

THE IMPACT OF STORYTELLING ON DONOR INTENTION: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON HANOI YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT:

Storytelling has been pivotal in charitable giving. This study explores the impact of storytelling factors on the intentions of donors in the case of the Hanoi Youth for Community Service Project in Vietnam. The study finds that four factors of storytelling, including emotional appeal, time duration, word-of-mouth, and memorability, have different impacts on the intention of donors. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of storytelling and offer valuable insights for charitable organizations to enhance their fundraising strategies.

Keywords: storytelling, donors, fundraising.

1. Introduce

In the ever-evolving landscape of philanthropy and charitable giving, understanding the mechanisms that drive individuals to support social causes has become a focal point for organizations seeking to maximize their impact. Storytelling, a timeless and universal form of communication, has emerged as a compelling tool in this endeavor, offering the potential to inspire and connect donors to the missions of charitable initiatives. It is not just about telling stories; it is about creating tales that touch people's feelings, beliefs, and dreams, making them want to take action. For examples, the World Wildlife Funds narratives of endangered species have raised awareness and fostered support among people. Or the Red Crosss narratives of disaster-affected individuals have motivated

people to participate in the cause and relief operations.

This empirical research study seeks to explore the profound influence of storytelling on donor intention within the specific context of the "Hanoi Youth for Community Service" (HYCS) project in Vietnam. HYCS has been run by a collective of high school students who share a common aspiration of enhancing the lives of the less fortunate. Its core objective is to assist families in the central province Quang Tri, particularly those whose members are victims of Agent Orange and landmines, remnants of the Vietnam War.

2. Literature review

2.1. Storytelling

Storytelling is firstly defined as conveying

accounts that involve contextualized particulars and causal relations between human intentions and consequences over time (McGregor and Holmes, 1999). Through time, specifically in marketing, storytelling has been found to enhance brand perception, engagement, and purchase intentions (Tsai, 2020).

Firstly, stories reshape brand perception, making brands memorable and linked to trustworthiness. For example, Nike's "Just Do It" campaign showcases athletes' triumphs, aligning Nike with motivation. Secondly, stories also deepens brand involvement, creating emotional engagement. For example, Starbucks' "Share a Cup of Happiness" campaign emphasizes connections over coffee, enhancing the brand's image. Thirdly, stories foster trust and desire, for example, TOMS Shoes' "One for One" campaign.

Similarly, storytelling has been applied to the nonprofit sector. It can elicit emotional responses, increase empathy, and motivate individuals to contribute to a cause, leading and directly affecting donation intentions to a charity. The storytelling technique has proven effective throughout history, offering a compelling approach to fundraising appeals and solicitation efforts (Merchant et al., 2010).

Six crucial factors are present in the context of storytelling ads related to purchase intention: Irritation, Word of Mouth, Entertainment, Memorability, Informativeness, and Time duration (Joshi, 2022).

2.2. Donor intention

A donor, in the context of charitable giving, plays a crucial role as an integral part of the philanthropic landscape. Donors can be either individuals or organizations that voluntarily contribute funds, resources, or support to various charitable causes and nonprofit organizations (Ranganathan and Henley, 2008).

Individual donors are driven by personal beliefs, empathy, and a desire to make a positive impact. Some donors also contribute to building their brand name and increasing their reputation, showcasing their commitment to social responsibility, and gaining credibility

in personal and professional spheres. Strategic philanthropy creates a mutually beneficial relationship between donors and the causes they support.

On the other hand, organizational donors encompass various entities, including businesses, corporations, foundations, and institutions. These entities engage in philanthropy and demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility. Organizational donors often align their corporate values with charitable causes and support initiatives that reflect their mission and values. Their contributions can be through monetary donations, grants, sponsorships, or partnerships with nonprofit organizations.

In this article, a donor is any person or organization that provides financial or other support to a charitable cause or organization. Donor intention is the reasoned decision-making process influencing individuals' willingness to donate money to charitable organizations. It is influenced by various factors, including attitudes toward charitable giving, subjective norms, and personal experiences.

3. Research methodology

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) is a popular theoretical framework used to understand individuals' behaviors based on attitudinal and social factors (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This framework provides valuable insights into the factors that shape donor intentions and can aid in developing effective fundraising strategies for nonprofit organizations. The article aims to study the impact of storytelling on donor intentions. The research model focuses on four factors of storytelling: Emotional Appeal, Time duration, Word of Mouth, and Memorability.

Emotional appeal is a powerful storytelling technique that aims to evoke specific emotions and sentiments in the audience. It also aims to establish a deeper connection with donors by triggering empathy, compassion, and personal relevance (Park & Lee, 2014). The replacement of the Entertainment factor with Emotional Appeal factor proves more suitable for the study as it aligns with the core objectives of charity efforts, fostering

genuine and impactful connections with donors. While Entertainment can capture attention and entertain audiences, it may not elicit the desired emotional response to motivate individuals to donate. Emotional Appeal, on the other hand, can create a meaningful and lasting impact, as it connects donors to the cause on a personal and emotional level. By engaging donors emotionally, they are more likely to develop a sense of purpose and commitment, leading to an increased willingness to contribute and support charitable organizations.

H1: Emotional appeal positively impacts donor intentions.

Time duration refers to the optimal and engaging length of storytelling that holds Donors' attention and creates a memorable impact for effective recall (Raj & Roy, 2015).

H2: Time duration positively impacts donor intentions.

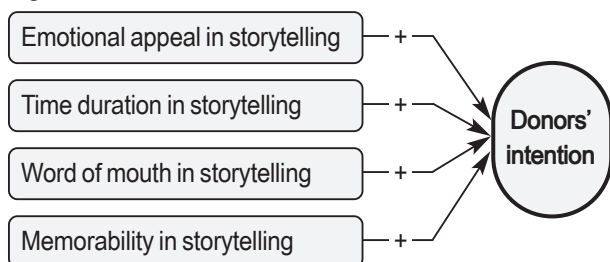
Word of Mouth refers to individuals sharing positive or negative experiences about a charitable cause or organization, influencing others' perceptions and decisions. It plays a crucial role in fostering trust and emotional connections, impacting donation intentions (Cambridge dictionary; Hennig et al., 2010).

H3: Word of Mouth positively impacts donor intentions.

Memorability refers to the storytelling's ability to create a lasting memory and emotional impact on donors, influencing their understanding of the storytelling's motive and donor intention (Mai & Schoeller, 2009).

H4: Memorability positively impacts donor intentions.

Figure 1: Research model



The article uses quantitative methods with a survey on donors to the Hanoi Youth for Community Service (HYCS) charity project in Vietnam. The survey has 25 questions in total, of both multiple-choice options and short-answer sections. For the multiple-choice questions, participants could choose between "Yes" and "No" answers. Additionally, they could rate certain questions on a scale from 1 to 5, indicating their level of agreement or preference. On the other hand, for the short-answer questions, participants could extend their thoughts or opinions on the topic by sharing experiences or stories they found touching or valuable of this project.

The survey is split into two parts: general questions and specific questions. The general questions aim to understand the background of the participants and sort them into different groups. This serves as a purpose for later topic-specific questions. On the other hand, the specific questions focus on participants' opinions about the research topic. These questions delved into aspects like the role of time in storytelling or the impact of emotional appeal. By having both general and specific questions, the research aims to capture a comprehensive view of participants' insights.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Sample description

Table 1. Respondents information

Non-donors	48
Individual donors	48
Organization donors	2
Both individual and organization donors	2
Total respondents (people)	100.00

Source: Author, 2023

100 respondents have completed the survey in July 2023. Data collection involved a multi-channel approach to reach potential respondents. The survey initiated survey-initiated contact with 20 donors through email invitations, used the HYCS Facebook page ($\approx 1,000$ followers), and utilized word-of-mouth referrals via 15 personal

connections. These diverse channels were used to gain responses from a wide range of respondents from various backgrounds and demographics not just donors only but also supporters and followers of HYCS.

4.2. Emotional Appeal

The importance of the emotional appeal: The mean score is 4.26 on the scale of 5. As HYCS aims to help the unfortunate lives seriously affected by the aftermath of the Vietnam War in Quang Tri.

The likelihood of donation afterwards: The mean score is 4.18 on the scale of 5. The majority of respondents are likely to make immediate donations to HYCS when emotionally moved by its specific stories.

Triggered Emotions: The top four emotions that the respondents selected as their primary motivator for donation are Compassion (72%), Empathy (66%), Hope (64%), and Happiness (58%). These emotions can be seen in specific stories of HYCS that touch the respondents. For example, “I was deeply touched when I met a man with a deformed head whos lost the consciousness of a normal person. I was told that hed been seriously injured due to a landmine explosion in his own field.” (Compassion, Empathy); “The miserable situation that people lived in. They need help to improve their living conditions.” (Empathy, Hope); “The joy that the kids express when staying in their new house.” (Happiness). It is evident that crafting narratives and communications that evoke these emotions holds the potential to resonate with a wider and more receptive audience. Organizations that incorporate these emotions into their storytelling strategies may effectively attract increased support and donations for their charitable initiatives.

4.3. Time duration

10-minute storytelling: 84% respondents would not mind a story that longed for 10 minutes and lose interest because of this.

Storytelling format: 66% respondents prefer short-form videos as their favored media channel with charitable storytelling. Storytelling has a widely recognized communication approach

through various media channels. Therefore, charitable groups should prioritize video-based media channels.

Likelihood of recommending others: The mean score is 3.94 on the scale of 5. People are more likely to recommend others with short storytelling campaigns than with long ones. It is significant for charitable organizations to take notice of time duration in their storytelling campaigns.

4.4. Word of Mouth (WoM)

Willingness to make a donation: 82% respondents are willing to make a donation based on positive WoM recommendations. Even if they have never heard of the charity before, the majority will make a donation base on a positive recommendation from their acquaintances.

Tendency to provide positive WoM: 98% respondents will spread positive WoM about a charitable organization if they personally observe its positive impact on the community. This emphasizes the potential of first-hand experiences to drive support for charitable organizations.

Likelihood of sharing: The mean score is 4.36 on the scale of 5. The majority of people are likely to share positive WoM to others about a charity group if they support it personally.

4.5. Memorability

Influence on decision making: The mean score is 4.02 on the scale of 5. Memorability in storytelling can positively impact donors intention.

4.6. Linkages among factors

Emotional appeal and Word of Mouth are the most influential factors in driving donor intention. Emotional appeal, by evoking empathetic responses, triggers a strong connection between the narrative and the potential donor, thereby motivating them to contribute to the cause. Word of Mouth plays a vital role in disseminating the story and engaging a wider audience, amplifying the reach and impact of charitable campaigns.

There is a linkage between Emotional appeal and Word of Mouth, emphasizing the interdependence of these two factors in the context of donor intention. The emotional

resonance of a narrative enhances its potential for being shared and discussed among individuals, effectively harnessing the power of social networks for fundraising.

In light of these findings, charitable organizations and projects like HYCS are encouraged to prioritize Emotional appeal and Word of Mouth in their storytelling strategies to enhance fundraising campaigns and broaden their donor base. By crafting emotionally compelling stories and facilitating word-of-mouth dissemination, organizations can harness the potent synergy of these elements to boost donor intention.

5. Conclusion

The act of giving is a fundamental aspect of human nature. However, in a world characterized by information overload and digital distractions, capturing and sustaining the attention of potential donors has become increasingly challenging for charitable organizations. It is here that the art of storytelling comes to the forefront, offering a bridge between the mission of the organization and the hearts and minds of potential contributors.

Storytelling transcends mere conveyance of information; it weaves narratives that evoke emotions, create connections, and instill a sense of purpose. When executed effectively, it can breathe life into statistics and facts, transforming them into compelling and relatable experiences that resonate

with audiences. Stories have the capacity to tap into the deepest wellsprings of human empathy, prompting individuals to take action, and this impact on donor intention is what the present research endeavors to explore.

This research delves into four central factors of storytelling: Emotional appeal, Time duration, Word of Mouth, and Memorability, to assess their impact on donor intention. By comprehensively examining these factors, the research aims to unveil the distinct roles they play in shaping the decisions of potential donors and to illuminate the nuanced relationships among them. In particular, the research identifies which factors of storytelling carry the most weight in motivating individuals to contribute to charitable causes and whether there exists an interplay between these factors.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on effective charitable fundraising and offers practical insights for charitable organizations or projects like HYCS. It underscores the significance of storytelling in engaging, inspiring, and mobilizing donors, highlighting the potential for creating positive change in the world through the narrative power of human empathy. However, it is important to note that this study acknowledges the need for future research with a larger sample size and in-depth interviews to further enhance the generalizability of these findings ■

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**TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA KỂ CHUYỆN
ĐẾN Ý ĐỊNH CỦA NHÀ TÀI TRỢ:
NGHIÊN CỨU THỰC NGHIỆM ĐỐI VỚI DỰ ÁN
HANOI YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE
TẠI VIỆT NAM**

● TRẦN VIỆT ANH

Trường Quốc tế Reigate Grammar

TÓM TẮT:

Kể chuyện đóng vai trò then chốt trong hoạt động từ thiện. Nghiên cứu này đánh giá tác động của các yếu tố thuộc hoạt động kể chuyện đến ý định tài trợ trong khuôn khổ dự án Hanoi Youth for Community Service tại Việt Nam. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng các yếu tố hoạt động kể chuyện, gồm: sức hấp dẫn cảm xúc, thời lượng, truyền miệng, và khả năng ghi nhớ có những mức độ tác động khác nhau đến ý định tài trợ. Nghiên cứu này kỳ vọng sẽ đem đến những hiểu biết có giá trị cho các tổ chức từ thiện đang tìm cách cải thiện chiến lược gây quỹ của mình.

Từ khoá: kể chuyện, nhà tài trợ, gây quỹ.