Social Media Charity Campaigns: A Study on the Motivation To Participate

Student name: Siobhan Slattery, Student number: 155425, Supervisor Name: Dr. Niall Hanlon

Abstract

This research investigated the motivations for people to participate in social media charity campaigns. Interviews were conducted and it was found that peer pressure and involvement of others were motivators. While previous research has been done on charity websites and information diffusion, in-depth research into the motivations to take part in these campaigns has not been performed.

Introduction

Online social networks are now part of the everyday lives of millions of people (Spaulding, 2010, p. 38). This paper will discuss Ireland's charity fundraising crisis in the wake of the latest economic recession (The Wheel 2014). The paper will discuss the popularity of social media and the emergence of social media campaigns. It is important for charities to understand what motivates the social media user to take part and spread this relatively new form of word of mouth to harness the power of this effective marketing tool to use for their benefit.

Virtual stewardship as discussed by Waters & LeBlanc Fenely (2013) involves creating a relationship with the consumer as important yet doesn't explain how a campaign which creates no relationship can be so successful. Sisco and McCorkindale (2013) discuss how credibility and transparency of the charity affect perceptions, yet these campaigns have not displayed any attempt at transparency. The charity "Just Giving" see the act of sharing as the catalyst and the bigger the better. Saegner et al (2013) talk about word of mouth and sharing content as a form of self-expression. The research by Saegner et al relates to consumer products and services. All of these studies talk about the elements that make online communication successful for organisations. None of these studies discuss the motivations behind creating and sharing content on social media, in the name of charity. It is intended that research will deal with this gap in the literature.

Method

Apparatus

A voice recording application on a Motorola Smart Phone was used to in order the capture every word of the conversation in the interviews and to enable transcription at a later date.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. The data from the interviews was put in to the Nvivo 10 software system. This was done to derive a "bottom up" approach to getting data from the interviews and (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.21).

Participants

Six participants were chosen to take part The participants were chosen using convenience sampling

Research Design

Qualitative analysis was used for this research in order to find rich data. One to one interviews were conducted in a private office with the participants. The initial questions were unstructured so as to avoid influencing the direction of the interview and to relax the interviewee into the conversation. According to Flick (2009, p.151) initial unstructured questions ensure that the wrong type of question is not asked too early therefore preventing participants from giving their own views

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was a priority to ensure that the participants were protected, their privacy was not invaded and the participants were not misled about the aims of the research (Flick, 2009, p37). The participants were protected from harm in that they were given what Murphy and Dingwall as quoted in Flick (2009, p37) describe as self – determination, their values and decisions were respected and not questioned in any way. Anonymity was assured by not disclosing and identifying data in the transcription process or the research report.

Results

1. Charity Involvement
The interviewees mostly preferred hands on or voluntary approach .Most of the participants mentioned charities that are quite popular on a national scale. Only one was involved in hands on charity work at the time

2. Motivation to participate
An element of peer pressure emerged when participants were asked about their involvement in the social media charity campaigns. All participants said that it was good to take part for the benefit of the charity but another theme that emerged was that of just taking part in something fun.

3. Benefit to the charity
When asked about the perceived benefit to the charity, the answers were divided between money and awareness. In order to gauge if the campaigns did in fact raise awareness the participants were asked to recall the causes that benefited from the campaigns and in the most part could not recall what the charity or the cause was.

4. Time for participation
The final theme to emerge was that all of the participants were late adopters to the campaigns. They waited and watched while others participated and didn't rush into it:

Discussion

While previous research has discussed how organisations can effectively spread word of mouth, this research has addressed a gap in the knowledge about the motivation to get involved in social media charity campaigns and to share them. It has found that the elements of virtual stewardship of reciprocity, responsibility, reporting and relationship nurturing do not apply to these campaigns (Waters and LeBlanc Fenely, 2013, p. 216). The research agreed with John Waddington of "Just Giving", that the bigger the effort, the more that people shared (Waddingham, 2013, p188). The causes were emotive which previous research would suggest causes a quicker rate of information diffusion (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013, p. 218). This research showed that the participants waited a while before getting involved, they admitted to bowing under peer pressure to take part, rather than being spurred on by the cause

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