and tactics available right now, it can be difficult to know where to start, unless a framework like RACE is being used. It will help manage and improve results from a digital marketing point of view and provide best practice analytics (Rautela, 2021).

2. *Third Party Digital Agency Consideration*

Planning and implementing a full digital media and marketing strategy for a community development organisation may not always be possible, the research indicates. It has found that time constraints, lack of expert staff and an unwillingness to commit due to a lack of confidence in a successful return has contributed to organisations going down the route of contracting the services out. The research shows that hiring a third-party digital agency can:

- Deliver high return on investment.

- Remove the hassle and time commitment needed to run a campaign meaning more time to focus on more pressing matters.

- Harvest and recycle invaluable data for follow on campaigns ("*The data we have got from our first campaign was worth a monumental amount,*" RP Danny McLaughlin said.

    "We wanted to hire a digital marketer but after using a third-party agency I don't think we will now," RP Pat O'Donnell of Croí Heart & Stroke Charity said. *"I think we will*

just contract it out after this experience, because charities are understaffed and overworked, always scrambling for money, and this is a professional approach that reduces the risk of employing someone and failing in organising our own campaign."

The three organisations who used this method of digital marketing in their community development campaigns all reported results that 'exceeded their expectations'.

"We're making more revenue that we ever have before with this current online version of Bingo," RP Seamus Caulfield of Balla CRD said, while RP Danny McLaughlin of Win a House in Westport added that *'the single biggest secret to the success of Win a House in Westport was the online marketing… it brought us to a new level."*

This method does bring more overheads and requires some initial capital budget to secure a prize and to fund the paid social advertising.

"If you're trying to sell a lot of something online, it is going to cost you a few quid," RP Colm Hanratty said. *"Most organisations and charities can be nervous and apprehensive at the start when they're investing money, because there's probably a lack of knowledge there. But we've never worked on a digital campaign that hasn't made money profit. And the one thing I always recommend is to lock in your prize for the customer early. Because at the end of the day it is retail, so if you're asking people to put their hand in their pockets and buy a luxury item, it needs to be worth it."*

Some examples of a prize are a new car, house or cash prizes. If your organisation can manage the overheads and is willing to take the risk, hiring a third-party digital agency, the research suggests, could be a viable option.

"Digital is the future and my advice would be to consider using the third-party digital agency," RP Pat O'Donnell said. *"We're generating twice as much revenue now as to when we were doing it before,"* RP Seamus Caulfield said. *"Costs are less, time is more*

76

plentiful for our committee and the customers are happier because our prize fund is greater due to all these things."

3. Support Digital Hubs to make them sustainable

Rural digital hubs can take a variety of forms but the most common version is to be used for business activities. Enterprise hubs and innovation hubs can fall under the same problem, despite differences in interpretations (Rundel, Salemink and Strijker, 2020). Since Covid-19 the working-from-home option has grown in popularity and is being considered a lifeline to rural Ireland, allowing people to live and work and to stimulate business activity outside of urban area (Davies, 2021). The research finds that digital working hubs are growing in popularity in Ireland, but that the centres of hubs must find other usages to become sustainable in the long term. Digital Hubs can be a practical and fruitful asset to promote community development, when approached with a long-term vision.

> *"One of the key challenges is the whole piece about how you find and pay a person to drive these centres on going forward and creating that funding stream,"* RP Dr Kevin Heanue of Connemara West said. *"Funding is limited and if most are not lucky enough to have a big pot of capital to use, and the unfortunate thing is that governments and politicians love to come down and cut the ribbon of a new centre, but they don't care how that building is in use after, it's the community left holding the baby."*

The growth of digital hubs will be key to providing infrastructure, expertise and localised support for community development organisations, but there needs to be a dedicated work plan and ongoing budgetary allowance afforded to the service to make them sustainable. Consequently, the research gives some of the following recommendations. Having discussed the benefits of digital hubs with community development organisations in this study it is clear

that adding other branches to the digital hub like a learning centre, co-location for other services, business and corporate packages will help its long-term future. The research also found that they can used by the community to avail of digital tools and assistance, while also catering for business relocation and semi-remote working presuming it has as the required technology to meet the needs of its users.

In the West of Ireland, digital hubs or remote working spaces are being successfully managed by community development companies who can generate income from additional resources available within the centre. These include events which provide revenue streams such as online bingo, e-learning and education abroad programmes, hot desks, and/or property leasing. Without State help, there will be difficulties in funding long term sustainability on digital hubs alone. The hubs can contribute to an extent of the sustainability but it is very much dependent on the set up (Rundel, Salemink and Strijker, 2020).

> *"It is important to think that technology and more broadly, digitalisation, can enable the development process in a community as opposed to it being the development itself,"* RP Dr Kevin Heanue said. *"But technology is opening up all these possibilities of bringing people together in rural areas which, if you like, is the gold standard objective for community development."*

RACE Strategy & Toolkit

It is recommended that the community development organisations use a strategic framework. As a result of the research findings uncovered, it has been discovered that there is a need to illustrate to community development organisations the kind of digital marketing framework that could be used for future projects. The RACE strategy framework has been discovered in the data collected, by RP Mark Newcombe, and also in the literature review (Rautela, 2021) .

The data collected in this research has been adapted for community development organisations and applied to the following iteration of the RACE framework to use as a working example. Sticking to the principles in the framework can lead to a successful community development project. Achieving digital marketing success in a crowded marketplace is difficult and goes beyond the product, so strategy needs to be goal-driven and data focused. Consumers go through a multistage journey before making purchasing decisions, so engaging with Community/customers is crucial, as is avoiding that hard sell effort early on (Edelman, 2010). Following the RACE (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) Framework will be the basis for a successful campaign, RP Mark Newcombe highlighted.
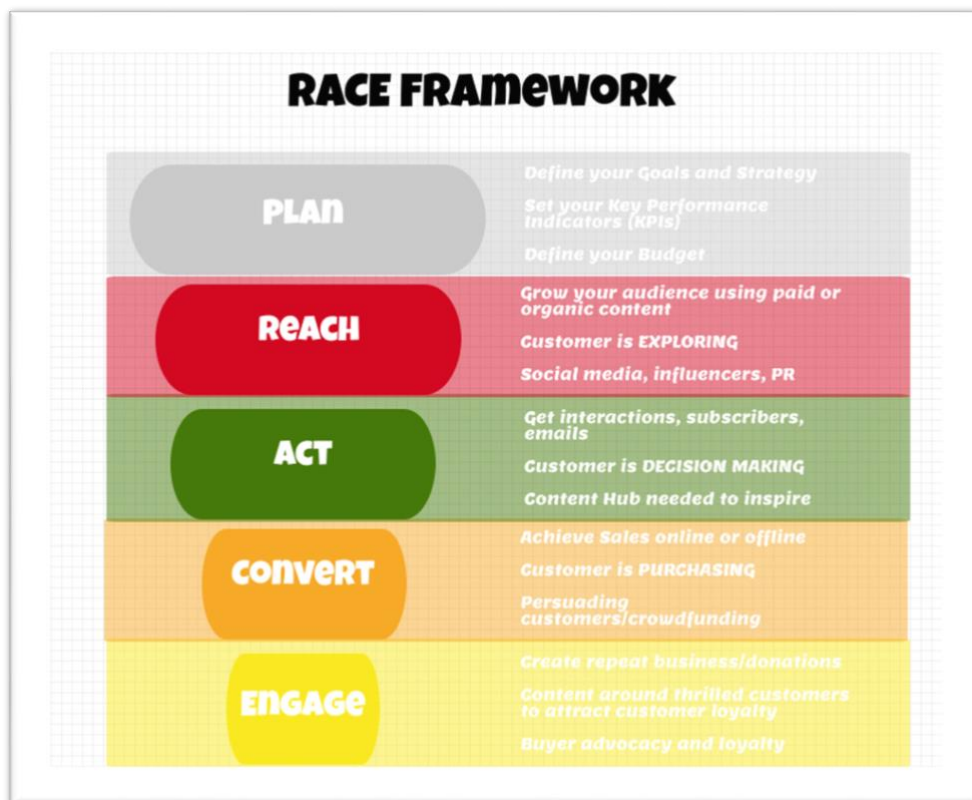
Figure 5 Race Strategy Framework (Rautela, 2021)

PLAN

"An effective digital marketing strategy starts with a robust plan," RP Mark Newcombe added, which sets out your overall objectives for the campaign, highlights your strengths and weaknesses, analyses your competitors and the market/target. This information is vital so realistic goals and KPIs can be set and reached.

REACH

This involves building awareness of your campaign or brand and trying to get your message out there on other websites, social media pages, or indeed traditional methods to try and build traffic to your main site, whether it is a website, or a social media page. The research indicates that the most popular tools to create online reach and build awareness are Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube and a personalised website. Sprout Social (2021) have produced useful demographics to consider (below) before choosing your platforms.

Table C Social Media Demographics (Sprout Social, 2021)

Social Channel	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Tik Tok	LinkedIn	YouTube
# of monthly users	2.7 billion	187 million	1 billion	100 million	738 million	2 billion
Largest age group	25-34 (26.3%)	30-49 (44%)	25-34 (33.1%)	18-24	46-55	15-25

Gender	44% female, 56% male	32% female, 68% male	57% female, 43% male	59% female, 41% male	51% male, 49% female	72% all female internet users; 72% all male internet users
Time spent per day	38 minutes	3.53 minutes per session	29 minutes	45+ minutes	63% users access monthly	41.9 minutes (18+)

The research shows that a combination of a Facebook page, Instagram page and a basic designed website can reach the desired target audience and create enough organic traffic to create the awareness for the campaign over a set period of time, approximately 3-6 weeks.

SEO/Google Analytics

Both Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Google Analytics are free, easy to use tools to help attract and track website traffic and data to help with future decisions. Definitions can be found in appendices A & B. Some other useful free SEO tools that community development initiatives in the West of Ireland are using include:

- Google Keyword Planner

- Google Trends

- Yoast SEO

Social Campaigns to Drive Awareness

The research shows that targeted social campaigns respond well in terms of traffic on public holiday weekends. It also suggests that utilising influencers or high-profile people, such as GAA stars, to raise awareness of the campaign will drive high volume on social. Win a House in Westport campaign used former Footballer of the Year Lee Keegan. This can be used with a larger, hero-style video aimed for social media, approximately 30-60 seconds in length and

6-12 second influencer videos. Research suggests allocating a small budget to create a flagship video will attract organic traffic throughout the campaign's lifetime.

Website Building

The results of the research point to two different website builders that are cheap, practical and easy to use. They include:

- Wordpress
- Wix

The research indicated that possessing a website was the simplest form of creating a platform where direct donations can be made by customers through crowdfunding software. It will also reap high volumes of traffic when paired with a successful SEO strategy.

ACT

This part of the strategy is aimed at encouraging interactions with your online audience, which will turn into leads and sales down the line. The research indicates that this stage of the strategy needs to 'inspire' and 'entertain' and that will come down to the content on the chosen social media channels. It is estimated by the year 2022, video will make up more than 82% of all consumer internet traffic (McCue, 2021). The research showed that a commissioned video produced by Win a House in Westport attracted nearly 800,000 views over the course of the campaign, albeit, digital ad spend was put behind the video. The Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch and Community Walkways project also produced a short 3D designed video of the new development. This was posted organically and contributed to over €70,000 raised through their website crowdfunding software. Images and graphics are another option to help drive organic traffic. The research highlighted that a content capture night should take place if applicable, which will give the digital team an opportunity to capture imagery of your subjects, which will

be essential for the content calendar and the creation of the online organic assets over the next few weeks. A content capture night can be when a community development organisation is hosting an event, it gives opportunity for photographs and videos to be taken and collected to be used as content throughout the campaign. A common theme, as well as a distinctive look and feel should be discussed before the creation of the assets for the content, with a mixture of humorous and informative style content proving popular in reach and engagement. Posts in both video and imagery can also be centred around engagement, such as giveaways, or like and share competitions. Consideration should also be given to User Generated Content (UGC) to help widen the reach and increase the share among social media, especially when the community is actually involved within the content itself.

A practical content calendar, the research shows, can look like below. It has been developed by the researcher after harvesting all the primary and secondary data. It sets out a basic calendar of organic content that can be rolled out over a six-week period for a community development organisation.

Table D Example of Content Calendar (Ger Flanagan, MSc Dissertation 2021)

Content Calendar Example						
	Weeks 1-3 (Reach)			Weeks 4-6 (Act)		
Monday	Teaser Post Social with image "Big News Coming Soon"	Short Blog Post Re: Campaign	Social Posts with humourous imagery	Launch Video re-post & blog	"Last Call" Like & Share post	Conversion focused posts link to donation software
Thurs	Like & Share Social Post for Launch	Launch Video Re-post (Social & Youtube)	Influencer Short Promotion Video	Influencer call out Like & Share comp	Campaign update from chairperson post/news etc	Blog post (info on where funds going)
Saturday	Launch Video	Engagement post "Let us know your thoughts…"	Sponsored Raffle like & Share competition	Imagery social posts information style	Competition announcement	Hero style' video Influencer may suit Direct to donation

CONVERT

This stage is where awareness and reach can be converted into sales. Focus should be on getting the audience to take the vital step in terms of donating to the campaign, or whatever the conversion variable happens to be. Crowdfunding software such as Stripe or GoFundMe

proved the most popular in the research. Ease of conversion is an important aspect of this stage, the research finds.

> *"When you get to the mechanics of an online purchase,"* RP Danny McLaughlin of Win a House in Westport said*, "it needs to be as simple for the consumer as possible. For example, we found that using Paypal on our website brings the user off our site and into another website, which we discovered frustrates the customer in terms of length of time taken to make the purchase."*

Stripe, Facebook Donations and GoFundMe allow easy access and practical use, but have different influences which needs to be considered.

> *"GoFundMe is very much a charity fundraising option, which we felt didn't suit our campaign as we weren't a charity,"* RP Donal Healy said*. "So, we put the Stripe plug-in on our website, which is an extremely go processing tool. However, it lacks the marketing benefits that GoFundMe brings, because with that software, you can share it on social media and people can who and how much they donate, which has a snowballing effect where people feel obliged to donate. Stripe is untraceable, if you like."*

The research also shows that this stage of the process is an opportunity to collect email addresses for the next stage of engagement – 'emails are worth their weight in gold from a digital marketing perspective," RP Colm Hanratty of SixTwo Digital said.

ENGAGE

> *"This is the final and shortest stage of the plan, but it can be really successful if done correctly,"* RP *Mark* Newcombe said. *"Customers are great, but repeat customers are even better."*

Research shows that some strong storytelling, case studies of previous donations and really engaging social content can inspire re-customers. Using analytic software on websites such as Google Analytics or Hotjar, will provide data that can be harvested to use in remarking communications. Hotjar is a software tool that helps businesses or organisations see and understand how users behave on your website (About us | Hotjar, 2021).

> *"This can be simple ways like changing around the navigation on your website to highlight what proved most popular in terms of visits, time on page and clicks,"* RP Danny McLaughlin said. *"And on your social posts, Insights will show you what worked and what didn't work and that can be invaluable in terms of re-posting or re-angling content to get more conversions. So don't be afraid to tear the data available to you apart."*

Mailchimp

Successful digital media campaigns use tools like Mailchimp to heighten their reach to their customers. Mailchimp is a well-known email marketing service. Its main purpose is to send out newsletters and automated emails in order to improve your business's outcomes, the research has shown.

> *"Email marketing allows you to communicate with your customers, engage them in conversation, and establish meaningful, long-term relationships,"* RP Mark Newcombe said.

A simply designed email, keeping consistent with the campaign's themes along with direct messaging and simple call to action, directing people to the crowdfunding software can benefit any campaign significantly.

Example Digital Marketing Plan

An example list of a digital marketing plan is created below, which has been developed by the research findings in this paper. It can be used by community development organisations to help plan and strategize their campaigns with a strong plan they can refer to throughout the campaign.

Table E Digital Strategy (Ger Flanagan, MSc Dissertation 2021

Plan	Create a Digital Marketing Campaign for a local amenity project to raise awareness and funds for the development using primarily organic (free) marketing tools			
KPI	Review of current situation/output	Set goals and objectives	Define and agree on a strategy	Define target audience
Action	Identify current digital marketing activities/channels	Conduct a SWOT analysis	Outline Goals: Ie: raise 50% funding online in X months	Identify needs, wants and customer personas

Digital Tools

A large number of digital marketing tools are currently being utilised by community development initiatives in the West of Ireland. The majority are free to use and are practical and easy-to-use. The figure below, showing the most popular tools in line with their use on the RACE Framework, was compiled using the data from the research. It has been developed by the researcher using the data collected to help guide community development originations to the most effective, practical and essential digital marketing tools available to them to use. Below is a table containing the key takeaways from the RACE Framework that can be constantly referred to throughout the whole campaign.

Figure 6 Essential Digital Marketing Tools (Ger Flanagan, MSc Dissertation 2021)

Table F Key Takeaways from RACE Framework (Ger Flanagan, MSc Dissertation 2021)

Reach	Act	Convert	Engage
Focus on Building Awareness	Encourage interactions with gathered audience	Turn interactions/reach/leads into sales or donations	Target repeat customers
Establish a platform on social media	Create inspiring and entertaining content	Decide on crowdfunding software	Create engaging content to re-inspire (good news stories)
Define target audience/brand message & content calendar	Develop distinctive look and feel of content	Promote email address sign ups with a giveaway competition	Start email campaign
Utilise video for maximum traffic	Like and share competitions/UGC	Use stronger sales messaging on posts	Harvest data to analyse what worked/didn't work
Run for 3-6 week period (approx)	Run for 3 weeks (approx)	Run for 3-4 weeks (approx)	2 weeks (max)

Overview/Reflection

This research has made several recommendations to support community development digital marketing efforts and that it is hoped that the RACE toolkit, which has been further added to and developed from the research data in this study and tailored specifically to rural community development organisations' needs in the West of Ireland, will be a useful practical tool for these organisations.

The researcher is grateful for the time and attention to detail provided to him by the community development officers in developing these recommendations and toolkit, which the researcher hopes will be invaluable to future community development organisations. It was admirable to

witness the efforts of promoting community development that were ongoing in the West of Ireland during the data collection process of this research and the researcher is hugely confident in the future of rural Ireland having witnessed first-hand some of the highly skilled, motivated and passionate volunteers within it.

> *"Where an organisation comes together and they decide as a community that a particular need or services needs completing, then put your head down and go for it, no matter how ambitious it is,"* RP Joe Kelly said. *"Don't listen to the noise in the background, the naysayers, because they most likely have no idea or experience of doing anything voluntarily to promote community development in their area."*

Themes Comparison

Below is a comparison table of themes discovered in the literature review and how they compared to the themes discovered in the data collection from the nine semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Table 9 Themes Comparison Lit Review & Findings

Literature Review Theme	Literature Review Quote	Research Theme	Research Quote
Community engagement	"multi-involvement from the various community stakeholders are hugely positive.." Luloff, AE (1999)	Time & Skill Required for success	"We managed to utilise a lot of skilled people… and we haven't paid a penny" RP Donal Healy
Sustainability	"projects that stimulate interest and engagement is vitally important." Brennan (2006)		"Building the centre is one part… but it creates an even bigger challenge down the road about

		Ensuring sustainability of digital hubs	how to sustain it over the next three or four years" RP Dr Kevin Heanue
Communication	"development efforts are important, but more is the process of interaction, establishment of channels of communication." Brennan (2006)	Organic and Paid Digital Marketing Strategies	"The very first few weeks of the campaign was telling our audience who we are and what we're doing…" RP Mark Newcombe
Grass Roots	"The basis of many current community leadership programme is a focus on strong grass roots involvement" Langone and Rohs (1995)	Strong brand helps success	"Everyone wants to be associated with this." [Colm Horkan Pitch and Walkways] RP Donal Healy
Community agency	"Freely interacting with others leads to community agency…" Brennan (2006)	Use of Third-party digital agencies	"I found out about the… digital marketing agency… from another local organisation" RP Danny McLaughlin

Further Research

The categories of findings in this study are based on the information provided to use by the various community development organisations.

However, it is important to remember that some important information may have been left out during the semi-structured interviews. So, this study does not claim to provide a complete representative overview for all the community development organisations in the West of Ireland, but rather insights into a select few examples that the researcher deemed successful. The findings of the paper suggest that digital media can have huge contributions to community development projects and campaigns in the future. It also found that there is currently a big

gap in research covering how communities around the world are utilising digital media to promote community development and grow their communities. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address digital media usage in community development on a global scale or how advances in digital technology are aiding rural areas to survive socio economic challenges.

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Appendix A

SEO

Search engine optimization is the process of improving a piece of online material so that it appears near the top of a search engine's page when someone searches for something (What Is SEO?, 2021). The main distinction between SEO and paid advertising is that SEO involves organic ranking, which means you don't have to pay to be in that spot. When budget is an issue in community development projects, as the research discovered, SEO is a simple tool that is free and can help bridge the gap from paid online search.

Appendix B

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a web analytics service that offers basic analytical tools and statistics for search engine optimization (SEO) and marketing. It's used to keep track of a website's performance and gather information from visitors. It can assist businesses in determining the most popular sources of user traffic, assessing the efficacy of their marketing efforts and campaigns, tracking goal completions, identifying patterns and trends in user involvement, and obtaining additional visitor data such as demographics. Google Metrics is frequently used by small and medium-sized retail websites to collect and analyse various consumer behaviour analytics, which may be utilized to optimize marketing efforts, generate website traffic, and better retain customers (Chai, 2021).

Appendix C

Taught Programme Research Ethics Approval Application Form

Research undertaken by taught students must receive ethical approval unless deemed exempt. This application form may be completed by an individual student or by a Programme Board/Lecturer for a group of similar research projects.

This application is completed by:

Student: X☐   OR   Lecturer on behalf of Programme Board: ☐

PART A

Applicant Details	
Name:	Gerard Flanagan
Student ID: (if relevant)	G00298920
Programme Title:	MSc Digital Media & Marketing
Programme Stage:	Stage 1
Research Supervisor's Name: (if relevant)	Dr Janine McGinn

Project Details	
Research Study Title:	A qualitative multiple case study assessment on the use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland
Research Study Summary (max 100 words): This research seeks to assess how four communities in peripheral regions in the West of Ireland are utilising digital media to promote community development. It will incorporate multiple case studies with data gathered via qualitative instruments, on projects namely: The Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch in Charlestown; Win a House in Westport 2; the Castlebar Community Sports Project; and the Catholic Church streaming of Mass services. This research will address the literature gap on this topic, with the objectives of: 1. Examining the use of digital media in specific community development projects in the West of Ireland 2. Evaluating the various tools and methods being used across the various projects	

3. Gathering information that will help will help generate a policy or model for effective digital media use in community development

	Risk Checklist Please answer ALL the questions in each of the sections below – Tick YES or NO		
	Will the research study….?	YES	NO
1	Involve direct and/or indirect contact with human participants?	X	
2	Involve analysis of pre-existing data which contains personal or sensitive information not in the public domain?	X	
3	Require permission or consent to conduct?	X	
4	Require permission or consent to publish?	X	
5	Have a risk of compromising confidentiality?	X	
6	Have a risk of compromising anonymity?	X	
7	Collect/contain personal data i.e. any information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual?	X	
8	Collect/contain sensitive personal data e.g. health data, sexual orientation, race religion?		X
9	Contain elements which you OR your supervisor are NOT trained to conduct?		X
10	Use any information OTHER than that which is freely available in the public domain?	X	
11	Involve respondents to the internet or other visual/vocal methods where participants may be identified?	X	
12	Include a financial incentive to participate in the research?		X
13	Involve our own students or staff?		X
14	Take place outside Ireland?		X
15	Involve participants who are vulnerable or at risk?		X
16	Involve any participants who are unable to give informed consent?		X
17	Involve data collection taking place BEFORE informed consent is given?		X
18	Involve any deliberate deception or covert data collection?		X
19	Involve a risk to the researcher or participants beyond that experienced in everyday life?		X
20	Cause (or could cause) physical or psychological harm or negative consequences?		X
21	Use intrusive or invasive procedures?		X
22	Involve a clinical trial?		X
23	Involve the possibility of incidental findings related to participant health status?		X
24	Involve the remuneration of research participants?		X

If, as a student, you answered **NO** to all the above questions your research supervisor will review, and if in agreement sign below to indicate that this form does not have to submitted to the Taught Programme Research Ethics Committee.

Name		Signed	N/A	Date	
	Research Supervisor				

If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions, you need to complete part B below.

PART B

1	Project Overview

Please give a brief overview of the study, including a summary of the aims and objectives.

This study will build upon research on community development in the West of Ireland, most notably on the research by Cearbhaill and Cinnéide (1986) and Brennan (2006) in Killala.

The value of this study is that it provides in-depth information on how communities are adapting to use digital media in community development projects during these times.

It is the first study of its kind evaluating methods that, it is expected will generate a model or policy for future community development projects and will make an important contribution to research as very little has been found in the literature about optimal digital community development initiatives.

This study will be of particular interest to the Community Development Journal:

https://academic.oup.com/cdj

Primary Aim: to generate a best practice model or policy for digital media community development projects

Objective 1: To gather qualitative information on how community development projects are currently utilising digital media.

Objective 2: To evaluate the correlation between tools and techniques used across the various communities to empower development

Hypothesis: This study aims to test the hypothesis that a group of people coming together within a community and working towards a common goal can produce improved solutions for problems in their area with effective implementation of digital media technologies and techniques.

Endpoints: To generate a model or policy for effective practice which can be adopted by other community development initiatives.

2	**Methodology**
Please give a description of the methodology, including any data collection and analysis methods.	
The intention is to use a qualitative research design within a multiple case study framework. In the sampling criteria, provision will be made for a potential snowball	

sampling effect. That is, if initial participants interviewed make the researcher aware of experts in the field of digital community development, who could contribute significantly to the knowledge generated in this study, then the researcher will adjust the sample to allow for the additional interviews to take place.

Engaging in a process of methodological triangulation, a variety of instruments will be employed to collect data. The instruments will include: a preliminary survey to identify specific participants for interview; semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews where necessary; website analysis and journaling.

A pilot study will take place using another community development project prior to contact with case study projects to test methods of gathering data, readability and a general understanding and acceptability of the questions being used in interview.

Interviews will be conducted in person, where possible with Covid-19, or else through Microsoft Teams and will range from 1-4 people at any one time in order to gather the qualitative information.

Interviews will be recorded and, prior to the interview, interviewees will be interviewed subject to prior consent. All interviewees will be given a brief ten minute introduction describing the aims and objectives of the project, details of researcher involvement and clarification in relation to confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

The data gathering process and analysis will be carried out over the course of 3-6 months.

3	Main Ethical Considerations

Please give a brief description of the main ethical considerations involved in the study.

Confidentiality: documentary analysis, potentially around finance, is an example of sensitive information which may be at risk during this study as it involved case studies with four or more participants. Thus it is vital to reiterate importance of maintaining confidentiality of and amongst participants. Within the introduction of every semi-structured interview/focus group, confidentiality and anonymity will be addressed thoroughly in line with research policy.

Bias risk during case study: It is important to get input from all participants on topics during semi-structured interviews to prevent bias risk from specific participants getting more time to speak. This can be avoided by proper facilitation from the coordinator of each case study group. It is also important not to include questions that are 'loaded' in the sense that they may lead to bias. The researcher must also not hint at any opinions they may have , making sure to keep body language and facial expressions as neutral as possible.

GDPR: Because of the research taking place on a digital landscape where personal details such as email addresses may be available, assurances will be provided in written form that all research will be done strictly in compliance with GDPR.

To combat any ethical concerns, the researcher will provide pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and will hold data securely and destroy all reference to names and identifiable details on transcripts when the data has been analysed.

4	Human Participants

If the study includes Human Participants (or their data), please give a description of who will be included.

Male and female participants over the age of 18 years-old. The participants would be involved in the organising committees of a community development project in the West which employs digital technology to enhance the reach of the development.

There will be approximately 15-30 semi-structured interviews, including focus group interviews where necessary.

5	Recruitment, Voluntary Participation, Consent and Right to Withdraw

If the study includes Human Participants, please give a brief description of the recruitment process, how voluntary participation will be ensured, if (and how) informed consent will be obtained prior to participants taking part in the study, and the right of withdrawal from the research process.

A shortlist of potential interviewees will be drafted based on their role in the research, expertise, employment status and sex. These interviewees will then be numbered in terms of significance to the research as deemed by researcher and consultation with research adviser.

Approaches will be made entirely by the researcher. They will be initially done through a phone call, or where that is not possible, email, followed by a phone call. Face to face approaches are also a possibility in some circumstances where Covid-19 restrictions are permitting.

Participants will be provided with a full breakdown of the research idea through a pre-prepared draft document and an interview brief will also be given.

No expenses or incentives will be offered.

Written confirmation will be provided on request.

Confidentiality of private information.

In that same confidentiality agreement, it will set out the time stage at which a participant can withdraw their involvement in the data collection. Participants can withdraw within 14 days of participating in the research.

Proposed participants who are asked to take part in the research DO NOT have to take part if they so wish.

A preliminary survey of potential participants will be administered to assess suitability of candidates for interview'. However, scope for snowball sampling will also be allowed if other expert or potential interviewees arise during initial interviews.

Requests will be made to potential participants via phone, email and social media.

The pilot study will be conducted using friends of the researcher to assess the readability of the questions, the format of the interview and the workings of a focus group interview. They will be recruited through phone contact. Issues involving coercion or feelings of obligation from these participants will be addressed by leaving response as optional and emphasizing that participation is voluntary.

Information related to the score and purpose of the study will be provided to all participants prior to interviews and participation. This includes name and details of researcher, purpose of study, what is required of participants, and information of confidentiality. They will also be informed that participation is voluntary and they have the ability to withdraw. They can do this by contacting the researcher by phone/email and consent forms will be administered to participants prior to engagement in focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Consent will also be recorded prior to the schedule of the interviews or focus group interviews.

6	Risks and Benefits

Please give a brief description of how, when and where the research will take place and whether there are any risks and/or benefits involved.

As some sensitive data may be collected, the research must comply full with GDPR legislation.

Face-to-face interviews and in-person focus group interviews will also be preferred unless Covid-19 regulations do not allow.

Interviews will be conducted via MS Teams, participants will be required to join an online group and will be sent information in advance so they have time to access. That is to ensure they have time to understand the material. It will also help in eliminating bias.

This is also a low level of 'health and safety ' risk involved in this study as participants are not required to do anything which may affect their own safety.

7	Personal Data, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Please specify what type of information/data will be collected/analysed and the source(s). In addition, specify if and how the anonymity of participants will be ensured, and information be kept confidential.

Participants will be asked to provide their name, age, sex, address and contact details.

Public domain data may also be collected, such as data from other similar community development projects that can be used for comparisons.

All data collected, however sensitive, will be conducted in conjunction and in line with the process and rules set out by GDPR. It will be stored on two external hard drives that only the researcher will have access to and kept in a secure place. Written confirmation will be provided therein setting out the process.

All data will be destroyed when the research is completed.

No further personal/sensitive data will be requested from participants.

No disclosure of information will be needed.

8	Reporting and Dissemination

Please give details of the planned dissemination and specify if the findings from the research will be published and whether any permission is required for this.

I intend to publish this as a research paper, in conjunction with all community development projects and various stakeholders, in the Community Development Journal.

Permission will be sought from participants to do so.

9	Location of research

Will the research take place outside of Ireland?

YES ☐   NO   X☐   If yes, give details below.

Not applicable

10	Collaborative Projects

Is the research a collaborative project (i.e., it involves more than one institution)?

YES ☐ NO X☐ If yes, give details below.	
Not applicable	

11	Any other permission or external ethical approval required to undertake the project
Please specify if the project requires any other ethical approval or permissions not mentioned previously in this application and how and when these will be obtained.	
No. However, the researcher commits to ensuring that all organisations' ethical procedures will be checked out with the relevant authorities, but it is not expected that there will be further ethical approval required for this research.	

DECLARATIONS AND SIGNATURES

STUDENT
I confirm that I will undertake this project as detailed in Part A and Part B of the application. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I may not make any substantial amendments to the project without further approval. I understand that research with human participants or their data must not commence without ethical approval.

Signed		*Date*	***05/03/2021***

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR RECOMMENDATION FOR STUDENT PROJECT
I confirm that the committee has considered part A and part B of the application. The project is viable and the student has appropriate skills to undertake the project. Where applicable, the Participant Information Sheet and recruitment procedures for obtaining informed consent are appropriate and the ethical issues arising from the project have been addressed in the application. I understand that research with human participants must not commence without ethical approval. I recommend this project for approval.

Name		*Signed*	*Janine Mc Ginn*	*Date*	05/03/21
	Research Supervisor				
Comment(s):					

E.g. if similar research projects have been previously approved.

LECTURER ON BEHALF OF PROGRAMME BOARD			
I confirm that the project will be undertaken as detailed in stage one and stage two of the application. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I may not make any substantial amendments to the project without further approval. I understand that research with human participants or their data must not commence without ethical approval.			
Signed	*Janine Mc Ginn*	*Date*	**05/03/21**

PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE					
I confirm that this project was considered by the Taught Programme Research Ethics Committee and has received ethical approval.					
Chair		*Signed*		*Date*	

This form will be retained for the purposes of quality assurance of compliance and audit for

THREE years

Appendix 4

Participant Consent Form

Research Title: A qualitative multiple case study assessment on the use of digital media in

community development projects in the West of Ireland.

The purpose of the research: This research seeks to assess how four communities in peripheral regions in the west of Ireland are utilising digital media to promote community development . The aim is to create a model or policy of best practice for future community development projects.

Research Objectives:

1. Examine the use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland
2. Evaluate the various tools and methods being used
3. Gather information that will help create policy on how digital media can be effectively used in community development

Researcher Disclosure:

It is important to note that this research has not been commissioned by any organisation or agency. It is planned to present research findings primarily to Galway Mayo Institute of Technology examiners and perhaps at academic conferences and in academic journals.

I, Ger Flanagan, am a research student of GMIT, I undertake to retain confidentiality of all data emergent from this research and I guarantee that I will not use any information disclosed to me by participants in this research for any purpose other than to further the research objectives stated above.

Informed Consent:

All research will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines set out by Galway Mayo Institute of Technology. Interview participants may ask at any time for clarification of anything they don't understand or would like explained further. Participants are not obliged to answer any of the questions that are put to them and are free to exit the research process. The researcher will ask permission to record the interview and the recording can be stopped at any time upon request.

Confidentiality:

Interview recordings and typed transcripts will be used only for research purposes, and third parties will not be allowed access to them during or after the course of the research project. Any interview transcripts will be encoded so that no record of the participants' names and data exist side by side. All data will be password protected and held in a secure environment.

Anonymity:

Individual participants will be made anonymous; names from interviews will not be mentioned in any publications that arise from the research. If for any reason any one of the institutes wishes to disclose or name schools involved in this research, full permission will be sought from institute management, but no participants will be named under any circumstances.

Feedback:

Participants will be sent a summary report on the findings if they wish.

Consent:

If you require any further information on this project prior to consenting to participation, please contact me on 087 6221600 or by email at G00298920@gmit.ie

For participant:

I understand the nature and purpose of this research and I consent to being interviewed. I understand that I do not have to answer any of the questions and that I may exit the interview at any time.

I do / do not consent to the interview being recorded.

I do / do not wish to be sent a summary of the findings when the project is completed.

Appendix 5

Participation Survey

1. Gender
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other
2. Age
   a. 18-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-50
   d. 51+
3. How many years have you been working in community development in the West of Ireland?
   a. 0-1
   b. 2-4
   c. 4-6
   d. 6+
4. What capacity have you been working in community development?
   a. Employed
   b. Volunteer

5. Did your organisation use digital media, such as text, audio, video or graphics?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Other

6. What forms did they use? (circle as many as you like)
   a. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Tik Tok
   b. Website/blogs
   c. Email marketing
   d. Pay Per Click advertising/internet banner ads
   e. Other (Please specify)

7. What sector did you work/volunteer in?
   a. Sport
   b. Education

   c. Religious

   d. Other (Please specify)

Appendix 6

Interview Schedule of Questions

Researcher: Ger Flanagan, research student at GMIT Castlebar.

Research Context: Multiple case studies to assess how four communities in peripheral regions in the West of Ireland are utilising digital media to promote community development.

Research title: A qualitative multiple case study assessment on the use of digital media in community development projects in the West of Ireland.

Prompts for researcher:

a) Assurances re confidentiality and anonymity (name will be stated on recording but recording erased once written transcript is assigned an encrypted pseudonym if requested).
b) Completion of consent forms
c) Permission to record & signature
d) Approximate duration of the interview (30-60 minutes)
e) The aim of this interview is to gather your experiences of the new programme development / programme accreditation / validation processes within your institute. In addition, of interest in this research is your opinion in relation to how the programme development and accreditation process provides for / supports / hinders academic creativity and innovation.
f) Participant information: Name / gender / age bracket / contact information/ number of years employed within institute /Job title; principal programmes / disciplines you are associated with; other roles within institute.

Sample Questions:

1. What did your community development project/initiative entail? Was it a large, medium or small project? Why did it come about? Explain.
2. Can you explain what was in place before the project took began?
3. Did Covid-19 impact the project – Yes/No?
    a. If yes, can you explain how Covid-19 impacted on the project?
    b. Were there any other uncontrollable factors that impacted the project?
4. How was digital media implemented throughout the project?
5. What responsibilities were assigned for digital media/social media management in the project?
6. What were the goals/KPIs of the digital strategy?
7. Were there any difficulties/problems encountered in achieving them>
8. Do you feel this strategy worked?
9. What would you put the success down to?
10. What recommendations would you suggest to other community development projects in their future digital media usage?
11. Learning from this project, what other strategies would you recommend in future community development projects, apart from digital and social media?

Appendix 7

Information Sheet

I, Ger Flanagan, from Balla Co Mayo, intend on carrying out a research project on how communities in the West of Ireland are using digital media in community development projects.

It will be a qualitative case study assessment and the aim of the research is to create a model or policy of best practice for community development projects. Inspiration to carry out this research comes from multiple sources, but mainly due to my keen interest in community development and digital media.

As a community volunteer myself, exploring how other areas conduct and implement a successful community development project was always something that interested me and

something I am passionate about. This passion intensified when Covid-19 struck and the landscape for conducting community development projects changed completely. It was inspiring to see communities adapt by utilising digital media as the forefront of promoting their campaigns, which will be the future of community development projects.

This idea of being able to create a model of best practice will hopefully be utilised by other communities in the future and thus provide insight and expertise to future community development projects and groups.

The research will be conducted via semi-structured interviews and focus groups with various communities in peripheral regions in the West of Ireland, be it in person, if Covid allows, or online. All participants will be provided with full disclosure if necessary and all research will be conducted in full compliance with the Taught Programme Research Ethics Committee in GMIT. A thorough consent form will be distributed to every potential participant in the research.

If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me at 087 6221600 or by email: G00298920@gmit.ie

Thank you,

Ger Flanagan.