



# The Impact of ‘Grassroots Seeding’ Marketing on Brand Word-of-Mouth Communication: An Exploratory Study Based on Cases and Descriptive Data from Xiaohongshu

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**Abstract.** Within the context of User-generated Content (UGC), grassroots seeding by consumers has emerged as a major influencer for brand Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. As a marketing practice marked by authenticity and relatability, grassroots seeding differs substantially from more traditional influencer marketing, particularly in terms of its reliance on non-professional consumers for authenticity and influence. Yet, very little is currently understood about the process through which grassroots seeding occurs, and most literature treats the process itself like a ‘black box’ rather than examining the process through which influence occurs. Within the context of addressing these gaps in current literature and understanding, the present research will examine the process through which grassroots seeding occurs through an in-depth examination of the Xiaohongshu platform and through a mixed-methods research design focusing on comparative case studies and quantitative data collection and analysis. Through a systematic application of the process-tracing methodology to the success stories of Florasis, a cosmetic brand, and Wang Bao Bao, a food brand, the present research will illustrate the dynamic process through which grassroots seeding occurs and how it leads to the diffusion and spread of WOM communication. Through a survey conducted on 203 active users on the Xiaohongshu platform, the present research will also illustrate a better understanding of the context and process through which grassroots seeding occurs and how it is understood by consumers. Through a nuanced process-tracing methodology, a coherent three-stage process through which grassroots seeding occurs will also be illustrated.

**Keywords:** User-generated Content, Grassroots Seeding, Word-of-mouth Communication, Process Tracing, Xiaohongshu

## 1 Introduction

The present state of digital marketing has thus experienced a revolution in terms of a change in communicational power from a ‘top-down’ approach to a ‘bottom-up’ model in light of user-generated content (UGC), which has reduced the power of traditional advertising models. Among these various changes in digital marketing paradigms, a

phenomenon has come to represent a particularly noteworthy trend in this environment: ‘grassroots seeding. As a phenomenon of interest in this analysis of digital marketing paradigms in contemporary society, ‘grassroots seeding’ can be described as a type of recommendation of a product or experience from a user-generated content perspective on social media or other content dissemination channels by a ‘normal’ user of a social media platform or other content dissemination tool—in contrast to a more traditionally influential figure in terms of advertising and other forms of recommendation, such as a ‘Key Opinion Leader’ (KOL), whose recommendation of a product is more likely to be perceived as overtly advertising-oriented in nature [1].

Such platforms as Xiaohongshu were found to be primary ecosystems where the process of grassroots seeding can thrive and flourish [2]. The primary reason behind this is the emphasis on interaction among peers, experience-based narration, and algorithm-based support for user-generated content [2]. The Xiaohongshu platform started off as an e-commerce guide across borders and has since developed into a lifestyle community and social commerce platform, boasting millions of users who are predominantly young women and share product reviews and experiences [2]. The user structure of Xiaohongshu has led to a socially homogeneous environment where recommendations can be leveraged and trust can be built quickly. The emphasis on authenticity and experience-based narration has led to an environment where grassroots seeding can thrive. For brands, especially new direct-to-consumer brands, the art of grassroots seeding on Xiaohongshu is an essential aspect of brand development and entry strategy in China.

Nonetheless, the economic value of the phenomenon, as well as the omnipresence of seeding in the wider community, mean that academic inquiry remains in the early stages. Indeed, the existing literature has approached the phenomenon from a limited set of perspectives. Firstly, a range of quantitative studies, typically published in marketing or communication journals, often incorporate word of mouth/e-word of mouth as a macro phenomenon, evaluating the results of the seeding process, e.g., purchase intention, brand attitude, through survey-based correlation models. Even though informative, these models usually describe the seeding process as a linear input/output model, failing to reveal the intricate, iterative, and highly complex nature of the process through which a single user, through a single action, can set off a chain of community involvement. Secondly, the existing literature, as presented through reports or business cases, although descriptive, remains atheoretical, as well as lacking methodological depth.

As a result, research into the psychological process of the spread of word-of-mouth information via ‘ordinary people’s recommendations’ has been less developed, especially in its relationship to consumers’ information processing behavior [3]. The crucial information processing steps in which consumers filter, reorganize, and optimize information according to their identification have been overlooked in existing research, which has typically considered the process of forwarding as a whole entity [3]. Therefore, the research question in this study has now been framed as: What role does ‘ordinary people’s recommendations’ play in the spread of word-of-mouth information, especially in its relationship to consumers’ information processing behavior [3]? That is, the research has explored the ways in which information created by ‘ordinary people’

might facilitate audience identification, which in turn might result in a pattern of information reprocessing in the process of forwarding, thus contributing to its spread as a whole entity [3]. The research question that has been central to this research investigation has been: What are the specific processes by which effective ‘grassroots seeding’ via the Xiaohongshu platform leads to the creation of brand word-of-mouth?

By answering this research question, the present investigation can fulfill multiple analytical objectives. On the one hand, the study can help create a process-oriented theory that transcends the variable-oriented approach while focusing on the dynamic, narrative characteristics of word-of-mouth (WOM) development. On the other hand, the investigation can help brand managers/marketers understand the logic underlying the development of organic advocacy, facilitating them in transcending the simplistic ‘viral marketing’ approach while creating more meaningful brand communities. Finally, the present study can demonstrate the value of in-depth analysis in the study of complex digital consumer phenomena, thus contributing to the diversification of methodologies used in the field of marketing research.

## **2 Literature Review and Analytical Framework**

### **2.1 Conceptual Foundations: Defining ‘Grassroots Seeding’ and ‘Word-of-Mouth’**

To begin with, the analytical basis needs to be well-defined with precise explanations of the key terms used in the study. ‘Grassroots seeding’ cannot be used interchangeably with ‘user-generated content’ or ‘online reviews.’ For the purpose of the study, ‘Grassroots seeding’ is defined as ‘narrative content about products or experiences that is produced and distributed on social commerce platforms by non-professional users, with an apparent lack of direct commercial sponsorship, motivated primarily by the wish to share personal experiences with peers.’ ‘The reception of online word-of-mouth (WOM) serves as the external information input that consumers are exposed to before their experience with the product or service, marking the starting point of the fan effect.’ ‘The empathy process in the experience process serves as the key mechanism that enables consumers to make the shift from external information to identification via the perception of the product or brand as innovative, attractive, or having high experience value [4].’ ‘The sharing process after the experience serves as the behavioral manifestation of the WOM process, with consumers acting as secondary distributors [4].’ This study introduces the ‘reception-empathy-sharing’ model with the moderating effect of brand exposure on the positive linear effect of WOM on innovation, with high brand exposure resulting in an inverted U-shaped effect on attractiveness [4]. This model serves as the analytical basis that explains the ability of internet-famous food and beverage brands to sustain the fan effect with high empathy [4].

It is based on a variety of important attributes, including:

**Source Identity:** The source is an ordinary user. In line with the norms on the platform, as well as existing research, being an ordinary user is typically equivalent to an account with a follower count less than a certain predefined value, e.g., 10,000 on

Xiaohongshu. However, being ordinary also involves a certain level of subjective perception on the part of the audience.

**Perceived Authenticity:** The content is perceived by the target audience to be authentic and unbiased, reflecting actual personal experience rather than an objective measure. It is through such perception that the content derives its power, differentiating it from content generated for business KOLs.

**Narrative Format:** The content of the presentation is normally of a personal and narrative kind—‘I tried this and here is what I saw happen’—and is not necessarily based solely on an evaluative or technical specification process. This allows for identification and replication of the situation and to have an emotional impact as it makes the story more relatable.

In the virtual environment, word-of-mouth goes well beyond the simple act of information sharing and is viewed as the ‘social process of cumulative engagement.’ The seeding act sets the stage for the ‘cascade of interactive behaviors such as liking, favoriting, commenting, querying, and—most critically—secondary creating or the act of reposting, imitation, or creating new content.’ The end product is not just increased awareness but the co-creation of ‘meaning and value for the brand or product.’

In the area of electronic warfare research, the complete model developed by Cheung and Thadani identifies the primary dimensions of effectiveness, i.e., the credibility of the sender, the quality of the message, the characteristics of the receiver, and the platform [5]. This model can be employed from an alternative perspective in order to understand the process of grassroots seeding, where the authenticity and appropriateness of content from the perspective of the creators can be viewed as an important aspect of the credibility of the sender, and where the content of the message can be viewed as of high quality from the perspective of electronic warfare [5]. In order to understand the process of grassroots seeding and its specific mediation process in the particular area of Xiaohongshu, the present study has been developed [5].

## **2.2 Theoretical Positioning and Analytical Framework**

The present study positions itself at the confluence of different theoretical streams while offering a novel perspective. It builds upon the Source Credibility Model that postulates that communicators’ credibility and expertise are determinants of persuasion. The grassroots seeders are highly trustworthy owing to their perceived authenticity and low levels of expertise. This study also builds upon Social Proof and Informational Social Influence theories that suggest that people are more likely to rely upon similar others under uncertain conditions or when making purchase decisions in a competitive and dynamic online marketplace. The source credibility model has dominated as a principal theoretical perspective to examine the persuasiveness of word-of-mouth communication [6]. Professionalism and credibility have long been perceived as complementary constructs; yet, grassroots seeding presents a theoretical conundrum as it entails low levels of professionalism and high levels of credibility owing to perceived authenticity and non-commercial content that resonates with consumers [6]. According to Pornpitakpan, credibility trumps professionalism in subjective assessments of personal expe-

riences; and that is exactly why grassroots seeding outperforms KOL marketing campaigns in Xiaohongshu—a social commerce platform that thrives upon consumers’ experiences.

In moving from merely examining the presence and nature of influence to examining the actual processes through which influence occurs—how rather than whether influence exists—this current research utilizes a principal methodology of Process-Tracing [7]. As a methodology for examining business cases, process-tracing is a method for discovering the causal mechanisms (‘cogs and wheels’) linking causes to effects in a single case. It is particularly well-suited to answering the question of how events occur, particularly when those events have a path-dependent and/or interactive nature.

When this process is adapted for use with grassroots seeding activities, it involves developing a hypothesized sequence of causes to trace the process by which an initial post leads to larger word-of-mouth (WOM) effects. The research then assesses this sequence based on detailed evidence from real-world cases. The initial framework presents the following sequence:

Content Creation (Node 1: Authentic Narrative) → Initial Audience Engagement (Node 2: Meaningful Interaction) → Algorithmic Recognition & Amplification (Node 3: Platform Logic) → Community Imitation & Meaning Co-creation (Node 4: Social Contagion) → Scaled Brand WOM & Identity Association

Moreover, the proposed framework claims that the ‘continuity of the causal chain is contingent upon the maintenance and signaling of ‘Experiential Authenticity’ at each of the nodes.’ Thus, there is a danger of breaking the chain of causation if there is an interruption in the ‘perceived authenticity.’ This proposed framework can be used both in data collection and data analysis.

### 3 Research Design and Methodology

Research on the recommendations of ordinary people regarding Xiaohongshu revealed the role of word-of-mouth communication as a multistage, algorithmic, and community-driven process, as revealed through the process-tracing approach, also termed the process tracing technique. This is further complemented by descriptive surveys, which reveal the larger behavioral and perceptual background of the Xiaohongshu community, thus helping in the evaluation of the wider applicability of the insights derived from the particular cases.

#### 3.1 Primary Method: Comparative Case Study with Process-Tracing

With regards to the specific aspects of the research design in this paper, the author has used a comparative case study design based on the process tracing method in an attempt to identify the specific mechanism through which the construct of ‘uninformed recommendation’ affects the word of mouth for brands [3,8]. This specific design orientation has been informed by a critical assessment of the dominant paradigms in the relevant bodies of knowledge [3,8]. Quantitative studies often treat electronic word of mouth as a homogeneous construct and try to measure the ultimate effects of the same on the

consumer through correlation patterns, thus simplifying the complex journey from recommendation to the ‘output’ in an ‘input-output’ framework in a manner that overlooks the critical processes of ‘iteration’ in a complex system [3,8].

**Case Selection:** The study employs a theory-based approach to case selection, where ‘revelatory cases’ are selected based on a clear manifestation of the phenomenon under study. The two brands, Florasis, a cosmetic brand, and Wang Bao Bao, a food brand, have been selected. These brands are prominently mentioned in the discussion on the Chinese market, where these brands have been referred to as exemplary brands that have recorded tremendous success in the Chinese market through seeding on the social commerce platform, Xiaohongshu. The approach to case selection is based on a ‘most similar, yet different’ approach, where the two brands are similar in that they are Direct-to-Consumer brands that have benefited from User-Generated Content, yet different in that they operate in different categories.

**Data Collection for Case Analysis:** Multi-source data collection methodology was adopted to facilitate data triangulation and create a rich data set for each company that covers their initial market breakout phase – for Florasis this would be between 2018 and 2020, while for Wang Bao Bao this would be between 2019 and 2021.

**Archival Digital Content:** Hundreds of historical ‘grassroots’ content postings on a given brand were collected using a search function on Xiaohongshu’s website and, where available, social listening tools. Collected content included text of postings, image/videos, timestamps, and most critically, dynamic metrics of likes, favorites, comments, and shares. Such a rich process of collecting content helped to ensure a good level of temporal coverage and content dynamics to support a robust process-tracing analysis.

**Secondary Commentary:** High levels of engagement with significant posts are reviewed to understand the ways the intended audience interprets the information and the ways the peer validation factor can operate.

**Analytical Procedure: Narrative Construction of the Case:** For every brand, a chronological narrative was developed, which helps in the identification of the first set of posts, which received traction, also termed as the ‘patient zero’ posts, and the subsequent diffusion pattern.

**Process-Tracing:** The evidence that has been assembled has been assessed in relation to the proposed process in a systematic way. For each proposed node in the process, such as ‘Algorithmic Amplification,’ certain elements of evidence are looked for, such as a sharp rise in page views accompanied by a high rate of favorites, or features of the platform that are referred to in user comments, such as inclusion in the ‘Discover’ page.

**Cross-Case Synthesis:** The commonalities and differences of the processes followed in the two studies were analyzed, and a general model of the grassroots seeding process was developed.

### 3.2 Supplementary Method: Descriptive User Survey

**Purpose:** To place the case results within the wider scope of the user base of Xiaohongshu and to elicit information on general perceptions, which cannot be extracted directly from the archival case results (e.g., internal motivations, relative trust).

**Instrument and Sampling:** A structured online questionnaire was distributed through social media channels used by Xiaohongshu members. A convenient sample of  $N = 203$  valid questionnaires was obtained from members who claimed to use the site at least weekly [2]. The majority were female (78%) and young (86%) as Xiaohongshu members are predominantly in that age group [2].

For Measurement, the survey included:

**Trust Comparative Scale:** The study asked the participants to rate the level of trust in recommendations given by 'an ordinary person like me' compared to recommendations given by 'a famous beauty/food KOL' on a 5-point Likert scale.

**Awareness and Attitude:** These items measured respondents' general awareness of the practice of 'grass roots seeding' as a marketing practice, as well as their attitudes towards the perceived authenticity of the practice.

**Analysis:** Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate various statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Simple crosstabs were also done to generate a better understanding of the data from a qualitative perspective.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations and Methodological Reflection**

All of the data that was used for this particular study was obtained from publicly available sources or voluntary and anonymous surveys. No private user information was made available to us. Several limitations have to be acknowledged. For example, while case study research is rich and insightful, it is not statistically generalizable. There is also a potential for hindsight bias due to the retrospective nature of case analysis. Again, the authors would argue that this is mitigated by the fact that this study is aiming to elaborate theory and explore mechanisms rather than making wide-ranging predictions. Furthermore, the authors have also used a form of triangulation as part of this particular research.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Descriptive Survey Results: The Landscape of User Perception**

The results allow for a comprehensive understanding of users' perspectives on grassroots seeding and its promise. Notably, 72.4% reported that they would have a higher level of trust in a product endorsement from 'an ordinary person like me' than from a key opinion leader in the same category who is a prominent figure. Open-ended questions that asked respondents to specify the major factors on which such a level of trust is based grouped around 'no commercial purpose,' 'more realistic results,' and 'similar lifestyle, skin type, body type.'

Regarding the drivers of engagement, the main factors that motivate the engagement with the grassroots posts were:

The information provided seems to be very detailed and genuine/real (68.5%).

It deals with a very specific problem or question the respondent has (57.1%).

The individual posting seems similar to the respondent based on age, interest, or circumstances (49.8%). Such findings emphasize the notion that the core unit of grass-roots seeding is perceived authenticity and relevance. They also suggest that engagement is not simply consumption in the passive sense of the word.

#### 4.2 Case Analysis: Unpacking the Process-Tracing Chain

An in-depth analysis of the Florasis and Wang Bao Bao cases shows a certain conformity in terms of the path to the achievement of the word-of-mouth (WOM) phenomenon, which supports the proposed process-tracing model.

**Node 1: Content Creation – The ‘Blueprint of Authenticity’.** While the initial successful posts for these brands were not sophisticated advertisements, the immersive low-fidelity style of the diaries was the key to their popularity. The initial viral post from Florasis was not just the brand showing off the elaborate makeup item, but the entire routine of the person getting ready for their date night, including their observation of their skin texture as well as their opinion of the texture of the item over an extended period of time. The initial post from Wang Bao Bao was titled ‘My 5-minute salvation for late work nights’ and depicted the somewhat disorganized kitchen counter space, the bowl of oatmeal with the added toppings, as well as the stress-relieving aspects of the item. The common factor in these posts was the establishment of the framework of the usage scenario.

**Node 2: Initial Engagement – The ‘Signal to the Algorithm’.** These posts initially gained traction with very specific audiences (the audience who follows the individual who made the post). The most outstanding characteristic that distinguished these posts was not only the total likes received but also the very high rate at which these posts were marked as favorites compared to likes. In all instances analyzed, the rate at which these posts were marked as favorites was very high, often higher than 1:3 in the early hours (one favorite for every three likes). This was in contrast to the much lower rate estimated to exist across the social media site in general. The Xiaohongshu site has a feature labeled ‘favorite,’ which in semantics refers to ‘the act of collecting something useful.’ The very high rate at which these posts were marked as favorites was a very good indicator to the site’s algorithm that the posts had very high levels of utility value and not just entertainment value [9]. The very high level of emphasis and importance given to the ‘favorite’ or ‘save’ feature in these high-value social media users could also be seen as a very strategic move to circumvent algorithm logic [9]. As Bucher pointed out, users often respond to algorithm logic in such a manner to ensure maximum visibility [9].

**Node 3: Algorithmic Amplification – The ‘Traffic Catalyst’.** In conformity with the stated goal of the platform, which was to emphasize good quality, useful information, the algorithm, through this signal, ensured the increased visibility of the posts. This, in turn, made the posts appear on the Discover page of the user engaging with, for instance, a makeup video or a recipe, thus going beyond the immediate network of the

poster. These remarks from the time also frequently consisted of phrases such as, 'Came from the Discover page,' thus affirming the above mechanism.

**Node 4: Community Imitation & Co-creation – The 'WOM Engine'.** It is precisely this awareness of shared posts that set off the core of the word of mouth process. Users were not simply consuming content; they were emulating and making the content their own. Thus, the Xiaohongshu platform soon became filled with posts like 'I also tried the Florasis date night look,' 'My version of 5-minute Wang Bao Bao salvation,' and so on. The process was not simply one of imitation; rather, it is an example of participatory culture. The next posts were variations on the same theme, variations of skin tones and oat ingredient toppings and so on. It is an expansive and rich tapestry of content surrounding the brand. The brand has moved from simply a product brand to a participatory ritual in the daily life of the consumer. It is in this way that there has been a rapid development of content volume, all of it organically tagged with the brand name and thus an inherent level of trendiness.

**The Outcome: From Product to Identity Marker.** It is clear that the result went beyond product sales and established a relationship with brand identity. The use of Florasis created an identification with an appreciation of 'artistic, detailed Chinese beauty,' and Wang Bao Bao became synonymous with the identity of 'busy and health-conscious youth.' Word-of-mouth marketing dissemination evolved from product attributes to shared values and lifestyles.

#### 4.3 Synthesis: The Integrated 'Authenticity-Virality' Loop

The information garnered from the survey as well as the case studies align in a cohesive whole in the form of an integrated conceptual model. The cycle begins with the content being presented in a manner that showcases its authenticity (Node 1). This resonates with a specific audience group whose interaction with the content, especially in the form of 'favoriting' the content, acts as a quality signal (Node 2). The algorithm on the platform, created to maximize user satisfaction by promoting content that is beneficial to the user, recognizes this signal and expands its dissemination (Node 3). This maximizes the availability of the authentic template to a larger audience group, who then proceed to utilize the template in a manner that leads to the proliferation of user-generated content in support of the trend being set (Node 4). This extensive proliferation of user-generated content then acts in a manner to assure the algorithm of the quality of the content being presented. Authenticity acts as the initial impetus for the trend; the algorithm acts as the accelerant; while the participatory nature of the user acts as the 'sustainment' for the trend.

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Summaries

This research aims to provide a systematic explication of the mechanisms by which grassroots seeding results in the diffusion of word of mouth. Through the use of a process-tracing approach with iconic case studies and the context provided by the results of the survey of the users, the research aims to explicate the unclear mechanisms behind the given phenomenon. The major finding of the research is that an effective grassroots seeding campaign is a non-random and sequence-dependent process that is mediated by platform dynamics and fueled by the involvement of the community. Its power stems from a complex yet potent sequence of events that starts with the creation of authentic narrative constructions, continues with the sending of significant signals of engagement, and finally leads to the imitation by the community and the co-creation of meaning. The continuous perception of the audiences with regard to the experiential authenticity has to be kept throughout the sequence. If the sequence works as expected, the result would be the transformation of an ordinary product posting into a significant element of a large and self-replicating network of the co-creation of meaning by the users.

### 5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

**Theoretical Contributions: Process-Oriented Framework:** This study contributes to the development of a comprehensive, process-oriented framework in the eWOM/social media marketing literature, moving beyond input-output models to shed light on the generative mechanisms behind naturalistic advocacy.

**Algorithm-Agency Interplay:** It highlights the often neglected but crucial role played by the algorithms on the platforms in the generation of word-of-mouth (WOM) responses to particular user behavioral indicators such as ‘favoriting.’

**Reconceptualizing Authenticity:** It defines authenticity not as an attribute of the source or the information, but rather as something validated by specific audience behaviors such as commentaries, the posing of questions, imitation, and so on, as well as the reaction of the platforms themselves. The study builds on the work of Yan and Wu’s study on the emotional transmission of the Chinese ‘grassroots seeding.’ It further argues that emotions, within the algorithm-driven environment of social commerce, are not just transmitted among users, but can also be detected and amplified algorithmically to create the effects of emotional resonance. It offers a more dynamic and multi-dimensional theoretical view of word-of-mouth among Chinese youth [10].

**Practical Implications for Marketers: Shift from Seeding to Garden Cultivation:** The study results also suggest that brands should place less emphasis on identifying individual seeders to reward, and place a greater focus on building environments that encourage real engagement, such as building products that enable detailed personal narratives.

**Explanation of Favorite Metric:** Marketers should understand the favorite or save feature as a primary performance measure (metric) for real utility and potential improvement by the algorithm, which may be considered a greater factor than the vanity measure of likes.

**Embracing Co-Creation over Control:** The most impactful outcome will come from imitation by users. Brands should create malleable content templates/challenges that encourage customization rather than imposing brand-defined campaign visual styles, and be willing to relinquish brand-defined narratives to the co-created crowd.

**Platform Partnership:** It is vital to have an understanding of the algorithm's affinity for content it perceives to be of use to the user, such as saves, longer viewing periods, and thoughtful commentary. The strategy for the content needs to focus on the idea of creating value for the user rather than simply pushing out brand messaging.

### 5.3 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The research also exhibits a range of limitations, which can be viewed as opportunities for productive avenues for additional research. First, the research is based on a success narrative, while a corresponding research study would involve an investigation into failed seeding attempts to understand where the proposed procedure deteriorates. Second, the research is limited to a specific social platform, Xiaohongshu, while a corresponding study would involve a reproduction of the research on other social platforms that have different algorithms and norms, such as Douyin/TikTok, where the social platform is entertainment-oriented, or Zhihu, where the social platform is based on Q&A. Third, the research is based on a descriptive survey, while a corresponding study would involve an experimental manipulation to understand the effect on authenticity perception. Fourth, a longitudinal ethnography study that begins with a seeding campaign would allow for real-time data collection on the seeders' perspectives on the intricate nature of the phenomenon.

### Authors' Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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