

Conceptualisation of Volunteers' Attitude Development: An Internal Marketing Imperative

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Abstract: This study seeks to explore how volunteers' attitudes are developed, using a social identity theory approach. Specifically, we explore that how volunteers may have on engendering empathy to help towards victims. From the onset, it is emphasized that this study is inter disciplinary in nature, especially given the paucity of research within this realm in the marketing domain. The purpose of this research is to conduct more research to enhance the understanding of how volunteers who are working for a charity organization think and feel and how this knowledge can help to better understand volunteers' positive attitude formation towards source and support. Without this understanding it looks difficult to understand how internal marketing initiatives can be undertaken and communicated. At a specific level and one which will be elaborated and defined further, this study seeks to understand the inter play between how volunteers think about themselves, especially in terms of their 'moral' self identity and how they feel about the cause of charity organizations, or their 'moral' emotions towards this issue. The organization internal marketing communication reflects some of the pertinent issues facing by charity organizations' clients and workers; and enhances understanding for researching attitude development from a volunteers' perspective. Thus project concludes with implications for internal marketing communications and for further research.

Key words: Internal marketing Communication • Social Identity • Empathy • Volunteerism

INTRODUCTION

The critical review gives insights of current knowledge; its limitation and suggest where intended research fits in future [1]. This section overviews what we know about volunteerism from a research perspective in general and then examines what has been done within the field of marketing. Therefore the field of volunteerism to understand what might stimulate volunteers towards social causes in general. It would expect to learn some insights from this literature for volunteers attitude formation. It is possible that work has been conducted within this area and thus this would bring useful insights into our conceptualisation for the volunteers' pro-social behaviour.

Literature Review: Reed, Aquinos and Levy [2] used the social identity concept, derived from social identity theory, to explain supporter behaviour and preference for giving in terms of money or time and resources. We therefore seek to develop this proposition that social

identity theory provides a useful framework, albeit one which has been neglected within this field, to explain the development of volunteers' attitudes.

Social identity was originally coined and defined by Tajfel [3] as that "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership" [3]. Turner states that Interestingly the self identification process is composed traditionally of both cognitive and affective components and is considered critical in attitude development theory. Indeed Tajfel [4] explain that the self identification process is an accumulation of value and emotional feelings that embody belongingness to an in-group. Therefore individuals will construct an identity which supports their moral emotional sentiments towards issues and which attenuates their existing or preferred identities.

It would make sense, as was proposed by authors such as Hibbert *et al.* [5] that volunteers also construct a self identity which matches with the cause or organization

they are supporting. Aquinos, Reed and Levy [2] specifically showed that volunteers, therefore, find greater affiliation between the causes identity and their own or construct a self identity which matches that of the soliciting organization of cause to justify support or develop their positive attitude towards compliance with requests for time or money. It is important to note that the theory has been developed recently to emphasize the role that informal attachment or affiliation may play in constructing self identities and thus the experience effect of volunteers seeking greater appraisal by social gatherings, through meetings with other volunteers, is relevant only when the behaviour of volunteerism has been established. However, the informal attachment also allows for justifying initial decisions and attitude development to support the cause without any physical interaction. It is possible that informal social identification then develops into a more formal identification, thus paralleling the ego altruistic drive for many donors and volunteers.

Identification with a group or organization influences the attitudinal and emotional reactions towards the stimuli. Thus, social identity can influence person's behaviour potentially. Social identity drives from the acceptance of identification or membership with a society/culture or group [6]. This sort of memberships enhance self image and satisfaction that constitute an individual's own self identity [3]. Self identity is a set of traits and characteristics; moral emotions and empathy are few among them. On the other hand social identity theory helps to explain the emotional and cognitive factors that influence behaviour [7].

Social identity theory applied in marketing literature for an understanding of consumer behaviour [8, 9]. Social identity influences consumer behaviours towards marketing communication and its response [10, 11, 12]. Usually persuasive communications utilise the actors that carries the social identity cues and adopt the view point of social identity shared by members to connect the psychological association between social identity and brands and services. This social identity based positioning strategies are very effective and influential. Still there is a need to do more research on social identity influences on person's behaviour and attitude.

Internal Marketing: Initially internal marketing applied in manufacturing companies for better operation management so in this context it is defined as 'the promoting of the firm and its product(s) or product lines to the firm's employees' [13]. In past, most of the studies

[14, 15] focused on internal marketing in commercial organization's and concluded that internal marketing is very effective for increasing the organization satisfaction and commitment which increase the retention rate and reduce the turnover rate among employees because it provides motivation for work and improve overall performance. Therefore 'internal marketing is viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products and (just as with external marketing) endeavouring to design these products to meet the needs of these customers better' [13]. In services oriented organization the internal marketing is very important element to provide superior services to customers and for success of external marketing. Greene *et al.* [13] postulated that in high contact services organization, services quality is dependent upon the service provider. That is why these services organizations need to be more focused on internal and external both application of marketing and same is the case with the charity organizations.

Bennet and Barkasjo [16] studies the internal marketing as antecedents of volunteer's organization commitment. Internal marketing applications in non-profit organization are not much focused in past even though it can help to manage the internal relationships of charity (non-profit) organizations with their volunteers. It would be resulted in high contributions towards organization's clients. Internal marketing is important to educate and motivate volunteers in order to help the welfare clients. It is more or less like a guide for workers appropriate attitudes and behaviours towards tasks.

Bennett and Kottasz [17] state that there are varying reasons for that people do volunteering such as feeling of social responsible empathy with needy, to gain social, psychological and practical benefits; desire to obtain experience, make friends, training and interesting task. Girdron [18] proposed that individualization of volunteers' jobs is essential in order to provide a person with self expressive tasks that gave a volunteer an opportunity to develop his or her skills or abilities. People usually do volunteering in a self expressive way that can satisfy them. To match the volunteers' individualization and organization objectives an effective internal marketing and communication program is required to avoid any unseen consequences for both organization and volunteers. Thus, internal communication not only affects volunteers and organization relationships but in fact it helps to utilize resources effectively for training and developing their interpersonal skills and behaviour. Internal marketing gives clarity to volunteers about organizations' rule,

policies, mission, responsibilities and handling the emergency situations. They concluded that internal marketing has positive influence on volunteer's attitude therefore it is worthwhile to invest in internal, marketing activities. But in charity organization one thing need to be assured that it reaches to all not only to few volunteers which cause confusion. It will be valuable to have a special campaign program to create awareness about organization's internal marketing activities because some volunteers simply ignore organizational internal marketing activities. Further for organization performance there must be compatibility between internal and external marketing programs. That is why volunteers' involvement in development of external marketing program is essential [16].

The organization's management should be supportive to internal marketing. It is assumed that internal marketing communicate charity organization's mission and new development more extensively and regularly to volunteers and also acknowledge and recognize their contribution. It is true that volunteers respond very differently to these efforts so the organizational commitment among individuals also varies. Volunteers' assessment and perception about internal marketing affect their response to these efforts. That is why feedback is also considered as important part of internal marketing. So it is important to know how volunteers perceive that internal communication affect their commitment [16].

Conceptualizing Volunteer Attitude Formation: The vast majority of work on volunteerism has been on exploring volunteerism within the non-profit and charities sectors. Furthermore, a primary objective of internal marketing is to recruit more volunteers therefore a general understanding of how volunteers develop their helping attitude. Exploring the literature on the conceptualization of the volunteerism process is thus deemed necessary to understand the development of the pro-social attitude. Ellis (1990) defines volunteerism as, contributing either time or resources of some sort, usually manpower related for a "charitable", "educational", "social" and "political" or "community" related cause without anticipation of compensation.

Omoto and Snyder [19]'s volunteer process model examines the antecedents of general volunteerism. They found that self identity, related to being a volunteer and emotions towards being a volunteer were also important drivers or predictors of volunteering decision making. Penner [20] however conceptualized the

volunteerism process as inter determined by a pro social personality or identity, or helpfulness traits such as a history of giving in pro social behaviour contexts and self identity related to this role and other orientated empathy or the ability to share concern and feel concern with the well being of others. Finkestein and Brannick [21] argue that this role identity theory explanation is important especially in understanding more informal volunteers or those that may work outside the formal structures of organizations such as ad hoc volunteers, campaigners, lobbyists etc.

Indeed, the altruism-egotistic dichotomy as determining the volunteer's decision making has spanned many studies on volunteerism and general pro social helping behavior. The traditional and still popular view is that people simply want to help for the sake of helping; and expect no return from anyone or from the representatives of the organization or the cause they are volunteering for [22, 23]. Many campaigners fall into this category where they may register as a campaigner for Charity X and engage in their set of voluntary activities which span many areas and across time and which may go unnoticed by anyone or unrecognized by the organization and yet the campaigner or volunteer derives pleasure from this right of anonymity to help. This form of pure altruism is generally considered to be rare especially in the west where highly visible campaigns are run based on role identity of being a helper or a volunteer for an organization. Nevertheless, it is also recognized that pure altruism is a very strong driver of volunteerism [24, 25, 26]. Andersen *et al.* [27] and Tidwell [28] for instance showed that those who preferred pure altruism to egotistical motives had stronger long term loyalty and commitment reinforcing the importance of pure altruism as a central and powerful driver of volunteerism, despite the growth of a more egotistical social marketing environment.

Empathy: Empathy is not an isolated or discrete emotion but rather an emotional process or experience or set of emotions based reactions. According to Feshbach [29] empathy is a "shared emotional response between an observer and a stimulus person". Moreover, he proposed that three components are essential: (a) the cognitive capacity to adopt another's perspective (b) the cognitive capacity to accurately predict another's affective experience and (c) the affective capacity to experience a range of emotions to cater for the others emotional experience. Coke *et al.* [30] propose two stages; one that involves perspective taking and is more cognitive in nature often coined as cognitive empathy stage which

facilitates the development of an empathetic concern or an affective desire to help which subsequently leads to actual or desired help. Sympathy on the other is feeling of concern for another without matching the emotional experience of another. Other orientated empathy can also be differentiated from self orientated empathy; the latter which is not thought to have a positive effect on helping behaviour but other orientated empathy is thought to have a positive and important predictive quality to helping behaviour [31]. Lazarus (1991, p.287) [32] defined empathy as ‘empathy should be regarded as an emotional capacity and a process’. Empathy is ‘sharing another’s feeling by placing oneself psychologically in that person’s circumstances’ (ibid). Thus it is not simply an emotion. Wispe (1986, p: 318) defines empathy as ‘the attempt by one self aware to comprehend non-judgementally the positive and negative experiences of another self. In other words it is relevant to sympathy ‘the heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated (ibid). Empathy is a broader concept e.g. according to Bagozzi [33] empathy is like a self regulation process which heightened the awareness about another person who is in danger and creates urge to help him.

Fostering empathy for others, such as (a) empathic reactions to others lead to concern for others [29], (b) such concern may manifest then into helping or pro social behaviour to alleviate the distressed individual [34, 35, 36] and (c) empathy can also inhibit feelings of aggressing and other harmful behaviours towards the distressed group [36, 37]. This it would appear that empathy generation would be an essential desired output from the managing internal marketing.

Conceptual Framework: The framework ‘Figure 1’ seeks to conceptualize supporter attitude development using social identity theory that supports the pro-social behavioural outcomes. On other side Tomkovick et al. (2008) explained that behavioural learning theories have suggested that behavioural learning is come from relationship between stimuli and response. Thus, internal marketing is playing a role of antecedent that provides learning for volunteers and influences person empathy. This moral standard shaped the attitude to perform a specific behaviour. In this framework empathy behave like a motivational force. That is why this research looks into how empathy demonstrates through internal marketing to promote volunteerism. The framework is presented to explain the key constructs.

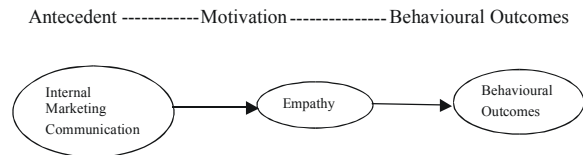


Fig. 1: The Conceptual Framework

Antecedent: Bendapudi *et al.*, (1996) described that many internal and external factors affect the giving and helping behaviour. They studied the promotional variable specifically charity appeals as antecedent in their research on ‘enhancing the helping behaviour: an integrated framework for promotion plan’. According to their point of view the promotional variables are controllable factors because a charity can control many promotional variables as media, messages, communication and request oriented variables that are used as antecedents for helping behaviour [38]. A primary objective of charity marketing is to recruit more volunteers and attract more resources. Therefore, a general understanding of how volunteers develop their helping attitude may inform about internal communication and message contents design.

Motivation: Haidt [39, 40] described that emotions evoked by persuasive stimuli are more important in shaping attitudes. There is possibility that emotions stimulate observer to opt admirable deeds i.e. helping others. Emotions are major drivers of pro social attitude development. Empathy linking the actual level of support or intentions for support may be a positive emotional support process.

Behavioural Outcomes: The desirable behavioural outcome is to promote the volunteerism that brings positive results for organization. This action could create organizational commitment and capitalise volunteers’ word of mouth. Hudson (2003) describes the volunteerism as a practice of voluntary action for social welfare without any personal benefit. Volunteering is either people do it due to their personal reasons or altruistic reasons but both are worthy for volunteering Omoto and Snyder, [17]. Porter *et al.*, (1974) defined organization commitment as an emotional (affective) association with organization [41-47]. According to O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) commitment produces the positive work outcomes such as pro-social behaviour. Still it is arguable that either pro-social behaviour leads to commitment or commitment leads to pro social behaviour. Commitment has emotional and cognitive elements that reflect employee’s energy to

meet organizations' goals. Greene *et al.* [13] postulated that effective marketing creates positive word of mouth by employees (in present context volunteers) about their organization. A word of mouth can capitalize the propensity of other external marketing such as advertising. This effort causes an inspired employee and satisfied customer. Therefore, the credibility of external marketing can be lent to internal promotion strategy.

CONCLUSION

Social identity theory is explicated as a result of the review on volunteerism leading to a conceptualization of empathy. Understanding how such volunteers think about themselves would shed light on their identity salience and the importance of this in harnessing support. Gaining more knowledge about how such volunteers feel about the cause would shed light in understanding how the decision to support develops along the classic cognitive-affect-behavioural or "winning minds winning hearts" pathway. This sequential order is not assumed in this classical pathway as the alternative affect-behavioural-cognitive (or "winning hearts winning minds") pathway is also one such possibility to explain the development of volunteers' attitudes. It is also true that the role of internal marketing cannot be denied for attitude development among the organizations' volunteers. Thus in internal marketing, marketing practices are focused on the people who serve the external clients. Internal marketing motivates the volunteers, to serve the cause to their best level.

This study seeks to act as an initial foray into investigating a new proposed model of volunteers' attitude development within a unique interplay between MI and ME proposed within an empathy centralisation structure this model has more generalised implications also for general volunteer movement conceptualisations. The important implications of this research seek to add knowledge in this important and much needed field. This paper will be provided basis for future implications such as: how to evoke empathy for voluntary participation, application of effective internal communication design for moral profile and identity of volunteers.

This research could be help to sort out the problems that charity organizations are facing regarding volunteers hiring, training cost, motivation, retention and turnover. One thing should be realised that actual staff should not be replaced by the volunteers. Volunteers are for extra support to improve organization performance.

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