

Social Information and Donations: Evidence from the Field

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Abstract

We conducted a field experiment to explore the effects of conformity to a social reference donation versus a comparable, but imposed, suggested donation. Our results show that people respond to the changing social reference. On the other hand, the treatment in which we suggested a donation results in lower shares of people donating, compared to the social reference treatment, and lower conditional donations even compared to the control. We find that people look at their peers as a reference to conform to, but partially reject being confronted with an imposed suggestion on how to behave.