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Does Consciousness of Social Face Matter? Understanding Sharing Behavior Towards Online Charitable Crowdfunding Information

Wu Li[1], *Yujie Dong*[1], *Zehang Xie*[1], *Qi Yao*[2], *& Yu Tian*[3]

[1] School of Media and Communication, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China
[2] School of Psychology and Cognitive Science, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China
[3] School of Marxism, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao, China

Abstract

Information-sharing behavior constitutes one of the key elements for the success of online charitable crowdfunding (OCC) projects, but it has received relatively limited academic attention so far. From a relational perspective, this study proposed a conceptual model to better understand the relationship between consciousness of social face, two types of impression management motivations, OCC information-sharing behavior, and perceived relational value. An online survey was conducted among 1,166 Internet users in China (47.2% were male; 70.8% fell within the age group of 18–35 years old). The finding showed that consciousness of social face was positively associated with information-sharing behavior through the positive mediation of promotion-focused impression management motivation and the negative mediation of prevention-focused impression management motivation. Furthermore, information-sharing behavior was positively associated with perceived relational value. This study sheds light on the impact of social face consciousness on prosocial information-sharing behavior through impression management motivations and offers practical implications concerning how to promote individuals' OCC information sharing behavior on social media.

Keywords: online charitable crowdfunding; information-sharing behavior; consciousness of social face; impression management; perceived relational value

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Introduction

In the last two decades, as Internet and social media technologies have become increasingly ingrained in our daily lives, traditional offline philanthropy has given way to a new era of online charitable activities around the globe. The breakout of COVID-19, in particular, accelerated the popularity of online charitable activities. Online charitable crowdfunding (OCC), defined as an online "technology-driven charitable fundraising approach" (Choy & Schlagwein, 2016), has become an increasingly important way for individuals to participate in charitable activities. It enables contributors to support their most desired charitable causes and choose the beneficiary of their fund instead of having the organization distribute the fund to the beneficiaries (Xiao & Yue, 2021). In 2021, 35 million Americans contributed $808 million to OCC on Giving Tuesday, a global generosity movement circulated on social media (Widaman, 2021). In China, official data indicated that OCC reached nearly 10 billion yuan in 2021 (Wen Wei Po, 2022).

Different from offline projects, OCC fully takes advantage of technology affordances and expands awareness of the crowdfunding projects within and beyond the close social network (Gerber & Hui, 2013). Prior research on OCC predominantly explored factors driving individuals' donation intention and behavior, including individual factors (e.g., trust, motivations, and personal norms, see Y. Chen et al., 2021; W. Li et al., 2022, 2024), technology affordances (e.g., perceived autonomy and relatedness concerning OCC platforms, see Y. Chen et al., 2021; Kasri & Indriani, 2022), and campaign characteristics (e.g., popularity, content quality, and modality, see Kasri & Indriani, 2022; Salido-Andres et al., 2022). Besides actual donations, individuals can participate in OCC projects by actively sharing the OCC information on social media. Existing literature has approached OCC information-sharing behavior from its antecedents and consequences. For instance, altruism and enjoyment in helping others (Hou et al., 2021) and attitudes and norms concerning OCC (Shneor et al., 2021) are found to impact individuals' OCC information-sharing, which further contributes to the success of fundraising (S. Liu et al., 2020; Moqri & Bandyopadhyay, 2017). While some studies have explored the relationship-based factors driving OCC information-sharing (Hou et al., 2021; Jiao et al., 2021), the influence of a deeper relational concern has yet to be addressed. Additionally, there is limited published research investigating the impact of OCC information-sharing on individuals' relational perceptions.

Given the existing knowledge gap in the study of OCC information-sharing, this study aims to examine the antecedents and consequences of OCC information-sharing behavior from a relational perspective. In other words, we view OCC information-sharing as a social behavior occurring within relationships with others and intend to explore how this behavior is linked to individuals' attention to and perceived value of socially defined aspects of the self. The consciousness of social face and its association with impression management motivations might be a useful lens for researchers to understand individuals' OCC information-sharing behavior on social media. As a socially defined aspect of self, face is a major concern in many Asian countries and collectivist cultures (A. Hwang et al., 2003; Oetzel et al., 2001). It is deeply rooted in the Chinese Confucian tradition (Lin, 1935, p. 2000) and conceptualized as a relational and interactional phenomenon (Arundale, 2006). Drawing from the Regulatory Focus Theory, we explore two types of impression management motivations as mediators in the relationship between the consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior. Moreover, as we study OCC information-sharing from a relational perspective, whether such a behavior driven by relational concerns and motivations can in turn boost individuals' perception of relational value as an important psychological benefit is of our interest as well.

The findings of the current study revealed a positive total effect of consciousness of social face on OCC information-sharing behavior, and both promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation mediated the relationship between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior. Additionally, OCC information-sharing behavior was positively linked with perceived relational value. This study sheds light on the impact of social face consciousness on prosocial information-sharing behavior through impression management motivations and offers practical implications concerning how to promote individuals' sharing behavior towards online charitable crowdfunding information on social media.

Theory and Hypotheses

Consciousness of Social Face and Impression Management Motivations

In Chinese Confucian society, the concept of face is initially developed as "the most delicate standard by which Chinese social intercourse is regulated" (Lin, 1935, p. 2000). The social aspect of the face, specifically, represents social status standing for the prestige and honor that a person receives as a result of achievement (Bond & Lee, 1978; Ho, 1976). Consciousness of social face, defined as "the extent to which an individual shows regard for and interest in the protection and the enhancement of face" (Chan et al., 2009, p. 293), describes people's concerns and needs to enhance their social face or protect their social face in social encounters (Zhang et al., 2011). It is "an individual's own property, not affected by a particular situation" (Han et al., 2022, p. 1149). Prior research has suggested that consciousness of social face is associated with many relational perceptions and behaviors (e.g., perceived social value, need for uniqueness, and status consumption) in collectivistic societies like China (K.-K. Hwang, 2006; J. Li et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2017). In the OCC context, individuals with higher face consciousness are more likely to maintain a self-identity associated with charitable causes and foster identification with charity groups and organizations, which may indirectly promote OCC engagement (Wang et al., 2019).

As the consciousness of social face involves the desire to maintain an individual's social image in front of others, it is very likely to influence individuals' impression management motivations when engaging in social behaviors (Zhang et al., 2011). Impression management, the process of people fostering or controlling the impressions in others' eyes (Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), plays an important role in both fundraisers' crowdfunding decisions and individuals' OCC engagement decisions. Crowdfunding entrepreneurs often display fears of disclosure, visible failure, and projecting desperation (Gleasure, 2015), and hence are motivated to use various techniques to manage the impressions and maximize crowdfunding success (Korzynski et al., 2021). In medical crowdfunding, fundraisers also use a series of impression management strategies to receive help and treatment funds (Xu & Wang, 2020). For individual funders, impression management motivations (i.e., image enhancement) are vital to their OCC engagement decision-making process (Cox et al., 2018) and may transform online activism into actual donations (Kim et al., 2023).

In this study, we classify the motivations of impression management into two types: promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation. As impression management constitutes a kind of self-regulation, it can involve two motivational systems with different focuses, i.e., the promotion focus and the prevention focus, as Regulatory Focus Theory posits (Higgins, 1997). Specifically, the promotion focus emphasizes the accomplishments and aspirations. In contrast, the prevention focus values safety and responsibilities. These two focuses are conceptualized as independent constructs and therefore may vary independently (Keller et al., 2015). In line with the Regulatory Focus Theory, the motivation of impression management can be categorized into two types with distinct focuses. We define promotion-focused motivation as the motivation to obtain good impressions from others and define prevention-focused motivation as the motivation to avoid leaving others with undesirable impressions in certain social activities. Previous studies have found that consciousness of social face and general impression management are significantly correlated (Zhang et al., 2011). Considering the dual nature of consciousness of social face (e.g., desire to gain face and fear of losing face), it is understandable to argue that it can be positively associated with two types of impression management motivations.

Therefore, we postulate the following hypotheses:

H1: Consciousness of social face is positively associated with (a) promotion-focused motivation and (b) prevention-focused motivation.

Impression Management Motivations and OCC Information-Sharing Behavior

According to the self-determination theory (Deci, 1992), human behavior could be efficiently determined by motivations to attain various goals and outcomes. In the age of social media, impression management as the theatrical performance of identity has also been frequently employed to explain individuals' self-presentation behavior on social media. Some scholarly works have further identified impression management motivation as one of the crucial motivations for individuals' self-oriented and relation-oriented behaviors on social media (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Donath & boyd, 2004).

OCC information-sharing behavior, as a socially observable prosocial information-sharing behavior, can be largely influenced by individuals' impression management motivations. Promotion-focused motivation may constitute a prominent motivation for individuals to conduct information-sharing behavior on social media. As sharing prosocial information in public is often considered an act that publicly presents a desired image and supports a social cause (Lane & Dal Cin, 2018), individuals with stronger promotion-focused motivation are more likely to conduct such information-sharing behavior to promote and enhance their positive images (Cox et al., 2018; Morrison & Bies, 1991). On the contrary, prevention-focused motivation can be a significant barrier to individuals' information-sharing behavior on social media. Individuals who share OCC information on social media may be perceived as begging for donations, and those who receive the information may feel burdened (Gerber & Hui, 2013), which poses threats to sharers' self-images. Besides, if people share inaccurate or fake OCC information with others, they will be regarded as lacking in judgment and information literacy and held responsible, particularly if the inaccurate or fake information causes their social networks to lose money. Hence, individuals with strong prevention-focused motivation may be inclined to avoid these risks and not to conduct OCC information-sharing behavior.

To sum up, we argue that promotion-focused motivation resorting to the desire to obtain good impressions from others may positively correlate with OCC information-sharing behavior, while prevention-focused motivation

emphasizing the need to avoid leaving others with undesirable impressions may negatively correlate with OCC information-sharing behavior.

H2a: Promotion-focused motivation positively predicts OCC information-sharing behavior.

H2b: Prevention-focused motivation negatively predicts OCC information-sharing behavior.

Taken together, we adopt a distal-proximal approach that assumes that distal factors (e.g., personality traits) can exert their effects via proximal motivational states (G. Chen et al., 2000; X. Liu et al., 2020; Wallace & Chen, 2006), and we formulate the underlying mechanisms that connect consciousness of social face with individuals' OCC information-sharing behavior. Since consciousness of social face has a long-term and stable influence on an individual's behavior (Han et al., 2022), it can be regarded as a trait-like individual difference that may influence OCC information-sharing behavior via proximal impression management motivations. On the one hand, the consciousness of social face may positively correlate with OCC information-sharing behavior through the positive indirect effect of promotion-focused motivation; on the other hand, it may negatively correlate with OCC information-sharing behavior through the negative indirect effect of prevention-focused motivation. Therefore, we propose that these two motivations can serve as mediators linking the consciousness of social face with OCC information-sharing behavior.

H3a: Promotion-focused motivation mediates the relationship between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior.

H3b: Prevention-focused motivation mediates the relationship between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior.

OCC Information-Sharing Behavior and Perceived Relational Value

From a relational perspective, OCC information-sharing behavior can be viewed as a social behavior that connects with not only others but also one's self-perceptions in social environments. In other words, the social and relational nature of OCC information-sharing behavior may associate the completion of the behavior with an individual's perceptions of relational value. Perceived relational value, defined as the extent to which individuals consider themselves to be liked and valued, constitutes an important component of individuals' self-concept (Fowler et al., 2021). While limited studies have been devoted to the relationship between specific OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value, several studies have shown that general prosocial behavior is closely associated with individuals' perception of relational value (see Lemay et al., 2021). This link may be partly due to that improvements in prosocial behavior positively predict peer acceptance (Caputi et al., 2012), which further boosts individuals' perceived relational value.

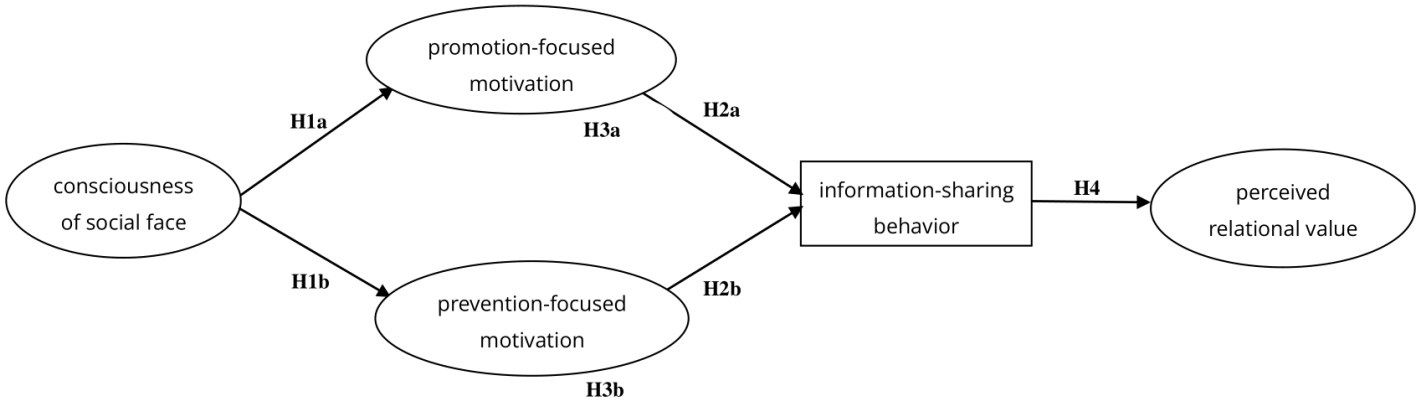
Additionally, the literature discussing social capital and its role in crowdfunding research (e.g., Ba et al., 2022; Shneor et al., 2023) offers another promising perspective on the potential positive relationship between OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value. Previous studies suggest that there is a typically bi-directional relationship between crowdfunding activities and social capital: social capital encourages individuals' participation in crowdfunding activities, and individuals develop their social capital through their participation in crowdfunding activities (Cai et al., 2021). Therefore, individuals who share OCC information are likely to perceive increased social capital and strengthened relations, which in turn enhances their perceived relational value. This assumption echoes with Stofberg et al. (2021), who proposed a relational-model view to explain peer-to-peer sharing behavior. They suggest that individuals engaging in information behavior are likely to gain two forms of relational value: one arising from a sense of community belonging and the other stemming from reciprocal transactions with peers.

In light of the above discussion, we propose the fourth hypothesis:

H4: OCC information-sharing behavior is positively associated with perceived relational value.

Based on the above hypotheses, we postulate a conceptual model to examine the associations among consciousness of social face, two types of impression management motivations, OCC information-sharing behavior, and perceived relational value (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *The Conceptual Model Examined in This Study.*



Methods

Procedures

We employed the online survey method to collect data for analysis. Prior to the formal survey, a pilot study was conducted using a convenience sample of 117 participants to assess the reliability and construct validity of the measures. Following the pilot test of the survey instrument, a modified online survey was administered via Survey Star, a professional online research company in China (https://www.wjx.cn), from September to October 2020. Survey Star has a sampling pool of more than 6.0 million registered nationwide respondents, encompassing diverse demographic characteristics. The data were obtained through simple sampling by randomly selecting participants who met our survey inclusion criteria (e.g., Internet users) from the company's nationwide online panels. To maximize the response rate, we introduced an incentive program offering 100 gift cards valued at RMB10 each, distributed via an online lucky draw.

A total of 1,485 people responded to the survey. We used several tactics in the process of administering the questionnaires to eliminate invalid cases (e.g., attention-check questions, detection of repeat Internet Protocol addresses), and 257 samples were removed at this stage. There was a total of 24 items in our questionnaire measuring the key constructs (e.g., consciousness of social face, promotion-focused motivation, prevention-focused motivation, OCC Information-sharing behavior, perceived relational value). To mitigate monotonous response bias, we then excluded 62 observations where respondents consistently provided the same values for 12 or more items consecutively. This threshold corresponds to half or more of the total items measuring the current study's key constructs. After eliminating invalid questionnaires in the aforementioned two stages, a total of 1,166 responses were obtained for the subsequent data analyses.

In order to assess potential non-response bias, we utilized the wave approach. Using the response time automatically collected by Survey Star, the online survey platform employed in our study, we categorized the samples into two groups: early and late respondents. Individuals who respond later often share characteristics with those who never respond (Duszynski et al., 2022). The chi-squared test showed there were no significant differences between these two groups in terms of gender ($\chi^2 = 1.67$, $df = 1$, $p = .197$), age ($\chi^2 = 2.63$, $df = 6$, $p = .853$), educational level ($\chi^2 = 1.13$, $df = 5$, $p = .952$), disposable monthly income ($\chi^2 = 4.27$, $df = 5$, $p = .512$), and religious affiliation ($\chi^2 = 0.02$, $df = 1$, $p = .893$). Thus, there was no severe non-response bias in our study.

Participants Demographic Profiles

Of these valid respondents, 47.2% were male; 70.8% fell within the age group of 18–35 years old; 82.3% had received a college degree or higher education; 43% had a disposable monthly income of more than 5,000 Chinese Yuan; 74.4% had not any religious affiliation (See Table 1 for demographic descriptions of the participants).

Table 1. *Participants Demographic Profiles (N = 1,166).*

Variables	Frequency (Percentage)
Gender	
Male	550 (47.2%)
Female	616 (52.8%)
Age	
below 18	32 (2.8%)
18–25	393 (33.7%)
26–35	432 (37.1%)
36–45	176 (15.1%)
46–55	82 (7.0%)
56–65	40 (3.4%)
above 65	11 (0.9%)
Education Level	
Primary school or below	8 (0.7%)
Middle school	33 (2.8%)
High school	166 (14.2%)
College	247 (21.2%)
Undergraduate	475 (40.8%)
Graduate	237 (20.3%)
Disposable monthly income	
≤1800	127 (10.9%)
1801–3000	230 (19.7%)
3001–5000	308 (26.4%)
5001–8000	260 (22.3%)
8001–12000	151 (13.0%)
≥12001	90 (7.7%)
Religious affiliation	
No	868 (74.4%)
Yes	298 (25.6%)

Measures

Unless stated otherwise, response options ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

Consciousness of Social Face

We adopted an 11-item scale developed by Zhang et al. (2011), which taps two correlated dimensions, the desire to gain face and the fear of losing face, and shows satisfactory construct validity (Zhang, 2012). The sample items included *I hope people think that I can do better than most others* and *I always avoid talking about my weakness*. Cronbach's α value for the scale was .93.

Promotion-Focused Motivation and Prevention-Focused Motivation

Due to the lack of well-established scales measuring promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation, we followed the advice of Tashakkori et al. (1998) and conducted focus group interviews of ten Internet users for scale self-development. Participants were asked about the reasons that they would or would not like to share charitable crowdfunding information on social media platforms. Based on our qualitative results and a previous study (J. Li & Yang, 2018), we developed an initial 9-item scale. We ran the exploratory factor analysis of the nine items and successfully extracted two factors, promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused

motivation. One item whose loading value on either factor was less than 0.40 was dropped from the scale (Pituch & Stevens, 2015).

The sample items for promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation were *Sharing OCC information on my social media would make me a likable person* and *When deciding whether or not share OCC information on my social media, I am worried other people may think I have no taste*, respectively. Both constructs had satisfactory reliability (promotion-focused motivation: Cronbach's α = .92; prevention-focused motivation: Cronbach's α = .92). Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) showed that the standard measurement model fit the data well: χ^2/df = 3.57, GFI = .99, NFI = .99, CFI = .99, RMR = .03, RMSEA = .047; 90% CI [.035, .060], and factor loadings ranged from .78 to .92.

OCC Information-Sharing Behavior

OCC information-sharing behavior was measured with a single item. Participants were asked to report the frequency they shared OCC information on social media in the past three months on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*).

Perceived Relational Value

Four items measuring participants' perceived relational value were adapted from Mathwick et al. (2008) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001). The sample item was *When sharing OCC information on social media, I feel I am needed by other people* and the Cronbach's α value for this scale was .82.

Covariates

Apart from demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, income, and religious affiliation, we also added past donation behavior towards OCC projects as a covariate in our study, given the potential impact of donation behavior on an individual's OCC information-sharing behavior (Hou et al., 2021). Past donation behavior was measured by a single item. Participants rated how often they donated to OCC projects in the past three months (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*).

Data Analyses

Structure equation modeling (SEM) was adopted in our study to test the conceptual model. Following the two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we first conducted CFA to examine the measurement model and then performed a structural model to examine the relationships among all studied variables. In addition, we resorted to the bootstrap method to further identify the mediating role of promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior. All analyses were completed using SPSS and AMOS.

Results

Common Method Biases

The Harman single-factor method was used to carry out the post-hoc statistical test for the common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results showed that after all the items of studied variables entered into the model at the same time, 5 factors with characteristic roots greater than 1 were extracted. The variation explained by the first factor was 38.98%, less than the critical value of 40%, which proved that there was no significant common method deviation.

Descriptive statistics of the main variables are shown in Table 2. The correlation coefficients among each two variables were significant with r value ranging from .13 to .56, except that between prevention-focused motivation and OCC Information-Sharing Behavior (*r* = .03).

Table 2. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Main Variables.*

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Consciousness of social face	3.26	0.90	**.79**				
2. Promotion-focused motivation	3.41	0.99	.56**	**.86**			
3. Prevention-focused motivation	3.13	1.09	.53**	.32**	**.86**		
4. Sharing behavior	2.80	1.17	.22**	.44**	.03	**1.00**	
5. Perceived relational value	3.97	0.73	.27**	.48**	.13**	.35**	**.74**

Note. The values in the diagonal are the square roots of AVE.

Measurement Model

In the CFA, consciousness of social face was treated as a second-order construct which was further measured by the desire to gain face and fear of losing face, promotion-focused motivation, prevention-focused motivation, and perceived relational value as first-order variables, and OCC information-sharing behavior as an observed variable. To verify an acceptable measurement model, a series of fit indices were estimated. Most of the key fit indices reached the threshold except for χ^2/df (5.11). The modification indices suggested a correlation between the residual errors of two items measuring the desire to gain face dimension of consciousness of social face (e.g., *I hope people think that I can do better than most others*, and *I hope that I can talk about things that most others do not know*). Considering that some information will be lost if any of them is removed, we added a double arrow linking with these two residual errors, which reduced the chi-square (χ^2) value by 136.68. After the modification, all the fit indices were acceptable, χ^2/df = 4.41, GFI = .93, NFI = .95, CFI = .96, RMR = .06, RMSEA = .054; 90% CI [.051, .057].

Additionally, the reliability and validity should also be examined in the structural model (Chin et al., 2003; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In Table 3, the composite reliability (CR) values of all the constructs were greater than .7, showing that the data had good reliability. Also, most indicator factor loading values exceeded .7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) value surpassed .5, which supports the adequate convergence validity of the scale. Besides, the square roots of the AVE values for all of the constructs (the diagonal values) were higher than their correlations with the other constructs, indicating that the scale had decent discriminant validity (see Table 2).

Table 3. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of Key Constructs.*

Constructs and Items	Standardized Factor Loadings				CR	AVE
Consciousness of social face (α = .93) [a]					.95	.62
Desire to gain face	.92					
I hope people think that I can do better than most others.		.70				
I hope that I can talk about things that most others do not know.		.76				
I hope that I can possess things that most others thirst for.		.76				
It is important for me to get praise and admiration.		.76				
I hope to let people know that I have association with some big names.		.82				
I hope that I have a better life than most others in others' view.		.83				
Fear of losing face	.92					
I always avoid talking about my weakness.		.83				
I try to avoid letting others think I am ignorant, even if I really am.		.81				
I do my best to hide my weakness before others.		.85				
If I work in an organization of bad reputation, I will try not to tell others about that.		.77				
It is hard for me to acknowledge a mistake, even if I am really wrong.		.76				
Promotion-focused motivation (α = .92)					.92	.74
Sharing OCC information on my social media…						
would help me to feel acceptable.			.83			
would make me a likeable person.			.87			
would make me socially desirable.			.88			
would improve the way I am perceived.			.87			
Prevention-focused motivation (α = .92)					.92	.74
When deciding whether or not share OCC information on my social media…						
I am concerned it may be a piece of misinformation.				.86		
I am worried other people may think I have no taste.				.89		
I am afraid that other people would have no good impression on me.				.87		
I am concerned putting peer pressure on the friends on my social media.				.82		
Perceived relational value (α = .82)					.83	.55
When sharing OCC information on my social media…						
I feel I am needed by other people.				.65		
I think I am helpful to other people.				.74		
I think I am important to other people.				.79		
I believe I am valuable to other people.				.79		

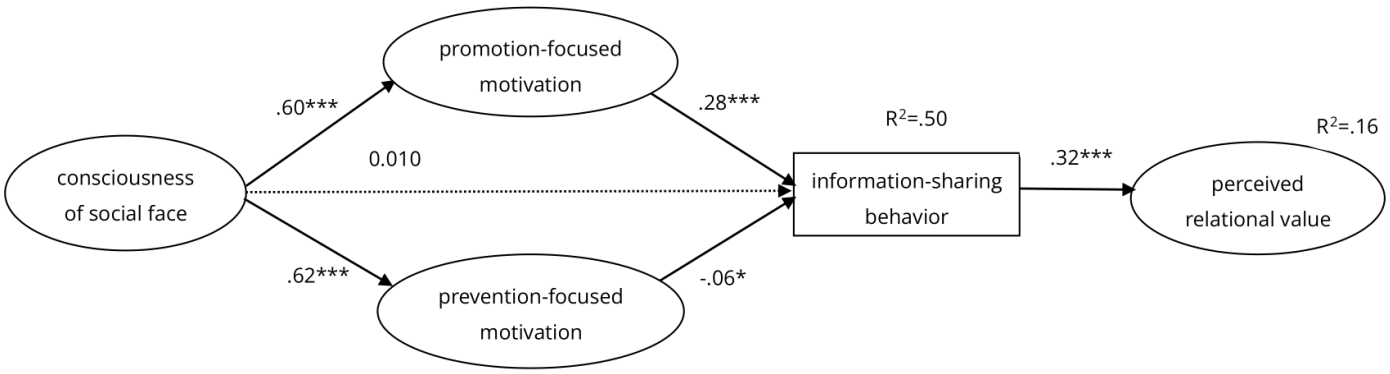
Note. [a] In the CFA model, consciousness of social face was treated as a second-order latent variable that was composed of two latent variables (e.g., desire to gain face, and fear of losing face).

Structural Model

Based on the above measurement model, we tested our conceptual model (see Figure 1). To obtain more robust results, demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, education, income, religious affiliation) and past donation behavior towards OCC were added into the model as control variables.

The model showed a good model fit, χ^2/df = 3.94, GFI = .92, NFI = .93, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05; 90% CI [.047, .053]. Then, we examined each path coefficient when controlling for all covariates. As shown in Figure 2, consciousness of social face was significantly positively associated with promotion-focused motivation (β = .60, p < .001) and prevention-focused motivation (β = .62, p < .001). Promotion-focused motivation was significantly positively associated with OCC information-sharing behavior (β = .28, p < .001), and prevention-focused motivation was significantly negatively associated with OCC information-sharing behavior (β = −.06, p = .034). However, there was no significant correlation between the consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior (β = .01, p = .763). Furthermore, there was a significantly positive relationship between OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value (β = .32, p < .001). All of our hypotheses were supported.

Figure 2. *The Final Model With Standardized Path Coefficients.*



Note. $^{*}p$ < .05, $^{***}p$ < .001.

The model indicated that the association between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior was possibly mediated by both promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation. To further test these two potential mediating paths, 5,000 bootstrap samples were created from the original data set by using the method of random sampling with replacement. As the results showed in Table 4, the total effect of consciousness of social face on OCC information-sharing behavior was significantly positive, B = .16, 95% CI [0.10, 0.22]. The indirect effects through promotion-focused motivation, B = .18, 95% Boot CI [.14, .22], and prevention-focused motivation, B = −.04, 95% Boot CI [−.07, −.01], were significant, yet with different directions. Furthermore, the results of pairwise comparison indicated that the specific indirect effect via promotion-focused motivation was statistically greater than that via prevention-focused motivation, difference = 0.21, 95% Boot CI [0.16, 0.26].

Table 4. *Total and Indirect Effects of Consciousness of Social Face on OCC Information-Sharing Behavior.*

	Effect	(Boot)SE	(Boot)LLCI	(Boot)ULCI
Total	0.16	0.03	0.10	0.22
Indirect1	0.18	0.02	0.14	0.22
Indirect2	−0.04	0.02	−0.07	−0.01
Difference	0.21	0.03	0.16	0.26

Notes. Indirect1: consciousness of social face > promotion-focused motivation > sharing behavior; Indirect2: consciousness of social face > prevention-focused motivation > sharing behavior; Total = Indirect1 + Indirect2 + Direct; Difference = Indirect1 – Indirect2.

Discussion

Extending prior studies on OCC information-sharing behavior, the present study took its public and relational characteristics into account and explored the antecedents and consequences of OCC information-sharing behavior from a relational perspective. The findings showed that consciousness of social face was positively associated with promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation, both of which mediated the relationship between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior. There was a positive

total effect of consciousness of social face on OCC information-sharing behavior. Furthermore, OCC information-sharing behavior was positively associated with perceived relational value. Taken together, this study helps us better understand the potential antecedents and consequences of OCC information-sharing behavior on social media.

Our first observation was that consciousness of social face exerted a positive total effect on OCC information-sharing behavior. This is consistent with some prior findings supporting the relationship between face consciousness and prosocial behavior such as ecological consumption (Shi et al., 2018). This connection is paramount as it implies that the conscious safeguarding of one's social image aligns with behaviors that benefit society at large. Moreover, the outcome of our study contributes to the growing body of knowledge around factors prompting individuals to share OCC information. Previous studies have made some early attempts to investigate relational factors, such as reputation motivation, the relationships between sharers and beneficiaries, as well as between sharers and OCC initiators/other sharers (Hou et al., 2021; Jiao et al., 2021). This study further reveals the influential role of consciousness of social face, a concern about the socially defined self, in driving OCC information-sharing behavior on social media. As a persisting and stable trait-like individual difference (Han et al., 2022), the consciousness of social face may underlie individuals' concern about their reputation and relations with others in general. This finding also helps confirm that OCC information-sharing behavior is a social behavior involving certain public commitments.

The mediation roles of both promotion-focused motivation and prevention-focused motivation in the relationship between consciousness of social face and OCC information-sharing behavior offer intriguing insights. This indicates that when individuals are highly conscious of their social face, they are motivated to both actively pursue a desired self-image and protect their self-image from risks and harm. This finding is consistent with the proposition of the impression management literature that individuals have the desire for control over the impressions others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) and in line with the attempts of previous studies to capture the impression management process in crowdfunding process (Cox et al., 2018; Gleasure, 2015; Xu & Wang, 2020). It is also coherent with the dual nature of consciousness of the social face that encompasses both the drive to enhance and the need to protect the social face (Zhang et al., 2011). Regarding the association between two impression management motives and OCC information-sharing behavior, we found that promotion-focused motivation emerged as a more prominent motive, despite prevention-focused motivation's negative implications. This can be attributed to the inherent human desire for social validation and accords with previous research suggesting that individuals' motivation for pursuing a desired image is a strong predictor of publicly observable information sharing for social cause (e.g., Lane & Dal Cin, 2018).

Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value. This finding adds to the prosocial literature that has linked prosocial behavior with psychological benefits. Previous studies have suggested that conducting prosocial behavior can enable individuals' psychological flourishing (Nelson et al., 2016), increase their perceptions of meaning in life (Klein, 2017), and enhance their self-esteem (Fu et al., 2017). Moreover, prosocial behaviors, as exemplified in acts of helping or cooperation, have been found to foster individuals' positive self-concept and self-evaluation (Cauley & Tyler, 1989; Grant & Sonnentag, 2010; Lemay et al., 2021). In light of these studies, our finding takes a step further by associating OCC information-sharing behavior on social media as a publicly token prosocial act with individuals' relational aspect of self-concept. We postulate that OCC information-sharing behavior on social media represents more than just a prosocial act; it's a public affirmation of one's values and an indicator of how individuals gauge their worth within their social and relational contexts. Besides, our finding also indicated the potential positive outcomes of social capital, which are induced by individuals' participation in crowdfunding activities, such as sharing OCC information on social media. This approach enriches the existing body of literature on social capital and crowdfunding research, which has mainly emphasized the importance of social capital in promoting individuals' participation in crowdfunding activities (e.g., Ba et al., 2022; Shneor et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The study sets out to investigate the mechanisms underlying individuals' OCC information-sharing behavior as a social behavior and its potential impact on individuals' perceptions of their relational value. To achieve this, an online survey was conducted among 1,166 Internet users in China.

Theoretically, this is one of the first empirical studies exploring the antecedents and consequences of OCC information-sharing behavior from a relational perspective. Specifically, this study probes this behavior as a social

behavior driven by a relational perspective into the self and impacting a positive evaluation of the self in relation to others. While previous studies predominantly focused on the predictive power of information, beneficiaries, and donors' prosocial characteristics in OCC information-sharing behavior (Hou et al., 2021; Jiao et al., 2021) and the impacts of OCC information-sharing on OCC performance (S. Liu et al., 2020; Moqri & Bandyopadhyay, 2017), the findings of the present study highlight the impact of face consciousness and impression management motivations in affecting prosocial information-sharing. The findings add to the previous observation on social face and impression management in the OCC context (Cox et al., 2018; Gleasure, 2015; Xu & Wang, 2020). Besides, the findings also indicate the potential of such prosocial information sharing in promoting positive identities and values, which in turn, can have many psychological benefits.

From a practical standpoint, the implications of this research are manifold, particularly for entities such as charities and fundraisers that lean heavily on social media platforms for outreach and promotions. Understanding how individuals' social face and image concerns influence their OCC information-sharing behavior can help OCC practitioners collaborate with online platforms to develop effective strategies to enhance their online presence and engagement with potential donors. For instance, the OCC projects can elaborate on the core values and self-images that potential information sharers wish to project when persuading them to share OCC information with others. While some Internet users want to be publicly acknowledged for their contributions to sharing such information, others might prefer discretion, prompting the need for features like anonymity options. Furthermore, gaining a deeper understanding of the correlation between OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value can illuminate the existence of a positive feedback loop in practice. To leverage this insight, OCC practitioners can implement feedback mechanisms and recognition systems aimed at cultivating a stronger sense of community and belonging among individuals who share information related to charitable crowdfunding initiatives. By acknowledging and rewarding these contributions, practitioners can foster a supportive and cohesive online environment conducive to further engagement and collaboration among information sharers within the OCC community.

Several limitations of the present study should be addressed. First, we cannot conclude causal inference among the variables we investigated in the present study, especially the relationship between OCC information-sharing behavior and perceived relational value, due to the cross-sectional nature of our data. Future studies should deploy more rigorous methodology (e.g., longitudinal surveys or experiments) to probe the causal relationships among these theoretical concepts. Second, we used only one item when we measured OCC information-sharing behavior. Multi-item scales measuring behavioral intentions and actual behavior (e.g., H. Chen et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2021) should be considered in future studies to better elucidate the causal relationship between variables and increase the predictive power of the study. Including behavioral intention also aligns with established theories of behavior change, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Third, whereas Ho (1976) suggested that face and face-related behaviors are universal, most research on social face consciousness, including the present research, predominantly relies on Chinese data. Thus, our findings call for further replication studies in more individualistic cultures, where issues of consciousness of social face and impression management may manifest in different patterns. Finally, the current study focused on individuals' information-sharing behavior towards prosocial crowdfunding. Replication studies are also needed in commercial-orientated crowdfunding, given that these different types of crowdfunding projects vary in terms of individuals' participation motivations and potential associated benefits.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Authors' Contribution

Wu Li: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, writing—original draft, writing—review & editing. **Yujie Dong**: writing—original draft, writing—review & editing. **Zehang Xie**: investigation, writing—original draft. **Qi Yao**: conceptualization, methodology, writing—original draft. **Yu Tian**: methodology, formal analysis, writing—original draft.

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About Authors

Wu Li (Ph.D., Peking University) is a professor in the School of Media and Communication at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His current research interests primarily lie in media psychology and online behavior.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1633-2363

Yujie Dong (M.A., Shanghai Jiao Tong University) is a doctoral candidate in the School of Media and Communication at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Her research interests include media psychology and health communication.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8146-6571

Zehang Xie (M.A., East China Normal University) is a doctoral candidate in the School of Media and Communication at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His research interests cover media psychology and human-computer interactions.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2665-2640

Qi Yao (Ph.D., Nankai University) is an associate professor in the School of Psychology and Cognitive Science at East China Normal University. Her research interests include social media, interpersonal relationship and collective behavior.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5327-262X

Yu Tian (Ph.D., Shandong Normal University) is a professor in the School of Marxism at Qingdao University of Science and Technology. His research interests center around Internet and smartphone addiction.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5061-0825

✉ **Correspondence to**
Qi Yao, School of Psychology and Cognitive Science, East China Normal University, China, 200062, qyao@psy.ecnu.edu.cn

Yu Tian, School of Marxism, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, 266071, tianyurest@outlook.com