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## Positive appeals are liked, but negative appeals work better

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# Framing charity advertisements:

Positive appeals are liked, but negative appeals  
work better

Arvid Erlandsson (Linköping University & Lund University)

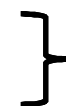
Artur Nilsson (Lund University)

# Charity appeals.

Designed to make people donate money.

Step 1: Increase likelihood of donating at all

Step 2: Increase magnitude of donating



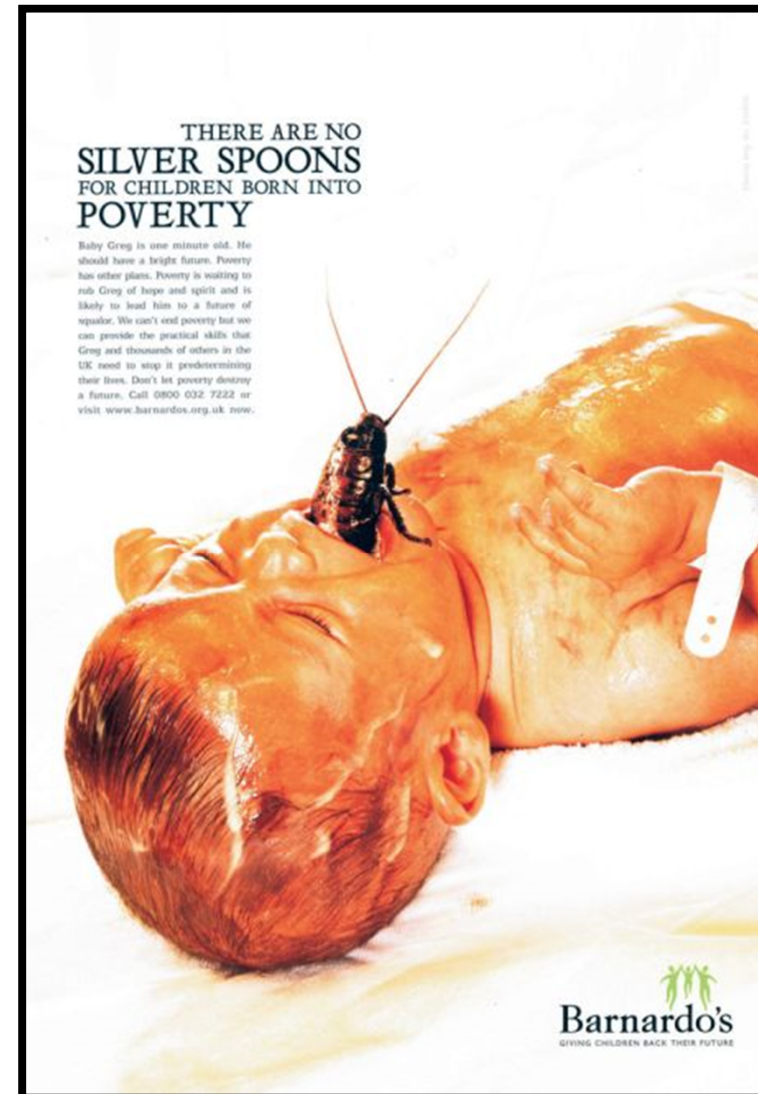
(Dickert, Sagara & Slovic, 2011)

# Types of charity appeals.

## Charity appeals can differ on many levels

- Characteristics of the victims one can save: One identified victim vs. statistical victims (e.g. Kogut & Ritov, 2005a, 2005b, 2007)
- Existence of victims one cannot save: Small scope frame vs. Large scope frame (e.g. Västfjäll, Slovic & Mayorga, 2013; Friedrich et al, 1999)
- Charity appeals can have its main focus on Emotions, Efficacy or Responsibility (Erlandsson, 2014)
- Negative vs. Positive valence

# Negative appeals.



# Positive appeals



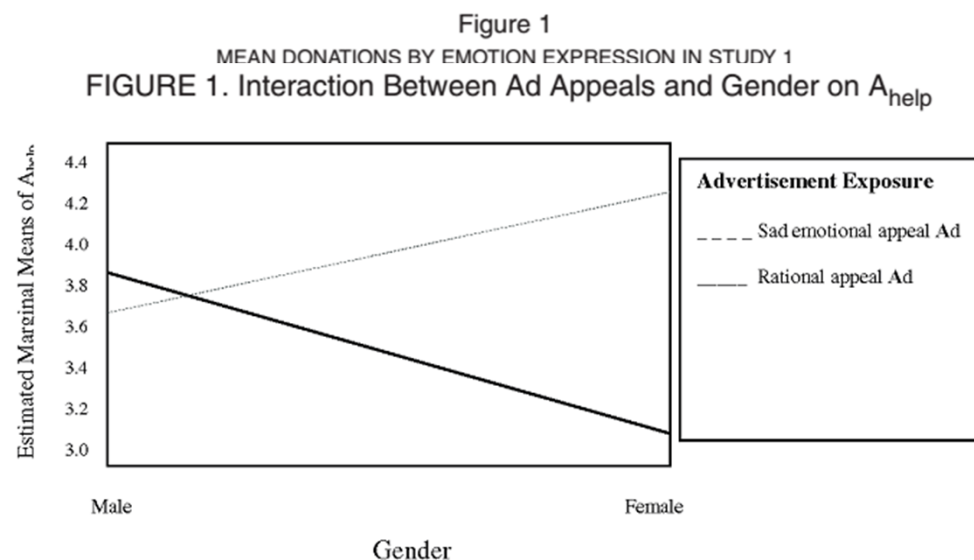
# Does negative or positive appeals work better?

## Negative appeals work better:

Pictures of sad children elicited more actual donations than pictures of happy children (Small & Verrochi, 2009, Study 1)

"Prevent a death" elicited a higher blood donation rate than "save a life" framing (Chou & Murighan, 2013)

Female donors gave more after seeing a negative than after seeing a neutral/rational appeal (Wang, 2008)



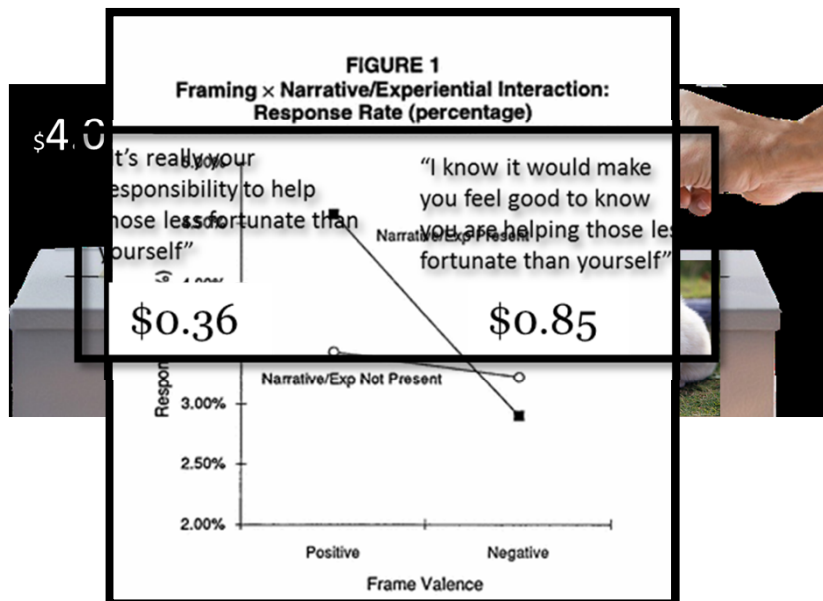
# Does negative or positive appeals work better?

## Positive appeals work better:

People are more likely to respond to positive reasons for giving than to negative reasons for giving in door to door solicitations (Benson & Catt, 1978)

Including cute pictures of puppies on a donation box rendered higher donations (Perrine & Heather, 2000)

A positive appeal with a narrative rendered a higher response rate than a negative appeal (Smith & Berger, 1996)





# Overview of research aims.

1. Testing main effect on type of appeal  
(negative/positive)  
(Are the positive or the negative appeal rendering the highest donations?)
2. Testing main effect for several individual differences  
(Which individual differences predict actual donations?)
3. Testing the type of appeal  $\times$  individual difference  
interaction effects  
(Are some type of people giving more to negative appeals while other types of people give more to positive appeals)

Presented  
here

Ask me

Ask me

Real donations as the dependent variable

# Study 1

# Study 1 - Baby Minhaj

<http://www.rescue.org/blog/face-famine-baby-minhaj-before-after>

News > "Face of the famine" baby, Minhaj, before and after

## "Face of the famine" baby, Minhaj, before and after

November 10, 2011 by Sophia Jones



Left: Baby Minhaj Gedi Farah, one week after he arrived at the IRC hospital emaciated and at the brink of death. Right: A chubby-cheeked and playful Minhaj two months after leaving the hospital. Photo: (L) Peter Biro/IRC (R) Photo: IRC

**DADAAB, Kenya** - When seven-month-old **Minhaj Gedi Farah** was admitted to the International Rescue Committee's hospital in the Dadaab refugee complex in July, he was dying.

Minhaj's emaciated little body was shown in media throughout the world. He came to signify the plight of thousands of refugee children fleeing **famine-devastated Somalia**.

Weighing just 3.1 kilograms (6.83 pounds), Minhaj was not only suffering from malnourishment but was severely anemic. It was touch and go as to whether the baby would survive -- his family had given up all hope.

After three life-saving blood transfusions and intensive feeding with Plumpy'nut, a vitamin-enriched peanut paste, Minhaj reached 4.1kgs (9.03 pounds) and was released from the hospital. He was then treated for tuberculosis in an IRC outpatient program.

Today, three months after he was released, Minhaj is unrecognizable. His mother, Assiyah Dagane Osman, recently brought the plump-cheeked baby back to the hospital's malnutrition unit to visit the IRC doctors and nurses who had saved his life. She was overjoyed and extremely grateful. "I am very happy with the treatment he received," she told them. "He is doing very well."

# Study 1

**The Children of Chad need your help**

*Tchad drabbas ofta av svår torka vilket leder till ett underskott av livsmedel och många barn lider av undernäring. Sjukvård saknas helt på många platser och en stor andel av barnen vaccinerats inte. På grund av detta är utbrott av sjukdomar som fjällinflammation och mässlingen vanliga. Tchad har också den högsta mödrastorleken i världen och bristen på sjukvård är en stark bidragande faktor. Vår organisation har som mål att arbeta med mobila sjukhus på så många platser i landet som möjligt och fokuserar på vård till barn och kvinnor.*

Hjälp oss att upprätta fler mobila sjukhus i Tchad.



Negative appeal

**A tragic story...**  
**Baby Minhaj could have been saved by people like you**



**Baby Minhaj used to be a healthy, happy, round-cheeked boy but when the severe drought and the subsequent famine struck, there was unfortunately no clinic close to the village where his family lived so Baby Minhaj died from acute malnourishment. With more help from people like you, we can avoid the same terrible thing happening to other children**

Positive appeal

**A sunshine story...**  
**Baby Minhaj was saved thanks to help from people like you**



**When Baby Minhaj came to our mobile clinic, he was in a very bad state due to the severe drought and subsequent famine. Few expected him to survive, but after a couple of week's treatment he was back to being a healthy, happy and round-cheeked boy. With more help from people like you, we can make the same miracle happen for other children.**

# Study 1

## Participants:

114 Swedish university students  
(47.4% female,  $M_{age} = 23.93$ ,  $SD = 5.17$ )



## Procedure:

- Asked to take part in a 20min study in exchange for three lottery scratch tickets (each worth 10 SEK  $\approx$  1€)
- Questionnaire 1: Battery of tests measuring individual differences
- Questionnaire 2: Participants were asked to read one of two charity advertisements and to rate their reactions towards the ad. In the end, they were told that they could donate money to the charity organization behind the ad by giving away the lottery tickets they had received (each donated lottery ticket = 10 SEK donation)
- Participants put both questionnaires and the number of lottery tickets they wished to donate in an envelope, sealed it and handed it to the experimenters.

# Manipulation Check (all on 1-7 scales)

13

	Negative appeal	Positive appeal	p
The ad gave me a bad conscience	4.04 (1.90)	3.33 (1.58)	.033
I felt happy when reading the ad	1.21 (0.41)	3.90 (1.82)	<.001
The situation in Chad seems serious	6.30 (1.04)	6.57 (0.65)	.105
I felt sad when reading the ad	4.84 (1.81)	5.00 (1.19)	.577
When I saw the ad, I felt hope for the children in Chad	2.52 (1.49)	4.38 (1.67)	<.001
I felt angry when reading the ad	3.98 (1.71)	3.29 (1.85)	.041
I liked the ad	2.89 (1.55)	4.42 (1.60)	<.001

## The negative appeal

- Elicited more guilt and anger

## The positive appeal

- Elicited more happiness and hopefulness
- Was significantly more liked

# Donated lottery tickets

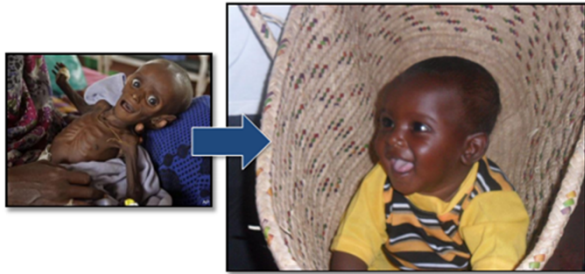
**A tragic story...**  
Baby Minhaj could have been saved by people like you



Baby Minhaj used to be a healthy, happy, round-cheeked boy but when the severe drought and the subsequent famine struck, there was unfortunately no clinic close to the village where his family lived so Baby Minhaj died from acute malnourishment. With more help from people like you, we can avoid the same terrible thing happening to other children

Mean = 1.66 tickets (SD = 1.38)  
CI95: 1.29-2.03  
Mdn = 2

**A sunshine story...**  
Baby Minhaj was saved thanks to help from people like you



When Baby Minhaj came to our mobile clinic, he was in a very bad state due to the severe drought and subsequent famine. Few expected him to survive, but after a couple of week's treatment he was back to being a healthy, happy and round-cheeked boy. With more help from people like you, we can make the same miracle happen for other children.

Mean = 1.12 tickets (SD = 1.23)  
CI95: 0.80-1.44  
Mdn = 1

$t(109.56) = 2.21, p = .030$   
Mann-Whitney U = 1274,  $z = -2.11, p = .035$

# Likelihood & Magnitude

	Negative Appeal	Positive Appeal
Donated nothing	20	27
Donated 1-2 tickets	10	18
Donated all tickets	26	13

Participants were equally likely to give something:  $\chi^2(1, N = 114) = 1.38, p = .240$

Participants reading the negative appeal were more likely to give all lottery tickets  
 $\chi^2(1, N = 114) = 7.30, p = .007$



# Study 2

# Study 2

## Negative appeal

17

Each day, one child in Sweden gets a cancer diagnosis. Although the medical treatments have improved, there are still problems with psychosocial care given to sick children and their families. There are care centers specifically designed to provide support for children with cancer and their families, but there is not enough room to offer a place for everyone. The main reason for this is a lack of resources. The care centers are partially supported by the state but private donations are essential.

Imagine yourself how it would feel to be a parent for a child with cancer. Would not you wish that your child got the best possible care?



Lukas, 5 years

Lukas was a very happy and playful boy. In 2012 he was diagnosed with acute Leukemia and his future looked dark. Lukas is still not cured and awaits a bone marrow transplant. Both Lukas and his parents look back to the time in care with very negative emotions. This is what Lukas' father Mats has to say about it.

*The chemo therapy was difficult for Lukas. Because there was not enough room at any care center, Lukas did not get the stability that he needed. The personnel were never the same and Lukas had to change room many times. It was stressful and frustrating for us Lukas really suffered. The people in the staff do their best but because there is not enough resources we had to do a lot by ourselves. Lukas medical situation has surely been hampered because of the lack of a care center, and we met other parents that said the same thing. (Mats Larsson)*

### **Without your help...**

...will we not be able to collect the resources necessary to offer more children a place at the specified care centers. Many children with cancer and their families will have to suffer without the possibility of extra support.

Your contribution is needed!

# Positive appeal

Fortunately, there have been great improvements within the cancer research and within the care for children with cancer. 90% of all diagnoses children are cured and the psychosocial care of sick children and their families has also been improved considerably. More children can now stay at the care centers specifically designed to provide support for children with cancer and their families. The main reason for this is the kind generosity that has been shown by the Swedish people at fund raising events and private donations.

We want to thank everyone that contributed helping children with cancer!



Lukas, 5 years

Lukas is a very happy and playful boy. In 2012 he was diagnosed with acute Leukemia. Lukas is already cured and both Lukas and his parents look back to the time in care with very positive emotions. This is what Lukas' father Mats has to say about it.

*We were all very well taken care of by the personnel at the oncological clinic as well as the care center. Lukas began his medical treatment short after being diagnosed and although the chemo therapy was tough, we always stayed positive. The people at the care center were terrific. We did not only received the best care and support possible, we also met friends for lives during the time at the care center (Mats Larsson)*

## With your help...

...will be able to collect the resources necessary to offer even more children a place at the specified care centers. Many children with cancer and their families will receive the extra support.

Your contribution is needed!

# Study 2

- **Participants:**  
203 Swedish university students  
(70 % female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 24.76$ ,  $SD = 5.67$ )



## Procedure:

- Asked to take part in a 10min Study in exchange for two lottery scratch tickets (each worth  $\approx 1\text{€}$ )
- Questionnaire 1: Battery of tests measuring individual differences and current mood
- Questionnaire 2: Participants were asked to read one of two charity advertisements and rated their reactions towards the ad. In the end, they were told that they could donate money to the charity organization behind the ad by giving away the lottery tickets they had received (each donated lottery ticket = 10 SEK donation)
- Participants put both questionnaires and the number of lottery tickets they wished to donate in an envelope, sealed it and handed it to the experimenters.

# Manipulation Check (all on 1-7 scales)

	Negative appeal	Positive appeal	p
The ad made me feel guilty	3.35 (1.87)	2.32 (1.54)	<.001
I felt hopeful when reading the ad	2.33 (1.37)	5.23 (1.55)	<.001
It is a big problem that not all children with cancer can stay at a care center.	6.50 (1.00)	6.24 (1.16)	.095
It felt tough to read the ad	5.18 (1.91)	3.16 (1.96)	<.001
I became sad when I read the ad	5.02 (1.93)	3.16 (1.78)	<.001
I think one can do a difference for ill children by donating money to the organization	5.24 (1.52)	5.68 (1.33)	.027
I became angry when I read the ad.	3.55 (1.84)	1.84 (1.40)	<.001
I liked the ad	3.30 (1.67)	4.60 (1.61)	<.001

## Negative appeal

- Elicited more guilt, sadness and anger
- Felt tougher to read

## Positive appeal

- Elicited more hopefulness and perceived impact
- Was significantly more liked

## Negative appeal

Each day, one child in Sweden gets a cancer diagnosis. Although the medical treatments have improved, there are still problems with psychosocial care given to sick children and their families. There are care centers specifically designed to provide support for children with cancer and their families, but there is not enough room to offer a place for everyone. The main reason for this is a lack of resources. The care centers are partially supported by the state but private donations are essential.

Imagine yourself how it would feel to be a parent for a child with cancer. Would not you wish that your child got the best possible care?



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### With your help...

...will be able to collect the resources necessary to offer even more children a place at the specified care centers. Many children with cancer and their families will receive the extra support.

Your contribution is needed!

Mean = 1.18 tickets (SD = 0.91)

CI95: 1.00-1.35

Mdn = 2

Mean = 0.91 tickets (SD = 0.88)

CI95: 0.74-1.08

Mdn = 1

$t(202) = 2.12, p = .035$

Mann-Whitney U = 4219,  $z = -2.12, p = .034$

# Likelihood & Magnitude

	Negative Appeal	Positive Appeal
Donated nothing	34	44
Donated 1 ticket	16	23
Donated all tickets	52	35

Participants were equally likely to give something:  $\chi^2 (1, N = 204) = 2.08, p = .150$

Participants reading the negative appeal were more likely to give all lottery tickets  
 $\chi^2 (1, N = 204) = 5.79, p = .016$

# Conclusion



# Losses loom larger than gains

- Compared to the positive appeal, the negative appeal rendered higher real donations in both studies.
- This effect was primarily due to the negative appeal increasing the magnitude of helping (not the likelihood of helping).
- The results are in line with the negativity bias theory (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), negative state relief model (Cialdini et al., 1987) and loss aversion theory (Kahneman, Knetsch, Thaler, 1991).

## Why are organizations using positive appeals?

- The negative appeals made people experience more negative emotions and were less liked than the positive appeal.
- This might suggest that donations after reading the negative appeal were made less voluntarily and was followed by less warm glow than donations after reading the positive appeal.
- A strongly negative appeal might be a type of social mugging (Jackson & Latane, 1981) where people help primarily in order to avoid an annoying solicitor or to relieve a perceived external pressure.
- Prediction: Negative appeals is beneficial in one shot helping situations but detrimental in making donors long-term committed to the organization.

Thank you for listening!

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