

Impacts of Facebook Usage on Non-Profits and Donors Relationship Building and Maintenance

Mohamed Aabeid

Department of Media, Sirte University, Libya

Dept. of Communication, Sch. of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Che Su Mustaffa

Adrian Budiman

Dept. of Communication, Sch. of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia

Abstract

Social media especially Facebook which has been identified as an effective means of interaction between non-profit organizations and the donors has not been examined along building trust and maintaining relationship. Whereas, this is more expedient because it is increasingly becoming difficult for non-profit organizations to maintain strong connections with the totality of the regular and potential donors and volunteers. In response to the challenges, this paper explores the perceptions of the managers and donors of non-profit organizations on how Facebook can take care of the difficulties of building trust and maintaining relationship which are the bedrock of fundraising and donation. Qualitative method with in-depth interview approach through a purposive sampling was adopted to probe into the impact of building and maintaining relationship. The data was analyzed thematically using NVIVO. The findings revealed that Facebook is mostly used by non-profit organizations to build and maintain good relationship with donors and the public. Similarly, the general perceptions shown that public trust is one of the most valuable commodities that any non-profit organization can have, and the degree to which donors trust these organizations have a huge impact on how they donate.

Keywords: Facebook, non-profit organization, donor, volunteer, social media

1. Introduction

For every non-profit organization, the need to build trust and maintain good relationship with donors and volunteers are so paramount to achieving the objectives of charity works, however, these critical factors are not always given attention. In the same vein, social media especially Facebook which has been identified as an effective means of achieving this has not been examined along building trust and maintaining relationship. This is more expedient because it is increasingly becoming difficult for non-profit organizations to maintain strong connections with the totality of their large alumni populations just as non-profit organizations are also finding it difficult to establish link with the potential donors and volunteers through conventional high-cost methods of direct mailing, phone calls and face-to-face interactions (Farrow & Yuan, 2011). Also, the use of Facebook has transformed the way organizations launch themselves to their publics, nevertheless numerous non-profits organizations have fallen short (Gorney, 2011). As a consequence of this, non-profit and other organizations need to carefully design and implement the right communication tool such as Facebook in order to focus on building and maintaining strong relationships with their publics and audiences (Kenney, 2012).

In response to this challenges therefore, this paper explores the perceptions of the managers and donors of non-profit organizations on how Facebook can take care of the difficulties of building trust and maintaining relationship which are the bedrock of fundraising and donation. Already, (Farrow & Yuan, 2011) have noted that many prevailing studies that have paid attention to the challenges have only focused attention at frequency of Social media usage or of charitable behavior. More so that the main objective of non-profit organizations is to accomplish a social mission through fundraising and volunteerism (Lewis, 2005). The strategy an organization employs to fulfill this mission has implications for its adoption and use of new media (Hackler & Saxton, 2007). Meanwhile, the strategy calls for more attention because the donors and volunteers who give their time and money would not be disposed to wadding through multitudes of messaging channels to find the information they want (Kenney, 2012).

The importance of Facebook adoption in building trust and maintaining relationship with donors was also stressed by Nah and Saxton (2012) who claimed that the ability for any organization to adopt innovative social media tools presents significant opportunities for a more level playing field and success in gaining connection with the donors. In spite of the importance of this, the understanding as regards it critical importance remains weak. Giving the increasing failures of government to provide for and attend to the pressing needs of people in Libya, owing to incessant conflicts, non-profits organizations have more than before are in dire need for help. Meanwhile, there are target audiences who are enthusiastic to offer their personal resources to support these organizations. In view of this scenario therefore, both non-profit organizations and the donors need a mutually beneficial relationship which can stem from trust and communications that will foster the creation of

that partnership. Although, some of the social media available do not inhibit this, however some of them do not make the building and sustaining of relationship easy. In this regards therefore, Facebook in particular has generated attention from non-profit organizations as innovative and effective communicative tools that both enhanced and supersede the traditional Website (Nonprofit Technology Network, 2011). Based on this gaps, this study's objective focuses attention at knowing the perceptions of both the managers and donors on the factors that affect trust building and sustainability of relationship.

2. Non-profit organizations in Libya

Several non-profit organizations operate in Libya to serve the needs of the society and particularly, the under privileged. According to Salhi and Gebara (2013), the story of non-profit organizations before the revolution showed that Libya had approximately about 90 to 95 non-profit organizations and one big organization owned by the former president col. Gaddafi, however, all the organizations are under the supervision of director of civil society organizations in the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society Centre. The organizations registered and operate within the ambit of the law NGOs No. (111) of 1970 and Law No. (19) of the year 2001 for the reorganization of associations Eligibility. Majority of the Libyan non-profit organizations help people who are affected by the fall out of the Arab spring revolution, especially in Benghazi by providing emergency aid, Medical supplies and food. Similarly, the displaced people in the city of Misrata received psychosomatic rehabilitation support due to the large number of wounded and martyrs people (Salhi & Gebara, 2013).

In 2011, Libya is rated 64th in the Human Development Index 2011 making it a country with high human development (Beltramin, 2012). The economy attracted three million immigrant thanks mostly to the petroleum industry. The need for non-profit organizations in Libya is imperative. Unlike the situation before revolution, a high numbers of the citizens are in dire need for support.

As at the moment, all of the Libya's non-profit organizations are private organizations and 90% of them have website, Facebook in particular (Salhi & Gebara, 2013) however, adoption and use have not been directly channeled at building relationship with the donors in spite of the stiff competition for funding. More so, some are still communicating mainly via telephone which makes it difficult to survive in the competitive world because of being unable to appreciate the donors or persons who want to join the activities, difficulty in increasing trust, and difficulty in motivating people. Due to these challenges, some non-profit organizations have to close down their organizations because of lack of support and difficulty in keeping in touch with old customers. It is in view of this that the focus of this paper attempts to shed more light on these issues in the Libyan context.

3. Facebook and non-profit organizations

Given the important roles of non-profit organizations in any society and the roles of social media in the facilitation of strong relationship and understanding, it is important to understand the acceptance as well as the implementation of this social media by the establishments (Nah & Saxton, 2013). Among all the social media, Facebook has been rated as effective and therefore widely used across organizations. According to Macduff (2012) most of the non-profit organizations used social media largely for marketing (92.5%), fundraising (45.9%), program delivery (34.5%), as well as market research (24.3%). However, Facebook is the most commonly used. For instance, 87% of non-profit organizations used Facebook, while Twitter is used by 59%. Others are YouTube (49%) then LinkedIn (33.9%) (Macduff, 2012). Giving reason for the popularity of Facebook, Waters (2009) stressed that Facebook offer a potent way to connect directly with donors and the public, ensures constant dialogues, and smoothen the sharing of other information.

Similarly, Facebook helps non-profit organizations to achieve perfections in their management in addition to promotion of interaction with donors and volunteers towards ensuring good relationship (Waters, 2010). However, based on Nah and Saxton (2013) findings, there is no positive interaction between the ratio of fundraising and social media use. Therefore, there is a need for proper understanding of how the adoption of social media, especially Facebook can translate to building of strong relationship with the donors in order to increase the ratio of fundraising.

Apart from being useful and helpful to non-profit organizations, adoption of Facebook also impact on the reputation and activities of non-profit organizations. Reputation in this case is defined as the collective delegacy and comparative stance of an organization amongst its stakeholders and larger surroundings (Fombrun, 1996). For instance, adequate use of Facebook makes organizations to be more accountable for their engagements with the general public and consequently build a strong relationship. Knowing that they will face public scrutiny, non-profit organizations endeavor to perform in a trustworthy and have an honest presence with a view to make their takes recognized and confided by donors and the public at large (Edwards, 2010).

Another impact of social media on organizations emanate from being honest and trustworthy. In an attempt for organizations whether for-profit or non-profit to become trustworthy, they become more transparent and open in their activities. Much information about their various acts, process of making decisions, basis of

decision and information are made accessible for the public and as such, organizations which utilize social media comparatively seem successful compared to organizations which did not (Harquail, 2011).

4. Methodology

The study adopted qualitative method with in-depth interview approach to probe into the perceptions of non-profit organizations managers and donors on the impact of building and maintaining relationship. The sampling design was based on purposive method (Creswell, 2012; Keyton, 2015). Series of in-depth interviews on 24 managers and donors were conducted and data were analyzed thematically using NVIVO 10 software. Therefore, emerging from the interviews was the generation of coding frames which consisted of conceptualizing components that illuminated the perspectives of the interviewees. Subsequently, subcategories were further developed in order to deepen the investigation.

5. Results

Though it is said that one can't please all the people all the time, however, Facebook and other types of Social Media can make it easier for an organization and business to identify who isn't happy with an aspect of your business and can help remedy the situation. In this case, there is a need to build as well as maintain relationship with donors and public in general. In achieving this, Facebook gives a unique opportunity to build relationship and maintain the relationship through regular interaction. According to Reynolds (2011), nonprofits organizations can maintain relationship especially in how they can position themselves in a positive light to their friends and donors. Therefore, based on the analysis with NVivo 10, the following sub-themes: constant connection, nurturing relationship and building trust were generated in response to the objective set. The figure 1 below shows the overall graphical display of the findings.

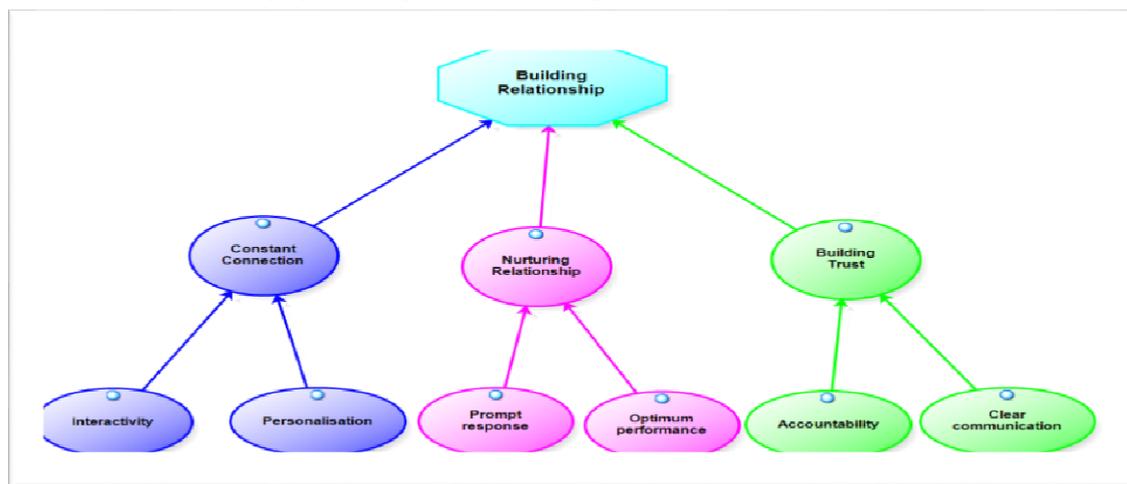


Figure 1: Building relationship through Facebook

5.1 Constant Connection

The need to be in constant connection to donors and general public by non-profit organizations have been described as very important in building and sustaining relationship. This fact emerged from the analysis of the interviewees' perceptions. Majority of the Informants identified regular interactivity and personalization of information as key factors in building relationship with donors.

5.1.1 Interactivity

One of the phenomena of Facebook is that it gives everyone a voice. Facebook can help facilitate interactive and a two-way conversation with donors about services. If used correctly, this can be a positive interaction which will ultimately improve understanding, services and increase client satisfaction.

Most of the Informants identified interactivity as a reason for their choice of Facebook for non-profit organizations and the eventual strong relationship. Confirming this, Informant M8 noted that, "for any organization to be successful, Facebook need to be used adequately for interaction. We interact very well with the donors through Facebook". Similarly, Informant M2 captured it thus:

We do not give any attention to the other sources of communication, we tried on the radio for three times to cover a campaign, but comparing to Facebook, we found that Facebook is much better to get a good interaction with the society than the Radio and Twitter.

From the perspectives of the donors, interactivity was described as a significant factor that improves and promotes the activities of non-profit organizations. Informant D15 for instance explained that, "Facebook made

it possible to interact with organization on their activities”.

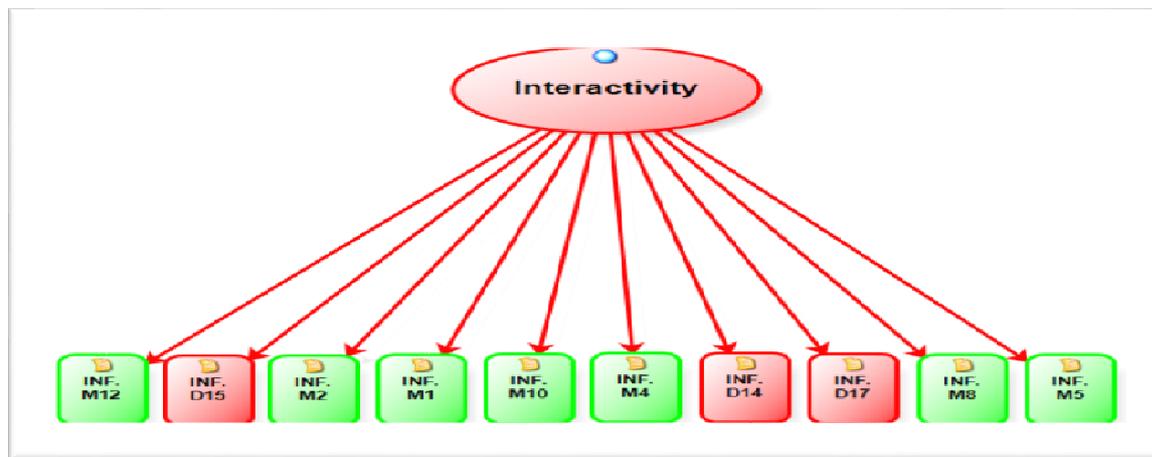


Figure 2. Facilitation of interactivity

5.1.2 Personalization

Personalization of messages is a form of communication between different members on Facebook which is only seen and accessible by the users participating in the communication. Among non-profit organizations, to personalize a message has grown popular because of the increasing demand for privacy and collaboration. According to Hutchinson (2015) personalization of messages is the key to reaching the next generation of consumer/donors because serving their individual needs, demonstrating that they're important are what add to establishing trust.

According to some of the Informants also, personalization is increasingly another means of handling issues with the donors because it provides every individual with a voice, a means to share their perspective with the organizations. Informant M1 indicated that, “Facebook helps us to have personal and exclusive relationship with our donors”. This is necessary because according to Informant M10, “many of our donors need to be interacted with on a personal level”. In relation to that Informant M8 reiterated that “We interact very well with the donors through Facebook. And because some of them like privacy, we deal with them personally also through Facebook inbox”.

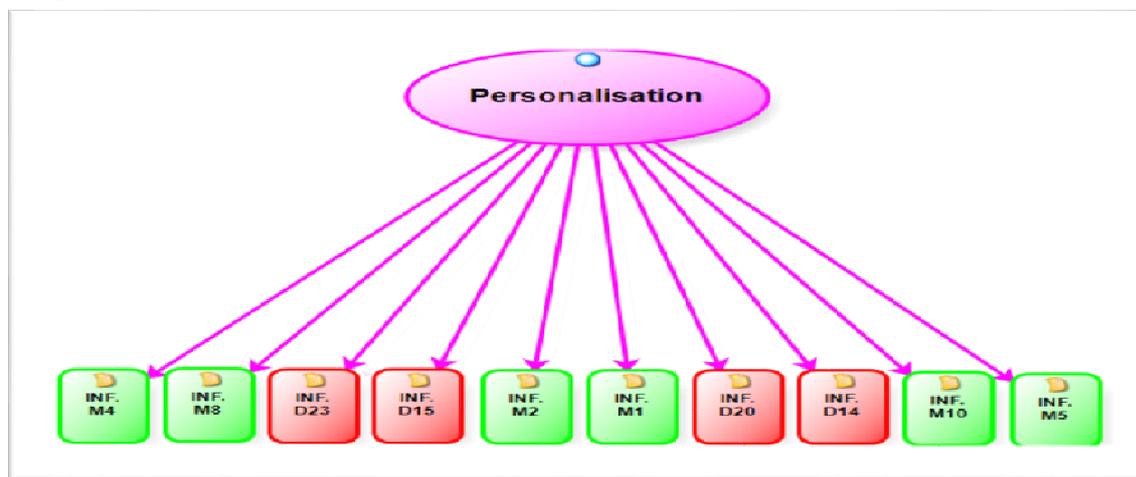


Figure 3. Personalization of messages for sustainable relationship

5.2 Nurturing relationship

Social media is an amazing opportunity for nurturing relationship and building the connections between non-profit organizations and referral public. When used properly, especially Facebook, as it emerged from the informants' perceptions, it's an opportunity to build increasingly strong relationships.

According to Rosen (2015), Social media is a perfect way to stay in touch between lunches and coffees. He described that it's a great way to nurture relationship without having to employ any further time, energy, or money. The need for non-profit organizations to be prepared to dedicate time and resource to developing relationships with donors to ensure their longevity was stressed by (Rosso, 1991). This is because, according to Waters (2010), the relationship management approach to fundraising can help result in significant gifts from

donors. In line with this, prompt response and optimum performance emerged from the data as the indices of what will nurture relationship between charity organizations and donors.

5.2.1 Prompt response

Responding adequately and promptly has been described by the informants as a strategy to maintain and nurture relationship with the donors. This same view was shared by Speiser (2015) who described the process of being prompt in dealing with donors and the public. He noted that first, the charity organizations must plant the seeds by publishing their activities. Then, water accordingly by interacting with followers. Fertilize if necessary by answering questions and educating. Check on the growing seeds every so often by reporting and keeping track of the progress. And finally, sit back and watch leads bloom into beautiful customers.

According to Informants from both the managers and the donors, prompt response is actually helping in maintaining good relationship. For instance, Informant M3 noted that, “Facebook has been helping us to be able to respond fast to complain and demands”. Similarly, Informant M5 disclosed that, “By our prompt response to their queries also, we establish good relationship with them”.

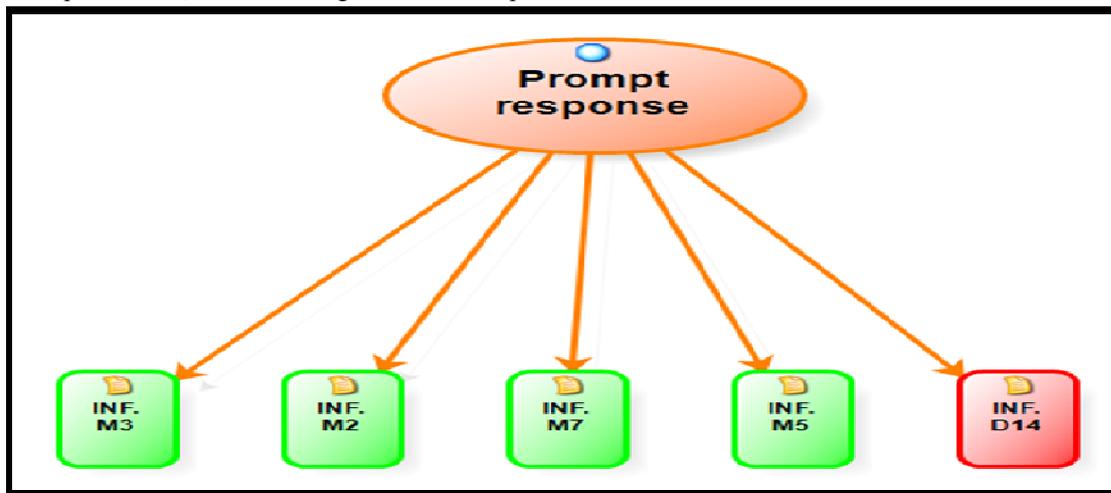


Figure 4. Strategy to maintain and nurture relationship with the donors

5.2.2 Optimum performance

The informants have identified optimum performance as the benefit as well as the strategy required in order to nurture good relationship with donor. According to Informant M1 optimum performance is a necessity in non-profit organization works. He noted that, “It is important also that we respond to all information asked by the public on any issue concerning us...ensure that we perform our responsibility adequately”. In the same vein, Informant M11 stressed that, “Facebook has helped us to perform very well”.

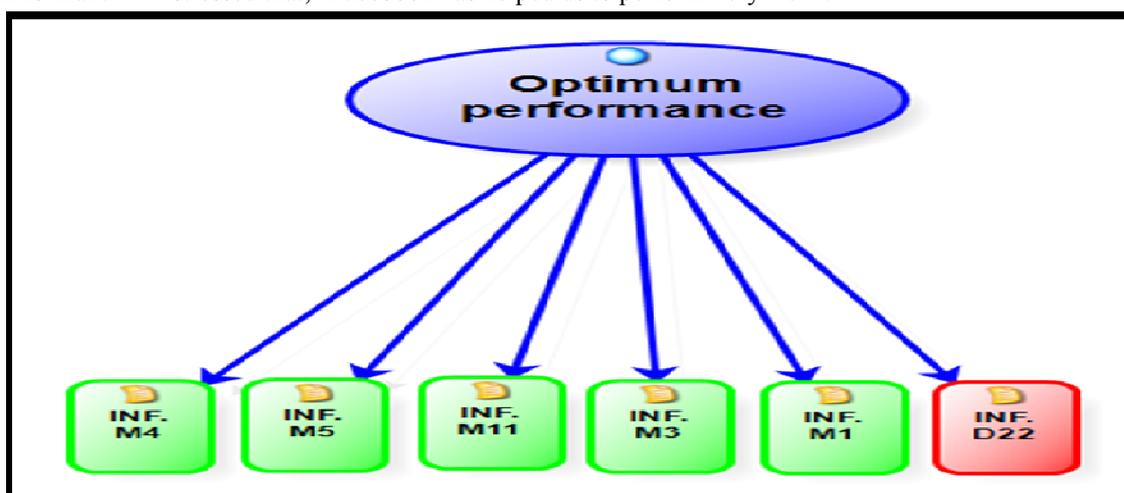


Figure 5. Optimum performance

5.3 Building trust

One of the most important things a non-profit organization can do to guarantee long term success and support from donors is to instill and cultivate trust between the organization and its donors. Informants have reiterated

that charity organizations should never take trust for granted as it is a foundational building block. Trust is a central aspect of many economic and social interactions such as charity organizations. According to Charities Aid Foundation (2014) public trust is one of the most valuable commodities that any not-for-profit organization can have, and the degree to which people trust these organizations may have a huge bearing on how willing they are to give to them.

5.3.1 Accountability

Accountability and trust play an important role in the charity sector as the assurances that donors rely on to assess whether their money has been used as directed. According to Freriksen (2014), if the public has little confidence in a charitable organization, they will be less willing to support the organization. As a consequence, for charities it is of importance that their Facebook use create trust in order for donors to donate and to continue donating. Therefore, in ensuring accountability, it is important for charity organization to always keep promises. In the same way, majority of the Informants agreed that accountability is essential and Facebook is one means through which that can be achieved. For instance, Informant M1 aptly put it thus, “In order to ensure that we are just and respected we ensure accountability”. Similarly, Informant M10 stated that, “Sometimes, it necessary to let the donors know how we utilize the money and run our organization, so we use Facebook to achieve these”. Meanwhile, among the donors, the issue of accountability was described as a guarantee that their donation was been rightly used. Informant D13 expressly put it thus, “I think the Facebook of the organization has made it possible for accountability and we are happy about that”.

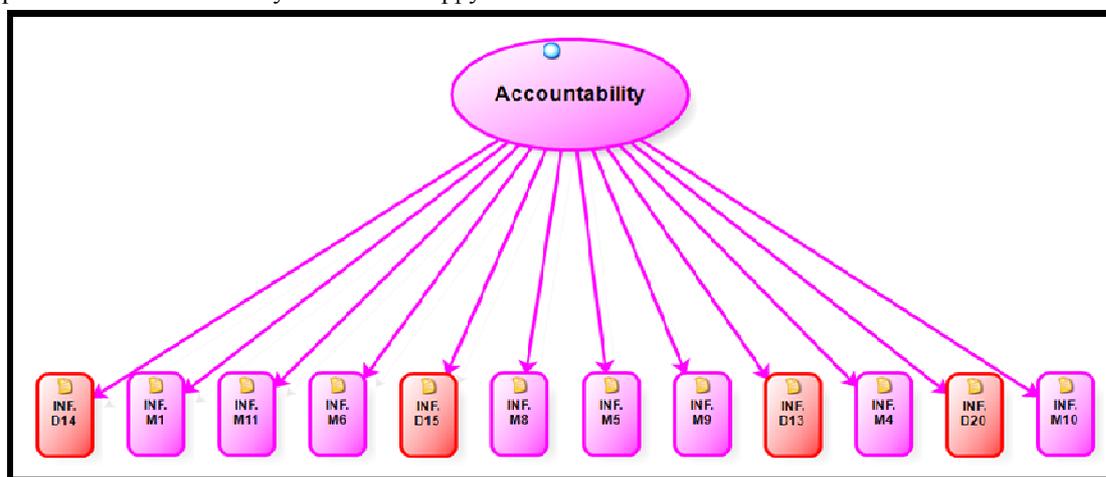


Figure 6. Perceptions on accountability as a foundation for building trust

5.3.2 Clear communication

With aggressive competition in today’s charity works, many of the nonprofit organizations are increasingly finding themselves looking toward their communications approaches to ensure success (Rasmussen, 2006). However, one way to possibly influence potential donors to contribute to charitable organizations is through communicating the successes of the organization to the public. Apart from this, another way is by emphasizing what goals the charity are planning to achieve in the future as well as how the organization is being managed.

In a similar manner, Informants have described the need for clear communication as significant to success of fundraising. For instance, We always try to send detail and clear information to our shareholders. It is important also that we respond to all information asked by the public on any issue concerning us. All these ensure that we perform our responsibility adequately (Inf. M1).

Also, Informant M5 reiterated how Facebook has helped in building trust with donor through communication thus: “we are right to depend on Facebook, because it helped to disseminate and increase our Association popularity, compared to other social networks of communication”. In relation to this, Informant M8 stressed that, “The donor always demand for informant and luckily, we are able to provide clear communication through what we post and share on Facebook”.

From the perspective of the donors, Informant D13, aptly put it thus, “the clear communication of the organization help in building trust”.

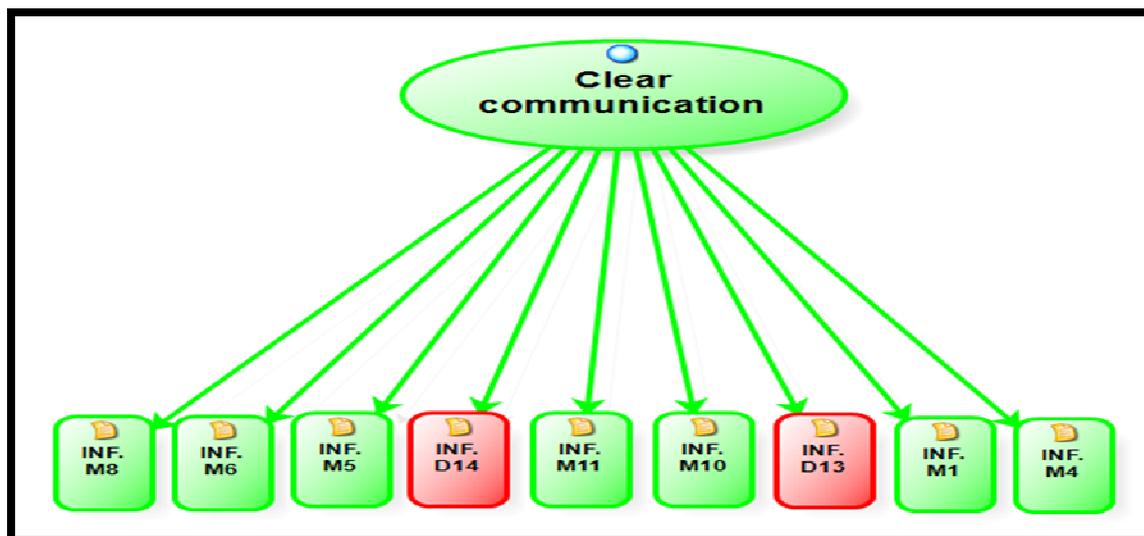


Figure 7. Perceptions of sources on the importance of communication in building trust

6. Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

In line with the objective set for this paper, the finding revealed that mostly, Facebook is mostly used by non-profit organization to build and maintain relationship with donors and the public. This perception was equally confirmed by Reynolds (2011) who reiterated that nonprofits organizations can maintain relationship especially in how they can position themselves in a positive light to their friends and donors. The emerged sub-themes that signpost the means of maintaining the relationship are through building trust, connection and nurturing of relationship.

As part of the ways to build and maintain relationship with donors and the general public, majority of the Informants identified regular interactivity and personalization of information as key factors. From the finding, it was established that one of the phenomena of Facebook is that it gives everyone a voice. This is achieved by facilitating interactive and a two-way conversation with donors about services which eventually improve understanding, services and increase client satisfaction.

Another benefit of Facebook that prompted its adoption among non-profit organizations is the ability to personalize a message which has grown popular because of the increasing demand for privacy and collaboration. Confirming this finding, Hutchinson (2015) stressed that personalization of messages is the key to reaching this next generation of consumer because hearing them, serving their individual needs, demonstrating that they're important are what add to establishing trust.

In view of the importance of the need to maintain good relationship with the donors and the public at large, the findings have shown that in achieving this Facebook has been used significantly. Similar to this discovery, Rosen (2015) described that with Facebook, it's a great way to nurture relationship without having to employ any further time, energy, or money. Non-profit organizations public expect at all time, not just adequate response but prompt response to all queries and complains. Realizing the important of this, Informants revealed that responding promptly has been the strategy to maintain and nurture relationship with the donors.

Trust between the non-profit organizations and donors is a central aspect of interactions and relationship that will be beneficial to the objectives of charity works. The general perceptions have shown that public trust is one of the most valuable commodities that any not-for-profit organization can have, and the degree to which people trust these organizations may have a huge bearing on how willing they are to give to them. One of the discovery of this study and which confirmed the scholars perceptions was the need for donors to have assurances that their money donated has been used as directed. This was established by the study as one of the main determinant of success of any non-profit organizations.

Based on the findings from this study, it is been recommended that non-profit organizations in Libya pay more attention to the needs of donors in the area of adequate information, accountability and personalization through Facebook. This is important because, many donors have claimed to be highly interested in these as determinants of future donations.

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