Differences between Students and Non Students’ willingness to Donate to a Charitable Organisation

Robin Pentecost, Griffith University
Lynda Andrews, Queensland University of Technology

Abstract

Research suggests that people are less philanthropic in terms of their general willingness to donate (Kottasz, 2004a). This paper reports on a study comparing how two groups (students and non-students) differ on both reported donating behaviour and intended donating behaviour. Findings suggest that group membership affects reported blood donating. Differences were also found between groups regarding importance of the charity, attitude towards the charity and importance of the need in terms of their intentions to make other forms of donations.

Introduction

Studies have examined what attitudes and motivations influence donating behaviour. Most of these studies used samples composed of either university students or non-university students (e.g. France, France, and Himawan, 2007; Giles et al., 2004; Lee, Piliavin and Call, 1999; Mathew et al., 2007). The study reported in this paper provides several points of differentiation from the existing literature. Researching a single organisation, it is a comparative study between university students and non-university students’ attitudes and motivations towards several forms of public donation activity: blood, money, time or goods. No other study has been found to-date that examines what differences and similarities, in terms of attitudes and motivations, may exist between students and non-students on these four forms of philanthropic activity.

Review of the Literature

It has been suggested that people are less philanthropic in terms of their likelihood to make charitable donations (e.g. Grace and Griffin, 2006; Kottasz, 2004a; Kottasz, 2004b). Examining three types of donating behaviour (blood, time and money) Lee, Piliavin and Call, (1999) found blood donations were perceived as being different to giving time or money; moreover, donating blood was less frequent than the other two. Similarly, Mathew et al., (2007) found donating blood to be perceived as a volunteer activity, and more impersonal. Thus, different forms of donating behaviour have different consumer perceptions. Consumer perceptions also differ on other factors. Research suggests donating behaviour to be influenced by the extent to which individuals perceive the relevance of the charitable organisation, the importance of a specific donation activity, or their level of involvement behaviour (Grace and Griffin, 2006; Lee, Piliavin and Call, 1999; Mathew et al., 2007). For example, Misje et al. (2005) identified four factors, understanding (a positive experience associated with donating), value (altruistic or empathic reasons for donating) and esteem (volunteering in order to feel better about oneself). Personal moral norm or moral duty (a sense of moral obligation to society) was included in some studies, but only had a weak
influence on attitude (e.g. Misje et al., 2005), or a non significant influence on intentions (e.g. France, France, and Himawan, 2007). Hence, donating behaviour can be influenced by the importance of the charity, the importance of the specific need and social values.

Additionally, attitudes towards a charitable organisation may also influence people’s behaviour towards making donations. Looking at positive attitudes Kottasz (2004b) examined whether affluent young professionals would prefer to donate to a reputable charity. While this factor was not supported in the research, the question still remains as to whether perceptions about a charitable organisation are likely to influence donating behaviour. As attitudes are predispositions to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way (Allport, 1935), attitudes are therefore still likely to have positive or negative influence on behaviour (Sheth, Mittal, and Newman, 1999). Thus, to what extent do attitudes towards a charitable organisation impact on people’s willingness to donate still needs to be addressed.

While the above discussion identifies what influences individuals’ behaviour towards donating, important differences may exist between the samples obtained. The studies reviewed used samples composed of either university students [students] (e.g. France, France, and Himawan, 2007; Giles et al., 2004; Nonis et al., 1996); or non-university students [non-students] (e.g. Lee, Piliavin and Call, 1999; Mathew et al., 2007; Tschueulin and Lindenmeier, 2005). However, none of the studies reported having a sample consisting of both students and non-students. Other areas of research reporting statistical analysis of between-group differences indicate the results to vary between students and non-students (e.g. Gordon et al., 1986). Peterson, (2001) found students to be more homogenous than non-students and as such caution must be exercised when extending student findings to a non-student population. Given this difference it is highly probable that students and non-students are likely to differ on what influences their donating behaviour.

Research Design

Based on the literature, the following research question is posed: How do students’ motivations and attitudes vary from those of a non-student sample across different forms of donation behaviour? The focus of this study is the Australian Red Cross (the Red Cross). The advantage of this organisation is that helping behaviour can be found in the all the forms identified above: blood, monetary, time, and goods. The study reported in this paper examines both students and non-students’ social values, importance of the need, attitudes towards the Red Cross, and the importance of the Red Cross on their donating behaviour. Adapted from Harvey (1990), six items were used to measure the perceived importance of charity. This importance relates to community values and explores the extent to which individuals perceive the charity to be worthwhile (e.g. Grace and Griffin, 2006). Attitude towards charity was measured using items adapted from Richins (1983). These items measure general attitude towards an organisation and its offering. Importance of need was measured using items adapted from Mano and Oliver’s (1993) need evaluation scale. Originally developed from Zaichowsky’s (1985) involvement items, this scale evaluates the degree to which respondents perceive the need as being vital and necessary. Social values, identified as the individual’s feelings of being part of a society, was measured using scales developed by Corfman, Lehman and Narayanan (1991). These items assessed socially related values such as security, belongingness, and respectability in a person’s life. This notion of social value is similar to that of Kottasz (2004b) who noted young professionals were found to feel a need to belong to their communities or to society.
Outcome variables contained both reported behaviour and intended behaviour. First, *blood donation* behaviour (*Have you ever given blood before Y/N?*) forms the criterion variable for reported behaviour. However, it should be noted that self-reporting may not capture actual past behaviour. The second group of outcome variables captures *behavioural intentions* towards making other forms of donations to the Red Cross such as money, time, and goods. While behavioural intentions may not always predict behaviour, it is considered to be a direct antecedent of that behaviour (Bagozzi, Gurham and Priester, 2002).

**Results**

The sample was drawn from a coastal city in Southeast Queensland with a large university population of both postgraduate and undergraduate students. Ratio sampling was used to remove potential biases on both gender and age characteristics, given that significant differences may be found between these characteristics when donating blood (Nonis et al., 1996). This resulted in a sample of 776 respondents of which 356 (46%) were students comprising 54% males and 46% females; and 420 (54%) were non-students comprising 58% males and 42% females. Average age for both groups was 29-30 with a standard deviation of 11.6. Testing found no significant differences between groups on both age or gender characteristics.

Tests were also taken to assess the validity of the student / non-student groupings. Validation was found with significant differences ($\chi^2 < .000$) reported on their highest level of education obtained. As may be expected, non-students reported the highest percentages of having attended high school (74%), being a high school graduate (74%), or a trade school graduate (94%). Students were found to have the greatest percentage of some university education (72%) and an undergraduate degree (55%). Reliability tests were conducted on the multi-item constructs. Results show *social values* and *importance of charity* to have alphas $\geq .70$ with *importance of need* and *attitude towards charity* both having an alpha of .66. While these latter constructs are below the .70 level recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), given the small difference (.04) these constructs were retained for further analysis.

Next, a Logistic Regression was used to evaluate reported donation behaviour (whether the respondent had given blood: Yes / No). This technique was chosen over Crosstabulation as it allows for each of the scalar predictor constructs (*social values, importance of charity, importance of need, and attitude towards charity*) as well as the categorical student / non-student variable to be included in the analysis. Results show a good fit for the Logistic model. Using the Log Likelihood Value (LLV) as a measure of error in model estimation (Hair et al., 1998), estimation was found to significantly increase ($\chi^2 [5 \text{ df}] = 29.98, \text{ sig.} = .000$) with the inclusion of the predictor variables (LLV = 747.872) against the base assumption that they do not estimate reported donation behaviour (LLV = 777.847). This was confirmed with fit between the actual model and predicted model, as indicated by the Hosmer and Lemeshow value, having an insignificant Chi-square ($\chi^2 [8 \text{ df}] = 10.52, \text{ sig.} = .23$). While a significant model was found, only 6.9% of the variance in the model may be explained by the model (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .069$). This variance may be explained primarily by whether the respondent was a student or not. Table 1 shows this predictor to have a significant effect (sig. $< .01$) on whether or not they had donated blood. The importance of this finding is in the significant influence ($B = .803$: Exp($B$) 2.233) of this categorical predictor variable on behaviour,
therefore, indicating potential differences between the demographic groups on donation behaviour.

Table 1: Logistic Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student / Non-Student</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>2.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Values</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>1.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Charity</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Need</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>1.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Towards Charity</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>1.301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Sig. < .01

While the above analysis focuses on actual blood donating behaviour, of interest is the intention towards other forms of donating. Using the groupings to compare students and non-students on their intentions to donate money, time or goods (regression analysis was chosen over t-tests to reduce type 1 error [Hair et al., 1998]), several differences were found between these two groups. Table 2 shows these findings.

Table 2: Intentions Towards other Forms of Donating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donation</th>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Social values</th>
<th>Importance of Charity</th>
<th>Importance of Need</th>
<th>Attitude towards Charity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>.106*</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>.080*</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>.114*</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>.104*</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Sig. <.05  ** = Sig. <.01

Results suggest when it comes to donating money, both importance of charity and attitude towards charity have a significant effect for students. However, this differed for non-students. For this group only importance of need was found to significantly influence their intentions to donate money. No significant influences on donating time were found for non-students, however, importance of charity and attitude towards charity were again found to be significant for students. Importance of need was significant for both students and non-students when considering giving goods, with importance of charity also being significant for students. Social values were found to have no influence on intentions to donate for both groups in the sample.

Discussion

Student/non-student groupings were found to significantly influence report donating behaviour. This would, therefore, imply that different motivations may underlie intended donating behaviour. Students were found to rate the importance of the charity to be significant for all forms of donation behaviour. This suggests that charitable organisations should focus on the importance of their charity when trying to attract donations of money, time and goods from the student demographic. For a more focused intended behaviour, e.g. specifically money or specifically time, then attitude towards the charity is also a significant
factor for money and time but not for goods. For this particular form of donation behaviour, the importance of the need has a significant influence, whereas attitude towards the charity does not. From a practitioners perspective these findings provide insights into the types of communication messages that should be incorporated into a marketing campaign.

However, the findings differed for a non-student sample. For this group, importance of the charity and attitude towards the charity bore no significance on any form of intended donation behaviour. It was found that importance of the need had a significant influence on the donation of money and goods. Of interest is the lack of significant influence of any of these motivating factors on the donation of time for the non-student group. This is consistent with other studies that suggest that people who work have less time available to participate in volunteer activities (e.g. Kottasz, 2004a). For marketers the emphasis in their marketing communications should be on the need for the donation, rather than trying to communicate the importance of their charity or trying to affect attitudes towards the charity in their campaigns. These identified differences between the two groups in the sample extend findings such as Giles et al. (2002) that highlight the importance of charitable organisations focusing only on those beliefs that are important to a particular target population of donors in their marketing efforts.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Limitations in our study are noted. First is the inherent limitation of social desirability in self reporting in the context of donation behaviour. Future research should consider methods of confirming donation behaviour, for example, respondents producing Blood donation ID. Additionally measures should be included relating to whether they have had the opportunity to donate in the recent past. Second, the respondents can be viewed as a convenience sample as they were recruited from one city that also has a large university population. A national sample would provide greater generalisability of the findings. Finally, we only found seven percent of explained variance in reported donation behaviour. This would, therefore, imply that other factors are intervening in this relationship between intended and reported donation behaviour. Future research should assess the extent to which additional moderating factors might impact on reported donation behaviour.

In terms of other future directions for research, while this study was confined to a specific organisation, the differences identified would suggest the importance of including both student and non-student samples to further increase the generalisability of future research findings. Additionally, the use of student samples may help in the development or testing of theories to predict or explain individuals’ donation behaviour. However, the extent to which these findings can be generalised to non-student samples needs to be examined as the findings in this study suggest that the findings may be quite different, as suggested by Peterson (2001).
References


