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Generosity as an Individual Difference Variable: Preliminary Steps towards a New Measurement Scale

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ABSTRACT

Generosity is giving more real value to another entity than the giver expects in return. It is seen as the height of humanity by philosophers, and as non-rational by economists, and is not only encouraged but also mandated by religious institutions. Altruism, the motivator of generosity is called the main problem in sociobiology (Ridley & Dawkins 1981). Interest has been shown in generosity and altruism for centuries. Marketers are primarily interested in generosity as it drives support of non-profit causes, but it also has potential value in understanding complaint behavior, service failures, and tipping of service workers.

This paper represents an effort to explicate generosity through the eyes of the various disciplines that are concerned with it. The goal is to develop a comprehensive literature review on generosity and propose a measure of the tendency to behave in a generous manner. We look at how generosity regarded in Philosophy where it is a central theme, in Economics where it not possible, in Psychology, where generosity is part of helping behavior and in Marketing where tipping behavior and charitable giving are its logical, though not well-researched correlates.

We develop a series of propositions upon which we will begin building a scalar measure of the tendency to be generous. These are:

Humility will be positively related to self-reported generous tendencies.

Empathetic concern will be positively related to self-reported generous tendencies.

Materialism will be negatively related to self-reported generous tendencies.

It is our hope that we can create a measure useful in a number of disciplines but especially in marketing to help segment and communicate for giving and activism appeals and to better understand tipping behavior.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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