

The Joint Influence of Regulatory Focus and Physical Temperature on Charitable Giving

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Abstract

This study investigates how temperature, as a contextual factor, influences charitable donations and under what conditions this effect emerges. Drawing on mass transactions data from an online donation platform ($N = 4,271,205$) and controlled experiments ($N = 1,100$; as well as an additional cross-country replication with $N = 892$), we find that physical temperature influences donations depending on the regulatory focus of the donation projects. Specifically, people donate significantly more to prevention-focused projects in lower temperatures. This effect arises because lower temperatures activate a prevention focus among individuals, creating a sense of regulatory fit with prevention-focused projects. These findings advance understanding of how environmental cues shape prosocial behaviour and highlight the importance of contextual and motivational alignment in charitable giving.

Track: Consumer Behaviour