

Motivations to Support Charity-Linked Events After Exposure to Facebook Appeals: Emotional Cause Identification and Distinct Self-Determined Regulations

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Nonprofit organizations are increasingly dependent on the involvement of Millennial constituencies. Three studies investigated their motivations to support charity-linked events: emotional identification with a cause, self-determination theory (SDT) regulations, and context-related Facebook promotions. This article addresses the recent call to expand SDT research from a simple analysis of autonomous versus controlled motivation, to studying the effects of all the regulations in the SDT continuum, in particular, the inclusion of the tripartite dimensions of intrinsic motivation and integrated motivation. Results demonstrated that the greater the emotional identification with the cause, the stronger was the tendency to support the charity-linked event. Also, the results in these social media contexts revealed that specific intrinsic dimensions (e.g., experience stimulation) are motivators of online and offline support, as is the personal value nature of integrated regulation. Whereas only autonomous motivational regulations predicted support for the two events organized specifically for charitable causes, both autonomous and controlled regulations predicted support of a for-profit event organized with a charitable cause as an adjunct. These findings can assist practitioners in designing more effective social media communications in support of charity-linked events.

Keywords: social media, self-determination theory, integrated regulation, tripartite model of intrinsic motivation, charitable causes

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Social media is a new domain offering exciting opportunities to investigate research questions in social psychology (Greitemeyer, 2011; Kende, Ujhelyi, Joinson, & Greitemeyer, 2015).

Our research examined motivation to support charity-linked events of nonprofit organizations that are currently faced with increased competition for resources and declining government support (Paulin, Ferguson, Jost, & Fallu, 2014; Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007; White & Peloza, 2009). Presently, they depend on an ageing set of traditional supporters (Urbain, Gonzalez, & Le Gall-Ely, 2013). However, their future success lies in ensuring the sustainable involvement of the Millennial generation (Fine, 2009), distinguished from other generations by their intense exposure at an early age to interactive technology and social media (Bolton et al., 2013).

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Facebook, the most detailed social media, is used primarily to maintain or solidify existing offline relationships allowing people to develop a public or semipublic profile and to emotionally participate with those whom they can share