

Should a critical illness campaign include the critical illness in the title?

**Jingjing Ma**  
Peking University  
**Yuanjie Zhao**  
Peking University  
**Yitian Liang**  
Tsinghua University

Cite as:

Ma Jingjing, Zhao Yuanjie, Liang Yitian (2025), Should a critical illness campaign include the critical illness in the title?. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (124594)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



## **Should a critical illness campaign include the critical illness in the title?**

With the rise of digitalization and social media, charitable donations are increasingly moving to online fundraising platforms, where countless causes are listed together with limited information displayed for each. Consequently, attracting online traffic to causes on these platforms is challenging, necessitating better information display design. Prior research and practitioners point to the importance of titles in driving donations. This research examines the impact of titles on online medical fundraising. Specifically, while it is common practice, this research finds that including the names of critical illnesses in the titles (i.e., CI-title) could hurt donation performance on online charitable fundraising platforms. Seven studies combining secondary, field, and experimental data provide convergent evidence for this undesirable CI-title effect, driven by anticipated distress, showing that donors tend to avoid CI-title causes by opting for others that are just one click away.

*Keywords: Fundraising Platform; Title Effect; Critical Illness*

*Track: Consumer Behavior*