

Nostalgic consumers are more likely to give to charity

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Nostalgia, a sentimental longing for the past, can boost donations and help drum up volunteers, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Previous research has shown that nostalgia can increase self-esteem, boost perceptions of meaning in life, and foster a sense of social connectedness," write authors Xinyue Zhou (Sun Yat-Sen University), Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides (both University of Southampton), Kan Shi (Chinese Academy of Sciences), and Cong Feng (Sun Yat-Sen University). "Nostalgia does not just have positive effects for the nostalgic individual but also for others, as beneficiaries of charities."

The authors set out to investigate whether nostalgia increases donor intentions and tangible donations to [charity](#)—and whether it's a good idea to incorporate nostalgia in charity appeals.

In five studies, the authors induced feelings of nostalgia by instructing participants to bring to mind a nostalgic autobiographical event. They then presented participants with a variety of charity appeals.

The researchers then measured participants' intentions toward young earthquake victims or children in relatively deprived rural area of China. In one study they measured concrete intentions to volunteer and donate. In studies 2-4, they examined more global intentions for volunteerism and monetary [donations](#). And in study 5, they measured tangible

charitable behavior.

"We have demonstrated that nostalgia augments empathy-based charitable intentions and behavior," the authors write. "It is encouraging to learn that people can mine their nostalgic memories and derive from this a feeling of empathy for the suffering of others."

"For several hundred years, nostalgia has been regarded as a negative emotion," the authors write. "It has been labeled as a medical disease, a brain affliction, and a psychiatric disorder. Recent empirical findings have rendered this view highly questionable. [Nostalgia](#) is a predominantly (albeit not exclusively) positive emotion that serves vital psychological functions."

More information: Xinyue Zhou, Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides, Kan Shi, and Cong Feng. "Nostalgia: The Gift That Keeps on Giving." *Journal of Consumer Research*: June 2012 (published online September 17, 2011).

Provided by University of Chicago

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