

ABSTRACT

The need for charitable organizations is continuously increasing due to the rising number of people in need, growing inequalities, as well as emerging crises such as wars, natural disasters, and inflation. The most prominent challenge faced by charities is their acquisition of sufficient funding, which is further exacerbated by the mounting competitiveness of these organizations as well as the declining donation behavior of the population. In light of this downward trend, the development of new marketing strategies is imperative to counteract this decline. Particularly in this digital era where social media is vastly prominent the discovery of modern methods to effectively engage with users is essential.

Previous research underscores the effectiveness of emotional advertising appeals in terms of persuasion, however, there are still knowledge gaps in terms of which emotions stimulate donation intention the most. For this reason, the purpose of this thesis is to obtain insights into the influence of emotional advertising appeals within digital charity marketing campaigns on donation intention. More specifically, the study investigates whether positively or negatively valenced appeals can exert a stronger impact on donation behavior. In addition, gender differences in altruism are examined, and whether altruistic values moderate the effects of negative emotional appeals on the emotions of guilt and shame, such that stronger values amplify this effect.

For the purpose of addressing the research gap and gaining further insights into the subject matter, this thesis employs an experimental research design. More specifically a between-subject design was administered, involving three experimental groups, each exposed participants to a different advertising stimulus, either a positive, negative, or neutral one. The total sample consisted of 267 respondents, all of whom were required to be over the age of 18 and have a current residence in Austria. The sample is representative of the Austrian population in terms of age and gender. Through the course of this online experiment, all participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental groups and instructed to answer questions about their personal donation intention and behavior, their altruistic values, emotional reactions towards the assigned stimuli, as well as their demographic characteristics.

After conducting various statistical tests to analyze the hypotheses, the findings indicate that all positive vs. negative advertising appeals prompt different emotions. Surprisingly, no significant difference was found in the effect on donation intention between negative and positive emotional appeals, suggesting that the emotional orientation of an advertisement has no influence on

consumers' intention to donate. Moreover, evidence was found to support the assumption that altruistic beliefs are stronger in women than in men. Lastly, the results of the statistical analysis confirm that an individual's level of altruistic values can moderate the impact of negative emotional appeals on the emotions of guilt and shame. Overall, the results of this study were not entirely consistent with the literature reviewed, but offer valuable new insights for marketers regarding promotional appeals, persuasion, and donation intention.