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The Role of Internet Platforms in Voluntary Participation of Users for the Social Innovation Activities

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1. Introduction

Currently, corporations are pursuing sustainable growth through various social and economic shared value initiatives, extending beyond mere profit generation (Yoo & Jung, 2015). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved as a primary mode of societal contribution for businesses, moving beyond traditional volunteering and donations to utilize both tangible and intangible corporate assets (Kang et al., 2022; Kim & Cho, 2019). In particular, internet platform companies play a significant role in CSR activities based on user participation, fostering voluntary engagement and creating intangible value (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016; Woo, 2017).

Recent studies indicate that social contribution activities through internet platforms are transforming the paradigm of user participation. For instance, various forms of technology platforms such as social media, participatory platforms, and gamification platforms are enhancing user engagement (Chow, 2021). These platforms replace traditional forms of civic engagement and offer new opportunities for users to contribute directly to solving social problems (Desouza & Bhagwatwar, 2017). Particularly, gamification platforms are notable for applying game elements in non-game contexts to motivate participation in social contribution activities, thereby fostering sustained user involvement

(Deterding et al., 2011).

Despite numerous studies on consumer motivations for using participatory internet platforms, there is a notable gap in research concerning how different types of social contribution activities influence these motivations and how they affect users' intentions to remain engaged with the platform continuously.

This research is predicated on the idea that internet platforms significantly influence user motivation and the range of available social contribution activities. It aims to empirically assess how these motivations impact the ongoing intention to use the platform, employing structural equation modeling for this purpose. This study seeks to clarify the motivations behind users' participation in social contribution platforms and to explore how these motivations lead to sustained platform engagement.

The outcomes of this research are expected to contribute significantly to assessing the social impact of internet platforms and to propose future directions for user participation and social contribution activities in the digital environment. Furthermore, the findings should provide strategic insights for internet platform designers and operators, helping them to foster user engagement and sustain social contribution activities.

2. Research background

2.1 Enhancing the Societal Contribution of Internet Platforms

Modern enterprises are leveraging internet platforms to simultaneously generate social and economic value (Gregori & Holzmann, 2020). In this context, the societal contribution of internet platforms extends far beyond traditional approaches, influencing a broad and diverse range of areas (Spagnoletti et al., 2015). Through internet platforms, companies can efficiently utilize their resources to strengthen Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, thereby improving relationships with consumers and enhancing brand value (Fatma et al., 2021; Okazaki et al., 2020). Additionally, internet platforms play a pivotal role in democratizing information access and enhancing its accessibility, which increases public awareness of social issues and augments the public interest (Plantin et al., 2018).

2.2. Typologies of User Engagement in Social Value Creation via Internet Platforms

As corporate social contribution activities expand through the use of internet platforms, enterprises are actively engaging in Creating Shared Value (CSV) activities, which involve co-creating new business models that also generate social value alongside their users (Motilewa et al., 2016). Furthermore, crowdsourcing activities, which capitalize on the public's ideas and capabilities through internet platforms, are becoming increasingly prevalent (Wazny, 2017). Such initiatives provide new opportunities for both businesses and consumers and induce positive changes across society. Consequently, there is a growing trend in research focused on consumer participation in social contribution activities through platforms.

Park & Shin (2016) investigated the key factors influencing the success of projects in donation-based crowdfunding, using the case of

DonorsChoose. Their findings revealed that the primary concern of most participants was not personal financial or material rewards, but rather maximizing the value of the donations and the amount of assistance received by the beneficiaries. Zhang et al. (2022) studied 'Ant Forest', an application that attracts numerous users and has resulted in the planting of millions of trees, by providing information technology-based methods that enable people to engage in environmentally friendly actions. Research on user participation in pro-environmental actions within social contribution activities is scarce, and to address this research gap, a model was developed to study the antecedents of sustained usage intentions of 'Ant Forest' users. Kim (2011) aimed to derive an ideal usage model for social media platforms to respond to unpredictable disasters. The study suggested that these platforms could be effectively utilized to establish communication systems targeting the public during emergencies and to build various disaster information services systems that include requests for assistance or supplies, incorporating location data. Lee & Jung (2014) examined how the extent and motivation of using social media platforms contribute to enhancing social capital and participation. Social capital encompasses concepts such as life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement activities, political participation, and social movements (Valenzuela et al., 2009). The findings indicated that both the extent and motivation of using social media platforms significantly influenced political and social participation. Thus, we can categorize the main domains of social contribution activities facilitated by internet platforms into four types: monetary donations, environmental activities, disaster response, and social movements.

The nature of internet platforms not only diversifies the types of social contribution activities but also the methods of participation. According to Kang (2012), there are types where users participate directly in activities and receive solely social rewards, as well as types where they participate directly and receive economic compensation.

While such classification traditionally focuses only on direct methods of participation, this study expands the categorization to include indirect methods of contributing to social activities. Consequently, the typologies of domains and methods of participation in social contribution activities via internet platforms, as identified in this research, are presented in Table 1.

3. Research model and Hypotheses

3.1 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is an empirically derived theory that studies human motivation and personality within social contexts, focusing on how psychological needs influence motivation and behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2012). SDT posits that intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation can drive individuals to engage in specific activities (Xiong et al., 2022). Intrinsic motivation refers to the enjoyment, interest, and self-satisfaction derived from activities, such as the fun elements in games (Lazzaro, 2009). Conversely, extrinsic motivation arises from external rewards separate from the inherent interest in the activity itself (Lepper & Greene, 2015).

Table 1. Types of Social Contribution Activities Using Internet Platforms

| Domain | Method of Participation | Example |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Monetary Donations | Direct Activity (No Reward) | - (Kakao) Users participate directly in fundraising projects and contribute donations - (Facebook) Donation campaigns |
| | Direct Activity (Reward) | - (Naver Happybean) Regular donation subscriptions receive 10% of the donation amount in beans monthly |
| | Indirect Activity (Reward) | - - (Naver Happybean) Earn beans for donations through activities within Naver |
| Environmental Activities | Direct Activity (No Reward) | - |
| | Direct Activity (Reward) | - (Ant Forest) Users earn energy points for each low-carbon activity |
| | Indirect Activity (Reward) | - (Ecosia) Use the search browser to contribute a portion of revenue to tree planting projects with each search |
| Disaster Response | Direct Activity (No Reward) | - (Facebook) Disaster response activities |
| | Direct Activity (Reward) | - |
| | Indirect Activity (Reward) | - |
| Social Movements | Direct Activity (No Reward) | - (Facebook) Social media movements using hashtags |
| | Direct Activity (Reward) | - (Naver Happybean) Participate in various social campaigns and earn beans for donations |
| | Indirect Activity (Reward) | - |

Hossain (2012) categorized additional extrinsic motivators that induce user participation on online crowdsourcing platforms into three types of incentives: monetary, social, and organizational. Monetary incentives include cash, vouchers, and other forms of compensation. Social incentives encompass awards, honor, and credibility. Organizational incentives refer to increased access to information, career opportunities, and additional authority.

Extensive research has been conducted on how these motivators affect attitudes towards platforms and intentions to participate (Mir, 2014; Hu et al., 2016). Therefore, this study categorizes the types of motivations of users engaged in social value activities on internet platforms into four categories: hedonic, economic, social, and organizational motivations. This research aims to examine how these motivations influence users' attitudes toward engaging in social contribution activities via platforms and to determine whether they affect purchase intentions and platform loyalty. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H1: Users engaging in social contribution activities through internet platforms are positively influenced in their attitudes towards the platform when participating due to hedonic motivations.

- H2: Users engaging in social contribution activities through internet platforms experience a positive influence on their attitudes towards the platform when participating due to economic motivations.
- H3: Users engaging in social contribution activities through internet platforms have a positive impact on their attitudes towards the platform when participating due to social motivations.
- H4: Users engaging in social contribution activities through internet platforms experience a positive influence on their attitudes towards the platform when participating due to organizational motivations.

3.2 Attitudes of Users Participating in Social Contribution Activities Through Platforms

According to Robertson et al. (1984), an attitude represents a persistent positive or negative emotional state regarding something, which can respond immediately to behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that the direct determinant of behavior is not the individual's attitude towards the behavior but rather the intention to perform the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This indicates that the attitude of users towards participating in social contribution activities via platforms has a significant impact on their intentions to participate. Wang & Wu (2019) analyzed the user engagement mechanisms on live streaming platforms and the impact of user attitudes and purchase intentions. They found that positive attitudes towards shopping on live streaming platforms positively influence purchase intentions. This suggests that positive attitudes can enhance intentions to participate in social contribution activities using platforms, while negative attitudes may hinder such intentions. Therefore, this study proposes that attitudes play a crucial role in the intention to

engage in social contribution activities through platforms, and aims to validate the following hypothesis.

- H5: The attitudes of users engaging in social contribution activities through internet platforms have a positive impact on their intentions to participate.

3.3 Intentions to Participate in Social Contribution Activities Using Internet Platforms

Intent to participate refers to the willingness of users to engage in social contribution activities through internet platforms. Users are motivated to participate in these activities by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, such as the enjoyment of the activity itself or the rewards obtained from participating. Through this participation, users create value that fulfills their desires, potentially leading to sustained engagement in social contribution activities if their motivational needs are met.

Platform loyalty refers to the users' intention to continuously use an internet platform. According to Ryu & Suh (2021), service satisfaction and a sense of belonging on the platform positively influence platform loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed for validation.

- H6: The intent of users to participate through internet platforms has a positive impact on their loyalty to the platform.

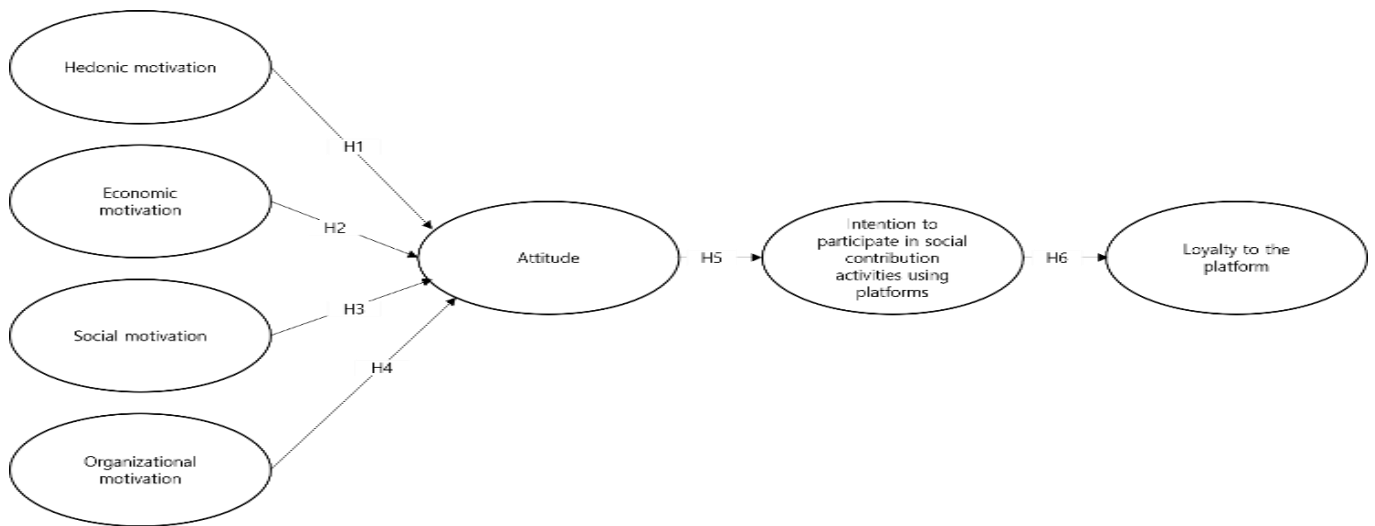


Figure 1. Research model

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