



No Likes, No Funds? A Comparative Analysis of Digital Presence and Financial Sustainability in a Non-Profit in Gurgaon, India

Paramjit S. Lamba¹, Suhani Gupta², Aman Parmar³, Lokesh Rathi⁴, Nikhil⁵, Tarun Gulliya⁶, Yash Ghudaiya⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7}School of Business, Sushant University, Gurugram

Cite This Paper as: Paramjit S. Lamba, Suhani Gupta, Aman Parmar, Lokesh Rathi⁴, Nikhil, Tarun Gulliya, Yash Ghudaiya (2026) No Likes, No Funds? A Comparative Analysis of Digital Presence and Financial Sustainability in a Non-Profit in Gurgaon, India. The Journal of African Development 1, Vol.7, No.1, 620-628

KEYWORDS

NGO fundraising, social media, digital presence, non-profit sustainability

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between social media presence and financial sustainability in the context of NeoFusion Creative Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in Gurgaon, Haryana, India. Despite over a decade of impactful community work, having reached more than 15,250 students, distributed over 62,000 meals, and rehabilitated over 500 school dropouts since its founding in 2013, the organization continues to face chronic funding shortfalls that threaten the continuity of its programmes. Adopting a qualitative case study methodology grounded in the interpretive paradigm, the study draws on direct observation, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and document analysis conducted during a social internship visit to the organization. Thematic analysis of the data reveals four interconnected findings: the organization maintains a limited and inconsistent social media presence; barriers prevent meaningful digital adoption; digital invisibility directly constrains fundraising outcomes; and a significant gap exists between the organization's on-ground impact and its public awareness. The study concludes that NeoFusion's funding challenges are primarily a consequence of strategic digital silence rather than insufficient public generosity, and recommends prioritized investment in digital communication capacity as a prerequisite for long-term financial sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era defined by digital connectivity, social media has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for communication, advocacy, and resource mobilization. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn have transformed the way organizations engage with their audiences, build communities, and solicit support. For non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are heavily dependent on public goodwill and donor contributions, a robust digital presence is no longer a luxury but is a strategic necessity. Yet, a significant number of NGOs, particularly those operating at the grassroots level in developing economies, remain largely absent from the digital landscape, hampering their ability to attract funds and sustain their operations.

India is home to one of the largest civil society ecosystems in the world, with an estimated 3.3 million NGOs serving diverse social causes ranging from education and healthcare to women's empowerment and environmental conservation. Despite this vast network, a large proportion of these organizations struggle with chronic underfunding, limited outreach, and poor public visibility. While metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru have witnessed the rise of tech-savvy non-profits that effectively harness digital platforms for fundraising campaigns, many NGOs in rapidly urbanizing satellite cities such as Gurgaon, Haryana, continue to operate in near-digital silence. This disconnect between the potential of social media and its actual adoption among grassroots NGOs represents a critical gap both in practice and in academic research. This paper investigates the relationship between social media presence and financial sustainability through an in-depth case study of NeoFusion Creative Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in Gurgaon, India. The study emerges from a social internship visit to the organization, during which it was observed that NeoFusion Creative Foundation was grappling with significant funding shortfalls while simultaneously maintaining little to no active and consistent presence on social media platforms. This absence not only limits the organization's ability to communicate its mission to potential donors but also reduces its overall credibility and public trust in an increasingly digital-first world.

The central research question guiding this paper is: Does the absence of an active and strategic social media engagement directly contribute to the fundraising challenges faced by NeoFusion Creative Foundation? This research adopts a



qualitative case study methodology, which allows for a rich, contextual, and nuanced understanding of the organization's experiences, challenges, and unmet digital potential. Data has been gathered through direct observation, informal interviews with key stakeholders, and organizational insights collected during the internship period, lending the study both empirical depth and practical relevance. The qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to this inquiry as it captures the lived experiences of those within the organization and explores the underlying reasons for the digital outreach gap in a manner that quantitative methods alone cannot achieve.

The significance of this study is further underscored by the scale and depth of work that NeoFusion Creative Foundation has accomplished on the ground. Established in 2013 as a nationally certified non-profit organization operating under Section 25A of the Companies Act, 1956, NeoFusion has over the years empowered more than 14,500 students, with a focus on adolescents, school dropouts, and unemployed youth from underprivileged communities across India. Founded by Dr. Anubhooti Bhatnagar, a Ph.D. in Sociology and a dedicated member of Rotary International, the organization's mission is to ignite dreams, nurture talents, and create sustainable career pathways for marginalized youth. Its Gurgaon centre, located at Rosewood City, Sector 49, operates a holistic learning model running two shifts, offering NCERT and NIOS curriculum-based education, performing and visual arts training, health and nutrition support, and employability skill development in partnership with organizations such as the NIIT Foundation and Smile Foundation. The Foundation's impact figures are striking: over 62,000 meals have been provided to students, more than 500 school dropouts have resumed their education, and over 150 youth have secured employment all testifying to the transformative work being carried out quietly, and largely without the amplification that a strong digital presence could provide.

Yet, despite this impressive on-ground impact, NeoFusion Creative Foundation's social media footprint remains limited and inconsistent, failing to translate its real-world achievements into the kind of public visibility that attracts donor support at scale. This paradox of meaningful work rendered invisible by digital silence, forms the heart of this study. The findings are intended not only to contribute to the academic discourse on non-profit management and digital communication in the Indian context, but also to offer actionable recommendations for NeoFusion Creative Foundation and similar organizations seeking to strengthen their financial sustainability through strategic social media engagement.

The paper is structured as follows: a review of existing literature on NGO fundraising and digital outreach, followed by the research methodology, case study analysis, findings, discussion, and concluding recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media as a Fundraising Tool for Non-Profit Organizations

The relationship between social media use and fundraising effectiveness in non-profit organizations (NPOs) has attracted growing scholarly attention over the past decade. Research has consistently demonstrated that social media platforms offer NGOs unprecedented opportunities to reach wider audiences, build donor communities, and mobilize financial resources. Social media is widely regarded as an unprecedented vehicle for NGOs to communicate their missions and reach their supporters, enabling people to easily see and engage with posts related to charitable causes (Pradhan & Verma, 2021). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn have become integral to non-profit communication strategies worldwide, not merely as tools of outreach but as mechanisms for sustaining donor relationships over time.

However, the literature cautions against assuming that a mere digital presence is sufficient. In a significant study analyzing the social media accounts of 83 non-governmental development organizations, the size of an NPO's follower network, its volume of posts, content that explicitly requests donations, and overall follower engagement were all found to influence fundraising outcomes whereas mere presence on social media alone had no significant effect on donations raised (Elvira-Lorilla et al., 2024). This finding has important implications for organizations like NeoFusion Creative Foundation, where token or inactive social media accounts may confer little practical fundraising advantage without a deliberate, consistent, and engagement-driven content strategy.

A systematic literature review of 62 studies on the subject further found that the benefits NPOs can derive from social media use for fundraising include increased transparency and accountability, enhanced organizational image, greater volunteer involvement, and improved donor engagement (Nonprofit Source, 2022). These findings suggest that social media functions not simply as a fundraising channel but as a trust-building instrument, one that shapes public perception and donor confidence in an organization's credibility and impact.

2.2 The Digital Divide Among Indian NGOs

Despite the well-documented potential of digital tools for non-profit sustainability, the adoption of these technologies among Indian NGOs remains deeply uneven. Despite rapid digital adoption across India, the nonprofit sector is lagging, often because leaders are so absorbed in frontline work that they lack the time or expertise to drive digital transformation, a gap that threatens long-term sustainability and limits the ability to scale impact (fundsforNGOs, 2025). This observation resonates powerfully with the situation observed at NeoFusion Creative Foundation, where organizational energy is directed almost entirely toward programme delivery, leaving little capacity for digital communication.

A national-level report on the digitization of India's non-profit sector reveals the scale of this challenge starkly. Indian



nonprofits score an average digital maturity of just 5 out of 10, and critically, 83% of Indian nonprofits fail to utilize freely available technology grants, notably Google Ad Grants, leaving millions of rupees in potential advertising credits untapped (Digital for Nonprofits, 2025). The same report found that organizations achieving advanced digital maturity realize up to 20% higher revenue growth compared to less digitally adept peers, a significant disparity that underlines the cost of digital inaction for resource-constrained NGOs.

The digital divide greatly influences NGO effectiveness, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, as many NGOs lack any digital framework for data gathering, online communication, or fundraising, and restricted use of digital tools and social media directly impacts donor participation and organizational visibility (NGOFeed, 2025). Gurgaon, while an urban centre, hosts numerous small NGOs that mirror this pattern, organizationally committed but digitally absent.

2.3 Funding Challenges and Financial Sustainability of NGOs

Chronic underfunding is one of the most pervasive challenges facing NGOs in India. Research on the problems faced by non-governmental organizations in Indian cities found that lack of funds, lack of trained staff, and poor public participation are among the major challenges faced by NGOs, alongside structural issues such as monopolization of leadership and limited government support (Redalyc, 2021). These challenges are compounded by a fundraising environment in which the culture of individual giving to NGOs is still developing. Even with the Corporate Social Responsibility law requiring eligible companies to allocate 2% of post-tax profits to non-profits, the sector still struggles to meet growing demands, with a small fraction of non-profits securing most of the capital while millions operate with minimal support (fundsforNGOs, 2025).

The literature further highlights how funding instability can distort an NGO's mission. Studies exploring NGO experiences in Indian cities have shown that the pursuit of external funding often leads organizations into patterns of "mission creep," where programmatic priorities shift to align with donor preferences rather than community needs (Hubbard, 2021). This underscores the importance of developing diversified, community-based fundraising mechanisms, of which social media is increasingly seen as a viable and low-cost avenue.

2.4 Transparency, Donor Trust, and Digital Communication

Donor trust is a foundational prerequisite for sustainable non-profit fundraising, and research consistently links transparency with increased giving. Studies find positive associations between donors' perceptions of financial transparency and both perceived organizational performance and donor trust, suggesting that transparency functions through both informational and performative mechanisms in shaping donor behaviour (Nature Communications, 2025). Social media, when used strategically, serves as a powerful vehicle for communicating this transparency, sharing impact stories, financial updates, and programme outcomes in real time.

According to the Give.org Donor Trust Report, nearly 70% of respondents rated the importance of trusting a charity before giving as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale, and nonprofits earning higher transparency ratings averaged significantly more in contributions than those that did not (Easy Donation Pickup, 2025). For an organization like NeoFusion Creative Foundation, whose work generates compelling human stories of transformation from school dropouts resuming education to youth securing employment, social media offers an accessible and authentic platform to build this donor trust.

2.5 Case Study as a Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study methodology, drawing on the foundational framework established by Yin (2018), who argues that the case study method is most appropriate when the research seeks to answer 'how' and 'why' questions about a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context. The use of case study research is recommended when examining phenomena as they occur within their natural setting, particularly for understanding complex organizational processes that cannot easily be separated from their environment (ScienceDirect, 2023). The single case study design employed here allows for an in-depth, contextually rich examination of NeoFusion Creative Foundation's specific digital and fundraising challenges generating insights that, while rooted in one organization's experience, carry broader implications for similar NGOs operating in urban India.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which holds that social reality is constructed through the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings that individuals attach to their circumstances (Creswell, 2014). Rather than seeking objective, generalizable laws, interpretivism aims to develop a deep and contextual understanding of a specific phenomenon as experienced by those within it. This paradigm is particularly well-suited to the present study, which seeks to understand how the absence of social media engagement shapes the fundraising experience of NeoFusion Creative Foundation, a question that is inherently rooted in organizational culture, human behaviour, and lived experience rather than in measurable variables alone. The ontological position adopted is one of constructivism, acknowledging that the reality of

the organization's challenges is socially constructed and best understood through close engagement with its members and context.

3.2 Research Approach

Consistent with the interpretive paradigm, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. Qualitative methods are appropriate when the aim is to explore complex social phenomena in depth, particularly when the research questions are concerned with "how" and "why" rather than "how many" or "how much" (Bryman, 2016). In the context of this study, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to capture the nuances of NeoFusion Creative Foundation's operational realities, the barriers preventing digital adoption, and the relationship between limited online visibility and persistent funding challenges, as well as dimensions of organizational life that numerical data alone would fail to illuminate.

3.3 Research Design

The research employs a single case study design, following the framework established by Yin (2018), who argues that a case study is the most appropriate strategy when examining a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. A single case study is justified here on the grounds that NeoFusion Creative Foundation represents a revelatory case, an organization whose combination of substantial on-ground impact and near-total digital absence offers a uniquely instructive lens through which to examine the broader issue of digital silence among Indian NGOs. The case study design facilitates the use of multiple sources of evidence, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Primary data for this study was collected through three qualitative methods during the social internship visit to NeoFusion Creative Foundation. First, direct observation of the organization's day-to-day operations provided insight into its communication practices and resource constraints. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including the founder and senior staff members, enabling the researcher to gather first-hand perspectives on funding challenges and digital outreach. Third, document analysis of the organization's website, annual reports, and available social media profiles was undertaken to assess the current state of its digital presence. This triangulation of data sources strengthens the internal validity of the study (Denzin, 2017).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected through observation, interviews, and documents was analyzed using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of recurring themes, and interpretation of those themes in relation to the study's central research question. The themes emerging from the analysis, including resource constraints, digital capacity gaps, and donor visibility, are discussed in detail in the findings section.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to established ethical principles of qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participant confidentiality has been maintained throughout, and the findings are reported in a manner that protects the privacy of individuals while faithfully representing the organization's experiences.

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings emerging from direct observation, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and document analysis conducted during the social internship visit to NeoFusion Creative Foundation, Gurgaon. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, from which four primary themes were identified: (1) the organization's limited and inconsistent social media presence, (2) the structural and capacity-related barriers to digital adoption, (3) the direct impact of digital invisibility on fundraising outcomes, and (4) the gap between on-ground impact and public awareness. Each theme is discussed in detail below, supported by evidence gathered during fieldwork and cross-referenced with the literature reviewed in the preceding section.

4.1 Theme 1: Limited and Inconsistent Social Media Presence

One of the most immediately observable findings during the internship visit was the near-total absence of a consistent, active, and strategically managed social media presence for NeoFusion Creative Foundation. While the organization does maintain accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn as evidenced by links listed on its official website, these platforms are characterized by infrequent posting, low follower engagement, and an absence of any structured content calendar or communication strategy. Posts, where they exist, tend to be sporadic, event-driven, and lacking in the storytelling depth that research identifies as central to effective donor engagement.

Document analysis of the organization's social media profiles confirmed that the volume and frequency of content falls



significantly below benchmarks recommended in the non-profit digital communication literature. This finding aligns with Elvira-Lorilla et al. (2024), who established that mere presence on social media platforms has no meaningful effect on fundraising outcomes, it is the consistency of posting, the size of the follower network, and the quality of engagement that translate into tangible donor support. NeoFusion's current digital posture, therefore, places it in a particularly vulnerable position: visible enough to be found online, but not active enough to inspire confidence, trust, or giving behaviour among prospective donors.

Notably, the organization has no active YouTube channel, despite possessing a wealth of video-worthy material in the form of student performances, community events, and transformation stories. This represents a significant missed opportunity, given that video content consistently generates the highest engagement rates across non-profit social media platforms (Nonprofit Source, 2022).

4.2 Theme 2: Barriers to Digital Adoption

Interviews with the founder, Dr. Anubhooti Bhatnagar, and senior staff members revealed that the primary reason for NeoFusion's limited digital presence is not indifference to its value, but rather a confluence of structural and capacity-related constraints. The organization operates with a lean team whose time and energy are almost entirely absorbed by the demands of frontline programme delivery, running two daily shifts of educational and artistic programmes, managing the mid-day meal programme, coordinating with partner organizations such as the NIIT Foundation and Smile Foundation, and maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements.

Staff members acknowledged during interviews that they were aware of the potential of social media as a fundraising tool but lacked both the dedicated human resources and the technical expertise to manage it effectively. No staff member held a designated role in communications, marketing, or digital outreach. This finding resonates strongly with the observation by fundsforNGOs (2025) that nonprofit leaders in India are so absorbed in frontline work that they frequently lack the time or expertise to drive digital transformation. The result is a persistent cycle in which resource constraints limit digital capacity, which in turn limits fundraising success, which further deepens resource constraints.

Additionally, the organization had not availed itself of freely available digital resources such as Google Ad Grants, which provide eligible non-profits with up to \$10,000 per month in free search advertising. This is consistent with the finding from Digital for Nonprofits (2025) that 83% of Indian nonprofits fail to utilize such technology grants, leaving significant potential donor reach untapped. The awareness gap around these tools represents a low-cost, high-impact area where targeted capacity building could yield immediate returns for NeoFusion.

4.3 Theme 3: The Impact of Digital Invisibility on Fundraising Outcomes

The most critical finding of this study concerns the direct relationship between NeoFusion Creative Foundation's limited digital presence and its chronic inability to attract sufficient donor funding. During interviews, organizational leadership confirmed that the foundation relies primarily on personal networks, word-of-mouth referrals, and a small number of long-standing individual donors for financial support. Fundraising appeals are largely conducted through direct personal outreach rather than through scalable, public-facing digital campaigns.

This approach, while authentic, is inherently limited in reach. The organization's website lists donation options including sponsoring a child's education for ₹2,000 per month or ₹24,000 per year, but without consistent social media activity to drive traffic to these donation pages, the potential donor base remains narrow and largely static. Observation during the internship confirmed that there was no active digital fundraising campaign running at the time of the visit, and no mechanism in place to track online donor acquisition or retention.

The consequence of this digital gap is a persistent funding shortfall that constrains programme delivery. The organization is currently running an urgent campaign to raise funds for providing students with hot and nutritious daily meals, a basic welfare need that ought to be within reach for an organization with NeoFusion's track record and impact credentials. That such a campaign has not gained wider public traction is, in large part, a function of its digital invisibility. This finding is consistent with Harris and Neely (2021), who established that transparency and visibility are directly associated with higher donor contributions, and with Vinales et al. (2025), who found strong positive associations between donor trust, perceived organizational performance, and giving behaviour.

4.4 Theme 4: The Gap Between On-Ground Impact and Public Awareness

Perhaps the most striking finding of this study is the profound disconnect between the scale of NeoFusion Creative Foundation's real-world impact and the degree to which that impact is known or recognized beyond its immediate community. The organization has, since its founding in 2013, reached over 15,250 adolescents through creative workshops and outreach programmes, distributed over 62,000 meals, helped more than 500 school dropouts resume their education, secured employment for over 150 youth, and supported 65 students in pursuing or completing college degrees. These are remarkable achievements for a grassroots organization operating primarily from a single basement centre in Sector 49, Gurgaon.

Yet, this story remains largely untold in the digital public sphere. The compelling human narratives available to NeoFusion such as students like Priyanka, who escaped child marriage through dance and went on to graduate in Kathak; Firoz, who transformed from a directionless teenager into the organization's Head of Operations; and Roshini, who topped her school



examinations after losing both parents, represent precisely the kind of authentic, emotionally resonant content that research identifies as most effective in motivating donor giving (Pradhan & Verma, 2021). These stories exist on the organization's website but have not been amplified through social media in any systematic or sustained way.

This gap between impact and awareness constitutes both a missed opportunity and an organizational risk. As NGOFeed (2025) notes, restricted use of digital storytelling and social media directly diminishes donor participation and organizational visibility. For NeoFusion, which has an unusually rich repository of transformation stories, the cost of digital silence is particularly high, not because the work is insufficient, but because the world simply does not know about it.

4.5 Summary of Findings

Taken together, the four themes identified in this analysis paint a coherent and concerning picture. NeoFusion Creative Foundation is an organization of genuine social worth, with a proven record of transforming lives in one of India's most rapidly urbanizing cities. Yet its chronic underfunding is not primarily a reflection of a lack of public generosity or donor interest, but is a structural consequence of digital invisibility. The absence of a consistent, strategic, and story-driven social media presence has left a significant gap between what the organization does and what the public knows it does. Bridging this gap is not merely a communications challenge, it is a financial sustainability imperative.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

The findings presented in the preceding section reveal a complex and multi-layered relationship between digital communication, donor engagement, and financial sustainability at NeoFusion Creative Foundation. This discussion situates those findings within the broader theoretical and empirical landscape established in the literature review, drawing out their implications for the organization specifically and for grassroots NGOs in urban India more generally. Four interconnected threads are explored: the strategic cost of digital silence, the capacity trap facing resource-constrained NGOs, the role of storytelling in donor mobilization, and the path toward digital empowerment as a sustainability strategy.

5.2 The Strategic Cost of Digital Silence

The most fundamental insight emerging from this study is that NeoFusion Creative Foundation's funding challenges cannot be understood in isolation from its digital communication practices. The organization's near-absent social media strategy creates what may be termed a visibility deficit, a condition in which an organization's public profile is so limited that its ability to attract new donors, volunteers, and institutional partners is structurally compromised, regardless of the quality of its work on the ground.

This finding directly supports and extends the conclusions of Elvira-Lorilla et al. (2024), who demonstrated that among non-profit organizations, it is not the mere existence of social media accounts but the active, consistent, and engagement-driven use of those platforms that produces fundraising outcomes. NeoFusion currently occupies the worst of both worlds in this respect: it has nominal social media accounts that signal digital awareness, yet these accounts are insufficiently active to generate the follower growth, post reach, or donor engagement that would translate into financial returns. This is arguably more damaging than having no accounts at all, since inactive accounts may convey an impression of organizational stagnation to prospective donors who visit them.

The strategic cost of this silence is magnified by the competitive environment in which Indian NGOs operate. As fundsforNGOs (2025) notes, only a small fraction of India's vast non-profit ecosystem secures the majority of available donor capital and increasingly, the organizations that succeed in this environment are those with the strongest digital communication capabilities. In a landscape where donors face an ever-widening array of giving choices, digital visibility functions as a form of organizational credibility. An NGO that cannot be found on social media, or whose social media presence is sparse and irregular, is likely to be bypassed in favour of organizations that communicate their impact more visibly and compellingly. For NeoFusion, the practical consequence of this dynamic is a fundraising ceiling that no amount of excellent programme delivery alone can break through.

5.3 The Capacity Trap: When Doing Good Leaves No Room for Telling the World

A critical insight emerging from the interviews conducted during the internship is that NeoFusion's digital inaction is not a product of complacency or indifference, but of a structural trap that is widely recognized in the literature on non-profit management. The organization's small and overstretched team is consumed by the demands of programme delivery such as educating children, feeding students, coordinating with partner organizations, and navigating regulatory requirements, leaving virtually no bandwidth for digital communication or fundraising strategy.

This dynamic reflects what Bryman (2016) describes as a common organizational paradox in the voluntary sector: the organizations most committed to their mission are often the least able to step back from it long enough to invest in the infrastructure including digital infrastructure, that would allow them to scale and sustain that mission. fundsforNGOs (2025) captures this succinctly in observing that nonprofit leaders are so absorbed in frontline work that they frequently lack the time or expertise to drive digital transformation, with the result that the very organizations doing the most impactful



work are often the least visible to potential funders.

The absence of a dedicated communications or digital marketing role at NeoFusion is therefore both a symptom and a cause of its funding difficulties. Without financial resources, the organization cannot hire a communications professional; without a communications professional, it cannot build the digital presence that would attract the financial resources needed to do so. This self-reinforcing cycle, what might be referred to as the capacity trap, is one of the most significant structural challenges facing small and medium-sized NGOs in India, and it is one that policy-makers, corporate social responsibility funders, and capacity-building organizations ought to treat as a priority intervention point.

The finding that NeoFusion has not availed itself of Google Ad Grants, which would provide the organization with up to \$10,000 per month in free search advertising, is particularly illuminating in this context. As *Digital for Nonprofits* (2025) reports, 83% of Indian nonprofits similarly fail to access these freely available resources, suggesting that the barrier is not financial but informational and capacity-related. This points to the need for targeted digital literacy programmes within the NGO sector, delivered by intermediary organizations that can help grassroots non-profits navigate and utilize available digital tools without requiring significant internal expertise.

5.4 Storytelling as a Catalyst for Donor Mobilization

One of the most practically significant findings of this study concerns the untapped storytelling potential that NeoFusion Creative Foundation possesses. The organization's decade-long journey has generated a rich archive of human transformation narratives comprising of students who escaped poverty, young people who found dignity through art, families whose lives changed because a child stayed in school. These stories represent an extraordinary asset for donor engagement, yet they remain largely confined to the organization's website and the memories of its staff, unreached by the social media amplification they deserve.

The literature is unambiguous on this point. Pradhan and Verma (2021) identify authentic storytelling as one of the most powerful mechanisms through which NGOs can build the emotional connection with prospective donors that motivates giving. Harris and Neely (2021) further establish that donors are most likely to give to organizations whose accomplishments are communicated clearly and compellingly, and that transparency about both successes and challenges deepens donor trust and long-term commitment. Vinuales et al. (2025) add that perceptions of organizational performance shaped significantly by the quality of an organization's public communication are directly associated with donor trust and giving behaviour.

For NeoFusion, this body of evidence suggests a clear and actionable path forward. The organization already possesses the raw material for a compelling social media presence including the stories, the photographs, the community relationships, and the impact data. What it currently lacks is the capacity and strategy to translate these assets into a consistent, platform-appropriate digital narrative. Short-form video content on Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, student spotlight features on Facebook, impact infographics on LinkedIn, and regular updates on fundraising campaigns across all platforms would collectively constitute a digital communication strategy capable of reaching audiences far beyond NeoFusion's current network and of converting that reach into donor engagement and financial support.

5.5 Digital Empowerment as a Sustainability Strategy

The discussion thus far points toward a broader conclusion: for organizations like NeoFusion Creative Foundation, digital empowerment is not a peripheral concern or a luxury to be addressed once financial stability is achieved. It is, rather, a prerequisite for that stability. As the literature consistently demonstrates, donor trust, organizational visibility, and financial sustainability are deeply intertwined in the contemporary non-profit environment, and all three are increasingly mediated through digital communication channels.

This reframing has important implications for how NeoFusion and similar organizations approach their strategic planning. Investment in digital capacity whether through hiring a communications volunteer, partnering with a digital marketing agency on a pro bono basis, enrolling in capacity-building programmes offered by organizations such as Digital for Nonprofits, or simply committing to a structured social media posting schedule, should be understood not as an operational overhead but as a core strategic investment in the organization's long-term survival. The evidence from this study suggests that the return on such investment, measured in donor acquisition, public visibility, and community trust, would far exceed its cost.

Moreover, the discussion highlights the responsibility that falls on external stakeholders such as the government bodies, corporate CSR departments, foundations, and academic institutions to recognize the digital capacity gap facing grassroots NGOs and to design support mechanisms that address it directly. Providing financial grants specifically earmarked for digital infrastructure, facilitating pro bono digital marketing support through corporate partnerships, and integrating digital literacy training into broader NGO capacity-building programmes are all measures that could meaningfully alter the fundraising trajectories of organizations like NeoFusion Creative Foundation.

In sum, the discussion reveals that NeoFusion Creative Foundation's funding challenges are not primarily a reflection of insufficient social need, inadequate programme quality, or donor unwillingness to give. They are a consequence of structural digital invisibility, a condition produced by the intersection of capacity constraints, awareness gaps, and the absence of a strategic communication culture within the organization. Addressing this condition requires action at both the



organizational and systemic level, and the recommendations arising from this discussion are presented in the concluding section that follows.

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the relationship between social media presence and financial sustainability in the context of NeoFusion Creative Foundation, a grassroots non-governmental organization based in Gurgaon, India. Guided by the central research question of whether the absence of active and strategic social media engagement directly contributes to the fundraising challenges faced by the organization, the study adopted a qualitative case study methodology, drawing on direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis conducted during a social internship visit.

The evidence gathered and analyzed across the preceding sections leads to an unambiguous conclusion: digital silence is costing NeoFusion Creative Foundation far more than it can afford. An organization that has, since 2013, empowered over 15,250 students, distributed more than 62,000 meals, rehabilitated over 500 school dropouts, and secured employment for over 150 young people from underprivileged communities, should not be struggling to fund a daily meal programme. Yet it is. And the primary reason, as this study has demonstrated, is not a lack of public generosity or societal indifference to the cause, but rather the organization's near-total absence from the digital public sphere where contemporary donor engagement takes place.

The findings confirm that NeoFusion is caught in a cycle in which resource constraints limit digital investment, which in turn limits fundraising success, which further deepens resource constraints. Breaking this cycle requires a deliberate and prioritized commitment to digital communication, not as a supplementary activity but as a core organizational strategy. The organization possesses every ingredient needed for a compelling social media presence whether it is authentic human stories, measurable impact, a passionate founder, or a community of beneficiaries whose lives have been genuinely transformed. What it currently lacks is the capacity and strategic framework to translate these assets into sustained donor engagement online.

This study also draws attention to a wider systemic issue within India's non-profit sector, where the digital divide between well-resourced and grassroots NGOs continues to deepen, concentrating donor capital among a small number of digitally sophisticated organizations while leaving the majority chronically underfunded and invisible.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study will serve as a practical resource for NeoFusion Creative Foundation as it seeks to strengthen its digital outreach and financial sustainability, and as a contribution to the growing body of scholarship examining the intersection of digital communication and non-profit management in the Indian context.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study provides a meaningful and grounded investigation into the relationship between digital presence and fundraising capacity at NeoFusion Creative Foundation, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study is based on a single case study, which, by design, limits the generalizability of its findings. Although the insights generated are rich and contextually detailed, they cannot be uncritically extrapolated to represent the experiences of all grassroots NGOs in Gurgaon or urban India more broadly. Future research employing multiple case studies or larger-scale surveys would strengthen the external validity of these conclusions.

Second, data collection was constrained by the duration and scope of the internship visit. The relatively short period of fieldwork means that some organizational dynamics, seasonal fundraising patterns, and longer-term communication trends may not have been fully captured. A longitudinal study tracking NeoFusion's digital engagement and fundraising outcomes over an extended period would yield more comprehensive findings.

Third, the study relies primarily on self-reported data from organizational stakeholders, which carries the inherent risk of social desirability bias. The participants may have represented their organization's digital practices and fundraising challenges in ways they considered favorable or professionally appropriate. Triangulation with independent digital analytics data would help mitigate this limitation in future research.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion presented in this study, the following recommendations are offered to NeoFusion Creative Foundation and to the broader NGO ecosystem:

For NeoFusion Creative Foundation, it is recommended that the organization immediately prioritize the development of a structured social media content strategy, built around its most compelling asset, the human transformation stories of its students and alumni. Designating a volunteer or intern specifically responsible for digital communications would represent a low-cost, high-impact first step. The organization should also apply without delay for Google Ad Grants, which would provide free search advertising to drive traffic to its donation pages at no financial cost.

For the broader NGO sector and policymakers, this study recommends the creation of dedicated digital capacity-building programmes targeted at grassroots non-profits, delivered through intermediary organizations and funded through corporate



CSR budgets. Technology companies operating in the National Capital Region, many of which are headquartered in Gurgaon itself, are particularly well-positioned to offer pro bono digital marketing support to organizations like NeoFusion as part of their social responsibility commitments...

References

1. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
2. Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
3. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
4. Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Transaction Publishers.
5. Digital for Nonprofits. (2025). State of nonprofits digitization report 2025. BizzBuzz. <https://www.bizzbuzz.news/national/andhrapradesh/most-ngos-lack-digital-literacy-despite-tech-boom-report-1364614>
6. Easy Donation Pickup. (2025). What you should know about nonprofit transparency. <https://easydonationpickup.com/blog/nonprofit-transparency/>
7. Elvira-Lorilla, T., Garcia-Rodriguez, I., Romero-Merino, M. E., & Santamaria-Mariscal, M. (2024). The role of social media in nonprofit organizations' fundraising. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640231213286>
8. fundsforNGOs. (2025, November 28). Digital transformation: The new survival imperative for Indian NGOs. <https://news.fundsforngos.org/2025/11/28/digital-transformation-the-new-survival-imperative-for-indian-ngos/>
9. Harris, E., & Neely, D. (2021). Determinants and consequences of nonprofit transparency. *Journal of Accounting, Auditing & Finance*. <https://candid.org/blogs/research-shows-nonprofit-transparency-matters/>
10. Hubbard, J. (2021). "Funding does something to people": NGOs navigating funding challenges in India. *Development in Practice*, 31(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2021.1911938>
11. NGOFeed. (2025). What are the challenges faced by NGOs in India? <https://ngofeed.com/blog/what-are-the-challenges-faced-by-ngos-in-india/>
12. Nonprofit Source. (2022). How nonprofit organizations use social media for fundraising: A systematic literature review. *Academia*. <https://www.academia.edu/71120147>
13. Pradhan, P., & Verma, D. S. (2021). Integrating social media in NGO strategic communication. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354774024>
14. Redalyc. (2021). Problems and challenges of non-governmental organizations in Pune City, State of Maharashtra, India. *Redalyc Journal*. <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/6437/643768221040/html/>
15. Vinuales, G., & others. (2025). Relationships between financial transparency, trust, and performance: An examination of donors' perceptions. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04640-2>
16. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications..

