

Original Paper

Impact of Emotional Storytelling in Facebook Health Campaigns on Patient Trust

Dr. Surjadeep Dutta¹

¹ Faculty of Management Studies, Dr. B.C. Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, West Bengal, India

Received: January 26, 2026

Accepted: March 22, 2026

Online Published: April 15, 2026

doi:10.22158/ibes.v8n2p155

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/ibes.v8n2p155>

Abstract

The study explores how emotional storytelling functions in Facebook health campaigns to influence patient trust because it shows that storytelling methods increase audience trust and health professionals' ability to establish connections with their viewers. The research demonstrates through literature review that patient stories which evoke emotions to their audience create higher empathy levels and better understanding of information and stronger perception of realness than standard informational material. Facebook functions as an interactive platform that enables users to build trust through its institutional credibility system and peer-to-peer interactions and social endorsement metrics that include likes and shares and comments. The research shows that emotional storytelling leads to higher audience engagement which results in better social support for patients and increased patient happiness and development of trust that lasts over time when messages include culturally relevant content and special audience needs. Trust will be undermined by misinformation and unethical storytelling methods and data privacy risks which need proper solutions to resolve these fundamental trust issues. The study identifies a research gap in understanding the mediating role of emotional engagement and perceived credibility in shaping trust within Facebook-specific health communication environments.

Keywords

Emotional storytelling, Facebook health campaigns, Patient trust, Social media engagement

Introduction

The quick spread of social media platforms especially Facebook has changed how healthcare organizations communicate because organizations can now create more personal and emotionally appealing content to connect with their patients. The practice of emotional storytelling which combines patient stories about their life experiences with emotional messages has developed into an effective

method for shaping how people perceive their audience while creating connections. Research shows that social media platforms benefit from narrative-based communication because it helps users connect with others through empathy which establishes trust toward healthcare providers (Zhao et al. 2022, Ko et al., 2023). Storytelling in healthcare settings makes medical information more relatable through its ability to create emotional bonds between patients and their healthcare providers (Canepa et al., 2024; Gesser-Edelsburg, 2021). The research demonstrates that Facebook health campaigns which use emotional elements through patient recovery stories and actual lived experiences create a substantial increase in audience credibility and trust because people believe narrative content to be more genuine than standard informational material according to (Hutchins, 2023; Ahuja et al., 2025). Emotional storytelling establishes social support networks which help communities grow stronger while patients build trust and achieve higher satisfaction levels according to (Khan et al., 2022; Smailhodzic et al., 2016). The use of emotional narratives helps organizations achieve better audience engagement but organizations should be aware of ethical issues which include risks of manipulating audiences and spreading false information and violating user privacy according to (Massey et al., 2025; Wells et al., 2015). The research about how emotional storytelling affects Facebook health campaigns needs exploration because it creates a foundation for building trust through ethical and effective digital health communication methods.

Literature Review

The research about health campaigns that use Facebook as their platform shows how social media communication affects patient trust in a complicated way that continues to grow because of various factors including how messages are created and the reliability of their sources and their methods of engagement and the health knowledge of their users. The research demonstrates that Facebook operates as both a distribution channel and an interactive platform where users establish trust through institutional credibility and peer interactions and transparent information sharing. The studies demonstrate that patients determine trustworthiness by using specific cues which include the source of the message and their assessment of expertise and the social endorsement metrics which include likes and shares because these metrics function as credibility indicators in online environments.

The research shows that Facebook health campaigns increase patient trust through messages which distributed by trusted institutions who used evidence-based materials to present their information. Users who saw simulated cancer-related Facebook posts showed greater trust in messages from recognized health institutions than they did with ambiguous sources according to Trivedi et al. (2020) which demonstrated that institutional legitimacy plays a crucial role in trust establishment. Chen et al. (2018) showed that health literacy acts as a strong mediator in determining people's trustworthiness for social media health information because users with higher literacy ability evaluate information more critically yet they still depend on Facebook to access information. People with lower eHealth literacy skills tend to trust Facebook health information more than other sources according to Paige et al. (2017)

which creates a dangerous situation because vulnerable people become more exposed to false information.

The research findings from Platt et al. (2016) and Chodick et al. (2021) demonstrate that Facebook advertising campaigns succeed in changing health behaviors through their capacity to build trust between audiences and their specific messages through multiple viewing sessions. The campaigns use Facebook's algorithmic targeting system to create custom messages that match particular demographic segments, which results in viewers finding the messages more relevant and trustworthy. Kite et al. (2016) demonstrate that interactive features like comments and shares create more engagement, which leads to stronger trust because they build a sense of community and dialogue between patients and health organizations.

The literature shows that communication strategies play a vital role in establishing trust between people. Rus and Cameron (2016) found that emotionally appealing and narrative-driven messages on Facebook generate higher engagement, which is often correlated with increased trust perception. Flood-Grady et al. (2020) show that Facebook campaigns which use culturally sensitive messages and audience segmentation lead to better participation and trust success among underserved groups. The research shows that healthcare providers who use Facebook pages to speak directly with patients create relational trust through their responsive and personalized interactions which establish a new method of communication through two-way dialog.

People find it difficult to trust Facebook health campaigns because their trustworthiness is compromised by worries about false information and privacy violations and unclear source information. Petersen and Lehmann (2018) stress that health-related contexts which involve sensitive data require organizations to maintain transparent data handling and privacy protection practices in order to build trust with their users. Al Mamun et al. (2015) observe that Facebook health groups need professional moderators to establish proper information validation systems which will help users build trust. Greene et al. (2011) show that Facebook enables diabetes patients to connect with their peers but users need to evaluate shared content because its reliability remains unclear.

Recent studies (e.g., Ahuja et al., 2025; Nabi et al., 2023) demonstrate that social media engagement connects to social capital and institutional trust which together show that Facebook's transparent communication creates trust in healthcare systems during extended time periods. Roundtree (2017) demonstrates that Facebook-based health interventions achieve their highest effectiveness when Facebook-based health interventions combine educational materials with interactive features that create community spaces which help develop both cognitive and emotional trust.

Research Objectives

To explore how emotional storytelling influences patient engagement on Facebook health campaigns.

Research Gap

The existing research about social media marketing together with healthcare communication still has major unknown aspects because researchers need to investigate how emotional storytelling functions in Facebook health campaigns and affects patient trust. The previous studies mainly examined social media engagement through likes shares and comments yet they failed to study how trust affects healthcare decisions which are an important psychological outcome (Ahuja et al., 2025; Hutchins, 2023).

Research Methodology

The research study uses a conceptual and exploratory research design which is based on a review of existing literature about social media marketing and healthcare communication and patient trust. The researchers collect secondary data from peer-reviewed journal articles and industry reports and academic databases to identify essential constructs which include emotional storytelling and patient engagement and perceived credibility and trust. The study develops a conceptual framework which shows emotional storytelling as the independent variable that affects patient trust through emotional engagement and perceived authenticity as mediating variables.

Conceptual Model



Figure 1. Framework of Emotional Story Telling in Facebook Health Campaign

Discussion

The model demonstrates how Facebook health campaigns use emotional storytelling to create a communication strategy which establishes patient trust and produces better health results. The model demonstrates that patient-centric storytelling which uses authentic narratives and relatable experiences serves as the main storytelling element. Research demonstrates that health communication which uses narratives to deliver information proves more effective than informational messages because it engages both cognitive and emotional processing, which helps people remember information and view it as

trustworthy (Gesser-Edelsburg, 2021; Gray, 2009). The process of real patient storytelling creates emotional responses which include hope and fear and resilience, which helps people to identify with others and feel empathy toward them. The model shows how Facebook and other social media platforms function as amplifiers which boost these particular narrative stories. Facebook users interact with posts more which contains attractive content and visual elements that appeal to their emotions. The research shows that visual storytelling and narrative-based content better engage users while establishing more authentic content which is essential for building trust (Gurrieri & Drenten, 2019; Jenkins et al., 2020). Users create participatory storytelling by sharing their stories which others can comment on while sharing their personal experiences which create a social space that strengthens emotional bonds (Hou, 2025).

The model establishes patient trust through emotional engagement which develops from four specific elements connection and empathy and authentic communication and confidence in care. People establish trust through both factual information and their perception of how genuine and relatable the speaker sounds. Digital health communication trust increases when users experience narrative coherence and emotional tone (Wang & Leng, 2025). Social media platforms enable patient-centered communication because they meet users' emotional and informational needs which lead to higher user satisfaction and trust (Wu & Jiang, 2023).

The model demonstrates that trust functions as a mediating variable which results in better health outcomes. Patients who trust health information and providers will follow through on recommended treatment plans and preventive health measures. Social media health communication enables effective patient health behavior change when trust exists between patients and their healthcare providers according to systematic reviews (Smailhodzic et al., 2016). Storytelling interventions demonstrate successful knowledge translation because they provide medical information in understandable formats which enable people to learn new behaviors (Park et al., 2021). The current model shows compatibility with modern health communication theories which include the narrative paradigm and emotional engagement frameworks because these theories state that people prefer to believe in stories rather than abstract data (Li et al., 2019). The research shows that emotional storytelling functions as a trust-building tool which creates health benefits for users in online platforms. The public needs to maintain trust through ethical considerations which include authenticity, privacy, and avoidance of false information (Wells et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The study results demonstrate that emotional storytelling functions as a vital strategic element which Facebook health campaigns use to build patient trust. User engagement increases through emotional narratives which also create an essential trust base for digital health communication because they establish credibility and authenticity. The study shows that content based on emotions establishes an effective way to connect healthcare providers with patients because it promotes empathetic

understanding and human relationships. The success of these methods depends on their implementation through ethical practices and their need for transparent operations with precise data. Healthcare organizations need to maintain a balance between emotional content and factual information to protect themselves from the dangers that false information and manipulation bring. The research demonstrates how interactive features and community-building elements function as essential elements which help people build trust relationships that last through time. The research delivers essential managerial guidance which helps develop patient-centered social media health campaigns that build trust and follow ethical standards while identifying research opportunities to study platform dynamics and trust development over time.

References

- Ahuja, V., Kaur, R., Tabeck, P., & Pande, N. (2025). Building trust and engagement: Social media's role in digital healthcare communication. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*.
- Al Mamun, M., Ibrahim, H. M., & Turin, T. C. (2015). Social media in communicating health information. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 12*, E11.
- Canepa, M. E., Macciò, M., Raffini, L., & Striano, P. (2024). *Enhancing public engagement through storytelling on Facebook and Instagram*. *Frontiers in Communication*.
- Chen, X., Hay, J. L., Waters, E. A., & Kiviniemi, M. T. (2018). Health literacy and trust in health information. *Journal of Health Communication, 23*(8), 724-735.
- Chodick, G., Teper, G. R., Levi, S., Kopel, H., & Kleinbort, A. (2021). Facebook campaign and HPV vaccine uptake. *Gynecologic Oncology, 160*(2), 463-469.
- Flood-Grady, E., Hough, D., & Damiani, R. E. (2020). Communication strategies for designing Facebook advertising campaigns. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science*.
- Gesser-Edelsburg, A. (2021). Using narrative evidence to convey health information on social media. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 23*(3), e24948.
- Greene, J. A., Choudhry, N. K., Kilabuk, E., & Shrank, W. H. (2011). Online social networking by patients with diabetes. *Journal of General Internal Medicine, 26*(3), 287-292.
- Hutchins, A. (2023). *Using emotion to promote engagement with healthcare marketing content on Facebook*. UNC Repository.
- Khan, M. I., Rahman, Z. U., Saleh, M. A., & Khan, S. U. Z. (2022). Social media and social support: A framework for patient satisfaction. *Informatics, 9*(1), 22.
- Kite, J., Foley, B. C., Grunseit, A. C., & Freeman, B. (2016). Please like me: Facebook and public health communication. *PLOS ONE, 11*(9), e0162765.
- Ko, Y., Kim, H., Seo, Y., Han, J. Y., Yoon, H. J., & Lee, J. (2023). Effects of social media narrative PSAs on COVID-19 vaccination intention. *Journal of Social Marketing, 13*(4), 490.
- Massey, P. M., Murray, R. M., Kostizak, K., Lo, W. J., & Yudell, M. (2025). *Ethics of using fictional stories in health communication on social media*. *Vaccine*.

- Nabi, M. N. U., Zohora, F. T., & Misbauddin, S. M. (2023). Social media links with social capital to trust in healthcare. *Library Hi Tech*, 41(1), 210-225.
- Paige, S. R., Krieger, J. L., & Stellefson, M. (2017). eHealth literacy and trust in online health communication. *Journal of Health Communication*, 22(1), 53-60.
- Petersen, C., & Lehmann, C. U. (2018). Social media in health care. *Applied Clinical Informatics*, 9(3), 628-635.
- Platt, T., Platt, J., Thiel, D. B., & Kardia, S. L. (2016). Facebook advertising for public health communication. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 2(1), e27.
- Roundtree, A. K. (2017). Social health content and activity on Facebook. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 47(3), 287-310.
- Rus, H. M., & Cameron, L. D. (2016). Health communication in social media. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 50(5), 678-689.
- Smailhodzic, E., Hooijsma, W., Boonstra, A., & Langley, D. J. (2016). Social media use in healthcare: A systematic review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 16, 442.
- Trivedi, N., Krakow, M., & Hawkins, K. H. (2020). Exploring source trust of cancer-related messages on Facebook. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 12.
- Wells, D. M., Lehavot, K., & Isaac, M. L. (2015). Ethics of patient storytelling in the modern era. *Academic Medicine*, 90(8), 1015.
- Zhao, X., Wang, X., Ma, Z., & Ma, R. (2022). Primacy effect of emotions in social stories: User engagement behaviors with breast cancer narratives on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*.