

# Slacktivism: 'Liking' on Facebook may mean less giving

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Would-be donors skip giving when offered the chance to show public support for charities in social media, a new study from the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business finds.

"Charities incorrectly assume that connecting with people through [social media](#) always leads to more meaningful support," says Sauder PhD student Kirk Kristofferson, who co-authored the forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Research* article.

"Our research shows that if people are able to declare support for a charity publicly in social media it can actually make them less likely to donate to the cause later on."

The study results add fuel to recent assertions that social media platforms are turning people into "slacktivists" by making it easy for them to associate with a cause without committing resources to support it.

In a series of studies, researchers invited participants to engage in an initial act of free support for a cause – joining a Facebook group, accepting a poppy, pin or magnet or signing a petition. Participants were then asked to donate money or volunteer.

They found that the more public the token show of endorsement, the less likely participants are to provide meaningful support later. If participants were provided with the chance to express token support more privately,

such as confidentially signing a petition, they were more likely to give later.

The researchers suggest this occurs because giving public endorsement satisfies the desire to look good to others, reducing the urgency to give later. Providing token support in private leads people to perceive their values are aligned with the cause without the payoff of having people witness it.

With the holiday season being the biggest fundraising period of the year, the researchers say it is vital that charities take another look at their strategies and plan appropriately.

**More information:** The study was published online November 6 and can be found at: [www.jstor.org/stable/info/10.1086/674137](http://www.jstor.org/stable/info/10.1086/674137)

Provided by University of British Columbia

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