

# Language Assertiveness and Individuals' Construal of Charitable Giving

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## **Abstract**

This research sheds light on a novel psychological distinction between assertive and nonassertive language, which help determining when one or the other language might be more (less) effective in promoting individuals' charitable giving. Specifically, based on the idea that assertive language can be seen as less polite than nonassertive language and that increased politeness is associated with abstract (higher level) construal, we argue that messages using assertive (nonassertive) language will lead recipients to construe the advocated action (i.e., giving to a charity) in more concrete (abstract) terms. Hence, based on the construal fit effect we propose that combining assertive language with a message emphasizing "how" individuals could donate (low-level appeal) and nonassertive language with a message emphasizing "why" individuals could donate (high-level appeal) will increase advertisement effectiveness. Results of three online experiments offer empirical support to our hypotheses.

**Keywords:** *Language assertiveness; construal level; helping behavior*

**Track:** Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing