



Passion for the past: The effect of charity appeals and nostalgia on apparel donation intentions

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Keywords: nostalgia, charity appeals, clothing donation, construal level theory, temporal distance, social distance

Introduction. Although many consumers have donated unwanted clothes to a local charity store or a clothing bin, Americans generate 16 million tons of textile waste a year and it accounts for about six percent of total municipal waste (Greenamerica.org, 2019). Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental issues and become more interested in supporting fashion brands that minimize environmental impacts of their operations (Childs et al., 2019). Global fashion brands actively engage in sustainable clothing campaigns and also initiate in-store apparel recycling programs. For example, H&M's "Close the Loop" program introduced a global garment collection service to encourage consumers to drop off unwanted garments in any of H&M's 3,500 stores for reuse or recycling. An increasing awareness of apparel donation has highlighted the importance of this topic for industry professionals, non-profit organizations, as well as academic research (Jung & Park, 2013). However, there was a lack of studies that specifically examine the effectiveness of charity appeals in the context of apparel donation. Notably, this study employs nostalgia, a sentimental longing for the past, as a possible moderator that influences the effect of charity ad appeals on donation intentions. Prior research has found that nostalgia bolsters social bond and increases charitable behavior (Zhou et al., 2012). However, less attention has been paid to how nostalgia influences the persuasiveness of charity appeals. To fill this gap, authors experimentally examine how nostalgia influences the way consumers respond to self- vs. other-benefit charity appeals that encourage apparel donation intentions. Self-benefit appeals emphasize that the main beneficiary of charitable support is the self, while other-benefit appeals highlight that the main beneficiary of charitable support is other individuals.

Literature Review. To make charity messages persuasive, charitable organizations often use self- vs. other-benefit appeals, which are congruent with egoistic and altruistic motives, respectively (Brunel & Nelson, 2000; White & Peloza, 2009). Truly altruistic reasons motivate donors to focus on essential causes and missions, such as feeding the hungry and supporting cancer research. The literature on charity message persuasion has examined the relative effectiveness of self- vs. other-benefit appeals (e.g., Brunel & Nelson, 2000; Chang, 2014; White & Peloza, 2009). Previous studies found that other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in facilitating charitable giving (Fisher et al., 2008; White & Pelza, 2009). Drawing on the empathy-altruism paradigm, Batson and Shaw (1991) argued that "empathic emotions evoke truly altruistic motivation that has an ultimate goal of benefiting not the self but the person for whom empathy is felt" (Batson & Shaw, 1991, p. 107). Fisher et al. (2008) demonstrated that other-benefit appeals can evoke more positive reactions than self-benefit appeals in raising donation intentions. Thus, it is hypothesized: *H1. Other-benefit appeals will elicit greater donation intentions than self-benefit.* Nostalgia experience typically involves interactions with close

others such as family members, friends, and romantic partners (Zhou et al., 2012). Prior research indicates that nostalgia strengthens a social connectedness and increases willingness to help others (Wildschut et al. 2006). Zhou et al (2012) also found that nostalgia enhances tangible charitable behavior and this effect is mediate by empathy. Drawing on the construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), nostalgia can be regarded as psychologically distant (past) emotion. As temporal distant (i.e., the perceived distance in time between present and past) increases, individuals' charity behavior will increase toward a socially distant others' benefit (Ein-Gar & Levontin, 2013). That is, it is expected that donation intentions will be increased when there is a match between temporal distance (nostalgic feeling to the past experience) and social distance of charity appeals (other-benefit). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are presented: *H2a. For nostalgic individuals, other-benefit appeals will elicit greater donation intentions than self-benefit appeals. H2a. For non-nostalgic individuals, self-benefit appeals will elicit greater donation intentions than other-benefit appeals.*

Research Design/Procedure. Two experimental studies were conducted to examine the hypotheses above. In Study 1, we used a one-factor (message appeals: self- vs. other-benefit) between-subjects online experiment. A total of 160 U.S. consumers (46.9% male, $M_{age} = 42.48$) were recruited from the Amazon Mturk consumer panel, and assigned randomly to one of the two conditions. Following stimuli exposure, participants responded to measures of donation intentions, manipulation check questions, and demographic questions. In study 2, we employed a 2 (message appeals: self- vs. other-benefit) x 2 (nostalgia: control vs. nostalgia) between-subjects design. A total of 225 U.S. consumers (42% male, $M_{age} = 40.92$) were recruited from the Amazon Mturk consumer panel, and assigned randomly to one of the four conditions. To prime nostalgia, we asked study participants to undertake an essay-writing task adapted from Zhou et al (2012). In the nostalgia condition, participants were asked to think of an important part of a past event or episode that makes them feel most nostalgic and write their experience. In the control condition, they were asked to write an ordinary event in daily life. After then, participants responded to measures of donation intentions, manipulation check questions, and demographic questions. Manipulation check questions ensured accurate perceptions of the manipulated variables in both studies and successfully achieved.

Results. In Study 1, an independent *t*-test was conducted to test the message appeal effect on donation intentions (H1). The result revealed a significant main effect, in which participants reported greater donation intentions ($M_{other} = 5.23$, $M_{self} = 4.70$, $t = 2.045$, $p = .043$) toward other-benefit appeals than self-benefit appeals, supporting H1. In Study 2, we conducted a two-way ANOVA with donation intentions as the dependent variable and chronical nostalgia as a covariate. The interaction effect between message appeals and nostalgia on donation intentions was statistically significant ($F(2, 219) = 8.338$, $p = .000$). Planned contrasts showed that in the nostalgic condition, participants had greater donation intentions for other-benefit

(vs. self) appeals ($M_{\text{other}} = 5.18$, $M_{\text{self}} = 4.47$, $F(220) = 6.840$, $p = .010$). However, in the control condition, no significant difference between message appeals emerged ($M_{\text{other}} = 4.68$, $M_{\text{self}} = 4.98$, $F(220) = 1.204$, $p = .274$). Thus, H2a was supported and H2b was not supported.

Discussion. This study's findings make several theoretical contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to growing research on the self-other perspective by identifying nostalgia as an important but uninvestigated moderator. The research on charitable persuasion has provided inconclusive evidence as to which charitable appeal is more effective in enhancing charitable behavior. We add to the literature by suggesting nostalgia as the moderator that may reconcile the conflicts. Further, by finding support for construal level theory, we demonstrate that when consumers have nostalgic feelings (temporally distant to the past), socially distant charity appeal (i.e., other-benefit) is more effective in enhancing apparel donation intentions. The current work also provides important managerial insights and implication to guide marketing practices. Our results indicate that people with higher nostalgia are more likely to donate their unwanted clothes if messages are helping others. Recently, nostalgia and retro have become a big trend in the fashion industry. Selecting nostalgic images, ads, and words that trigger happy memories from the past with other-benefit charitable appeals would benefit for fashion brands in their charity-affiliated strategies.

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