

Anonymous Giving as a Vice: An Application of Image Motivation

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Abstract

Although anonymous giving, instead of known giving, is in general thought to be virtue, this paper shows that the existence of anonymous donors paradoxically have a negative effect on fund-raisers in that it reduces the total amount of donation. If many altruists (the good type) switch from known to anonymous donation, it relatively lowers the group reputation of known donors, while it enhances that of non-donors. These effects dilute the incentive of the other individuals to become known donors, if they have psychological “image motivation”. I suggest one practical method to control the expected number of anonymous donors: fund-raisers remove the “check boxes” from their Web sites.

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