

The everlasting appeal of charity galas

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Charity galas have historical significance in elite fundraising; however, there is a potential decline in their popularity, with younger generations looking to engage with philanthropy in ways that differ from those of previous generations. Therefore, it is unclear if charity galas are still relevant today.

The study compares attitudes towards charity galas in the UK among donors of different generations and fundraisers, focusing on emerging (younger generations) and established donors (older generations).

Using surveys and interviews, the author found minor differences in attitudes towards galas among donors of different generations. This fundraising method is still relevant, providing the charities have willing supporters with appropriate social networks.

#Gala #Fundraising #Donor #Motivation #Connect #Cause

Background & Context



- The generation of **emerging donors** has more resources and begins to donate at a younger age than previous donors. The sentiment is that these donors are focused **on impact-oriented and solution-focused philanthropy**, preferring hands-on volunteering over formal gala events.
- There is a **lack of qualitative accounts** about fundraising galas as a subject of study. Available literature suggests that galas have remained essentially unchanged over the long history; while technology, knowledge, and young minds continue to evolve.
- There are **multifaceted motivations** behind philanthropic giving and gala attendance. Individuals tend to donate in response to requests. Social networks, prestige, and reciprocity influence participation in galas, with individuals seeking personal satisfaction, public recognition, and social connections.
- Though galas have the potential to be economically inefficient for fundraising, **galas can effectively reach new donors** in established social networks. The festive nature of galas and the opportunities for networking and prestige contribute to their appeal.

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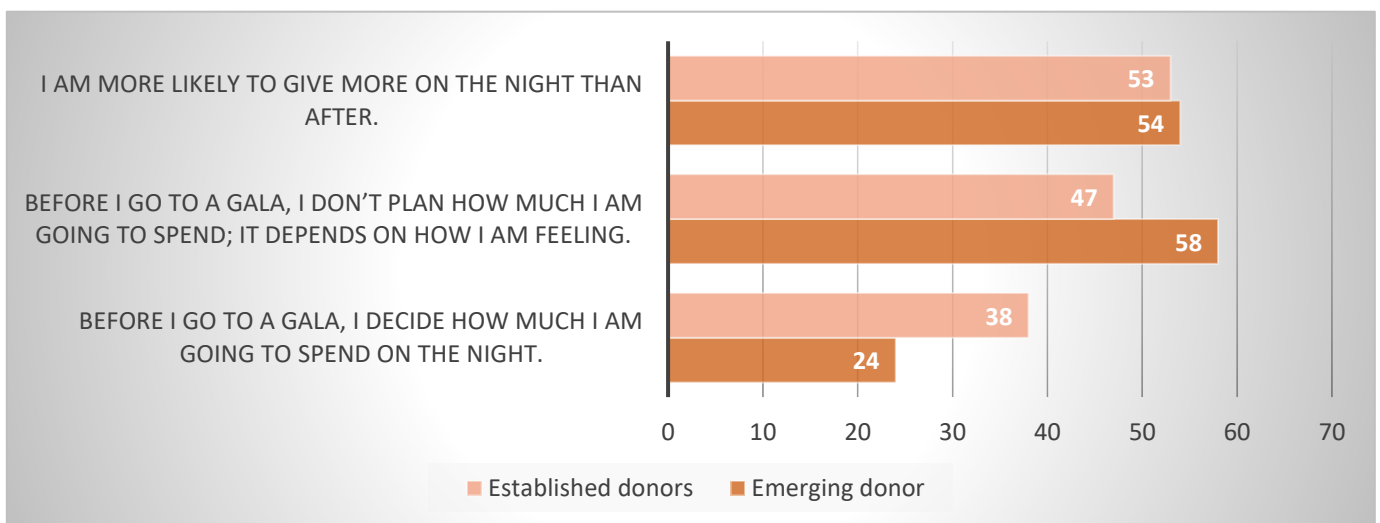
Takeaways

& Learnings

- With **minor differences between the attitudes of emerging and established donors towards galas**, charity galas remain a good strategy for collecting funds. Participants in charity galas are likely to belong to high-income households.
- The primary driver for both emerging and established donors to attend galas was solicitation: **because they were asked to attend**. The strength of solicitation seems to depend on the **affectionate distance**: reciprocity and obligation to accept invitations from **friends and colleagues** were common themes among participants. Additional motives were a **connection to the cause** and involvement with charities.
- Hosting a gala is not enough to convince people to give: participants mentioned that **the appeals or presentations during galas impacted their giving, and those need to abide by a certain level of quality**. A compelling and emotionally engaging presentation increases the likelihood of donations, while a poorly executed or uncomfortable presentation could deter donors.
- Regarding the differences, **emerging donors say they give more** than established donors. This relates to donors giving more as they age but only until retirement. Most participants **attended more than one gala per year**. A higher percentage of emerging donors say they attended more than three galas per year, while established donors say they attended fewer galas.



Figure 1. Giving decisions at galas, suggesting that an appeal or presentation from a trustee or beneficiary influences giving.



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