

Ethical and Effective Fundraising Communication – An Oxymoron?

Roman Antoschin

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

Christian Schlereth

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

Christine Eckert

European Business School Oestrich Winkel, University of Technology Sydney

Hannah Erlebach

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

Cite as:

Antoschin Roman, Schlereth Christian, Eckert Christine, Erlebach Hannah (2023), Ethical and Effective Fundraising Communication – An Oxymoron?. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 52nd, (114113)

Paper from the 52nd Annual EMAC Conference, Odense/Denmark, May 23-26, 2023



Ethical and Effective Fundraising Communication – An Oxymoron?

Abstract

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) nowadays face the challenge of having to design donation appeals that are both effective, i.e., economically successful, and ethical, i.e., not perceived as attention-grabbing or cliché. In this research, we investigate whether asking consumers for recommendations through surveys is a reliable tool for NPOs to obtain guidance on balancing these goals. We contrast consumers' recommendations from a survey with actual donation behavior from the same pool elicited in a field experiment. The results reveal that survey recommendations can be misleading: Irrespective of whether respondents based their recommendations on NPO's economic goals or ethical aspects, these recommendations contradict what works best in the field experiment. Drawing on dual process theory, we provide a first reasoning for the discrepancy and link it to "mindless giving" – a tendency of consumers to act based on instincts rather than rational reasoning when faced with donation decisions.

Subject Areas: *Intention-Behavior Link, Marketing-Mix Effectiveness*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics