Saying No to the Glow: Why Consumers Resist Arrogant Brands

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In five studies, we demonstrate that when consumers experience a self-threat, they may avoid brands that convey arrogance in favor of a competing, non-arrogant alternative. Such avoidance, in turn, has positive implications for vulnerable consumers, as it helps them to restore their self-worth and feel better about themselves.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1018719/volumes/ap11/AP-11

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When natural disasters happen, the media's role is to convey the cries of victim. Although donating to a good cause is an “incontrovertible part of the American consumer’s life” (Brooks, 2006), Winterich, Mittal and Ross (2009) assert that “though volitional, donations to domestic versus international causes seem to differ.” Part of the reason for these differential donations may be that victims of Sandy are seen as belonging to an in-group, whereas victims of the Japanese Tsunami are seen as belonging to an out-group (Cuddy, Rock, and, 2007; Kogut and Ritov, 2007). In addition, with the power of advertising, in-group and out-group donors perceive a different “need” to donate to the respective groups of victims (domestic vs. international). However, it is unclear the type of message that differentiates individual’s donation behavior. This study seeks to further the understanding of prosocial behavior by exploring the motivation behind donation, attitude towards helping others, one ethnic identity, and one’s attitude towards different types of donation ads (e.g. message) and their impact on charitable donation advertising effectiveness that is tied to one’s ethnic identity.

Although TPB has been applied in past research such as organ donation (Hyde and White, 2009), volunteering time (Warburton and Terry, 2000), and blood donation (Armitage and Conner, 2001), TPB has not been widely applied in monetary donation advertising effectiveness. Based on the TPB theory, we argue that the TPB variables are important in predicting donation intentions and may differ for different donor groups (e.g. in-group vs. out-group). In past research, among other factors that influence monetary donations to charitable organizations, motives and attitudes were identified as predictors of donation behavior (Green and Webb, 1997). It is of interest to draw more fine-grained distinctions between the different types of donation situation (domestic versus international) and an individual’s perception towards donation have an impact this interconnected society.

Hyde and White (2009) argued that personal influence is clearly relevant for donation behavior and this personal influence maybe in the form of one’s self-identity which may be relevant to one’s ethnic identity. This suggests that any cue that highlights their ethnic identity (e.g. country-of-origin, in-group members) will potentially play a role in determining one’s donation behavior.

Self-concept is defined as what an individual belief about himself or herself, which includes the attributes of who and what the self means to this individual (Baumeister, 1999). According to Grubb and Grathwohl (1967), self-concept is of value to an individual and the behavioral outcome will be focused toward the protection and enhancement of self-concept. They claim that the consumption behavior of this individual will be directed toward enhancing self-concept through the consumption of goods as symbols. This suggests that individuals who have a positive self-concept, the likelihood of any donation advertising for an in-group would be higher.

In summarizing the previous literature, two main research gaps are identified. Charitable organizations are no longer just seeking help within the country; rather they are extending their donation effort to overseas donors as well. However, studies that consider cultural factors are lacking. Second, little research has focused on the interactive effects of framing and evidence on situation (in-group vs. out-group). Self-concept which ties back to how an individual perceives themselves, will have an impact on the level of bias towards in-group and out-group.

Hypothesis 1: Attitude towards helping others is positively related to donation control beliefs and donation motivation.

Hypothesis 2: Donation control beliefs are positively related to donation confidence and donation behavior on ethnic identity.

Hypothesis 3: Donation motivation is positively related to donation confidence and ethnic identity on donation behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Donation confidence is positively related to advertising effectiveness.

Hypothesis 5: Ethnic identity on donation behavior is positively related to advertising effectiveness

Hypothesis 6: Self-concept (e.g. in-group vs. out-group) moderates the relationship between ethnic identity on donation behavior and advertising effectiveness.

Hypothesis 7: Self-concept (e.g. in-group vs. out-group) moderates the relationship between donation confidence and advertising effectiveness

Six variables were measured to test the hypotheses. One hundred-seventy undergraduate college students participated in the survey. For experimental treatments, each subject randomly received one of four versions (America disaster screens with factual message, America disaster screens with emotional message, Japan disaster screens with factual message, Japan disaster screens with emotional message). For manipulations check, two sets of items (country and message types) were used to verify the manipulations of the advertising messages. These results indicate a success of the intended manipulation.

Cronbach’s Alpha shows that all scales had internal consistency. All measures demonstrated reliability with alpha values of .89 and greater. A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the overall validity of the measurement model. The CFA results showed a good model fit for a 25-item model, with $\chi^2 = 437.64$, $df = 260, p = .000$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .06; NFI = .88; TLI = .94. Also, the results supported the construct validity of the measurement model. Metric invariance between US disaster and Japan disaster data was examined. First, the two groups were fitted separately with no equality constraints imposed. Overall, the unconstrained or “totally free” (TF) model fit reasonably well, with $\chi^2 = 784.41$, $df = 520, p = .000$; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .06; PNFI = 0.69. Next, constraining the
measurement weights to be equal between groups, the model fit with \( \chi^2 = 806.66, df = 539, CFI = .92; RMSEA = .05; PNFI = .72 \). The chi-square difference test results (\( \Delta \chi^2 = 22.25, df = 19, p = .272 \)) indicates that full metric invariance could be established and allows valid comparisons of relationships between the effectiveness of US disaster ads and Japan disaster ads.

First, an overall structural model fit for the two groups was estimated without any constraints imposed. The one-group SEM model provided a satisfactory fit of data with \( \chi^2 = 458.76, df = 267, p = .000; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .07; TLI = .93 \). Next, the procedures turned to a test of moderation using the country variable. Overall fit measures of the “totally free” model indicated that the model was consistent with the data (\( \chi^2 = 814.985, df = 534, p = .000; CFI = .91; RMSEA = .06; TLI = .91 \)). By constraining all structural coefficients to be equal in both groups, the model fit with \( \chi^2 = 837.74, df = 553, p = .000; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .06; TLI = .91 \).

The SEM structural paths show that attitude toward helping others was positively related to ethnic identity on donation control belief (U.S. \( \beta = .25, t = 2.15 \); Japan \( \beta = .43, t = 3.90 \)) and donation motivation (U.S. \( \beta = .71, t = 6.44 \); Japan \( \beta = .79, t = 7.75 \)). Donation control belief is positively related to ethnic identity on donation behavior for U.S. disaster (\( \beta = .25, t = 2.29 \)), but not significantly related to Japan disaster. Donation control belief is negatively related to donation confidence (U.S. \( \beta = -.26, t = -2.13 \); Japan \( \beta = -.48, t = -3.45 \)). Donation motivation is positively related to ethnic identity on donation behavior (U.S. \( \beta = .32, t = 2.86 \); Japan \( \beta = .36, t = 2.86 \)). Donation motivation is negatively related to donation confidence for Japan disaster (\( \beta = -.33, t = -2.62 \)), but not related for US disaster. Also, ethnic identity on donation behavior is positively related to advertising effectiveness (U.S. \( \beta = .65, t = 6.07 \); Japan \( \beta = .55, t = 5.13 \)). Donation confidence is positively related to advertising effectiveness (U.S. \( \beta = .22, t = 2.16 \); Japan \( \beta = .18, t = 1.68 \)). An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine the effect of country and message in the relationship between EIDB/DCF and AEFF. The main effects of country and message indicate that there are significant effects on AEFF with country (\( F(1, 164) = 9.12, p = .003 \)) and message (\( F(1, 164) = 4.30, p = .040 \)). Comparison of these variables’ means indicate that U.S. disaster ads have higher AEFF than those of Japan disaster ads. Also, emotional messages have higher mean scores than factual messages.

The study findings show that when a natural disaster strikes in a foreign country, people’s attitude towards helping others in that foreign country is affected by their ethnic identity on donation behavior. In addition, advertising effectiveness is affected by people’s ethnic identity on donation behavior and their attitude towards the charity ads. Further, between emotional and factual messages, emotional messages were considered more persuasive to respondents in regards to natural disaster ads. This study has a number of important practical implications that are of relevance to all levels in society: donors, marketers, charity organizations, and advertising agencies. Knowing the antecedents of effectiveness enables advertisers and marketers to develop strategies to increase charity donation effectiveness. Charity organizations might consider emphasizing donors’ motives (helping others) with emotional donation messages if the context is for a domestic charity.

REFERENCES