An examination of the persuasive marketing strategies used by charity websites to attract donors

How prevalent are charity websites on applying persuasive marketing strategies towards an increase in donor intentions?

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**Introduction**

- Donation is a form of pro-social behaviour performed for a healthier functioning of a society (Chang, 2014).
- Commercial marketing such as websites have become an increasingly popular method of donation appeal by charity organisations.
- Message variables, Message framing, Guilt, Altruistic and Egoistic Motives are seen most common in charity websites.
- Azjen’s (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour proposes that people’s behaviours are determined by their intentions through the process of 3 component: Attitude towards behaviour, Subjective Norms & Perceived Behavioural Control.

**Aim of Study**

- Examine possible persuasive marketing strategies used by charity websites to attract donors’ attention
- Through Thematic Analysis, interpret website data to observe most common methods used to increase donation intentions.

**Methods**

- Qualitative research method was used as it provides in depth interpretations.
- Use of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) provided flexibility and opportunity to focus on analysing the data in richer detail through the use of relevant themes and subthemes.
- 12 charity websites were used in order to observe possible persuasive marketing strategies initiating attitude change in donor intentions.
- Ethical approval was granted by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee of UWL.

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**Analysis**

**Theme**

- Guilt Regulation
- Involvement in the charity
- Persuasive Emotive Language

**Subtheme**

- Altruistic Helping (Latent)
- Egoistic Helping (Explicit)
- Volunteering (Explicit)
- Fundraising Events (Explicit)
- Donation in memory (Latent)
- Reason to donate (Explicit)

**Quotes**

- “Your donation will help support thousands of people with a learning disability to develop skills, gain confidence, and take part in the activities that really interest them”
- “You can gain so much from becoming a volunteer with us and there are so many ways you can help”
- “Get involved. Your time is one of the most valuable gifts you can give”
- “Feeling adventurous? Do a Skydive in aid of Arthritis Care to raise funds which will help support millions of people around the UK living with arthritis”
- “Tribute funds. A place for remembering your special loved ones.”
- “Your donations help us investigate complaints of cruelty, rescue animals from suffering and neglect, care for them and find them loving new homes.”

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**Discussion**

- Guilt appeals were seen to be the most prevalent and favourable form of persuasive advertising tool used amongst majority of the websites.
- Emerged themes mirrored previous research indicating that charity websites use various forms of message variables and guilt stimuli to increase donation intention.

**Limitations**

- Interpretations may be subject to researcher bias.
- This study does not allow for comparison of marketing strategies across different causes.

**Implications**

- Findings in this research provide supportive attributes for smaller charities intending to gain donations & anticipating to establish a profitable charity organisation.
- The findings in this study proposed that any form of marketing and advertising requires persuasive message channels; encourage & enabling funding from potential consumers increasing higher profit margins.

**Future Recommendations**

- Use of content analysis – allows direct observation of specific images and word concepts within various media e.g. Books, TV, Billboards and Ad’s.
- Focus on a larger scale of data in order to analyse more profound methods of attracting donor intention.

**References**