



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Investigating the moderating role of altruistic beliefs on negative emotional appeals in digital charity advertising: A study on guilt, shame, and donation intention among Indonesian donors

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### Abstract

The rising demand for charitable organizations is fueled by increasing numbers of people in need, growing inequalities, and crises such as wars, natural disasters, and inflation. Charities face the challenge of securing sufficient funding, worsened by increased competition and a decline in public donation behavior. Developing new marketing strategies is crucial, particularly leveraging social media in the digital age. While previous research underscores the persuasive power of emotional advertising, gaps remain in understanding which emotions most effectively drive donation intentions. This thesis explores the impact of emotional advertising appeals in digital charity marketing campaigns on donation intention, investigating whether positive or negative appeals are more influential. Additionally, it examines gender differences in altruism and how altruistic values moderate the effects of negative emotional appeals on guilt and shame. An experimental research design was used, with a between-subject design involving three groups exposed to positive, negative, or neutral advertising stimuli. The sample consisted of 200 respondents over 18 years old, representative of the Indonesian population. Participants were randomly assigned to groups and answered questions on donation intentions, altruistic values, emotional reactions, and demographics. Statistical analysis revealed that positive and negative advertising appeals elicit different emotions. Surprisingly, no significant difference was found between positive and negative appeals on donation intention, suggesting emotional orientation does not influence donation intentions. The study also found stronger altruistic beliefs in women and that altruistic values amplify guilt and shame in response to negative emotional appeals.

**Keywords:** Charity Marketing; Emotional Advertising; Donation Intentions; Digital Campaigns; Gender Differences

### 1. Introduction

Global warming is a critical issue affecting populations worldwide, particularly in developing countries.[1]. Addressing sustainability and mitigating climate change impacts require collective action from all stakeholders. Research highlights the pivotal role non-profit organizations play in achieving sustainable development goals such as eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, promoting good health and well-being, and providing quality education.[2]. With crises like pandemics, climate change, and conflicts becoming more frequent, the demand for charity organizations is predicted to rise, especially if poverty worsens.[3].

One significant challenge for charities is securing adequate funding and retaining volunteers, a problem exacerbated by inflation, which is expected to reduce the value of donations by 8.5%.[4]. Despite increasing needs, donation behaviors are declining.[5]. The COVID-19 pandemic further hindered fundraising efforts, leading to a shortfall in funds as many events were canceled.[6]. Caritas Indonesia reported a 30% increase in aid requests since the pandemic began, while German charities saw a 20% drop in donations in 2021 compared to the previous year.[7]. In 2022, the number of donors in Indonesia fell by 6.5% from 2021, reaching a historic low of 18.7 million.[8]. To reverse this trend, effective

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strategies are essential to enhance donation behavior.[5]. This study aims to raise awareness of these challenges and provide charity marketers with insights into the impact of different emotional appeals in advertisements, focusing on which are most effective in encouraging donations. The World Economic Forum notes that 339 million people globally need humanitarian aid, often those most in need are the least supported.[9]. Given that governments cannot always aid every person in need, the role of charity organizations becomes crucial in mobilizing resources to meet basic needs.[10]. However, generating sufficient funding remains the greatest challenge.[4]. Thus, developing effective marketing strategies to attract consumer attention is vital.[11].

Moreover, the influence of TV commercials is waning, likely due to the saturation of advertisements and mass communication.[12]. To stand out, charities often use emotional appeals, which are more likely to capture attention.[13]. Emotional appeals can engage consumers, fostering a relationship and potentially increasing loyalty.[14]. While positive emotional appeals like hope are common[15], studies suggest that negative emotions, such as guilt and fear, are more effective in motivating donations.[16]. Emotions directly impact purchase intent, making their study crucial.[17]. Identifying the most effective emotional appeals could provide valuable insights for charity marketers, potentially enhancing donation behavior.

This study aims to enhance the current literature and offer valuable insights for marketers by investigating the impact of emotional advertising appeals within charity marketing campaigns on donation intentions. The research will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of two positive (hope and joy) and two negative (guilt and shame) emotional appeals in prompting donation intentions. Additionally, the study will explore whether positive or negative emotions are more effective in activating prosocial behavior and the role that altruistic beliefs play in this process. Moreover, gender differences in altruistic values will be examined to provide a deeper understanding of how these differences may influence donation behavior. The overarching goal of this research is to fill the existing gap in literature and address the issue of declining donation willingness.

The predefined research questions guiding this thesis are as follows: First, what are the most effective emotional advertising appeals in increasing donation intentions? Second, to what extent are negatively valenced emotional appeals more effective than positive emotions in stimulating donation intentions? Third, how do altruistic values differ between men and women in the context of emotional advertising within charity marketing campaigns? Lastly, to what extent do altruistic values moderate the effects of negative emotional appeals on feelings of guilt and shame, and does the strength of altruistic values amplify this effect in the emotional advertising of charity marketing campaigns? To answer these research questions and obtain generalizable results, an online experiment will be conducted. Participants will be randomly assigned to view one of the artificially created charity advertisements featuring either a positive (hope and joy), negative (guilt and shame), or neutral appeal. After viewing the advertisement, participants will respond to questions measuring their emotional responses, donation intentions, altruistic beliefs, empathy, and self-efficacy. Additionally, demographic information will be collected to analyze potential gender differences.

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## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Advertising Appeals

The examination of advertising appeals forms a pivotal part of the literature review for this thesis, delving into the core concept of advertising appeals and emphasizing the impact of emotional advertising on consumer behavior. This section revisits previous research on the effectiveness of both emotional and rational arguments in advertising. Given the significance of advertising appeals in charity marketing, understanding the theories behind the use of emotion in advertising is crucial for developing and executing effective charity campaigns and maximizing fundraising efforts.

#### 2.1.1. Emotional Contagion Theory

The review incorporates the Emotional Contagion Theory to explore the impact of emotions on consumer behavior within charity advertising contexts. This theoretical framework is utilized to understand how emotional appeals in persuasive communication and the resulting behavioral synchronization, attributed to emotional contagion, can influence charitable donations.

Research has shown that individuals naturally synchronize their emotions with those of their conversational partners, indicating the contagious nature of emotions. This synchronization is evident in facial expressions, vocal tones, and body language, leading to behavioral alignment.[18]. Known as emotional contagion, this effect involves the transmission of the sender's emotions to the receiver. In marketing, this phenomenon plays a pivotal role in shaping customer attitudes and is often leveraged in marketing strategies.[19].

## 2.2. Rational Advertising Appeals

This segment of the literature review delves into the utilization of logical advertising appeals within digital marketing charity campaigns. Logical, or informational, advertising appeals primarily rely on logical reasoning and the presentation of rational product attributes and benefits.[20] By employing logical advertising appeals, products can be highlighted based on their advantages.[21]. The genesis of this appeal lies in the presumption that humans are rational beings and thus make logical decisions.[17].

The central premise of such advertising is the personal benefit to consumers, while the advertising itself clearly and effectively showcases the functions or advantages that consumers desire from a product or service, such as the price-performance ratio, discounts, or quality. [21, 22]. One conjecture that has been posited is that the use of logical communication in advertisements can influence both the brand attitude of the consumer and their inclination to make a purchase. [22, 23] The findings of Albers-Miller and Stafford's study suggest that employing rational arguments in advertising can mitigate skepticism and uncertainty about a particular good or service.[24].

## 2.3. Emotional Advertising Appeals

In the preceding section, a comprehensive analysis of rational advertising appeals was presented. The focus now transitions towards emotional advertising appeals, encompassing their significance, efficacy, and influence on consumer responses. The theoretical and empirical aspects of emotional appeals in advertising will be explored and synthesized through an exhaustive review of existing literature.

Emotional advertising refers to deliberate efforts in advertising aimed at evoking emotions in the audience, in contrast to rational advertising this entails associating an emotionally neutral stimulus with a particular emotion. [12, 25]. According to Frederickson [26], emotions are "multicomponent response tendencies that unfold over relatively short time spans." Though lacking a universal definition, emotions can be characterized by certain attributes recurring across definitions. Emotions constitute complex responses to significant events influencing subjective well-being, impacting behavior and subjective experiences [12], and are contingent upon conscious or unconscious evaluations of triggering experiences.[25].

### 2.3.1. Negative and Positive Emotional Appeals in Charity Advertisements

Numerous academic studies have illuminated the profound impact of emotional advertising strategies on consumer behavior, particularly in contexts such as charitable donations.[26]. This investigation delves into the nuanced dynamics of negative and positive emotional appeals within charity advertisements, specifically their influence on donation intentions. Furthermore, the role of altruistic beliefs will be scrutinized as a potential moderating factor in elucidating this relationship.

## 2.4. Research Model

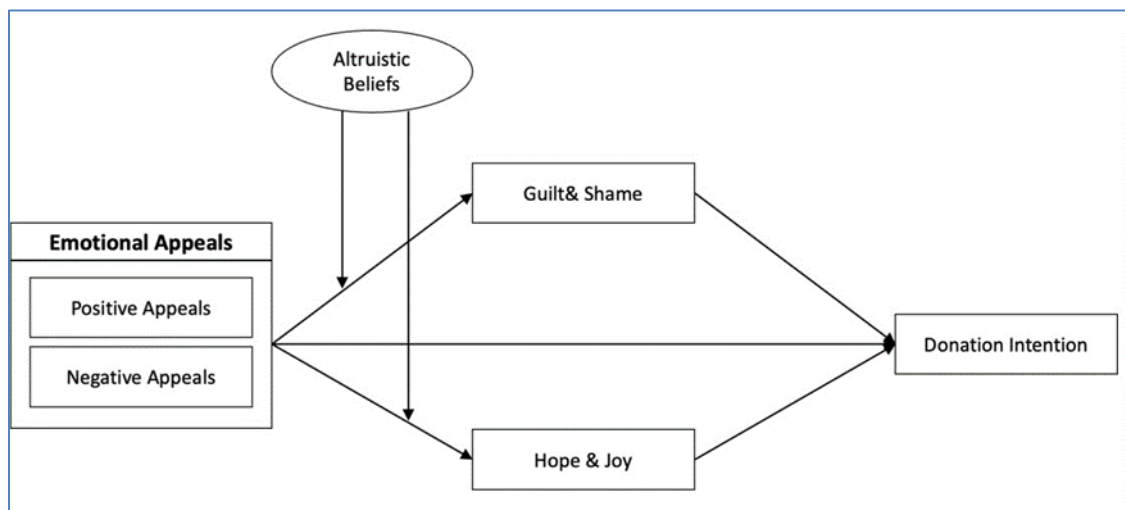


Figure 1 Research Model

In accordance with the aforesaid hypotheses there is a research model presents a visual representation of the conceptual framework to provide a clearer depiction of the study's objectives and the interrelation between its components, Figure 1 depicts the research model:

## 2.5. Research Design and Approach

This study investigates the impact of emotional advertising appeals in digital marketing campaigns on donation intentions using a quantitative, experimental research design. Quantitative research is employed for its ability to produce generalizable findings through statistical analysis, making it suitable for examining relationships among variables and testing hypotheses.[28]. This approach provides meaningful insights for Indonesian marketers on utilizing emotional appeals to boost donations. The experimental design was chosen for its effectiveness in studying cause-and-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables.[29]. By comparing treatment and control groups under controlled conditions, experimental research enhances internal validity and clarifies observed effects.[30]. Prior studies on advertising appeals, such as [25,31] support the use of this approach. The online experiment conducted in this research used artificially created ads with positive, negative, or neutral appeals. An online survey was administered via a panel data provider to ensure diverse respondent demographics. Subsequent sections will detail the experiment, measurement scales, stimuli, sampling, and data analysis methods.

## 2.6. Type and Sources of Data

In this research, primary data consists of information directly collected by the author from original sources or the research site. The author gathered this data using questionnaires and interview results obtained from informants related to the research topic. Additionally, secondary data was utilized to study the influence of motivation and leadership style on employee performance. This secondary data was sourced from company records, organizational documentation, book references, and other relevant information to enhance and support the quality of the research.

## 2.7. Data Collection Method

To validate the study's theoretical propositions, an online survey experiment with a between-subjects one-factor design was conducted. Three distinct advertisements were created as stimuli to evoke specific emotional responses: positive (hope and joy), negative (guilt and shame), and neutral. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these conditions. The survey, conducted via SoSciSurvey and distributed through a panel data provider, ensured a diverse and representative sample of Indonesian adults. The survey included closed-ended questions and was in Indonesian. Participants were screened for eligibility based on age and residency. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, confidentiality, and anonymity, and consent was obtained. They were exposed to one of the stimuli, followed by an attention check to ensure engagement. Those who passed continued to a manipulation check. The study examined five constructs: emotions, donation intention, altruistic beliefs, empathy, and self-efficacy. Participants rated their emotional response on a 7-point Likert scale, followed by questions on donation intention and an attention check. Further sections assessed altruistic beliefs, empathy, and self-efficacy. Finally, demographic data and donation behaviors were collected. Participants were thanked for their participation at the end.

## 2.8. Population and Sample

The research involved 272 participants aged 18 or above residing in Indonesia. After data cleaning, 267 records were analyzed. Participants included 131 females (49.1%), 135 males (50.6%), and one identifying as diverse (0.3%). Ages ranged from 18 to 83, averaging 47.73 years; 36.3% were under 40, and 63.7% were 41 or older. Education varied: 13.9% had university degrees, 18% high school diplomas, 24.3% vocational school, 34.9% apprenticeships, and 8.9% compulsory schooling. This diverse sample enhances representativeness for generalizing results. Experimental groups included 81 in the neutral group, 91 in the positive appeal condition, and 94 in the negative condition.

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## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Data Analysis

#### 3.1.1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis evaluates the consistency of the scales and measurement instruments in the questionnaire. High internal consistency indicates a strong fit between items, meaning they assess the same construct. Cronbach's Alpha is used to measure internal consistency, with values above 0.7 indicating high reliability. The constructs—altruistic beliefs, donation intention, empathy, self-efficacy, and emotions—show high reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values of

0.761, 0.907, 0.930, 0.935, and 0.833, respectively. No items were excluded as removing any did not substantially alter the Cronbach's Alpha values.

**Table 1** Reliability Analysis

Measures	Cronbach's Alpha if item is deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Altruistic Beliefs</b>		<b>0.761</b>
I have a moral obligation to help those who are in need.	0.736	
Cooperation: Enhancing positive benefits for the community.	0.723	
Equality: provide equal opportunity for all	0.731	
Social justice: eliminating inequality, caring for the helpless.	0.735	
A world of peace: free from war and opposition	0.739	
Helping: working for the welfare of others	0.721	
Wealth: material properties, money	0.763	
Authority: the right to lead or domination	0.762	
Social power: control over others, authority	0.775	
Influence: having an influence on people and happenings	0.722	
<b>Donation Intention</b>		<b>0.907</b>
I would like to donate to charitable foundations or non-profits in the next four weeks.	0.888	
I would donate the next time I have the opportunity.	0.884	
I would never consider contributing to this organization.	0.954	
After seeing the charity's commercial, it is very likely that I would donate to this organization.	0.877	
I will donate soon.	0.874	
I would like to donate as soon as possible.	0.881	
It is likely that I would donate to this organization.	0.876	

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**3.1.2. Manipulation Check**

In experimental research, manipulation checks ensure that the conditions elicit the intended effect. Two manipulation checks were included in the online survey. For the first manipulation check, participants rated their emotions on a scale from -4 (negative) to 4 (positive). An ANOVA showed significant differences between the groups: the positive stimulus group had the highest mean, followed by the neutral group, and the negative group had the lowest mean. A post-hoc test confirmed significant differences between the positive and neutral groups, and the positive and negative groups, but not between the negative and neutral groups, indicating that the stimuli successfully elicited different emotional responses.

**Table 2** Means and Standard Deviation for the Groups

	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Negative</b>	4.14	2.092
<b>Neutral</b>	4.44	1.943
<b>Positive</b>	6.02	2.000

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**Table 3** Significance Levels - POST-HOC TEST

Questionnaire	Negative		Neutral		Positive	
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>Sig.</b>	0.606	<0.001	0.606	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**Table 4** Results of test between Subject Effects

Source	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>Group</b>	23.002	<0.001	0.148

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

For the second manipulation check, a MANOVA was conducted using composite scores of the emotions hope, joy, guilt, and shame. The positive group had a higher mean for hope and joy and a lower mean for guilt and shame, while the negative group exhibited the opposite pattern. The MANOVA results confirmed a significant difference between the groups, validating the effectiveness of the manipulation.

**Table 5** Means of groups by emotions

Questionnaire		Mean	Std. Deviation
Hope & Joy	Negative	3.145	1.403
	Neutral	3.104	1.342
	Positive	3.961	1.377
Guilt & Shame	Negative	3.351	1.461
	Neutral	3.168	1.477
	Positive	2.780	1.440

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**Table 6** Results of multivariate test

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
<b>Pillai's Trace</b>	0.123	8.684	4.000	528.000	<0.001	0.062

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

### 3.1.3. Hypotheses Testing

In order to test the first Hypothesis Positive advertising appeals elicit stronger emotions of hope and joy compared to guilt and shame. A one-sample t-test was performed on data from participants exposed to positive stimuli. Results indicated that positive appeals significantly influence positive emotions ( $M=3.960$ ,  $SD=1.377$ ) more than negative emotions ( $M=2.780$ ,  $SD=1.440$ ),  $t(91)=27.594$ ,  $p<0.001$ . High effect sizes for hope & joy (Cohen's  $d=2.877$ ) and guilt & shame (Cohen's  $d=1.931$ ) demonstrate substantial emotional differences. Thus, H1 is supported

**Table 7** Results of one-sample T-test and Descriptives

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
<b>Hope &amp; Joy</b>	3.961	1.377	27.594	91	<0.001	<0.001
<b>Guilt &amp; Shame</b>	2.780	1.440	18.519	91	<0.001	<0.001

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

The Second hypothesis states that negative appeals exert a more substantial impact on emotions of guilt and shame compared to hope and joy. A one-sample t-test on participants exposed to negative stimuli showed significant t-values for both hope and joy ( $t=21.735$ ) and guilt and shame ( $t=22.232$ ), indicating that the emotional differences are not due to chance. Negative emotions had higher mean scores ( $M=3.351$ ,  $SD=1.461$ ) compared to positive emotions ( $M=3.145$ ,  $SD=1.403$ ),  $t(94)=22.232$ ,  $p<0.001$ , supporting H2

**Table 8** Results of one-sample t-test and descriptives

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
<b>Hope &amp; Joy</b>	3.145	1.403	21.735	93	<0.001	<0.001
<b>Guilt &amp; Shame</b>	3.351	1.461	22.232	93	<0.001	<0.001

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

For hypothesis three and four Emotions impact donation intentions, with negative emotions having a greater impact than positive emotions. Regression analysis revealed a significant model ( $F(2,264)=59.428$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Guilt & shame significantly influenced donation willingness ( $B=0.380$ ,  $SE=0.053$ ,  $\beta=0.374$ ,  $t=7.212$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) as did hope & joy ( $B=0.371$ ,  $SE=0.054$ ,  $\beta=0.353$ ,  $t=6.813$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). H3 is supported, but H4 is rejected due to the negligible difference between standardized beta coefficients.

**Table 9** Results of Anova

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
<b>Regression</b>	185.409	2	92.704	59.438	<0.001
<b>Residual</b>	411.826	264	1.560		

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**Table 10** Results of Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<b>Hope &amp; Joy</b>	0.371	0.054	0.353	6.813	<0.001
<b>Guilt &amp; Shame</b>	0.380	0.053	0.374	7.212	<0.001

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

### 3.2. Data Analysis Summary

In this section, attention was directed towards the analysis of the gathered data from the conducted experiment. Two efficacious manipulation checks were executed, and the six fundamental hypotheses were scrutinized and elucidated. A concise overview detailing the specific statistical examinations employed for each manipulation check and hypothesis, along with their corresponding acceptance or rejection outcomes.

**Table 11** Results of Manipulation Check

Manipulation	Testing method	Result
Manipulation advertising appeals	ANOVA & MANOVA	Manipulation check was successful

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

**Table 12** Results of Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses		Testing Method	Result
H <sub>1</sub>	Positive appeals have a stronger impact on the emotions of (a) hope and (b) joy than on the emotions of guilt and shame.	T-Test & MANOVA	accept
H <sub>2</sub>	Negative appeals have a stronger impact on (a) guilt and (b) shame than on the emotions of hope and joy.	T-Test & MANOVA	accept
H <sub>3</sub>	The emotions (a) hope (b) joy (c) guilt, and (d) shame impact donation intention.	Regression Analysis	accept
H <sub>4</sub>	The impact of negative emotions (guilt and shame) on donation intention is stronger than the impact of positive emotions (hope and joy)	Regression Analysis	reject
H <sub>5</sub>	Altruistic values are stronger for women than for men.	ANOVA	accept
H <sub>6</sub>	Altruistic values moderate the impact of negative emotional appeals on (a) guilt and (b) shame, so that stronger values increase this effect.	ANOVA	accept

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

#### 4. Conclusion

The study on emotional appeals in digital charity marketing campaigns has yielded valuable insights. Positive appeals evoke hope and joy, while negative appeals, particularly guilt and shame, are more effective in motivating donations. Altruistic values amplify the impact of negative emotions, especially in women. This research informs charity marketers about the nuanced roles of emotions and altruism in shaping donation behaviors, offering a pathway for developing more effective strategies to address societal needs. Expanding the study's scope to diverse cultural backgrounds and exploring moderating variables enriches understanding, advancing emotional advertising's impact on global donation behavior.

#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict-of-interest*

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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