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Crowdfunding for Cancer: Successes and Challenges of a Female Physician's Organization in Nigeria

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Abstract

Background: Crowdfunding is emerging as an innovative method of financing and has been applied in different settings in developed countries. However, this concept is largely unknown in developing countries. This paper documents the experiences of two crowdfunding campaigns for cancer by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria. The goal of the campaigns was to raise funds to support cancer patients.

Methods: The campaigns were designed as a hybrid model for crowdfunding, shared on online social media platforms via WhatsApp and the organization's Facebook page. Personal messaging, print, and audiovisual media campaigns were also carried out. Intensive, repeated, and captivating motivational messaging was carried out and a cancer-branded and personalized T-shirt was perked for the donors.

Findings: The two campaigns raised over 11 million Naira (USD 30,898.9), which was used for further cancer screening activities, including donations to cancer patients seen via the routine and outreach cancer screening programs. A post-campaign online survey revealed that over 70% of donations came from close networks and over 90% of respondents were willing to donate to future campaigns. Key factors to success were mobilization of an early crowd of donors, frequent updates, repeated messaging and a strong online and social media presence. Short timing of the campaign and time needed post-campaign to fulfill promises were challenges. The campaign WhatsApp platform has remained a viable and vibrant online community actively engaged in fundraising for other women helping women projects.

Conclusions: This paper set out to describe and evaluate the crowdfunding campaigns by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State. The campaigns were successful, raising funds for Cancer Street Walk and funds to support the patients seen in the cancer screening clinics. With dwindling foreign aid for many programs in LMICs, the application of crowdfunding can provide a viable complementary source of income for projects.

Keywords: Cancer, Crowdfunding, Fundraising, MWAN, Nigeria

Introduction

Crowdfunding is a method of raising funds online for a project by soliciting small donations from many people.¹ The concept of crowdfunding finds its roots in the broader concept of microfinance and crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is a concept that uses the “crowd” to obtain ideas, feedback, and solutions in order to develop corporate activities. Crowdsourcing is defined as “the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call”.² This concept makes use of the “wisdom of the crowds”, thus a form of citizen science where non-experts can make contributions to a particular field of endeavour.

Crowdfunding is an application of crowdsourcing, with the objective to collect money for investment, without using the traditional financing routes. As an emerging concept, there is no universally accepted definition, with various authors attempting to describe it based on what it achieves. Mollick defines Crowdfunding as “*the efforts by entrepreneurial individuals and groups – cultural, social, and for-profit – to fund their ventures by drawing on relatively small contributions from a relatively large number of individuals using the internet, without standard financial intermediaries*”.³ There are three basic types of crowdfunding; Reward (donation), Debt (also known as crowdlending and peer to peer (P2P) lending) and finally Equity crowdfunding (also known as crowdinvesting).⁴ Reward crowdfunding relies on people's contributions to projects or causes for often intangible or no return. Debt crowdfunding is the closest to getting finance for a business

or project through traditional means. Equity crowdfunding means that people get shares or a stake in the business or project in return for their monetary investment.

Crowdfunding usually runs on platforms. As an emerging form of funding, various platforms for crowdfunding have been established and open for use both in the developed and low middle-income countries (LMICs).⁵⁻⁷ These include Kickstarter, GoFundme, RedCrow, Indiegogo, OpenExplorer, and Experiment. In developed countries, the number of successful science-related crowdfunding campaigns is growing.⁸ These strategies of fundraising has been used in developed countries like Canada, United States, and Spain.⁹⁻¹¹

Crowdfunding platforms are characterized by essentially different business models, based on the type of crowdfunding they offer as follows: the investment-based platforms, the reward-based and donation-based platforms.¹² All models have recorded successful fundraising. For instance “*FundedByMe*” which is said to be the largest equity funder in Europe, connects investors with deal flow and entrepreneurs with crowd capital.¹³ This platform has successfully funded 444 companies with more than €19.400.000. Another equity-based CFP is the UK-based “*Crowdcube*.” As of 2019, it claimed to have funded more than 1000 investment start-ups, with investors realizing returns of over 30million pounds from 23 of the businesses.¹⁴ In France, crowdfunding had grown so popular that it was adopted by the government, with efforts made to protect the people, while improving the design of campaigns and platforms.¹² A popular French reward-based platform is “*Ulule*”, with

a community of almost 3 million members, this platform has brought about 30,000 projects to life as of August 2020, raising 27 million euros of funds with more than 65,800 creators.¹⁵

Crowdfunding can also be useful for start-ups.^{3,16} this is best demonstrated in the debt-based platforms. In the United States, a lending-based CFP is *Prosper.com*. Prosper hosts campaigns that, for instance, help hardworking families escape the credit card trap, fund an entrepreneur dream, or finance a dream wedding, as they advertise on their platform.¹⁷

In contrast, the donation-based CFPs support humanitarian and artistic projects. A donation-based campaign relies on voluntary contributions to a public good. A study of medical crowdfunding of four popular donation-based platforms for Canadian recipients showed four platforms *FundRazr.com*, *Generosity.com*, *GoFundMe.com*, and *YouCaring.com* funded medical needs related to a range of illnesses or treatments ranging from chronic illnesses like cancers to acute situations such as injuries following vehicle collisions.¹⁸ The successes of these campaigns demonstrate the public's willingness to support and participate in projects.

The use of crowdfunding has skyrocketed in the developed countries in the last decade due to the availability of modern technology and the social media revolution. It has found application in health start-ups, medical research, individual health care funding.^{16,19,20} Crowdfunding in medical research is also becoming more popular owing to increasing competition for the shrinking amount of government funding and is used as a supplemental or alternative sources of funding.^{5,10,21} In developed

countries, the number of successful science-related crowdfunding campaigns is growing.^{22,23} The main reason for this trend is that traditional research grants are highly competitive and usually require pilot data and preliminary analyses in order to be funded.

Despite the success stories, however, it is estimated that 60% of crowdfunding campaigns fail.^{3,24,25} There have also been concerns that this method of fundraising may deepen social inequities and systemic disparities.²⁶ The fears of crowdfunding platforms creating a non-level field for those seeking financial support to access healthcare, thus deepening the disparity.^{11,27} Although there are concerns that crowdfunding may increase health disparities as it can create an unequal and biased marketplace for those seeking financial support to access healthcare.²⁶ This raises concerns about the achievement of the global goals of Universal Health Coverage.

However, despite the availability of online sites and successes in developed countries, crowdfunding remains largely unknown and unexplored in LMICs. In many LMICs, many individuals and organizations have little or no access to public funds, despite having laudable initiatives that could contribute to the development of their communities. On this account, a lot of projects become "dead on arrival" due to a lack of funds to execute them. Crowdfunding can thus be used as an alternative source of income for such projects. The potentials of crowdfunding in these countries with scarce resources that may benefit most from this emerging concept of fundraising for health projects is thus underexploited.

The Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN) is a national organization of not-for-profit female medical and dental practitioners in Nigeria.²⁸ It is an affiliate of the oldest medical organization in the world, The Medical Women International Association, an international organization of female medical doctors and dentists globally. There are currently 31 member states in the 36 states of Nigeria.²⁸ In line with her mission to serve women, the organization focuses on address the high burden of breast and cervical cancers in Nigeria²⁹ via breast and cervical cancer screening programs.²⁸

Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN) AKS branch based in Uyo, was inaugurated in 1990.³⁰ In line with the national objectives, the branch started screening for breast and cervical cancers as a pet project in 1998.³⁰ This screening is two-pronged, with the routine screening at the MWAN clinic, while intermittent outreaches are carried out in various local government areas (districts) in the state. The challenge for most of the indigent women screened and found positive for cancers has been funding for treatment. To address this need, the MWAN Akwa Ibom State branch decided to carry out fundraising campaigns for cancer. This paper documents the experiences, successes, and challenges of an application of crowdfunding by the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria (MWAN) AKS branch. This paper answers the following questions: How were the crowdfunding campaigns carried out? How successful were the campaigns at achieving their goals? What factors contributed to the success of the campaigns? What challenges did MWAN face in carrying out the campaigns? What lessons can be drawn for future fundraising campaigns and for other LMICs?

Methods

This paper discusses crowdfunding using the key elements in the design and implementation of crowdfunding as described by Dahlhausen *et al* as a framework.⁵ The project, the goal, the platform, the campaign Video, Campaign page, Contribution levels, Perks, Campaign launch, and Post campaign. The two campaigns were carried out between January to February 2018 and January to March 2020.

The Project

The idea of building a crowdfunding campaign came by brainstorming within a sub-group nicknamed "the think tank" on innovative ways to fund activities planned for the World Cancer Day of February 4, 2018. Three activities were planned as follows; a 3km Cancer Walk, the inauguration of the new set of executives, and a Pink Charity Ball.

The project was titled MWAN AKS 2018 Cancer Walk and Pink Charity Ball. We used our well-known professional organization MWAN, which the community had come to see and trust as our brand and logo.

The Goal

The fundraising started without an actual amount as a goal. However, the ultimate desire was to raise funds to support the indigent cancer patients, beyond organizing the Pink Ball. This thus allowed for flexibility in planning.

Campaign Launch

The 2018 campaign was launched online three weeks to the date for the events. The 2020 campaign was launched six weeks ahead of the event. The launch was carried out as online messaging with chats and

videos were that were eye-catching and widely shared on social media.

Campaign Page, Video, and Platform

The main platforms that were used in both campaigns were WhatsApp and Facebook pages.^{31,32} Other online social media platforms used included the organization's Twitter handle and Instagram page. However, the campaign was hybrid because we also carried targeted appeals to our social networks – family, friends, and followers via text messaging and cold calls. There were also print and audiovisual campaigns including radio and television talk shows highlighting the events.

Campaign Video and Messages

The campaign videos featured life stories and interviews with cancer survivors seen via the screening program. Motivational campaign messages were sent out with appeals such as **“Donate to a worthy cause”** and **“Help our women who can't afford cancer care...”**. The perks of donation and health benefits of the walk were also highlighted in the adverts. These videos were sent out daily on social media platforms. For 2020, we leveraged the success of the 2018 Cancer Walk, hyping the event. These messages were repeated intensively often twice daily up till the date of the events.

The Perks

In reward-based campaigns, donations are rewarded with symbolic gifts (e.g., T-shirts, mugs, mention in a paper).⁵ Usually, the project is uploaded among others on an internet platform that enables project owners to launch their campaigns.⁸ For both 2018

and 2020 MWAN events, a customized, personalized, cancer-branded T-shirt was perked for the donors, participation in the 3km Cancer Road walk, recognitions on MWAN social media pages, and branding on the Pink carpet for the Charity Ball for SME and corporate organizations. Another perk was attendance at the Pink Charity Ball which doubled as the inauguration of the newly elected executives.

Contribution levels

In the first campaign, a minimum of three thousand Naira (N3000)(\$11)¹ was requested as a minimum contribution for individuals and ten thousand Naira (N10,000)(\$40) for SMEs and Corporate organizations. For the second campaign, a minimum of N5000 (\$18)² was requested from participants, while SMEs were encouraged to contribute in different categories with perks attached to each donor. Contributions were sought from family, friends, neighbours, and corporate organizations. The 2018 campaign was launched on WhatsApp on January 18 and lasted for one month, ending on February 3, 2018. The 2020 campaign lasted for 3months, starting January 24, till March 7. Both Campaigns closed on the eve of the Cancer Day celebration with a massive increase in contributions and orders in the last week of both events.

Post Campaign

This featured follow up on promises made during the Charity Ball and the fulfilment of the promised perks. For the 2020 campaign, the Corona Virus pandemic lockdowns caught up with us delaying follow-up and prompt fulfilment of perks promised.

¹ This was at the prevailing dollar rate of 1USD to 256 Nigerian Naira in 2018

² In 2020, the dollar rate had increased to 302 Nigerian Naira for 1USD

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was sought and obtained from the University of Uyo Institutional Health Research Board

Results

The 2018 campaign raised a total of 2.67 million Naira (\$10419)³, while the second campaign raised 3.2million naira(\$10415).⁴ Total money raised for the events, including funds donated during the Pink Ball amounted to N4,786,500 and N6,276,800 in 2018 and 2020 respectively. Funds raised from the 2018 Pink Charity Ball was donated to cancer patients seen via the routine MWAN cancer screening clinic. These came from various sources as outright donations, perked contributions, and contributions made during the Pink Charity Ball.⁵ The funds raised were used to mark the World Cancer Day events. The Cancer Walk events had an overwhelming turnout and publicity with over 400 individuals joining the street party in 2018 and an even larger turnout of about 550 people in 2020. The Pink Charity Ball for both years had a turnout of over 200 people although being a strictly ticketed event.

Figures 1 and 2 show the daily trend of donations during the campaigns. During the first campaign, there were two peaks observed, one during the first week of the launch and in the last week. In 2018, the campaign duration was short, lasting for just 18 days. Figure 2 shows the trend of

donations in 2020, with multiple peaks especially during the second half of the campaign period. Funds raised from the campaigns in 2018 and 2020 before the Pink Ball were ₦2,780,000 and ₦3,163,500 respectively. Total money raised for the events, including funds donated during the Pink Ball amounted to ₦4,786,500 and ₦6,276,800 in 2018 and 2020 respectively. Funds raised from the 2018 Pink Charity Ball was donated to cancer patients seen via the routine MWAN cancer screening clinic.

For the perked contributions, over 428 T-shirts were ordered in 2018 and a total of 486 T-shirts and 19 branded gowns were ordered by over 240 individuals, SMEs, and corporate organizations in 2020.

The successful Cancer Walk raised awareness levels for the MWAN breast and cervical cancer screening program. There was a surge in cancer screening attendance in the months following the outreach. Figure 3 shows the trend in the routine cancer screening clinic two years pre and post-campaign.⁶ There has been a steady increase in the routine breast and cervical cancer screening attendance post-campaign and which can be attributed to the increased awareness levels created by the campaign. During the campaigns, the planning team also crowdsourced ideas for a successful event from the donors. This led to the creation of an online WhatsApp group of over 200 people from diverse backgrounds, spanning women from other professional bodies like the Federation of International

³ The prevailing exchange rate for 2018 was 256 naira to 1USD

⁴ In 2020 the exchange rate was up to 302naira to 1USD

⁵ Funds raised during the Pink Ball itself is excluded in both counts as some pledges were redeemed close to 2months post events

⁶ This did not include the outreach cancer screening programs post campaign which also experienced a surge as many female legislators and public spirited individuals invited MWAN for outreach in their LGAs(districts)

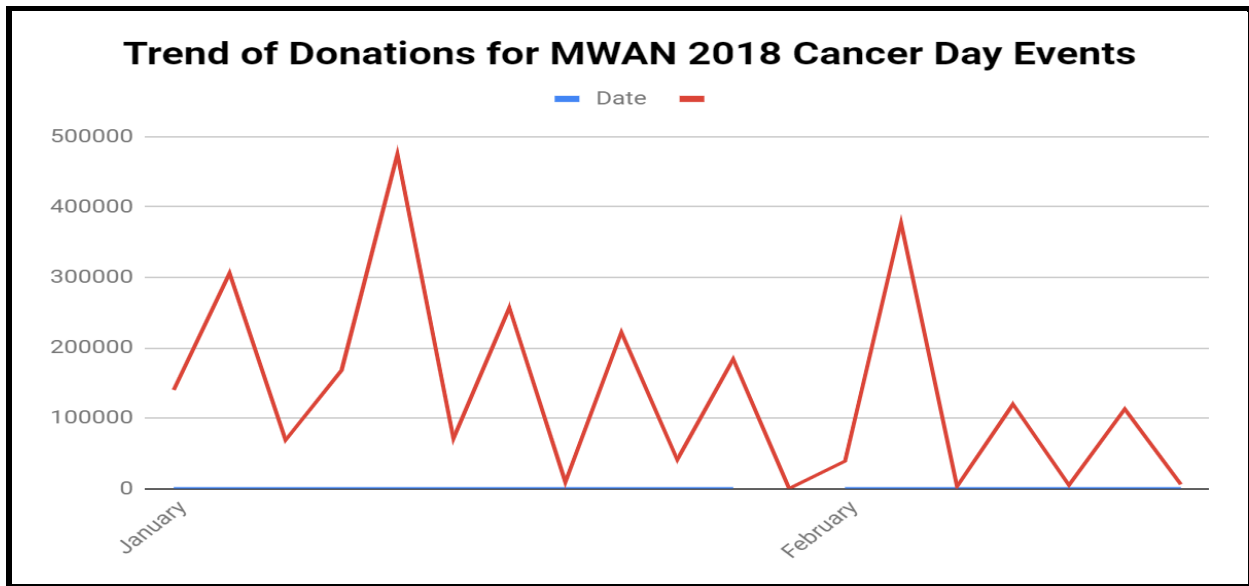


Figure 1: Trend of donations (cash inflow) for MWAN 2018 World Cancer Day Events

Trend in Donations for MWAN 2020 Crowdfunding Campaign

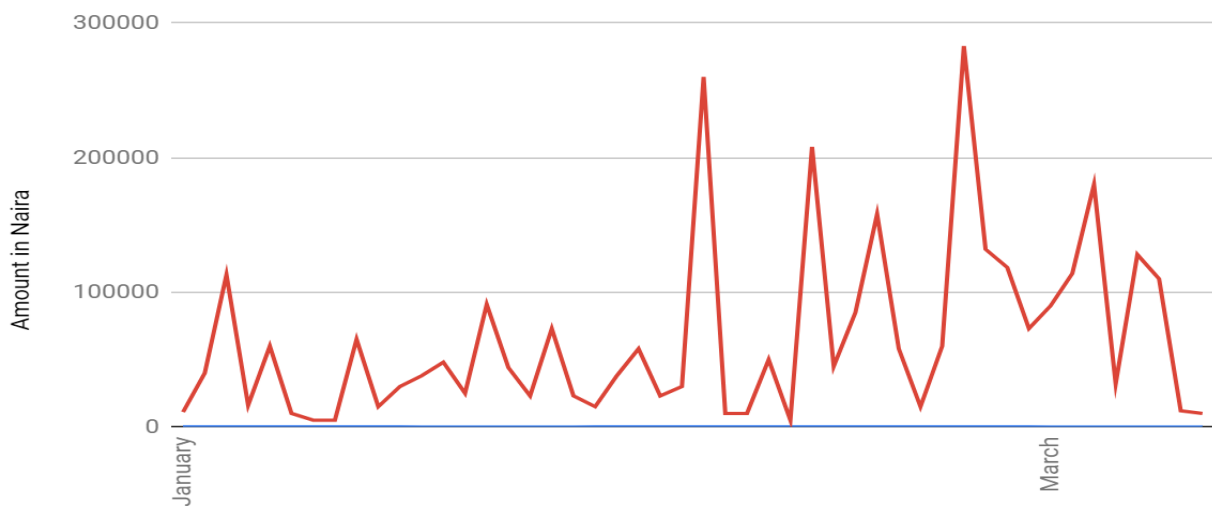


Figure 2: Trend in donations (cash inflow) for MWAN 2020 Crowdfunding Campaign

Female lawyers (FIDA), Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Association of Lady Pharmacists, individual entrepreneurs from Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs) to many public-spirited individuals including a few men. As at the

time of this publication, the campaign WhatsApp platform formed in 2018 has remained a viable and vibrant online community actively engaged in raising funds for other women helping women and children projects. This platform served as the foundation for the 2020 campaign.

A post-campaign survey conducted online about a year post the 2018 event had 71 respondents who participated in the events. Of the 71 respondents, 22(29.9%) were friends and family of MWAN members.

Figure 4 shows the age range of respondents, 53.5% were aged 31-40years and 21% were aged 41-50 years.

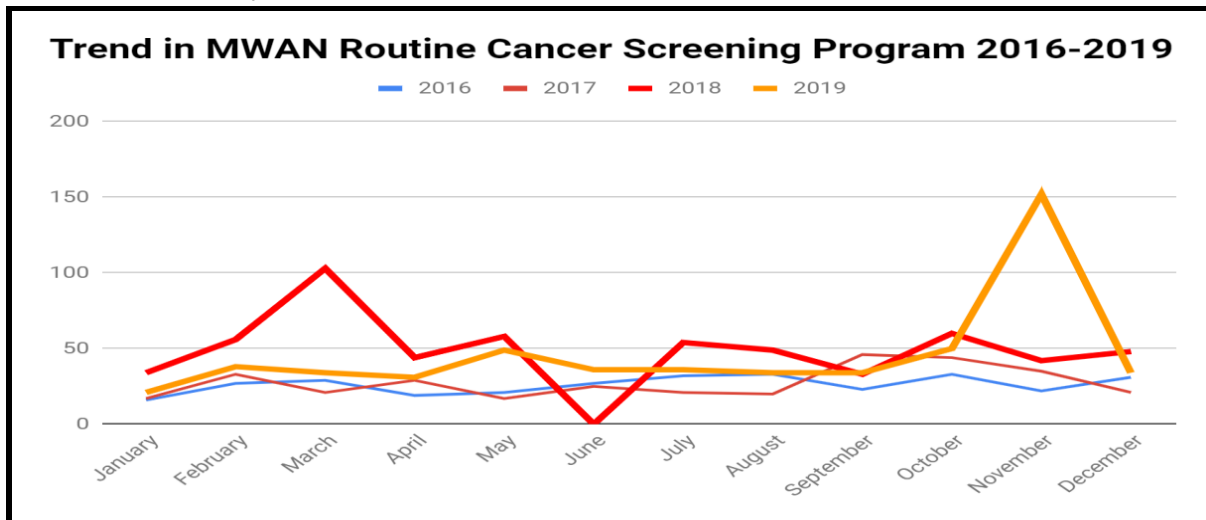


Figure 3: Trends in MWAN Routine Cancer Screening Program 2016-2019

Figure 5 shows the source of information of the respondents, 46.5% were reached via WhatsApp platform, Facebook page (16.9%), 28.2% were reached by personal cold calls and referrals, and 4.2% others (which included text messaging).

Reasons why respondents supported the campaign are seen in Figure 6. These included that MWAN is offering important

community services (94.4%), desire to have their names written down as having donated for cancer (66.2%), knowing someone who had cancer (26.8%), a personal invite from a known person (40.8%), desire to have the branded T-shirt (46.5%), desire to have fun with other ladies (32.4%) and others who wanted to learn about cancers (11.3%).

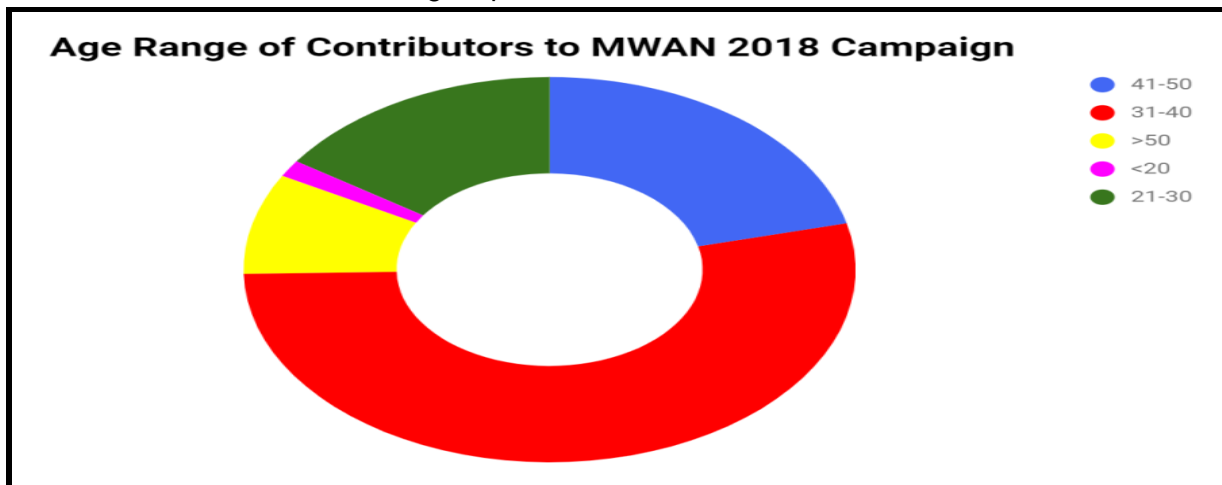


Figure 4: Age range of contributors to MWAN 2018 Campaign

Source of Information for the MWAN 2018 World Cancer Day

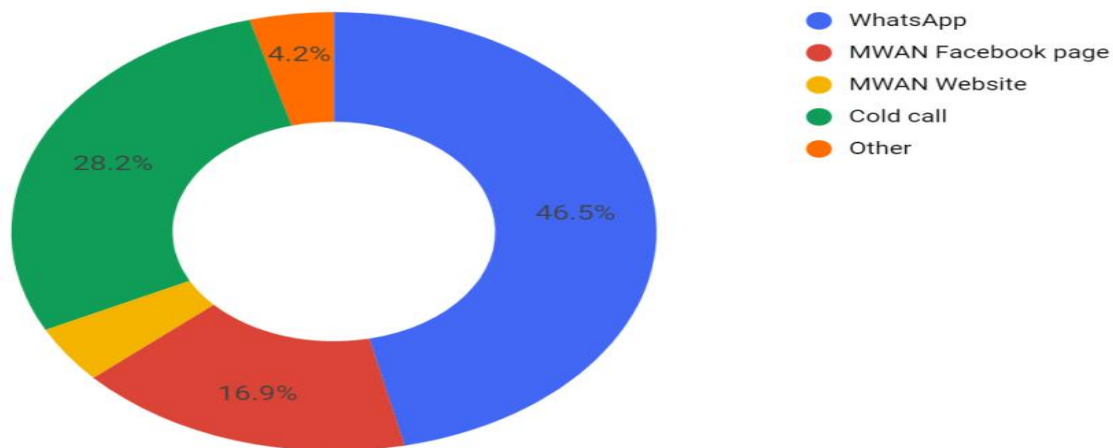


Figure 5: Source of information for MWAN 2018 World Cancer Day

When asked to rank the strongest motivating factor, (Figure 7) the ranking was as follows MWAN is offering important community services (87.3%), desire to have their names written down as having donated for cancer (32.4%), knowing someone who had cancer

(26.8%), a personal invite from a known person (33.8%), desire to have the branded T-shirt (22.8%), desire to have fun with other ladies (18.3%) and others who wanted to learn about cancers (5.6%).

Most Common Reasons for Supporting MWAN 2018 Campaigns

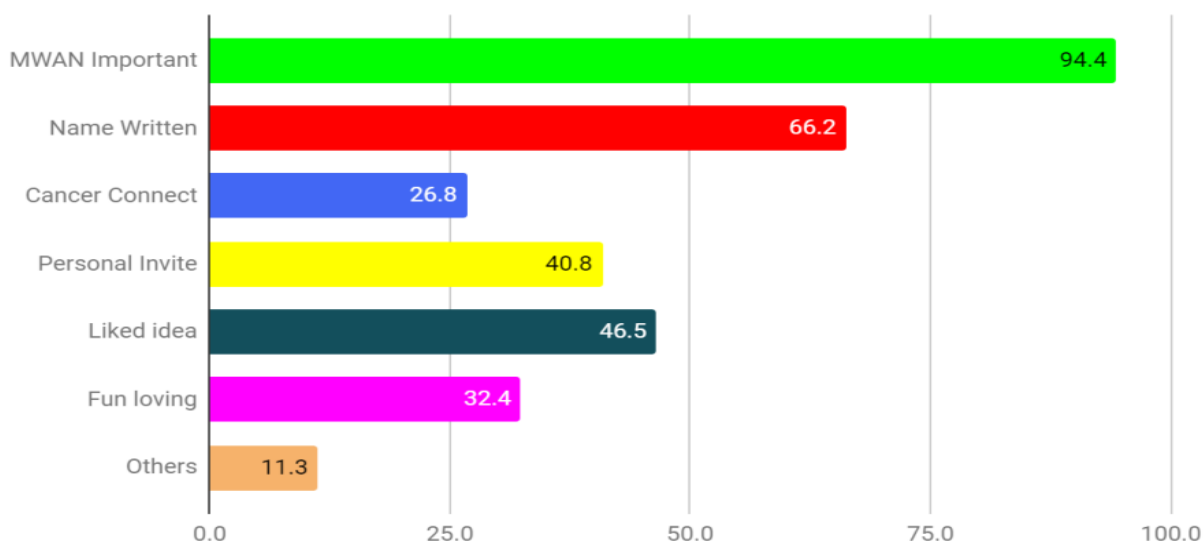


Figure 6: Most common reasons for Supporting MWAN 2018 Campaign

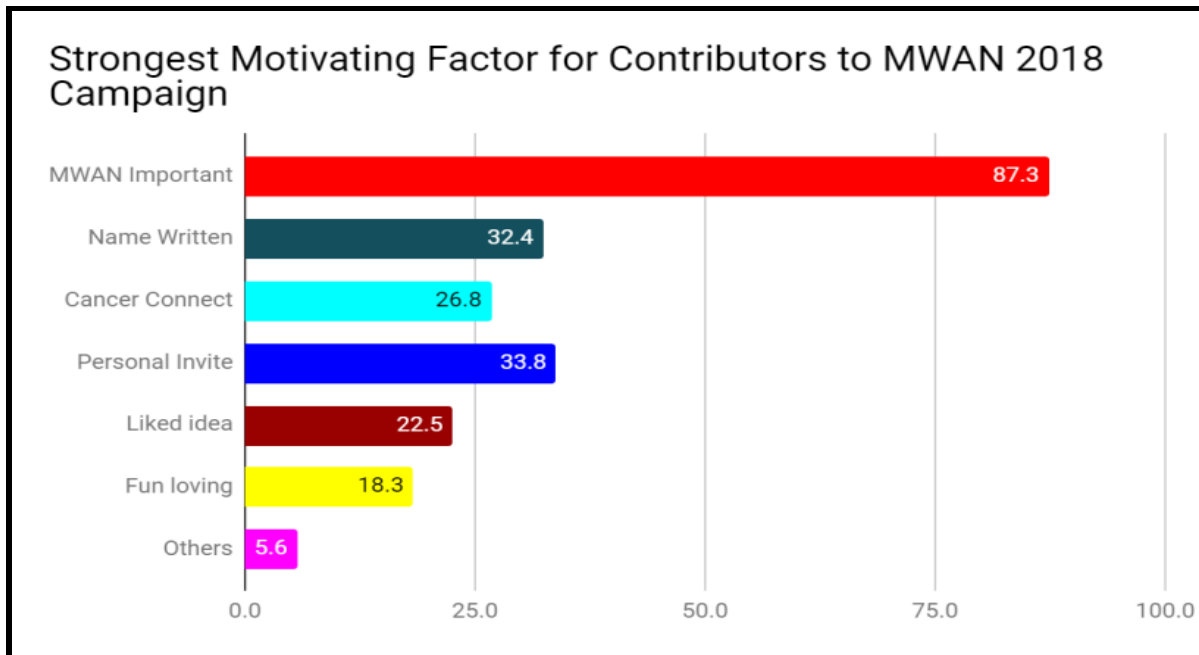


Figure 7: Strongest motivating factor for contributors to MWAN 2018 Campaign

About 80% of participants who responded scored the events excellent and would recommend them to a friend. The survey also revealed that 92% of respondents were willing to donate to future campaigns.

Discussion

In this paper, we have presented so far how the crowdfunding by MWAN AKS was carried out. The rest of this paper discusses how successful the campaigns at achieving their goals, factors that contributed to the success of the campaigns and the challenges MWAN faced in carrying out the campaigns. This section concludes by drawing lessons for future fundraising campaigns in similar settings.

Successes

The success of a crowdfunding campaign strongly depends on a number of factors such as characteristics of the project, network creators, content of the message, and the network of the project owner.^{8,27,33}

These are key factors in the identification of a 'crowdfundable' project. A project is said to be crowdfundable if it is a clearly defined project that appeals to potential supporters.³⁴ So the question is "what kinds of projects are people likely to fund?" Projects with a specific purpose, delivering what people can understand as opposed to those that have vague or broad mission goals, with no promotional strategy.³⁵ Respondents in the crowdmatch challenge, carried out in small communities in the United Kingdom, identified a crowdfundable project, as one that "*needs to be for a specific purpose*", be "*something tangible*", "*delivering something that people can understand*", and "*engaged hearts and minds*."³⁴ These descriptive words echoed in our campaign messages of "*donate to a worthy cause*" "*donate 3000 to save a life*", "*help her pay her bill*". With the aim of our campaign being fundraising for cancer, by a charity organization, the donors could identify with the project which was tangible, specific, and appealed to them.

Evidence suggests that women are more likely to succeed at crowdfunding than men,^{25,36,37} women-led projects are more likely to succeed³⁶ and women donate more to charitable causes than men³⁸. One of the theories to explain this success is homophily, particularly activist choice homophily, which arises from group-level identity concerns and rooted in perceived social differences.³⁶ A large number of people who responded to our call were females. They could identify with females and realized they could be in a similar situation. This perceived susceptibility engaged the donors and driving interest and donations. Furthermore, it has been documented that projects with non-profit goals are more likely to be funded than projects with for-profit goals²⁷. For our campaign, it was seen that the women ready and willing to support fellow women in the face of perceived disadvantage. This group-level identity played a critical role in the success of the platform sustaining other projects beyond the initial campaign that it was set up for. Being a female organization and addressing female cancers attracted more females, although we had some male participation especially during the Pink Ball events.

Successful campaigns require a strong online presence, built by a creator who is both productive and a social media connoisseur.³⁹ Failure to build a strong online presence was cited as a key characteristic of failed campaigns.³⁵ MWAN had a strong online presence built from the launch of both campaigns. This was created by the campaign team led by the Project Coordinator for the organization. It has been documented that successful campaigns require a "media connoisseur". The Team had a medical media connoisseur, a young doctor who was empowered to be the face

behind the campaign. Popular on social media as Dr. Fab, she built a network that snowballed the campaign nationwide and internationally, attracting donors and other organizations to identify with the campaign. This is an attribute that should be identified and encouraged among health teams and organizations, as these skills are fundamental to the success of fundraising.

Social capital has been described by many authors as fundamental to the success of crowdfunding.^{25,40,41} This refers to the resources and support networks available to individuals and groups through memberships in social networks. In many projects early donors are seen in family, friends, and acquaintances³⁵ and leveraging on ones' network usually leads to successful start-off for campaigns^{18,42} This was one of the major enablers of success for MWAN as the initial contributions came from members. The campaign team created a list of contributors immediately after the campaign was launched and posted this on social media platforms. Influential stakeholders within MWAN were first contacted for support and listed as contributors. With the names of contributors publicly acknowledged online on the campaign platform, there was a surge of donations within the organization as more people were motivated to donate. In addition, the campaign team received maximum cooperation and support from other MWAN members as they snowballed the campaign messages to friends and family. This clearly demonstrated the importance of early backers as some researchers have also shown. In his seminal work, Schelling described this concept using two specific examples: Saturday-morning seminar cycles organized by Harvard's faculty and spontaneous volleyball matches improvised in grassy areas of the campus (Schelling,

1978, p. 154). Schelling noted that if a large number of participants gather the first time an event is held, then a larger crowd was likely to gather the next day. Conversely, if few people participate at the beginning of an event—no matter how good it was—the event was fated to attract fewer and fewer participants. This rule has been documented in both the real world and in online communities. Our experience corroborated Schellings' work as we raised a crowd of early supporters who helped kick start the donations.

Regularly updating the funders was another strategy that led to success. Publication of the list of donors on the campaign platform served as a means of regular updates which has been found to be strategic to crowdfunding campaigns. Regularly updating the public reflects the efforts of the fundraisers to reach more funders and signals confidence. It has been found that campaigns with a lack of early updates were 13% less likely to be successful.²⁵

A key strategy for successful crowdfunding is the establishing and maintaining of professional contacts through social media.^{3,10} It has been found that social network size predicts the success of a campaign. According to Mollick "*...a founder with 10 Facebook friends would have a 9% chance of succeeding, one with 100 friends would have a 20% chance of success, and one with 1000 friends would have a 40% chance of success*".³ MWAN succeeded in creating a network of people online via social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. These people came together on a WhatsApp platform to successfully plan and execute World Cancer day events in 2018 and 2020. The WhatsApp group established gave us a platform for contributor

participation leading to high turnout and active participation. The platform remained and was used to plan and execute the second Cancer walk which drew an even larger crowd and turned out to be the largest street Walk for cancer in the South of Nigeria.³²

Another important strategy for successful fundraising is messaging. There are two dimensions to the messaging; i) the content and ii) the frequency. Our findings agreed with previous findings that successful campaigns relied on strong, content-rich video that clearly expressed a tangible need, crafted around a story.^{3,35,43,44} A study by Google found that 57 percent of interested donors made a donation after watching an online video.⁴⁵ The repeated messaging such as tweeting to keep people engaged have been seen to contribute to successes in campaigns.^{3,10,46} This helped to overcome the challenges of low turnover in our crowdfunding campaigns.

Motivation has been documented to be a strong determinant of the quality and the number of contributions.⁴⁷ Many theories are available to explain public behavior and motivation for crowdfunding. The four Fs that motivate online contributors—Fun, Feeling good (fulfillment), Fame, and Fortune—were seen in this campaign.⁴⁸ As seen in the survey,(Figures 6 and 7) many people felt MWAN was doing something important and wanted to help people with cancer, contributing to the medical community. This altruistic trait has been seen to be a strong motivating factor in crowdfunding and crowdsourcing campaigns.^{49,50}

In addition, offering attractive and acceptable perks has been shown to help in fundraising. The demand for the branded T-shirts was overwhelming for the organizing team on

both campaigns. This is in keeping with findings that reward-based crowdfunding for creative ventures and start-ups have been found to be more successful.⁴⁹ The large turnout for the Cancer Walk and the Pink Charity ball was evidence of the acceptability of the perks to the audience.

Some researchers have observed that a characteristic of crowdfunding campaigns is that half of the donations arrive at the beginning and end of the campaign.⁵¹ This was evident in the first of the MWAN campaigns. The trend in the 2018 campaign (Figure 1) shows two spikes in the first and last weeks. However, the 2020 campaign lasted longer, almost double the duration of the first one. The trend was different in this second campaign as seen in Figure 2, there were multiple peaks especially towards the last weeks of the campaign period. We also observed that in both campaigns, people brought money on the date of the event for T-shirts and joined the Cancer Walk.

Challenges

The major challenges noted by the campaign team were the short timing for the first campaign and time needed and energy needed post-launch of the two campaigns. The timing for the first campaign proved to be a challenge, with only 16 days to target-date post-launch. Our experience was in agreement with other campaigns with found duration up to around 30 days increases the likelihood of success, after which longer duration seems to reduce the likelihood of success, as campaign momentum stagnates, and contributors become harder to engage.⁵² The team would have raised more funds given a longer period post-

campaign launch in 2018. We noted this and started our second campaign earlier. We did have a better turnover in funds with the second campaign in 2020, as we had more time, precisely six weeks from the campaign launch to the events.

More challenges emerged in the Post campaign period as time was needed to follow up on the promises some of the contributors made.⁵ We required significant time, funds and effort to deliver on our promises and reward. Evidence suggests that time needs to be invested in an organization's crowdfunding initiatives to ensure successful outcomes. ⁵³ This was necessary in our case to build trust and confidence in our donors, considering the fact that we would likely go back to the same crowd to ask for donations in the future.⁴¹

Overall, MWAN had very successful campaigns to raise funds for cancer patients. The success was even more remarkable considering that the country was in an economic recession in 2018 and the situation is worse in 2020 with Nigerian poverty index deepening and Nigeria becoming the Poverty Capital of the world.^{54,55} The success of the campaign was also evident in the trend in attendance at the routine breast and cervical cancer screening clinic. As seen in Figure 3, attendance at the routine breast and cervical cancer clinic increased and remained above the pre-crowdfunding periods.⁷

Study Limitations: This is a reflection of our experiences and we cannot exclude the possibility of recall bias. Besides as we did not intentionally set out to carry out a

⁷ The dip in June 2019 to zero was due to a no screening day as MWAN members were mandatorily involved in a state-wide activity carried out by the

parent organization, the Nigerian Medical Association

crowdfunding campaign, there were no specific amounts set as targets for the campaigns.

Conclusion

In seeking innovative ways of funding, we were able to carry out two successfully crowd-funded events. The major reason for our innovation was to find alternative sources of funding as we had failed over the years to successfully raise funds using traditional methods to support indigent cancer patients. Future campaigns need to be carefully planned, giving time for appropriate launch, donations, and post-campaign activities. Despite the contrary lines of thought that crowdfunding may deepen inequalities to access in healthcare, the fact that in most LMIC countries, government spending on health is usually low, crowdfunding may actually serve as an alternative complementary and supplementary source of funding for projects. Besides, it can also serve as a platform to engage private sector participation in health care, and a means of tapping into the *"wealth of the crowds"*. Health and social development organizations in LMICs need to learn the art of crowdfunding and be deliberate in designing crowdfunding campaigns to maximize the chances of achieving campaign goals.

Key Messages:

Crowdfunding as a strategy for fundraising is underexploited and poorly understood in LMICs.

Crowdfunding can be successfully used as an alternative and complementary method of financing health projects in LMICs.

Campaigns designed to fund projects should be carefully designed to give time for adequate planning and execution of the campaign to improve amounts raised and achieve intended goals.

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