

ABSTRACT

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Internet as a pro-social behavioral tool - a qualitative approach

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Abstract:

Since the creation of the Internet as an information technology, it has become a tool capable of influencing almost all aspects of human life, which include the Internet as a pro-social behavioral tool (Amichai-Hamburger, 2008). Online context is therefore a place full of pro-social promises (Wright & Li, 2012), and as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOS) face increasing challenges (such as resource scarcity), this tool can be an important resource for the involvement of volunteers and the creation of opportunities for participation through online volunteering (Pinho& Macedo, 2006). Online or virtual volunteering is understood as a peculiar form of volunteering, whose great distinction is based on procedure, since it occurs partially or totally on the internet. Strengthened by the evolution and expansion of the internet, this is a recent and understudied phenomenon. Existing studies on volunteering essentially emphasize involvement in offline volunteering, with few of them focusing online (Mukherjee, 2011). Thus, this article seeks to understand the process of online volunteering, from the volunteer's perspective, namely the motivations that lead the individual to volunteer online, as well as the experiences and consequences/benefits provided. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative methodology is adopted that incorporates the accomplishment of twenty-four interviews to volunteers of several nationalities that do or have carried out online volunteering activities. The results contribute to the understanding and development of new knowledge about the online volunteering process, more precisely for a better understanding of how NPOs can take advantage of this resource, namely in the management of volunteering. The main conclusions lead to the consideration that altruistic motivations and learning/career are the most determining motivations in entering into online

volunteering. Regarding the intention of permanence, the satisfaction associated to the experience and the initial motivations are shown to be decisive, and these motivations turn out to be benefits of the accomplishment of online volunteering. The consequences/benefits are essentially associated with the provided learning, which volunteers consider to be a valuable asset in the future, and the intrinsic reward of self-actualization and e-empowerment, namely by providing an increase in the self-esteem of the volunteer and by allowing the creation of his virtual identity.

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