

Donor Perception and Intention Impacting Nonprofit Organizations

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Abstract

The perception of a donor and their inevitable intention as it relates to their formed opinion is the framework of consumer-organizational interaction within the world of nonprofits. Realizing the elements that directly influence the perception one forms of an organization allows businesses to discover the best ways to market their message and present themselves in a way they deem most appropriate. Understanding an organization's influence and ability to manipulate the view of the consumer plays a large part in the nonprofit sector, determining how much a nonprofit will be supported by potential donors. The donor behavior that relays their perception and intention proves to be an imperative topic of discussion, and one worth dissecting to a much greater degree.

Donor Perception and Intention Impacting Nonprofit Organizations

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of donor perception and intention will be important to grasping the impact of the donation process in nonprofit organizations.

Understanding each element on its own is important, however, comprehending how each plays a determining factor in the other is necessary to a successful evaluation of the topic. Nonprofit organizations are often widely misunderstood by the large majority of the population. Many of these misunderstandings require a deeper knowledge of donor perception and intention in relation to nonprofit organizations. As the world is evolving, social media has become a factor in understanding the views of an organization, causing marketing the message to be yet another factor in this process. Social media plays a large factor in an organizations ability to effectively market their mission and reach larger amounts of people from all across the world.

Understanding what a nonprofit organization is, better comprehending the consumer/donor to organization relationship, and analyzing the best strategies of making these connections will be a key element of the research process. Throughout the entirety of understanding the relationship between the donor and the organization, ethical considerations will have to be made on both ends to maintain a sense of integrity and respect. Not only do ethical matters have to be considered amongst the business leaders and workers to ensure proper business practice is being maintained, but it is also essential that the consumer or prospective donor is maintaining a sense of integrity throughout their interaction with the organization. Ethical considerations will also be analyzed from a biblical standpoint, discussing what role Christian beliefs should play within the world of business. This paper will analyze all these factors in comparison to previously conducted studies and research and use the combined information to best understand the nonprofit sector. First,

however, one must define what the nonprofit sector is and how it is relevant to donors and the world of business.

The Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit organizations encapsulate over 1.8 million organizations within the United States, 40 percent of which are made up of schools, churches, and foundations (Cause IQ, 2020). This sector makes up a large variety of organizations, varying from sports teams, human service organizations, educational institutions, and many more (Cause IQ, 2020). For the purpose of this thesis, the main focus when referring to the nonprofit sector will be regarding charitable organizations known as 501(c)(3) charities; however, the large spectrum of all nonprofit organizations will still be considered. Organizations within this sector act towards helping a greater good, whether that be providing after school programs for underprivileged kids, an organization that offers jobs to recovering human trafficking victims, or even a shelter that gives housing abilities to runaways, homeless individuals, or animals from neglected homes. These organizations rely heavily on the contribution from volunteers who donate time and money in order for the organization to operate. Nonprofit organizations must be strategic in the way they acquire their funds in order to function to the best of their ability. These organizations find it to be a necessity to plan outreach events, banquets, 5k runs, and other similar, yet creative ideas, that help outsiders get plugged in and stay interested in becoming more involved. Building a sense of interest for outsiders helps establish a sense of investment and allows the organization to build up a following. This may be on social media platforms, newsletters, community events, or simply from word-of-mouth. Nonprofits organizations must work hard to establish a presence in their area, allowing those who can benefit from their services to know how to get connected, while also becoming well-known amongst prospective donors. Nonprofits directly benefit from

their need to be in existence, meaning that if the cause they are working towards is no longer an issue, there may no longer be a need for them to be in operation. These organizations thrive off their desire from others and the desire to collectively work towards a greater cause.

Organizational Leadership

Nonprofit organizations can be structured in a much different way than that of a for profit organization. Usually, a nonprofit has a board of directors that oversees the paid employees and volunteers of the organization, allowing for proper regulation and accountability to take place. Nonprofits may also specify boards into categories, such as having a fundraising board, an advising board, and a finance board. In a for profit organization, however, companies are usually organized by hierarchical power starting with the CEO, going down to the managers and front-line employees. Although a manager may have some say in business and organizational decisions, the ultimate say comes from the CEO and other high-level figures. While all of the different committees will have their own individual tasks and duties, they will ultimately be working together to achieve the common goal of effectively and efficiently running the organization. Often, the various committees and board of directors is made up of volunteers who may be specialized in their field. The organization may be able to find a professional who is willing to serve on the committee and offer up their knowledge and expertise. When serving on a committee, it is necessary to have a duty of loyalty, meaning that the needs of the organization are put above the needs of the individual and there is not to be any conflicts of interest (Thomas & Strom-Gottfried, 2018). It is the duty of those chosen members when on the board to maintain a sense of efficiency within the organization to ensure that the mission and vision is being met and accurately strived towards every day. It is the board of director's job to hold even the Chief

Executive Officer (CEO) of the organization accountable and take necessary precautions if they are acting out of line.

Trust Within Leadership

Trust is yet another quality that is important in leadership and management and “at its core, trust is an assurance that lets people manage risk in their relationships with others” (Evans, 2020, p. 2). Businessman Jack Welch emphasizes even more so of how important a role trust plays within business, explaining that, “Leadership today is all about two words: it’s all about truth and trust. To trust means making an active choice to risk something that’s important to you or to your project that may have a lasting impact” (Evans, 2020, p. 5). Leadership means delegation and with that comes trusting your employees with tasks that carry some weight. Although failure is unavoidable within the basic operations of an organization, the more trust that is established, the better a company can function. When leaders effectively delegate, they “take charge of how they deal with trust in everyday personal interactions, they gain control over a powerful tool for moving their initiatives forward, enhancing their collaborative efforts, and improving execution across their organizations” (Evans, 2020, p. 2). Leaders must put trust in others but also remember that someone had to first trust in them in order for them to be in the place they are. Trust can be hard but is an indispensable element of effective leadership.

Donor Perception

Donor perception is the viewpoint and understanding an individual donor has of the organization, based on the way the organization may be portrayed on platforms such as social media. Every opinion and statement about an organization plays a role in how an outsider may perceive that organization, regardless of if they are true or not. This element is important to evaluate because it helps the nonprofit organization in understanding how potential donors

perceive their organization and this allows the company to target their marketing message to best market the organization. Organizations must actively work to create the best image of themselves and be perceived in the best light by others. Although it can be difficult to alter someone else's perception, there are most certainly ways within the world of business for an organization to influence that perception for their own benefit.

One technique specifically to alter the way a donor perceives an organization is based on positive and negative charity appeals (Erlandsson et al., 2018), a technique that has been researched and found to be impactful within nonprofits through portraying the importance of donating in a way that can appeal best to the specific audience. Seeing that the organization itself has leverage on changing the way a potential donor may perceive an organization is vital in crafting the mission message. Understanding that outsiders can have a specific view of an organization makes it important to focus on the strategy behind marketing the message. Consumers will make preconceived notions about an organization, despite having very limited knowledge or exposure to the company. In a strategic manner, however, it is possible for the organization to take some control of the perception by capturing essential symbolic attributes that create brand personality that reflects the company's mission and intended message (Febriani & Selamet, 2020). The organization must do so in a way that ensures that the message is being perceived in the way intended. This intended perception relies heavily on trust which is another huge factor that plays a role in the relationship between the donor and the organization (Williams et. al., 2018). Having a sense of trust and reliability allows for a donor to feel confident in supporting and backing a specific organization. If the organization portrays itself in a transparent, trustworthy manner, the donor may be more likely to perceive the organization from a positive perspective.

Another important element within the process of donor perception relates to how highly the organization regards their brand image. Some define brand image as “a collection of ideas, feelings, and attitudes that consumers have about brands” (Febriani & Selamet, 2020, p. 168). Brand image often plays one of the largest factors into whether a consumer is likely to support an organization or not. If they have a positive perception of an organization and agree with the actions they are taking, they will be much more likely to support them. Take, for example, Patagonia, a company that makes known their passion and effort towards helping the environment. Since 1985, Patagonia has pledged 1 percent of their sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment (Patagonia, 2021). If consumers come across this company and they too are passionate about taking action in protecting the environment, they will most likely have a positive perception of the organization, even if they have not yet experienced or interacted with the company. It would be appropriate to assume that consumers with likeminded passions would support this company. Of course, Patagonia is able to recognize the positive brand image these beliefs give them as an organization, and although their acts of corporate social responsibility may require them to put in extra work and effort that is not directly earning them a profit, they are willing to make the sacrifice for a cause they are passionate about. They are also able to realize the long-term benefits of establishing their business on a cause that others are passionate about. Although 1 percent of income is not a large amount in the scheme of things, the majority of consumers will be mostly concerned with the fact that they are contributing at all.

Trust by the Donor

Understanding the element of trust can be a determining factor in the perceptions formed by the donor. Trust is defined as “a belief held by the trusting party that trusted parties who

exhibit their ability to do the right thing, and have integrity and benevolence, will behave in accordance with the expectation of the trusting party” (Feng & Du, 2017, p. 1776). Furthermore, trust is “essential for a successful consumer-organization relationship and has a positive effect on consumer intention to purchase or donate” (Feng & Du, 2017, p. 1776). It has been identified that both expertise and trustworthiness are important elements of establishing and maintaining source credibility (Haley, 1996). Understandably in today’s society, social media perspective is a large part of establishing the relationship between the consumer and the organization and even more pivotal in establishing trust through online interaction. Trust is suggested to evolve from social interaction, defining interactivity as “the extent to which an organization’s social media offers consumers the ability to interact with the organization and other consumers” (Feng & Du, 2017, p. 1777). The more a consumer interacts with a nonprofit organization’s content on social media, the more trust they gain for the organization and the greater likelihood for a positive perception to be established by that potential donor.

Furthermore, an image of a company, inevitably, becomes whatever the consumer perceives it to be, meaning that “different perceptions of source credibility differentially affect message evaluation, attitude change, behavioral intentions and behavioral compliance” (Haley, 1996, para. 3). If trust is unable to be established between the consumer and the organization, it will be quite difficult for a positive perception to be formed. A study on the correlation between brand personality traits and employee brand affect and trust showed that sincerity has a significant effect on both employee brand trust and affect (Febriani & Selamet, 2020). To explain further, the element of sincerity and the organization’s ability to show an emotional connection made potential donors more trusting in the organization as a whole. When employees and

volunteers working for the organization actively show they care through their actions and intended emotions, trust can be established easier.

When organizations are marketing themselves, it is important that they consider the following points brought up by Donaldson (2020) and colleagues:

Since attributes of social enterprises have a significant impact on donors' perceptions, communication professionals must evaluate whether (1) their organization possesses the attributes that consumers most desire and (2) whether they are communicating the possession of these attributes in their outreach efforts. Specifically, fundraising professionals and other communication officers should consider whether potential donors are aware of the amount of the budget that is spent on administrative expenses, as well as if they are targeting individuals who are interested in the specific geographic location in which the organization operates. (p. 18)

Trust plays into finances of an organization, making sure that donors are aware of where their money is going. Although it is important for the organization to make sure that the donated funds they receive are going towards supporting their mission and vision, there are expenses that come with running an organization. Employees must be compensated, events must be planned, and bills have to be paid to maintain a sense of normalcy within the company. Outreach events and banquets account for a large portion of incoming donations, resulting in money being spent in order for money to be received. Throwing an elaborate banquet for potential donors where individuals give testimonials about their positive experiences related to the organization can be one tactic of effectively raising money. Again, although this may cause an initial outflow of resources, it can be expected that this will be an event that will bring in large portions of income.

Considering the complexities and intricate levels of where money goes and how it is spent, it is important for nonprofit organizations to be willing to be transparent with their finances. Although nonprofit organizations are required to release certain financial statements just like for-profit companies, often times they elect to release even more statements than the required amount as an act of transparency to consumers and potential donors. Disclosure is yet another way to further the factor of trust between the organization and the prospective donor, considering that “Disclosure is at the heart of relationships and can help NPOs to develop an intimate relationship with consumers by delivering them a good experience and satisfaction” (Fefng & Du, 2017, p. 1778). An organization willing to disclose information, especially information that is much more than what is required, proves a sense of transparency and willingness to be held accountable. This is just another way of nonprofit organizations building a constant avenue of trust between themselves and outside individuals.

Marketing the Message

Understanding how donors perceive the organization is an essential element for the organization to use in crafting their message. For nonprofits, the goal is usually not to market a specific product that is being sold, but rather, to market a message that is reflective of their mission. Nonprofit organizations often “are driven by certain missions to increase critical and visible position in political, social, and economic life” (Febriani & Selamet, 2020, p.168). This allows for donors to evaluate within themselves whether or not they desire to support the organization based on their alignment with the message or “brand”. Brands often function as “nodes in memory, with associations linked to them in that links between a brand and associations are created and reinforced as consumers are exposed to the brand in a specific context over time” (Gregory et al., 2020, para. 4). In understanding this, nonprofits can work

towards creating a message that is marketable and appealing to the appropriate targeted audience. Being able to recognize and capitalize on popular associations can be helpful in establishing a reinforceable brand or rather, a nostalgic brand, to consumers and donors alike. Take the Nintendo DS for example, a game console that was popular during the early 2000s and is now considered a nostalgic gaming system to teens of this generation. In 2017, Nintendo released a new updated, yet similar version, called the Nintendo Switch that associated their brand with underlying nostalgic memories for many consumers. By creating this emotional connection, Nintendo was able to successfully sell over 78 million consoles since its release date (Vailshery, 2021).

Establishing a mission and vision statement for the organization that envisions what cause is being sought after is a vital step. If the mission and vision is not reflective of the actions in which they perform, marketing will become difficult for the organization and confusing to the consumers. Ensuring that the mission and vision statements of the organization are clear, yet concise, can be a large part in what draws consumers and prospective donors towards one organization over another. These statements should work towards the shaping of brand personality and strive towards achieving a positive perspective from consumers. With this comes brand personality and the discovery from organizations that “it is important for nonprofit organizations to understand how the positive effect of brand personality on the intention to donate may be affected by other marketing instruments” (Shehu et al., 2016, p. 591). An effective brand personality can be the direct result of having consistent traits that are desirable to the consumer. Tying these traits into the organizational mission and vision will, in turn, allow consumers to have overall positive association with the organization, thus, creating a positive brand personality. Due to the mission being the essence of a nonprofit organization, it is essential

that everything they do in marketing and promoting their message is a direct reflection of the mission and what the organization stands for.

Marketing Strategies

Marketing strategies are part of the process that helps connect the consumer to the organization. Previous research about differing marketing strategies that affect donation models and motivation have been looked at from an economic, psychological, and sociological sector standpoint, yet the investigation of internet use of nonprofit organizations has allowed researchers and marketers to grasp different sources than before (Donaldson et al., 2020). Using the internet and social media as a way of reaching consumers and prospective donors opens a whole new opportunity and reachable people group. Not only are different strategic methods being used, but new tactics are having to be developed as well.

The nonprofit sector relies heavily on their ability to utilize digital technologies as a way of marketing their message. Recognizing that “Strategic use of digital platforms and tools can help non-profits engage and reach their audiences, help diversify income streams and gain much needed efficiencies” is the first step towards a more digitally inclusive mindset (Garsten & Bruce, 2018, p. 57). Organizations that fail to adapt to the world of media and digital presence may inflict serious consequences on their business, simply due to their inability to connect to a larger audience.

One strategy of marketing involves negative and positive appeals, which are defined as follows: “Negative appeals are operationalized as advertisements that emphasize the negative consequences if not complying with a request whereas positive appeals are operationalized as advertisements emphasizing the positive consequences if complying” (Erlandsson et al., 2018, p. 445). The interesting point of this strategy is that the information presented is exactly the same, it

is just the way in which it is presented. Negative and positive appeals can make large impacts in the way that manipulates consumers to portray a situation in a specific manner as such:

One suggestion, the negative appeal, includes a picture of a miserable child in desperate need of help and emphasizes the severity of the situation and the terrible consequences for children who are not helped. The other suggestion, the positive appeal, includes a picture of a smiling chubby-cheeked child and emphasizes past miraculous achievements and the potentially wonderful consequences for children who are helped. (Erlandsson et al., 2018, p. 444)

Both methods of advertisement are effective in their own way yet are able to pull more towards one group of consumers over another simply due to the ability to connect in an emotional way. Some individuals may see the picture of the starving children and want to be part of the solution that helps them to get food. Their emotional appeal to such a negative picture is what ultimately pushes them over the edge into investing towards the cause. Others may be more drawn to help when they see the picture of the happy, satisfied child and will give in hopes of allowing that child to maintain in their happiness. Some argue that negative charity appeals are more effective, due to the theory that suggests that escaping negative situations is often viewed as more urgent than reaching largely positive situations (Erlandsson et al., 2018). The same source also argues for the case of positive charity appeals being more effective. They argue that positive appeals provide readers and prospective donors with a glimpse of the positive impact they have the opportunity of being a part of, increasing their perception of the impact they could have of the situation. These strategies can be the determining factor as to whether or not a donor will give to an organization. Each technique must be carefully analyzed, as it could result in more harm than good being done. For example, the article discussed earlier in the paragraph raises the point that

in some cases, the feelings associated with negative charity appeals, if overly strong, can cause the reader to feel as if the marketer has manipulative intent, resulting in them feeling negative feelings towards the sender rather than them feeling guilty and wanting to help the cause at hand (Erlandsson et al., 2018). Taking this into consideration, it is important to steer away from causing readers to feel discomfort or a longing for disassociation simply due to the tactic of which the information was presented.

Another consideration of marketing strategies is the different ways in which an organization may attempt to get their point across, and how that may vary depending on the type of organization. In the past, a popular method of marketing and advertising was the use of public service announcements (PSAs); however, in today's world of marketing that has become less of a strategy for most and are pushing most nonprofit organizations towards a corporate sponsor for messages and other paid message placement (Haley, 1996). Many organizations now use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, on LinkedIn to get connected with consumers and advertise their mission on a large scale. In the same way that public service announcements were able to reach a large amount of people, social media is, in a sense, today's form of PSAs. These platforms offer inexpensive opportunities for businesses and charitable organizations to advertise and promote themselves to a wide variety of users. Platforms such as these offer specific benefits and features to organizations that make it even more convenient to have a social media presence that reaches large quantities. Other organizations rely on referrals and word-of-mouth in order to promote and advertise for them. This can be a very effective way of marketing by simply allowing past and present consumers or donors of the organization to share with others why they support and invest into this organization and its mission over another. Often times, hearing how good an organization is from an outsider's perspective can appear as

more trustworthy to other potential consumers or donors because they are reaping no benefit from what they say.

Yet another technique of nonprofit organizations involves monetary incentives for donors as part of the marketing process. This practice entices prospective donors by enhancing the donor's intentions of continual engagement of investing in the organization (Shehu et al., 2015). Obviously, whenever a monetary incentive is advertised, individuals are much more prone to partaking in order to reap the benefit. This could consist of a company such as Target that advertises offers giving a ten-dollar gift card if you spend over fifty dollars on products from a specific department. As is such, nonprofit organizations may offer monetary incentives, when they can, in order to sway individuals to donate their time and resources towards their greater cause. This may look like offering a percentage off of their products for a limited time. This strategy can, however, come with some negative impacts that may affect donor perceptions. Initially, offering monetary gain turns a social market into a monetary market and, thus, crowds out intrinsic motivations for donating (Shehu et al., 2015). Although it may not matter to the organization or the individual as to whether their motivation to give comes from within or not, it is still an important consideration to be made when strategically marketing a nonprofit organization. Similarly, donors who donate to a certain organization may be able to benefit monetarily by receiving tax deductions on their charitable donations according to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This can be a benefit to individuals because it allows them to invest in a good cause while also lowering their taxable income.

Marketers can also use imagery as a sense of persuasion to readers. Studies have shown that using images for message delivery has a potentially powerful affect because images with strong emotional appeals can compel consumers to donate or share social media posts (Jordan et

al., 2018). That same study also showed that charities are prone to use more positive images over negative, however, when it comes to children evoking negative emotions, people tend to give more. This can be beneficial information for nonprofit organizations because they can use his strategic way of marketing using imagery to relate to readers. By connecting with consumers and potential donors on a deeper level, an emotional connection is likely to be established, making them more likely to feel invested and want to donate to the organization.

Social Media

Considering the weight social media carries within the strategies of marketing, it is necessary to discuss the various forms and the support and convenience it provides. As a result of the massive impact of social media in general, nonprofit organizational leadership has been applying social media as a main marketing tool in order to reach more consumers and increase their support from the public (Feng & Du, 2017). To explain further, research compares the interaction of traditional versus online consumers:

Naturally, in contrast to the traditional research on text content, content recommendation processes in social platforms introduce content types that are created and shared by the users themselves, gather the feedback information of other users through the articulated relationships in complex networks, and implicitly infer the user preferences and content popularity. (Li et al., 2019, p. 2)

Social media's ability to connect such large masses of people from even larger distances is part of the reason that it has become such an essential part of marketing. If an individual across the world wants to help support an organization, they can simply do so at the click of a button.

Another contribution brought forth by social media is electronic word-of-mouth, "the extent to which users wish to disseminate the content in an organization's social media" (Feng et al., 2017,

p. 1779). Social media's ability for users to connect from all over the world allows for electronic word-of-mouth to be an effective tool for spreading and sharing individual experiences.

Obviously, word of mouth can be helpful or hurtful to the organization, however, it has proven to be quite helpful to nonprofit organizations.

Donor Intention

Donor intention is the likelihood of a donor investing in an organization, based on the knowledge and perception gained. It is important to understand what intentions a donor has and the likelihood of them investing time, money, and energy into a nonprofit organization.

Donations are the main way nonprofits are able to operate on a day-to-day basis, emphasizing the importance and weight it holds within an organization. Many factors may affect the intent of the donor, starting with how the organization is initially perceived. This could range from the way the organization presents themselves on their website, how their posts come across on social media, or simply word-of-mouth (Du & Feng, 2017) among those who are familiar with the organization. One study (Donaldson et al., 2020) argues the perspective and association of when is most beneficial to donate from the donors perspective:

Limited interest in donating to ventures at the startup stage, started by someone with unrelated business experience, and located in an open access country. Donors were interested in donating to a social enterprise, located in the 10–40 window, started by someone with related U.S. and in- country experience, paying salaries based on local wages, with an 8% to 10% administrative efficiency. (p.17)

All of these affect the actions of the donors and their personal feeling of their decision. One's sense of motivation is valuable to understanding the essence of why someone acts in a certain manner. In order for one to intend on donating or supporting an organization in some way, it

ultimately depends on whether they feel intrinsically motivated to do so (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). Intrinsic motivation is defined as “motivation that emphasizes pleasure and enjoyment as drivers of effort, individuals feel naturally drawn toward completing their work, expansion of effort is made from personal enjoyment, it is fully volitional, self- determined and autonomous” (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017, p. 418). Intrinsic motivation can be one of the simplest ways to connect a potential donor to the organization. As such, finding out who has an inward connection to the organizational mission, making the connection, and allowing them to continually invest creates an individual who is donating, not because they feel that they have to, but because they genuinely want to.

As stated previously, the relationship between the donor and the organization also plays a part as to whether the donor will feel inclined to support the mission. Considering this from a personal perspective helps one to understand that it is hard to give support to a person, let alone an entire organization, if the initial factor of trust is not first established. Similarly, it is difficult to provide support for an organization that you find difficulty aligning your beliefs with that of the company. To increase donor intention, organizations must strategically promote themselves to the appropriate people group who may be passionate about the same things that the organization is working towards.

Rightfully so, “donors often rely on nonprofit organization’s brands as trust-related cues in the context of social exchanges with nonprofit organizations, a positive brand perception is indeed a necessary condition for a nonprofit organization to be part of a donor's consideration” (Shehu et al., 2015, para. 4). It has been proven that consumers are willing to make material sacrifices if an organization has certain preferred or desired characteristics (Donaldson et al., 2020). Putting into perspective, a consumer may be more willing to sacrifice the quality of an

item such as a tote bag because it is made by underprivileged kids who get a portion of the revenue. Although the quality of the bag itself may be less than that of one from a store such as Target or Marshalls, the consumer is willing to make that material sacrifice to support the cause. Similarly, a consumer may be more likely to support a business such as Chick-fil-A because they believe in the same values and want to support an organization that stands for things that are in alignment with their own personal beliefs. Chick-fil-A also prides themselves in customer service, food quality, and efficiency. Some may argue that they paint this picture of impeccable food service in all areas so that consumers perceive that to be aligned with their moral beliefs. No matter what the reason, as long as the organization is efficiently meeting the needs of the consumer while also staying in alignment with that of their organizational mission, that is all that really matters. This all ties into the thought of positive brand perception leading to donor intention.

Similarly, a donor may have intentions of contribution simply due to their belief that positive consequences will be a result of their gift. This could be categorized as “demonstratable gifts, emotional benefits, and family benefits” (Hou et al., 2010, p. 2) that may seem beneficial to the prospective donor. The same source also discusses that donating has become, often, an act of selfish ambition, meaning that the donor only gives to the organization, not necessarily because they care about the bottom line, but because they know they will reap a benefit from doing so. Although the motivation may not be as one might intend, the donor may receive positive benefits that they do not even realize. Often, individuals will donate to an organization due to a personal connection they have such as donating to the American Cancer Society due to a relative dealing with Cancer. This personal, emotional connection may gravitate the individual towards the organization due to extrinsic motivations such as appearance. These benefits could be monetary

or even emotional connections they have established through the relationship between them and the organization.

Donation Process

Each of these factors affects the essence of the donation process of a nonprofit organization, which is ultimately the economic goal. Nonprofit organizations function mainly on their ability to obtain and maintain the inflow of donations. As the name implies, nonprofits are functioning, not for the purpose of selling a good to make money, but rather, to help impact a specific need. Some explain the nonprofit sector as being atypical, simply because they are in existence to serve third party beneficiaries- their missions (Petty, 2013). Donations can come in many forms, those being time, talent, treasure, or even prayer. It is important to recognize that all of these forms of donations are necessary for a nonprofit organization to continue functioning, and all of them are dependent on the perceptions and intentions of outsiders. There are many people who are able to support an organization through one of these forms, however, in order for them to commit to helping a specific organization, they must feel an attachment to the company. Understanding that this attachment stems from the marketing message calls for an emphasis on creating that message. The organization must have a sound mission and vision statement and allow their marketing message to accurately reflect this. They must also have a dedicated team of employees, volunteers, and board of directors that are willing and able to hold the organization to that mission. Individual donors “accounted for about 70% of the charitable donations in 2017, making individuals one of the most important stakeholder groups for nonprofit organizations” (Donaldson et al., 2020, para. 3). Recognizing individual donors’ stake in the donation process must affect the way organizations market to these potential donors.

Understanding how to bring in donations of time or money is an important part of the nonprofit sector. Volunteer positions make up a large portion of a nonprofit organization and can often be difficult to fill based on the lack of monetary compensation and the amount of commitment needed. One study found that “brand recognition, including recognition reward and brand personalities, in the recruitment process for volunteering positions in non-profit organizations” (Febriani & Selamet, 2020, para. 5). They also emphasized the importance of utilizing all resources and instruments in the recruitment process of volunteers and the need for careful consideration of brand image throughout this process. This speaks to the fact that not only is brand recognition and personality important to the consumer or potential donor, but it is important to the potential volunteer who may or may not choose to donate their time and energy to the organization. It is essential to ensure that the volunteers working for an organization are also passionate and invested in the organizational mission. When the volunteers have an emotional, personal connection to the organization, they can have intrinsic motivation that propels them to want to fulfill their duties to the best of their ability. This is their way of donating their time and energy to the organization. When potential donors see the passionate involvement and positive corporate culture within the organization, they may want to donate and invest in the company as well. In turn, having volunteers who are passionate about what they are doing and eager to work towards the mission will be a positive energy that is prone to attract outsiders’ attention.

Collaboration among organizations can be a necessary element of the donation process, allowing each group to give part of what they have to offer that may benefit the other. Although some may donate out of selfish motives, knowing that if they give something they will get something they want in return, it can still be beneficial for both parties involved. If the

organizations are under a common understanding of the gifts that are being exchanged, clear communication is maintained, and neither party feels like they are being underhanded. This can be a beneficial tactic of the donation process for some organizations. This could also look like two like-minded organizations coming together to plan a fundraising event together, splitting the costs and the monetary benefits. This could allow for larger, unrelated groups to come together and find passions they never knew they had.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical behaviors and actions are considered throughout the entirety of the research process from both the consumer and organizational perspective. Ethics is an important factor in the eyes of prospective donors, holding that the organization will maintain a “standard of integrity, honesty, openness, and efficiency” (Petty, 2013, p. 141) that continually establishes and builds up trust. When it comes to asking potential donors for gifts, Petty (2013) explains that there are five important principles to establish when fundraising: honesty, respect, integrity, empathy, and transparency. The author explains that maintaining these core principles throughout the entire fundraising process will help to ensure that ethical considerations are the overriding theme of all actions, and the respect and support of donors is retained. Part of this is ensuring donors that their monetary donation is going towards what they think it is. It is a necessity for nonprofit organizations to be transparent and open about their actions, especially when it concerns money. Organizations should behave ethically by using donations and funding in the most efficient and effective way possible and to show transparency in their efforts.

Another ethical consideration is looking from an external perspective, regarding the relationship between the nonprofit organization and any companies and their vendors. It can often be easy to take advantage of organizations as such by spiking up prices (especially if they

are the only one in the area able to provide such sources) or unfairly bargaining for exchange of goods. These considerations should be made wisely and thoughtfully, ensuring that all actions are fair and collaborations uplifting to both organizations involved. Rather, ethical behavior can look like offering a charitable organization a special deal as a contribution for publicly supporting their mission. This can relate to a company's desire to fulfill their corporate social responsibility and helping their brand image by showing they care about issues that matter. It is important for organizations to maintain business etiquette when interacting with one another, even if they may be in similar, yet competing fields.

Highlighting what ethical behavior can look like is important, not to add emphasis to it, but rather, to understand what actions not to partake in and learn from them. From a consumer perspective, unethical behavior could look like leaving a false review about the company that may cause others to steer away from the organization. It could also look like providing false information in order to receive benefits that the company may be offering. Both of these examples can often appear to be easy when using platforms such as social media to hide behind. Ultimately, employees or volunteers who participate in unethical behaviors will end up facing the consequences they inevitably made for themselves. Ethics is often looked at as either a list of common sense or a set of excuses for being unpleasant (Petty, 2013, p. 236), yet it is much more about understanding proper business behavior. Appropriate ethical behavior is the glue that holds an organization together and although some unethical actions can slide by undetected, it will ultimately catch up to them and cause detrimental harm.

Biblical Integration

Considering how Christians may behave differently under certain contexts can be an important factor of the donor-organization relationship. Christians have preestablished ethical

considerations that are part of the foundation of their faith and are often held to a higher standard than others within the world of business. Ethics is often described as doing the right thing, even when nobody is watching, a principle that is most certainly prevalent throughout scripture, but most specifically in Matthew 5:5-6:

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room, and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (*New International Version*)

Putting this scripture into context, we see Jesus telling His followers to not only do what is good in front of all others, but rather, the real reward is for those who are doing good, even when nobody is watching. In nonprofit organizations, trust is being placed into the hands of many, often people who are simply volunteers. Integrity and honesty are essential in maintaining a proper business practice and although it may be convenient to think ethical issues do not arise in nonprofit organizations such as churches and religious institutions, this would be a misconception. Because churches must have a business mindset to run smoothly, employees may feel pressured to behave unethically through falsifying records or providing inaccurate financial documents for the sake of efficiency.

Scripture tells us that whoever knows the right thing to do yet fails to do so is sinful (*New International Version*, Jam. 4:17), and this most certainly applies in the world of business. In many situations, but especially within the world of nonprofit organizations, it can be so easy to deceive others and make false accounts of where money is going. As Christians, it is our job to be the light in potentially dark situations (Matt. 5:14) and continue doing what is upright and

honest, even if others are not. Within the business world, it is inevitable that we will be faced with situations that will cause us to make tough, ethical decisions. As Christians, it is important that we stand firm in our faith and the foundational instructions left within the Bible, and remember to always stay true to God's word. We will be faced with hard times that may shake us from our foundation, but as Christians, we must remember to continually put our faith and trust in God.

Similarly, as consumers and potential donors ourselves, it is important to look at a nonprofit organization from an ethical standpoint and from an outsider's perspective. Just as the organizational leaders are expected to be trustworthy, honest, and fair, that same expectation remains as a consumer. Consider Matthew 7:12 where Jesus says, "so whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (*New International Version*). As consumers, it is expected that the organization will treat us with respect and honesty, being truthful in their organizational mission and transparent in their actions. As such, it seems most appropriate that consumers can assume those same expectations apply among themselves, ensuring that they are honest and full of integrity when it comes to regard with the organization. Consumers must remain truthful, ensuring that they are providing accurate information to organizations, abiding by any rules or policies put forth by the organization, and simply being a good customer.

Conclusion

Having the knowledge of how each of these factors play a role into the overall scheme is important to the nonprofit sector. First it is necessary to understand the way in which a donor perceives an organization to then understand their intentions. A donor can alter their perception based on newfound information, or their perception can be altered by different techniques and

strategies of the organization itself. Understanding both the perception and intention of the donors allows for the comprehension of how the nonprofit organization is affected.

Understanding the process involved in receiving donations will show how a nonprofit organization is affected and impacted by the process. Organizations can receive their donations through many different avenues, including fundraising events, organizational collaboration, online giving, or volunteering. An understanding of how the world of social media plays a role into a nonprofit organization increases comprehension of the crafting of the marketing message. Seeing just how much the world of social media has grown over the years and the effect that has on nonprofit organizations specifically can show practical examples of just how efficient an organization's online marketing is. In the end, finding the most efficient way to connect potential donors to a nonprofit organization they are willing to invest in is the goal. An understanding of how all the strategies, definitions, and best practices will help nonprofit organizations and, ultimately their leadership, to use strategies best suited for them and their target market will help to achieve a more cohesive Donor Perception and Intention that will Impact Nonprofit Organizations in a profound way.

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