
Guilt Based Online Appeals for Donation by NGOs: Examined through the Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective

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Abstract

The current research makes a pioneering contribution by examining the existing literature on use of guilt in online appeals for donation by Non-Government Organisations(NGOs) using the Integrated Marketing Communication(IMC) perspective forwarded by Batra and Keller(2016) specifically their communication-matching model. Also, the present study examines the popularity of different communication content characteristics in online guilt appeals for donation, namely the type of guilt, type of appeal used- cognitive or emotional, type of guilt statements and application of donation-button through the content analysis methodology on 213 Indian NGO websites. The findings reveal that more than half the NGO websites use guilt as an appeal for raising donations and it is existential-guilt which is used 96.6 percent of the times. Further, the NGOs prefer emotive guilt appeals in visual form over cognitive appeals and statement of fact is the most used statement-type. However, the use of donation button is found only in 65.25 percent of the websites, thus highlighting the nascent stage of website development of Indian NGOs. Finally in the review of literature on ‘guilt and online donations’ conducted through the lens of IMC theory, a paucity of research is revealed and the study is concluded with suggestions to simultaneously examine the cross effects of a variety of online and offline media in the context of guilt appeals and a need is felt for more complex research designs and experiments in the e-philanthropy literature.

Keywords: guilt appeals, integrated marketing communication, content analysis, NGO websites, e-philanthropy.

1.0 Introduction

Guilt is a negative emotional state experienced when people find themselves associated with negative consequences threatening their self-identity goals (Antonetti& Baines, 2015). Guilt, is therefore, associated with a number of prosocial behaviours such as altruism, empathy, donations (Tracy and Robins, 2004 and Tangney, 1999) which are performed to overcome one’s negative emotions. Thus, guilt is used in marketing communication to enhance donations (Noble, Pomeroy & Johnson, 2014).

Prosocial behaviour such as donations assumes importance for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) who rely on public for fund-raising (Pitts, Blose & Mack, 2014) and hence these NGOs play an important role in society by providing community services

(Randle, Miller, Stirling & Dolnicar, 2016). It is therefore recommended that NGOs use guilt appeals for donation. Increasingly, NGOs are making appeals for donation online (Shier and Handy, 2012) as internet has proved to be a fast and effective revenue tool (Cano Murillo, Kang & Yoon, 2016).

In order to understand an ideal approach of communicating with online donors, a comprehensive framework of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) given by Batra and Keller (2016) which emphasizes the need to communicate with consumers (in this case, 'donors') in a synchronised manner using different media and touch-points is studied in the current research. Batra and Keller (2016) have forwarded a set of two models which together cover the IMC approach, i.e. a 'bottom up' model called the communication-matching model and a 'top down' model called the communication-optimisation model. The 'communication-matching model' suggests certain characteristics of media and message which should be adopted at different stages of consumer decision journey while the 'communication-optimisation model' emphasises the criteria that should be adopted to evaluate a particular IMC program.

The objective of current research is, thus, to examine the existing literature on use of guilt in online appeals for donation by NGOs using the Integrated Marketing Communication(IMC) perspective forwarded by Batra and Keller (2016), specifically their 'communication-matching model'. The literature selected for review includes literature from streams of 'guilt' in consumer behaviour, advertising, psychology, philanthropy and NGO-websites. Also, this research examines the communication content characteristics of online guilt-based appeals used by NGOs through the content analysis technique (Kassarjian, 1977) on 213 Indian NGO websites.

Together, these research objectives cover the practise and literature on use of guilt in online donations. This research effort is thus a response to call for further research on their models of IMC given by Batra and Keller (2016). Also, Campbell and Lambright (2019) pointed out the need for research on internet presence of NGOs and therefore the current study examines the prevalent communication content characteristics of guilt based online appeals for donation by NGOs so as to fill a gap in existing literature and be able to give an appropriate emphasis to different sub topics within the literature reviewed.

The present study, thus, makes an empirical contribution by identifying the communication characteristics of guilt appeals on NGO websites. It is found that there is a difference in how guilt appeals are used today in India on NGO websites compared to how they were used two-decades ago in print advertisements in UK. Also, by using a strong organisational framework on existing literature, this research effort is able to identify areas of strength in the topic as well as the aspects needing more research. It has also been able to offer suggestions on Batra and Keller (2016) model and ascertain the need for more complex research-designs and experiments to answer various IMC related research questions that have so far been neglected.

2. Conceptual Background

The upcoming section is organised under two heads, i.e., “Integrated Marketing Communication & Communication Matching Model” and “Communication Content Characteristics of Guilt appeals”.

2.1 Integrated Marketing Communication and Communication Matching model

This sub-section relies completely on Batra and Keller (2016) who have given a comprehensive IMC framework, composed of “communication-matching model” and “communications-optimization model”. The objective of communication matching model is to suggest the media and message for different stages of consumer decision journey whereas the communication optimisation model enables one to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a communication program with the help of seven C’s namely coverage, cost, contribution, commonality, complementarity, cross effects and conformability. This model also takes cognizance of latest developments in consumer-behaviour, media and information-processing.

Batra and Keller (2016)’s understanding of consumer processing of communications based on previous literature is integrated with the postulates of their model and is integral to understanding IMC as explained by them. In this model, they have integrated the elements of ‘consumer’, ‘situation ‘communication’ with multiple communication outcomes. The processing of messages by consumers and its subsequent outcome is determined by consumer motivation, ability and opportunity to process the communication message.

The multiple stages of consumer decision path are also an important postulate of the model where the ten stages range from need arousal for the brand to becoming a loyal advocate of the brand. Also, Batra and Keller (2016) focus on the possibility of different communication outcomes and point out that at different points in consumer’s decision journey the consumer has different information needs and the marketer desires different outcomes. The various communication outcomes/goals are to create awareness, salience, to convey detailed information, create imagery and personality, build trust, elicit emotions, inspire action, instil loyalty and connect people.

Batra and Keller (2016) highlight that the media and message that is to be pressed into service has to be different for consumers at different stages so as to match different needs and objectives of marketers and the sequence of messages that the consumer receives should also be an important consideration while designing an IMC.

The IMC model highlights that various media- both offline and online have their unique interaction and cross effects. Cross effects are important because the impact of a particular communication is increased if the consumer has been previously exposed to it through a different medium.

2.2. Communication Content Characteristics of Guilt-based Appeals

Guilt occurs due to an individual’s belief of having violated an ethical principle or having transgressed a moral value (Lascu,1991) and therefore it results in lower self-esteem (Muralidharan and Sheehan, 2018). However, guilt is categorised as a constructive emotion because guilt-laden individuals take responsibility for their actions (Dahl, Honea, Manchanda, 2003 and Tangney, 1999) and are motivated to make-up for the transgression committed (Lascu, 1991).

The popularity of guilt appeals for seeking donations has been confirmed by several researchers (Chen, Thomas & Kohli, 2016 and Randle et al., 2016). In the content analysis of guilt appeals in advertisements from popular magazines conducted by Huhmann and Brotherton (1997) two decades back, out of 153 advertisements that used the guilt appeal, 21.6 percent were appealing for charity.

Communication content characteristics are a part of factors that affect consumer communication processing and a website is a crucial element in consumer decision journey because a consumer visits a website when he/she is actively-seeking information (Batra and Keller, 2016), therefore the present study chooses to analyse the content of NGO websites. On pursuing literature, the following characteristics have been identified as relevant for examining online appeals for donation:

a. Types of Guilt Appeals: The distinction among three states/types of guilt is provided by Huhmann & Brotherton(1997) and Lascu (1991), where anticipatory guilt occurs before the happening of an event when people contemplate their future course of action before making a decision, reactive guilt occurs as a response to transgressing a moral standard of behaviour and existential guilt is experienced as a result of discrepancy between one's present state of well-being and that of others, i.e. the less fortunate ones. According to Lwin and Phau (2014), different types of guilt appeals should be used simultaneously to maximise the effect of marketing. Huhmann and Brotherton(1997) found that in the charity advertisements using guilt appeals for donations, an overwhelming majority use the existential guilt appeal, i.e. 85.7 percent, followed by anticipatory guilt appeal, i.e. 16 percent and reactive guilt appeal, i.e. 13.3 percent. In spite of evidence on the excessive use of existential guilt, some researchers (Chang and Lee, 2009) focus greatly on the usage of anticipatory guilt appeal as it arouses consciousness and self-relevance of viewers' regarding the dreadful consequences to be faced in future if an appropriate action is not taken in the present moment. Also, it is recommended in the recent literature that anticipated emotions are more significant in guiding subsequent behaviour than the actual/felt emotion (Erlandsson, Jungstrand & Västfjäll, 2016 and Baumeister, Vohs, Nathan & Zhang, 2007).

However, it is yet to be seen in literature on guilt and online donations whether the usage of guilt appeals has increased over the years in the online media and whether the focus has shifted to anticipatory guilt or not. Therefore, the present study addresses the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How often does guilt appear in online donation appeals by NGOs of different sectors?

Research Question 2: Which particular type of guilt is most preferred in online donation appeals by NGOs?

b. Cognitive and emotive guilt appeal: According to Bennett (2008), advertising appeals on a website can be framed affectively or cognitively where written discussions on a website convince the visitors by providing cognitive reasons to donate. According to Back, Carra, Chiaramonte, and Oliveira (2009), donation acts are logically-driven and consciously conducted after cognitive evaluation of myriad courses of action. However, Morgan, Movius and Cody (2009) suggest that it is the emotional involvement of

donors in the donation-cause which reduces chances of counter-argument by them and they are more likely to donate. Therefore, the overall presentation of website should comprise of both information and images to persuade browsers/visitors to take immediate action (Bennett, 2008). According to Burt and Gibbons (2011), 42-seconds is the average time people spend on a web-page and photographs/images are effective because they require less time to be processed. Also, Lowry, Wilson and Haig (2014) have highlighted how the faster processing of visual content on websites can directly influence users' trust related beliefs. Chen, Thomas and Kohli (2016) recommend the use of guilt appeals along with emotional message frames because a picture is considered more emotive than a text message. Many researchers have found that using disturbing images is effective for securing donations (Thornton, Kirchner and Jacobs 1991) because a website visitor may be deeply shocked by viewing images of needy individuals (Bendapudi and Bendapudi, 1996) and disturbing words/pictures may increase the size of donations (Burt & Strongman 2005; Burt & Gibbons, 2011). Hence, over the years, literature has been divided on the usage of cognitive/emotive(visual) appeals and it is not known which one is preferred in online appeals for donation. Therefore, the upcoming research question is:

Research Question 3: Which particular type of appeal, i.e. cognitive/visual(emotive) or both is preferred in online donation appeals by NGOs?

- c. Types of guilt statements:** Vangelisti, Daly and Rae (1991) discussed 17 types of guilt inducing verbal/cognitive statements, out of which, Huhmann and Brotherton (1997), identified four widely-used statements, namely, statement of fact, statement of action, suggestion and question. The statement of fact refers to a report or description of existing circumstances which generally consists of figures, percentages etc. The statement of action induces people to act by donating immediately by reminding them that they violated a personal or social norm. A suggestion is one which advises viewers to take an action in future for those in need. A question is one which asks about the thoughts/feelings of an individual. However, to our knowledge no study exists which particularly examines the usage of guilt statements in online appeals for donation. Therefore, the next research question is:

Research Question 4: How often do the four types of guilt statements-statement of action, statement of fact, question or suggestion-appear in online donation appeals by NGOs?

- d. Donation Button:** According to Lee and Benbasat (2003), 'make a donation' button should be presented on the website in an attention-grabbing manner. Burt et al., (2011) explain that this is needed because people spend very little time viewing web-pages and need help to make a link between the appeal and the button. Hence, Zhang, Prybutok and Strutton (2007) suggest that the button must be contiguous to a message appealing for donation, however, the message near the button may be in text or visual form. The donation button is a key linkage in the online donation process and a variety of donate buttons exist such as 'Support', 'Help' etc (Burt et al., 2011). Therefore, the next question is:

Research Question 5: How often does the donate button appear in close proximity to the guilt appeal message on NGO websites?

3. Research Methodology

First, content analysis was conducted for determining the communication content characteristics of online guilt based appeals for donation made by NGOs and then relevant literature was examined using the IMC framework. Need for conducting content analysis first was felt in order to give focus and relevance to the literature-review as there is a paucity of descriptive research on use of guilt appeals and to our best knowledge the last study is the one by Huhmann and Brotherton (1997).

3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is an observational research method that systematically evaluates the symbolic content of different forms of recorded communication (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991) and now the technique has been updated so as to be applicable even to the online media (McMillan, 2000). The sub-headings of this section are:

- a. **Unit of analysis:** The unit of analysis for the present content analysis was the homepage of NGO websites, which some authors (Hwang, McMillan and Lee 2003) describe as the ‘front door’ to the website. Ha and James (1998) suggest that the homepage of website should be examined because majority of visitors decide on browsing the site further based on their impression of the home-page. Videos on the home-page were also analysed as they inject more emotion and imagery into brand-perception (Batra & Keller, 2016).
- b. **Sampling:** The list of NGOs participating in the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon (SCMM) was adopted as the sampling-frame because the researchers wanted a list of active NGOs, maintaining a website. Longer lists including government directories were ruled out because many of the NGOs listed on them did not have their independent websites. SCMM is a sporting event and one of the largest charity platforms in India. The SCMM-list comprises of 252 NGOs, however it was found that 39 of those NGOs either do not have a website or have an inadequately maintained websites. Therefore, the final sample size of this research effort is 213 NGO websites.
- c. **Categorisation of NGOs:** In order to identify “sector” of an NGO, one of the authors visited the websites of each NGO in the sample and examined their vision and mission statements thoroughly. Thereafter, the NGO was classified under one of the following heads as per the classification scheme of NGOs used by Laura (2014) which contains eleven categories -Viz., children and youth, development, education, environment, health, humanitarian, human rights, law and justice, peace-building, shelter and technology.
- d. **Coder-Training and Pilot-Studies:** Two independent coders were trained for the present research with the help of a 54-slide long Power-Point presentation prepared in accordance with the suggestions of Phillips (2011) containing the description of various concepts pertaining to guilt. A content analysis protocol containing the operational definitions of each variable in the study and the objective coding

procedures to be followed by the coders during website analysis were also given to them. Practical training of coders was done on 10 international NGO-websites and as suggested by Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken (2010), two coders independently coded the websites. A second round of training had to be conducted after the first pilot study because the reliability results between coders were not satisfactory. After the second pilot study which was also conducted on 30 international websites, the reliability results obtained ranged between 84 percent and 100 percent, i.e. within the acceptable levels.

e. Final-Study: The coders were given screenshots of home-pages of all 213 NGO websites, clicked in October, 2019. The coders worked independently and pursued blind coding to avoid coder-bias (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991 and Neuendorf, 2011). Each of the coders were assigned half of the sampled websites. To assess inter-coder reliability, a sample of 80 was taken, keeping in mind that the recommended acceptable level is between 50 and 300 and over 10 percent of full sample (Neuendorf, 2016, Lombard et al., 2010 & Krippendorff, 2018). Inter-coder reliability was assessed for each variable in the study using indices of percent agreement (basic assessment), Cohen's kappa, Holsti's formula and Scott's Pi reliability coefficient. Table 1 contains the results of reliability tests.

As can be seen in Table-1, all the values of inter-rater reliability are above the minimum recommended agreement coefficient of 60 (Neuendorf et al., 2011).

3.2 Methodology for Review of Literature:

For the second research objective, the researchers relied upon literature covering the time period from 1991 till-present. It was searched in the databases of Emerald and Elsevier using keywords, such as, guilt, guilt in philanthropy, guilt and donations, guilt and psychology, prosocial behaviour, NGO websites, marketing-communication and communication models. The present study took articles from established journals in several fields viz. marketing, consumer-behaviour, psychology and internet communication. Each article was read in full to identify relevant literature.

4. Findings and Discussion – Communication Content Characteristics

In the section below, findings are presented and discussed only of the content analysis of online guilt appeals used by NGOs.

4.1 Communication Content Characteristics of Online Appeals for Donation using Guilt Emotion.

a. Use of guilt appeals: Table-2 contains the sector-wise profile of NGOs in the sample as well as the data on usage of guilt appeals.

As is evident from Table-2, more than half the NGOs examined, use guilt appeals for raising donations. The sector-wise composition of sample reveals that approximately 92 percent of websites examined belong to only five of eleven sectors, namely children and youth, development, health, humanitarian and education while other sectors have negligible presence in the sample.

b. Use of Different Types of guilt appeals-anticipatory, reactive and existential: Table-3 shows “usage-frequency of three types of guilt appeals”.

As is evident from Table-3, use of existential guilt far surpasses the use of anticipatory guilt and reactive guilt. Just as in the study by Huhmann & Brotherton (1997), existential guilt has proven to be the most popular appeal out of three different types of guilt appeals, in the present research also, it is the existential guilt which is majorly used by NGO-websites in India, but its usage has decreased considerably from 85.7 percent two decades back in the print media to 55.9 percent in the digital media in a different culture. Further, inspite of the emphasis laid on significance of anticipatory guilt by some researchers, there has been a stark reduction in its usage by NGO-websites. Also, the presence of reactive guilt on NGO websites is negligible. The reduced preference of guilt appeals by NGO websites can be attributed to a sharp criticism of such “pornography of poverty” in some recent literature (Beswick, Dasandi & Hudson 2019). Also, according to Hudson, Van Heerde, Dasandi and Gaines (2016) such visuals are inaccurate, unethical and can instil a sense of hopelessness and helplessness among donors. Refreshingly, White and Habib (2019) cite research on charity beauty premium which says that visually appealing images can also be used to prime people to perform prosocial acts rather than using negative emotions. Further, Erlandsson et al., (2016) suggest that the positive equivalent of anticipated guilt is anticipated warm-glow which can also be used to enhance donations.

c. Use of cognitive or emotive (visual) appeals: Table-4 presents data to address the above communication characteristics. As is evident from Table-4, guilt appeals in the visual message forms are more popular (used 50.4 percent) than guilt appeals in cognitive form either singularly or in combination with cognitive appeal. These results differ from 1997 study by Huhmann and Brotherton, which found that 54 percent of guilt appeals were in cognitive or verbal form and that has reduced to 13.5 percent in the online-media. Also, 42.6 percent messages were in the visual form two decades back and 43 percent depicted the message in both visual and text. This difference in results can be attributed to differences in medium and advances in technology that have enabled videos and coloured images to give a lively account of the situation. Also, it cannot be denied that some differences may exist due to differences in cultures. On the whole, the results of present study are an affirmation of the power of visuals which have been extensively documented in research cited earlier in this paper. In spite of an increasing use of visuals which includes images as well as videos, the videos account only for 18 percent of the total visual guilt appeals which is also an indication that the NGO-websites in Indian are not yet effectively leveraging the power of digital media as Batra and Keller (2016) suggest that by using the distinctive strengths of greater number of media choices available, a marketer can sequence them in more powerful ways to move consumers quickly along their decision journey.

d. Use of guilt statement: Table-5 shows data for this communication characteristic.

As is evident from Table-5, on analysing the websites using cognitive guilt appeals, it is found that statement of fact is highly preferred, (i.e. 74 percent) in online appeals for donation, although there is a tie between statement of action and question, while

the use of suggestion statement is negligible. However, these results cannot be compared with Huhmann and Brotherton (1997) who reported results pertaining to use of guilt statements in different commercial sectors and not specifically for charities. But, it is evident from the present research that the online appeals for donation highly prefer statement of fact over any other statement which seems to be done in accordance with the instructions of Batra and Keller(2016) who suggest that the detailed information on a website may lack credibility. Hence, a statement of fact may enable NGOs to provide authenticity to the messages/claims made by them and enable the viewers to understand the gravity of the situation. For example, Government statistics reveal that a million people were displaced and left homeless due to the floods.

e. Use of donation button: Table-6 shows results for use of donation button.

As is evident from Table-6, 65 percent of NGO-websites feature the donation button on their website but only a small percentage, i.e., 11.51 percent of NGOs- display the donation button in proximity to guilt appeal message. One possible reason for all websites not having a donate button could lie with the stage of website-development. Rowley (2001) explains that organisations gradually develop their interaction with consumers through their websites and identifies four stages of website-development, namely, contact, interact, transact and relate. It seems that many NGOs in India are still in the nascent stages of website-development. Also, Batra and Keller(2016) state that a consumer goes through different stages in his decision journey and a successful decision journey can be derailed by failure at any stage, therefore, we conclude that not having a donate button will recede the pace of donations. Furthermore, all the websites analysed were static in nature which indicate that they haven't heeded to the advice of Batra and Keller (2016) who suggest that a dynamic website allows for segmentation and targeting of viewers leading to prompt changes in media as well as messages on those websites. The lack of donation button on NGO websites may even be linked to the type of financing undertaken by NGOs as Hudson et al.,(2016) suggest that some NGOs, instead of depending on public have developed long-term relationships with stakeholders and solicit funds from them or the government.

4.2 Use of IMC perspective and Communication Matching Model on Literature Relevant for Online Guilt-based Appeals for Donation

This section is organised to conform to the postulates of IMC Models forwarded by Batra and Keller (2016). The findings of content analysis have helped this review of literature in prioritising different options of communication content characteristics, to identify focus areas of review, to estimate the extent of connect/disconnect between research and practise and to identify areas needing more research.

a. Understanding consumer processing of Guilt-appeals: The first three sub-sections of this section, namely- consumers, situation, communication content characteristics are the same as those used by Batra and Keller (2016) whereas the fourth sub-section, i.e. credibility characteristics has been added considering its importance to literature under review.

i. Consumer-characteristics: In the original article by Batra and Keller (2016), consumer characteristics are discussed under three parts, namely, motivation of consumers, ability of consumers and opportunity provided to them. According to Hallahan(2000), in order to increase motivation, it is essential to enhance the relevance of message for target audiences and he specifically mentions the use of guilt and fear appeals to get the required consumer attention. Further, the ability of consumer has been discussed with the help of persuasion knowledge model of Friestad and Wright(1994) in which persuasion knowledge refers to consumers' knowledge and beliefs about goals and tactics employed by marketers and also Coulter, Cotte, and Moore (1999) expect that consumers do have reasonable knowledge about usage of guilt as a tactic for donation-seeking by fund-raisers. Also, according to Coulter et al.,(1999), negative appeals like guilt work for three reasons, namely, persuasion knowledge, advertisement credibility and inferences of manipulative intent. Hence, guilt will be aroused if consumers perceive an advertisement to be credible but a negative reaction will be aroused if they consider an advertisement to be manipulative. Again, Hibbert, Smith, Davies and Ireland (2007) use persuasion knowledge model in which they reveal that the consumers' knowledge of advertising tactics mediates the arousal of guilt by charity advertisements and the anticipation of browsers regarding the employment of psychological mediators to convince them may result in their not making a donation.

Lastly, the opportunity perspective which refers to some executional factors of a communication message such as exposure-time, message-length, arguments and absence of distractions (Hallahan, 2000) has been missing in the literature on guilt and online donations. So, overall, the consumer has been the focus of research in guilt but the changes in consumer-behaviour across generations is not reflected in the literature on guilt and online donations.

ii. Situation: Researchers have pointed out the importance of situational characteristics for purposes of donation. According to Hibbert et al., (1996) the decision to donate is largely a response to social-learning and conditioning of donors and situational stimuli are important determinants of behaviour. Therefore, fundraisers need to pay more attention to controlling and developing donation situations for different levels and types of donations to elicit responses from donors.

Furthermore, the importance of situational factors is increasing as more and more consumers are accessing websites from mobile-phones. As such, the rise of mobile-phones has added a new urgency and breadth to research on situational variables (Karnowski and Jandura, 2014) and once again those situational variables are yet to be examined with respect to guilt and online donations.

iii. Communication-content characteristics: On examining mechanisms that drive charitable-giving, Bekkers & Weipking (2011) exhort NGOs to actively solicit donations rather than passively presenting a platform to donate and use message stimuli that will develop a connection with the donors. Furthermore,

Morgan et al., (2009) suggest that the perceived realism of content being aired can lead to attitude change because if the information is accurate it will increase learning, motivation and emotional involvement of donors and vice-versa. The literature relevant to communication content characteristics examined by the present content analysis has already been presented in section 2.2 and the results reveal a mismatch between practise and literature on use of guilt. As is evident from the results, NGO websites are preferably using existential guilt but there isn't a correspondingly large body of literature on existential guilt. The present study therefore proposes the need to define 'anticipated-existential guilt' as a separate/standalone construct in the context of donations because till now the lone 'anticipated guilt' construct is taken as a much generalized construct by researchers which is invariably used for multiple sectors. However, the 'anticipated-existential guilt' construct which is not yet recognised in literature, is required to be understood so as to provide credible answers on how donors anticipate the feeling of existential guilt in advance before making a decision to donate. Again, there is scant research examining preferences for different writing styles on NGO-websites. Finally, it is suggested that practitioners will benefit greatly from research determining the effectiveness of different communication content characteristics on donations, particularly the size of donations as it is relatively neglected in literature. Again, digital media discusses different communication characteristics like personalisation, customisation, privacy issues but such issues are yet to make their way into the literature on guilt and online donations.

iv. Source credibility characteristics: For the sake of credibility, the need for trustworthy message source has been emphasised by several authors. Although, there can be many sources of trustworthy message but the content analysis of present study has examined 'NGO-websites' as a message source. According to Keating and Thrandardottir (2017), it is essential to build a trustworthy image of NGOs as most of them are dependent on donors for help. Further, it is argued by him that trusting NGOs is a function of two-things, namely, the extent of information that donors have about the NGO and the donors' ability to enforce penalties on NGOs for non-compliance.

Finally, the literature-review of present study indicates that the source credibility characteristics have received more attention in literature than it has received in the IMC framework given by Batra and Keller (2016). This indicates the need to adopt a general-model or framework of IMC which suits the specific needs of individual products and an online appeal for donation by NGOs is a unique communication framework with its own exigencies.

b. Consumers are at different stages of consumer decision journey: On examining consumers' or in this case donors' journey from the time of viewing a communication featuring guilt to the point of making a donation, it is evident that this is a long journey impacted by several variables. The arousal of guilt emotion in an individual has several antecedents, such as, type of communication viewed by the donor, the other antecedents

being the individual-related factors like empathy, perspective-taking, self-reflection (Kenemore, 2019), social/moral norms of the individual (Tangeny, 1999) and his/her consumption related choices like overspending, luxury consumption and compulsive consumption (Antonetti & Baines, 2015; Dahl et al., 2003). Further, Antonetti and Baines (2015) discuss many moderating variables between antecedents of guilt and the inducing of guilt emotion such as scepticism towards advertisement, self-efficacy and culture. Finally, after guilt having been aroused, there can be several reactions to guilt (Dahl et al., 2003) by an individual, ranging from denial and denigration to acknowledgement and rationalisation. Then again, there are several moderators between guilt and consequences of guilt (Antonetti and Baines, 2015) including personal norms, materialism and culture.

Apart from the antecedents, the moderating variables and the outcomes, the literature is also cognizant of different segments of prosocial individuals where Hallahan (2000) suggests three types of audiences, namely, active audience, aroused audience and aware audience. Finally, the stages of transition of a prosocial individual range from a sympathiser to becoming a donor to a volunteer to an advocate and finally an activist (White et al., 2019).

The number of stages in consumer decision journey from the antecedents of guilt to the type of involvement in social causes are not as numerous or granular as those identified by Batra and Keller (2016), but they are uniquely suited to the setting in which they have been discovered. Keeping in mind, the size of literature that examines numerous variables impacting different stages of consumer's journey, it is recommended that the causal chain framework analysis (Ngai, Tao & Moon 2015) be used to analyse the literature from several decades so as to determine the changes taking place in consumer's (donor) journey.

c. Need to focus on all possible communication outcomes: As mentioned earlier, Dahl et al., (2003) have presented an extensive list of outcomes but those are of guilt and not strictly communication outcomes. In accordance with the 'elicit emotions' perspective given by Batra and Keller (2016), there is a publication by Basil, Ridgway & Basil (2006) which suggests that guilt appeals are designed to induce an emotion and such appeals are effective because they create a sense of responsibility to help the less fortunate. However, there is a significant section of literature which doubts the efficacy of guilt appeals to create desirable communication outcomes (Noble, Pomeroy and Johnson, 2014; Antonetti & Baines, 2015; Randle et al., 2016; van Rijn, Barham and Sundaram-Stukel, 2017) as guilt appeals are known to cause irritation, annoyance (O'Keefe, 2000) and sometimes even the feeling of being manipulated (Hibbert et al., 2007). Therefore, it is concluded by White, Habib and Dahl (2020) that guilt can motivate prosocial behaviour only when it is used in moderation and subtle manner rather than in an explicit manner.

However, the outcomes examined in literature on guilt and online donations do not do justice to the long-list of outcomes discussed by Batra and Keller (2016) from creating awareness to instilling loyalty. The IMC related focus of Batra and Keller (2016) on media and message to be used at different stages of consumer journey (in this case, donors' journey) is also missing in the literature on guilt and online donations. Hence, there is a need to examine the comparative importance of different communication outcomes in this field.

d. Cross effects and Interaction effects of all media – online as well as offline:

Literature has taken note of the increasing use of online media by NGOs (Shier et al., 2009; Kirk, Abrahams and Ractham 2016) as well as donors (Pitts et al., 2014). Recently, Campbell et al.,(2019) pointed out the importance of internet-presence for NGOs and called for more research on all three aspects of internet-presence, i.e. adoption, activity and visibility.

In contrast to general assumption that a website with appealing characteristics will positively influence donations, Shier and Handy (2012) give insights into the limited role of website characteristics in online donations. According to them, while a website is likely to contribute to the perception of trust in an NGO, it is not likely to be a leading factor in determining whether an individual donates. They attribute this to the self-selection bias amongst browsers and suggest that the decision to donate is not a function of website per se but a function of finding the right cause.

Apart from this, in the literature review on guilt and donations, it is evident that understanding consumer processing of guilt appeals is the most heavily researched aspect of IMC but there is still not enough research to equip this area to move forward in the times of increasing use of digital-media. Hence, the literature needs to specifically and simultaneously examine the cross effects of a variety of online and offline media in the context of guilt and donations.

6. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

The present research was undertaken with the goal of understanding literature and practice of online guilt-based appeals for donation in the context of IMC. It first examined the usage of different communication characteristics that are associated with guilt appeals for donation by NGO websites. Armed with those results it went on to conduct a literature-review from the field of guilt and online donations.

The findings of content analysis of 213 Indian NGO websites obtained through this research effort have been compared with the only other content analysis of guilt appeals which was conducted on magazine advertisements by Huhmann and Brotherton (1997). The results give evidence of the preferential use of existential guilt appeal and almost negation of anticipatory and reactive guilt; the rise of use of visual appeals over cognitive appeals; the higher usage frequency of statement of fact than any other statement and the decline in use of suggestion statement. Surprisingly, all the websites analysed do not have a donation button and very few place the button in proximity to guilt appeal message which highlights a gap between theory and practise.

In addition to helping ground the review of literature and inform its focus and emphasis, the content analysis based findings of present study fill a lacuna in existing literature and are benchmarks with which results can be compared and interpreted by subsequent researchers in streams of guilt, e-philanthropy and internet-presence of NGOs.

When literature is organised according to postulates of model of Batra and Keller (2017) it is revealed that while there are certain aspects of IMC that the literature on guilt and online donation has not addressed as yet and there are certain unique topics on which researchers have given more focus than called for by the general IMC model. The IMC related postulate

of effect of sequence of exposure to communication does not find a place in this review because of absence of literature on this aspect. This is indicative of a general lack of IMC focus in the research on guilt and online donations. It is not surprising that the aspect on which the research is richest is ‘Understanding consumer processing of guilt appeals’ which in Batra and Keller (2016)’s IMC perspective is not a part of IMC postulates though its relevance to IMC has been acknowledged. Conversely, source credibility characteristics have been given more importance in literature on guilt and donation than in the model by Batra and Keller (2016) thereby pointing to the unique IMC needs of different product categories as a response to myriad consumer behaviour for different products.

While specific research questions that need to be examined for a particular postulate have been discussed earlier, here, it is pertinent to point to the need for more complex research designs in surveys as well as experiments while examining the IMC perspective in guilt and online donations. Also, longitudinal-studies are required to examine the effect of exposure sequence.

A sector-wise analysis of NGOs could not be conducted in this research effort due to constraints of sample-size of different sectors of NGOs and the absence of a robust methodology in literature to bifurcate NGOs into different heads. The weakness of NGO sector as a whole in building websites has affected this study.

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Appendices:**Table-1**
Inter-Coder Reliability

Sr. No:	Variables	Percent Agreement (IRR)	Cohen's Kappa	Holsti's Formula	Scott's Pi
1	Guilt appeal	94%	0.95	0.94	0.87
2	Guilt type	88.67%	0.77	0.89	0.77
3	Cognitive/ Visual Message appeal	94%	0.91	0.94	0.91
4	Type of guilt statement	92.45%	0.83	0.92	0.83
5	Donation button	94.33%	0.72	0.94	0.89

(The Authors')

Table-2:
Use of Guilt Appeal by NGOs of Different Sectors:

NGOs (Sector-wise)	Number of NGOs in the total sample	Number using the guilt appeals (n)	Percentage using guilt appeals (p)
Children and Youth Development	49	26	53.1
Education	31	14	45.2
Environment	04	01	25
Health	36	21	58.3
Humanitarian	36	22	61.1
Human-Rights	01	00	0
Law and Justice	01	00	0
Peace-Building	01	01	100
Shelter	08	08	100
Technology	01	00	0
Total	213	119	55.9

(The Authors')

Table-3:**Use of different types of guilt appeal**

Type of guilt appeal	Number of NGOs	Percentage(p)
Anticipatory	3	2.5
Reactive	1	0.8
Existential	115	96.6
Total	119	100.0

(The Authors')

Table-4:**Use of cognitive and visual content**

Type of content	Number of NGOs using	Percentage(p)
Cognitive content	16	13.5
Visual/emotive content	60	50.4*
Cognitive content	43	36.1
Total	119	100.0

(*18% display the visual-content in the form of videos)

(The Authors')

Table-5:**Use of different guilt-appeal statements by NGOs**

Type of guilt appeal statement used	Number	Percentage
Statement of Fact	54	74%
Statement of Action	8	11%
Question	8	11%
Suggestion	3	4%
Total number	73	100

(While total number of NGOs using cognitive appeal is 59(43+16), in Table: 5, the total in the table is higher because some NGOs use more than one type of guilt statement)

(The Authors')

Table-6:**Use of Donation-Button**

Donate button	Number of NGOs	Percentage
Have donation button	139*	65.25%
Do not have donation button	74	34.75%
Total	213	100.0%

(*Only 16(11.5%) of NGO-websites have "donation-button" placed next to the guilt appeal message)

(The Authors')