Designing Effective Communication for Food Waste Reduction: The Role of Perceived Gains and Losses in Volunteer Hesitation and Platform Loyalty

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Abstract:
This study examines how perceived gains and losses shapes sustained engagement on food waste reduction volunteering through a digital food-sharing platform. Drawing on conservation of resources theory, we conceptualise volunteering as a resource evaluation process in which individuals assess anticipated benefits and potential costs when deciding whether to continue participation. Using survey responses from active volunteers in the UK, we test how these gain–loss perceptions affect hesitation, toward long-term engagement and, subsequently, continued volunteering intention and platform loyalty. The results demonstrate that perceived gains reduce hesitation and enhance sustained engagement, whereas perceived losses heighten reluctance to persist and weaken both intention and loyalty. By identifying the resource evaluations that drive retention in a digital platform context, this research provides an empirical foundation for designing more effective prosocial communication strategies that strengthen long-term engagement in food waste reduction initiatives.

Keywords: Food waste reduction, Volunteering, Perceived gains and losses, Hesitation, Conservation of resources theory