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That's Disgusting: The Role of Disgust in Nonprofit Marketing Campaigns

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That's Disgusting: The Role of Disgust in Nonprofit
Marketing Campaigns

Tyler N. King

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

That's Disgusting: The Role of Disgust in Nonprofit Marketing Campaigns

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Nonprofit organizations face a unique challenge in communicating their messages in a marketing saturated world. The author of this research studied how nonprofit organizations used fear, disgust and empathy in their marketing campaigns to see if the use of these emotions would have an effect on six different factors. The results of this study showed how the use of distress can be used to amplify the feelings people have when they see images that contain both fear and disgust.

Keywords: fear, disgust, empathy, nonprofits, marketing campaigns

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It's funny. When you first start they tell you that by the time you're done with your thesis, you may not have the kindest feelings towards it. While I have to admit I may not have had the best feelings towards my thesis, I will be forever grateful for the lessons I learned along the way. Most importantly I would like to thank my wife, Jody King, for her unwavering support and understanding as I completed this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Callister for his guidance throughout this whole crazy process. I would also like to thank my parents for their support as well. Thank you to to Prof. Edward Carter and Dr. Tom Robinson for being on my committee.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Breaking through the constant stream of advertising messages in 2016 is not a task for the faint of heart. We now live in an age where businesses have access to their audience 24/7 (Gonzales, 2013). Twenty years ago, marketers only had newspapers, television, and radio as mediums of communicating with their audience. Now people log on as soon as they wake up in the morning to tweet about the previous night's dream. Marketers today have the unique challenge to find new ways to distribute their messages to a crowded marketplace (IAB, 2013).

This new paradigm puts nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in a precarious situation. These organizations do not have the same financial resources as you would find in an Apple or Google. This means NPOs are forced to use a more creative strategy to raise awareness for their causes. One way to do this is by using advertisements that use shocking images in their marketing campaigns to grab their audience's attention. An example of this kind of marketing campaign utilized by a nonprofit is a recent advertisement created by Operation Smile.

In 1982, Dr. Bill and Kathy Magee established Operation Smile after they returned from a cleft palate humanitarian mission in the Philippines. While they were overseas, they noticed a large amount of children who needed their help. With the assistance of Mother Teresa, Operation Smile began work in India's most economically devastated areas. For the last thirty years, Operation Smile has continued to help children across the world live happier and healthier lives (Children's Charity, 2014).

Like many NPOs, Operation Smile is compelled to use shocking advertising images to

rise above the noise of competing advertising campaigns. This is illustrated by Operation Smile's online print advertisements which include a young child with a distinct cleft palate and text inviting the viewer to take action. These ads have helped over 5,000 volunteer medical professionals perform over 222,000 free surgical procedures around the world (Children's Charity, 2014).

Operation Smile's current advertising campaign is not the only example of nonprofit using shocking images in their marketing messages. The United Way based out of Milwaukee has also seen success in their use of shocking images. It used pictures of pregnant boys to raise awareness for Wisconsin's high teen pregnancy rate (Donohue, 2008.) From this campaign, the United Way has been able to work with local schools to help lower teenage birth rates in Milwaukee (Donohue, 2008.)

Montana created the Montana Meth Project Foundation to help educate young people about the dangers of using meth. The State of Montana has bought airtime on television during the most popular times of the week to help reach the largest audience possible. From their efforts of using shocking images that illustrated the gruesome effects of meth use, Montana has been able to reduce the number of teens who use meth by twenty-five percent (Donohue, 2008).

These are just a few examples of how nonprofits have used disturbing images to communicate their goals to the public. The central question this thesis explores is whether shocking images actually enhance advertisement appeals and influence the audience to act.

Why This Research is Important

There are three reasons why the research conducted will be important both in the academic and professional worlds. The first relates to the use of disgust in advertising by nonprofits to engage with their potential and current donors. The emotion of fear is the more

heavily researched emotion in the overall study of persuasive fear appeals with disgust often being a second thought to fear (Morales, Wu & Fitzsimons, 2011). This research will explore new ground by trying to understand how the use of disgust by nonprofit organizations can affect consumers when they see advertisements which use disgust.

The second factor this thesis will study is the effect of using both fear and disgust in advertising campaigns. Previous research has shown how fear may provoke other negative emotions, like disgust (Dabbs & Leventhal, 1966). Dabbs and Leventhal concluded emotions have distinct characteristics, and it was one of their conclusions that fear is not the only emotion that can influence persuasion. Leshner, Bolls and Thomas (2009) also discussed how fear and disgust are different enough emotions to warrant further research. This research will seek to understand if the use of both fear and disgust help people to be more inclined to act on the nonprofit advertisements they see.

The last factor is the emotion of empathy and the role it plays in persuasion. Empathy, as part of persuasion, is an important contemporary research topic (Shen, 2010). Shelton and Rogers found that appeals to fear that persuade us to protect ourselves from outside harm also induce us to protect others (Shelton & Rogers, 2006). This desire to protect others is one of the core definitions of empathy. Empathy has also been shown to help in advertisement persuasion in marketing campaigns (Shelton & Rogers, 2006). By studying empathy and disgust, this research will attempt to define how fear, disgust and empathy can enhance persuasion in fear-appeal-based advertisements sponsored by nonprofit organizations.

Limitations of Previous Research

As stated in the previous section, the combination of disgust and advertising has not been heavily studied (Shimp & Stuart, 2004). Most researchers have studied fear as their primary

emotion as they explore the role emotion plays in persuasion (Morales, Wu, and Fitzsimons, 2011). These studies are also more focused on for-profit organizations rather than nonprofit. The study of disgust and persuasion used by nonprofits is an underdeveloped but important research topic (Nabi, 1999). It has only been in the last several years that academic researchers have begun to explore how disgust aids persuasion when used by nonprofits. It will be their research that will solidify the research questions of this study.

Contributions to the Research

This study will seek to understand how advertisements that use fear and disgust will affect the viewer's ability to act on the messages they see from nonprofits. This study will explore how disgust enhances or limits persuasion in nonprofit advertisements that use disgust-inducing images. This paper will also study the dual relationships between disgust and empathy in nonprofit advertising campaigns. Empathy is a secondary emotion that is activated when people feel disgust and this Empathy creates the cognitive dissonance which causes people to act on the messages they see. This leads to a need to resolve any dissonance they may feel from seeing shocking advertisements from nonprofits. The combination of fear, disgust and empathy should result in more people acting on the nonprofit messages they see, and this will be the key component this thesis will seek to understand.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

While nonprofits have long been a part of our society, it has only been in the last twenty years they have needed to increase their marketing presence to compete in an ever growing and saturated advertising world. Nonprofit organizations can be defined as "organizations that serve some public purpose and therefore enjoy special treatment under the law" (Grobman, 2008 p.

32). Each nonprofit is made up of a board of directors who oversee the NPO's mission statement and disbursement of resources (Grobman, 2008). Marketing in today's world requires money, time, and skill which are three things nonprofits may not have.

What sets them apart financially from a for-profit business is their tax status. A nonprofit organization can be eligible for benefits like exemptions from sales, property and income tax. These advantages allow nonprofits to share more of their income with the cause or people they are trying to serve and allow incentives for people to donate to these organizations (Grobman, 2008). Some popular nonprofits are the ACLU, Greenpeace, American Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders. These nonprofits bring in millions of dollars every year to support their causes. Each has utilized effective marketing campaigns to help raise this money and spread their message.

In 2015 it is becoming even more important for marketing strategies used by charitable organizations to stand out above the communication overload consumers face each day (Losee, 1989). One of the most common ways nonprofits get their message to the masses is through the use of Public Service Announcements or PSAs (All about Public Service Announcements, 2014). These public service announcements are considered "advertising" by normal media outlets and must follow the same broadcast guidelines as paid advertising. Over the years PSAs have been proven effective to communicate messages from nonprofits and research has shown the public reacts positively to them and views PSAs as a legitimate source of information (All About PSA's, 2014). However, there are certain guidelines PSAs must follow and it is important to understand what PSAs are and are not (All About PSA's, 2014).

Public Service Announcements are not free advertising. For PSAs to be effective and bring real value to a nonprofit, they must contain a message that connects with the audience.

They cannot just be for the promotion of the organization's image. PSAs are also not always inexpensive or an easy way to advertise. While the method of distributing PSAs is changing, they can still be categorized into two main groups (All About PSA's, 2014).

The first category is the Public Service Announcement that displays how people who need help stopping an addiction or other destructive behavior like smoking, drinking and doing drugs. The second category motivates the public to donate time or money (All About PSA's, 2014). This type of Public Service Announcements has been used to connect effectively with its intended audience and help the nonprofit raise money for its cause (Fishbein, Hall-Jamieson, Zimmer and Haefen, 2001). Nonprofits may only have a small window in which to connect with their audience which means it is crucial for them to craft the right message that will connect with the most people in the shortest amount of time.

Advertising Wear In and Wear Out

Several variables affect how an audience views a marketing message. The first of these variables is the understanding of advertising Wear In and Wear Out (Pechman & Stewart, 1990). This is a phenomenon that is produced by advertising repetition. An advertisement has successfully worn in an audience when the consumers who are exposed to it have a positive impression of the advertisement. However, the research is still not conclusive about when an advertisement has successfully worn in. Some consumers only need to see the ad once, while others may require multiple viewings. For still other viewers, the ad may never "wear in" (Pechman & Stewart, 1990). An advertisement has successfully worn out with an audience when the advertisement no longer has any significant effect or has a negative impact on the consumer. This may occur after one viewing or fifteen. The concept of Wear In and Wear Out is important to understand for this research because the ads used in the survey must wear in to the highest

number of people with only a single viewing. This is why the researcher is basing the ads used in the survey on established campaigns used by actual nonprofits that have proven to wear in with consumers quickly. Some of these PSAs have been able to avoid wear out by using shocking images that elicit a range of negative emotions to help their cause. This is known as Shockvertising.

Shockvertising and Persuasion

Shockvertising has been defined as “shocking content in an advertisement which significantly increases attention, benefits memory, and positively influences behavior” (Dahl, Frankeberger & Manchanda, 2003 p. 268). An example of a nonprofit using “Shockvertising in their marketing campaigns is found in graphic health ads (Copper, 1996). PSAs of a healthy lung laid alongside a smoker’s dying and blackened lung, shock the viewer into action. Dr. Ann Copper calls this method of advertising Yobbo advertising. Yobbo advertising is “roughly translated as the desire to shock the audiences into taking notice by whatever means possible” (Copper, 1996, p5). The uses of fear and disgust shock people into changing their behavior which can help nonprofits achieve their goal of getting their audience to act on their objectives (Dahl, Frankeberger & Manchanda, 2003). Shockvertising has been proven effective in recent academic studies because it allows the organizations that use this tactic to break through the noise of the modern commercial environment (Copper, 1996). In 2003, Dahl, Frankeberger, and Manchanda found that shocking content in HIV/AIDS awareness prevention advertisements significantly increased attention, helped audiences remember and also positively encouraged people to change their behavior to avoid HIV/AIDS.

Recent research shows a difference between for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations when they use Shockvertising (Sabri, Ouidade & Obermiller, 2012). People who

viewed shockvertising by for-profit companies reacted negatively to the ads. These shocking advertisements created reduced purchase intention towards the company (Sabri, Ouidade & Obermiller, 2012). Viewers did not react positively to the for-profit companies because they viewed the shocking advertisements as a cheap way to get their attention. However, the researchers did find that when nonprofits used shockvertising it succeeded in getting the audience to side with their cause (Sabri, Ouidade and Obermiller, 2012). By using shocking images, marketers have been able to connect with audiences they are trying to persuade.

The research has shown people are more willing to engage with nonprofits that use appeals like fear and disgust (Parry, Jones, Stern, & Robinson, 2013). In their research Parry et al discovered that nonprofits who used fear-inducing images were effective in influencing people to contribute to their cause. However, they noted that in some areas, people did not relate to the ads no matter how shocking. These often included religious taboos or morally offensive images. Their findings illuminate how it is important to strike the right tone between shocking and being offensive. People do respond to shocking images, but they must be the right fit.

Individuals who view shocking advertisements come to the viewing experience with a unique set of values and experiences (Parry, 2013). It is from these experiences that people filter out what they want to learn from the shocking images. If a person has had a loved one affected by drunk driving, shocking images based on this experience will affect this person more than someone who does not share the same life experience. When a nonprofit organization uses disgust or fear to help people support their cause, the audience can connect with the message because there is something in their life or environment that allows them to understand the message (Parry, 2013). The creation of an emotional connection is the desired effect of advertisers and, while fear has been studied intently over the last decade, the emotion of disgust

has not. Even though fear and disgust are both negative emotions, the brain processes these emotions differently. This process can be used by nonprofits to enhance their persuasive messages (Parry, 2013).

Fear Appeals and Persuasion

To understand the role disgust plays in persuasion, we must understand the notion of fear appeals. Witte (1992) described fear appeals as “persuasive messages designed to frighten people into doing what the message recommends, by depicting the terrible consequences of noncompliance.” (p. 355) Fear appeals threaten their audience with adverse effects if they continue or do not stop a certain behavior (Witte, 1992). The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) anti-texting campaign is an example of fear-appeals-based advertisement by a nonprofit.

The NHTSA is in the midst of educating drivers about the seriousness of texting while driving. A series of ads was created to elicit fear in today’s drivers (Help Shape Your Teen, 2011). In the first ad, the audience can see a bloody hand lying on the asphalt next to the tire of a car. The caption reads, “I can text and drive just fine.” The second showed a child’s tricycle with a pair of small shoes next to it. The ad didn’t show an injured child, but the caption explains the mortifying scene, “I text in my neighborhood because there’s nothing going on and no traffic” (Help Shape Your Teen, 2011 p. 1).

The fear in these advertisements is based on what could happen if they continue to text and drive. The negative consequence of the fear is informing the viewer they could either kill themselves or someone else. The emotion of fear in these ads has proven to be a powerful deterrent to texting while driving. Research has shown ads based on fear can be effective when they connect with the audience (Dahl, 2003). Along with the emotion of fear in these appeals,

Dabbs and Leventhal found how other emotions besides fear can be evoked by these types of advertisements.

In a 1996 study, researchers looked at fear-based public service announcements and found 97 percent of the people surveyed responded that fear-based ads created more than just fear (Dillard, 1996). The emotions of anger and disgust were evoked by the fear-based advertisements and Dillard was able to show these emotions enhanced persuasion with PSAs. More recently Passyn and Sujana (2006) discovered how along with fear, emotions like regret and guilt which are characterized as being self-accountable, enhanced the persuasion of the advertisements used in their research.

Recent research into health-based PSAs and their use of fear appeals have shed new light on this topic. In health PSAs, fear appeals are generally used to portray some kind of threat which shows the danger of performing some kind of harmful act to the body (Leshner et al, 2009). These events are always considered to be negative and are linked to specific consequences (Stephenson & Witte, 2001). For fear appeals to be truly effective, they must contain material which is effective in enhancing both the desired response and self-efficacy (Dillard & Anderson, 2004; Witte 1992). From these findings, the assumption can be made that fear appeals can be applied to PSAs and through the protection motivation theory we can begin to understand why this is the case.

Protection Motivation Theory

These conclusions about fear appeals and persuasion lay the foundation to use the protection motivation theory to inform this research thesis. The protection motivation theory (PMT) was first developed in the late 1970s by Dr. R. W. Rogers to explain fear appeals (Plotnikoff & Trinh, 2010). PMT was originally based on the research of Dr. Richard Lazarus

who dedicated his academic study to understand how people behave and cope during tense and stressful situations (Lazarus, 1991). Later in the early 1980s Dr. Rogers was able to extend this theory of persuasion to communications. This theory predicts that when a person feels threatened by an imminent danger (this knowledge may come from mass media fear appeals) the basic human response is to attempt to protect oneself (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There are four parts that make up the framework of this theory: the first is perceived severity of a threatening event; second is the perceived probability of the vulnerability; third is the efficacy of the recommended preventive behavior; and finally, fourth is the perceived self-efficacy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

When a person is exposed to a threat, their first reaction is to assess the severity of the situation. Our brains evaluate the seriousness of the situation and if it is severe enough, our brains allow us to cope with the danger (Lazarus, 1991). This coping behavior manifests itself in the actions one takes to resolve the danger. This involves both efficacy and self-efficacy. Efficacy is the way a person believes going through with specific recommendations can remove the threat. Self-efficacy is the belief in the ability to fulfill the recommendations successfully which will cause the danger to cease to be a problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

In their 1981 study, Shelton and Rogers proved the protection motivation theory can be used to explain how empathy could be used in persuasive communication messages. They argued the focus of a danger can shift from you to someone else. As a person experiences danger, the need to protect another individual can be activated along with fear or disgust. Shelton and Rogers noted: “The intensity of this empathic arousal is determined by the extent to which respondents are motivated to focus their attention on (i.e., to take the perspective of) the plight of the victim.” (p. 366) Shelton and Rogers used the theory of protection motivation to lay the foundation of

future research based on empathy in persuasion.

Leshner et al. (2009) were able to use the protection motivation theory to explain the effectiveness of anti-smoking messages. They discovered when people viewed anti-smoking PSAs the subjects responded to the negative images seen in the messages. Their research explained how disgust toward enhanced messages increased persuasion. From their research, they concluded that if both the threat and efficacy judgments were high, the subject's protection motivation is also heightened. From this emotional state they were then more likely to abide by the recommendation made to them in the advertisement. Even though protection motivation theory has been proven in fear-appeal-based messages, there is an additional model that can be used to understand how disgust influences persuasion.

Extended Parallel Process Model

EPPM is defined as “how people can be motivated to control either the danger presented (danger control) or their fear related to the danger (fear control) in response to a fear appeal message” (Leshner, 2009 p. 448). EPPM enhances PMT by focusing on response efficacy and self-efficacy to determine if the participant is more likely to engage in a danger control or fear control process. Like PMT, EPPM states that when response and self-efficacy are high, people adopt the messages seen in the advertisements. EPPM explains that when response and self-efficacy are low, people are more likely to adopt the fear control process. Instead of accepting the messages they see, their behavior would take “the form of strong defensive processing of message content and include behaviors such as message avoidance in order to control their fear of the threat rather than taking action to avoid the presented danger” (Leshner, 2009 p. 449). The protection motivation theory and extended parallel process model will provide the theoretical foundation for this research, but there is a third model that can give additional clarity to the

research.

The Limited Capacity Model

In the early 2000s Andrew Lang proposed a theoretical model to give improved insight on how fear and disgust are processed in persuasive messages (Lang, 2000). The LCMP model was recently updated by Lang to better reflect the importance of emotion and motivation to determine how people react and remember messages (Lang, 2006). From this updated version Lang was able to design effective cancer communication messages which were proven to increase the motivation of the action the message prescribed.

The key point of LCMP is that humans only have “limited amount of cognitive resources to allocate to the mental tasks involved in perceiving, comprehending, and remembering information they encounter in their environment” (Lang, 2006 p.449). When people are participating in a mental task, the way they process the information they see can be defined into three areas: encoding, storage, and retrieval. Our brains simultaneously process all of these tasks as they see a media message. In the most up-to-date understanding of LCMP, researchers have been able to show how media messages can activate the two main motivational subsystems in our brains that provide the foundation for human emotion, the appetitive and the aversive (Berntson & Cacioppo, 2000).

In previous research about emotion, appetitive and aversive activation have been viewed as being on opposite sides of the emotional spectrum. Appetitive and aversive activation have been found to significantly affect processing of media messages (Lang, Shin, and Lee, 2005). One of the main objectives of the appetitive system is to absorb information. On the opposite side, the aversive system wants to protect us. When we experience low to moderate arousal, the appetitive system kicks in. This is known as the positivity effect. The positivity effect encourages

us to explore our environment (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999). As media messages become more negative and arousing, our aversion activation is increased. These feelings are stronger and occur faster than their appetitive counterparts; this is known as negativity bias (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999). By understanding how we process the appetitive and aversive message, researchers have been able to better understand how people react to negative images.

So now the question is how can LCMP be applied to fear and disgust media messages? In their 2009 study Leshner, Bolls and Thomas were able to use LCMP to discover how the use of negative and arousing content in televised anti-tobacco messages can increase aversive activation with the audience. By increasing the aversive activation, the images would be able to connect with more people and persuade the viewers to complete what the advertisement suggests. One of the main emotions used in persuasive messages is disgust. While this emotion has been the least studied of negative emotions, it can still be effective in helping people remember and act on the persuasive messages they see.

What is Disgust?

Previous research has defined disgust as “a revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive substance” (Rozin & Fallon, 1987, p. 23; see also Angyal, 1941). Even though this definition of disgust associates it with foods that are ingested, Rozin and Fallon observed it can be applied to non-food substances (Rozin & Fallon, 1987). Their definition of disgust implies “that feelings of disgust are often related to some sort of physical contact between the disgusting object and the human body.” (Rozin & Fallon, 1987, p. 23) Disgust has “consistently been linked to the ideas of revulsion, deviation, and physical contact” (Rozin & Fallon, 1987, p. 23). When a person sees a cockroach crawl across his or her dinner, the emotion

of disgust is created. When that person sees a cockroach outside of a food situation their brain associates the two, and disgust is felt (Rozin & Haidt, 2009; Paul Rozin et al., 1997).

Understanding disgust is important for this study because a clear definition must be used so that the results can be applied to more than just one subject group.

This definition can be used to understand how the feeling of disgust affects people in both physical and emotional ways. Researchers have found the body physically reacts to disgusting images by closing the nostrils and opening the mouth (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Izard, 1971). The disgusting images also create a desire to get away from the object, which causes the viewer to feel distressed. And finally in some instances, feelings of nausea and revulsion can be elicited (Ekman & Friesen, 1975; Izard, 1971).

Initial studies have divided disgust into two distinct categories. The first is the type of disgust which is animal in nature or origin (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). An example of this type of disgust is the way certain people react to spiders or rats. The second category of disgust can be classified as disgust based on feces and bodily products whether human or animal parts (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). Current academic research has also categorized disgust into seven distinct groups: food, animals, body products, sex, body envelope violations, death, and hygiene (Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley, 1993, 2000). The images used in the data collection of this study will use the categories of body envelope violation and hygiene to understand how people react to disgusting images.

In their 2009 study, Tybur, Lieberman and Griskevicius also separated disgust into two distinct emotional domains. The first domain explains how disgust came from a primal need to protect oneself and others (Tybur, Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009). This is known as the adaptionist disgust theory. This theory proposes how uneasy feelings occur as the food rejection

response is applied to stimuli relating to rejecting unwanted microbes, putting off rejected sexual partners and avoiding “norm-violating individuals” (Tybur, Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009, p. 3). Pathogen disgust is closely related to our early need to keep our food safe from containments. This classification includes ill feelings towards microorganisms, animals, and insects (Curtis, Aunger, & Rabie, 2004). This domain also can explain why certain groups of people are associated with potential carriers of harmful microbes (Navarrete & Fessler, 2006). Disgust is not the only negative emotion this study researched. Fear is also a powerful emotion that can affect the way people view and internalize nonprofit marketing messages.

Fear versus Disgust

In the last twenty years, researchers have been able to show how disgust correlates significantly with the emotion of fear (Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin, 1994). Disgust is a subset emotion of fear and the research suggests that unlike other emotional combinations, disgust and fear can be activated together based on the same stimuli (Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin, 1994). Even though these two emotions can be felt in the same situation, it is important to understand the relationship these two emotions have with each other as well as their differences on how they influence persuasion.

Unlike fear, disgust is based on a significant sense of certainty (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). A person who feels disgust knows exactly what the problem is and they know how to deal with it. The person experiencing the disgust exhibits confidence that they will have the ability to overcome the disgust (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Fear, on the other hand, is based on uncertainty (Lazarus, 1991). People experiencing fear do not know what to do and they lack the confidence to resolve their fearful situation (Lazarus, 1991). Even though both fear and disgust have distancing behaviors as ways to deal with the negative emotions, fear avoidance is a multistep

process and disgust is an immediate process.

Fear avoidance requires two steps to process and then resolve the offending emotion (e.g., Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert 1997; Lazarus, 1991; Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). If the fear is evaluated to be from a distance or there is some kind of barrier protecting the person, the fear avoidance is negated. If there is not a barrier, then the person experiencing the fear can “freeze” (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1997).

Disgust avoidance is directly opposite of fear. Disgust makes the person experiencing the emotion immediately act to avoid the disgusting offense (Lazarus, 1991). As soon as people are disgusted, the brain implements distancing behaviors (Rosen & Schulkin, 1998). This immediate distancing is what makes using disgust so effective in advertising. The brain’s tendency to quickly resolve the disgusting stimuli allows advertisers to get people to act (Lazarus, 1991).

The ability to use disgust to enhance persuasion can be directly seen in the work done by Morales, Wu and Fitzsimons (2012). These researchers were able to confirm two of their hypotheses about the role disgust played in persuasion. The first hypothesis they confirmed was the participants who experienced disgust showed increased persuasion and compliance compared to the students who only viewed the fear-based ad or neutral based condition (Morales, Wu & Fitzsimons, 2012). The second hypothesis they were able to confirm was conclusive with their preliminary research:

“Participants who were exposed to the co-activation of disgust and fear showed higher levels of persuasion, compliance, and purchase intentions than those who were exposed to fear only, and these results were again mediated by likelihood to act quickly in response to the advertisement” (Morales, Wu & Fitzsimons, 2012, p. 5).

The work of Morales, Wu and Fitzsimons proved that the combination of both fear and

disgust has been shown to increase persuasion but there is another emotion that has not been as heavily studied that could also help nonprofits with their persuasive messages. The feeling of empathy is an important emotion to understand when it comes to persuasive-based advertising messages because it is a byproduct of both fear and disgust.

Empathy and Persuasion

A simple definition of empathy is “accurately perceiving the internal frame of reference of another” (Gold & Rogers, 1995, p. 79). Hoffman (1990) described how empathy is essential to moral development and justice and is a catalyst for cohesion and unity. This broad definition of empathy is made up of both affective and cognitive components (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990).

Affective empathy is the emotion we feel in response to another person’s emotions. This can include “mirroring” another person’s feelings, or experiencing feelings of discomfort when we pick up on another’s fear and anxiety (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Cognitive empathy, which can also be referred to as perspective-taking, can be defined as the ability to understand people’s emotions in social situations (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). This is the definition this thesis will use to understand how people relate to the disgust-inducing images they see in the nonprofit media messages.

One of the key contributions this research will make to this area of academic study is to examine the relationship empathy plays in inciting people to act on the images they see in nonprofit advertisements. The work of Shelton and Rogers from their 2006 study established the connection of how fear appeals (like disgust) can be used with empathy to successfully enhance persuasion with nonprofit media messages.

In 2006, Shelton and Rogers examined how elements of fear appeals can entice a person

to protect themselves from a threat or dangerous situation as well as persuade people to protect others. To prove this hypothesis, they used two videos relating to a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to helping save endangered whales in the South Pacific. The first video they showed to their research participants was based on disgust. This short video segment displayed horrifying and disgusting scenes of whales being captured and killed. The researchers also showed a film that displayed a pro-environmental organization saving whales from these same whalers. Their results showed both of these films strengthened viewers' desire to help the whales and the organization that was trying to protect them.

From these studies, Shelton and Rogers were able to infer that disgust appeals can enhance a person's desire to protect people, other animals and ourselves. The researchers identified three implications about the role of fear appeals, empathy and persuasion. The first implication is how empathy-arousing appeals can be applied to mass media campaigns. This implication is important because it shows how empathy can be created by nonprofits in their advertising campaigns. The second concept of response-efficacy in persuasive appeals can be created from direct, individual action to an activity requiring the mediation of social organizations. Third, nonprofit campaigns can be effective when the potential beneficiaries are not the ones shown, but who "symbolize the many others in the same plight" (Shelton & Rogers, 2006 p. 217). Shelton and Rogers were not the only people who have studied the connection between persuasion and empathy in enhancing persuasion.

In Dr. Shen's 2010 paper she studied how empathy was a process where the perception of a person's emotional state immediately activates the viewer's vicarious experience of their state. Empathy was then categorized into three distinct groups: affective, cognitive and associative. The process by which a viewer feels empathy in advertising was later studied in Dr. Shen's next

paper about message-induced empathy (Shen, 2010).

In this article, Shen defined message-induced empathy as “a perception–action process that consists of affective, cognitive, and associative components” (Shen, 2010. p. 397). Shen used 20 PSAs about the risks of smoking and drunk driving and tested the effect relating to empathy on 289 participants. Shen’s research concluded that empathy “has a unique contribution to predicting persuasion outcomes above and beyond the individual's affective and cognitive responses to the messages” (Shen, 2010. p. 397).

In their 2009 study, Campbell and Babrow studied how empathy is used in health-related messages using their Empathy Response Scale (ERS). Their study of HIV/AIDS PSAs supported their use of the ERS scale to assess whether health ads that included empathy were effective in changing public opinion. These researchers have shown empathy can be used to increase persuasion in fear-appeal-based advertising in nonprofits. This research will use fear, disgust and empathy to understand if the combination of all three is the most effective way to persuade people to act on a media message from a nonprofit. As this paper has pointed out, previous research has been able to show how fear-appeal-based ads, which use disgust, are able to improve persuasion in advertising campaigns. It is also important to understand specific advertising factors that can influence persuasion.

Importance of the Cause

In 1996, Mount studied several factors about what leads people to donate to a cause. She wanted to understand what made people give their time and money to nonprofits. Mount was able to identify several factors that increased people’s desire to donate, like sympathy, the joy of being “asked” and obligation. The factor that will help inform this thesis is the idea of believing in the cause. Mount discovered that the more a person believes in a cause, the more willing he or

she will be to donate to it. This understanding of the importance of a nonprofit's cause is significant for this research, because if an advertisement is just disgusting and the use of disgust doesn't enhance the importance of the cause, then disgust is not an effective way to earn consumers' trust. The public needs to be able to understand the importance of the cause and still like the brand even if it does use disgust in its persuasion campaigns.

Brand and Advertising Attitude

Brand attitude describes how consumers feel toward a specific brand (Park et al, 2010). This attitude describes what people think about the product or service, whether the product being advertised is a need or how much it is wanted by the consumer (Park et al, 2010). Park studied brand attitude and its effect on consumer purchasing (2010). This study discovered that people who had a more positive attitude towards a brand were more willing to "forsake personal resources to maintain an ongoing relationship with that brand" (Park, 2010 p. 14). The notion of brand attitude is important for this research because it is essential to test advertisements that everyday consumers can have a positive reaction. By using ads that create a positive brand attitude toward nonprofits, the researcher can see if using disgust can lead to higher level of liking the brand compared to advertisements that only use fear.

Advertising attitude refers to "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (Lutz, 1985 p. 17). Mitchell and Olsen (1981) found advertising attitude has several key effects on consumer purchasing. One of these factors is how advertising attitude acts as a moderator as it influences brand attitude and intention to purchase (Mitchell & Olsen, 1981). Similar to brand attitude, advertising attitude is essential to this study because it is important to understand how the people surveyed will react to the print advertisement they see.

These advertisements must create a positive attitude between the consumer and the nonprofit in order to gather accurate results. By using ads that will create positive advertising and brand attitude, the researcher will be able to understand what makes consumers want to donate to nonprofits. Donations to nonprofits don't always come in monetary form. Many nonprofit organizations need people's time and energy to help their cause.

Why Do People Volunteer?

In the United States, half of the population participates in some kind of volunteerism every year (Clary & Snyder, 1999). From their research Clary and Snyder were able to identify six reasons why people donate their time to a cause they care about. These reasons are based on values, understanding, enhancement, career, social and protective.

People volunteer to express or act on important values in their life. They feel it's important to help others, which leads to a more well-rounded life. Volunteers seek to understand the world and develop new skills they wouldn't normally use. Volunteerism also acts as an enhancement to their overall well-being. People who donate their time also do it for social interaction and to strengthen relationships with their family and friends. Finally, people also volunteer as a form of protection. It helps reduce negative feelings, like guilt they may feel when they see a nonprofit helping a cause they can relate to (Clary & Snyder, 1999).

It is this last factor that this thesis will address as to why people donate to a cause. Since people volunteer their time out of guilt one can also assume they donate because they feel some kind of empathic connection to the cause. This connection to help even out of guilt still helps the nonprofit achieve its goal. The question now is if you add disgust into the equation, do people still like the advertisement enough to give their time and money?

Advertisement Likeability

Advertisement likeability simply describes how consumers either like an advertisement or don't (Kennedy, Sharp & Rungie, 1999). The importance of consumers liking an advertisement has been shown to be essential in creating an ad that people can remember and like (Hollis, 1995). Likeability has also been shown to be one of the best predictors of sales (Haley, 1991). However, it is important to consider that likeability and its advertising effectiveness have been a hotly debated issue (Jones, 1996). Even with this debate, likeability is crucial for the success of a marketing campaign (Kennedy, Sharp & Rungie, 1999). It is possible that use of disgust in nonprofits advertisement campaigns may reduce likeability which would negatively affect the marketing campaign of a nonprofit who uses disgust. This study will seek to understand if the use of disgust will have a positive or negative effect on the likeability of the advertisement.

Trustworthiness of the Message

Trustworthiness is a term used to measure the level of reliability of a message source for correct information (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). Mills and Jellison (1967) described trustworthiness as, "the intention of the source to provide correct information" (1967, p. 3). There has been extensive research done on trustworthiness of endorser and celebrity trustworthiness but not as much from a corporate or nonprofit entity (Lemanski & Lee, 2012). However, celebrity and corporate endorsements of a message have been seen as trustworthy by the general public and have led to increased persuasion in marketing messages (Petty & Wegener, 1998).

Trustworthiness is important for this study because as people see nonprofit messages based on fear and disgust, the level of trust they have in a nonprofit could affect how they process the message seen in the advertisement. This trust in the nonprofit could lead them to be

more or less inclined to donate their time or money to the cause.

Inclination to Donate

What makes a person donate has been extensively researched over the last ten years (Aaker & Akutsu, 2009). Giving has been shown to have a positive effect on the lives of those who give (Harbaugh, Mayr & Burghart, 2007). It has been found that those who give time or money have an overall better quality of life than those who do not donate (Thoits & Hewett, 2001). There are several factors that influence one's willingness to give to a nonprofit. In 1998 Strahilevitz and Myers found how guilt played a role in consumer giving. Along with guilt, sympathy and empathy have also found to increase giving (Small, Lowenstein, & Slovic, 2007). For this study, traits like sympathy and empathy will be studied to understand if they increase the persuasion effects of nonprofit ads that use disgust. This has been shown to be effective in ads that don't use disgust which will serve as a starting point for this thesis (Finkelstein, 2008).

Cognitive Dissonance and Giving

People donate for a variety of reasons, and in order to understand why, the theory of cognitive dissonance will be used. Cognitive dissonance is a communication theory explained by Leon Festinger. This theory describes when inconsistency is experienced, people feel uncomfortable. They are then motivated to overcome these feelings of uneasiness and avoid an increase in the level of discomfort they feel (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance has been applied to nonprofit giving in a study conducted by Waters (2008). Waters studied how people donated to two American Red Cross chapters after the devastating tsunami that Indonesia in 2004. He found that people who experienced cognitive dissonance were more likely to donate to the Red Cross than those who did not. Waters also reported how people who did donate were

able to resolve their dissonance by giving to the Red Cross. It's important to understand cognitive dissonance for this thesis because people who see the fear-appeals-based advertisements will experience some level of dissonance. It is this feeling of uneasiness that could make them more inclined to donate their time and money. This question leads into one of the six research questions this thesis will study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the role of fear appeals that use disgust in communication persuasion appeals. The researcher has outlined six research questions this thesis will seek to explore and understand.

RQ1: Will fear appeal-based advertisements that use disgust lead to greater perceptions of the importance of the nonprofit's cause compared to ads that only use fear?

RQ2: Will fear-appeal based advertisements that use disgust impact liking evaluations regarding the nonprofit's cause compared to ads that only use fear?

RQ3: Will fear appeal ads that use disgust generate higher levels of reported empathy toward the victim compared to ads that only use fear?

RQ4: Will fear-appeal based advertisements that use disgust lead to greater intention to donate to the nonprofit's cause compared to ads that only use fear?

RQ5: Will fear-appeal based advertisements that use disgust influence likelihood of volunteering for the nonprofit's cause compared to ads that only use fear?

RQ6: Will fear-appeal based advertisements that use disgust influence the feelings of trustworthiness towards the nonprofit compared to ads that only use fear?

There are still many questions to be answered about the role disgust, fear and empathy play in persuasion. Previous studies have thoroughly researched how fear appeals can lead to

increase retention and persuasion with shocking advertisements. For this thesis, the researcher is interested in learning more about how the presence or absence of disgusting images influence attitudes and perceptions of a cause and intentions to volunteer and donate.

Chapter Three

Method

The Independent variable is the presence of disgust captured in images from fear appeals. The fear appeal ads will vary in their use of disgust. The dependent variables will be importance of a cause, liking of a cause, empathy, and intentions to volunteer and donate to a cause.

Definition of Disgust

In order to test disgust in nonprofit advertisements, it is important to understand the operational definitions of these emotions. The conceptual definition this research will use to define disgust will be based on the work of Morales, Wu, and Fitzsimons (2012). They describe that disgust has been linked to “the ideas of revulsion, deviation, and physical contact” (pg. 3). This definition of disgust will inform the creation of the ads used in the survey.

Definition of Empathy

As previously stated in this study cognitive empathy, which can also be referred to as perspective-taking, can be defined as the ability to understand people’s emotions in social situations (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). This is the definition this thesis will use to understand how people relate to the disgust-inducing images they see from the nonprofit advertisements.

Questionnaire

The data for this study was collected by an online survey based on the research done by Weeks (2014). In this online survey, participants will only see one of the two ads. One based on

fear and the other based on fear and disgust. Each person who takes the survey will be selected at random to either see the image based on fear or the picture based on fear and disgust.

Participants

Participants for this study will be from a collection of people recruited from the researcher's social media audience. The researcher will not use any subject who is under the age of 18 in order to sustain current survey rules established. For the pretest, 50 subjects will be selected to assure the manipulation of fear and disgust versus fear-only is distinct in the levels of disgust generated. For the actual research, the survey will be sent to 100 subjects through Qualtrics, an online survey gathering platform.

Disgust

Disgust will be measured by asking volunteers how they felt after they viewed the advertisement with the disgust element. The disgusting element will be a glass of muddy drinking water the child will be holding. The respondents will then be able to discuss their reaction to the advertisement by using a seven-point Likert scale. The pretest will make sure that people will be able to identify the disgusting element.

Empathy

Empathy will be measured using the Empathy Quotient (EQ) based on the work of Lawrence, Shaw, Baker, Bahron-Cohen and David (2004). The Empathy Quotient is a proven method for surveying how people evaluate the emotion of empathy in persuasion communication messages. To understand empathy in this study, the people who view the images will be asked about distress, the feeling of wanting to help, being able to imagine someone you love in a similar situation, and the ability to feel compassion for the child seen in the image.

Importance of the Cause

To measure the importance to the cause, the work of Rizi, Nazish, and Gull will be used. In their 2012 study, these researchers asked whether or not the importance of the cause-effect consumers buying behavior with nonprofits and other cause marketing related campaigns. To test their hypotheses, they used questions based on a Likert scale, which contained responses from very much agreement to very much disagreement. These questions were graded on a 1-7 scale. This survey method provided the result that the importance of the cause has a positive correlation to giving. The questions for this Likert scale will be based on seven areas to measure the importance of the nonprofit's cause.

Liking the Cause

The attitude of liking the nonprofit will be evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale about how participants like the brand after viewing the image (Phelps & Thorson, 1991).

Intention to Volunteer

To measure whether fear appeals-based ads, which use disgust, enhance the likelihood of people to volunteer for nonprofits, the work of Clary and Snyder will be used (1999). Survey questions will be created on a Likert scale based on their seven factors which explain why people donate their time or money. An example of this type of question would be, "After viewing this image how inclined are you to volunteer to work with Clean Water for Africa?"

Intention to Donate

In 2006, Bennett studied the factors that examined why people donate to nonprofits. In this study, Bennett discovered the factors that lead to a greater inclination to donate. From his research, this study will measure if fear appeals based ads that use disgust improve people's willingness to donate to nonprofits. An example of this type of question would be, "After viewing this image how inclined are you to donate to Clean Water for Africa?"

Trustworthiness of the Message

The trustworthiness of the nonprofit will be measured using a seven-point Likert scale. This scale will be based on the work done by Petty and Wegener (1998).

Manipulation

In order to make sure the advertisements used in this study show examples of both fear and disgust that can be differentiated by the audience, a pretest was conducted. This pretest will be given to 100 subjects. Each of these subjects will be randomly selected to either see an ad based on fear alone or an advertisement based on fear and disgust. The goal of this pretest is to make sure each advertisement exhibits the emotions it is testing and to make sure the degree in emotions is significant enough that the participants will be able to know if the ad is about fear or disgust.

The actual test that will be used in this thesis to gather data about disgust and empathy will be a between-subject's design test. This type of test assigns subjects to either the treatment condition (fear+disgust) or the control condition (fear only). In this study, there will be two types of advertisements the participants will answer questions about. The first ad will be only based on fear of a child drinking dirty water with a written caption that explains how many children die each year from drinking dirty water. This advertisement will not contain an image of a glass of dirty water. The second will use a combination of disgust and fear that shows the same young child with the same written caption but it will add an element which will elicit disgust in the people who view the ad. This element will be a glass of dirty water next to the child. This ad will be based on other ads that are used by clean water nonprofits. These media messages will be randomly assigned to make sure an accurate representation of data is collected. Once the participant views these ads, they will then answer a series of questions about disgust, the

importance of the cause, empathy, advertisement liking, the inclination to volunteer and inclination to donate. Based upon the research questions previously stated in this section the researcher hopes to be able to contribute valuable insights into the discussion of the roles disgust, empathy and persuasion play in nonprofit advertising campaigns.

Chapter Four

Results

Pretest Calibration

In order to make sure the fear and disgust image had a higher rating of disgust than the fear only image, a pretest was conducted on May 16, 2016. Fifty responses were collected using a Qualtrics survey that was distributed through the researcher's social media profiles. All of the respondents were over the age of 18 and were native to the United States. The survey was randomized so each respondent received both the advertisement based on fear alone or fear and disgust combined. (See Appendix C and D for the images the respondents viewed).

The total number of respondents who saw the fear-based advertisement numbered twenty-five, and twenty-five people saw the fear-and-disgust based image. The people surveyed were predominately female (73%) and between the age of 25-44. Eight-nine percent of respondents were married and 52% of them had a four-year degree.

Each subject saw either the fear or the fear + disgust image and rated the image on the degree to which it elicited feelings and fear and disgust using two seven-point Likert scales. The results of the pre-test confirmed the distinctions between the two conditions. The means in both conditions revealed that subjects viewed the image as fearful (fear condition = 2.1; disgust condition (2.0), with "1" being strongly agree and "7" being strongly disagree). Next, I examined the degree to which the two conditions differed on disgust. The fear + disgust image garnered a significantly higher level of disgust ($M = 1.7$) than the fear only ($M = 3.1$).

Survey Results

The data collection survey was distributed from May 18, 2016 to May 19, 2016. One hundred people responded to the survey. Fifty people viewed the advertisement based on fear and fifty people viewed the advertisement based on fear and disgust.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

For each of the six research questions, a series of independent variable T-test evaluations were conducted. SPSS was used to determine if there was any statistical significance for which the researcher could support the six research questions used in this study. In this section, the researcher will describe the results from each of the T-tests. Each group of respondents was assigned to the fear or the fear + disgust condition. The fear group saw the image of an African boy holding a cup of water by a muddy river. The contents of the cup are not visible. The caption reads, "1800 children die every day from unsafe water." For the fear + disgust condition, subjects saw the same ad as fear condition, except that the content of the cup are clearly visible, and the drinking water is a thick, muddy brown. Subjects in both conditions were then requested to answer all questions relating to the dependent variables previously mentioned.

Research Question 1: Importance of the Cause

In this RQ, I explored whether fear appeal-based advertisements that use disgust lead to greater perceptions of the importance of the nonprofit's cause compared to ads that only use fear. Results showed no significance between the two conditions. The mean for the fear-based group was 3.4 (Moderately Important) and for the Fear and Disgust based group it was 3.2 (Moderately Important) where "1" was "dislike a great deal" and "7" was "like a great deal".

Research Question 2: Liking of the Cause

For this RQ I examined whether fear appeal-based advertisements that use disgust lead to

greater perceptions of liking the cause compared to ads that only use fear. There was also no statistical significance between the two groups when it came to liking the cause seen in the image. The P value was 1.000. The mean response from the fear group was 4.6 (Neither Like nor Dislike), and the mean response for the fear and disgust group was also 4.2 (Neither Like nor Dislike) where “1” was “dislike a great deal” and “7” was “like a great deal”.

Research Question 3: Empathy and Disgust

To understand the role of empathy in nonprofit advertisements that use fear and disgust, the researcher asked five questions to evaluate the emotion of empathy that was derived from seeing the image used in the survey. The first question asked if the respondents could easily tell if the child seen in the picture was in distress. There was statistical significance for this question. The P value was .27. The standard deviation was 1.66905. The mean for the Fear only group was 3.7 (Somewhat Agree) and the mean for the Fear and Disgust group was M=2.9 (Agree). For the other four questions about empathy, there was no statistical evidence found.

Research Question 4: Intention to Donate

For this RQ, I explored whether fear appeal-based advertisements that use disgust lead to greater intention to donate to the nonprofit’s cause compared to ads that only use fear. The reported a P value 1.000. The mean for the Fear based group was 3.9 (Slightly Unlikely) and the mean for the Fear and Disgust group was also 3.9 (Slightly Unlikely). “1” was “extremely unlikely” and “7” was “extremely likely”.

Research Question 5: Inclination to Volunteer

For this last RQ, I examined whether fear appeal-based advertisements that use disgust lead to greater intention to volunteer to the nonprofit’s cause compared to ads that only use fear. There was no statistical significance found with a reported P value of .611. The mean for the

Fear based group was 3.5 (Slightly Unlikely) and the mean for the Fear and Disgust based group was 3.6 (Slightly Unlikely). “1” was “extremely unlikely” and “7” was “extremely likely”.

Research Question 6: Trustworthiness of the Nonprofit

For the research question about the trustworthiness of the nonprofit that used these two negative emotions in their advertisements, no statistical significance was found. The P value was .614. For the Fear based group, the mean was 3.6 (Somewhat Trustworthy) and the mean for the Fear and Disgust group was 3.7 (Somewhat Trustworthy).

Chapter Five

Discussion

This study began with the intent to understand the role fear, disgust and empathy play in persuasion by nonprofit marketing campaigns. Previous research was dedicated to understanding how fear affected people’s perception of nonprofits, but the combination of all three emotions had been an underdeveloped area of research. The three mass communication-based theories that were used as a foundation for this study were the protection motivation theory, the limited capacity model, and cognitive dissonance. Using these three approaches, the researcher created a survey that sought to understand if the use of fear, disgust and empathy would lead to a greater intention to donate, volunteer, of trust, of liking the nonprofit, and understanding the importance of the nonprofit’s cause compared to advertisements that only use fear.

Research Question 1: Importance of the Cause

The research question sought to understand if the combination of fear and disgust would make the respondents more inclined to like the cause of the nonprofit. This was not the case with the mean response of groups of moderately important. The addition of disgust to a fear appeal does not seem to garner perceptions of greater importance. Perhaps subjects felt that whether the

subject was going to drink muddy water or not, their concern was not impacted with the actual presence of the muddy water.

Research Question 2: Liking the Cause

Again, while I anticipated that disgust at the presence of the muddied water in the cup would deepen the emotional reaction and increase the liking for the cause, this did not materialize. Similar to the issue of importance of the cause, subjects did not seem additional changed by the presence of disgusting elements in the ad.

Research Question 3: Empathy and Disgust

As mentioned earlier, there were five questions that assessed empathy. These questions were analyzed separately rather than together because each contained distinct elements of empathy that, taken alone, would shed important light on specifically how people responded to disgust. As noted, only the subcomponent of “distress” achieved significance. However, it should be noted that subjects did either slightly agree or agree, on average, with questions dealing with compassion, wanting to help, and being able to relate to the situation to someone they love. However, only distress of the empathy based questions achieved statistical significance. The inclusion of disgust seemed to amplify feelings of distress. Disgust seems to have intensified the emotional reaction to the ad, causing subjects to feel a sense of concern or alarm. This finding shows that disgust can be a useful tool for nonprofit strategists in terms of intensifying the feelings people have toward the victims when they view the image.

Research Question 4: Intention to Donate

Like the previous research questions, there was no statistical significance that supported the idea that the people who saw the fear and disgust image would be more inclined to donate than the people who only saw the fear image. The mean response for both groups was slightly

unlikely. An explanation for this could be this question asked people to complete a call-to-action. It put the respondents in a situation where they would have to make a choice that would result in having to give something to a cause. Based on the image they saw, they may not have known how to do that. The image did not contain any information about donating to the cause which could have impacted this question.

Research Question 5: Intention to Volunteer

The mean response for both groups was slightly unlikely, and one reason could be geographic distance. Previous research has shown that when people see something that is from away from them, they are less inclined to take action. The nonprofit was called Clean Water for Africa and the child seen in the picture was in Africa. The people who took this survey may have felt they would have to move or travel to Africa which is not an easy task for the average person to complete.

Research Question 6: Trustworthiness of the Cause

Both respondent groups had the mean response of somewhat trustworthy for this question. This shows that the use of fear and disgust did not cause people to not trust the nonprofit. Nonprofits can take this outcome and feel comfortable that they won't damage their brand but using these two negative elements in future marketing campaigns.

What does it mean for nonprofits?

After analyzing the data gained from the survey, the question now is, what does this mean for nonprofits that use fear and disgust in their marketing campaign? Nonprofits will continue to use these two negative emotions because as the data has shown, they are easy to identify in images. Even though fear and disgust can be felt by people who view the images that does not mean that they are effective in getting people to take action.

The last two questions respondents were asked to answer dealt with people's response to completing a call to action. The first question asked after seeing the image will they be more inclined to volunteer to work with a nonprofit like Clean Water for Africa. There was no statistical significance response to this question, and the mean was response was slightly unlikely for both groups of people.

The reaction was similar to the question which asked people how inclined they would be to donate to Clean Water for Africa. The mean answer for both groups was also slightly unlikely. This shows that while people understand the negative emotions and identify the child is in distress, it still wasn't enough to get people to act. Nonprofits who use negative emotions need to make sure their calls to action are easily understood and not too daunting for people to complete.

At the same time, nonprofits should use caution when they use fear and disgust in their advertising campaigns. One question asked, "I felt that the nonprofit was trying to manipulate my emotions with this advertisement." While there was no statistical significance, the mean for both groups was somewhat agreed. It is not easy to craft a narrative that doesn't cross the line into outright manipulation. Before a nonprofit engages in a campaign that uses these negative emotions, careful planning and research should be conducted to make sure the message engages the public without being overly manipulative.

Limitations of Research

During this study, the researcher found several limitations that could have had an impact on the results reached during the data collection portion of this study. One such limitation is the exposure or lack of exposure to seeing real-life children affected by dirty drinking water. Depending on the life experiences of the people surveyed, some may have had direct contact with children who had to drink dirty water; others may not. For those that did not have this

firsthand experience, they may have had a harder time connecting to the message they were asked to analyze. For those who had direct experience, this could have created a bias to be more easily swayed by the image they saw. This leads to another limitation that people may have experienced a lack of connection to the nonprofit.

The level of disgust used in the surveys was created to be discernible without making the observer uncomfortable. If the image caused an excessive amount of disgust, it could have led the person viewing the image to stop taking the survey or become traumatized from the experience and their answers would not be valid. Because of this, the researcher was limited in what images could be used in the data collection process of this study.

Another limitation this study had was it only studied the initial reaction to the disgust element. It did not seek to understand the role disgust had throughout the person's relationship with the nonprofit. Future research could study if nonprofits should only use disgust to grab people's attention or should they continue to use disgust in their communications with their audience as way to keep people engaging with their cause.

Further Research

One particular element that could be used in future research is the ability to use eye tracking technology to observe what parts of an image the respondents focus on the most. Images are essential to a marketing campaigns and the ability to understand what people are drawn to in an image is important for businesses and nonprofits to understand (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Eye tracking has also been proven to be an effective way to analyze fear based tobacco advertisements (Krugman, Fox, Fletcher, Fischer & Rojas, 1994). Eye tracking would be a simple factor to add in future research, and it would also provide new insights into how people view fear and disgust based images used by nonprofits.

Future research could also include a picture without anything in the background. The image used for this research not only had the young child holding a glass of dirty water but also a dirty river in the background. This could have led to some inferences about the quality of water found in the fear only condition. The muddy water might also have served as a distraction, drawing eyes away from the treatment conditions. Future research could be done with an image that only has the child with the fear and disgust element with a blank background. This would eliminate any other distracting element of the image and help the respondents know exactly what they need to focus on.

As previously stated in this study, the use of celebrity endorsement of a nonprofit has shown to be effective in helping people act on the messages they see in nonprofit marketing campaigns. In future research, along with the child seen with the dirty drinking water, a celebrity or a well-known public figure could be shown with the child in distress. The use of the celebrity could help bring validation to the nonprofit and encourage people to act on the message the nonprofit would like them to do.

Future research could also include the use of a different nonprofit that has a different level of disgust. While clean water is a popular cause, it is not something that is seen in developed countries like the United States were the people who responded to this study live. Nonprofits that deal with drunk driving, drug abuse, pornography addiction and even texting and driving all have levels of fear and disgust that could be studied. These causes are more in line with what people in first world countries deal with on a day-to-day basis which could lead to higher levels of empathy to the images they see in the advertisements.

Additional studies could also show a series of nonprofit images instead of just focusing on one. Each image would be a different nonprofit and the levels of disgust would increase with

the first nonprofit being tamer and the final nonprofit having a more graphic disgust element included in the image. By using different nonprofits with escalating disgust elements, the researcher would be able to learn if higher levels of disgust could increase the likelihood of volunteering or donating to the nonprofits cause.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Nonprofits will continue to use images that elicit feelings of fear and disgust in their marketing campaigns. As the results of this study have shown, they have proven to evoke those feelings and cause people to identify distress. However, they should move forward with care because while people can identify the fear and disgust, this does not always mean they are willing to act on the messages they see.

Acting on the message is essential for nonprofits because it's only half of the equation to have a compelling message. The other half is constructing a narrative that tells a story in a compelling way that will not only bring attention to the nonprofit's cause but keep people engaged with the nonprofit's cause. This is important because it is imperative the nonprofit not only appeals to its base it must craft a narrative that engages with a wide an audience as possible to succeed for a long period of time.

A recent example of a nonprofit that used fear and disgust to raise awareness for its cause was Kony 2012. This nonprofit raised awareness about an African warlord, Joseph Kony, who kidnapped children to either enlist in his guerrilla army or sell as sex slaves. A thirty-minute video that used fear and disgust went viral and millions of people donated to help end Kony's illegal operations. The use of these two negative emotions was able to capture the attention of the world but it was not enough to sustain the nonprofit. Like a firework exploding in

the air, the cause of the nonprofit was intense but brief. Kony 2012 did not lay the foundation to get people to continue to engage with its cause over the long term. In order to truly be successful, a nonprofit can use disgust to grab people's attention but a plan must be put in place to get people to become attached to the not only the cause of the organization but the nonprofit itself.

Nonprofits face an uphill battle in exposure and relevancy as they compete with corporations who not only have professional marketing departments but millions of dollars to spend to engage with their audiences. Shocking images can be used to distinguish their messages but at the end of the day, the importance of the cause should never be sacrificed just for the sake of shock. The narrative must be strong enough to connect with their audiences after their initial reaction to the disgusting element. The nonprofits that do this will not only be able to achieve their goals in their short term, but they will be able to create a brand identity their audience will want to continue to engage with throughout their lives.

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Appendix A: Pretest

What is your age range?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or older

Gender

- Male
- Female

Education Level

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2-year degree
- 4-year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate

Marital Status

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

Does this advertisement used by the nonprofit, Clean Water for Africa illicit feelings of fear for the child's safety after you have you viewed it?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Does this advertisement used by the nonprofit, Clean Water for Africa illicit feelings of disgust after you have you viewed it?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix B: Data Collection Survey

What is your age range?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75+

Gender

- Male
- Female

Education Level

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Some college
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Professional degree
- Doctorate

Marital Status

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

Does this advertisement used by the nonprofit, Clean Water for Africa illicit feelings of fear for the child's safety after you have you viewed it?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I can easily tell that the child seen in the advertisement is in distress.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Seeing the child in this advertisement makes you want to help.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

When I saw the child in the advertisement, I imagined myself or someone I love in that situation.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I felt compassion when I saw the child in the advertisement.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I felt that the nonprofit was trying to manipulate my emotions with this advertisement.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Given all the different problems and issues that nonprofits address in the world, how important is the issue highlighted in this advertisement to you?

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

After viewing this image how much do you like the nonprofit Clean Water for Africa that created this advertisement?

- Dislike a great deal
- Dislike a moderate amount
- Dislike a little
- Neither like nor dislike
- Like a little
- Like a moderate amount
- Like a great deal

In your opinion, based on this advertisement, how trustworthy is Clean Water for Africa.

- Very trustworthy
- Trustworthy
- Somewhat trustworthy
- Neither trustworthy nor untrustworthy
- Somewhat untrustworthy
- not trustworthy
- very untrustworthy

Q34 After viewing this image how inclined are you to volunteer to work with Clean Water for Africa?

- Extremely unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly likely
- Moderately likely
- Extremely likely

After viewing this image how inclined are you to donate to Clean Water for Africa?

- Extremely unlikely
- Moderately unlikely
- Slightly unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Slightly likely
- Moderately likely
- Extremely likely

Does this advertisement used by the nonprofit, Clean Water for Africa illicit feelings of disgust after you have you viewed it?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix C: Fear Based Image



Appendix D: Fear and Disgust Based Image

