

EMOTIONAL APPEALS: THE EFFECTS OF DONATION
BUTTON DESIGN ON DONOR BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Webpage design is an important factor in the capturing of new donor populations and increasing charitable giving. Charities often use emotional appeals when soliciting donations but little is known about the effects of embedding different verbal triggers directly into donation buttons. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of three emotional triggers on donor compliance, donation amount and trust in the charity. A between-groups experimental design was used to test six hypotheses regarding the impact of social approval, empowerment, and guilt on donor compliance, donation amount and trust in the charity. Eighty students completed the research protocol using a simulated online donating platform. The hypotheses were not supported and the implications of the findings are discussed within the context of the strengths and limitations of the research design.

Emotional Appeals: The Effects of Donation Button Design on Donor Behaviour.

In the middle of the lunch rush, a collector stands on a street corner in the centre of town. “Would you like to donate?” she asks a harried passer-by, “it’s for a good cause”. The man averts his eyes, and hurries on his way, his mind elsewhere. It’s hard to stand out in a crowd. It is particularly difficult when the crowd is full of other good causes, and commercial interests, not to mention an individual’s work and personal commitments, all jostling for attention. This is the challenge charities face everyday as they try to raise money for their causes. In response, non-profit organisations employ a range of techniques designed to attract and engage donors such as showing the direct effects of past donations (e.g. Burt & Dunham, 2009), creating anchors by suggesting donation amounts (e.g. Feinberg & Desmet, 2003; Randall & Martin, 2008), and using emotive language in their advertising materials (Basil, Ridgway & Basil, 2008). Although framing effects and the effects of making outcomes salient have been extensively researched, the effects of using different emotional triggers to prompt donations remains ambiguous. As such the focus of this research was to compare the impact of several emotional triggers on donor compliance, donation amount and charity trust. Thus the research tested several hypotheses regarding emotional triggers using an online donating platform.

While in some respects the Internet could be considered a larger crowd in which to compete, it also provides charities with new opportunities to attract a global pool of potential donors. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of donations that come through online platforms such as charity’s websites or crowd-funding sites such as www.justgiving.com (Bennett, 2009), indicating that donors are becoming increasingly comfortable with giving via the Internet. Accordingly, the value of online donations has increased exponentially from a little over half a billion dollars in 2000 to over \$290 billion in 2010 (Giving USA Foundation, 2011).

For non-profit organisations, three factors drive revenue: the number of individual donations, the size of each contribution, and the administrative costs associated with soliciting and processing donations. Given that, on average, online donations are larger than donations made offline (Network for Good, 2006), and the administration costs associated with online donations tend to be substantially lower (Goecks, Volda, Volda, & Mynatt, 2008), the Internet could enable charities to significantly increase their revenue. Additionally, an Internet presence helps charities connect with a younger, wealthier demographic, typically inaccessible through traditional means (Johnson, 1999). Studies show up to a quarter of this population have made a donation online, and two thirds intend to do so in the future (Charities Aid Foundation, 2006), making them a prime target for charities seeking online donations. An important factor in the development of online donating and the capturing of new donor populations is the design of the charity's webpage.

Effective web design can influence people to make socially conscious decisions (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009), but little is known about the effects of different verbal triggers embedded directly into donation buttons. The donation button is the link that a donor clicks on a web page in order to begin the process of making a donation. On average, browsers spend 42 seconds viewing each webpage, and their attention typically begins to wane after 10 seconds (Ware, 2007), so efforts to engage a potential donor must occur within this timeframe. Additionally, the donation button should be prominent and eye-catching (Lee & Berbasat, 2003), and either contain or be adjacent to, a call to action (Zhang, Prybutok & Strutton, 2007). In addition to facilitating donations made by donors who visited a charity's website with the intention to donate, effective stimuli may increase the instance of spontaneous donations by casual browsers (Bennett, 2009). Such stimuli should take the form of large buttons containing concise messages (Baltas, 2003), and should elicit emotional or cognitive reactions from the viewer (Bennett, 2009). Charities rely on donor support to operate, so

raising the compliance rate and increasing the amount donated should be central considerations when building a website, and effective donation button design may aid revenue gathering by increasing compliance and donation amounts.

One mechanism through which effective web design raises compliance and donation amounts is by increasing the degree to which the general public trust the charity they are interacting with (Burt & Gibbons, 2011). Trust is crucial to the donor-charity relationship because donors are not typically able to accurately assess the direct effects of their donation, and must rely on charities to deliver the expected benefits to the communities they serve (Hansmann, 1980). Trust in this context reflects a donor's degree of certainty that the charity will behave in an ethical manner and use the donation for its intended purpose (Grabner-Krauter & Kaluscha, 2003). The presence of trust depends upon the willingness of donors to expose themselves to the risk that a charity may not behave as expected, and accept that they will have little or no recourse in such a situation (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Research into the effects of website design on trust found that certain design elements, such as the inclusion of photographs illustrating the need for aid, significantly increased the degree of trust between participants and the charity (Burt & Dunham, 2009). Additionally, trust was positively correlated with participants' interest in making a donation, and their intended donation amounts. This result indicates that rather than being merely a theoretical construct, trust motivates donors to act and has practical utility. Based on this, trust-building strategies are likely to provide charities with a competitive advantage by increasing the lifetime value of the average donor and contributing to the sustainability of a donor population. Given the effect of trust on donor affect and behaviour, it is important to also explore the effects of different emotional triggers in relation to trust.

The Role of Emotional Appeals in Charitable Giving.

Many charitable appeals work by generating emotional responses among potential donors, in order to influence their behaviour (Dillard & Peck, 2000). Helping behaviours may be motivated by a number of factors, one aspect of which are the associated psychological benefits such as improving mood, alleviating guilt or enhancing one's image (Bekkers & Weipking, 2011). The present research investigates the effects of incorporating different verbal emotional triggers into donation buttons on donor behaviour, with a view to increasing revenue by improving compliance rates and increasing donation amounts. The knowledge gained from this research is intended to guide charities in sustainable fundraising techniques that maximise revenue, ultimately leading to better outcomes for the causes championed by charitable organisations.

Charities engage in emotional appeals in an effort to increase both the quantity and magnitude of donations (Basil et al., 2008). Early consumer behaviour research based on the behaviourist tradition showed that emotions influence consumer spending decisions (Watson, 1922), and more recent research supports the assertion that donor decision-making operates in a similar way (Hibbert & Horne, 1997). To better understand the process through which donors make donation decisions, Hibbert and Horne (1997) gathered qualitative information during four group discussions on charitable giving. They found that rather than using extended problem solving strategies to make donation decisions, the participants tended to engage in less rational decision-making processes, often acting out of emotion rather than logic. Even in the case of large donations, extended problem solving involving extensive information gathering and risk minimisation was typically shunned in favour of limited problem solving or the use of heuristics. Emotional appeals exploit this predisposition to simplify the decision-making process by providing donors with emotional triggers that justify quick and easy donations. By encouraging loose change donations equivalent to the price of a

cup of coffee or allowing the charity to withdraw a small amount of money from the donor's bank account every month, and providing a justification for taking such an action, charities can simplify the decision-making process, which may increase compliance. Once a relationship has been formed, the higher the degree of trust between the donor and the charity, the more likely the donor is to engage in routine response behaviour and donate to the charity whenever they are prompted to do so (Hibbert & Horne, 1997). In keeping with these findings, Bennett (2009) found that including pictorial and verbal emotive elements on a webpage increased the number of donations by 31%.

The Effects of Social Approval, Empowerment and Guilt on Donor Behaviour.

Based on the contents of recent charitable appeals, the present study explored the influence of social approval, empowerment and guilt on donor behaviour and trust. In this context social approval referred to the positive feeling one derives from being looked favourably upon by one's peer group. Empowerment is also a positive emotion and occurs when an individual is equipped with the resources to effect change in their chosen domain and believes that their actions will make a difference. In contrast, guilt is a predominantly negative feeling which stems from the knowledge that one has deviated from, or failed to live up to, one's own ideals in thought or action (Coulter & Pinto, 1995).

Social Approval

There is evidence that some charitable behaviour may be motivated by a need to avoid disdain or obtain social approval (Ariely, Bracha & Meier, 2009; Becker, 1974; Harbaugh, 1998; Reyniers & Bhalla, 2013). People are more likely to donate to charity when other people in their reference group do (Sugden, 1984), and Bekkers and Wiepking (2011a) reported that the higher the potential social rewards, the higher the chance that people will

donate to a cause. Charities wishing to capitalise on people's desire for social approval provide potential donors with opportunities to gain such approval through the use of both online and offline social fundraising techniques (Meer & Rosen, 2011). On social giving sites, campaign organisers and previous donors provide positive reinforcement to new donors in the form of comments or status updates, promoting donating as an admirable activity and showing potential donors that generosity is rewarded. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis was put forward:

Hypothesis 1. When a donation button includes trigger text designed to emphasise the social rewards of donating, compliance rates will be higher than in the control condition.

Because the experimental manipulation in this condition connected the act of donating with social admiration, a positive phenomenon, the participant was expected to feel positively towards the charity by association. Therefore the second hypothesis was as follows:

Hypothesis 2. When a donation button includes trigger text designed to emphasise the social rewards of donating, participants will exhibit increased trust in the charity compared to those in the control condition.

Empowerment

Donating has been shown to have emotional benefits for donors (Aknin et al., 2010). Campaigns which use slogans such as, "your dollar can feed a child", or "you can restore sight to the blind", are attempting to gain donations by simultaneously highlighting a need and empowering donors to help. Cialdini, Darby and Vincent (1973) argue in their negative-state relief model that donors experience a state of aversive arousal when they are confronted with a sad situation, and that they want to remedy the situation as a way of alleviating their negative feelings. The technique works by enabling donors to feel that they can help improve the circumstances of a person or animal in need by donating. Empowering people in such a

way provides them with a means of escaping their negative feelings and reaching a positive mood state. Based on this, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3. Participants in the empowerment condition will have a higher compliance rate and larger donation amounts than participants in the control condition.

Similarly to those in the social approval condition, empowered participants were expected associate their positive feelings with the charity. Therefore hypothesis four stated the following:

Hypothesis 4. Participants in the empowerment condition will have higher trust in the charity than participants in the control condition.

Guilt

Charities frequently use appeals designed to elicit feelings of guilt as a means of soliciting donations (Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997). Although the negative-state relief model discussed earlier would appear to predict high compliance rates and generous donation amounts as a means of alleviating the negative mood state brought on by guilt, the reality is more complex. Guilt is an effective enforcer of religious morality, and influences behaviour in interpersonal relationships (Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 1994; Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991), but is less effective as a motivator for charitable behaviour (Dillard, Kinney & Cruz, 1996; Coulter & Pinto, 1995).

According to reactance theory, when people believe that someone is trying to manipulate their feelings in a negative manner in order to gain something from them, they feel threatened and turn against the person or organisation responsible (Brehm, 1966). This theory is supported by the findings of Englis (1990) and Pinto and Priest (1991) who found that advertisements containing guilt-provoking elements unwittingly also provoked anger and contempt. Charitable giving is perceived as a voluntary activity and being made to feel guilty

violates the expectation of free choice with regards to donating (Radley & Kennedy, 1995), leading to reactance. Therefore the fifth hypothesis asserted the following:

Hypothesis 5. Participants in the guilt condition will have low compliance rates and low donation amounts compared to the control condition.

Finally, because reactance is associated with distancing behaviours, the last hypothesis was as follows:

Hypothesis 6. Participants in the guilt condition will exhibit lower trust in the charity compared to the control condition.

In summary, the aim of this study was to explore the effects of three different emotional triggers on compliance rates, donation amounts and charity trust. Six hypotheses were proposed in an effort to better understand how to influence donor affect and behaviour in the context of an online donating platform.

Method

Participants and Sampling

The participants were recruited via an on-campus print advertisement (shown in Appendix A). Participation was voluntary and participants were randomly assigned to an experimental condition. To prevent confounding effects, only participants who had not participated in any related studies on charitable giving were eligible to take part. The participants were 80 students enrolled at the University of Canterbury. Over all conditions there were 31 males and 49 females, and they ranged in age from 17 to 50 ($M=23.91$ $SD=6.04$). The demographic information for participants in each condition is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Information for Participants by Condition

| | Control | Empowerment | Guilt | Social approval |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Males | 9 | 5 | 11 | 6 |
| Females | 11 | 14 | 9 | 15 |
| Mean age | 23.50 (SD=5.97) | 25.68 (SD=8.17) | 24.05 (SD=5.93) | 22.57 (SD=3.43) |
| <i>N</i> = | 20 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

Materials

Experimental Stimuli

A mock-up website homepage was created using a screenshot of a New Zealand based non-profit's homepage. The charity agreed to the use of their materials for experimental purposes and was identified in all instructions, homepages, and survey items, however to maintain anonymity the charity will not be named here. The experimental homepage was identical across experimental conditions, except for the design of the donation button. The homepage contained information about the charity and how donations are used, a condition-dependent donation button, and a 'no thanks' button. The charity's logo was at the top of the page and the buttons were positioned near the centre of the screen. Red buttons were chosen to align with the charity's existing colour scheme and branding.

The donation buttons (shown in Figure 1) comprised the independent variable in the experiment and were created using Photoshop. The phrases that formed the basis of the independent variable manipulation were chosen based on previous research in this area. To induce *guilt*, the phrase "You should help" was chosen and paired with "Donate now". The use of this pairing was supported by the research of Coulter and Pinto (1995) who found that such manipulations could induce guilt in potential donors by emphasising that the participant should make a responsible choice by taking a particular action. In the *empowerment* condition, the phrase "You can help" was linked with the previous call to action. Basil, Ridgeway and Basil (2008) reported that a text manipulation which informed participants that they were able to help increased feelings of self-efficacy in potential donors, increasing donation intentions through empowerment. For the *social approval* condition, the text, "People like generous people" was used. This manipulation was selected based on the work of Muehleman, Bruker, and Ingram (1976) who found that people admired people they perceived to be generous and that they would behave in a more generous manner when this

fact was made salient to them. The phrases in each experimental condition were positioned above “Donate Now” on the donation button. The donation button in the control condition contained only the call to action, (i.e. “Donate Now”) without any emotional trigger.



Figure 1. Donation buttons for the experimental and control conditions.

Scales

To heighten methodological soundness, variables relevant to donor behaviour such as altruism, dispositional trust, past donation behaviour, familiarity with the charity, and susceptibility to social desirability bias were measured to ensure there were no between-group differences. Altruism is strongly linked to charitable giving (e.g. Piliavin & Callero, 1991; Piferi, Jobe, & Jones, 2006) and refers to the extent of an individual’s concern for the welfare of others (Costa, McCrae & Dye, 1991). Dispositional trust has been found to influence individual’s perceptions of charity trustworthiness (Mayer et al., 1995), and reflects an individual’s propensity to believe that others are reliable, honest and capable. Past donation behaviour is defined as the number of times an individual has donated money to any charity in the past twelve months. Familiarity with the charity is the extent of a person’s knowledge about the charity’s mission and operations, and has the potential to affect the generalisability of the results. Social desirability bias is an individual’s tendency to behave in a way that they believe will be viewed favourably by others. For example, an individual may overstate their generosity when discussing their previous donation behaviour with a researcher. Alternatively, participants who exhibit social desirability bias may donate more in

the context of the experiment than they typically would in their real lives. Both of these issues may result in skewed data so it is an important variable to control for.

An online survey was created using Qualtrics software (www.qualtrics.com). During the experiment, the software recorded the compliance rate and donation amount. The following items and scales were used to assess demographic information, past donation behaviour, familiarity with the charity, charity trust, dispositional trust, social desirability bias and altruism. The survey questions are presented in Appendix B.

Past Donation Behaviour and Familiarity with the Charity

Past donation behaviour was assessed using two items, “In the past 12 months, how many times have you donated to charity?” and, “Before today, had you ever donated to the Charity X?”. Participants responded to the first item by selecting a number from a dropdown menu, and selected ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for the second item. Familiarity with the charity was measured using a single item: “Before today, how familiar were you with the services offered by Charity X?”. Participants responded to this item using a 4-point Likert scale (where 1= *not at all familiar* and 4= *extremely familiar*).

Charity Trust

Charity trust was measured using the 5-item scale developed by Sargeant, Ford and West (2006). Example items include “I would trust this non-profit to use donated funds appropriately”, and “I would trust this non-profit to always act in the best interest of the cause”. The scale was scored by summing the ratings and dividing the product by the number of items. A higher score is indicative of higher trust in the charity. Sargeant et al. (2006) reported a coefficient alpha of .94. In this study the co-efficient alpha was .89. Chronbach’s alpha could not be improved thorough item deletion so all items were retained.

Dispositional Trust

Dispositional trust was measured using the 10-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool (2009). Each item was preceded by the stem, "I tend to see myself as someone who...". Example items are "trusts others" and "suspects hidden motives in others". Six of the items were positively keyed and four negatively keyed. After reverse-coding the negatively keyed item responses, the scale was scored by summing the ratings and dividing the product by the number of items. A higher score means higher dispositional trust. McCrae, Kurtz, Yamagata and Terracciano (2011) reported a test-retest reliability coefficient of .83 for the scale. The International Item Personality Pool (2009) reported a coefficient alpha of .82. In keeping with those findings, in this study the co-efficient alpha was .83. The alpha could not be improved thorough item deletion so all items were retained.

Social Desirability Bias

Social desirability bias was measured using eight items adapted from Lee and Sargeant's (2011) social desirability scale. This scale uses a multi-faceted approach to assess social desirability bias by measuring self-deception, intrinsic benefit and social norm influence, and was developed specifically for use during charitable giving studies. An example item from the self-deception component is "I believe I give more to Charity X than many Charity X supporters". Example items loading on the intrinsic benefit factor include "If I never gave to Charity X I would feel bad about myself" and "Donating to Charity X makes me feel good. "I like to support causes that I know many other people support" is an item from the social norm influence component of the scale. The scale was scored by summing the ratings for each factor and dividing the product by the number of items measuring that factor. Higher scores across the three factors provided evidence that the participant was likely to be responding in a

socially desirable manner. Lee and Sargeant (2011) reported a coefficient alpha of .74 for the self-deception component, .76 for the intrinsic benefit component, and .75 for the component assessing social norm influence. In this study the co-efficient alphas were .83 for social norm influence, .75 for intrinsic benefit and .43 for the self-deception component. None of the alphas could be improved through item deletion. Based on these results the social norm influence and intrinsic benefit scales were retained, and responses to the two items measuring self-deception were not analysed due to a lack of internal consistency.

Altruism

Altruism was measured using a 10-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool (2009). Each item was preceded by the stem, "I tend to see myself as someone who...". Example items are "loves to help others" and "looks down on others". Five of the items were positively keyed and five were negatively keyed. After reverse-coding the negatively keyed item responses, the scale was scored by summing the ratings and dividing the product by the number of items. A higher score means a higher degree of altruism. McCrae et al. (2011) reported test-retest reliability coefficient of .75 for the scale. The International Item Personality Pool (2009) reported a coefficient alpha of .77. Similarly, in this study the co-efficient alpha was .79. Internal consistency could not be improved thorough item deletion so all items were retained.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables were the compliance rate, donation amount, and charity trust. The compliance rate is the percentage of participants who donated any money during the experiment and the donation amount is the magnitude of the donation made. Participants were given \$10 prior to the experiment as remuneration, and thus donations ranged from \$0

to \$10 and increased in \$1 increments. Charity trust refers to the degree to which the participant trusted the charity in question. Qualtrics recorded compliance rates and donation amounts, and charity trust was measured using the scale by Sargeant et al. (2006) discussed above.

Procedure

Prior to beginning the study, the participant was given an information sheet (see Appendix C) and asked to fill out a consent form (see Appendix D). All participants provided written consent and were given ten \$1 coins. The payment had the dual purpose of acting as an incentive and enabling all participants to fully participate in the study by ensuring that they had money they could donate from, regardless of personal financial situation. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions using a random number table. Next, the participant was seated at a computer and viewed a screen containing the following instructions:

The study will take approximately ten minutes to complete and you have been given \$10 for your participation. During the study you will have an opportunity to view the homepage of Charity X's website. Once you have viewed the page, you may choose to click on either the 'donate' button or the 'no thanks' button. You must click on one of the buttons. If you choose to donate please place the amount you would like to donate into the envelope in front of you. Following this decision you will be asked to complete a short survey. If you choose to make a donation, one hundred percent of your donation will be given to Charity X.

After the participant indicated that they had read and understood the instructions by clicking 'I understand', a mock-up of the charity's homepage with a condition-dependent donation button and a 'no thanks' button appeared onscreen. The homepage remained onscreen until the participant clicked on one of the buttons. If the participant clicked the

donation button a screen asking them to type their donation amount into a free-form textbox was displayed, and they were instructed to place their donation into the envelope on the desk in front of them. After the participant entered the amount they wished to donate the first page of the survey was displayed onscreen. The demographic questions always appeared first, followed by five randomly ordered pages containing the scales measuring the control variables and charity trust. If the participant clicked the “No thank you” button on the homepage, indicating that they did not wish to donate, the first page of the survey was displayed immediately and the computer recorded their donation amount as \$0. There was no time limit for the survey, and the entire procedure took each participant about ten minutes to complete. When the participant had answered all survey items a “Thank you” screen was displayed, informing them that the experiment was over.

Design

The study used a between-groups experimental design, and was approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee. The emotional trigger embedded in the donation button denoted the three levels of the independent variable. Each trigger was designed to invoke feelings of *guilt*, *empowerment*, or *social approval*. A single control condition was also used, and each experimental condition was compared to this control condition. The dependent variables were the compliance rate, donation amount, and the degree to which the participant trusted the charity. Altruism, dispositional trust, the tendency to display socially desirable behaviour, familiarity with the charity and past donation behaviour were also measured to control for between group differences in these dimensions. In order to control for common method variance, the order of the scales used to measure the control variables was counterbalanced across participants. All scales were responded to using a 5-point Likert scale (where 1= *strongly disagree* and 5= *strongly agree*).

Results

To determine whether dispositional trust, altruism, and the two facets of social desirability act as covariates, affecting the relationship between donation amount and charity trust, Pearson product moment correlations were calculated. The relationships between the variables can be seen in Table 2. In line with previous research (e.g., Burt & Williams, 2014), altruism and dispositional trust were positively correlated, as were charity trust and dispositional trust. As expected, social norm influence was positively correlated with charity trust, dispositional trust and intrinsic benefit, and intrinsic benefit was also positively correlated with charity trust and donation amount.

Table 2.

Correlations between Altruism, Charity Trust, Dispositional Trust, Donation Amount, Social Norm Influence, and Intrinsic Benefit.

| | Altruism | Charity Trust | Dispositional Trust | Social Norm Influence | Intrinsic Benefit |
|-----------------------|----------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Charity Trust | .13 | | | | |
| Dispositional Trust | .53** | .24* | | | |
| Social Norm Influence | .18 | .30** | .26* | | |
| Intrinsic Benefit | .15 | .26* | .20 | .37** | |
| Donation Amount | .23* | .29* | .19 | -.04 | .30** |

Note. ** correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). * correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). N=80.

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics by condition for compliance rate, donation amount, charity trust, dispositional trust, altruism, familiarity with the charity, previous donating behaviour, and the two facets of social desirability. Although participants were randomly assigned to conditions, it is important to ensure that the participants in each condition are equivalent in terms of the control variables. The ANOVA comparisons in Table 4 show that the four groups are not significantly different in terms of altruism, dispositional trust, familiarity, previous donating behaviour and the two facets of social desirability. However, based on the correlations shown in Table 2, dispositional trust, altruism, social

norm influence, and intrinsic benefit were included as covariates during subsequent analyses to control for their effects.

Table 3.
Unadjusted Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Control Variables by Condition.

| | Control | Empowerment | Guilt | Social Approval |
|-----------------------------|---------|-------------|--------|-----------------|
| Compliance rate | 60.00% | 57.89% | 40.00% | 47.62% |
| Donation amount | | | | |
| Mean | \$3.70 | \$2.84 | \$2.25 | \$2.57 |
| SD | \$4.41 | \$3.66 | \$3.68 | \$3.87 |
| Charity Trust | | | | |
| Mean | 3.84 | 3.99 | 4.09 | 3.95 |
| SD | .65 | .51 | .67 | .83 |
| Dispositional Trust | | | | |
| Mean | 3.69 | 3.47 | 3.56 | 3.63 |
| SD | .47 | .54 | .55 | .58 |
| Altruism | | | | |
| Mean | 4.05 | 3.93 | 3.84 | 3.88 |
| SD | .46 | .30 | .40 | .57 |
| Familiarity | | | | |
| Mean | 2.15 | 2.11 | 2.15 | 1.86 |
| SD | .88 | .88 | .75 | 1.06 |
| Previous donating behaviour | | | | |
| Mean | 4.45 | 4.89 | 11.25 | 3.90 |
| SD | 11.49 | 8.21 | 25.02 | 4.44 |
| Social Norm Influence | | | | |
| Mean | 3.10 | 2.86 | 2.87 | 2.98 |
| SD | .87 | .88 | .71 | .75 |
| Intrinsic Benefit | | | | |
| Mean | 3.18 | 2.82 | 2.78 | 2.98 |
| SD | .75 | .86 | .74 | .72 |
| N | 20 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

Table 4.
ANOVA Comparisons between Conditions for the Control Variables.

| | ANOVA comparison |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dispositional trust | $F(3,76) = .64, p = .59$ |
| Altruism | $F(3,76) = .85, p = .47$ |
| Social Norm Influence | $F(3,76) = .39, p = .76$ |
| Intrinsic Benefit | $F(3,76) = 1.12, p = .35$ |
| Familiarity | $F(3,76) = .51, p = .68$ |
| Previous donating behaviour | $F(3,76) = 1.13, p = .34$ |

Because participants were randomly assigned to conditions, and the cell sizes are unequal, it is appropriate to use a parametric test such as ANCOVA to analyse the differences in group means. Levene's test showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated at the $p = .01$ significance level. A one-way between subjects ANCOVA was conducted to compare the effects of different emotional triggers on donation amount in the empowerment, guilt, and social approval conditions, controlling for altruism, dispositional trust and social desirability, with the control condition. Table 5 shows the covariate-adjusted means and standard errors. Contrary to hypothesis 1, no significant difference was found between the control group and the empowerment group on donation amount ($F(1,33) = .24$, $p=.79$). There was also no significant difference between the donation amounts of the control group and the guilt group ($F(1, 34) = .16$, $p=.85$), so hypothesis 3 was not supported. Similarly hypothesis 5 was not supported by the finding that the control and social approval groups did not differ by donation amount ($F(1, 35) = .16$, $p=.85$). These results indicate that participants in the empowerment and social approval conditions did not donate significantly more, and participants in the guilt condition did not donate significantly less than those in the control condition.

Table 5.
Adjusted Means and Standard Errors of Donation Amount by Condition.

| | Control | Empowerment | Guilt | Social Approval |
|-----------------|---------|-------------|--------|-----------------|
| Donation amount | | | | |
| Mean | \$3.22 | \$3.02 | \$2.57 | \$2.57 |
| SE | \$.84 | \$.87 | \$.83 | \$.81 |
| N | 20 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

A one-way between subjects ANCOVA was conducted to compare the effects of different emotional triggers on charity trust in the empowerment, guilt, and social approval conditions with the control condition, controlling for altruism, dispositional trust and social desirability bias. The covariate-adjusted means are presented in Table 6. No significant differences were observed in terms of charity trust between the control and empowerment

groups ($F(1, 33) = 1.43, p=.25$), so hypothesis 2 was not supported. Contrary to hypothesis 4, the difference in charity trust between the participants in the control group and those in the guilt condition was not significant ($F(1, 34) = 1.82, p=.17$). There was also no significant difference found between the control and social approval groups ($F(1, 35) = 1.92, p=.15$), this result being contrary to hypothesis 6. These results indicate that the emotional manipulations had no effect on the degree to which participants trusted the charity.

Table 6.

Adjusted Means and Standard Errors of Charity Trust by Condition.

| | Control | Empowerment | Guilt | Social Approval |
|---------------|---------|-------------|-------|-----------------|
| Charity Trust | | | | |
| Mean | 3.75 | 4.05 | 4.14 | 3.93 |
| SE | .15 | .15 | .14 | .14 |
| N | 20 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

To determine whether the different manipulations had an effect on donation compliance, binomial tests of proportional difference were conducted between the control and experimental conditions. Binomial tests of proportional difference were appropriate to use in this situation because the design protocol used random assignment, the samples were independent, and each sample contained sufficient donated and did not donate cases to reveal significant differences between groups if any existed. The greatest difference in donation compliance occurred between the guilt and control conditions (40% and 60%, respectively), however a binomial test of proportional difference showed that these groups were not significantly different at the $p = .05$ significance level (2-tailed) ($Z=1.27, p=.21$). Similarly, the difference in compliance between the empowerment and control conditions (57.89% and 60%, respectively) was not significant ($Z = .13, p=.90$), nor was the difference between the social approval and control conditions (47.62% and 60%, respectively) ($Z = .77, p=.44$). This lack of significant differences indicated that the type of emotional trigger contained in each donation button was not likely to be affecting compliance rates.

Lastly, because of the lack of significant differences between conditions with regards to donation amount, charity trust, and compliance, the overall compliant and non-complaint groups were constructed (ignoring experimental condition) and were compared in an effort to replicate previous findings. The descriptive statistics for these two groups are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7.
Means and Standard Deviations for the Compliant and Non-Compliant Groups for each variable.

| | Compliant | Non-Compliant |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Donation amount | | |
| Mean | \$5.54 | \$0.00 |
| SD | \$3.80 | \$0.00 |
| Charity Trust | | |
| Mean | 4.11 | 3.82 |
| SD | .56 | .76 |
| Dispositional Trust | | |
| Mean | 3.67 | 3.50 |
| SD | .48 | .57 |
| Altruism | | |
| Mean | 4.05 | 3.79 |
| SD | .45 | .41 |
| Familiarity | | |
| Mean | 2.22 | 1.90 |
| SD | .88 | .88 |
| Previous donating behaviour | | |
| Mean | 9.00 | 3.08 |
| SD | 18.84 | 6.93 |
| Social Norm Influence | | |
| Mean | 2.96 | 2.95 |
| SD | .86 | .74 |
| Intrinsic Benefit | | |
| Mean | 3.19 | 2.69 |
| SD | .79 | .66 |
| <i>N</i> | 41.00 | 39.00 |

As expected, a one-way ANOVA showed that altruism had a significant effect on compliance ($F(1, 78) = 6.94, p=.01$), as did charity trust ($F(1, 78) = 3.76, p=.05$). The effect of dispositional trust was not significant ($F(1, 78) = 1.95, p=.17$). With regards to the two facets of socially desirable behaviour, although social norm influence had no effect on compliance, intrinsic benefit did have a significant effect ($F(1, 78) = 9.21, p=.00$). These

results, which replicate previous findings, suggest that the lack of significant differences between the conditions is likely to be a true finding, as opposed to being caused by methodological errors or some unique and unusual aspect of the sample.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to compare the effects of three emotional triggers on donor compliance, donation amount and trust in the charity. The research protocol tested six hypotheses regarding the effects of incorporating emotional triggers into an online donating platform. Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 related to the effects of the emotional triggers on compliance rates and donation amounts and are discussed first. Hypotheses 2, 4, and 6 related to the effects of the triggers on charity trust and are discussed second.

With regards to hypothesis 1, the compliance rate of participants in the social approval condition did not differ significantly from those in the control condition so the first hypothesis was not supported. Similarly, no significant differences were observed in terms of compliance and donation amount between the empowerment and control conditions, indicating a lack of support for hypothesis 3. Although the results trended in the expected direction, compliance rates and donation amounts in the guilt condition were not significantly lower than in the control condition. Therefore hypothesis five was not supported. With regards to the effect of the emotional triggers on charity trust, no significant differences were found. This result is contrary to hypotheses 2, 4 and 6, which predicted that social approval and empowerment would increase trust, while guilt would decrease it. Overall, although the results generally followed the expected trends, the lack of statistical significance indicates that these differences are likely due to chance.

Although the hypotheses were not supported, the results replicated previous findings in terms of the positive effect of charity trust and altruism on the compliance rate. Additionally,

as observed in past studies (e.g., Burt & Williams, 2014), altruism and dispositional trust were positively correlated, as were charity trust and dispositional trust. These replications strengthen the interpretation of the results as indicative of the emotional triggers having no effect on the dependent variables, as opposed a methodological issue causing the lack of significance and a subsequent type 2 error.

While statistically significant outcomes are heavily favoured by top psychology journals (Fanelli, 2010), reporting non-significant results is important because doing so contributes to the creation of a representative account of the current state of knowledge in the field. The reporting of non-significant results helps to reduce the file drawer effect, a phenomenon whereby the available knowledge on a topic is restricted through the inclusion of only studies in which significant results were found (Rosenthal, 1979). The file drawer effect may result in biased knowledge because statistically significant studies may differ in important ways from the non-published studies (Scargle, 2000). Scientific research is the pursuit of truth, a pursuit that benefits from access to the widest possible range of information. Therefore, even non-significant results should be reported because they have the potential to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

The findings that trust in the charity and altruism affect compliance are in keeping with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Piferi, Jobe, & Jones, 2006; Piliavin & Callero, 1991). One way charities can develop trust is through intelligent web design (Burt, 2014). Webpages that contain information outlining the organisation's knowledge, skills and abilities can make a prospective donor feel more confident that the charity will use their donation effectively. Including information about the percentage of each donation that aids the cause, and the percentage that is used for administration purposes increases transparency. This can heighten trust provided that the donor deems the division of funds acceptable. Making browsers aware of the good the charity has accomplished through past donations can also increase trust in the

charity. In particular, pairing a depiction of the need for aid with evidence of the organisation's response is an especially effective way of increasing trust (Burt & Dunham, 2009). Overall the present findings support the conclusions that trust and altruism affect charitable giving, and strengthens the recommendations of previous researchers who suggested charities should increase trust as a way of improving compliance rates (e.g., Burt & Dunham, 2009; Burt & Gibbons, 2011).

This study adds to the literature on charities' use of emotional appeals by suggesting that situating these particular textual triggers in donation buttons has no effect on compliance, donation amounts, or trust. Practically speaking, the lack of significant differences between conditions may be a positive finding for charities using guilt as a means of inducing charitable behaviour. Although it was predicted that using guilt as a trigger would elicit reactance from participants, lowering compliance and donation amounts, participants in the guilt condition were not significantly less generous or trusting than participants in the control condition. This finding indicates that charities using guilt appeals may not be significantly reducing their potential earnings or damaging the relationship between themselves and potential donors. On the other hand, the results should not be read as encouraging charities to adopt guilt provoking appeal strategies.

Strengths and Limitations

The present study had three main limitations: the use of self-reported data, threats to ecological validity, and potential issues related to the manipulations. The study used self-reported data to assess altruism, dispositional trust, charity trust, past donation behaviour and familiarity with the charity. Participants' responses may have included intentional or unintentional distortions (i.e. dishonesty or memory lapses), adversely affecting validity and leading to biased results. Social desirability bias is of particular concern when dealing with

self-reported data, however in this case the inclusion of a social desirability scale allowed us to determine that participants were unlikely to be intentionally distorting their responses in an attempt to appear more favourably. Self-reported data is often relied upon when assessing psychological variables such as altruism and dispositional trust (e.g., Burt & Dunham, 2009; Burt & Gibbons, 2011; Burt & Williams, 2014), and was deemed to be the only practical way of measuring these variables.

A second concern was the effect of using a student sample on the ecological validity of the study. Ecological validity is the degree to which the participants, procedure, stimuli and setting of the experiment mirror the real-world context under investigation (Brewer, 2000). Although the use of students precludes generalising the results to other populations, students have been shown to engage in charitable behaviour (e.g., Burt & Williams, 2014) and are a population of interest to charities. Students are typically tech-savvy, are early adopters of new technology, and are heavy Internet users (Jones, 2002), suggesting they are likely to be among the first to donate via new online platforms, justifying research into how to influence their behaviour in the context of online donations.

Previous research (e.g. Burt & Gibbons, 2011; Burt & Popple, 1998) shows that students engage in charitable behaviour, both in real life and within experimental contexts. The present results support these conclusions, suggesting that for charitable giving research, students are an appropriate pool from which to draw a sample. Additionally the findings support the method of Burt and Williams (2014), who used a student sample for a study into online donation behaviour. Because the present research protocol incorporated an online donating platform, and the compliance rate was similar to Burt and Williams', it is suggested that not only is it appropriate to use students as participants in traditional charitable giving studies, but it is also appropriate to use such a sample in studies investigating online donation behaviour, a relatively new field of inquiry.

A third concern related to the efficacy of the manipulations. Although there was no check during this experiment to ensure that experimental stimuli elicited the expected emotions, the stimuli were checked and used successfully during previous research as outlined in the method section. Therefore it is believed that this does not pose a significant threat to the validity of the study. A related concern, however, is the placement of the stimuli in the experimental timeline. Decision-making as a process involves the perception and evaluation of stimuli, followed by the selection of a course of action or the maintenance of the status quo. In a one-time decision-making situation such as the present study, a stimulus must enter an individual's train of cognition before they make a decision in order to influence their behaviour. Prior to being exposed to the donation buttons, participants viewed a page containing instructions. Part of the instructions informed the participants that they would have an opportunity to donate during the experiment. It is possible that participants made the decision about whether or not to donate at that point, prior to observing any experimental stimuli. The timing of stimulus presentation could explain why similar emotional triggers produced changes in behaviour in previous studies but not this one. While it is not practical or ethical to run the experiment without including instructions, future studies could explore the effects of this limitation by moving the manipulation onto the instruction screen. Alternatively, a real-world test could be conducted using a live website and comparing the compliance rates of different versions of the donation page. Such a study would require access to a charity's website, and would be limited by a lack of information about the participant pool, but could shed some light on the importance of the timing of the manipulation.

The present study had several strengths. Firstly, the experimental design with a control group and random assignment to conditions enabled us to establish cause and effect relationships between the independent and dependent variables, had these been present.

Additionally, the high level of control over the lab setting results in a study that is easy to replicate, meaning that future researchers could replicate the results. Secondly, participants did not know that they would be asked to donate during the experiment until they had agreed to participate. This avoids a selection bias in which participants choose to take part based on their desire to donate to charity. By not disclosing the information until participants have agreed to take part, there is no reason to believe that the people in our sample are more likely to donate than people in the greater student population. By collecting real donations, rather than only measuring participants' intentions to donate, we were able to assess actual donating behaviour and avoid the results being skewed by the reporting of intentions to donate that would not necessarily translate to real-world donations. Lastly, the sample size offered sufficient power to detect differences between groups if there were any, lowering the potential for a type 2 error (Shevlin & Miles, 2000). Coupled with the replication of previous findings, this makes it more likely that the manipulations truly had no effect.

In conclusion, the present study compared the effects of three emotional triggers on donor compliance, donation amount and trust in the charity. The hypotheses were not supported, however findings regarding the affects of charity trust and altruism on compliance replicated the results of previous studies. This study also contributed to the literature on the use of students as a sample in charitable giving research. The main limitation of the study related to the timing of the presentation of the experimental stimuli, and future research could address this issue. Overall, given the growing proportion of donations that take place online, donor behaviour with regards to online donation platforms is an important field of study and offers many opportunities for researchers to provide value to charitable organisations.

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Appendix A

\$10

\$10

Participants Wanted!

Please give 10 minutes of your time to help me with my dissertation.

Participation involves viewing a website and completing a short survey.

To arrange a time to take part, please contact me using the details below.

You will be compensated for your time ☺

Unfortunately, STAR students are not included in this study.

Stella's Awesome Experiment.
Text/ call: 08781 72201 or email:
stella.seyb@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

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Appendix B

Demographic, Familiarity and Past Donation Behaviour Items

What is your gender?

How old are you?

In the past 12 months, how many times have you donated to charity?

Before today, had you ever donated to Charity X?

Before today, how familiar were you with the services offered by Charity X?

Charity Trust

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I would trust this non-profit to always act in the best interest of the cause.

I would trust this non-profit to conduct their operations ethically.

I would trust this non-profit to use donated funds appropriately.

I would trust this non-profit not to exploit their donors.

I would trust this non-profit to use fundraising techniques that are appropriate and sensitive.

Dispositional Trust

I tend to see myself as someone who...

Trusts others.

Believes that others have good intentions.

Trusts what people say.

Believes that people are basically moral.

Believes in human goodness.

Thinks that all will be well.

Distrusts people.

Suspects hidden motives in others.

Is wary of others.

Believes that people are essentially evil.

Altruism

I tend to see myself as someone who...

Makes people feel welcome.

Anticipates the needs of others.

Loves to help others.

Is concerned about others.

Has a good word for everyone.

Looks down on others.

Is indifferent to the feelings of others.

Makes people feel uncomfortable.

Turns my back on others.

Takes no time for others.

Intrinsic Benefit

Donating to Charity X makes me feel good.

I give to Charity X because I would feel guilty if I didn't.

If I never gave to Charity X I would feel bad about myself.

Social Norm Influence

I like to support causes that I know many other people support.

I like to support causes that are well known.

I like to support a cause that is well recognised by others.

Self-deception

I believe I give more to Charity X than many Charity X supporters.

I would describe myself as a very generous person.

Appendix C

Psychology Department
Telephone: +64 3 364 2987 ext. 7187
Email: stella.seyb@pg.canterbury.ac.nz
20/05/14



Web-based Donating Study Information Sheet for Participants

My name is Stella Seyb and I am a Masters student at the University of Canterbury. The purpose of this study is to investigate web-based donating behaviour.

Your involvement in this project will involve viewing a charity's website and completing a short survey. During the session you will have the opportunity to make a real donation using cash that will be provided to you. The experiment will take approximately ten minutes.

In the performance of the tasks and application of the procedures there are no risks to you.

You may receive a copy of the project results by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. If you withdraw before October 15th 2014, I will remove all information relating to you. After this point data removal becomes impossible.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, your name will not be attached to any data you provide, and the data will be securely stored on Qualtrics. It will be password-protected and my supervisors and myself will be the only ones to have access to it. The data will be destroyed after five years.

A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library. The research may also be published in academic journals.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for the MSc in Applied Psychology by Stella Seyb under the supervision of Chris Burt and Katharina Naswall, who can be contacted at christopher.burt@canterbury.ac.nz and katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return it to the researcher before taking part.

Appendix D

Stella Seyb
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Web-based Donating Study Consent Form for Participants

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.

I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and her supervisors, and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that I am able to receive a report on the findings of the study by contacting the researcher at the conclusion of the project.

I understand that I can contact Stella Seyb (stella.seyb@pg.canterbury.ac.nz), Chris Burt (christopher.burt@canterbury.ac.nz) or Katharina Naswall (katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz) for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

By signing below, it signifies that I have received my \$10 cash payment

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to me before beginning the experiment.

Stella Seyb