

Leveraging Social Media Marketing in Healthcare-Based Non-profit Organisations: Insights from the Technology Acceptance Model

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to identify the variables that both positively and negatively influence the usage of social media marketing (SMM) by South African healthcare-based non-profit organisations (HB NPOs) based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Social media has emerged as a key tool for fostering dialogue between HB NPOs and their stakeholders in South Africa. A majority of NPOs agree that marketing is essential for raising funds and awareness, yet comparatively few partake extensively in new digital marketing activities. Based on the researcher's expertise (judgemental sampling), the study selected thirteen respondents (marketing and/or social media managers, coordinators, and directors) to participate. The study used a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews to understand the perspectives of HB NPOs and their use of social media marketing (SMM). The interviews were transcribed and analysed using ATLAS.ti. The study elucidates motivational variables influencing the actual usage of SMM via the integration of the TAM and considers aspects like external variables, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioural intention within an HB NPO context. The research affirms the importance of the use of SMM for the sustainability and promotion of HB NPOs (increased awareness, donation appeals, community relationships, cost-effective platform to raise funds, powerful images and patient stories lead to brand emotions and positive image), but also reveals a number of negative influences that impede the usage of SMM by HB NPOs (lack of government support, corporate sponsors, time, understanding, capacity, resources, and a small donor pool). Practically, SMM presents an opportunity for HB NPOs to allocate necessary resources toward its strategic use

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as a communication approach, enabling them to take advantage of the beneficial and sustainable influences. Theoretically, this investigation supports the foundational principles of the TAM and adds to it from a qualitative perspective by highlighting the sustainable and negative influences of external factors, perceived usefulness and ease of use, and behavioural intentions based on SMM usage by HB NPOs. The study enhances understanding of digital marketing, broad NPO management, and the organisational behaviour of HB NPOs in a developing nation context via the TAM framework.

Keywords: *Healthcare-based non-profit organisations (HB NPOs); social media marketing (SMM); sustainability; organisational behaviour; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African healthcare-based non-profit organisation (HB NPO) sector often plays a pivotal role, acting as a change agent and assisting the government in fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities. These organisations deliver approximately 70% of all social services in South Africa (SA) (SA News, 2023). The World Health Organisation declares health as a basic human right and defines health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, thereby improving their health” (Ghebreyesus, 2017). There has never been a greater need for organisations dedicated to promoting health, safeguarding, and enhancing the quality of life in communities (Edelman & Kudzma, 2021). HB NPOs in SA are organisations advocating for health equality or universal access to healthcare (Republic of South Africa, 2024). To achieve this, they must address socioeconomic factors beyond individual control—including housing conditions, violent crime levels, access to vaccines and nutritious food, and income levels—that contribute to collective risk (World Health Organisation, 2013). These NPOs play a significant role in improving public health in SA. For instance, they strive to provide equitable treatment for all residents, focusing on achieving social justice and tangible change for marginalised communities (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014; Gray & Vawda, 2017). However, according to Maboya (2016), these organisations' ability to continue making decisions and operating in ways that are consistent with their values is gravely threatened. Many NPOs are struggling to fulfil their role as safety nets because of the growing commercialisation of healthcare, intense competition, and diminished support from the government and, to a lesser extent, business (Buheji et al., 2020). Furthermore, the public, as well as many decision-makers in industry, government, the financial community, and healthcare, are not aware of the special function and significance of NPOs (Shin et al., 2018). This reinforces the importance of health promotion and justifies this study's emphasis on the HB NPO sector.

Intriguingly, while 90% of NPOs agree that marketing is essential for raising funds and awareness, only a small portion extensively partake in marketing activities (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Bezuidenhout, 2017; Alexander et al., 2023). Research has found that NPOs do not prioritise the importance of marketing and the rise of SMM (Tharpe, 2019; Abbott, 2021; Gartner et al., 2021; Maxhuni, 2021; Mehrotra & Siraj, 2021). NPOs work hard to help their communities by raising funds,

volunteering, and addressing social issues. Often, NPOs run out of time for marketing because they have so many donors to contact, programmes to run, and administrative issues to deal with, so the priority of marketing is often pushed aside for other tasks (Lee et al., 2017; Roza et al., 2017; Abbott, 2021; Kumar et al., 2024). NPOs must be well known to retain volunteers, members, sponsors, donors, and other supporters, and to achieve that goal, marketing is really important. NPOs can combat declining donations and a lack of volunteers by ensuring that the public is aware of their existence and mission (Cruickshank, 2017; Brink et al., 2020; Alexander et al., 2023). Marketing has been looked at as a critical element of sustainability for NPOs, especially social media marketing (SMM), because now, more than ever, more people engage online, especially post-COVID-19 (Chikwanda, 2020; Kumar et al., 2024). There has been much growth in SMM-related international NPO research in recent years (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Xu & Saxton, 2019; Mehrotra & Siraj, 2021; Alexander et al., 2023; Sánchez-Torné et al., 2023; An & Yu, 2024; Parker et al., 2024), and several studies were also conducted in SA (Mwaura et al., 2020; Swart et al., 2021; Dondolo et al., 2023). However, a consensus among researchers points to the need for future investigations into social media's role across varied NPO types, given the sector's size and diverse requirements (Kapoor et al., 2018; Alexander et al., 2023), especially since there is a need for further research that solely considers SMM among HB NPOs' (Tursunbayeva et al., 2017; Duffett & Thomas, 2024). Zhang et al. (2022) suggest that future research should explore whether social media platforms, besides popular ones like Facebook, effectively influence target audience attitudes and behaviours for NPOs. Further, they recommend examining whether social media improves NPO perception and generates additional income streams, enhancing sustainability, which will be further explored in this study.

This study employs the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explore SMM and motivations within South African HB NPOs. TAM, initially proposed by Davis in 1989, has evolved to be the most prevalent model for examining user acceptance of novel technology (Davis, 1989). TAM is used to explore how environmental variables influence individuals' attitudes, intentions, and beliefs concerning the usage of new technology based on external variables, perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEU), behavioural intentions, and actual use. This study seeks to explore the above-mentioned research gaps and variables that influence the usage of SMM by HB NPOs in SA via the TAM as the theoretical underpinning. Hence, the primary objectives of this inquiry aim to investigate what variables have a positive and negative influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs grounded on the TAM.

5.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent times, the sustainability of NPOs has emerged as a significant challenge (Singh & Mthuli, 2021; Kumar et al., 2024). Discussions on sustainability frequently pivot on future funding opportunities, underscoring the need for a constant evaluation of the organisation's cause and exploration of funding avenues (Ayinkamiye & Spencer, 2021; Singh & Mthuli, 2021; Dondolo et al., 2023). NPOs must devise strategies that foster fundraising and result in sustainability beyond

donor funding (Mehrotra & Siraj, 2021; Ayinkamiye & Spencer, 2021; Haruvy & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2024). Internal and external marketing communication strategies are required to establish relationships with communities and stakeholders, for example, police, local media, hospitals, and schools, which can include online posts results and news to increase trustworthiness and visibility (Albanna et al., 2022). However, there is increasing competition in the marketplace, especially in terms of social causes, so NPOs need to use innovative strategies to attract supporters and build trust among donors. The COVID-19 pandemic restricted traditional fundraising and marketing strategies, for example, face-to-face collections were no longer possible (Abbott, 2021; Rashid et al., 2021; Waniak-Michalak et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2024). Consequently, NPOs were forced to consider new strategies to identify and gain access to new potential donors (Eaves & Lombardo, 2021; Alexander et al., 2023). Digital integration, which has already begun to gain traction, is one of the most efficient methods to achieve greater transparency and personalisation in donor outreach, especially via SMM (Corsini & Moultrie, 2019; Alexander et al., 2023; Haruvy & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2024).

Sustainability in NPOs typically encompasses long-term programme and community development viability in addition to financial stability (Ryser et al., 2020; Ayinkamiye & Spencer, 2021; Rashid et al., 2021). Financial challenges significantly contribute to the downsizing and eventual closure of NPOs. The decreasing number of NPOs is a concern since they provide essential services in supporting individuals, families, and communities in need (Kaye et al., 2021; Santos & Laureano, 2020; An & Yu, 2024). SMM is a potential tool that can enhance financial sustainability, but NPOs often have limited resources, inadequate information, and time constraints that prevent them from effectively leveraging social media (Cho et al., 2017; Zhang & Gupta, 2018; Abbott, 2021; Dondolo et al., 2023). Previous studies indicate that the large amount of time needed to implement and maintain SMM poses a major problem for NPOs (Ahmad et al., 2018; Khoo, 2019). Additionally, NPOs might not have sufficient resources to adopt and implement new infrastructure or technology, which may also reduce their capacity to fully utilise SMM (Dwivedi et al., 2022). While most social networks are free to use, providing NPOs with many opportunities, it is a misconception that SMM and promotion are cost-free or inexpensive for NPOs (Marwick, 2017; Armstrong & Butcher, 2018; Oyewobi et al., 2023). The costs include time investment, content creation, advertising, training, monitoring, and crisis management. As a result, the idea that social media marketing is free or inexpensive for NPOs is not true, as these hidden costs are relatively high and require resource allocation. Emerging organisations might lack the resources to manage current technology, such as computers, and they might not have sufficient staffing to do so (Elvestad & Phillips, 2018; Oyewobi et al., 2023). Therefore, a deeper understanding of the role of social media in NPOs will provide a foundation for future research and help NPOs appreciate the practicality of social media in achieving their goals. The relationship between social media marketing in the health NPO sector and potential financial sustainability merits further investigation.

The importance of SMM in the HB NPO sector, and its relationship with sustainability and financial factors requires for inquiry (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020; Abbott, 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Mehrotra & Siraj, 2021; Van Steenburg et al., 2022; Alexander et al., 2023). HB NPOs have the opportunity to reach a larger wider audience, build relationships, and more effectively disseminate messages with their target audience via social media. A number of studies agree that SMM is an effective way to reach younger target audiences (Marthinus et al., 2014; Duffett, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Duffett et al., 2019; Duffett, 2020; Edu et al., 2021; Duffett, 2022; Ionescu et al., 2023; Duffett & Charles, 2024; Duffett et al., 2024). TAM posits that the actual use of a novel technology depends on the user's attitude towards it, specifically its PEU, and the anticipated benefits associated with its application. Consequently, the variables PEU and PU are used to predict behaviour intentions and actual use, which may also be influenced by external variables (Dos Santos, & Duffett, 2021; Duffett & Maraule, 2024). In line with this model, if individuals believe that using a specific technology will enhance productivity or provide benefits, they are more likely to do so (Shaw & Sergueeva, 2019). Furthermore, if individuals consider the technology easy to implement, their hesitation towards its adoption lessens. This study suggests that if NPOs comprehend the benefits of employing SMM and can effortlessly utilise it, their acceptance will likely increase. The study aims to propose a theoretical framework based on the TAM tailored to understand the use of SMM by HB NPOs in South Africa. Hence, the main research questions of the study are as follows:

- What variables have a positive influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs based on the TAM?
- What variables have a negative influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs based on the TAM?

5.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study makes use of the subjectivist philosophical orientation of inductive interpretivism in its attempt to comprehend the reality that is the subject of the investigation, namely the implementation of SMM in the HB NPO sector (Haydam & Steenkamp, 2020). Qualitative research is a frequently used method to analyse information by organising it into themes and categories with common associations between them. Hence, it was important for this study to obtain meaningful data from participants with sufficient knowledge and expertise about their HB NPOs use of SMM (De Vos et al., 2011; Thomas & Duffett, 2024). The investigation employed a purposive sampling technique, selecting participants according to their marketing understanding and SMM knowledge of the HB NPO, their immediate SMM management or coordination of the HB NPO, and one-year employment by the NPO. The respondents were selected following the suggestions made of the HB NPO and their respective positions. Following the first email, prospective participants responded via a letter of consent, authorising their participation in the research project. The investigation utilised a data saturation approach to select the number of participants who were actively engaged on social media channels. Data saturation is the term used to describe point art in which no new information is being obtained from the participants. Hence, the introduction of new participants

does not contribute any additional insights to the research. The data saturation theory is supported by several inquiries, namely De Vos et al. (2011), Marthinus et al. (2024), and Moyo et al. (2020; 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). This study reached saturation with a sample size of 13 participants. Research conducted by Zeimers et al. (2019), Maxhuni (2021), and Gamieldien et al. (2022) utilised a similar number of participants to investigate SMM and NPO-related topics.

This research utilised semi-structured interviews, which involved asking questions that were open-ended (Duffett et al., 2009). A semi-structured interview guide was used as an instrument to gather data. By utilising this type of interview technique, the investigator was able to fully engage in conversations that provided valuable insights into the opinions and views of the participants concerning the use of SMM by the HB NPOs. The interview guide enhanced the pertinence and logical flow of the questions. However, in some cases, questions were customised or restated to assist the participant in better comprehending a specific question. The researcher utilised semi-structured interview guide questions, but in certain cases, additional insights were gained through the use of explanation and refinement of the questions. The emergence of novel video meeting platforms provides qualitative investigators with fresh opportunities to gather real-time data. Video meeting platforms are frequently employed to achieve cost savings, gain access to larger and more diverse audiences, and organise interviews with multiple participants in a shorter duration by removing the need for travel (Lobe et al., 2020). The interviews with the HB NPOs were conducted exclusively through the use of the Zoom online meeting video application. Primary data collection began after all participants were informed of and provided with a chance to give voluntary informed consent permission. All identifying information and data shared was kept completely confidential to encourage open communication and genuine participant responses. The average duration of the interviews was 43 minutes. The interviews were both video and audio recorded, enabling the researcher to continually listen to them in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, which is crucial during the transcription, analysis, and coding processes. ATLAS.ti facilitated the investigators in uploading all the transcripts of the interviews for coding in order to convey the results through direct quotations, which are elaborated upon in the next section.

5.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.4.1 External Influences

The interviews with the HB NPO participants revealed the following external variables that had a positive influence on their use of SMM: rising costs of traditional advertising, building community presence, broader awareness, and a global platform that reaches an international audience. For example, participant 1 disclosed, "Yes, I think that there's an idea that hospice is just for the dying, and it is really not, and SMM has helped with that." Participant 3 noted, "I think the main purpose is just to let ourselves be known by the community, and what we do, just to let ourselves known by people, what we do."

Other recent studies confirm the positive influence of the abovementioned external variables on SMM among NPOs (Ali et al., 2023; Parker et al., 2024). However, a number of external variables were also found to have a negative influence on SMM usage among HB NPOs: lack of government support, a smaller pool of donors, a lack of corporate sponsors, and platforms that continually change. Participant 7 complained that "I think Facebook is such a pain to work with; they keep changing the algorithms, and also, the minute that you do a little bit of boosting, they want you to advertise all the time." Participant 9 stressed that "we do not have the money. I mean, we are only funded by social development." Abbott (2021), Albanna et al. (2022), and An and Yu (2024) affirm similar negative issues that have an adverse influence on SMM.

5.4.2 Usefulness

The HB NPO participants verified several PU variables that had a positive influence on their use of SMM: awareness, donation appeals that can go viral, a cost-effective platform to raise funds, and forming relationships with the community. Participant 6 stated, "But yes, I mean, I think social media channels are very useful in a number of ways, in terms of fundraising." Participant 4 stressed, "Yes, it is vital; it is one of the most cost-effective ways to reach people." Several other studies substantiated the usefulness of SMM among the aforementioned benefits NPOs can derive from the usage of various digital platforms (Albanna et al., 2022; Haruvy & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2024). Rashid et al. (2021) investigated how the IMAM Response and Relief Team (IMARET) used social media for fundraising to address their challenges by providing personnel, supplies, and logistical support. The study also found that greater engagement in social media increased donations.

However, some HB NPOs have negative influences regarding the PU of SMM usage: patient care priority, which leaves little time for SMM; the impact of SMM not always immediate; a lack of understanding regarding measuring the impact of efforts; and HB NPOs' staff overworked, as SMM is not perceived to be a priority. Participant 9 reported, "Posting content is a challenge because I do all my posting during my personal time; very little is done during working time." Participant 7 stated, "Yeah, we need to persuade the higher-ups that social media provides value." Several other inquiries confirm similar negative issues based on the usefulness of SMM among NPOs (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020; Gartner et al., 2021).

5.4.3 Ease of Use

The results show that HB NPO participants also confirmed some PEU variables that have a positive influence on SMM usage: a majority of the SMM platforms are free, SMM platforms (e.g., Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) are easy to access, Facebook/Instagram tools and reporting are easy to use and understand, and it is easy to take photos in the field and share work via SMM. Participant 10 reported, "I literally just posted a couple of pictures and said thank you to everyone involved, and that just absolutely skyrocketed with engagements.

And so things like that, I find, do incredibly well.” Participant 3 indicated that “I believe Facebook is most useful, so it must be Facebook.”

Other studies verified the ease of use of SMM owing to the advantages that NPOs receive from engaging with digital marketing channels (Maxhuni, 2021; Albanna et al., 2022). However, the HB NPO participants also identified some negative influences on the PEU of SMM usage, such as capacity constraints, the absence of SMM effort measurement due to a lack of understanding, the inability to post during working hours but only during personal time, and the challenge of adapting to frequent changes in SMM platforms. Participant 9 said that “As I said, it is currently not being measured, purely because there’s no time to do it.” Participant 5 asserted that “I post at least twice a week, pretty much every week, and we’ve been short-staffed, so it [has] been extra challenging.” Several other inquiries agreed that SMM could be challenging for NPOs due to similar reasons (Sun & Asencio, 2019; Kumar et al., 2024).

5.4.4 Behavioural Intentions

The study ascertained some positive behavioural intentions due to SMM usage by HB NPOs, namely, patient stories, brand emotions and image, and the impact of powerful images (increases donations and awareness towards HB NPOs). Participant 1 declared, “But the emotive, seeing a nurse helping a patient on social media, gains a lot of traction and provides a sense of belonging.” Participant 4 specified that “Patient stories, linked with images, tend to get a lot of good engagement because I think people can identify with them.”

Other recent studies confirm the positive influence of stories and images on behavioural intentions among NPOs due to SMM (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Di Lauro et al., 2019; Tonetti, 2019; Abbott, 2021; Rashid et al., 2021). However, other participants acknowledged negative influences that include behavioural intentions due to SMM usage among HB NPOs: limited resources allocated to SMM due to lack of understanding; SMM is considered a “nice to have”; and no clear SMM goals, so no clear plan. Participant 2 admitted to not having written SMM goals: “Not outlined on paper. I’m always excited if we have growth in our audience, but there’s nothing written down or set in place.” Participant 13 specified, “I guess, from a personal point of view, it is just myself and my assistant; we do not have sufficient staff; we can’t afford sufficient staff to assist.” Albanna et al. (2022) and Kumar et al. (2024) also indicate similar negative influences on behavioural intentions relating to SMM use among NPOs.

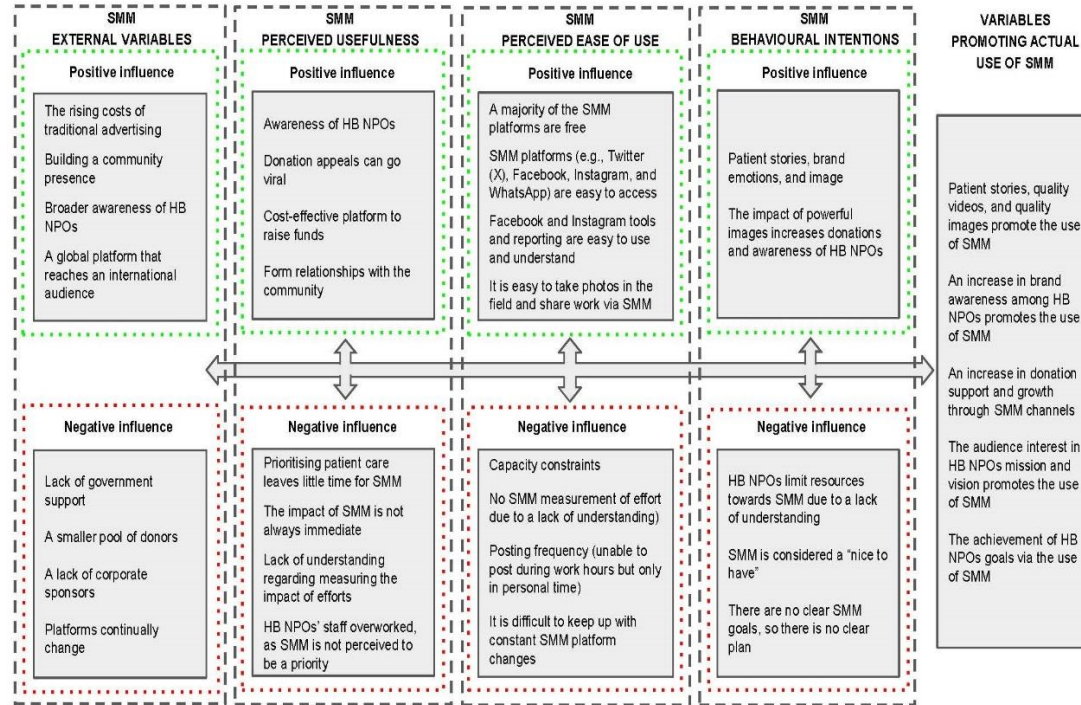


Fig. 5.1. TAM variables' positive and negative influences on the use of SMM by HB NPOs

5.4.5 Variables Promoting the Actual Use of SMM

The research showed that a number of variables had a positive influence on actual SMM usage by the HB NPO participants: patient stories, quality videos, and quality images promote the use of SMM; an increase in brand awareness of HB NPOs promotes the use of SMM; donation support and growth through SMM channels; audience interest in HB NPOs mission and vision promotes the use of SMM; and the achievement of HB NPOs goals via the use of SMM. Participant 4 revealed, "Well, I think, generally, at the moment, video works very well on all platforms across the board, because it is visual, it engages a lot of senses, and it is quick, and sometimes people do not want to read anymore; they do not have the time to read." Participant 9 disclosed, "I think I've mentioned it earlier... the growth of membership, the awareness raising within the sector, the awareness raising of the actual organisation, marketing the organisation; and just purely communicating; you're creating that communication channel, which is so important." Participant 11 affirmed: "I think we want to create a sense in people that there's something they can, personally, do to change things, that there are actions that they can take. So we want people to feel positive; we want people to be aware of the issues, but also to feel positive about the actions that they can take, which will make that change." Various other MPOs also examined a number of variables that influence the use of SMM and confirmed analogous results to this study (Di Lauro et al., 2019; Xu & Saxton, 2019; Abbott, 2021; Mehrotra & Siraj, 2021; Albanna et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2023; Parker et al., 2024; An & Yu, 2024) but did not especially consider the HB NPO sector.

Therefore, the investigation qualitatively ascertained the positive and negative influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs based on the TAM (as per the above results and discussion) in terms of external variables, PU and PEU, behavioural intentions, and actual SMM usage, which is depicted in Fig. 5.1.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first research objective of the study sought to ascertain what variables had a positive influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs based on the TAM. The study concluded that there was a number of variables that had a positive on SMM, for example: external variables (rising costs of traditional advertising, building community presence, broader awareness, and a global platform that reaches an international audience); PU (awareness, donation appeals can go viral, cost effective platform to raise funds, and form relationships with community); PEU (a majority of the SMM platforms are free, SMM platforms are easy to access, Facebook/Instagram tools and reporting are easy to use and understand, and it is easy to take photos in the field and share work via SMM); behavioural intentions (patient stories, brand emotions and image, and the impact of powerful images increase donations and awareness); and actual use of SMM (patient stories, quality videos and quality images promote use of SMM, increase in brand awareness of HB NPOs promotes use of SMM, donation support and growth through SMM channels, audience interest in HB NPOs mission and vision

promotes use of SMM, and the achievement of HB NPOs goals via use of SMM). HB NPOs have some understanding of the use of SMM as a strategy, but not enough to build upon their relationship with their audiences because these strategies are not consistent over a long period of time, or they often do not have enough buy-in from the NPO boards. As a result, this element represents an opportunity for health-related NPOs to improve how social media is regarded and spend resources on using social media strategically as a marketing communication strategy.

This study's recommendations inexorably mirror the need to accelerate the development of an appropriate SMM strategy for HB NPOs to further increase brand awareness, online donations, and other organisational sustainability factors via the strategic use of social media. HB NPOs should establish and implement meaningful measurements to track social media goals that are aligned with the organisation's overall goals. Board members and chief executive officers should prioritise the usage of SMM, consider embracing cutting-edge technology, and develop appropriate strategies for achieving organisational objectives. By positioning social media as a pillar that feeds into HB NPO's overall goals, the organisation will be aligned, and social media will be viewed through the correct lens in terms of value within the organisation. Abbott (2021) investigated the use of SMM among four maternal mental health NPOs, and the results revealed differences in the use of SMM by the NPOs. The study recommended an analysis of SMM needs, the enhancement of social media capabilities, the recruitment and training of personnel skilled in SMM, and an investigation into platform-specific fundraising potential, all of which align with the suggestions of this study.

The second research objective determined the negative influence on the use of SMM among HB NPOs based on the TAM. A number of variables were found to have a negative influence on SMM usage among HB NPOs, which include: external variables (lack of government support, a smaller pool of donors, lack of corporate sponsors, and platforms continually change); PU (patient care priority, which leaves little time for SMM; the impact of SMM not always immediate; lack of understanding regarding measuring the impact of efforts; and HB NPOs' staff overworked, as SMM is not perceived to be a priority); PEU (capacity constraints, no SMM measurement of effort, lack of understanding, posting frequency, and difficult to keep up with constant SMM platform changes); and behavioural intentions (limited resources allocated to SMM due to lack of understanding, SMM is considered as a "nice to have", and no clear SMM goals, and no clear plan).

It is recommended that NPOs upskill and invest in digital channels to stay in touch with their core audience and reach new audiences. Organisational leaders must recognise that the use of SMM is no longer a superfluous option but rather a crucial component of every organisation or NPO, and that all parties involved should strive to understand the benefits of SMM. HB NPOs are encouraged to regularly assess and improve their SMM efforts and efficacy across all social media platforms and not allow problems to stop them from participating on these digital platforms. Furthermore, it is recommended that HB NPOs consider enrolling in free online

courses, and making use of university service-learning projects (Cromhout et al., 2021; Cromhout & Duffett, 2022; Duffett & Cromhout, 2022c; Duffett et al., 2023a), and student-led advertising agencies (Duffett & Cromhout, 2022a; 2022b; Duffett et al., 2023b) to assist with SMM, which are cost-effective strategies for securing desperately needed resources and expertise.

The findings provide critical strategic insights for marketing professionals working with HB NPOs who want to use or build an online community on social media to raise funds, create events, identify the most effective social media platforms, increase brand awareness, develop relationships with current and potential new audiences and find cost-effective ways to publicise an HB NPOs name through the strategic use of social media. Communication professionals working at health NPOs, for example, should strive to create targeted and relevant content about various parts of the organisation, rather than focusing solely on ad hoc content or content that lacks depth or will have little impact if shared. Another benefit of this research is that it helps South African HB NPOs establish effective social media use strategies based on the dissertation's best practise measurements and techniques, such as the optimum time to post social media content, the type of content that will connect well with the target audience, the relationship between using visual and video content for increased engagement and how these could lead to additional donations and support for an individual HB NPO. One significant finding was that barriers to social media usage included reach, frequency of action, expense, time and a lack of organisational awareness. This also means that HB NPO marketers should prioritise and invest in resources to better understand their online community and audience, as well as strengthen their organisation's social media strategy to anticipate potential usage difficulties. Often, HB NPOs only need to conduct a simple Google search on volunteers available for digital assistance to find resources and helpful links to alleviate the burden of capacity when it comes to social media and expenditure, time and awareness. An HB NPO might even make a post on their various social media accounts asking their supporters to help them find people who can assist their HB NPO in increasing their digital presence and providing a better strategic lens.

Theoretically, this investigation not only reaffirms the foundational principles of the TAM but also augments it by introducing external factors that influence the adoption trajectory of SMM usage by HB NPOs. This enriched understanding of external determinants provides a refined qualitative perspective on the TAM's applicability within the NPO context. The wide array of variables that have a positive influence delineates a promising avenue for NPOs to harness the latent potential of SMM. This narrative accentuates the need for stakeholders, from policymakers to industry experts, to advocate for enhancing the digital proficiency of NPOs in South Africa and similar regions. The way forward encompasses targeted training, collaborative research, financial support, and partnerships with entities proficient in digital strategies. With these synergistic efforts, the digital horizon for the sustainability of HB NPOs appears promising.

5.6 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides a detailed analysis of HB NPOs and their active use of SMM media as an important strategy. Nevertheless, there was an obvious constraint on the extent of the scope. The study's perspective is limited by its exclusive focus on SMM, without considering other traditional advertising approaches. The study concentrated on a particular subgroup of NPOs operating in the HB industry and restricted its geographic coverage to a single developing country. Therefore, the findings, derived from a purposive sample, solely reflect the sentiments of this particular group and may not accurately represent the overall sentiments of all NPOs, both at a local and global level.

The study used a qualitative approach, but quantitative or mixed-method approaches could enhance the validity, reliability, and generalisation of the results, which are avenues for further research. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study effectively establishes the foundation for future investigations in this field. Future research endeavours may expand the NPO industry and global range, investigate various strategies for marketing, and examine new online channels (e.g., TikTok). The ongoing study, with its particular emphasis, highlights the interactive relationship between SMM and South African HB NPOs, which necessitates further exploratory research.

CONFERENCE DISCLAIMER

Some part of this manuscript was previously presented in the conference: 10th International Conference on Business and Management Dynamics (ICBMD) dated 11-12 September 2024 at Sun City Resort, North West Province, South Africa.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The authors declare that they used QuillBot Premium to identify and correct language, grammar, and spelling errors in the manuscript. The authors also used Turnitin to assess the originality of the manuscript and found it to be at a satisfactory level.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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