Perceptions of Charitable Giving: Discovering and Understanding Societal Views to Maximize the Ability to Build Homes, Hopes, and Futures

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ABSTRACT
Watauga County Habitat for Humanity is always in need of additional volunteers and donations to most efficiently improve the community with their home building efforts. A survey was developed and distributed to friends and family of Appalachian State University’s Communication Research Methods class to gauge the public’s perception of charitable giving in general, as well as Habitat for Humanity specifically. The study uncovered descriptive attributes of Habitat for Humanity and themed statements related to charitable giving that our participants found favorable. It also revealed that charities with strong reputations had a more positive public perception among our participants, and the use of keywords relating to positive ethical values may be more impactful in marketing and advertising for charitable organizations. These words clustered in three groups echoing Aristotle’s persuasion modes of ethos, pathos, and logos. The results of the study were analyzed to make recommendations for marketing and fundraising strategies for Watauga County Habitat for Humanity, such as promoting values that align with societal ethics and morals when advertising to increase the public’s willingness to volunteer with or donate to the organization.

Habitat for Humanity International was founded in 1976 and has become the number one homebuilder in the world (Croce, 2016). Habitat for Humanity’s regional divisions have developed partnerships within their respective communities to help build homes for those in need so they may attain the dream of homeownership. Since its conception, this organization has helped 6.8 million families worldwide, with 25 of these families being housed by Watauga County Habitat for Humanity (Habitat for Humanity, 2016; Watauga County Habitat for Humanity, 2016).

The Watauga County Habitat for Humanity organization was seeking more volunteers and donations to continue and expand their home building efforts. Watauga County, located in western North Carolina on the border of Tennessee’s Cherokee National Forest, has been named a “difficult to live in” county by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for nearly a decade, due in part to the area’s lack of affordable housing. Nearly one-third of Watauga County residents lived below the poverty line as of 2013 (Appalachian District Health Department, 2016).

Watauga County Habitat for Humanity partnered with Appalachian State University (located in Boone, Watauga County’s county seat and largest town) to find a way to more
effectively engage with donors and volunteers. After completing background research about the organization, interviews were conducted by Appalachian State University’s Communication Research Methods class to obtain information necessary to create a unique survey instrument. Participants were asked about their perception of charitable giving, as well as to provide their opinions of Habitat for Humanity in ten single, descriptive words. The results were compiled and dissected to obtain themed statements that described charitable giving, and adjectives that described Habitat for Humanity, based on their comments. A survey was then designed and distributed and the results analyzed to provide recommendations for the organization’s communication with the public to increase donations of volunteer efforts and building supplies.

Sargeant (1999) studied individuals’ giving behaviors, as well as how charities communicate, to determine how these influences may affect individuals’ charitable donations. Sargeant’s research suggested that charities focusing their efforts on the targeted donors most likely to assist them would likely reduce the organization’s donor acquisition cost. He found that there were several motivational factors that could encourage people to donate to charities, including whether the donor believed they would receive any social or political benefit, whether the donor’s support would be visible to others, and whether the donor perceived an organization as financially efficient. One especially important factor that seemed to influence charitable giving was whether an individual has personal experience (either themselves or through a family member or close friend) with the problem addressed by the charity, especially in the case of charities devoted to researching specific medical conditions.

Sargeant proposed that the perception of a charity’s appeals by the public was a great influence on individuals’ decision-making processes (specifically, in making the decision to support that charity or not). He also found that a potential donor’s demographics (especially their age, gender, and level of income) were key determinants of whether, and how much, that individual would be likely to donate. In his report, Sargeant cited other researchers’ work that noted that females were more likely to engage in charitable giving if they had a thorough explanation of how their money would be used, and were more likely to give ‘from the heart than the head’. He also cited earlier research that found that individuals in lower socioeconomic classes identified more with recipients of charities and were hence more likely to donate to charities themselves, and that those wealthier gave in their own self-interests or due to feelings of social responsibility. Both of these groups (the wealthy and the working class) were found to give a higher proportion of their income than individuals considered middle-class. Also, prior studies suggested that individuals motivated by intrinsic rewards (such as increasing their feeling of self-worth or finding comfort in relieving another’s suffering) were more motivated to donate to charities than those seeking external rewards (for example, to conform to social norms or receive recognition).

Individuals’ demographics influence their perceptions of (and donations to) charity, and key words or themes can be used in a charitable organization’s marketing messaging to more effectively influence potential donors to give to their cause. Inspired by Sargeant’s findings and suggestions for future research on this topic, specific themes that could be used in charities’ marketing communications to increase the likelihood of convincing the public to donate to or volunteer with the organization were sought. The study was designed to uncover keywords and their underlying themes with the ultimate goal to make recommendations to Watauga County Habitat for Humanity, in an effort to improve the effectiveness of their marketing messages, and, in turn, the success of the organization.

Previous research on general perceptions of charitable giving provides insight on how individuals decide whether or not to support a charity through donations or volunteering.
Knowing what factors drive individuals to donate is beneficial, as it allows charities to target certain audiences through their messages (Vesterlund, 2006). Factors that determine how charitable giving is perceived and influenced can be separated into two categories: public incentives and private incentives.

Those who are influenced by public incentives choose to donate time or money due to its positive influence on the community and benefit to those who are in need of assistance. These individuals may take into account the goals of a charity when deciding where to allocate donations (Smith & Schwarz, 2012). These individuals perceive charitable giving as a way to encourage community growth and to help others. Charities that craft their messages effectively can target this type of audience. Because of their concern for those they help, these individuals may cease their charitable giving if a charity insinuates that those who are being helped are responsible for their unfortunate situation (Cole, 2014). Due to this mindset, organizations should avoid blaming those they are helping so as to not discourage donations (Lee, Winterich, & Ross, 2014).

Those who focus more on the way that donating affects them personally are motivated by private incentives (Vesterlund, 2006). These individuals perceive charitable giving as a way to encourage community growth and to help others. People who find that their morals and values match those of a specific charity are more likely to associate with that charity and donate to that cause (Smith & Schwarz, 2012). An economics professor at Williams College, Jon Bakija, acknowledges this factor and suggests that tax subsidies on monetary donations promote giving and improve the level of charitable donations in the United States (Povich, 2013). Vice President of the National Council of Nonprofits David L. Thompson (2013) agrees with Bakija, adding that charitable giving benefits society as a whole and it is imperative to promote generosity by having the government provide tax benefits to those who donate to charity. This suggestion is one way that individuals who are influenced by private incentives can be targeted and encouraged to donate more.

Perceptions specific to Habitat for Humanity allow insight into how this organization is regarded by the public. Habitat for Humanity was listed in fourth place in the Cone Nonprofit Power Brand report, a public ranking of nonprofits, in 2009, as they were commended for their brand image and public perception (Cohen, 2011). One study found that Habitat for Humanity was very effective at building low-income homes efficiently and that this work was extraordinary considering the organization's dependence on volunteer efforts and donations (Hays, 2003). The homes that are built were found to be beneficial to society as a whole, as they allow for homeowners to have a safe place to live and provide them the ability to focus their attention on their educations, careers, and well-being (Evans, et al., 2000). Even though many are aware of Habitat for Humanity’s positive influence on the communities they serve, many misconceptions about this organization and its purpose remain.

In general, Habitat for Humanity is seen as a domestic, faith-based organization that focuses on the needs of those in the United States (Cohen, 2011). In reality, Habitat for Humanity is part a very large network throughout the world that helps families in many countries. Although Habitat for Humanity is an organization founded upon Christian beliefs, it does not only assist or seek assistance from individuals of Christian faith. Most of their efforts are non-denominational, as Habitat for Humanity helps people of all religions in countries throughout the world, even though they are seen as an organization that does small, religious charity jobs within the U.S. Conversely, there are also many who are unaware of the fact that Habitat for Humanity is a Christian-based organization (Mueller & Hooker, 2015).

One complaint about Habitat for Humanity’s work is that they are not perceived to have provided for the larger community when building one home for a single
family. It is thought that those who receive the home are receiving a very generous donation, but it is not well known that each family is required to help build their home alongside the Habitat for Humanity volunteers. Home recipients are also responsible for paying for their home, though the price is reduced due to volunteer labor and the mortgage is interest-free. Habitat for Humanity’s ReStores, their retail locations that accept donations of home-building materials, are also commonly misidentified as The Salvation Army or Goodwill, which can impede the organization’s brand image (Cohen, 2011).

The professional website Indeed allows individuals to anonymously review their experiences with businesses they have worked for. Organizations are rated on a scale from 1 to 5 stars. Habitat for Humanity achieved a 4.4-star rating with over 500 reviews, an outstanding rating that portrays a positive public image (“Habitat for Humanity Employee Reviews”, Indeed, 2015). This rating system can encourage those who wish to volunteer with (or donate to) Habitat for Humanity, as they can see that this organization has been rated highly by current and former volunteers and employees. Many positive comments are listed on the page and this allows interested individuals to see that Habitat for Humanity has been considered by others a great organization to work for. Adversely, there are some negative comments left in these reviews, primarily regarding the actual work of building the home and the lack of pay.

In general, research on this topic led to the conclusion that there are public and private incentives the motivate volunteers and donors, and these qualities need to be considered when attempting to gain more individual participation. Many perceptions of Habitat for Humanity are misconceptions that should be addressed by the organization. Individuals interested in volunteering can access websites like Indeed that can encourage their contributions to organizations like Habitat for Humanity. Understanding the general perception of charitable giving and the misconceptions about Habitat for Humanity are vital to the design and success of this research, and subsequent studies that seek to determine how to improve these opinions and increase volunteer participation and donations.

**METHODOLOGY**

Initial qualitative interviews were conducted by the student researchers to obtain the participants’ individual perceptions of charitable giving, with which the survey instrument would be designed. Interview respondents were qualified as being familiar with charities and were selected through a convenience sample. A total of 28 interviews were collected. Interviewees were asked general questions related to their experiences with and perception of charitable giving. The respondents were also asked to provide at least ten descriptive words they felt best defined Habitat for Humanity.

These open-ended discussions were then analyzed by all student researchers, where statements related to charitable giving were narrowed down into eight themed statements based on their commonalities. The themed statements related to the perception of charitable giving were deduced based on how often these topics were raised by respondents in the students’ interviews. These statements were: “I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations”, “I support charities that make my community better”, “Charities that focus on the needs of specific individuals are most important to me”, “A charity must have a good reputation”, “I associate with charities that have a religious affiliation”, “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important”, “Volunteering by giving time is the most appropriate way to support a charity”, and “I am attracted to charities that feature a celebrity spokesperson”.

The adjective list from each survey respondent was collected in a master document. Based on frequency, adjectives that participants believed best described Habitat for Humanity were: Humanitarian, Generous, Compassionate, Wonderful, Community,

The eight themed statements relating to charitable giving and the descriptive words pertaining to the perception of Habitat for Humanity were then used to design an online survey. The eight themed statements were placed in a matrix format question, with Likert scale response options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. To measure the relevance of descriptive adjectives of Habitat for Humanity, participants were given the same Likert scale response options. Demographic questions, including the participants’ educational level, age, employment status, household income, annual amount of charitable donations, marital status, presence of children in the household, and ethnicity, were also included in the instrument.

The online survey instrument was distributed electronically through convenience, judgmental, and snowball sampling techniques. Participants received the survey instrument via a direct email or by clicking on a social media link posted by one of the students. The survey was then completed anonymously. A total of 804 discrete responses were collected. Seven surveys received were incomplete and, consequently, omitted from our analysis. The final total of usable survey responses was 797. Though demographic questions were included, no identifying information was collected from respondents. Participants were not compensated for completing the survey.

The Statistical Analysis Software Package (SPSS) was used to conduct analyses of the data collected by the survey. To begin analyses on the twenty descriptive adjectives pertaining to Habitat for Humanity (Humanitarian, Generous, Compassionate, Wonderful, Community, Admirable, Hopeful, Life-Changing, Workers, Volunteer, Building, Caring, Kindness, Charitable, Supportive, Good, Helpful, Needed, Home, and Giving), an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed. These words were separated into three word clusters and analyzed for underlying themes.

Next, the eight themed statements were tested for reliability by calculating Cronbach’s alpha. This testing determines the level of internal consistency among the scale items, to assure all items measure the same construct.

Then relationships among the pairs of items and the themed statements were conducted with Pearson’s correlations. Next, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on the eight themed statements related to perception of charitable giving. The eigenvalue determines how strongly a group of responses is related, and researchers generally hope to find an eigenvalue equal to or higher than 1 (Ledesma & Valero-Mora, 2007). This analysis highlights more manageable clusters of data that are correlated with each other, as well as underlying connections within the data that might not otherwise be visible to researchers studying the full data set.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) testing was performed to determine if there were significant differences among the categories within the descriptive variables, related to perception of charitable giving. Regression analysis was performed to determine if any of the word clusters representing perception of Habitat for Humanity were unique significant predictors of perceptions of charitable giving.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic information collected from the 797 survey respondents was analyzed. The largest age group among the respondents was 18 to 31 years old (44%). A majority (61%) were married or living with their significant other, and 64% did not have dependent children or other minors living in their household. Most of the respondents, 84%, categorized themselves as Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American, and 7% identified as Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American. A significant number of responses
from South Asian, Indian American, Middle Eastern, Arab American, Native American, or Alaskan Native individuals were not received.

Over half of the participants indicated that they had earned a college degree (57%), and others had completed some college (27%). Most identified as an employee of a business (44%), while some held management positions (17%), or were the owner of a business (12%). Over half of the respondents said that they earned less than $60,000 annually (55%), but a significant percentage of participants (15%) placed their annual income level at over $100,000. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of participants said that they donated less than $1,000 to charities annually, while one-quarter claimed that they gave between $1,000 and $5,000.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to dimensionalize the descriptive words that represented perceptions of Habitat for Humanity. The first analysis collected the items into one factor. Researchers commonly must decide how many factors to separate data into when performing an EFA, and this decision is important as analytical results can vary widely if the number is either too large or small (Ledesma & Valero-Mora, 2007). The EFA on the descriptive words was conducted by separating the data into three word clusters.

The most powerful word cluster collected the words Supportive, Generous, Compassionate, Wonderful, Admirable, Hopeful, Caring, Kindness, Charitable, and Giving, and had an eigenvalue of 7.17. The second most powerful word cluster was created by the words Life-Changing, Workers, Volunteer, and Building, which invoke the actual process of home building and appeal to logic. The eigenvalue of this cluster was 4.44. The remaining words (Home and Humanitarian) were sorted into the third cluster. These words suggest an appeal to ethics, an obligation to do what is right for the community and help others that are in need. This cluster’s eigenvalue was 3.87. Three words were confounded (Helpful, Good, and

Needed), while one word, Community, did not load into any of the three factors.

After considering the underlying themes of the related words within clusters one, two, and three, the groups were named after the modes of persuasion first described by Aristotle, respectively: “Pathos”, appealing to the audience’s emotions; “Logos”, relating to logical or factual appeals; and “Ethos”, based on ethics or a speaker’s credibility.

The test to determine internal reliability indicated that the eight themed statements that measure perceptions of charitable giving achieved a 0.49 Cronbach’s alpha. Researchers often look for a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.7 or higher to confirm that the data are, indeed, consistent (George & Mallery, 2003). A Cronbach’s alpha below this 0.7 threshold may indicate low inter-relatedness within data, or it may be the result of a survey instrument with too few questions (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Because reliability was not achieved among scale items, correlation testing was conducted. Correlation testing found the effect size (r) of each pair to determine the strength of the correlations between the themed statements. Effect sizes are categorized as follows: Small, positive correlation (0.10-0.29); medium, positive correlation (0.30-0.49); large, positive correlation (0.50-1.0). The following pairs had the strongest correlations: “A charity must have a good reputation” and “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important”, r = 0.35; “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important” and “I support charities that make my community better”, r = 0.31; “I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations” and “I support charities that make my community better”, r = 0.27.

There were negatively correlated statements, as well. In fact, all negative statements were associated with the phrase “I am attracted to charities that feature a celebrity spokesperson”. The statements that were negatively correlated with this phrase were: “I support charities that make my community
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Table 1. Rotated Components Matrix of the Factor Analysis of Adjectives Related to Perception of Habitat for Humanity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pathos</th>
<th>Logs</th>
<th>Ethos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderful</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admirable</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-Changing</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Three adjectives - Good, Helpful, and Needed - were confounded, and one adjective - Community - did not load into any factor using the Principal Components extraction method.

better” (r = -0.54), “I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations” (r = -0.06), “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important” (r = 0.08), and “A charity must have a good reputation” (r = -0.04). All effect sizes of the negative correlations were weak.

EFA was conducted on the eight themed statements. The rotated solution provided two factors, with one predominant factor, which had an eigenvalue of 1.79. The factor collected “A charity must have a good reputation”, “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important”, “I support charities that make my community better”, and “I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations”.

The four themed statements were collapsed in a dependent variable, which was used for Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and regression testing. ANOVA testing was performed to compare means among categories within each demographic variable and see whether there were statistically significant differences among them. The only demographic that had significance was “marital status”, although it was weak with an effect size of 0.018.

The next test conducted was a regression analysis to determine if there were any word clusters that were unique significant predictors of perceptions of charitable giving. One cluster was a unique significant predictor of charitable giving. It was the “Ethos” cluster which collected the terms Home and Humanitarian.

The basis for this research, that specific keywords could be used in charities’ marketing communications to positively affect the public’s level of volunteering and donations, was the foundation for the suggestions that
### Table 2. Correlation Coefficient Values Between Eight Themed Statements Related to Perceptions of Charitable Giving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Volunteering</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Transparent</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Love for People</th>
<th>Reputation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A charity must have a good reputation. (Reputation)</td>
<td>0.112**</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.252**</td>
<td>0.185**</td>
<td>0.080*</td>
<td>0.358**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important. (Love for People)</td>
<td>0.185**</td>
<td>-0.081*</td>
<td>0.148**</td>
<td>0.318**</td>
<td>0.176**</td>
<td>0.262**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charities that focus on the needs of specific individuals are most important to me. (Individuals)</td>
<td>0.120**</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.156**</td>
<td>0.140**</td>
<td>0.078*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations. (Transparent)</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.272**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support charities that make my community better. (Community)</td>
<td>0.169**</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>0.173**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering by giving time is the most appropriate way to support a charity. (Volunteering)</td>
<td>0.109**</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am attracted to charities that feature a celebrity spokesperson. (Celebrity)</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with charities that have a religious affiliation. (Religious)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p* < .05, **p* < .01, 2-tailed test.

### Table 3. Rotated Components Matrix of the Factor Analysis of Statements Related to Perception of Charitable Giving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A charity must have a good reputation.</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important.</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support charities that make my community better.</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations.</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering by giving time is the most appropriate way to support a charity.</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charities that focus on the needs of specific individuals are most important to me.</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I associate with charities that have a religious affiliation.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am attracted to charities that feature a celebrity spokesperson.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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were made to Watauga County Habitat for Humanity regarding how their advertising and other messaging could be improved to attract more volunteers and donors. We found that individuals’ demographics did influence their perceptions of charitable giving, though to a small extent, and that key themes can be used in an organization’s messaging to more effectively influence potential donors.

The correlations of the themed statements suggested that those who are interested in donating to charities prefer organizations that have a good reputation, demonstrate a love for people, work to make the community better, and are transparent about how they allocate received donations. This information is useful when determining how potential donors view charities and how they decide which ones they will associate with. Those who are looking for charities with a religious affiliation may not be as concerned about the charity’s donation allocation transparency, and vice versa. Also, the celebrity spokesperson themed statement negatively correlated with statements about making the community better, being transparent about allocating donations, demonstrating a love for people, and having a good reputation (the four statements that have been found to be important to a positive charity affiliation), further suggesting that a celebrity spokesperson is not necessary for positive perceptions of charitable giving.

ANOVA testing showed that marital status was significantly related to the ethical statements, and that the strongest relation was among those participants who indicated that they were separated. This suggests that Habitat for Humanity should consider that the population has a wide variety of opinions when it comes to charitable giving, and that marital status may be important to consider.

EFA testing on the descriptive adjectives showed that the significance of the terms in the first cluster, Pathos, suggests that these emotionally-charged words are most impactful to Habitat for Humanity’s target audience. The words in the Pathos cluster were: Supportive, Generous, Compassionate, Wonderful, Admirable, Hopeful, Caring, Kindness, Charitable, and Giving, and these words may positively influence those who may consider donating to and/or volunteering with Habitat for Humanity if they are integrated into advertising and marketing messages. These adjectives successfully appeal to emotions and help consumers connect with Habitat for Humanity’s message.

The Logos and Ethos clusters also provide some insight, although not as strongly as the first category. Words in the Logos cluster (Life-Changing, Workers, Volunteer, and Building) may appeal to the public’s sense of logic. Words in the Ethos category (Home and Humanitarian) appeal to a sense of ethics, such as an obligation to do what is right for the community and help people that are in need.

The final test conducted was regression analysis to determine if the descriptive word clusters Pathos, Ethos, and Logos were significant predictors of perceptions of charitable giving. The four themed statements, collapsed into one variable, were once again used as the dependent variable. One cluster of words proved to be a significant predictor, which included the words Home and Humanitarian. Regression testing on the descriptive adjectives showed these words to be strong predictors of behaviors toward the four ethically-themed statements. These words were also found to have an underlying ethical appeal, correlating with “I support charities that make my community better”, “I believe in charities that are transparent about how they allocate donations”, “A charitable organization that demonstrates a love for people is important”, and “A charity must have a good reputation”. The words (or visual depictions that invoke the ideas of) Home and Humanitarian should be implemented in Habitat for Humanity’s messages to suggest that Habitat for Humanity is a charity that has a good reputation, is transparent about how they allocate donations, demonstrates a love for people, and makes the community better.

Regression testing indicated that the words Home and Humanitarian lead people to believe the message that Habitat for Humanity
is a charity that fulfills their expectations. This information could be useful to Habitat for Humanity, as well as other charitable or nonprofit organizations, when crafting fundraising or volunteer-seeking marketing campaigns. By understanding how potential donors or volunteers view charities, and how they ultimately decide which ones they will support, these organizations can better determine how to most effectively present their appeals.

Overall, our respondents looked for underlying ethical values of charities, so promoting the ethical aspects of Habitat for Humanity’s charitable giving would be beneficial. Association with a celebrity spokesperson is discouraged, as this factor was proven to be negatively correlated with the ethically-themed statements that were proven to be beneficial to the organization. Words with emotional appeal should be implemented to persuade those who are compelled by emotional values to donate and volunteer. Habitat for Humanity should highlight its long history and good reputation, and demonstrate that the organization is based on a love for people. Also, their marketing campaigns would benefit by suggesting that their work makes the communities they assist better, and that they act with transparency about the way donations to the organization, and to the people the organization helps, are allocated.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research, there are factors that impede the research process and limit results. Through the interviewing process, sampling method, and electronic surveying, responses were obtained from across the state of North Carolina, as well as across the country. Also, convenience sampling occurred by sending the survey electronically to friends, family, and social media contacts of the class, as well as to those who had the survey redistributed to them, so a preferred stratified random sample was not obtained. Lastly, demographic information related to gender was omitted from the survey instrument, which prevented analysis of this demographic. Therefore, suggestions cannot be made concerning perceptions of charitable giving and Habitat for Humanity that may differ by gender.

Our pool of survey respondents was composed primarily of individuals identifying themselves as Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American (84%). Watauga County, North Carolina reports that slightly over 95% of their population fits into this category, according to the United States Census Bureau (2015). Seven percent of survey participants identified themselves as Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African-American (the second largest demographic group in our study), as compared to 2% of Watauga County residents. This difference in reported demographics suggests that our survey was completed by a population more ethnically diverse than the county this study was completed to benefit. Education levels and marital status rates may also differ from our survey population to a statistically significant degree. The survey respondents were not specifically from Watauga County and the respondent demographics did not parallel the population of Watauga County specifically. As such, our findings may not accurately reflect the perceptions of the residents in this particular community.

SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH

There is abundant room for future research on society’s perceptions of charitable giving, and specifically on keywords or themes an organization can use to encourage the public’s willingness to donate their time or money to a cause. Further exploration into how perceptions of charitable giving vary according to respondents’ religious affiliations, income levels, and gender identity would almost certainly yield additional valuable information. Other appeals not captured by this study, particularly as they apply to more diverse demographics (specifically, minority groups), could have a greater impact on an organization’s ability to learn how to best reach potential donors than the appeals studied here. Expanding upon this research
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REFERENCES


