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## A Qualitative Investigation on the Impact of Positive Vs Negative Charitable Advertisement Appeals on the Prosocial Behaviour and Donation Behaviour Using Neuro-scientific Techniques

**Yomna Mohsen Hussein Abi El Hassan**

Marketing Assistant Lecturer, Department of Marketing and International Business,  
October University for Modern Sciences and Arts, Egypt

**Abeer Abdelrahman Mahrous**

Professor of Marketing, Department of Business Administration,  
Cairo University, Egypt

### **Abstract:**

*This paper aims to investigate the effect of charitable ads on the prosocial behaviour and donation intentions, while identifying the moderating effect of altruism, social norms, and moral intensity. The research is an exploratory research that follows a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with a convenient sample of 20 respondents and two focus groups to provide insights about the audience's response to the exposure to the positive vs. negative advertising appeals in charitable advertising domain. The respondents formulated critical arguments about their perception of the positive vs negative charitable advertisements in Egypt. This research is expected to have a theoretical contribution through addressing the relationship between the constructs previously discussed. Furthermore, neuromarketing research in this field is still scarce and limited, both in terms of reach and methodology. Furthermore, it is possible that the use of additional neuroimaging techniques will be useful. The charitable advertising discipline has been less researched in Egypt after the emergence of new methodological techniques to better assess its effectiveness. Furthermore, the effect of print advertising on the intention to donate, the course of focus, and the impact of image valence on intention have all been examined in recent Neuromarketing research. However, no previous research has discussed collectively the impact of the altruism, prosocial behaviour, moral intensity on the charitable advertisement, and consequently affecting the intention to donate using Neuroscientific techniques in Egypt.*

**Keywords:** Charitable advertising, neuro-marketing, advertising appeals, prosocial behaviour, donation behaviour

### **1. Introduction**

In the past decades, many marketing strategy systems understood the importance of social expectations and used knowledge as a primary tool for modifying socially focused behaviours eventually, "social-norms marketing strategies" arose as a feasible alternative to more conventional methods such as information campaigns and fear-inducing messages for eliminating harmful behaviours in areas like alcohol consumption, substance use, recycling, and littering as it confirmed its effectiveness as a social marketing approach (Schultz et al., 2007). Advertisements featuring a series of emotional appeals were implemented in various donation campaigns, but, if not implemented well, can irritate and drive off the potential donors. A better advertising campaign can be constructed with the aid of understanding the demographic characteristics of the donors and how they perceive the charitable institution. Clearly, in order to find an answer to the question of what motivates people to donate, it is necessary to consider the photos of people used in charitable organisation ads, especially in terms of their emotionality. (Burt and Strongman, 2016)

As referred by Small & Cryder (2016), Many who encourage and participate in prosocial actions have long understood the self-serving advantages of supporting others. The Emerson quote means that, while people can support others, their motives for doing so are often egoistic or self-serving. The Dalai Lama quote, on the other hand, indicates that people should support others for more altruistic, other-centred purposes. These different points of view illustrate the two common ways that advertisers appeal for charitable support: egoistically (by emphasising the benefits to the donor) or altruistically (by emphasising the benefits to the recipient) (i.e., by highlighting the benefits for others). At the same time, there is a rising attention within marketing scholars to the redirection from traditional research techniques towards the usage of the neuroscientific methods which was labelled as neuromarketing. Daugherty and Hoffman (2017) stated that Neuromarketing is the study of how people respond to ads, both consciously and unconsciously, using neuroscience measurement methods. This emerging approach explores a number of marketing fields, including persuasion, decision making, cognition, and ethics, thus connecting customer behaviour, neuroscience, economics, and psychology.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Charitable Advertisements

As stated by Lwin et. al (2014), The focus of previous charitable donation research has been on planned giving, donor characteristics, and the expectation of intrinsic benefits such as improved self-esteem, public gratification, satisfaction, and fulfilment by fulfilling one's obligation, as well as helping behaviour and charitable donation behaviour. However, changes in the social, political, and economic conditions in many countries around the world have resulted in a decline in charitable support, making it harder for charities to raise funds. Charitable organisations are constantly using a range of methods in their promotional communication to influence individual donations. This change includes using emotion and social pressure to make the charitable cause more subjective to the donor, as well as increasing the donation suitability (Mayer, 2013). These advertisements, on the other hand, if mismanaged, can cause frustration, resentment, and displeasure toward the advertising, as well as possible donor refusal. As a result, non-profit marketers are keen to learn more about individual donors and what motivates them to donate to charities. The message content and affect strength of an advertising will expose its persuasive style or emotional appeal (Bulbul and Menon, 2010). The promotional content is reflected in the manner in which the message is conveyed and what is actually specified. The strength of an emotion during exposure to an advertisement determines its level. The effect or emotional strength of a message is an indicator of its effects on its intended audience.

Erlandsson et al. (2018) stated that negative appeals are advertisements that emphasise the negative implications of failing to comply with a demand, while positive appeals are advertisements that emphasise the advantages of complying. Various terms are used to describe these types of appeals. Sad appeals, loss-framed appeals, and guilt appeals are all terms used to describe negative appeals. Constructive appeals have been referred to as "warmth appeals," "gain-framed appeals," and "altruistic appeals." Negative appeals aim to persuade people to comply by reminding them of unfavourable and often disturbing occurrences that have happened in the past and/or may occur in the future, as well as a way for the reader to avoid these events. Positive appeals aim to persuade people to cooperate by reminding them of desirable past or future events, as well as a method for approaching and realising these events.

### 2.2. Altruism

As mentioned by Andreoni et. al (2017), It is undeniable that humans have a tremendous potential for generosity. People are courteous to strangers, contribute money to charities, volunteer to help others, and even make selfless sacrifices. Such outward altruism was initially motivated by indirect selfishness. Many people were surprised by the initial results of economists who removed these rewards in anonymous, one-shot dictator games between random strangers. Subjects often avoided self-interested decisions, with many opting for even splits. If indirect selfishness cannot account for giving, maybe a taste for altruism can. We soon discovered, however, that people were concerned not only with final consumption allocations, but also with the methods for achieving them. The presumption is that utility is based on the act of giving; that helping others makes you feel good. The warm-glow hypothesis, rather than offering a response to why people give warm glow, acts as a placeholder for more nuanced models of person and social motives. Human wellbeing today and in the future depends on the long-term sustainability of society and ecosystems (Hauser et al., 2014). A transdisciplinary approach aimed at understanding the neurobiology of sustainable decision-making is needed to empower more individuals to behave responsibly in terms of social stability and environmental protection.

Berman et al. (2018) argued that charitable contributions would do the best if they were directed to causes that resulted in the greatest welfare benefits. The effective-altruism movement aims to bring this idea to life. Effective altruism is based on consequentialist ethics, and it proposes that instead of consulting one's emotions when determining where to donate money, people can use expected benefit maximisation. Donors should strive to maximise the social welfare benefits on each pound donated, much as an investor seeks to maximise the financial gain on each pound invested. Effective altruism has spawned groups that educate the public about the success of charities in recent years. However, it is uncertain if providing this information would have a discernible effect on decision-making.

### 2.3. Social Norms

Norms are classified as general behavioural expectations in a social context, according to Jayachandran (2020). Many important customer behaviours are influenced by community or social norms. Family, colleagues, and others examine and evaluate the brand of shirt a person wears and the type of vehicle he or she drives. People behave in a socially directed way to reduce social costs and feelings of shame, according to social psychologists such as Blau (1968). Schwartz (1977) introduced the first major model of altruistic behaviour that focused on the importance of personal and social norms in decision-making. Bertoldo and Castro (2016) proposed a model in which the different types of norms involved in SDT motives were organised along a spectrum of increasing self-integration. Descriptive social norms, which are followed by injunctive social norms, are the most external type of motivator in this model. The natural or desired behaviour in a given situation is referred to as descriptive social norms, and they provide details for the intrapersonal goal of acting correctly in that situation (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). According to Bertoldo & Castro (2016), injunctive norms refer to a social group's sense of acceptance or disapproval of a particular conduct. This is why injunctive norms are so important for establishing and maintaining social bonds between people. Several other studies have shown that social expectations can have a major impact on consumer behaviour (Fisher and Ackerman 1998). Consumers often buy advertised goods in order to obtain perceived acceptance from significant acquaintances or to escape perceived rejection from significant acquaintances. When we are exposed to predictable stimuli in the world, we respond with a series of learned behaviours. Social and personal norms have filtered these learned habits.

#### 2.4. Moral Intensity

Each phase in the ethical decision-making process is thought to be influenced by moral strength (Butterfield et al., 2000). The moral problem is defined using the term moral strength. The degree of harm caused, the strength of the social norm broken, the probability that a result could be realised, the time period associated with the moral problem, proximity or nearness of the issue to the person, and the concentration of the possible impact are all characteristics of the seriousness of a moral issue. Jones (1991) argued that the characteristics of the moral problem, which he referred to as moral strength, affect ethical decision making, according to Lincoln & Holmes (2011). Magnitude of Effects, Temporal Immediacy, Social Consensus, Proximity, Probability of Effect, and Concentration of Effect are the six dimensions of moral strength. The magnitude of consequences refers to the extent to which a decision maker's action can harm or benefit a person. A rise in moral strength occurs when there is a greater degree of damage or good. According to Rousselet et al. (2020), temporal Immediacy refers to the period between an event and its effects. An action that has immediate negative consequences can result in a higher rise in moral severity than one that has delayed consequences. The degree of agreement within a social group that a specific action is good or bad is referred to as social consensus. This social group may be society as a whole (for example, an immoral act is not socially appropriate in society because it is illegal) or a smaller social group, such as an individual's academic peers. The moral strength of an act rises because there is a clear social consensus that it is morally wrong. Proximity refers to the nearness of the decision maker to the individuals potentially affected by the consequences (Rousselet et al., 2020). Proximity may refer to a sense of being geographically, culturally, socially, or mentally similar. A rise in moral strength is associated with a rise in proximity. The probability of the anticipated outcomes and the estimated amount of harm/benefit occurring is referred to as the probability of effect. Moral severity rises as the likelihood of the action happening and causing the expected harm is high. The final factor, Concentration of Damage, defines the relationship between the number of people harmed and the severity of the harm. Moral strength rises when the effect's concentration is high.

#### 2.5. Prosocial Behaviour

Helping, soothing, sharing, and cooperating are examples of prosocial behaviour described by Hauke (2018) as "conduct intended to support one or more people other than oneself." However, only a subset of these behaviours is linked to altruism, which is described as the desire to improve the welfare of others and includes acts such as self-sacrificial helping or helping without apparent external rewards. In recent decades, social scientists have tried to understand the different factors that prompt people to help others. In the context of charitable giving, theories that explain peoples' pro-social behaviour are manifold. Some researchers suggest that donors behave purely altruistic and are solely motivated by the consequences of their donations on the welfare of the beneficiaries. According to Small and Cryder (2016), prosocial consumer behaviour research builds on decades of social psychology literature about helping, which tried to understand situational and personality variables that affect whether people support others in person. Recent research on prosocial consumer behaviour, on the other hand, looks at what motivates or dissuades people from supporting unknown and sometimes abstract groups of people, typically embodied by charitable organisations. Individuals seldom come into contact with beneficiaries throughout these situations. Instead, their decisions are influenced by details in charity ads, their connection to a cause or association, their sense of obligation toward future beneficiaries, and other factors. Understanding the underlying processes that lead to altruistic behaviour is particularly important in order to effectively design charitable advertisements that intend to increase charitable giving. (Hauke, 2018)

#### 2.6. Attention

At any given moment, the amount of conscious thought dedicated to an advertisement is referred to as attention. Since eye tracking and EEG methodology have shown that attention level is related to memory and attitude toward the brand being advertised, quantifying attention (J. Lee & Ahn, 2012) and attitude toward ads in general (Goodrich, 2014) or toward the product is important (Treleaven-Hassard et al., 2010). Subjects are needed to perform reading tasks and view graphic displays in the typical advertisement format used by NGOs. The type of data processing and its relation distinguishes text from graphic, self-relevant from irrelevant information. Pictorial knowledge is quicker, more effective, and inherent in the learning process, according to Chen et al. (2016). Furthermore, according to the elaboration probability model, self-relevant information is stored in the human brain at the central level rather than the peripheral level. According to Kalliny (2017), Visual attention is divided into two types: spatial attention and feature-based attention. Spatial attention is the method of focusing attention from a visual field on a particular location. It enables people to process all visual information in a visual area selectively. It's obvious, as shown by eye movement to the centre of attention. Feature-based focus, on the other hand, is used to distinguish and highlight specific features in a visual field. It works both within and outside the attention's spatial orientation. As debated by Lu (2019), Emotional appeals can be very successful at attracting attention and helping advertisements stand out in a cluttered media climate, resulting in more favourable convincing outcomes. The role of emotion in media processes and effects has grown in popularity, encompassing a wide range of communicative contexts.

### 2.7. Intentions to Donate

According to Konrath & Handy (2018), Much as shoppers want to get something out of their purchases, fair donors want to get something out of their contributions. These benefits may be monetary (e.g., tax avoidance) or nonmonetary (e.g., charitable contributions) (guilt avoidance, recognition). Benefits can directly benefit donors as well as those that benefit others, giving donors an indirect benefit through value validation. Furthermore, according to Konrath and Handy (2018), private and public benefit motivations are not always distinct and can also overlap. People may donate for a variety of reasons, in other words, and they can be inspired by both private and public benefits. Donor reasons for public benefits include altruism, faith in charitable organisations, and social motives. Some of the reasons for private benefits include social, egoism, fiscal constraints, guilt, and self-esteem. Take note of the overlap in social benefits, which are theoretically capable of producing both private and public benefits. Research focusing on antecedents of specific behaviours revealed that behavioural intentions are also determined by attitudes towards the behaviour as well as attitudes toward the object. In the context of charitable giving, this emphasizes the role of individuals' attitude toward helping others as well as their attitude toward charitable organizations.

Individuals with a good outlook toward helping others, as well as charitable organisations, are more likely to donate to charities, according to Webb et al. (2000). In this context, attitude toward helping others is described as "global and relatively enduring evaluations with regard to helping or assisting other people," while attitude toward charitable organisations is defined as "global and relatively enduring evaluations with regard to non-profit organisations that assist individuals." Based on their influence on donation intention, these two attitude constructs are included as covariates in the current research. Moreover, research conducted by other researchers suggest, that also individuals' general well-being is an antecedent for pro-social behaviour. According to their findings, people who have a great well-being, i.e., great life satisfaction and happiness, invest more hours in volunteer service. Applied to the context of donation behaviour, it is assumed, that individuals' general well-being is positively influencing their donation intention. Consequently, personal well-being is included as a third covariate in the current research (Hauke, 2018).

### 3. Research Objectives

After reviewing the previous literature on the charitable advertising in Egypt, the researchers aim is to analyse the impact of Altruism, personal and social norms and moral intensity as a moderating influence on the effect of positive versus negative charitable advertisement appeals on the prosocial behaviour and the intention to make a donation in nongovernmental charity organization as an exploratory stage in the research.

- R01: To investigate the effect of charitable advertisement appeals on the prosocial behaviour of the donors.
- R02: To analyse the effect of charitable advertisement appeals on the intentions to donate.
- RQ3: To understand the moderating effect of altruism, moral intensity and social norms on the relationship between the charitable advertisement appeals and the prosocial behaviour and intentions to donate.

### 4. Methodology

A qualitative study was conducted which is defined as an exploratory research type which relies on a small sample and its main aim is to provide consumers' insights and deep understanding of their behaviour. This research design encompasses many approaches that permits the respondents to openly express their opinion in details such as in-depth interviews and focus groups as mentioned by Malhotra et al. (2017). The researchers applied a qualitative design that aims at grasping insights from charitable advertising audience about their perception of the positive vs. negative appeals and how it affects their prosocial behaviour and their intention to donate. The researchers first conducted in-depth interviews with a convenient sample of 20 respondents from different genders and ages. The age range was between 18 and 50 years old. Moreover, two focus groups were conducted with two groups of audience. Before conducting the interviews, the researchers gathered information about the advertising stimulus elements that are used in the charitable advertising domain in Egypt whether positively or negatively to gain realistic perspective from the audience.

### 5. Results

The researchers started the interviews and focus groups by asking the respondents about the types of charitable advertising that they love watching, all of the respondents indicated that they prefer the positive advertisements more than the negative ones. Then, by showing the respondents the positive advertisements then the negative advertisement that will be used in the experiment later on, all of the respondents selected have previously watched similar charitable ads aiming for collecting donations for other charitable institutions. Most of the respondents indicated that emotional charitable ads affect them more than informative ads. But only positive emotional ads were mentioned to have the greater impact on their donating behaviour. Meanwhile, negative emotional ads were mentioned to have a negative impact on their behaviour as there is a common perception between the Egyptian society that negative emotional ads aims for begging for money, rather than reflect the main cause for donation.

"I never believed this kind of ads. I always feel that they are fooling us just to take the donations for themselves. I even switch channels when this kind of ads come on the television." – Shahira, 25 years old.

Most of the respondents agreed that the positive advertisement that was featured with a heart-warming music and the nostalgic game done by children was the most affecting ad that would drive them to immediately donate even through a text message. They describe the ad to be heart-warming, creative and cheerful. Respondents agreed that they would pay attention if the ad was aired onto television and they would even leave it without skipping as youtube sponsored ad. They thought that the ad was truthful and believable. Respondents also agreed that they didn't only

consider donating to the organization after viewing the ad, they would donate all through Ramadan. They also agreed mostly that the ad increase their moral responsibility towards helping the cause promoted. Moreover, the respondents indicated that the factors that might drive them to donate is the credibility of the organization and how much they would see ads that reflect real cases and the impact of their donations truthfully.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they might pay attention to the negative advertisements in the beginning of its airing, but then they feel manipulated into donating to the institution. This led to the loss of the credibility of the charitable institutions from their point of view. Also, they pointed out that using a holy month like Ramadan in the Middle East to ask for donations through sympathy is an even more reason to avoid donating for these charitable institutions. All of the respondents indicated that if the institutions used a positive story or a nostalgic story that might be emotional yet convincing, they might consider donating to them. When asking the respondents about the reasons that would drive them to donate after watching a negative advertisement, all of them indicated that if they felt like their donations are actually making a difference through an improved statistic or witnessing a success story for the cause that was actually affected positively through donation, only then they would donate after watching the negative advertisement. The main results of the interviews and focus groups are that the Egyptian audience to charitable advertisements are more accepting to see positive emotional advertising than the negative advertising. It was concluded that the charitable institutions have misused the negative ads lately to the extent that it was actually perceived as manipulation. Moreover, the factors that drive the donors towards giving is the credibility of the institution and witnessing actual results based on their act of giving.

## 6. Conclusion

The researchers concluded that the prosocial behaviour of the Egyptian donors is mainly triggered and motivated by the positive charitable advertisement rather than the negative charitable advertisements. Moreover, they claimed that negative charitable advertisements are a main repellent for their intentions to donate to the charitable organization. The prosocial behaviour of the Egyptian donors is merely originated from external sources, it mainly originates from within the individuals, but it might be triggered by watching a positive emotional advertisement that makes them feel like an active member in the society with a potential of changing it. The negative advertisements might affect the emotional side of the elder donors based on the exploratory research, but it might have an opposite impact than the targeted aim of the advertisement. These results helped the researchers achieve the first and second objectives of the study.

In addition to this, the researchers examined the impact of the moral intensity, social norms and altruism behaviour of the donors as active moderating factors that impact the relationship between both the positive and negative charitable advertising appeals and the intentions to donate and their prosocial behaviour. It was concluded that the moral intensity as an individual characteristic of the donors has nothing to do with how they perceive the advertisement as well as how they act towards the society and the intentions to donate to the organization. Also, the social norms of the donor with respect to the society do not moderate the relationship between the advertisement appeals and the prosocial behaviour of the donors and their intentions to donate. Finally, the altruistic behaviour of the donors was proven to have no moderating impact on the advertisement appeals and the prosocial behaviour and intentions to donate. This indicates a valuable insight which is that the donation decision is merely a complicated process to the Egyptian donors, but it mainly has specific drivers which might include the type of advertisement appeal used by the organization, convenience of the donation and the credibility of the charitable organization.

The results prove that the experiment to be done will provide powerful contribution to the body of knowledge and the marketing practices of the charitable institutions through understanding the blackbox inside the mind of the Egyptian donors to better grasp the elements that would drive the audience to donate to the institutions in need.

## 7. Implications and Suggestions for Further research

This study contributes to the existing marketing literature and body of knowledge by addressing the topic of positive and negative charitable advertisement appeals and their impact on the prosocial behaviour of the Egyptian citizens as well as their intentions to donate to the charitable institutions through multiple techniques. In addition to implementing this study in the Egyptian context which lacks similar studies, this study would provide better understanding of the Egyptian Donors' Behaviour towards the charitable advertisements, and how their underlying perception of the advertisements might be a bit contradictory to how they behave towards it. This study would also help marketing practitioners create more effective advertisements that would positively influence their prosocial behaviour in general and consequently their intentions to donate.

The exploratory nature of this research doesn't allow for generalization of findings to the whole population in Egypt. Therefore, it is recommended for the future researchers to focus on studying the direct impact of the donor's moral intensity, altruism and social norms on the intentions to donate to charitable organizations and their prosocial behaviour, to provide better understanding to the underlying subliminal behaviour of the donors using the neuroscientific techniques. This area requires academic attention to gain further insights. Moreover, it is recommended to do comparative study between different demographic categories and how their donation behaviour might differ as well as their perception of the charitable advertisement, also, Neuroscientific. Techniques shall be used to measure the citizens' perception towards public awareness advertisements.

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