Factors influencing intention to donate via social network site (SNS): From Asian's perspective

Suaini Sura, Jongchang Ahn *, Ook Lee

Department of Information System, Hanyang University, 222 Wangsimni-ro, Seongdong-gu, 04763 Seoul, Republic of Korea

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study examined whether external factors, which are charity project, charity organization, Internet technology features and social network site (SNS) features influence people's general attitude towards online donation and their intention to donate via SNS. An online survey was conducted based on the framework of factors influencing the intention to donate via SNS that was adapted from the literature review. Data from 258 respondents were used for analysis. Structural equation modelling was used to test the research model and hypotheses. The results indicated that the Internet technology features factor significantly contributes in influencing people's general attitude towards online donation, and general attitude positively influences people's intention to donate via SNSs. The full mediation effect of the general attitude towards online donation on the relationship between Internet technology features and intention to donate via SNS was found. However, charity project, charity organization, and SNS features were not significant factors in influencing people's intention to donate via SNSs. The sample was limited to some Asian countries (preliminary Malaysia and South Korea). Thus, the results cannot be generalized to other countries. The findings suggest that non-profit organizations should focus on how to deal with the Internet issues, especially pertaining to security and privacy. Therefore, a mechanism for gaining donors' trust to use the Internet, particularly in doing online transaction must be considered.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the Internet has become a platform to raise charitable donations. Despite the fact that several online donation websites exist, these websites are primarily used for information dissemination rather than for interactive exchange with the donor audience (Waters, 2008). They lack functional capability that meets potential users' expectations. Therefore, donation websites have not continued to gain support from the online community (Wong and Jussof, 2011). Its lack in capability to capture the function that meets potential users' expectation leads to the lack of continuous support from online users.

After the emergence of Internet technology, a new technology called Web 2.0 was created. Ever since Web 2.0 was introduced, the social network site (SNS) platform has been widely used. Boyd and Ellison (2007) have defined SNSs as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they wish to share a connection, and view their list of connections, as well as the connections of those

* Corresponding author.
 E-mail addresses: susura@hanyang.ac.kr (S. Sura), ajchang@hanyang.ac.kr (J. Ahn), ooklee@hanyang.ac.kr (O. Lee).

made by others within the system. Thus, SNSs provide users with the capability to create virtual communities by allowing them to communicate and share information as in real-life connections (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In addition, SNSs have emerged as a form of social media. The technology and platform that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking are referred as social media (Cohen, 2011). The term 'social media' pertains to the ability of SNSs to include features and applications that provide not only text, but also audio, videos, images, and other multimedia elements to facilitate communication. With the increasing popularity of SNSs, many online donation websites were quick to react and have started to shift to SNSs. Users use SNSs not only to communicate with their contacts, but also to share information, to search for donation and volunteer opportunities, and to donate money (Branston and Bush, 2010; Castillo et al., 2014).

In 2012, the ePhilanthrophy Foundation (2012) reported that US$163 million had been donated online and 65% of people who donated had done it online. 13% of the total amount was donated through social media. Meanwhile, M+R Strategic Services and the Nonprofit Technology Network (2013) (The organizations with the aim to help non-profit organizations especially by providing technology services) reported that in 2013, the social media audience continued to grow significantly with 46% median increment of Facebook fans and 264% increment of Twitter followers. Facebook continues to have a larger social media presence for most groups. From these reports, it seems likely that more people will donate via SNSs in the future. This situation can be an opportunity for researchers to study the reasons of people donating via SNSs.

In the context of monetary donation, some previous studies (e.g. Smith and McSweeney, 2007; Linden, 2011; Knowles et al., 2012) have examined the intention to donate. These studies applied theory planned behavior TPB as a tool to understand people's behavior and intention, and found out that TPB is applicable and relevant to be used to understand people's behavior intention to donate. According to TPB (Ajzen, 1991), the attitude towards the particular behavior has the ability to predict people's intention on that behavior. The more favorable and stronger the attitude is related to the behavior, the stronger the intention to perform that behavior. Several previous studies, for example, Knowles et al. (2012) have confirmed and identified that attitude towards monetary donation is the strongest predictor of monetary donation behavior. The basic thing of attitude determinant is the function of salient information or belief that is relevant to the behavior, implying that the strength of the attitude can be affected by the relevance of information of which an attitude is based on (Ajzen, 2001). The applicability and relevance of TPB to be used in examining and understanding people's behavior intention have motivated us to extend this theory to examine people's attitude and intention towards online donation mainly via SNS. Treiblmaier and Pollach (2006) attempted to investigate the external factors that could influence people's general attitude towards online donation. They have stated that charity project, charity organization and the Internet as factors could measure the general attitude towards online donation. These three factors are associated with the online donation and have an impact on people's perception and belief towards online donation. However, without proper study and evidence, we cannot simply imply that the external factors influencing general attitude towards online donation, which have a significant influence on the intention to donate online, will also have a significant influence on the intention to donate via SNS due to the fact of the unique nature of SNS.

In the context of donation via SNS, a few studies have been conducted examining on the predictor of attitude towards online donation behavior. Most studies have focused on investigating how SNSs could help and support online donations, and how non-profit organizations manipulate and use SNSs to enhance their charitable activities (Branston and Bush, 2010; Curtis et al., 2010; Phethean et al., 2013; Quinton and Fennemore, 2013). Despite SNS's potential and significance, the question of the factors affecting people's attitude that lead people to donate via SNS has yet not to be fully explored. We consider (1) the attitude affected by the information and belief relating to which attitude is based on (for example, for SNS donation, charity activity and the Internet are needed to ensure online donation takes place), and (2) the difference between online donation and SNS donation. In particular, for online donation, information is mostly based on what is provided by the website's owner. However, for SNS donation, SNS is a user-generated content tool where information is not solely based on the owner of the SNS account, but is also provided and created by SNS members. Therefore, we are motivated to identify the factors influencing people's attitude towards online donation that lead to their intention to donate via SNSs. Although a study (Kim and Lee, 2014) have examined the attitude towards SNS donation, focusing on how social capital influences attitude by using the theory of reasoned action, we take a different approach. In our study, by applying TPB, we have adapted and extended the proposed model by Treiblmaier and Pollach (2006) to examine the external factors (charity activity, charity organization, Internet technology features and SNS features) influence on the attitude towards online donation and attitude towards online donation influence on the intention to donate via SNS. We also have explored the mediation effect of attitude towards online donation on the relationship between external factors and the intention to donate via SNS. By conducting this study, it offers an insightful understanding on online donor behavior from the aspect of which external factors influence general attitude towards online donation and to what extent attitude plays a role as a mediator between external factors and the intention to donate via SNS due to the fact that online donation (e.g. collecting money donation via SNS) depends on the online donor.

In this paper, first, we discuss relevant literature about the intention to donate, online donation, donation via SNSs and TPB. Second, we present the research model for the intention to donate via SNSs, as well as the five hypotheses for this study. Third, we offer the research methodology in addressing data collection, measurement and preliminary data analysis. Followed by the results of convergent validity, discriminate validity and structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis. Last, we discuss the possible reasons for the findings and finally conclude this paper.