

Case Study

CHARITY

Evidence-based strategic planning support

"I find there's a degree of scepticism internally of research that reports on claimed attitudes and behaviours ...Mindlab's methodology allowed us to get beyond claimed behaviour, and ...gave us a clear steer on how we could stretch our brand to work harder for fundraising."
-Rachel McCourty, Insight Manager
NSPCC 2019



In 2019, the NSPCC commissioned Mindlab to inform and optimise their strategic planning. The NSPCC wished to understand which combination of vision statements, impact statements, and visual branding would most improve public understanding of the organisation's purpose and energise support.

One key challenge of this project was to understand how the NSPCC can drive income in the short-term (traditionally by provoking a strong emotional response) whilst also building long-term warmth and trust.

Getting to the heart of donation behaviour

Questions around charitable donations can result in biased responses, as people are inclined to represent a more desirable view of their altruistic attitudes and behaviours (even to themselves). In order to avoid these biases Mindlab used implicit testing techniques to extract peoples' subconscious beliefs and behaviours.

1,000 UK participants took part in an online experiment conducted by Mindlab, comprising of a set of semi-implicit measures exploring preference, perceptions and associations.

Under time pressure, association tests were used to measure how strongly different images and impact phrases represented different attributes such as 'close to my heart'. Multiple tests were used to determine how attributes and imagery fit with perceptions of key charitable organisations, including the client. Themes could be created from the data representing what they are intuitively communicating.

To uncover people's intuitive donation preferences pairs of charities were shown, also under time pressure, with participants having to choose which they would rather donate to.

Key Points

- Mindlab provided the NSPCC with a clear direction on optimal brand communications to support increased donation and improved brand perception
- The greatest impact for taking action and converting concern to donation is to use positive, hopeful imagery that provides the donor with a sense of empowerment and ability to make a difference
- These insights helped the client to optimise their strategic planning
- The NSPCC achieved one of the top five 'most improved' brands in YouGov's Charityindex rankings in 2020



Insights for the client

Mindlab was able provide NSPCC with quantifiable evidence that the move towards more positive, outcome-focused messaging and imagery is the right direction for this charity.

It is very important that a charity represents a cause close to people's hearts.

The data showed that people tend to donate more when they perceive a charity as making a difference and that the goals and activities of the charity are clear.

The research study clearly demonstrated that people are more likely to donate and have better brand perception when the imagery used by the organisation is more educational and hopeful.

This helped shape the NSPCC brand communications moving forwards.

The NSPCC have been working on embedding insights from this research since 2019 and are proud now to be seeing evidence of genuine impact.

This research won the Applications of Research Award at the 2021 Market Research Society Awards

In order to understand the qualities linked to charities people most want to support, we conducted a correlation analysis of the proportion of times charities were preferred against their association scores. This showed us the extent to which different attributes are linked to donation intention. It allowed us to determine the underlying links between perceptions and intended behaviour, rather than relying on self-report.

We found that people are less likely to donate when exposed to 'sad' imagery. Conversely, people are more likely to donate when imagery is perceived as educational and also when the work of the charity is seen to be effective and making progress. The study showed that Informative imagery gives a sense of positivity, hope and relevance, which are attributes more highly associated with intent to donate.

Key findings

- 1) The legacy of prior hard-hitting campaigns is still reflected in brand associations.
- 2) The perceived 'sadness' of a charity is negatively correlated with donation intent.
- 3) We found that images and words relating to the perceived impact a charity has and personal & emotional connection are key in driving donations.
- 4) The NSPCC's existing strapline was validated as having the strongest message, which helped avoid an expensive brand refresh.

'Every Childhood Is Worth Fighting For'

Attribute	Correlation with donation intention
Close To My Heart	0.99
Making Progress	0.97
Clear Goals	0.97
I Understand	0.97
Hear a lot about	0.97
Needs money	0.96
Inspiring	0.96
I can help	0.96
Urgent	0.95
Relevant to me	0.95
...	
Emotive	0.51
Government funded	0.45
Sad	-0.38

Research outcomes

1. A renewed internal focus on impact and progress has made a significant difference at the NSPCC.
2. One of the key take-outs from the research was that the NSPCC needed to show more about what they actually do for children. This is now done through their 'Frontline' creative strategy. There has been great success with this strategy. In particular, it was the basis for the 'Still Here for Children' rapid response campaign (April 2020). This campaign generated significant peaks on tracked measures of brand affinity and cut-through that had previously been in decline.
3. Subsequently, in 2020, NSPCC was one of top five 'most improved' brands in YouGov's CharityIndex rankings.