

# The Role of Goal Orientations on Pro-Social vs. Pro-Self Spending Choices

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**Keywords:** *Relational consumption, Goals and motivation, nudge, decision making, experimental methods.*

**Description:** *Two experimental studies show that inducing an extrinsic goal focus influence consumers towards less pro-social spending choices.*

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

### Research Question

The present research examines the role of goal orientations (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) on consumer's pro-social vs. pro-self spending choices. We hypothesize that priming an intrinsic goal focus will influence consumers towards pro-social spending choices while inducing an extrinsic goal focus will increase the likelihood of making pro-self spending choices.

### Methods and Data

Study 1 was an experimental survey collecting data from 211 university students. Participants were randomly allocated to an extrinsic or an intrinsic goal writing induction. Then, they were presented with a windfall scenario and were asked to freely describe how they would spend the money given. A researcher blinded to the hypothesis coded the descriptions as pro-social or pro-self. Forty-eight participants' descriptions (24%) were coded as pro-social spending choices. A chi-square test comparing the extrinsic vs. intrinsic manipulation with their pro-social vs. pro-self spending choice indicated that there were significant differences between the groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.10$ ,  $p = .014$ . Participants that completed the intrinsic manipulation (107 out of 201) were more likely to choose to spend money on someone else ( $n = 33$ ) than participants in the extrinsic manipulation ( $n = 15$ ).

Study 2 ( $N = 297$ ) was an experimental survey with three con-

ditions. We used visual stimuli and reading materials that replicated content from popular magazines, to induce an intrinsic, extrinsic, or neutral goal orientation (control condition) on a general population sample. After the manipulation, participants were presented with a windfall scenario were asked to freely allocate the money into a purchase and indicate whether they selected to spend money on themselves or on someone else. A chi-square test showed significant differences between the conditions,  $\chi^2(2) = 8.00$ ,  $p = .018$ . Participants that completed the extrinsic manipulation were less likely to make a pro-social spending choice ( $n = 22$ ) than participants in the intrinsic ( $n = 43$ ) and control ( $n = 41$ ) groups.

### Summary of the Findings

Participants primed with an extrinsic goal focus were less likely to make pro-social spending choices. These results show a causal link between an extrinsic goal focus and pro-self spending choices.

### Key Contributions

Environmental cues portraying extrinsic goals, such as fashion magazines or advertisement, nudge consumers towards less pro-social spending choices, which have been found in past research to provide higher levels of well-being.

*References are available on request.*

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