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IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHARITABLE ADVERTISING

THE INFLUENCE OF GUILT AND REGULATORY FOCUS FRAMING ON VIEWER RESPONSES TO SIMILARITY-BASED APPEALS IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

Due to the steadily increasing number of non-profit organizations, charitable organizations find themselves in a crowded and competitive landscape. As individual donations contribute a large percentage of their income, uncovering strategies that enhance the effectiveness of their fundraising messages is vital for their success.

Possible strategies to differentiate themselves from the competition and improve the effectiveness of charitable advertisements are the use of similarity- instead of guilt-based appeals as well as regulatory focus framing. However, only little is known about their effects in the context of charitable advertising, which is why this study aims at approaching this research gap. Particularly, the research addresses whether it is possible for similarity-based appeals to completely avoid elements that are evoking guilt, or if at least a small guilt-evoking element is needed. Furthermore, the study also considers age as a possible moderator to investigate whether the so-called generation gap in fundraising originates from age-related differences in information processing.

Therefore, a 2x2 between-respondents factorial design (guilt-evoking element vs. no guilt-evoking element; promotion frame vs. prevention frame) with two age groups (older adults vs. younger adults; n = 388) was conducted to examine their effects on the dependent variables attitude towards the advertisement, problem awareness, moral obligation and donation intention.

The results of the study are diverse. Firstly, the findings reveal that similarity-based appeals containing an additional guilt-evoking element are more effective in generating donation intention than appeals completely avoiding feelings of guilt. Also, the results provide a deeper understanding of why this is the case, confirming that problem awareness and moral obligation are determinants for donation intention. Secondly, the results of the study do not uncover a main effect for regulatory focus framing.

Finally, the study discusses future research recommendations and provides scientific and practical implications.

Keywords: charitable advertising, similarity-based appeals, guilt-based appeals, regulatory focus framing, age differences

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, 5.2 billion euros were donated to German charitable organisations (GfK, 2018). However, as the number of non-profit organizations (NPOs) is steadily increasing, charitable organizations find themselves in a crowded and competitive landscape (van Rijn et. al, 2017; Venable, Rose, Bush, & Gilbert, 2005). As individual donations contribute a large percentage of an NPOs income (Hibbert, 2016), this competitive situation makes it vital for charitable organizations to uncover strategies that enhance the effectiveness of their fundraising messages and trigger the donation decisions of people (Das et. al, 2008).

A commonly used approach for motivating charitable giving is evoking feelings of guilt through charitable advertisement (Huhmann and Brotherton, 1997). This strategy is based on the finding that people donate in order to reduce their negative emotions and personal distress elicited by the suffering of others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006). Yet, such negative valence appeals are becoming increasingly common, which is why some charitable organisations are trying to differentiate themselves by using a more positive approach in their advertising (van Rijn et. al, 2017). Unlike appeals that are evoking feelings of guilt, more positive approaches avoid information regarding the poor state of the recipient. Instead, they focus on communicating everyday things potential donation recipients enjoy in life, such as interests and feelings potential donors can easily relate to (ibid.). Also referred to as the “similarity principle”, research by Bekkers (2010) as well as Park and Schaller (2005), proved that emphasizing on similarities elicits pro-social behaviour.

Although this more positive approach bears the chance of differentiation in the increasingly competitive non-profit sector, only little is known about its effectiveness compared to the traditional guilt-based appeals. Therefore, the present research aims at contributing to the research stream of improving the effectiveness of charitable advertisements by addressing this research gap. Particularly, the research investigates whether similarity-based appeals such as the current advertising campaign of the German NPO “Menschen für Menschen” can completely avoid elements that are evoking guilt, or if at least a small guilt-evoking element is needed to stimulate peoples’ donation intention.

Further potential for enhancing a fundraising messages effectiveness lies in its message framing. Framing is a popularly adopted communication strategy to influence consumer perceptions, judgements and decisions (Chang & Lee, 2010). Broadly, a message can be framed in either negative or positive terms (Das et. al, 2008). Many researchers investigated the effects of so-called gain- versus and loss-framed messages, defining gains as the presence of a positive desirable outcome and losses as the presence of a negative undesirable outcome (e.g. Cao, 2016, Chang & Lee, 2010; Das et. al, 2008, Lindenmeier,

2008). An example for such gain-framed appeal in a fundraising context would be “With your help, an unfortunate child can have an opportunity for a bright future”. Contrary, a loss-framed message would state “Without your help, an unfortunate child will remain living in the dark” (Chang & Lee, 2009). Although the two messages are framed differently, they have the same goal, that is to promote donation behaviour (ibid.). Findings in this research area indicate, that in case of charitable advertising that is presenting the charity’s cause in a narrative way, positive gain-framed messages generally exert a more positive effect on persuasion than negative loss-framed ones (e.g. Das et. al, 2008)

However, a more novel perspective on message framing that is often found in a health-related persuasion context is not only distinguishing between gains and losses but is also considering non-gains, defined as the absence of a positive outcome, and non-losses, defined as the absence of a negative outcome (Idson et al, 2000). Thereby, this more novel perspective expands the traditional perspective on gain-versus and loss-framed messages and indicates, that advertising a positive desirable outcome can be both focused on attaining a gain, but also on attaining a non-loss (ibid.). This raises the question, whether the effectiveness of gain-framed messages differs from the effectiveness of non-loss messages and if consequently the effectiveness of positive-framed messages could be increased by optimizing its focus.

Although in the field of health-related communication, many studies compared the persuasiveness of gain- versus non-loss-framed messages, also referred to as promotion and prevention framed appeals, only little is known about its effectiveness with regard to charitable advertising. Fundraising appeals are usually concerned with outcomes directed to other people, which is a crucial difference compared to health-related communication, that is usually concerned with outcomes affecting the self (Joeng et. al, 2010). Therefore, the second aim of the proposed research is to expand the body of promotion versus prevention framing for the context of charitable advertising.

Furthermore, examining the demographics of people that are already making donations to charitable organizations sheds light on a third potential to increase the effectiveness of charitable advertising. Representative surveys on present donation behaviour in Germany reveal, that especially people at the age of 60 and older account for more than half of all charity donations, while in the younger generation only a few people are donating (GfK, 2018). Taking into account the importance of also the younger potential donor segment for a charitable organisations income (Hibbert, 2016), it is vital to investigate whether this so-called fundraising generation gap (Impact Guru, 2018) originates from age-related differences in the persuasion processes. Consequently, the proposed research thirdly aims at investigating whether the age of a potential donor moderates the effectiveness of similarity- versus- guilt-

based appeals, as well as promotion versus prevention framed messages. Thereby, the study strives for giving practical implications, whether different age groups need to be addressed in different ways.

All in all, this leads to the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does a guilt-evoking element in similarity-based charitable advertisement affect people's intention to donate?

RQ2: To what extent does regulatory focus framing in charitable advertisement affect people's intention to donate?

RQ3: To what extent does the effect of a guilt-evoking element on people's donation intention interact with the advertisements regulatory focus framing?

RQ4: To what extent is the effect of a guilt-evoking element and regulatory focus framing on people's donation intention moderated by age?

To address this research interest, the study is conducted based on a case study of the German charitable organization "Menschen für Menschen" (MfM), which is providing aid for self-development in the rural areas of Ethiopia (Menschen für Menschen, 2018a). MfM is one of the first German charitable organization trying to differentiate themselves from the predominant guilt-based competition using similarity-based advertisement.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Donation behaviour

Prosocial behaviour such as helping, comforting, sharing, and cooperating can be defined as “actions intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself” (Learning, 2003, p. 463). However, only a subset of these behaviours is related to altruism, which is defined as the motivation to increase another person’s welfare and include actions such as self-sacrificial helping or helping in the absence of obvious, external rewards (ibid.)

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 explanation 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 (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Bergstrom et al., 1986; Roberts, 1984; Warr, 1982).

However, another research line proposes, that people’s motivation to engage in charitable giving is due to psychological benefits they receive from the act of giving (Andreoni, 1989). Also referred to as “warm-glow” or “joy of giving” (ibid.), Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) describe the psychological benefits as “an almost automatic emotional response, producing a positive mood, alleviating feelings of guilt, reducing aversive arousal, satisfying a desire to show gratitude, or to be a morally just person” (p. 15). This more egoistically motivation behind helping others is labelled as impure altruism (Andreoni, 1989). Evidence for the impure altruism perspective is present in many studies (Palfrey and Prisbrey, 1997; Charness and Rabin, 2002; Imas, 2014), but so is evidence for altruism that that goes beyond the mere personal interest (Bolton and Katok, 1998; Eckel et al., 2005).

Understanding the underlying processes that lead to altruistic behaviour is particularly important in order to effectively design charitable advertisements that intends to increase charitable giving. Therefore, the current study aims especially at understanding what psychological factors are important in the formation of charitable intentions, as intentions are regarded as the key determinant of behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). Based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), several studies already proved that the more people intend to engage in a particular behaviour, the more likely they are to actually engage in it (Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Godin & Kok, 1996; Hausenblas, Carron, & Mack, 1997). Given the pivotal role of behavioural intention in predicting actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), donation intention is chosen to be the primary dependent variable in the current study.

2.2 Evoking feelings of guilt vs. avoiding feelings of guilt

Most charitable organizations are making use of charitable advertisements that are evoking feelings of guilt because research revealed that people donate in order to reduce negative emotions and personal distress elicited by the suffering of others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006). Feelings of guilt usually stem from being aware of extreme differences in well-being between oneself and potential aid recipients, paired with a sense of responsibility to help (Burnett and Lunsford, 1994; Hoffman, 1982; Ruth and Faber, 1988). Therefore, guilt appeals usually focus on differences between potential donors and donation recipients by emphasizing the extreme poverty, poor health or lack of education of the recipient (van Rijn, 2017) and create a moral context in which one feels inclined to give (Aguilar et al., 2008; Brañas-Garza, 2006).

As such negative valenced appeals are becoming increasingly common, some charitable organizations such as the German NPO “Menschen für Menschen” are trying to differentiate themselves by using a more positive approach in their advertising (Menschen für Menschen, 2018b; van Rijn et. al, 2017). Unlike guilt appeals, these more positive valence appeals usually avoid information regarding the poor state of the recipient and instead communicate everyday things potential donation recipients enjoy in life, such as interests and feelings potential donors can easily relate to (van Rijn et. al, 2017). Also referred to as the similarity principle, research by Park and Schaller (2005) as well as Bekkers (2010) proved that emphasizing on similarities elicits pro-social behaviour. This positive effect of similarities is rooted in the fact, that similarity to another person leads people to like that person and that liking another person increases compliance with requests from him or her (Cialdini and Trost, 1998).

Although this more positive similarity-based approach therefore bears the chance of differentiation in the increasingly competitive non-profit sector, only little is known about its’ effectiveness on donation behaviour compared to traditional guilt-based appeals.

A well supported social psychological theory to predict human behaviour that can be applied to the context of charitable giving in order to explain whether a similarity-based or guilt-based approach is more effective in stimulating charitable giving is the theory of planned behaviour (TPB - Ajzen, 1985). The TPB is based on the assumption, that behavioural decisions such as charitable giving are not made spontaneously, but are the result of a reasoned process (ibid.). In this reasoned process, elements such as attitude, norms, and behavioural control shape an individual's behavioural intentions, that consequently induce behaviour (ibid). Therefore, it is the respective approaches effects on such elements, that predict their effectiveness on individual's donation intentions.

Research conducted by Coulter and Pinto (1995) suggests, that high levels of guilt in a charitable appeal are negatively related to people’s attitudes toward the advertisements and consequently have negative effects on their behavioural intention. This is in line with the TPB,

stating that attitude plays an important role in shaping an individual's behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1985). Moreover, also findings of Brennan and Binney (2008) suggest that negative guilt-based appeals are more likely to invoke inaction rather than pro-social behaviour due to the overuse of negative emotions in charitable appeals.

However, previous research also indicates the importance of potential donor's perceptions of need for pro-social behaviour, stating that donors respond to need with increased contributions (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2001). This is consistent with the findings of de Groot and Steg (2009) who emphasized the decisive role of potential donors' awareness for a problem on individual's donation behaviour. As positive valenced similarity appeals avoid information regarding the poor state of the recipient and only communicate things potential donation recipients enjoy in life, potential donors' problem awareness might be weakened or even prevented.

Moreover, the research by de Groot and Steg (2009) revealed that differences in perceived need affect individuals' perception of moral obligation, which is another important determinant for donating intention (Gorsuch & Ortberg, 1983). Due to its pivotal role, Smith and McSweeney (2007) added moral obligation as an additional element to a revised theory of planned behaviour that is especially tailored to the context of charitable giving. Furthermore, Gorsuch and Ortberg (1983) demonstrated, that moral obligation is even stronger in influencing donation intention than potential donors' attitudes. Therefore, although guilt based appeals might lead to more negative attitudes towards the advertisement as stated above, their effects on moral obligation are likely to positively impact potential donor's donation intention in spite of it.

These critical roles of feeling of guilt, perceived need and moral obligation raise the question, whether it is possible for similarity-based appeals to completely avoid elements that are evoking feelings of guilt, or if at least a small element communicating the poor state of the recipient is needed. Based on the presented theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are established:

H1: People's donation intention will be higher if they are confronted with an advertisement containing an element that is evoking guilt (guilt appeal) than when they are confronted with an advertisement avoiding guilt elements and only focusing on the similarity between the recipient and the donor (similarity appeal).

H2: People's donation intention is mediated by people's attitude towards the advertisement (A), feeling of guilt (B), perceived need (C) and moral obligation (D).

2.3 Promotion vs. prevention framing

Besides the use of guilt, also message framing is a commonly used communication technique for increasing the effectiveness of charitable appeals. Framing can be referred to as “the presentation of one of two different but equivalent value outcomes to decision makers” (Chang & Lee, 2010, p. 197). Making a specific perspective of an issue more salient in communication leads individuals exposed to the communication to develop a particular conceptualization of it, which consequently affects their opinion and behaviour (Entman, 1993). In the context of charitable advertising, a fundraising appeal can be oriented towards attaining a positive outcome or towards not attaining a negative outcome, such as “*Help now with your donation to promote safe access to drinking water in Ethiopia*” versus ““*Help now with your donation to prevent drinking water shortages in Ethiopia.*”.

Both cases promote the same positive and desirable development objective, that is clean water in Ethiopia. But while the first message is focused on promotion, the second one is concerned with prevention to pursue this outcome (Lee & Aaker, 2004). Based on the hedonic principle, that states that people are motivated to approach pleasure and avoid pain, both messages are likely to motivate behaviour (Higgins, 1998). Research by Jeong and colleagues (2011) indicated that increased willingness to donate money especially occurs when the framing of the message is congruent with peoples’ dispositional motivation. This is consonant with the regulatory fit theory (Higgins, 1987), stating that people have different strategies for regulating pleasure and pain, called “regulatory focus”, which leads them to prefer different goal-pursuit strategic means. One strategy emphasizes the pursuit of gains (or the avoidance of non-gains) and aspirations toward ideals, named *promotion focus* and is respectively preferring eagerness as strategic means for pursuing a goal; the other one emphasizes the avoidance of losses (or the pursuit of non-losses) and the fulfilment of obligations, labelled *prevention focus* and is preferring vigilance as strategic means (ibid.).

People tend to have a chronic predominant focus on which they rely in most situations (Higgins, 2002), but both promotion focus and prevention focus can also be momentarily activated by situational factors (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000).

When the messages focus is congruent with the recipient’s regulatory focus, the recipient is experiencing so-called *regulatory fit* (Higgins, 2000). This experience of fit leads to enhanced processing fluency and consequently more favourable evaluations (ibid.). Moreover, research revealed that when people perceive regulatory fit, it increases their strength of engagement (Higgins, 2002).

Research conducted by Lee and Aaker (2004) revealed, that although any specific objective can be promoted with either a promotion- or prevention-focused message, some objectives are more suitable with a particular orientation. Their findings suggest, that the message topic

itself is framing either promotion or prevention concerns and thereby either compatible or incompatible with the focus the message. Further they argue, that increased persuasion occurs when the end state referred to in a persuasive message as defined by desirability is congruent with the focus of a message (i.e. promotion vs. prevention) (ibid.) Respectively, appeals aiming for a positive outcome (i.e., gains or nonlosses) tend to be more compatible with a promotion focus, whereas appeals concerned with negative outcomes (i.e. nongains or losses) tend to be more compatible with a prevention focus (ibid).

Applied to the context of charitable advertising, this leads to the assumption that an appeal that is advertising a positive end state such as clean water in Ethiopia, a promotion frame tends to be more suitable than a prevention frame, leading to higher levels of fit. Resulting from this regulatory fit, promotion framed messages are likely to enhance the processing fluency of potential donors and are consequently expected to lead to more favourable evaluation of the advertisement (Higgins, 2000). On the basis of the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), this evaluation, i.e. the attitude towards the advertisement, is influencing individuals' donation intention. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: People's donation intention will be higher if they are confronted with an ad framed in promotion focus than when confronted with an ad framed in prevention focus.

H4: The effect of a charitable appeals regulatory focus on the potential donor's donation intention is mediated by their attitude towards the advertisement (A).

2.4 The interrelationship between regulatory focus framing and feelings of guilt

As stated in the previous section, making people experience a fit is crucial for influencing their attitudes towards the charitable advertisement and the organization as well as their donation behaviour. Therefore, also the compatibility of different appeal elements plays a critical role for persuasion effects.

According to Brockner and Higgins (2001), not only message frames can differ in their orientation towards promotion versus prevention, but also emotional experiences can be captured by their regulatory focus. While some emotions such as happiness and anger are related to a promotion focus, other emotions like fear and anxiety are associated with the prevention system (ibid.). Therefore, evoking feelings of guilt within a charitable appeal is likely to have an impact on the effectiveness of its message framing, depending on the emotions regulatory focus compatibility with the message frame.

The regulatory focus of an affective state depends on whether the emotion originates from the (un)successful attainment of accomplishments and aspirations or the (un)successful attainment of responsibilities and obligations (Baas, De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008). Both cheerfulness-related positive affective states such as happiness, as well as dejection-related negative affective states such as sadness or disappointment are associated with a promotion focus, because they are linked to the (un)successful attainment of a desired end state (Carver, 2004; Baas et. al, 2008). In contrast, quiescence-related positive affective states such as feeling relaxed or calm, but also agitation-related negative affective states such as fear or anxiety are linked with a prevention focus due to their origin in the (un)successful avoidance of undesired end states (ibid.).

Feelings of guilt can be conceptualized as a negative emotional state aroused by an individual's "*belief or knowledge that he or she has violated some social custom, ethical or moral principle, or legal regulation*" (Heidenreich, 1968 in Basil et al. 2006, p. 1036). Therefore, it is associated with responsibilities and obligations and an aversive state that people attempt to avoid (Fiske, 2004). Accordingly, guilt is an agitation-related emotion and can be conceptualized as a prevention-focused (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

Building on previous research regarding regulatory fit and persuasion, it is proposed that if the regulatory focus of the emotion evoked by the charitable appeal is congruent with the regulatory focus framing of the message, high levels of regulatory fit occur. As a result, high levels of fit between the evoked emotion and the framing of the message lead to more fluent processing of the message and account for increased persuasion effects (Labroo & Lee 2006; Lee & Aaker 2004).

As feeling guilty is a prevention-related emotion, guilt appeals are likely to be more compatible with a prevention-framed message than with a promotion-framed one. By contrast, if no feelings of guilt but only neutral feelings of similarity are evoked by a charitable appeal, potential donors regulatory focus solely primed by the message's topic itself. Therefore, it is rather suitable with a promotion-focused message due to desirability of the promoted objective (see section 2.3). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are established:

H5a: When a charitable appeal contains an element that is evoking guilt (guilt appeal), it leads to higher donation intentions when its message is framed in a prevention focus, than when it is framed in a promotion focus.

H5b: When a charitable appeal avoids evoking feelings of guilt (similarity appeal), it leads to higher donation intentions when its message is framed in a promotion focus, than when it is framed in a prevention focus.

2.5 Moderating effects of age

Although the body of research on the effects of guilt and regulatory focus framing on persuasion emerged over the years, only little is known about age-related differences in responses to charitable appeals using these techniques. As stated already in the introduction, Germany is experiencing a so-called fundraising generation gap (GfK, 2018). This means that in 2017 more than half of all charity donations came from elderly donors at the age of 60 and older, while in younger generation only few people were donating (ibid.). However, taking into account the importance of also younger potential donors for an NPOs income (Hibbert, 2016), it is vital to investigate whether the persuasiveness of guilt and regulatory focus framing is moderated by age and if consequently different age groups need to be addressed in different ways.

Previous research on information processing suggests, that older and younger adults differ in their information processing, especially with respect to emotions (Williams and Drolet, 2005). Several studies indicate, that compared to younger adults, older adults have a greater focus on emotional goals which lead them to favour positive and avoid negative information in their attention and memory (Mather & Carstensen, 2004). On the contrary, younger adults tend to engage in more objective and factual processing (Isaacowitz et al. 2000).

An explanation for this originates from the socioemotional selectivity theory, a lifespan theory of motivation postulating a shift in priorities of different goals with age due to time horizons becoming increasingly constrained (Carstensen et al. 1999). As older adults are more likely to recognize that they are approaching the end of their lives, they perceive time as limited (Carstensen, 1992) and tend to be present-oriented, focused on finding satisfaction in the moment. By contrast, younger adults are more likely to perceive time as open-ended, which is why they tend to be future-oriented and pay more attention to planning (Carstensen et al., 2003). As a result of these differences in the perception of time, older adults are more likely to engage in emotion regulation processes and are especially focused on preventing the occurrence of negative emotions compared to younger adults (Gross, 1998).

Given that the effectiveness of guilt appeals in charitable advertising is also based on emotion regulation processes, as it is suggested that people donate in order to reduce negative emotions and personal distress elicited by the suffering of others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006), it can be assumed that older adults are more likely to get more affected by the use of guilt than younger adults. As older adults are more focused on preventing negative emotions than younger adults (Gross, 1998), they are more likely to relieve their feelings of guilt by making a donation. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H6a: Older adults get more persuaded by a charitable appeal evoking feelings of guilt than younger adults, resulting in higher donation intentions.

Moreover, previous research also revealed age-related differences in memory for material with positive and negative emotional valence and corresponding positivity and negativity effects (Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004).

Several findings indicate that younger adults have a tendency to process negative information more thoroughly, also referred to as negativity effect (Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004), because their minds are prepared to recognize and select threatening stimuli from the environment (Ybarra, 2001). By contrast, older adults are more likely to favour positive and avoid negative information in their attention and memory (Mather & Carstensen, 2004), also referred to as positivity effect. As already mentioned in the previous section, this is a result of older adults' perception of time as limited, leading them to be present-oriented, focused on finding satisfaction in the moment and prevent the occurrence of negative emotions (Carstensen 1992, Gross, 1998).

In a promotion framed message, a success is the presence of a positive outcome and can be labelled as gain (Idson et. al, 2000). By comparison, in a prevention framed message, a success is the absence of a negative outcome and can be referred to as a nonloss (ibid.). Therefore, a promotion-framed message is gain related and more positive valenced, whereas a prevention-framed message is loss related and thus slightly more negative valenced. Consequently, when considering the age-related positivity and negativity effects it can be assumed that younger adults get more persuaded by prevention framed appeals, whereas older adults are very likely to feel more addressed by a promotion framed appeal.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6b: Older adults get more persuaded by a promotion-framed charitable message, resulting in higher donation intentions, whereas younger adults get more persuaded by a promotion-framed one.

5.6 Additional influences on donation intention

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 (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the context of charitable giving, this emphasizes the role of individuals' attitude toward helping others as well as their attitude toward charitable organizations (Webb et al., 2000). Findings of Webb et al. (2000) indicate, that individuals having a positive attitude toward helping others, as well as charitable organizations, are likely to donate to charities (ibid.). Hereby, attitude towards helping others is defined as "global and relatively enduring evaluations with regard to helping or assisting other people", whereas attitude towards charitable organizations is seen as "global and relatively enduring evaluations with regard to the non-profit organizations that help individuals" (Webb et al., 2000, p.300). Based on their influence on donation intention, these two attitude constructs are included as covariates in the current research.

Moreover, research conducted by Thoits and Hewitt (2001) 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 (ibid.). 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.

2.7 Research Model

Based on the hypotheses elaborated in the previous sections, the following model is concluded to illustrate the relationships that are central to this research.

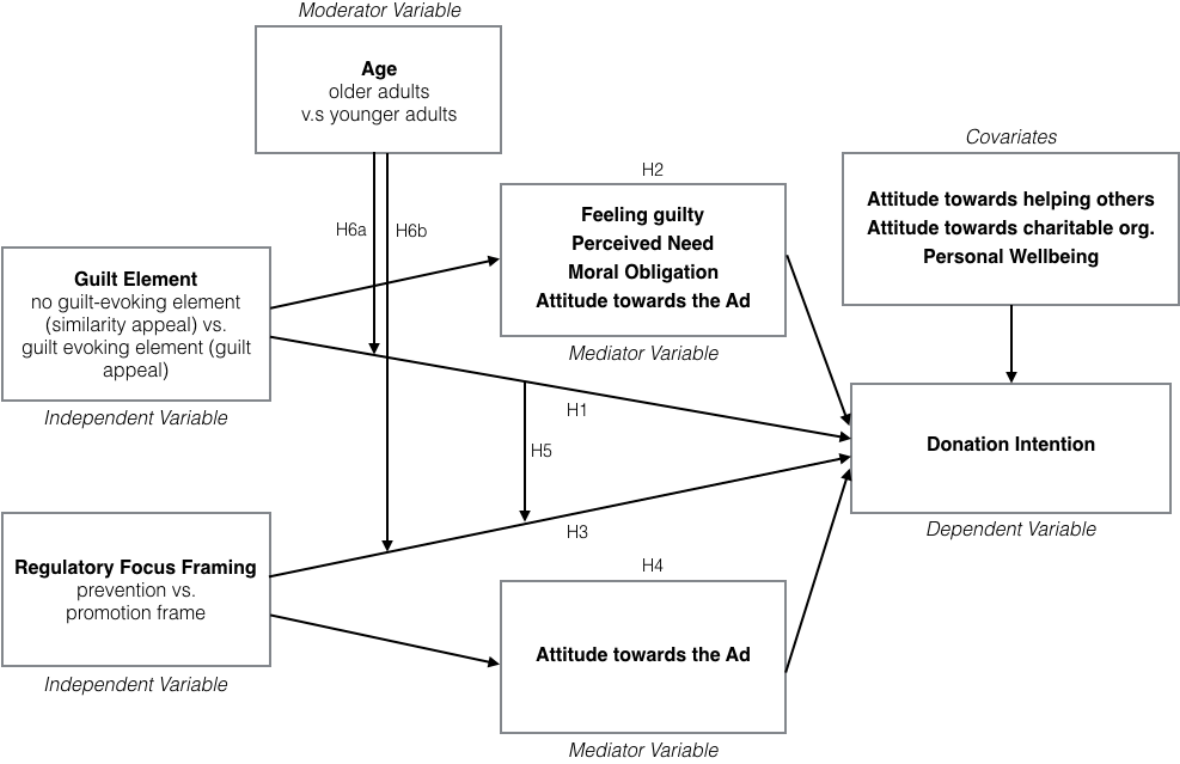


Figure 1: Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

In order to test the six hypotheses and the conceptual model visualized in figure 1, the research design was chosen to be a 2x2 between-respondents factorial experimental design with two groups by means of an online survey. As similarity- and guilt-based appeals usually vary in more than one dimension, the stimulus material in all conditions was based on a similarity appeal, but contained an additional guilt evoking element in part of the manipulations to keep the manipulation one-dimensional (see section 3.4, p.20).

Hence, two levels of both *element evoking guilt* (guilt element vs. no guilt element) and *regulatory focus framing* (promotion vs. prevention) were manipulated as independent variables. Together with the two levels of *age* (old adults vs. young adults), eight experimental conditions were generated (see table 1).

Table 1: Experimental conditions

Experimental Condition	Guilt Element	Regulatory Focus	Age Group
1	yes	Promotion	old
2	yes	Prevention	old
3	no	Promotion	old
4	no	Prevention	old
5	yes	Promotion	young
6	yes	Prevention	young
7	no	Promotion	young
8	no	Prevention	young

3.2 Research Procedure

As a first step of the research procedure, the questionnaire and the previously mentioned manipulations were created with the survey tool *Qualtrics*.

In order to recruit participants for this experiment, the German convenience pool “SoSci Panel” was used. The pool consists of 48.000 active panellists and is publicly available for fundamental research. The target population recruited for this study consisted of two age groups: Firstly, older Germans aged 60 and older, as this age group accounts for more than half of all charity donations in Germany (GfK, 2018). Secondly, younger Germans aged between 18 and 30, given that this age group donates the least (ibid.).

The panellists were invited to participate in an online study about the communication of charity organizations by clicking through a link to the research site that was sent to them via e-mail. After a short introduction, participants were asked to fill in the first part of an online questionnaire to measure three covariates (*attitude towards helping others, attitude towards charitable organizations, personal wellbeing*). Subsequently, they were presented with an

advertisement-like stimulus material randomly selected from a set of four, comprising the experimental manipulations. After exposure to the stimulus manipulations, participants filled out the second part of the online questionnaire comprising the dependent measures.

3.3 Research Sample

The research sample consists of 388 German-speaking respondents, which were all recruited on the basis of a non-probability convenience sampling method through the SoSci Panel. Due to the study's interest in age differences, the sample was divided into two age groups using the median split. This resulted in an older age group with an average age of $M=66.34$ ($SD=6.48$) years and a younger age group with an average age of $M=28.31$ ($SD=5.79$) years. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents across the conditions.

Table 2: Distribution across conditions

Condition	n	Percentage (%)
1	44	11.3
2	43	13.7
3	48	12.4
4	49	12.6
5	51	13.1
6	47	12.1
7	49	12.6
8	47	12.1
Total	388	100

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents' characteristics

		overall		older age group		younger age group	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Gender</i>	male	170	43.8	119	61.3	51	26.3
	female	215	55.4	74	38.1	141	72.7
<i>Occupation</i>	pupil	3	.8	0	0.0	3	1.5
	apprentice	4	1.0	0	0.0	4	2.1
	student	71	18.3	0	0.0	71	36.6
	employee	118	30.4	37	19.1	81	41.8
	civil servant	13	3.4	7	3.6	6	3.1
	self-employed	29	7.5	20	10.3	9	4.6
	housewife/ -husband	9	2.3	5	2.6	4	2.1
	job-seeking	10	2.6	2	1.0	8	4.1
	pensioner	116	29.9	116	59.8	0	0.0
	other	15	3.9	7	3.6	8	4.1
<i>Awareness</i>	yes	157	40.5	119	61.3	38	19.6
	no	168	43.3	44	22.7	124	63.9
	not sure	63	16.2	31	16.0	32	16.5
	total	388	100.0	194	100.0	194	100.0

In order to examine the relation between the subjects' characteristics and their allocation to a condition, several randomization tests were performed. The findings indicate an imbalance in the proportion of males and females in the different age groups. While in the younger age group the majority of subjects were female (73%), the older age group had a larger proportion of men (61%, $\chi^2(2) = 48.41$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, in the younger age group considerably fewer subjects were familiar with the organization *Menschen für Menschen* (20%) compared to the older age group (61%, $\chi^2(2) = 79.90$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, when analysing the results of the study, differences between the two age groups need to be interpreted with caution since related effects could also be due to gender- or awareness-related reasons. Other significant differences between the two age groups can be attributed to natural differences between older and younger adults, which is why there is no need to elaborate on them.

3.4 Stimulus Material

The stimulus material used in this study was based on the current campaign of "Menschen für Menschen" (MfM) (Menschen für Menschen, 2018b). To test the independent variables of guilt element and regulatory focus framing, four conditions were created (see table 4).

The concept of MfM's campaign is to motivate people to charitable contributions by showing them similarities between Ethiopians and Germans (Menschen für Menschen, 2018b). In a series of short videos, several Ethiopian characters are introduced with their interests and give practical advice for everyday problems both Ethiopians and potential donors can easily relate to.

For the stimulus material, four screenshots of characters portrayed in the actual videos were composed to a shot picture series and complemented with a written description about their name, age, interests and character as pictured in the campaign (see figure 1).

In order to test whether such similarity-based appeals are more or less effective containing elements that are evoking negative emotions such as guilt, in one manipulation the picture series also contained an additional slide stating the poor state of the people portrayed. As previous research revealed that feelings of guilt inter alia occur when someone compares his own well-being and fortune with others and realizes a great difference in favour of himself (Lwin & Phau, 2014), the statement emphasized the differences in the amount of water used by Ethiopians compared to Germans (see figure 2). As in the original similarity-based campaign no information regarding the poor state of the people portrayed was given, the other manipulation forewent this statement.

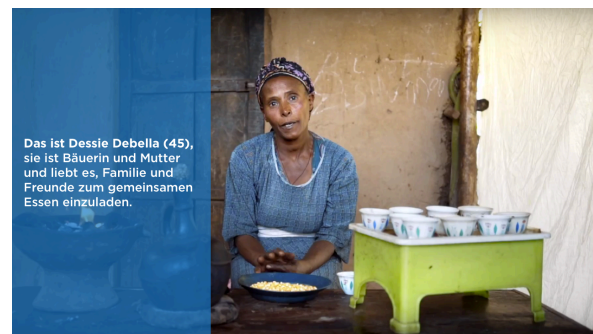
In all conditions, the picture series ended with a call to do a charitable donation and the MfM logo. The way in which the appeal was presented was manipulated by regulatory focus framing, to be able to examine which framing type is most effective persuading people to donate. While in half of the conditions, the fundraising appeal was oriented towards attaining a positive outcome and promoting a safe access to drinking water (promotion frame), the appeal in the other conditions was oriented towards not attaining a negative outcome and preventing drinking water shortages (prevention frame) (see figure 3).

Figure 1: Similarity manipulation



similarity picture a)

"This is Jonas Medeska (13), he is a pupil and shoe-blacker and loves to play football in his free time."



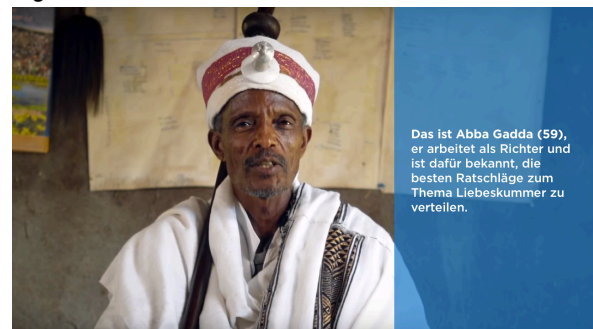
similarity picture b)

"This is Dessie Debella (45), she is a farmer and mother and enjoys inviting friends and family to have dinner together."



similarity picture c)

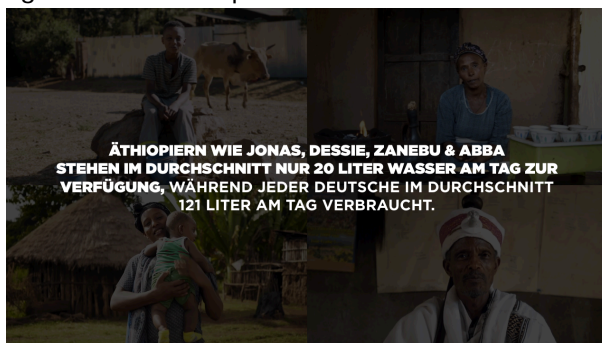
"This is Zanebu Abdi (29) with her little son Tadesse. At the moment, she is not getting much sleep, because Tadesse is getting his first tooth."



similarity picture d)

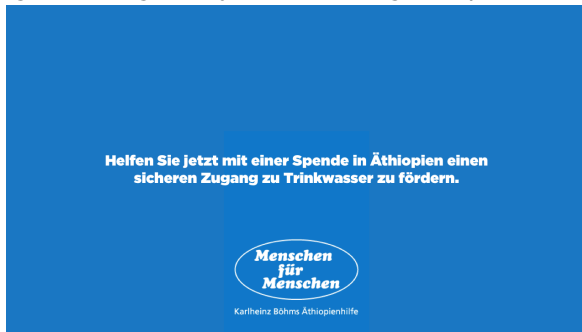
"This is Abba Gadda (59), he is working as a judge and known for giving the best advice when it comes to lovesickness."

Figure 2: Guilt manipulation



"Ethiopians like Jonas, Dessie, Zanebu & Abba only have access to 20 litres of clean water a day, while every German consumes an average of 121 litres of water per day."

Figure 3: Regulatory focus framing manipulation



a) promotion frame
 "Help now with a donation to promote safe access to drinking water in Ethiopia."



b) prevention frame
 "Help now with a donation to prevent drinking water shortages in Ethiopia."

Table 4: Overview of all stimulus conditions

	1	2	3	4
	similarity	similarity	similarity	similarity
	no guilt element	guilt element	no guilt element	guilt element
	promotion frame	promotion frame	prevention frame	prevention frame
	= similarity approach without guilt element x promotion frame	= similarity approach with guilt element x promotion frame	= similarity approach without guilt element x prevention frame	= similarity approach without guilt element x prevention frame

3.4.2 Pre-test

To empirically check the effectiveness of the two manipulations within the stimulus material, two pretests were conducted.

In the first pretest, a convenience sample consisting of 15 respondents was exposed to one of four charitable appeals that varied in terms of elements evoking guilt and elements evoking feelings of similarity. Two scales measuring *feelings of guilt* and *feelings of similarity* were used as manipulation checks so that corrections to the stimulus material could be made before the experiment went into the field. The respective items derived from prior research conducted by van Rijn et. al (2017), Ashar et. al (2016) and Coulter and Pinto (1995) and were also used in the main study.

To test the differences between the conditions, an ANOVA was conducted. Although the respondent's feelings of guilt differed as expected, the results did not differ significantly.

Nevertheless, the manipulation was retained for the main study, as it was very likely that the small sample size had prevented the extrapolation of significant differences (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). As the differences between the respondent's perception of similarity were significant, also the similarity manipulation remained unchanged for the main study.

In the second pretest, another convenience sample consisting of 22 respondents was exposed to either the promotion or prevention framed appeal designed for the study. As there was no suitable scale to measure the perception of the regulatory focus of a message, a new scale was designed as manipulation check. Respondents were confronted with six semantic-differential statements pairs (see table 6) and asked to rate which of the respective two statements fit better to the stated fundraising appeal, putting a mark on one of five points along each dimension. The item pairs were derived from the theoretical examination of regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998, 2002). According to Higgins, a promotion focus associates with the need for growth and therefore hopes and aspirations, whereas a prevention focus associates with the need for security and hence is related to responsibilities and obligations (ibid.). Consequently, the promotion focus is linked with the achievements, the promotion of something positive and feelings of cheerfulness in success, whereas the promotion focus aligns with losses, preventing something negative and feelings of relief when succeeding (ibid).

After calculating a mean score per participant, an ANOVA was conducted. The findings revealed that the respondent's perception of the messages regulatory focus differed as expected, but not significantly. However, the manipulation was maintained for the main study, as the small sample size was most likely the reason for the insignificant result (Faber & Fonseca, 2014).

Table 5: Semantic-differential statements pairs measuring the perception of regulatory focus framing

Question: Which of the following two statements do you think fits better to the charitable appeal that you saw?

Promotion Focus	Prevention Focus
The charitable organization is striving to achieve better access to drinking water.	The charitable organization is striving to avoid drinking water losses.
In order to help the people in Ethiopia, the charitable organization is trying to promote something positive.	In order to help the people in Ethiopia, the charitable organization is trying to prevent something positive.
I think the people in Ethiopia are happy about a success of the aid organization.	I think the people in Ethiopia feel relieved about a success of the aid organization.
The organization is concerned with stimulating further development in the field of drinking water.	The organization is concerned with ensuring greater security in the field of drinking water.
The organization has a hopeful vision.	The organization has a responsible vision.
The advertisement evokes feelings of aspiration.	The advertisement evokes a sense of obligation.

3.4.3 Manipulation Check

3.4.3.1 Guilt Element

Also in the main study the effectiveness of the two manipulations within the stimulus material was two empirically checked. As in the pre-test, six items derived from previous research (Coulter and Pinto, 1995) were applied to measure the participants' feelings of guilt. Prior to performing the analysis, the items measured on a five-point Likert scale were reverse coded (5=agree / 1=disagree). Then the mean scores per participant were calculated and an independent-samples t-test was run. As awaited, the test revealed that there was a significant difference between the two groups, concerning recipient's feelings of guilt in the guilt element condition ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.88$) versus the condition without such element ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.93$, $t(386) = -4.67$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.47$).

3.4.3.2 Regulatory Focus Framing

To verify the manipulation of *regulatory focus framing*, one control item was employed, because the complete scale used in the pre-test would have been too long for the actual main study. Respondents were confronted with one of the semantic-differential statement pairs derived from the theoretical examination of regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998, 2002). As in the pre-test, they were asked to rate which of the two statements fit better to the stated fundraising appeal, putting a mark on one of five points along each dimension (1=promotion / 5=prevention). The chosen statement measuring the perception of a promotion focus was "The charitable organization is trying to promote something positive in order to help the people in Ethiopia". Contrary, the statement measuring the perception of a prevention focus stated "The charitable organization is trying to prevent something negative in order to help the people in Ethiopia".

Against expectations, an independent-samples t-test revealed no significant difference between the two groups ($M_{\text{prom}} = 2.19$, $SD = 1.20$, $M_{\text{prev}} = 2.21$, $SD = 1.19$, $t(386) = -0.14$, $p = 0.892$). Therefore, a follow up two-way ANOVA was run and revealed a significant interaction effect between age and the regulatory focus manipulation, $F(1, 380) = 6.90$, $p = 0.009$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.018$. Consequently, an independent-samples t-test was run in each age group and revealed, that in the younger age group, there was a significant difference between the promotion ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.94$) and prevention condition ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.19$, $t(188) = -0.34$, $p = 0.028$, $d = 0.32$). However, in the older age group, no significant effect was found ($M_{\text{prom}} = 2.44$, $SD = 1.35$, $M_{\text{prev}} = 2.15$, $SD = 1.19$, $t(191) = 1.59$, $p = 0.113$). This indicates that the manipulation was only successful in the younger age group. Accordingly, the results regarding regulatory focus framing must be interpreted with caution, especially with respect to age-differences.

3.5 Measurements

The measurement instrument consisted of questions measuring the covariates, the manipulated stimulus material, questions about the participants' recognition of the different manipulations and as well as the participant's socio-demographic characteristics.

Most of the items used were either entirely or partially adopted from previous research and translated from English into German after being adapted to the context of the study. Except the constructs *personal well-being* and *attitude towards the advertisement*, all items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, from agree (1) to disagree (5).

The items to measure the subjects general *attitude towards helping others* were adapted from research conducted by Webb, Green and Brashear (2000), just like the scale measuring the subjects general *attitude towards charitable organizations* (ibid.). Example items for scales are "People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate" (*attitude towards helping others*) and "The money given to charities goes for good causes" (*attitude towards charitable organizations*).

Items for measuring the construct of *personal well-being* were derived from the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI-A) developed by Lau, Cummins and McPherson (2005). Although the original PWI-A scale contains seven items of satisfaction, for the purpose of the present study only the first five items have been adapted. Like the original PWI-A, the scale to measure personal well-being had an eleven-point response range, with endpoints labelled "no satisfaction at all" (0) to "completely satisfied" (10). An example for this is "How satisfied are you with your standard of living?".

To gain information about how the participants perceived the manipulations, the second part of the online questionnaire aimed at measuring *feelings of guilt, feelings of similarity, perceived need, moral obligation, attitude towards the advertisement and donation intention*. Feelings of guilt were comprised of six adjective items (i.e. guilty, ashamed, bad, irresponsible, uneasy, upset) found in the research conducted by Coulter and Pinto (1995). Additionally, five filter items (i.e. happy, entertained, inspired, manipulated, connected) were embedded among the guilt items to ensure that participants did not focus on guilt when answering the survey.

The scale measuring feelings of similarity comprised of six statements, from which three statements were adapted from the measurement instrument of van Rijn, Barham and Sundaram-Stukel (2017). The remaining three items were based on research conducted by Ashar, Andrews-Hanna, Yarkoni, et. al (2016). An example statement is “The people in the pictures remind me of myself”.

Items for measuring perceived need were adapted from a scale developed by Diamond and Kashyap (1997) and three items developed by Cheung and Chan (2000) measured the construct moral obligation. “People in Ethiopia have a great need for monetary contributions made by people from Germany” and “I feel the moral obligation to donate money to people in Ethiopia” are an example statement measuring these constructs.

The items used to measure attitude towards the advertisement comprised five semantic-differential adjective pairs and originated from previous research done by Koring (2015) and Nan (2006). The participants were asked to rate the advertisement and the organization in the advertisement putting a mark on one of five points along each dimension. An example item pair is “boring / interesting”.

The final depended measure donation intention comprised of four statements also adapted from a scale developed Basil, Ridgway, and Basil (2008). “I am intending to make a donation to this organization in the near future” is an example statement for measuring this construct. Eventually, also socio-demographic variables including *age, gender, educational background, occupation and personal income per month* and *MfM-awareness* were queried.

Please refer to table 6 for a complete overview of all measurement items employed.

In order to ensure the measurements instruments quality, the validity and reliability of the measurements were examined. A preliminary analysis revealed the overall sampling adequacy to be meritorious (KMO=.781), as well as acceptable adequacy of all individual variables, yielding between KMO scores from .648 to .875. Together with a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity result ($X^2(45) = 1184.48, p < 0.001$), these findings provide confidence in the factorability of the items and thus the outcome of a factor analysis (Dziuban & Shirkey, 1974; Kaiser & Rice, 1974).

Subsequently, a factor analysis with varimax rotation on the 43 items was performed, emerging nine components with eigenvalues of above 1 that explain a total of 67% of the variance. All items loaded cleanly into the constructs they were intended to measure with the exception of one item measuring similarity. Moreover, three items were identified as problematic due to a low loading on their respective constructs, especially in comparison with the other items intended to measure the same.

Therefore, the four problematic items were discarded from the following analysis, while the remaining and viable 39 items were merged into their respective constructs.

Completing, the internal consistency of the measures was assessed by conducting a reliability analysis calculating the constructs Cronbach's Alpha values. Table 6 provides an overview of the results of both analyses.

Table 6: Results of Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation and Follow-Up Reliability Analysis

<i>Construct</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Components</i>								
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Attitude toward helping others</i>	.80	People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate.									.78
		Helping troubled people with their problems is very important to me.									.82
		People should be more charitable toward others in society.									.78
		(DEL) People in need should receive support from others.									.58
<i>Attitude toward charitable organizations</i>	.86	The money given to charities goes for good causes.				.76					
		(DEL) Much of the money donated to charity is wasted. (R)				.55					
		My image of charitable organizations is positive.				.83					
		Charitable organizations have been quite successful in helping the needy.				.77					
		Charity organizations perform a useful function for society.				.74					
<i>Personal Wellbeing</i>	.81	How satisfied are you with...									
		... your standard of living?							.77		
		... your health?							.66		
		... what you are achieving in life?							.80		
		... how safe you feel?							.68		
... your future security?							.78				
<i>Attitude toward the advertisement</i>	.89	boring / interesting	.72								
		unpleasant / pleasant	.74								
		unlikeable / likeable	.81								
		bad / good	.79								
		non-credible / credible	.77								

<i>Feeling guilty</i>	.91	guilty	.77	
		ashamed	.86	
		bad	.85	
		irresponsible	.80	
		uneasy	.82	
		upset	.72	
<i>Feelings of similarity</i>	.85	The people in the pictures remind me of myself.		.84
		The people in the video remind me of friends or relatives of mine.		.84
		I can identify with the people in the pictures.		.69
		After seeing the advertisement, I think that ...		
		... German's interests and hobbies are similar to Ethiopian's interests and hobbies.		.67
		(DEL) ... German's joys and fears are different from Ethiopian's joy and fears. (R)		
		... German's morals and values are similar to Ethiopian's morals and values.		.66
<i>Perceived need</i>	.54	After considering the advertisement, I think that...		
		...people in Ethiopia have a great need for monetary contributions made by people from Germany.		.63
		...there will be serious consequences if people in Germany don't donate money to people in Ethiopia.		.75
<i>Feelings of moral obligation</i>	.90	After considering the advertisement ...		
		... I feel the moral obligation to donate money to people in Ethiopia.	.65	
		... I think it is egoistic not to donate money to people in Ethiopia.	.68	
		(DEL) ... I think that donating money to people in Ethiopia conforms to my moral principles.	.58	
		... I feel guilty if I don't donate money to people in Ethiopia.	.77	
<i>Donation intention</i>	.88	I am intending to make a donation to this organization in the near future.		.68
		There is a large chance that I will donate to this charitable organization in the near future.		.72
		I do not have the intention to donate to this charitable organization. (R)		.79
		The chance that I will donate to this charitable organization is very small. (R)		.81

4. RESULTS

In the following section, the results of the statistical analyses performed will be discussed.

4.1 Main effects

In the first place, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with three fixed factors including guilt element, regulatory focus framing and age was performed to reveal potential relationships between the manipulated and dependent variables, while controlling for the covariates attitude towards helping others, attitude towards charitable organizations and personal wellbeing.

The ANCOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect of guilt element on donation intention. Participants who saw the charitable appeal containing a guilt evoking element had higher donation intentions than the participants in the condition that avoided a guilt element. Based on this result, hypothesis H1 can be supported.

In contrast, a different picture emerged for regulatory focus framing. The results of the ANCOVA did not indicate a significant main effect for regulatory focus framing on donation intention. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is not supported.

Table 7: Results of Analysis of Covariance for the Main and Interaction Effects

	df	F	p	partial η^2
guilt element (GE)	1, 377	11.71	.001***	.030
regulatory focus framing (RF)	1, 377	.32	.292	.001
GE x RF	1, 377	.26	.613	.001

Note: *** significant at .001

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation Values

		guilt element		no guilt element	
		promotion	prevention	promotion	prevention
older adults	M	2.75	2.59	2.42	2.44
	(SD)	(1.23)	(.99)	(.02)	(1.18)
younger adults	M	2.37	2.62	1.80	2.24
	(SD)	(.98)	(1.17)	(.91)	(.86)

Note: M – mean; SD - standard deviation
reverse coded five-point Likert scale (5=agree / 1=disagree)

Moreover, the ANCOVA revealed statistically significant main effects for the two covariates attitude towards helping others and attitude towards charitable organ, but not for personal wellbeing.

Table 9: Results of Analysis of Covariance for the Covariates

	df	F	p	partial η^2
attitude towards helping	1, 377	13.38	.001***	.034
attitude towards charitable o.	1, 377	16.31	.001***	.041
personal well-being	1, 377	1.12	.292	.003

Note: *** significant at 0.001

4.2 Interaction effect

As stated in the theoretical framework, an interaction effect between guilt element and regulatory focus framing was hypothesized. However, the results of the ANCOVA did not reveal a significant interaction (see table 7). Accordingly, hypotheses H5a and H5b are not supported.

4.3 Moderation effect

Next to analysing the effects of the two manipulations, the ANCOVA was also applied to investigate whether the effects of guilt element and regulatory focus framing depend on a potential donors age. Against expectations, the results did not indicate signification moderation effects of age for any of the two relationships. Based on this result, hypotheses H6a and H6b are not supported.

Table 10: Results of Analysis of Covariance for the Moderation Effects

	df	F	p	partial η^2
age (A)	1, 377	3.06	.081	.008
GE x A	1, 377	1.06	.304	.003
RF x A	1, 377	2.50	.114	.007

4.4 Mediating effects

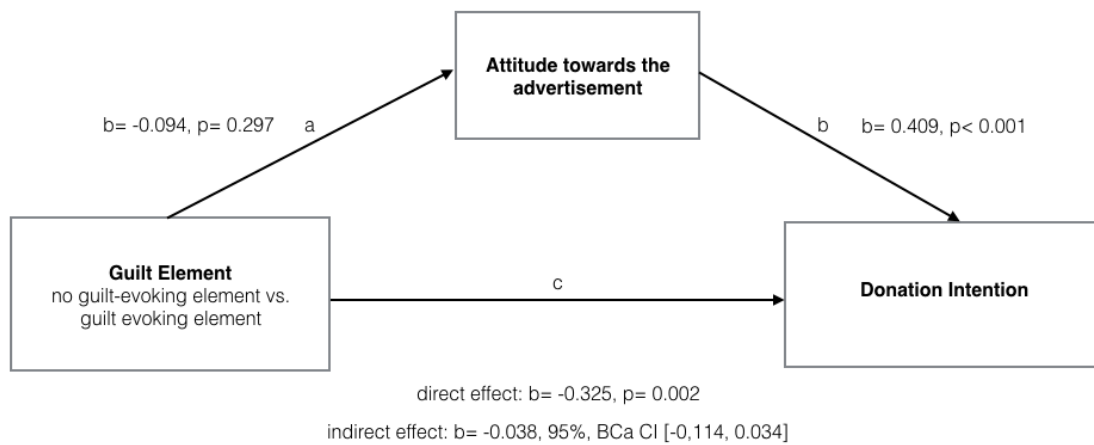
As portrayed in the research model (see section 2.7), the effect of guilt element on the outcome variable donation intention, is hypothesized to be mediated by the variables *feeling guilty*, *perceived need*, *moral obligation*, and *attitude towards the advertisement*. Therefore, a mediation analysis was conducted and version 3.0 of Hayes PROCESS macro extension for SPSS was employed for the analysis.

For reasons of completeness, it should also be noted that mediation effects were also hypothesized to emerge for the separate effect of regulatory focus framing. However, as the ANCOVA results showed no statistically significant main effects for, it is concluded that hypotheses H4 cannot be supported, as there are no effects to be mediated.

4.4.1 Mediating effect of attitude towards the advertisement

Guilt appeals containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient were hypothesized to influence recipients' donation intention also with the initiative through lower attitude towards the advertisement. However, the mediation analysis did not reveal a significant indirect effect of the guilt element on recipients' donation intention through their attitude towards the advertisement, $b = -.038$, BCa CI $[-.114, .034]$. Therefore, hypothesis H2(A) is not supported.

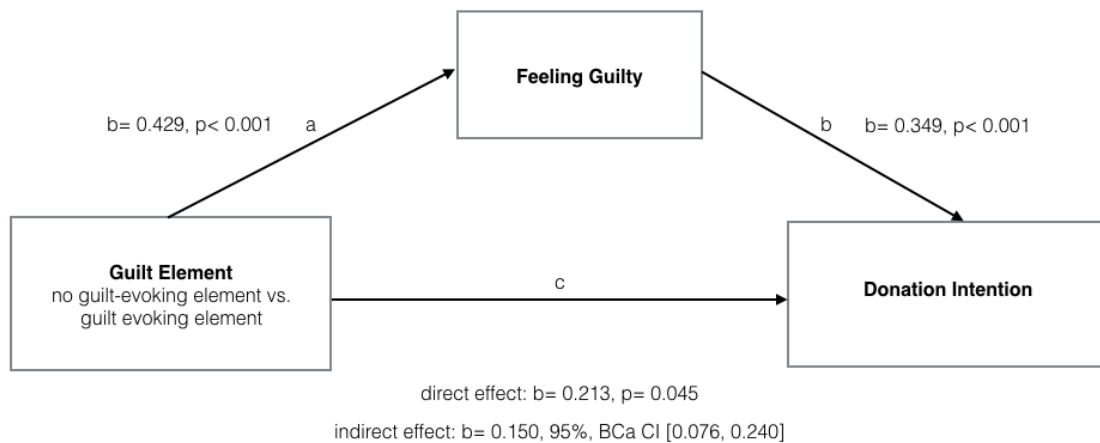
Figure 4: Mediating Effect of Attitude towards the advertisement on Donation Intention



4.4.2 Mediating effect of feeling guilty

Moreover, guilt appeals containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient were also hypothesized influence recipients' donation intention with the initiative through higher feelings of guilt. The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of the guilt element on recipients' donation intention through feelings of guilt, $b = .150$, BCa CI $[.076, .224]$. As the direct effect is significant, feelings of guilt are partially mediating the relationship between guilt element and donation intention (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Yet, hypothesis H2(B) is supported.

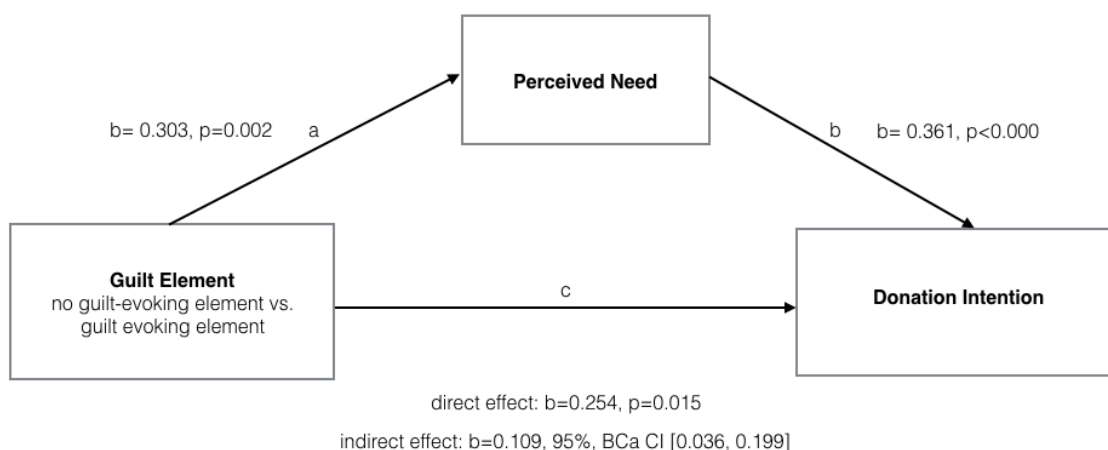
Figure 5: Mediating Effect of Feeling Guilty on Donation Intention



4.4.3 Mediating effect of perceived need

Furthermore, guilt appeals containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient were hypothesized to influence recipients' donation intention with the initiative through higher perceived need. The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of the guilt element on recipients' donation intention through perceived need, $b = .109$, BCa CI [.036, .199]. As the direct effect is significant, perceived need is partially mediating the relationship between guilt element and donation intention (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Yet, hypothesis H2(C) is supported.

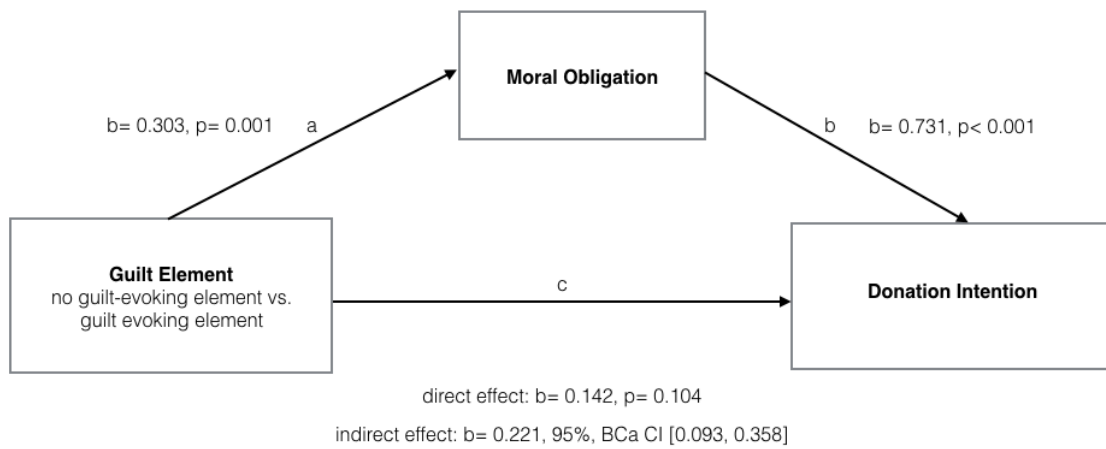
Figure 6: Mediating Effect of Perceived Need on Donation Intention



4.4.4 Mediating effect of moral obligation

Also, guilt appeals containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient were hypothesized to influence recipients' donation intention with the initiative through higher moral obligation. The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of the guilt element on recipients' donation intention through moral obligation, $b = .221$, BCa CI [.093, .358]. As the direct effect is not significant, moral obligation is completely mediating the relationship between guilt element and donation intention (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, hypothesis H2(D) is supported.

Figure 7: Mediating Effect of Moral Obligation on Donation Intention



4.5 Overview of the results of the tested hypotheses

Following the previous discussions of results, an overview of the tested hypotheses and the conclusion based on the statistical analyses performed is provided in table 11.

Table 11: Overview of the results of the tested hypotheses

No	Hypothesis	Result
H1	<i>People's donation intention will be higher if they are confronted with an ad containing an element that is evoking guilt (guilt appeal) than when they are confronted with an ad avoiding feelings of guilt by only focusing on the similarity between the recipient and the donor (similarity appeal).</i>	supported
H2	<i>People's donation intention is mediated by people's attitude towards the advertisement (A), feeling of guilt (B), perceived need (C) and moral obligation (D).</i>	H2A: not supported H2B, H2C, H2D: supported
H3	<i>People's donation intention will be higher if they are confronted with an ad framed in promotion focus than when confronted with an ad framed in prevention focus.</i>	not supported
H4	<i>The effect of a charitable appeals regulatory focus on the potential donor's donation intention is mediated by their attitude towards the advertisement (A).</i>	not supported
H5a	<i>When a charitable appeal contains an element that is evoking guilt (guilt appeal), it leads to higher donation intentions when its message is framed in a prevention focus, than when it is framed in a promotion focus.</i>	not supported
H5b	<i>When a charitable appeal avoids evoking feelings of guilt (similarity appeal), it leads to higher donation intentions when its message is framed in a promotion focus, than when it is framed in a prevention focus.</i>	not supported
H6a	<i>Older adults get more persuaded by a charitable appeal evoking feelings of guilt than younger adults, resulting in higher donation intentions.</i>	not supported
H6b	<i>Older adults get more persuaded by a promotion-framed charitable message, resulting in higher donation intentions, whereas younger adults get more persuaded by a promotion-framed one.</i>	not supported

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of results

5.1.1 *The effects of a guilt element in a similarity appeal*

Only little research has been done to compare traditional charitable appeals that exploit feelings of guilt with more positive appeals that emphasize similarities between donors and potential aid recipients. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the difference between similarity- versus guilt-based appeals by means of a systematically manipulated stimulus material. Particularly, the research aimed at investigating, whether similarity-based appeals can completely avoid elements that are evoking guilt, or if at least a small guilt-evoking element is needed to stimulate peoples' donation intention.

The results of the study demonstrate, that charitable appeals containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient, also referred to as guilt-based appeals, are more effective in generating donation intention than charitable appeals that are only focusing on similarities and avoiding such kind of information. Moreover, the results revealed mediating effects of feeling guilty, perceived need and moral obligation on donation intention.

By pointing out that donation intention is mediated by feelings of guilt, the findings are in line with previous research that claims that people make donations in order to relieve their negative emotions and personal distress when being confronted with needy others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006). Hence, these findings provide support for negative mood repair theories, stating that people prefer to feel good and have the universal goal to repair their negative mood when feeling bad (Buss, 2000). Pro-social behaviour induced by guilt-based appeals is therefore egoistically motivated, because it is directed toward the end-state goal of increasing the helper's own welfare (Batson, 1991). Contrary, similarity-based appeals are likely to induce a more altruistically motivated helping that is directed towards the goal of increasing the other's welfare apart of reducing the helper's negative emotions (ibid.). However, according to the results of the present study, stimulating egoistically motivated helping seems to be more effective than prompting altruistically motivated helping.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that donation intention is mediated by problem awareness and moral obligation. This finding validates past research conducted by De Groot and Steg (2009), stating that promoting prosocial behaviour such as donating money is most successful when first raising awareness for the problem. This is also consistent with research conducted by Bekkers and Wiepking (2001) who proposed, that awareness of need as a "first prerequisite for philanthropy". As positive valenced similarity appeals avoid information regarding the poor state of the recipient, potential donors don't get aware of the aid recipients' problem, which explains the significant differences in perceived need between the two kinds

of appeal. In addition, according to De Groot and Steg (2009), the differences in perceived need affect the perception of moral obligation.

Moreover, the significant differences in moral obligation between the similarity- and the guilt-based approach might also be reasoned in differences in potentials donors' notion of possible consequences when refraining from donating, which are also related to the differences in problem awareness. According to Schwartz (1970), the salience of possible consequences for others plays an important role in activating of a sense of moral obligation to help. Although in none of the manipulations the negative consequences of refraining from donating were directly stated, the charitable appeal containing an element communicating the poor state of the recipient made possible negative consequences indirectly more salient than the charitable appeal avoiding such information. This indicates that similarity-based appeals not only miss raising awareness for the aid recipients' problem but also for possible negative consequences, resulting in lower feelings of moral obligation and consequently lower donation intention. In addition, the study's findings concerning the mediating role of moral obligation validate research conducted by Smith and McSweeney (2007) as well as de Groot and Steg (2009), stating that individuals who feel a strong moral obligation report stronger donating intentions.

However, the results seem to be contradictory to research conducted by Brennan and Binney (2008) as well as Coulter and Pinto (1995). Based on a qualitative interview study, Brennan and Binney (2008) suggested that negative appeals are more likely to invoke inaction rather than pro-social behaviour due to an overuse of negative emotions in charitable appeals. Yet, as mentioned above, the results of the study demonstrated that the negative appeal containing a guilt-evoking element led to a significant higher donation intention than the more positive appeal. Moreover, there were no significant differences in attitude towards the advertisement and the charitable organization between the two conditions.

This seemingly contradictory result might be ascribed to people's two very different systems by which information can be processed, as proposed in several two-system models (i.e. Kahneman, 2011). According to Kahneman's two-system view, two types of cognitive processes can be distinguished, labelled System 1 or intuition and System 2, also referred to as reasoning (Kahneman, 2011). While the operations of System 1 are typically fast, automatic, effortless, associative, implicit i.e. not available to introspection, and often emotionally charged, the operations of System 2 are slower, serial, effortful, more likely to be consciously monitored and deliberately controlled (ibid.). As Brennan and Binney's (2008) study was based on a series of interviews regarding participants attitudes towards appeals in advertising and their self-reported emotional responses to these appeals, their study was limited to the participants explicit attitudes, i.e. their attitudes that people can report and

whose expression can be consciously controlled (Kahneman, 2011). However, according to various dual-process models, people also have implicit attitudes resulting from their intuitive information processing to which they do not initially have conscious access and whose activation cannot be controlled. An explanation for the contradictory results therefore might be, that peoples' explicit elaborated attitude about negative appeals in advertising indeed often is negative, but negative appeals yet trigger also implicit information processing and subconscious mood repair intentions as stated above.

Another explanation for the effective results of the negative valenced appeal might be the relatively moderate level of guilt used in the stimulus material. According to research conducted by Coulter and Pinto (1995), moderate guilt appeals are most effective in finding a balance between gaining consumers' attention and eliciting a palatable level of feelings of guilt, compared to low and high levels of guilt. In their studies they revealed, that especially high levels of guilt that are attacking the recipients' self or his actions are likely to result in anger and people taking offence. Therefore, anger plays a critical role in moderating the relationship between the use of guilt and peoples' attitudes and intentions. The stimulus appeal used in the present study only contained one single sentence to evoke feelings of guilt, factual stating the differences in water access between potential donors and aid recipients, but not attacking the recipients' self or his actions. Hence, it probably did not stimulate anger or motivate people to take offence.

5.1.2 The effects of regulatory focus framing

Previous research showed, that framing a persuasive message in congruence with consumers' regulatory focus enhances persuasion (e.g., Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Florack & Scarabis 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2004). People not only tend to have a chronic predominant orientation focus on which they rely in most situations (Higgins, 2002), but both promotion focus and prevention focus can also be momentarily activated by situational factors (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000). The hypothesis of this study, presuming that charitable appeals framed with a promotion focus would lead to a more favourable attitude towards the advertisement and to higher donation intentions was based on the assumption, that appeals aiming for positive outcomes would prime a promotion focus in the participants, leading to congruence with a promotion message.

However, as the present study did not find a statistically significant effect of regulatory focus framing on the dependent variables, it might be possible that just aiming for a positive outcome itself is not enough to prime a distinct focus in the participants. Therefore, they were very likely to rely on their chronic predominant orientation focus. As it is estimated that approximately half of all people are chronically promotion-focused and half are prevention-

focused (Higgins 1987; Lee, Aaker, and Gardner 2000; Lockwood, Jordan, and Kunda 2002), in both manipulations half of the participants might have experienced a regulatory fit, whereas the other half did not, leading to no significant differences.

Another explanation might be, that individual characteristics of the participants had altered the persuasiveness of regulatory fit. Previous research revealed, that for example people's involvement moderates the effect of regulatory fit on persuasion (Wang & Lee, 2006). The findings of Wang & Lee (2006) suggest that the fit effect is the result of heuristic and not systematic processing, implicating that consumers rely on their regulatory focus especially when allocating scarce cognitive resources. As participants of the present study were asked to carefully review the stimulus material, it is very likely that they were highly involved and systematically processing the charitable appeal. This might be a reason, why the framing of the message had no main effect. However, as in real life conditions people are usually low involved when being confronted with advertising (Krugman, 1965) regulatory focus framing might have a significant effect when used in practice.

5.1.3 The effects of age

As only little is known about age-related differences in responses to charitable appeals using the mentioned techniques, the aim of this study was also to investigate whether the persuasiveness of guilt and regulatory focus framing is moderated by age.

According to the findings of this study, age does neither moderate the relationship between guilt and donation intention nor the relationship between regulatory focus and donation intention. Therefore, the findings suggest that using an element that is communicating the poor state of the recipient within a charitable appeal has the same effect among different age groups. Moreover, also the effect of regulatory focus framing does not seem to be dependent on potential donors age. However, this result cannot be interpreted with absolute certainty, as the manipulation check for regulatory focus framing only turned out to be significant in the younger age group.

5.2. Future research recommendations and implications

5.2.1 Limitations and recommendations for future research

Because of the fact that the study is limited to the used methods and gathered data, important limitations and several recommendations for future research are discussed next.

One key limitation of the study is that the participants knew that they were taking part in an experiment and asked to carefully review the stimulus material. Therefore, it is very likely that they were highly involved and systematically processing the charitable appeal, whereas in real life conditions, advertising and charitable appeals are usually processed with relatively low involvement (Greenwald, & Leavitt, 1984). As involvement is known to moderate the amount and type of information processing elicited by persuasive communication (Petty & Cacioppo, 1983), additional research needs to be conducted under real-life low-involvement conditions.

Moreover, the manipulation check for regulatory focus was only based on one item and solely significant in the younger age group. As, to the knowledge of the author, there are several scales to measure peoples dispositional regulatory focus (Higgins al., 2000, Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002) but no scales to measure peoples regulatory focus primed by a message, further research to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure this separate construct is needed. Once such scale is established, the current study could get replicated aiming for a more reliable and significant manipulation check, especially with respect to age-related differences.

A further limitation is the low reliability of the scale measuring *perceived need*. As its Cronbach alpha value was quite poor and below 0.7, the construct would normally be abandoned from the further analysis and interpretation. However, as it plays such an important role in explaining why guilt appeals are more effective than similarity-appeals and leads to valuable managerial implications, it was kept in the analysis. Nevertheless, it is vital to further investigate the decisive roles of *perceived need* and *problem awareness* using a more reliable scale. In order to improve the scale, the number of items needs to be increased.

Furthermore, the results of the current study are only generalizable to the German population. Especially with respect to regulatory focus, previous research revealed differences in the motivational styles that are predominant in each culture, for example between East-Asian and Western cultures (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Uskul, Sherman, & Fitzgibbon, 2009). Further research could compare the persuasiveness of charitable appeals using regulatory focus framing in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures.

Also, the demographics of the respondents are limiting the study. As reported in the methods section, the randomization test revealed an imbalance in the proportion of males and females in the different age groups. While in the younger age group the majority of subjects were

female (73%), the older age group had a larger proportion of men (61%). Therefore, further research should replicate the study with a more balanced sample. Additionally, also gender-related differences in the persuasiveness of guilt appeals and regulatory focus framing might be interesting to explore. Previous research already revealed major gender differences in pro-social behaviour, indicating for example that guilt appeals induce women's pro-social behaviour but have the opposite effect on men (van Rijn et. al, 2017).

Lastly, the study investigated the persuasiveness of guilt and regulatory focus framing in the context of prosocial behaviour, especially with respect to donation intention. However, it remains unclear whether the findings can be also applied to other persuasion contexts such as health behaviour. Therefore, future research is also needed to examine whether the findings are transferable to other circumstances.

5.2.2 Scientific Implications

The current study provides several scientific implications. First of all, the findings support the results of earlier research concerning the use of guilt in charitable appeal. Moreover, the study extends the corresponding body of research by being the first study comparing the effectiveness of guilt- versus similarity-based appeals by means of a systematically manipulated stimulus material. The results of the study not only present evidence, that guilt appeals are more effective in generating donation intention than similarity-based appeals, but also provide a deeper understanding of why this is the case. Confirming the decisive roles of problem awareness and moral obligation, the study thereby also validates research conducted by Bekkers and Wiepking (2001), de Groot and Steg (2009) and Gorsuch and Ortberg (1983).

Moreover, although the study did not reveal a main effect for regulatory focus framing, the current research implies, that measuring the effectiveness of regulatory focus framing is quite challenging and needs a more solid approach than currently used within this field of research. Furthermore, the findings indicate, that just aiming for a positive outcome when asking for donations within a charitable appeal itself is not enough to prime a distinct regulatory focus in potential donors. Thereby, the findings are challenging research conducted by Lee and Aaker (2004), which postulated that appeals aiming for positive outcomes are significantly more compatible with a promotion focus compared to a prevention focus.

Additionally, the findings also provide implications concerning possible influences of peoples age in the context of charitable advertisement. According to the study's results, the underlying psychological process of people making a donation in order to reduce negative emotions and personal distress elicited by the suffering of others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006) is not moderated by the potential donors' age and occurs across different age groups.

5.2.3 Managerial implications

Next to the scientific implications that are retrieved from the results of the current study, the findings also provide managerial implications. Firstly, the findings suggest, that charitable organizations generate higher donation intentions when using guilt-based charitable appeals that contain an element communicating the poor state of the recipient, instead of using similarity-based appeals only focusing on commonalities and avoiding negative information. The results imply, that making people realize a great difference in their own well-being and fortune compared to others, evokes feelings of guilt and is essential for stimulating problem awareness. Thus, when avoiding information regarding the poor state of the aid recipient and only focussing on similarities between the potential donors and aid recipients, people don't understand that there is a major need for donations. If people are not aware of the problems existence or size, they do not feel moral obligated to donate, which severely compromises their donation intention.

Therefore, the results of the study suggest, that if charitable organizations such as "Menschen für Menschen" want to differentiate themselves by using a more positive approach in their advertising, they still need to emphasize the aid recipients' problem at least in a small element, as this is very important in order to stimulate potential donor's problem awareness, moral obligation and consequently donation intention.

Secondly, the findings not only confirm, that people donate in order to reduce negative emotions and personal distress elicited by the suffering of others (Dillard & Nabi, 2006), but also indicate that these effects occur regardless of the potential donor's age. Therefore, the results of the study suggest, that charitable organizations don't need to address different age groups in different ways when making use of a guilt-based appeal.

This also applies to the use of regulatory focus framing, as no age-related differences on its effect on donation intention have been revealed. However, the findings suggest that it might be advantageous to use both types of message framing when targeting a heterogeneous market.

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