

ERNOP Research Note

Academic articles on philanthropy through a practitioner lens



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The antecedents of charity trust and its influence on supportive behavior

Walter Wymer - University of Lethbridge | Annika Becker – Universität Hamburg | Silke Boenigk - Universität Hamburg

The article identifies the individual and organisational factors which influence donor trust in charities, such as branding and celebrity endorsement, offering practitioners an analysis of the impact on donor behaviours which could be used to strengthen supporter relationship strategies.

The research explores the antecedents of trust and asks: to what extent do these positively influence donor behaviour; and is gender a moderating factor in this relationship?

The data suggests that seven of the identified antecedents are correlated with positive donor behaviours, with organisational transparency, and individual awareness of an organisation the strongest factors, and that gender is not a significant variable. The authors present a compelling case for charitable organisations to consider how these seven antecedents could be leveraged in marketing and communication activities.

[#Charitytrust](#) [#Donorbehavior](#) [#Volunteerbehaviour](#) [#Trustantecedents](#)
[#Genderandbehavior](#)

Background

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Context



- In fundraising literature, trust is assumed to be key to organisational credibility and donor engagement. However, **data analysis on this is limited**, with a focus on donations excluding other behaviours like volunteering. In this study, volunteering is included in the scope of analysis, and there is an assumption that there is a link between trust and these supportive behaviours.
- The researchers hypothesise that **personal connection to a charity** will positively influence the trust an individual has in that organisation, and that charity communication strategies will result in a link between **awareness of a charity** and the level of trust it attracts.
- Charities emphasise their values to attract support from individuals who share them, with **cause worthiness** being key. Existing data on consumer behaviour also points to **word-of-mouth** as another important factor.
- From an organisational perspective, public awareness and communication strategies underpin the identified organisational antecedents of **celebrity support, charity age and reputation, and perceived transparency**.
- Existing data suggests that **gender is a useful predictor of supportive behaviours**, linking women's tendency to score more highly on measures of caring and empathy with their greater propensity to volunteer, for example, and this factor is applied to the other variables.

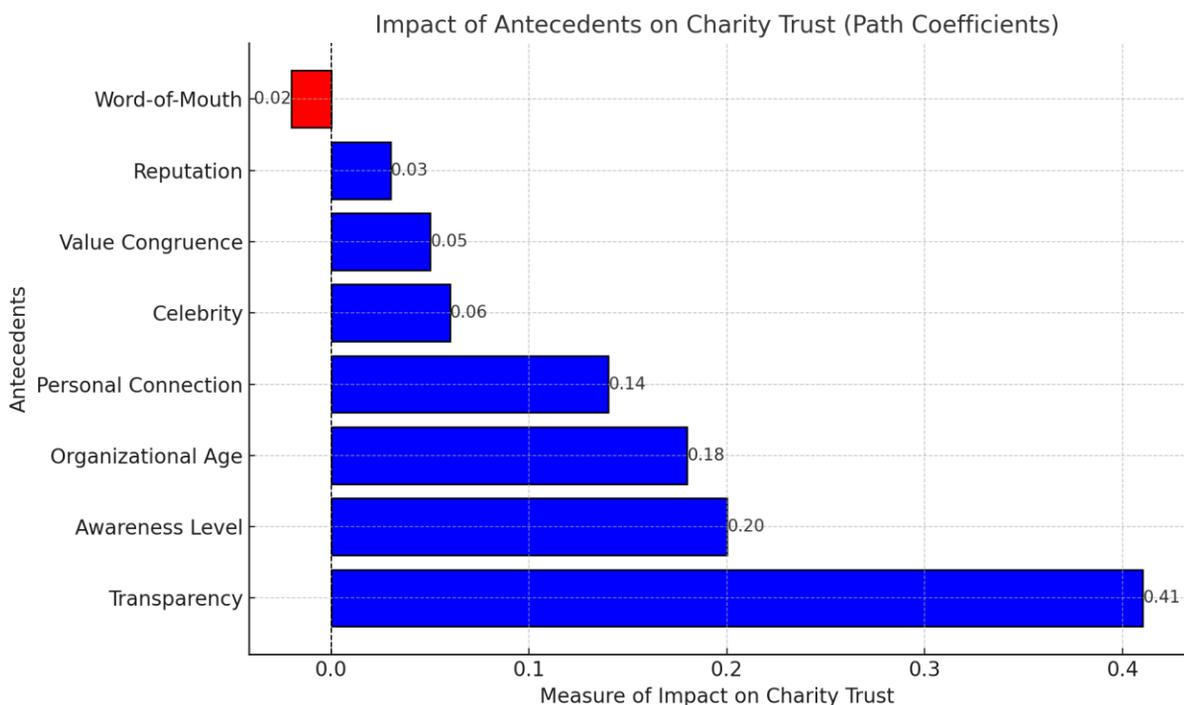
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Take aways & Learnings



- Seven of the eight hypothesised antecedents were found to have a measurable impact on trust, and this has practical relevance for non-profit management strategies. **Transparency was most significant driver of trust, reinforcing the importance of effectively communicating the use of donations, and the direct benefits for the charitable mission.**
- Brand awareness** was also found to be strongly linked with trust, and the authors recommend that charities consider **how their marketing and public engagement strategies can build this brand awareness**, with a particular focus on **highlighting the age and reputation of the organisation.**
- Of the eight hypothesised antecedents, only one was not positively linked with trust and supportive behaviour – **word of mouth in fact showed a small negative impact, challenging previous findings and assumptions about the power of peer-to-peer donor networks.**
- The analysis found **no evidence that gender is relevant to the relationship between charity trust and charity support.**



ERNOP Research Notes provide easy-to-read, practice-oriented summaries of academic articles on philanthropy and are written by practitioner experts. This ERNOP Research Note 2025/2 is published in March 2025 and has been written by Jemma Chambers from Habitat for Humanity Great Britain. More information can be found at www.ernop.eu.