

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series

Deborah Small, Yale University (US)

December 15th, 2022 | 13:00 - 15:00 | AD.0.114 Sitzungssaal 1

Talking About Charity

Put Your Mouth Where Your Money Is:

A field experiment nudging consumers to publicize their donations to charity

Due to the power of social influence, donors could amplify their impact by sharing about their donations. However, we show that when deciding whether to tell others about their generosity, donors often overlook the social impact of sharing and instead focus on possible risks to their reputation (e.g., of seeming braggy, inauthentic). In a large pre-registered field experiment, we tested a brief post-donation intervention designed to encourage word-of-mouth by re-orienting donors to the social impact case for sharing. After donating, 78,951 donors to an education non-profit received either a control or a treatment message asking them to share a link to the cause via social media, text, or email. Compared to the organization's standard solicitation ('Please share your donation...'), our intervention emphasized the consequences of sharing for the cause ('Your donation can start a chain reaction...'). This brief, free nudge increased click-through by 4.1%, likelihood of recruiting at least one later donation by 15.7%, and funds raised via social influence by 21.1% per donor treated. While many field experiments aim to increase donation rates or magnitudes, we show that thoughtful marketing can also exogenously influence word-of-mouth, and we discuss approaches for encouraging sharing in the domain of charity and beyond.