Measuring our respondents' values

1. Why do we need another measure?

At nfpSynergy we are constantly trying to understand the drivers behind and barriers to engaging with charities. What is it about certain brands that make them so appealing to certain groups? How can charities learn from the examples of others? We are constantly in a process of improvement and trying to find the best measurements to describe interactions and relationships with charities. To help our clients understand the answers to these we have generally focused on brand measures such as awareness, understanding, warmth and associations, as well as demographics such as age, gender, faith and so on.

Combined together these can often describe pretty well who engages with charities, and some of the why. However, we have felt that a part of the puzzle was missing. Yes we can see that certain brands and certain brand attributes appeal to certain groups, but to understand why they do so, we thought it was important to go beyond simply demographics, and look at the values of supporters and the broader public. What is it that someone values in life, and how does this impact on the kinds of charities they choose to support? How can charities find groups of people that share their values? Can charities tailor their messages to appeal to the values of their key audiences?

To try and understand these questions, we looked at some academic models and decided to trial one particular model in our most recent wave of research. We will be continuing to test new measures and improvements to CAM and will be sharing them with you throughout the year ahead.

2. Introducing the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values

One of the major models for describing and explaining people's values is the Theory of Basic Values, devised by Israeli academic Shalom Schwartz in the 1990s. It has been tested across a range of different countries, cultures, languages and groups and aims to describe a person's basic values by ten basic factors. These factors have been shown to be relatively constant across cultures and have therefore been described as universal values. They are:

- **Power:** the degree to which a person attaches importance to social status, prestige and respect of and control over others.
- **Achievement:** a person who values achievement highly puts great importance on setting goals and achieving them
- **Hedonism:** the desire to enjoy oneself and to seek pleasure
- **Stimulation:** this is a desire for excitement, novelty and new experiences
- **Self-Direction:** for a person who values self-direction, it is important to be outside of the control of others and to live their lives independently
- **Universalism:** those who value universalism are concerned with the well-being and protection of all people and of nature, and value tolerance highly
- **Benevolence:** this is the degree to which people desire to give to and help those around them
- **Tradition:** for a traditionalist it is important to respect and value the customs of their group
- **Conformity:** a person who values conformity sees the importance in rules and structures and does not like to break from socially expected behaviour
- **Security:** the desire for safety, stability and harmony in a life

In our research, we use a short set of questions known as the Portrait Values Questionnaire to assign our respondents scores for each value. The respondent is presented with 21 short descriptions of people[1] in turn, e.g.:

- Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to her. She likes to do things in her own original way.
- It is important to him to be rich. He wants to have a lot of money and expensive things.
- She thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. She believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life.

They are then asked to describe how much like themselves that person is on a scale from "Not at all like me" to "Very much like me". The resulting 21 scores can be converted into the ten universal values by a standard process of averaging. This process also takes into account the fact that different respondents will tend to either answer quite high or quite low across the board – by comparing each score to a respondent's average score we can see the **relative importance** of each value to that person.

We then have a score for how important each of Schwartz's ten values are to that person, which we can use to identify differences in values between different groups.

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[1] In our online surveys we ensure that the gender of the pronoun matches the respondent – i.e. women will be asked to compare women to themselves and men to men

3.   What can we use this for?

At a simple level, we can look at how charitable donors differ from the rest of the population in terms of their values. The Charity Awareness Monitor data suggests they tend to value benevolence more than the rest of the public (unsurprisingly), but are even more so defined by their universalism and belief that everyone should be treated equally. They are also a little less interested in power when compared to the general population.

We can also see how differences in values can affect the kinds of charitable causes that people support. Those who support overseas charities, and especially environmental charities, tend to score much higher for universalism than other charitable supporters. Those supporting armed forces charities have higher scores for conformity and tradition as shown in the chart below. While charitable supporters in general come out as strongly benevolent, supporters of older people's charities are especially so compared to other donors. Even at this basic level we can see the effect of personal values on real world involvement with charities.
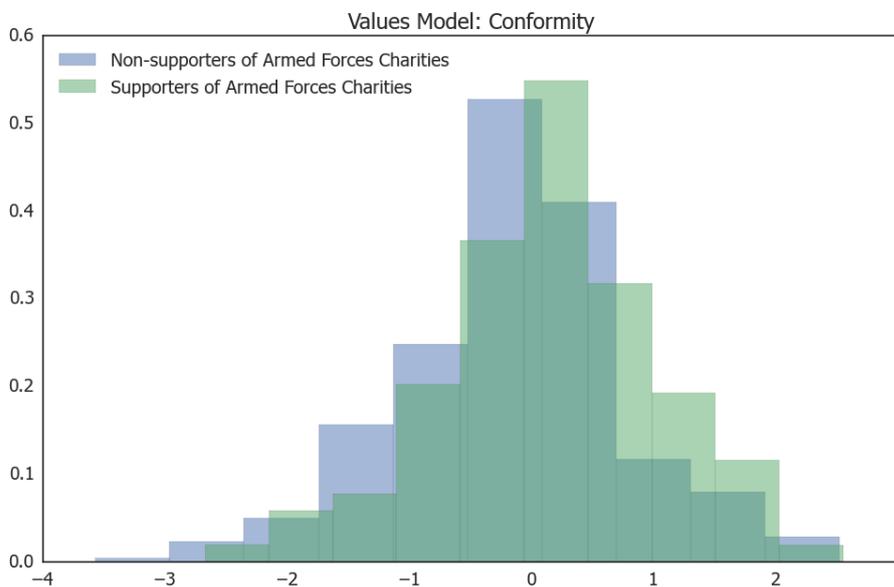

Figure 1: Conformity scores for supporters of Armed Forces charities and others

Into the future we can start to use this model for more complicated things – regression analysis can identify which values are drivers of different kinds of support for different organisations. Including standard value measures in supporter surveys can help us to identify what the most important values are for your supporters as opposed to the UK public on the whole. These measures could also be used to inform more nuanced value-driven segmentations.

We hope we have given you a flavour of the kinds of things we can use the values model for, and you will see it cropping up throughout this wave's set of CAMEO. In the near future we plan to expand this beyond just our sector measures and into some of our brand measures, to find out how supporters of different charities differ in their values. If this would be of interest to you, please get in touch with your account manager to find out more.

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