CultureCase

Corporations donate to the arts to enhance their image and reputation

This research was conducted by **Mark S. LeClair and Kelly Gordon** at **Fairfield University, USA**

Summary

This paper illuminates the behaviour of corporate donors in the US and the motives that shape their decisions. The research found that donations to cultural organisations were a mechanism for supporting the advertising and marketing aims of the corporation, whereas corporations donate to other social causes for different reasons.

The data came from a nation-wide report of corporate giving

Historically, research has attempted to divine whether or not the motivations behind corporate giving were broadly altruistic or served a more utilitarian function (such as raising reputation, reaching clients or shareholders, or increasing standing in relation to competitors). Rather than asking executives or individual donors about their attitudes, this research looked at actual donations data. The research made use of the Conference Board's nationwide Survey of Corporate Contributions by the top 75 corporate donors for the ten years up to 1994.

Size matters, as does profitability, but for the arts advertising was key

Their analysis found that larger corporations gave more money to arts and culture, and donations increased with profits. Specifically for the arts, donations increased with advertising expenditure. This finding could not be said of

donating policy in relation to other sectors such as education or civic causes, suggesting that that the arts offer something distinct to corporate donors.

It’s about image and reputation

The petroleum, printing and publishing, and banking industries all tended to donate more than other industries to the arts. The authors suspect that petroleum companies were attempting to alleviate their poor public image, with publishing and banking looking to cultivate a sophisticated and cultured corporate image. They conclude that, 'support of cultural and artistic activities is primarily a means of promoting the firm'.

Keywords

donor motivation **USA** **corporate giving** **image** **reputation** **survey**

Title	Corporate support of artistic and cultural activities: what determines the distribution of corporate giving?
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