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篇名:

A Research on Teenagers' Prosocial Behavior:
Exploring the Effects of Image Motivation and Extrinsic Incentives

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I. Introduction

Ranging from goods to kidneys to money, people donate things of value in order to support others. In modern society, charitable behavior began holding an increasing amount of importance. In the United States, total giving to charitable organizations added up to over 410 billion USD in 2017, representing 2.1% of the nation's GDP (Giving USA, 2018). However, this human tendency to make sacrifices and contributions creates a paradox that economic theories cannot seem to explain.

The predominant neoclassical economics theory is based on core assumptions of individual behavior. It assumes that individuals strive to selfishly maximize their wellbeing, and, in order to do so, they act rationally when making decisions (Halfpenny, 1999). Thus, when charitable behavior comes into the picture, it seemingly contradicts the idea of rational decisions and utility maximization. If individuals seek to maximize their benefit, why would anyone donate on the basis of their own sacrifice, making gifts without return?

While some economists accept that charitable behavior lies beyond the scope of neoclassical economics explanations, other economists believe in a separate mechanism — impure altruism. Donors with purely altruistic motivations are solely concerned about the provisions of public goods, whereas people motivated by impure altruism gain utility from giving — whether from the act of giving itself or from extrinsic incentives (Andreoni, 1990; Costa-Font et al., 2012). Out of the many possible sources of utility, we specifically examine two common sources: extrinsic motivation, where the donor gains physical or monetary rewards, and image motivation, where the donor receives public praise and creates a positive image of themselves (Becker, 1974).

In this paper, we specifically explore the motives of charitable behavior in teenagers from both junior high and senior high. There has been a large amount of research on charitable behavior that has been conducted on children and adults, but there is little literature on teenager donations. Therefore, we try to adjudicate the interaction between effects of extrinsic motivation and image motivation, determining how each variable plays a role among teenagers' donation motives.

II. Literature Review

In a previous study examining extrinsic motivation and image motivation, experimenters created a 2 by 2 experimental design: subjects' efforts to donate were either publicly announced or kept private and were either given monetary rewards or left without any physical reward (Ariely et al., 2009). The experiment was carried out with the charity event "Click for Charity," in which participants clicked on two computer keyboards. For every certain amount of times they click the keys, money would be donated to a certain organization. Their results suggest that visibility may reduce the effectiveness of monetary rewards. In other words, monetary incentives significantly increase donation efforts in private conditions but decrease donation efforts when donors will be announced publicly. Researchers conclude that donors do not want to appear selfish in front of the public, namely they don't want to seem like they are donating only for monetary rewards.

In this paper, we created a similar research design with image motivation and extrinsic motivation. We will focus our subject pool on teenagers, an age group to which individual image may be especially important, thus the effects of image motivation could be particularly influential.

There has been some research conducted for finding teenager's charitable behavior. For example, in "The Science of Generosity" written by Allen (2018), it proves that factors that motivate teenagers to donate include self-presentation as well as peer-pressure; however, there's no direct investigation towards how image motivation and incentive play a role in their donation motives.

It is important to look into teenagers' prosocial behavior because they could potentially affect schools' and the decision makers' actions. For example, if a school is fundraising for charity and is encouraging students to participate in the donation campaign, the incentives as well as the image motivation that comes into play may affect student's choices. In this paper, we would like to investigate how the influence of physical incentive and image motivation differs among 10 to 14 years old (younger group) and 15 to 17 years old (older group).

III. Research Methods

(I) Survey Design

In a bid to understand the interaction between extrinsic incentive and image motivation, we modified the experiment design from Ariely et al. (2009). Instead of conducting in person experiments, we collected data based on surveys and self reported answers.

In our survey, we give four scenarios to our respondents, where subjects' donations are either a) rewarded with candy and kept private, b) rewarded with candy and publicly announced, c) given no physical award and kept private, and d) given no physical award and publicly announced (see Appendix A). Subjects were told to imagine the situation and try their best to make a donation decision as if they were to be placed in the same real world situation.

We also divided the participants into two age groups in order to gain a closer look at how junior high students (10-14 years old) and senior high students (15 to 17 years old) carry out different prosocial behaviors based on different incentives.

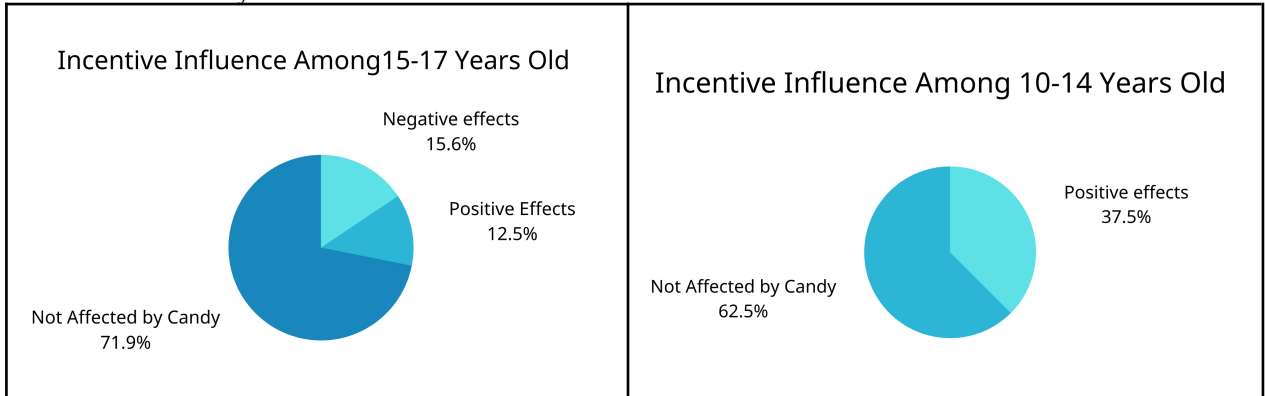
(II) Research Focus

1. Investigate the differences of motivations behind prosocial behavior in two groups of teenagers (10-14 years old and 15-17 years old).
2. Discuss the influence of image motivation and physical incentive on teenagers' donation motives.

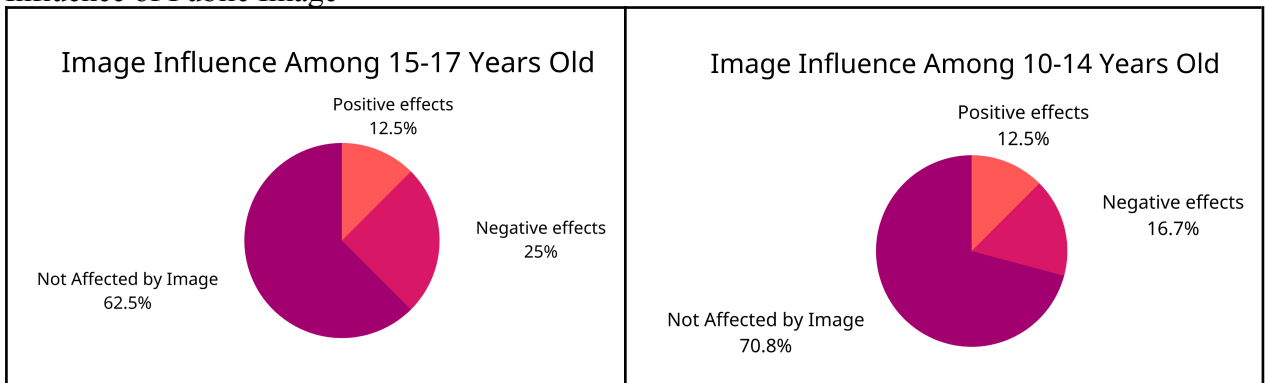
IV. Analysis and Results

(I) Data Collection

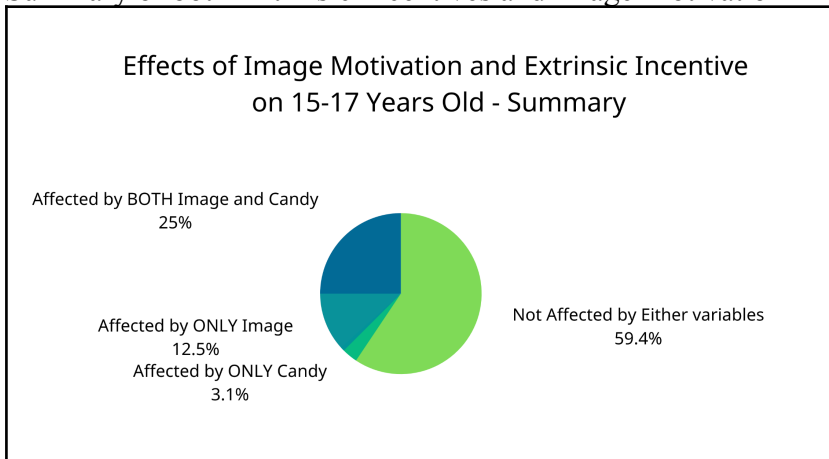
Influence of Candy as Reward

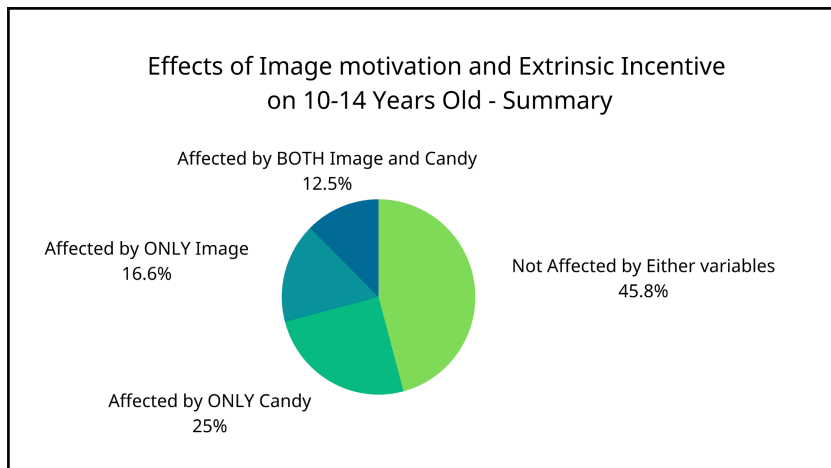


Influence of Public Image



Summary of both Extrinsic Incentives and Image Motivation





(II) Data Analysis

A. The influence of physical incentive

As can be seen from the graph illustrated above, it is clear that younger group teenagers are affected more by incentive. They donate more when there's reward at stake. Whereas the older groups of teenagers are quite indifferent to the incentive. We suggest that the varying attitudes shown by two different groups might have something to do with the exposure of social media.

Social media plays a big role in teenager's cultures today, and according to a report published by American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, it is shown that approximately 90% of teenagers ages from fourteen to seventeen used social media at least daily, and it may potentially put unrealistic expectations to young adults mind. Such factors may thus subconsciously affect their donation motives (AACAP, 2018).

B. The influence of image motivation

Generally speaking, the older teenage group is being affected more by image than the younger groups do, and it is clearly suggested that the older group donate significantly less when their decisions are being publicly displayed. Their attitudes difference when there's an image involved may be attributed to peer-pressure (梁玉嬋, 2006). According to psychologist Erik Erikson (1959), it is known that teenagers are experiencing the stage of "identity versus role confusion," and they search self-identity largely from acceptance. Adding on to the previous statistics that older teenagers have higher exposure to social media, teenagers generally use social media for self-expression as well (Mayo Clinic, 2019). Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that image is an imperative factor that may, to a certain extent, control their intentions in many ways.

C. Drawing conclusions from results

From the results shown above, the incentive would be necessary when motivating younger groups, whereas when trying to motivate older groups of teenagers, just simply making the fundraising event sound appealing without any image or incentive motivations seems like a better approach (Lyness, 2015). It is still better to just keep all the donations recorded private in order to maximize the donation, according to the overall statistics we collected.

V. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study provides insight into the effects of physical rewards and image motivation in different age groups across high school and junior high school students.

(I) Limitations

While our results suggest a pattern in the interaction of incentives and subjects' charitable behavior, we recognize some limitations inherent in our methods. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person experiments were not suitable, and we were limited to using surveys and self-report procedures to collect data.

In the study, subjects were recruited through email, and data were collected through an online response form. Similar methods have been commonly used across studies, but in the case of this study, where respondents are expected to imagine situations without being actually given the incentive, bias may easily occur (Granello and Wheaton, 2011; Adams et al., 1999). Without experiencing any loss or gains, subjects may experience self-report bias despite being instructed to simulate the scenarios as if they are events in real life. Responses may naturally deviate from their actual behaviors if they were to make the same kind of decision in real life.

Another limitation of this study lies in the incentives provided. This study suggests a potential relationship between physical incentives and a higher giving in younger teens, as well as image incentives and a higher giving in older teens. However, this correlation may have been influenced not by the offer of general incentives but by the offer of candies in specific. If the physical incentive were to become monetary incentives, the results might have been different. Our speculation is that candy in itself is more appealing to younger teens compared to older teens. This suggests that different incentives have varying levels of efficacy with different age groups. Future work should build on these results and test how types of incentives can be applied in different contexts with different target donors.

Moreover, our study does not reveal whether socioeconomic status could affect donation results. Our respondents are all students of the same private school. Income levels vary among student households, and they may vary even greater compared to students from schools with lower tuition fees. Since SES has potential effects on students' monetary values (Nelson and Lechelt, 1970), future studies can create a similar giving situation and investigate correlations between family background and donation amount.

(II) Implications

This study adds to knowledge on the underpinnings of charitable behavior in teenagers.

We add to existing knowledge on charitable behavior motives by focusing on teenagers, an often overlooked group in research on donations and charity. While teenagers are often left out of the view in charity topics, they can have important contributions in the real world. Many teenagers have the financial ability to donate money to charity organizations through allowance or pocket money. Especially in households celebrating Chinese cultures, teenagers receive red envelopes from elders in the family. Moreover, in addition to financial abilities, teenagers are a great source of help through volunteering. By looking into incentives that prompt teenagers to donate money, we can also suggest the incentives that may increase their efforts and dedication in fundraising money or assisting tasks for charity organizations.

Moreover, Choi et al. (2019) found that donation experience in teenagers increases their awareness and the frequency of future donations. Therefore, by learning more about charitable behavior motives in teenagers as well as people in general, government and charity organizations alike can better adjust their incentives and policies to raise as much funds as possible and increase societal efficiency on resource allocation.

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Appendix A

情況 1 / Senario 1

您的學校正在為伯大尼育幼院進行募款，而您的手中有1000元台幣。
Your school is fundraising for 伯大尼育幼院. You have 1000 NTD.

根據情況 1，若您每捐50元新台幣會得到一顆糖果，並且您的捐款紀錄會被公開，請問您會捐款多少元？ Keeping in mind of the scenario 1, if you get a piece of candy for every 50 dollars you donate, and your donation amount WILL be publicly announced, how much would you donate?

Short answer text
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根據情況 1，若每捐50元新台幣您會得到一顆糖果，並且您的捐款紀錄不會被公開，請問您會願意捐多少元？ Keeping in mind of the scenario 1, if you get a piece of candy for every 50 dollars you donate, and your donation amount will NOT be publicly announced, how much would you donate?

Short answer text
.....

根據情況 1，若您的捐款不會得到任何實質上的回饋，並且您的捐款紀錄會被公開，請問您會願意捐多少元？ Keeping in mind of the scenario 1, if you get no physical reward for your donation, and your donation amount WILL be publicly announced, how much would you donate?

Short answer text
.....

根據情況 1，若您的捐款不會得到任何實質上的回饋，並且您的捐款紀錄不會被公開，請問您會願意捐多少元？ Keeping in mind of the scenario 1, if you get no physical reward for your donation, and your donation amount will NOT be publicly announced, how much would you donate?

Short answer text
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