INVESTIGATING VOLUNTEERISM BEHAVIORS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS IN VIETNAM

ESTUDO SOBRE O COMPORTAMENTO DE VOLUNTARIADO NAS REDES SOCIAIS NO VIETNÃ

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Abstract

This study examines factors influencing voluntarism behaviors using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory in the Vietnamese online social network context. We proposed a research model to test the direct and indirect impact of information quality on trust, social identification, and volunteerism behaviors of Vietnamese people when they are exposed to charity groups and information from social online networks. This study uses a quantitative survey method. A self-administered online survey was conducted to collect data from online charity groups. After six months, we collected 102 valid responses. SmartPLS 4.0 was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Our results showed that volunteerism behaviors were most strongly influenced by information quality, followed by social identification. Trust in donors and charity groups was proven to have little influence on voluntarism behaviors in this study. Therefore, we recommend that charity groups utilize online social media to disseminate transparent information about their calls for charitable or volunteer activities.

Resumo

Este estudo examina os fatores que influenciam o comportamento de voluntariado com base na teoria Estímulo-Organismo-Resposta (SOR) no contexto das redes sociais online no Vietnã. A equipe de pesquisa propôs um modelo para testar os efeitos diretos e indiretos da qualidade da informação na confiança, identidade social e comportamento de voluntariado dos vietnamitas ao interagir com grupos de caridade e informações em redes sociais online. Um questionário de pesquisa online foi realizado para coletar dados de grupos de caridade nas redes sociais. Após seis meses, a equipe de pesquisa coletou 102 respostas válidas. O software SmartPLS 4.0 foi utilizado para testar as hipóteses propostas. Os resultados da pesquisa mostram que o comportamento de voluntariado é mais fortemente influenciado pela qualidade da informação, seguida pela identidade social. A confiança nos doadores e nos grupos de caridade demonstrou ter pouca influência sobre o comportamento de voluntariado neste estudo. Portanto, a equipe de pesquisa recomenda que os grupos de caridade utilizem as redes sociais online para transmitir informações de forma transparente sobre seus

apelos para doações ou atividades de voluntariado.

1 INTRODUCTION

Poor and hunger are still significant problems today. UN predicts that some 370 million people could still be hungry in 2050. Charitable organizations play a crucial role in reducing poverty. Volunteerism has the potential to play a significant role in poverty reduction through various mechanisms and approaches. Participatory approaches, such as empowering local communities to address their challenges, have been effective in countries like Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, and the Philippines, where tools like system mapping have facilitated lasting social change. Additionally, volunteering helps build social capital, which is essential for community development by creating networks that support poverty alleviation efforts. In rural areas, volunteerism can enhance social service delivery, although challenges remain in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Furthermore, an asset-based approach to volunteerism leverages the strengths and resources within low-income communities, helping individuals improve their lives and support their communities. Finally, volunteerism contributes to economic efficiency, innovation, and social cohesion, promoting the sustainability of services and fostering social harmony.

Volunteerism is traditionally understood as the voluntary offering of time, skills, or resources for the benefit of individuals, communities, or causes without monetary compensation. However, the nature of volunteer engagement on social media differs from traditional volunteerism in both scope and motivation. The emergence of Web 2.0 marked a critical transformation in the digital landscape, enabling interactive, user-driven platforms that facilitate collaboration and content sharing. Among its many applications, online social networks (OSNs) have become a dominant force in shaping modern social interactions. OSNs have been recognized as an effective method for fundraising. Furthermore, the expansion of social media has altered the way individuals participate in civic and community-related activities, such as volunteerism. As platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram have become integral to daily life, the methods by

which individuals locate, organize, and engage in volunteer activities have shifted from physical locations to digital spaces. Social networking sites (SNSs) facilitate the dissemination of information, collective mobilization, and the establishment of trust among users. Online volunteerism often involves rapid responses, lower physical commitment, and broader reach, making it both accessible and susceptible to fluctuating participation levels. This raises the question of how and why individuals decide to engage or disengage in volunteering behaviors within digital contexts.

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework provides a useful lens for understanding such behaviors. Originally developed in environmental psychology, the SOR model posits that environmental stimuli influence individuals' internal states (the organism), which in turn shape their behavioral responses. Applied to online contexts, stimuli could include content quality, peer influence, and perceived social impact, while organism factors might involve emotional arousal, altruistic values, and sense of community. Yet, despite the growing importance of SNSs in facilitating volunteerism, empirical research applying the SOR framework to this context, especially in Vietnam, remains limited. Vietnam presents a unique cultural and social setting for this investigation. In Vietnam, social networks have become essential platforms for mobilizing volunteers, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. As a collectivist society with strong community ties and high engagement in social causes, volunteerism has deep cultural roots. However, the integration of SNSs into volunteer mobilization introduces new dynamics, including the influence of online social capital, algorithm-driven exposure to volunteer opportunities, and the role of digital trust. Understanding these dynamics is essential for both academic theory-building and the practical design of effective volunteer mobilization strategies in the digital era.

In this regard, this study aims to investigate the determinants of volunteerism behaviors on social networks in Vietnam through the lens of the SOR framework. By identifying how specific online stimuli shape internal psychological states and, in turn, influence volunteering intentions and actions, this research contributes to the literature on online volunteerism, expands the application of the SOR model, and provides actionable insights for organizations seeking to leverage SNSs for social good.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Volunteerism

Smith (1975) concluded that defining volunteerism is a problematic research job (Smith, 1975). Rausch (1996) states that volunteerism cannot be confined to a static definition. Instead, it is a concept shaped by individual interpretation and context (Pancer, 2020). As a result, the idea of 'volunteer space' was introduced, suggesting that the most effective approach, while avoiding restrictive definitions and empty rhetoric, is to outline the broad boundaries of this 'volunteer space.' These boundaries serve as a basis for developing definitions tailored to particular contexts of volunteer research or activities. In this study, we use the definition proposed by Ellis and Noyes (1990), which characterizes volunteering as a voluntary response to a recognized need, driven by social responsibility, without financial expectation, and extending beyond one's usual responsibilities.

2.2 Online Social Networks (OSNs)

O'Reilly (2005) conceptualized Web 2.0 as "the Web as a platform" to contextualize the development of OSNs, where users are not only passive recipients of content but active participants in online communities.

While the terminology of Web 2.0 has gradually given way to more recent paradigms such as Web 3.0 and decentralized platforms, OSNs, particularly Facebook, remain highly relevant, especially in the context of digital mobilization and civic engagement. As of May 2025, Facebook remains the world's largest social media platform, with 3.065 billion monthly active users (MAUs) (Meta Platforms, 2025), accounting for a global market share of 71.58% among major social networking sites. This significantly surpasses other platforms such as Instagram (8.88%) and Pinterest (6.34%) (StatCounter, 2025).

This study focuses on volunteerism actions facilitated through Facebook, a platform that has played a pivotal role in connecting individuals with nonprofit organizations, local campaigns, and crisis response initiatives. Despite the widespread use of Facebook for volunteering purposes, the underlying motivational and behavioral

mechanisms driving users to participate in volunteerism through OSNs remain underexplored, particularly in developing country contexts.

Past literature has demonstrated the potential of OSNs to enhance political participation (Boulianne, 2015), support medical and mental health interventions (Naslund *et al*., 2016; Torous *et al*., 2021), and amplify nonprofit outreach (Milde & Yawson, 2017; Yoo *et al*., 2023). However, much of this research is either outdated or fails to explain why users engage in prosocial behaviors in virtual environments. Furthermore, while previous studies often conflate general social media usage with volunteer-driven activities, few have dissected the specific psychological, social, and technological factors that influence digital volunteerism.

To address this gap, this paper adopts a behavioral lens to examine the key determinants influencing individuals' participation in volunteerism on Facebook. Drawing on a case study approach, the research examines how trust, information quality, and social identification collectively influence digital volunteering behaviors. The findings aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of digital civic engagement in the age of social technologies.

2.3 Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory

SOR Theory, developed by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell in the early 1970s (1974), is a framework to understand how individuals psychologically respond to stimuli. Influenced by earlier behaviorist and cognitive models, the theory includes three key elements: Stimulus (S), which refers to external factors or events, such as physical, social, or emotional cues that trigger a response; Organism (O), which represents the internal processes of the individual, including cognitive, emotional, and psychological factors that mediate how the stimulus is perceived and reacted to; and Response (R), which is the organism's reaction to the stimulus, encompassing emotional, cognitive, or physiological responses.

Applying the SOR theory, studies have identified factors that serve as stimuli for volunteerism behaviors, including information quality, social identification, and trust in donors and charity organizations on OSNs.

2.3.1 Information quality

In their seminal work, DeLone and McLean (1992) made a significant contribution to the understanding of information systems success by developing a comprehensive model, which they later refined in 2003 (DeLone & McLean, 2003). The model outlines several critical dimensions of information system success, with "Information Quality" being one of the pivotal constructs. There are several different measurement scales for information quality. We utilize the measurement scales developed by Tang and Nguyen (2013). Information quality has a positive influence on the intention to use (Cho *et al*., 2024; Tang & Nguyen, 2013). Importantly, information quality is fundamental to enhancing the effectiveness of volunteers (Foody *et al*., 2015; Meyer *et al*., 2018; Tommasi *et al*., 2025).

2.3.2 Social identification

Kelman (1958) first defined social identification (or social identity) as "can be said to occur when an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or a group." Social identity affects decision-making and participation in virtual communities (Haque *et al*., 2023). Many studies focus on the relationship between social identity and Knowledge sharing (İMamoĞLu *et al*., 2022; Kane, 2010). Moreover, there is a strong correlation between social identity and the propensity to volunteer, suggesting that individuals who identify strongly with a group are more likely to engage in volunteerism that benefits that group (Thoits, 2021; Thomas *et al*., 2017; Williams *et al*., 2024).

2.3.3 Trust

Trust is essential in online volunteerism, where participants engage without face-to-face contact and often lack control over others' actions. This concept involves vulnerability based on expectations of reliability. Mayer *et al*. define trust as a willingness to be vulnerable due to the expectation of reliable behavior, regardless of one's ability to monitor (Mayer *et al*., 1995). In online social networks, trust affects not only volunteering but also knowledge sharing and relationship building, prompting the creation of

measurement tools for this construct (Ihm & Shumate, 2022; Pinto *et al*., 2023; Xia *et al*., 2023). Trust levels also vary with personality; openness and emotional stability predict engagement in digital volunteerism (Tommasi *et al*., 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic, trust became crucial for online volunteer participation, as users relied on platforms to maintain social connections (Pickell *et al*., 2020).

Trust in online social networks is intricately linked to volunteerism, with various factors such as social capital, personality traits, and community characteristics influencing this relationship. It is necessary to deepen the understanding of these dynamics, particularly in how online environments affect trust-building and volunteer behaviors.

2.4 Hypotheses

2.4.1 Information quality and trust

Trust in charity organizations is shaped by the quality of information they provide, particularly in areas such as transparency, accountability, and communication. Transparent use of resources and financial reporting fosters stronger donor relationships (Wymer *et al*., 2020). The positive influence of information quality and trust on online shopping has been demonstrated by Tang & Nguyen (2013). Accountability and accessible public communication help satisfy stakeholder information needs and reinforce trust (Hyndman & McConville, 2018). The perceived credibility of an organization, influenced by website quality and transaction convenience, also plays a key role in encouraging donations (Liu *et al*., 2018). Additionally, trust is often built through local networks and interpersonal scrutiny rather than relying solely on organizational metrics (Chaudhry *et al*., 2021). Trust further contributes to participants' satisfaction with charity events, highlighting the relational dimension of trust in nonprofits (Park *et al*., 2021). Personal experiences with specific initiatives also shape giving behavior, making high-quality information a key factor in sustaining donor confidence (Hager & Hedberg, 2016). Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis:

H1: Information quality positively influences trust in OSNs charity organizations.

2.4.2 Information quality and volunteerism behaviors

High-quality information enhances volunteer engagement, satisfaction, and overall effectiveness. For example, when volunteers are provided with clear and stimulating role descriptions, their motivation and commitment improve (Power & Nedvetskaya, 2022). High-quality reporting on volunteer contributions also correlates with better service outcomes, such as in healthcare settings where informed volunteers contribute more effectively (Hotchkiss *et al*., 2014). Standardized communication frameworks ensure that volunteers understand their tasks, improving collaboration and service delivery (Meyer *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, institutional support combined with clear expectations leads to higher-quality volunteer contributions (Mason *et al*., 2021). Informing individuals about the cognitive and emotional benefits of volunteering can also increase participation rates (Rashid *et al*., 2023). Lastly, volunteers who clearly understand their responsibilities are more likely to feel fulfilled and remain engaged (Burbeck *et al*., 2014). These findings affirm the importance of information quality in fostering successful volunteerism. Thus, we had the following hypothesis:

H2: Information quality influences volunteerism behaviors.

2.4.3 Information quality and social identification

High-quality information marked by accuracy, clarity, and relevance significantly influences social identification by enhancing individuals' sense of belonging within communities. When students actively engage with reliable content on social media, their identification with peer groups grows stronger (Song, 2023). The ability to detect misinformation also fosters trust in platforms, which can enhance users' sense of community (Barakat *et al*., 2021). In online brand communities, high-quality information fosters social capital and trust, thereby strengthening group identity (Zhang *et al*., 2021). Similarly, engaging with credible content increases users' trust and emotional connection to online groups (Rahmad *et al*., 2023). Within organizations, clear and relevant information supports knowledge sharing by reinforcing social identity and collective engagement (Ho *et al*., 2012). Together, these studies confirm that information quality is crucial in fostering meaningful social identification. Therefore, we have the hypothesis as follows:

H3: Information quality positively influences social identification.

2.4.4 Social identification and trust

Social identification in online social networks plays a crucial role in building trust between donors and charitable organizations. When users feel part of an online community that shares a charity's values, their trust and willingness to contribute increase (Quinton & Fennemore, 2012). Online environments that reinforce shared identity deepen emotional connections and promote ongoing engagement. The credibility of user-generated content on platforms like Facebook further enhances trust, as donors rely on peer-shared experiences within their own identification group (Haralabopoulos *et al*., 2016). Strong online branding and well-managed digital donor experiences also foster emotional identification and long-term support (Wymer & Čačija, 2022). Moreover, social identification in online platforms encourages trust-based knowledge sharing, strengthening donor-charity relationships (Ho *et al*., 2012). Because leveraging social identification in digital spaces allows charities to cultivate trust more effectively, leading to increased donor loyalty and sustained online engagement, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Social identification positively influences trust in OSNs charity groups.

2.4.5 Social identification and volunteerism behaviors

Individuals with strong altruistic identities formed through online communities are more likely to volunteer (Pevnaya & Tarasova, 2024). Civic groups that promote inclusion and collective values online can further strengthen youth engagement in volunteering by reinforcing group identity (Mati, 2024). Social media platforms also facilitate "friendsourcing," where users invite peers to participate in causes, enhancing both identification and commitment (Wilkerson *et al*., 2018). During crises, online networks serve as mobilization tools, where a shared identity fosters trust and collective action (Demiroz & Akbaş, 2022). Broadly, cohesive online communities foster social identification, leading to increased volunteerism and stronger mental well-being (Bowe *et al*., 2020). These findings highlight how online platforms shape social identity and drive sustained volunteer engagement, so we propose the hypothesis as follows:

H5: Social identification has a positive influence on volunteerism behaviors.

### 2.4.6 Trust and volunteerism behaviors

Higher interpersonal trust online correlates with increased altruistic behavior, including volunteerism (Sun *et al*., 2024). Communication and trust in digital spaces also enhance commitment to volunteer causes, particularly by strengthening identification with charitable goals (Ihm & Shumate, 2022). Trust helps users evaluate which organizations to support, guiding their decisions on volunteering in online environments (Wang *et al*., 2016). Shared knowledge and group similarity further build trust, creating a supportive atmosphere for organizing volunteer efforts (Kant & Bharadwaj, 2013). Broadly, trust promotes prosocial decision-making and greater involvement in communal actions, including volunteering (Hoang & Quang, 2020). These studies collectively affirm that cultivating trust through online social networks is essential for fostering active and sustained volunteer engagement. As trust within online social networks significantly influences individuals' willingness to engage in volunteer activities by fostering social connectedness and perceived reliability, we develop the following hypothesis:

H6: Trust positively influences volunteerism behaviors.

The six proposed hypotheses in this study are summarized as follows:

Figure 1

Research model
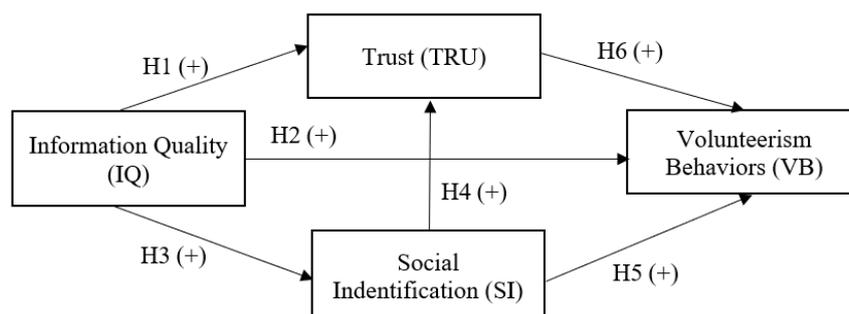
3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Measurements

In this study, measurements of the SOR theory factors were adopted from previous studies. The measurements of information quality (5 items), trust (3 items) were retrieved from Tang and Hanh (2013). Meanwhile, social identification (6 items) was measured by Dholakia *et al*. (2004). Volunteerism behaviors (2 items) were derived from the definition of Ellis and Noyes (1990).

3.2 Sampling and data collection

Different OSNs exist, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc. However, Facebook is the largest in terms of the number of users. We chose Facebook as the typical platform for charity or volunteerism calls. In Vietnam, we delivered questionnaires to various Facebook-based charity groups, including Lê Thanh Hải, Quyên Trần, Tu Thien Minh Tam, Com 2000, Com Co Thit, and Vo Thuong. We posted our questionnaire on these Facebook groups and called for answers from these OSN members. After six months, we received a total of 102 complete responses. The sample has more females (64.7%) than males (35.3%).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We used SPSS for the reliability test. We employed SmartPLS 4.0 to test six proposed hypotheses.

4.1 Reliability test

The total Cronbach's Alpha of all variables is more significant than 0.7. Each construct measurement has a Cronbach's Alpha, which is more significant than 0.7. Our measurement model is reliable (Marilee *et al*., 2009). Details of Cronbach's Alpha for each variable are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha and AVE results

	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Trust (TRU)	0.828	0.744
Information Quality (IQ)	0.913	0.709
Social Identification (SI)	0.891	0.663
Volunteerism Behaviors (VB)	0.849	0.899

The convergent validities of all variables are acceptable, with AVEs exceeding 0.5 and more significant than 0.5. Discriminable validities are acceptable using both greater than correlations, so that all discriminant validities of variables are valid. With EFA data analysis, all items load onto their intended factors, with no cross-loading.

In addition, we tested the discriminant validity of the measurements using Fornell-Larcker criterion. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	IQ	SI	TRU	VB
IQ	0.842			
SI	0.69	0.814		
TRU	0.79	0.604	0.862	
VB	0.27	0.296	0.245	0.948

4.2 Model test and discussions

R2 values of all variables are more significant than 0.1. The outcome of data analysis shows that information quality has the most decisive impact on volunteerism behaviors. The results of the hypotheses test are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct effect coefficient	Standard Deviation	Conclusion
H1	Information Quality → Trust	0.790		Supported
H2	Information Quality → Volunteerism Behaviors	0.270		Supported
H3	Information Quality → Social Identification	0.690		Supported
H4	Social Identification → Trust	0.112		Supported
H5	Social Identification → Volunteerism Behaviors	0.208		Supported
H6	Trust → Volunteerism Behaviors	0.051		Supported

R Square (Social Identification)	0.447		
R Square (Trust)	0.676		
R Square (Volunteerism Behaviors)	0.112		

All the hypotheses are significantly tested. Information Quality presents the most substantial impact on Volunteerism. Information Quality is the driving factor of Trust. This result is consistent with studies of Yoon (2002) and Nicolaou and McKnight (2006). The relationship between information quality and social identity is significantly tested. The study of the relationship between information quality and social identity has not received the attention of scholars. The study of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) only mentions language and shared understanding. Social identification enhances Trust with a coefficient of. The relationship between social identification and Trust is also consistent in workplace contact (Ho *et al*., 2012). Social identification exacerbates volunteerism activities. There is a lack of research to show this correlation. Some research indicates that social identification, participation, and commitment are key factors (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Shen & Chiou, 2009). Trust in the charity groups will enhance volunteerism activities. The coefficient is small, indicating that trust's impact on volunteerism behaviors is minimal. These donors may not fully trust the charity group, but when they receive high-quality information and social identification, they still support the financial efforts of the charity group.

5 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This research study makes several significant contributions to the body of theoretical knowledge related to charitable behavior on online social networking platforms. First, it explores the relationship between information quality and social identification. By examining the role of information quality, the study demonstrates that this factor not only influences individual perception but also has the potential to shape social behavior, such as building trust and fostering group cohesion. This represents a novel approach, extending the role of information quality beyond the technical domain into the social dynamics of online environments. Second, the study offers empirical insights into the relationship between social identification and volunteering behavior, an

area that has received little attention in prior research. The findings suggest that when individuals feel a sense of belonging to a charitable group, they are more inclined to participate in supportive activities. This expands the application of social identification theory into the realm of digital philanthropy, where participation is driven not only by personal emotions but also by a shared sense of community. Third, the study provides both theoretical and empirical explanations for the success of charitable campaigns on online social networks. Our research proposes an integrated theoretical model that explains how elements such as information quality, social identification, and trust interact to shape volunteering behaviors. This integrated framework provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding the key drivers behind donation and volunteering decisions in the context of social media, particularly for small charitable organizations seeking effective digital strategies to amplify their social impact.

5.2 Managerial implications

Based on the research findings, several important managerial implications can be drawn for charity managers, especially those leading small organizations that rely on social media platforms, such as Facebook, for fundraising and volunteer engagement. First, building and maintaining high-quality information is a critical factor. Content must be clear, credible, and frequently updated to foster trust within the online community and enhance user engagement. Moreover, managers should place strong emphasis on fostering a sense of connection and social identity among participants. This can be achieved through interactive activities, inspirational storytelling, and initiatives that help individuals feel like part of a shared community with a common mission. When individuals feel emotionally connected to an organization, they are more likely to engage and sustain their volunteering behavior. However, managers should also be cautious about how social identification is leveraged. While social identification can encourage volunteerism, it may also carry risks if not handled appropriately. Overemphasizing notions of "us" or applying social pressure may cause participants to feel constrained, which can backfire or lead to disengagement. Social identification should be cultivated organically, through shared values, mutual trust, and voluntary participation, rather than through emotional manipulation or group conformity effects. Furthermore, trust remains an essential component in the governance of charitable organizations, even though it may

not be the sole factor influencing donation behavior. Transparency in operations, public disclosure of fund usage, and consistent, responsive communication with the community will help reinforce the organization's credibility and lay the foundation for the sustainable growth of charitable campaigns on social media.

5.3 Limitations and further research directions

Despite yielding valuable findings, this research study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the scope of data collection was limited to volunteer groups on the Facebook platform, while charitable behavior may be influenced by cultural variations, organizational types, and differing social media environments. This limitation highlights the need for future research to include diverse platforms and user demographics to enhance the generalizability of the proposed theoretical model. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on small-scale charitable groups and does not cover large-scale organizations with more complex operational structures and professional communication strategies. Comparing these two types of organizations may yield new insights into the behavioral differences of donors and volunteers, enabling more tailored and context-specific recommendations. Finally, the study has not examined the influence of other potentially relevant factors such as the emotional impact of charity-related messaging, the role of online communities, or the indirect effects of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). These are promising avenues for future research that could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of donation behavior in the digital environment.

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Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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