The Ethicality of Point of Sale Marketing Campaigns: Normative Ethics Applied to Cause Related Checkout Charities

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The Ethicality of Point of Sale Marketing Campaigns: Normative Ethics Applied to Cause Related Checkout Charities

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Organization of the presentation

Intro to checkout charities
Purpose of research
Research question
Conceptual frame
Summarized findings
Practical considerations
Future research opportunities
Conclusion
Intro to checkout charity

“Would you like to contribute to XYZ charity by adding a dollar to your bill today?”

- $4.1 billion raised for charities in three decades (Engage for Good)
- $441 million in raised for charities in 2017 (Engage for Good)
- 71% of report contributing (n=3,030) (Good Scout Group, 2014)
- Donors report that guilt is the major reason they give (Good Scout Group)
- Although philanthropy can be a matter of life or death, there’s little research on the ethics of philanthropy (Wood, 2018)
- Almost no research on the ethics of checkout charities
Purpose

1. Demonstrate a method of exploring the ethics of a contemporary form of charitable giving
2. Explore the ethics of responsible giving from three primary stakeholder perspectives
3. Illustrate an in-depth ethical decision-making process founded in normative ethics that may be used when teaching
Research question

How do the ethics of giving apply to the acts of:

1. Providing an opportunity for donating
2. Deciding whether to donate to checkout charities
Conceptual frame

Consequentialism (Mill, Bentham)
- Focus on the outcome of achieving the greatest happiness in the long term (Brusseau, 2012)

Deontology (Kant)
- Focus on duty based upon rationale judgments of acts being either right or wrong (Hill, 2019)
- Act in a way that the rule for your action could be universalized (Brusseau, 2012)
- Human welfare is the end goal rather than the means to achieve a goal

Virtue ethics (Aristotle)
- Three central concepts, specifically excellence or virtue; practical wisdom or phronesis; and flourishing or eudaimonia (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016)
## Summarized opportunities/challenges for each normative ethical frame for three major stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consequentialism</th>
<th>Deontology</th>
<th>Virtue Ethics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonprofits</strong></td>
<td>Mission fulfillment, passion for the cause, pursuing a greater good, public image</td>
<td>Provides the means to help others, amplifies the power of giving</td>
<td>Develop a cooperative social systems network to promote human flourishing</td>
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<td>Legalities, raising money, long term viability, determining most effective fundraising</td>
<td>Fiduciary duty to use the money and resources responsibly, develop a system of accountability</td>
<td>Maintains standards of excellence that align with community virtues that promote human flourishing</td>
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<td><strong>For profits</strong></td>
<td>Positive public image</td>
<td>Positive public image</td>
<td>Act in socially responsible way</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Worker resistance, methods of asking</td>
<td>Method of ask should not use donors as means to an end</td>
<td>Method of ask meets standards of excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donors</strong></td>
<td>Affordable, easy, pleasure from helping others</td>
<td>Fulfilling duty to help others, establish “habit of giving”</td>
<td>Provides ways to develop and live into ethical character</td>
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<td>Impulse vs utility, empathy vs rationality, may reduce giving to community causes</td>
<td>Feelings of unwarranted guilt and shame when unable to fulfill duty, fading effect</td>
<td>Determine whether the opportunity to give promotes human flourishing</td>
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Practical considerations

Nonprofits

- Align moral identity with campaign
- Engage major stakeholders
- Assess strategic alignment, including identifying fiscal value and feasibility
- Locate suitable for profit partners

For profits

- Determine whether participating fits within the organization’s social responsibility plan
- Engage employees in participating in ‘the ask’
- Assess impact of partnership on public image

Donors

- Does the cause align with one’s moral identity
- Is the method and place of ‘the ask’ appropriate
- Does the donation fit within one’s personal giving plan
Future research

Welfarist consequentialism moves giving from individual considerations of giving to justice theories of giving by engaging a conversation about the impact of giving and the responsibility to move giving from a local focus to a global focus; connecting this research with other systems ethics approaches such as sustainability might be interesting.

We did not fully explore the question of whether the ethics of ‘the ask’ would promote human flourishing for employees; this could be an interesting area for further research, especially as related to employee engagement.

We drew some preliminary findings from the emerging field of behavioral ethics about the use of fear, guilt, and shame in motivating people to give within the context of checkout charities and other point-of-sale campaigns; as the research of giving advances, more work in this area may be valuable.
Conclusion

Effective ethical decision making examines problems from multiple perspectives, a competency well worth developing in an ethically pluralistic global society.

Checkout charity campaigns are growing because they are easy to implement, involve low risk and are marketed to be a win for all involved.

However, when ethical conditions of the purpose of giving or the ethics of ‘the ask’ are unmet, stakeholders would be well advised to live into their moral identity and ‘just say no’.