Abstract

In times of crises and subsiding government support, choosing the most effective advertising message appeal in motivating donation behavior is fundamental to charity success. This study investigates the relative effectiveness of popular culture celebrities (PCC) and religious celebrities (RC) as two message appeals in motivating donation intentions intended for a ‘child suffering’ donation campaign among Kuwaiti donors. The two message appeals were presented in alternated order to a sample of 385 potential donors and the data was used to test the conceptual model using MANOVA, CFA and Structural Equation Modeling. The results showed that the type of emotions evoked (negative and positive), and emotional intensity (strong/weak) differed between the two ad appeals. Intensely evoked emotion was positively associated with ad favorability, and the latter was also found to be an antecedent of donation intentions. Conclusions and practical implications are presented and discussed.

Keywords  Charity message framing · Nonprofit Organizations · Celebrity endorsement · Philanthropic behavior · Donation intention · Emotional response

1 Introduction

An integral activity of nonprofit organizations is to create effective marketing communication to garner financial support for their causes. At the heart of all communication activities lies the critical role of message appeal in attracting and motivating donations (Siemens et al., 2020; Tao et al., 2021). However, the economic challenges facing private sector entities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in...
charities struggling to compensate for the loss in their donation pool by appealing to individual donors who may be less affected by the economic slowdown. Even as charities devote significant fundraising activities to increasing their donation pool, potential donors are becoming less responsive to solicitation activities through real and virtual mediums (Salido-Andres et al., 2021), and the level of intentional message-skipping is both high and alarming (Jeon et al., 2019; Tuchman et al., 2018).

The use of celebrities in advertising dates back to the end of the 18th century but has gained wide acceptance in the past three decades (Fleck et al., 2012). In philanthropic communication, celebrities often play dual roles: as high-profile donors contributing directly to the donation pool and as cause-endorsers, where they continue to garner strong message attention and influence recipients’ emotions to obtain strong giving responses (Ilicic & Baxter, 2014; Panic et al., 2016). This is important as these human brands can cut through the advertising clutter and offer to the public a high-profile positive behavior that can be mimicked and adopted by fans and followers in donating to the cause (Choi et al., 2020). Numerous studies have been dedicated to understanding how celebrities can be employed for a cause (for a review, see Halder et al., 2021).

While the term celebrity indicates positive fame for a person that commands idolization, respect, and fondness, there can be different types of celebrities when marketers have to make a choice. For the purpose of this research, the use of celebrities in advertising in the Arab world in general, and the Arabian Peninsula in particular, can be classified into two main categories: Popular Culture Celebrities (PCC), which include actors, athletes, singers, writers and general media celebrities (Jerzyk & Wyczynski, 2016; Joseph & Wearing, 2014); and Religious Celebrities (RC), as described by Claessens & Van den Bulck (2015) which, in this study, include Muslim scholars, prayer leaders, and influential orators. The scant research addressing the use and efficacy of celebrities in the Arab world (Kooli et al., 2018) in general, and in Kuwait as a part of Middle Eastern cultures, involves only a tiny fraction focused on the GCC context, which is characterized by the strong interplay between Islamic faith and distinctive traditions of the Arab-Islamic culture. This is in contrast to the substantial research and numerous books dedicated to studying the use of RCs in fundraising in the US, which is widespread, with televangelists occupying both paid programs on Networks or having dedicated TV channels and radio stations working for a cause.

Hence, this study is focused on examining the relative efficacy of the use of PCC and RC as two main fundraising message appeals to encourage monetary donations for a child suffering in crisis. This study contributes to the philanthropic marketing communication literature by answering the following questions:

1. Do PCC and RC evoke similar positive and negative emotions after ad exposure?
2. Are there any differences between evoked emotions and post-ad evaluation for each appeal?
3. To what extent is ad evaluation associated with donation intentions?
4. Which message appeal leads to stronger donation intentions?
2 Literature review and hypotheses

2.1 Philanthropic behavior

The propensity to donate is an acquired behavior. It is shaped by beliefs and socially learned values and attitudes formed early in life (Weerts & Cabrera, 2018). These values and attitudes differ widely between world cultures. Even though the same donation behavior can be observed in two different societies, the motivation and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards may differ. This is important since the Islamic faith propounds a significant amount of teaching that calls for true Muslims to share part of their wealth with the poor through compulsory alms (zakat), handouts (sadaqat), or offering other forms of giving. Both nomadic and coastal Arab cultures are known for generous hospitality and sharing with others at times of prosperity and crisis. Against this backdrop, Halder et al., (2021) surveyed extant philanthropic marketing literature and found that consumer culture is an important moderator of source credibility in advertising while pointing out the general paucity of research on such a culture. In such a cultural setting, it is still unknown whether the interplay of religious beliefs, social values, and traditions on one side and the continued infusion of global entertainment culture on the other side is creating different preferences and motivational forces to engage in giving behavior. With increased reliance on celebrities in marketing communications in general, and philanthropic communication in particular, evoked emotional response triggered by the use of different types of celebrities in philanthropic advertising is still under-investigated.

2.2 Celebrity in marketing

The use of celebrities in marketing communications has been the subject of considerable marketing research in commercial and nonprofit contexts. In philanthropic communication, the use of celebrities in encouraging others to give is well-documented in the literature, where many studies have found celebrity endorsement to be instrumental in driving donation behavior (e.g., Chan & Zhang 2007, Hwang et al., 2017; Wymer & Drollinger, 2015). Through mass media and social media engagement, marketers use celebrities as “human brands” to create advertising attention, enhance evaluation, and produce favorable donation intentions (Chang & Lee, 2009; McCormick, 2016) surveyed the donation literature to identify external motivators for donating money and tangible assets and found celebrity endorsements to be among the most important external influences to motivate giving. Peterson et al., (2018) found that by evoking positive emotions, celebrity endorsements produce stronger donation intentions. To celebrities, the endorsement of donations to the cause is instrumental in improving their popularity, social profile, and income.

The “celebrity-follower” connect is often described as a one-sided parasocial relationship, where fans and followers actively seek various aspects of a celebrity’s life while the latter has neither the knowledge nor the interest to reciprocate such interest (Giles, 2002). In their study, Escalas & Bettman (2017) argue that celebrities play an important role in their followers’ identity construction and found followers’ have the need to belong tendencies, which explain both the attachment to and acceptance of
advertised celebrity endorsements. For celebrities to be effective, they should be perceived as: (1) a credible source in the ad (source credibility theory, Hovland & Weiss 1952); (2) possessing enough social attractiveness (source attractiveness paradigm, McGuire 1985); (3) having a public image that can be aligned with the cause (match-up hypothesis, Kamins 1990), and (4) providing culturally-embedded meanings that can be transferred from celebrity to the cause and finally to the message recipient (meaning transfer model, McCracken 1989). Celebrities should not be confused with social media influencers who are considered “micro-celebrities” and who become famous through self-branding on social media platforms as experts (Khamis et al., 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). In this study, we conceptualize celebrities as human figures who are known for their talents or distinguished achievements and can command public attention through sustained media appearances while generating continued interest among followers. These attributes are necessary, but not sufficient, to produce the desired effects of celebrities in commercials. This is in line with a recent review of the relevant literature that identified several theoretical foundations to explain the success of celebrity as a source of credibility in marketing communication, including source credibility theory, attractiveness theory, elaboration likelihood model, match-up hypothesis, and meaning transfer model (Halder et al., 2021).

Celebrity endorsements influence recipients through the various stages of message reception and reaction. According to the AIDA model (hierarchy of effects model in advertising), recipients of ad messages pass through the four stages of attention, interest, desire, and action (e.g., Arulmani & Abdulla 2007) that represent the logical passing of consumers from a cognitive to an affective and, finally, to a conative state. Gaining attention is important because in a world with constant involuntary exposure to commercials, advertisers can overcome “ad blindness” by projecting celebrities to curtail ad-skipping and increase ad attention. In their empirical experimental study, Wu et al., (2012) found that using celebrities significantly improved ad attention, ad recall, and attitude toward the brand. Advertisers are also keen to leverage the strong image and identification of celebrities to generate interest in causes as followers determine the relevance between the celebrity, the advertised cause, and their values, interests, and self-images. Recipients often evaluate the truthfulness and legitimacy of the information provided before engaging in further information processing, a critical step where attachment to the featured celebrity can initiate the building of trust in the message content. Therefore, celebrities act as a credible source of information necessary to build consumer trust during message transfer that allows further processing of received information during the communication process (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). An established interest is followed by evoking the desire to donate in which this planned behavior is often contemplated in the light of expected psychological rewards (e.g., guilt reduction and warm-glow effects), social benefits (e.g., social benevolence and recognition), and even utilitarian benefits (e.g., tax deducts) and expected sacrifices (money, time, and effort). These past stages culminate in action whereby celebrity fans and followers execute the intended behavior and donate to the cause.
2.3 Celebrity endorsement in philanthropic ads

Are all celebrities eligible to become effective endorsers of giving to a social cause? The answer is most probably: ‘No’. Marketers must select the best celebrity to appeal to the public. As mentioned earlier, this is a function of a celebrity’s level of popularity, perceived congruency between public personality and social cause, and perceived credibility. Although there is much research on celebrity endorsements in marketing communications, little focus has been devoted to distinguishing between different types of celebrities who can evoke different motivations for giving. For example, Samman et al., (2009) studied the recallability of celebrities that participated in international development and the respondents identified 29 celebrities, including singers, actors, and politicians. However, this study did not distinguish between PPCs and RCs.

Next, we outline both of these types of celebrities in the context of philanthropic advertising.

2.3.1 PCC appeal

PCCs are the most frequently used endorsers in marketing communications. Admired for their distinguished performance, recognized for their distinguished talents, and desired for their physical attractiveness, PCC can be instrumental in driving altruistic behavior. They do not just attract attention to the ads featuring the cause, they also provide credibility to the information to create interest, trust, and a stronger inclination to act. However, PCC can encourage giving only when recipients trust the genuine altruistic motivation of the featured celebrity based on consistency, distinctiveness, and the celebrity’s past altruistic behavior. More specifically, for performance celebrities to succeed in soliciting charitable giving, they first need to be legitimately associated with the cause, either by earlier engagement in previous altruistic behaviors or by affiliation with well-trusted international entities or reputable nonprofit institutions.

How PCC celebrity endorsement in advertising can influence how prospective contributors perceive and donate to the cause in the traditional sense has been studied by a growing body of empirical research, both in off-line contexts (e.g., Ranganathan & Henley 2008; Peterson et al., 2018) and online (Panic et al., 2016). After ad exposure, potential donors form emotional reactions to the ad that can be either positive, negative, or mixed and that can produce message compliance to regulate emotional outcomes. For example, humanitarian assistance ads with images of poverty-ridden backgrounds where young children show severe malnutrition often evoke negative emotions (e.g., sympathy, sadness, and guilt) so compliance with the ad request to give donations should regulate the unpleasant effects of such negative emotions. In other ads, the use of celebrity images along with happy children saved from disaster is often associated with positive emotions that can also trigger ad message compliance. Therefore, one of the controversial issues in advertising appeals is how ad evaluation and behavioral intentions vary between ads that arouse overwhelmingly positive emotions, negative emotions, and mixed emotions. A study by Chang & Lee (2009) showed that advertising effectiveness increases when negative emotions are
evoked by a negative message frame and that they appeal in the short run, but positive emotions are associated with ad effectiveness in the long run. In another study, Wu et al., (2012) found that the positive emotions associated with celebrity endorsement generated better donations intention. This is confirmed by Peterson et al.’s (2018) celebrity endorsement study that found a strong positive association between post-ad positive emotions and donations. Based on these findings, and as shown in Fig. 1, we propose that:

**H1:** Popular culture celebrity endorsement appeal is expected to evoke higher positive emotions than negative emotions.

**H2:** Popular culture celebrity endorsement appeal with higher positive emotion should lead to a more favorable ad evaluation.

### 2.3.2 RC appeal

In the present study, we are concerned with investigating the specific influence of RCs on message acceptance and compliance with donation requests. Because religious figures are iconic symbols of the prevailing faith or religion, they represent the dual function of being religious authority symbols and motivators for compliance. The effects of religiosity on ad like and donations have been confirmed in published research (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2014), and the presence of religious figures in an ad often triggers the recipient’s religiosity with a strong message of compliance. This is in line with the conclusions from Wymer & Drollinger’s 2015 study that found a celebrity’s expertise and admirability to be the most significant predictors of willingness to donate for a cause.

According to Stever (2009), RCs are influential public figures that are identified with religious symbols, role modeling, and admired values, including care, wisdom, and generosity. Stephens (2017) emphasized the interrelationships between RCs and charitable fundraising organizations buy-in various American activities. The results obtained from the few studies in the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa) support the role of religious figures as having effective charitable appeal. For example, RCs were found to motivate giving behavior to satisfy religious obligations in Arab cultures (Farah & El Samad, 2014). Echchaibi (2009) found support for the positive influence of religious persona in motivating giving, while Condra et al., (2019) found embedding well-recognized religious figures in fundraising messages improves campaign credibility by underscoring the role of donation in implementing religious duties.

The duality of emotions in ads suggests a stronger impact on donations. While RC ads have been shown to induce dual emotions (negative and positive), the inclusion of human agony images triggers relatively stronger negative emotions, while subsequent exposure to religious figures evokes positive emotions. According to the hedonic contingency model (Bae, 2021), the sequential process of moving from negative to positive emotions (e.g., happiness) should lead to more message processing since recipients with positive emotions are more attentive to the message. The work
of Anik et al., (2009) proposed that religious giving is associated with happiness more than secular giving (Konow & Earley, 2008). In light of the above, we predict that:

\[ H3: \text{Religious celebrity appeal is expected to evoke more negative emotions than positive emotions.} \]

\[ H4: \text{Higher negative emotions associated with religious celebrity message appeal are expected to create a strong favorable ad evaluation.} \]

### 2.4 Ad evaluation and donation intentions

Ad evaluation reflects the cognitive and emotional reaction to the ad experience. Similar to the concept of customer satisfaction with products and services, message recipients form an evaluative judgment of whether the ad was good, likable, enjoyable, helpful, positive, and informative. (Gorn et al., 2001). Considerable research suggests that ad evaluation is a key antecedent of behavioral intentions (e.g., Chen et al., 2005). This is consistent with results obtained by Silvera & Austad (2004), who found that higher advertising effectiveness is linked to high levels of ad evaluation and attitude toward the advertised product. Based on the above discussion, we expect that:

\[ H5: \text{Higher ad evaluation is expected to be positively related to donation intentions.} \]

The strength of emotion produced by ad appeals has been studied to understand their relationships with giving as helping behavior. Choi et al., (2020) have suggested that individuals in a neutral emotional state are less inclined to participate in helping behavior and that stronger positive or negative ad appeals lead to stronger benevolence that ultimately enhances giving. More recent research has shown that appeals producing either strong positive emotion or strong negative emotion can increase helping behavior, and the ability of the ad to induce both emotions may lead to a stronger impact of ad evaluation on donation intentions. In a recent study, Bae (2021) found that not only positive emotions led to more favorable ad evaluation and donation intentions but also that a negative-positive sequence of evoked emotions further enhanced both ad evaluation and donation intentions. Based on these recent results, we expect that:

\[ H6: \text{Irrespective of the celebrity type used, an ad evoking stronger positive and negative emotions is expected to lead to a stronger impact on donation intentions.} \]

A summary of these hypotheses and their relationships are portrayed in Fig. 1.
3 Methodology

3.1 Participant, design, and procedures

A total of 387 Kuwaitis were recruited to participate in this study voluntarily by completing an online survey. Data were collected during the third quarter of 2021 using the stratified snowball sampling method for better population representation. With a two-week interval, thirteen participants completed the first exposure but not the second and were subsequently dropped. As shown in Table 1, our sample demographics had a mean of 43.5 years and a range of 18–69 years. The gender composition of the sample was 49% males and 51% females. Regarding education, 40.3% of the sample held undergraduate qualifications or higher, followed by 33.3% with two years of college and 26.4% with high school education or lower. The majority of the participants (63%) received income from being gainfully employed, while 21.2% were retired and 15.8% reported no work but receiving income from investments and/or family/government sources.

Following the one-group post-test only research design (Cook et al., 2002; Ranganathan & Henley, 2008), this empirical study tested the expected effectiveness of PCC and RC message appeals on post-ad emotion, evaluation, and intention to donate. To manipulate advertising appeal as the main independent variable, the participants were presented with two advertising stimuli, with the first featuring pop culture artists and the second presenting well-known religious personas created specifically for this research. The selection of PCCs included male singers and a female TV star with credentials including a previous history in soliciting donations for children in poverty as part of the Good-Intention Ambassadors program. In contrast, well-known religious figures with a previous proven track record in helping those in need were included as RCs. As a standard protocol, a pretest was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurements, the efficacy of the ad copies in producing the expected appeal effects, and to examine whether each ad appeal led to its expected impact on...
emotions. This was carried out using online surveys. Manipulation checks showed that both ad copies were perceived as intended. Familiarity and trust in the featured charities (international and local charities) were deemed high as results showed that the participants were familiar (98.8%) and that they trusted (97.2%) both charities in the ads. Source credibility was also assessed as respondents were familiar with featured celebrities in both ads and liked them. The mean scores for familiarity and liking were 5.86 and 5.32 on a 7-point scale for both singers, while the corresponding mean scores for RCs were 5.58 and 5.79, respectively. The collection of data started with the participants being presented with one of the two advertisement copies at different times (at least two weeks apart) in alternate order and were asked to respond to questions following each ad. To rule out the empirical presence of ad order effect, a post-experiment comparison between the alternate presentation order showed insignificant mean differences between the two groups.

### 3.2 Measurements

In this study, scales adopted from existing marketing and psychology literature were adapted to correspond to the measurement of each construct in the model. These constructs included post-ad emotion, ad evaluation, and donation intention are discussed next.

#### 3.2.1 Ad-induced emotion

As shown in Table 2, emotional intensities were assessed by measuring (1) four negative feelings, including sadness, sorrow, shame, and distress, and (2) four positive emotions, comprising interest, hope, altruism, and determination, using a semantic differential scale. For instance, to indicate their level of sad emotions, the participants...
were presented with a five-point semantic differential scale ranging from (1) very pleased to (5) very sad. For positive emotions, participants were asked to indicate their post-ad positive emotions by indicating, for example, the extent they felt interested ranging from (1) not at all interested to very interested (5). Results obtained and presented in Table 3 supported scale internal consistencies of all positive and negative emotions across the two celebrity appeal conditions, with Cronbach alpha levels ranging from 0.81 to 0.97 well above the minimum level of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2009). The dimensionality of positive and negative emotions for each appeal was assessed using factor analysis procedures. Results in Table 3 also supported the unidimensionality of the positive emotions scale and negative emotions scale with a single factor extracted from each scale explaining 64% or higher of the total scale variance. Calculated mean scores for negative and positive emotions were used for subsequent analysis.

### 3.2.2 Ad evaluation

Two items were used to measure how participants evaluated the ad: Ad liking (Walker & Dubitsky, 1994) and Ad ranking (Yoo, 2014). A 5-point scale of the overall measure of ad likability was used ranging from (1) didn’t like at all to (5) total liking of the ad. In ad ranking, participants in the second exposure were re-presented with the earlier ad and then asked to assess the relative favorability of the focal ad over the previous ad at the end of the survey using the following scale: (5) high favorability of focal ad, (4) moderate favorability of focal ad, (3) almost similar, (2) moderate favorability of previous ad, (1) high favorability of previous. Results have shown that the correlation between both items was high for both ads (R_{PPC} = 0.82 and R_{RC} = 0.83, p < .0001) therefore, the average of the two items was used for further analysis.
3.2.3 Donation intentions

After ad presentation, donation intention was measured using a combination of direct and indirect items. A direct question using a 5-point scale (1 = low intentions, 5 = certain donation intention) and the likelihood of donating for the cause in the next month ranging from (1) unlikely to (5) highly likely. Calculated correlations between the two items were strong and positive for both ads (R_{PPC} = 0.84 and R_{RC} = 0.90, p < .0001). As such, the average of the two items was used for subsequent analysis.

3.2.4 Control variables and manipulation checks

To confirm whether the ad frames were perceived as intended, several procedures were undertaken to control for possible extraneous variables. First, after ad exposure, we asked the respondents to recall what key features they had seen in the ad (names of pop culture artists and RCs, names of advertising charities) and the obtained results confirmed that proper comprehension of the key elements of the ads had been obtained. Second, to minimize the effects of extraneous variables, three control variables were included to assess pre-existing differences among participants in their baseline attitudes toward perceived need gravity, favorability of the philanthropic organization, and the type of featured celebrities. The results showed no differences in attitude toward need severity or featured charities, yet males tended to have a slightly more favorable opinion of the female singer (M_{male} = 4.8 vs. M_{female} = 4.3, p = .043) while both genders showed similar favorable opinions about the male singer. Finally, to control the presentation order effects, a second ad was shown to the sample after two weeks. ANOVA procedures for mean comparison on emotion, evaluation, and intentions yielded insignificant differences between the two orders of ad presentation for all variables (for all calculated ANOVAs, calculated F(5, 494) were below 1.92 with p > .11). These results support the lack of order effect bias in ad presentation and carry-over effects from one ad to the other.

| Constructs          | # of items (loading) | CR    | AVE   | MSV |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| **PCC**             |                      |       |       |     |
| Positive Emotion    | 4 (0.81, 0.83, 0.88, 0.81) | 0.90  | 0.70  | 0.61 |
| Negative Emotion    | 4 (0.87, 0.9, 0.9, 0.89) | 0.94  | 0.79  | 0.34 |
| Ad Evaluation       | 2 (0.82, 0.83)       | 0.81  | 0.68  | 0.61 |
| Donation Intention  | 2 (0.93, 0.92)       | 0.92  | 0.91  | 0.40 |
| **RC**              |                      |       |       |     |
| Positive Emotion    | 4 (0.81, 0.83, 0.69, 0.71) | 0.82  | 0.53  | 0.06 |
| Negative Emotion    | 4 (0.86, 0.85, 0.85, 0.87) | 0.91  | 0.73  | 0.29 |
| Ad Evaluation       | 2 (0.84, 0.90)       | 0.86  | 0.76  | 0.29 |
| Donation Intention  | 2 (0.94, 0.95)       | 0.97  | 0.95  | 0.22 |

Notes:

- a, b: Fit indices for the Popular Culture Celebrities (PCC) measurement model: (χ² = 304.19, df = 48, p = .000); CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, SRMR = 0.0037).
- For Religious Celebrities (RC) model: (χ² = 216.07, df = 48, p = .000); CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.071)
3.2.5 Measurement validation

Before testing the proposed relationships in the conceptual model, factor analysis procedures were applied to assess the dimensionality of post-ad positive emotion, negative emotion, ad evaluation, and intention to donate. As shown in Table 3, the results showed that a single factor emerged for negative and positive emotions, with explained variance exceeding 64%, indicating scale unidimensionality. To confirm these results and before testing the structural model, a reflective CB-SEM measurement model was developed and tested for each message appeal ad in accordance with standard data analysis procedures (Hair et al., 2014). The results in Table 3 indicated a robust overall model fit with Comparative Fit Indices ≥ 0.95, Tucker-Lewis index ≥ 0.93, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ≤ 0.059, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual ≤ 0.07). These results indicated the plausibility of the measurement model of both ad appeals and allowed us to proceed into further analysis.

The convergent validity of the model constructs was assessed both at the indicator and at the construct level. For each construct, the indicator-factor loading exceeded the 0.70 suggested as a reasonable minimum level (Hair et al., 2014) indicating strong indicator reliability. At the construct level, the CFA results showed all Average Extracted Variances (AVEs) exceeded the minimum level of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The divergent (discriminant) validity was also supported as all Average Shared Variance ASVs were greater than the squared root of the AVEs, the Maximum Shared Variance (MSVs), and the Squared MSVs. Based on these supporting results, the average scores were used for structural model analysis for both models, as shown in Fig. 2.

3.2.6 Mediation

To assess the extent of mediation in our theoretical model, the direct and indirect paths, along with their significance levels, were calculated (see Table 4). The main purpose was to determine whether emotion exerted direct, partially mediated, or fully mediated effects on donation intention via ad favorability. The results indicated that the effects of post-ad positive emotion are fully mediated through ad favorability for both PCC and RC appeals. Similar findings were also observed in negative emotions.
Celebrity appeal effectiveness in donating to the cause: Popular...

4 Hypotheses testing results

4.1 Post-ad emotion and ad evaluation

To test H1, positive emotions across the two conditions were analyzed using several multivariate statistical methods, including MANOVA, ANOVA, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). As shown in Table 2 and Fig. 2, the RC ad evoked higher mean values of the four negative emotions than the PCC ad. The statistical significance of these observed differences was tested using repeated-measure MANOVA, followed by between-conditions ANOVA comparisons. Mauchly’s test showed sphericity assumption was violated, $\chi^2(5)=51.32, p<.0001$; therefore, Greenhouse-Geisser Epsilon ($\tilde{\omega}=0.96$) was used to correct the degrees of freedom. The results confirmed the observed differences in Fig. 2 that PCCs produced stronger positive emotions than RCs: $F(1,772)=118.72, p<.000$.

As shown in Table 5, the sample response to the PCC ad had an average score for interest of ($M_{PCC}=3.59, SD=1.02$) compared to ($M_{RC}=2.9, SD=1.11$), and those differences were found to be statistically significant with $F(1,772)=168.9, p<.0001$. Similarly, a one-way ANOVA showed the PCC ad produced higher hope emotion scores than the RC ad ($M_{PPC}=3.4, SD=0.98; M_{RC}=2.82, SD=1.05; F(1,772)=62.2; p<.0001$). Similar results were found for altruism ($M_{PPC}=3.65, SD=1.01; M_{RC}=2.66, SD=1.02; F(1,772)=186.1; p<.0001$) and determination ($M_{PPC}=3.7, SD=1.03; M_{RC}=3.34, SD=0.93; F(1,772)=31.8; p<.0001$). The culmination of these results lends strong support to H1.

in both ads. These findings generally support full mediation relationships with the effects of emotions being completely mediated through ad favorability.
To examine the directional relationships between post-ad emotion, ad evaluation, and donation intentions for each type of ad appeal, the path model was specified and tested using SEM procedures. As shown in Fig. 3, all the fit indices were supportive of the proposed model in both ad appeals.

According to H2, higher positive emotion was expected to produce a more favorable ad evaluation in the PCCs’ ad appeal as opposed to negative emotion. The results from path analysis using SEM supports this prediction (Fig. 3). The directional path between post-ad positive emotion and ad evaluation was positive and statistically significant ($\beta=0.56, CR=11.71, p<.0001$), while the effects of negative emotion on ad evaluation were negligible ($\beta=-0.07, CR=-1.44, p<.151$). These results largely support H2.

H3 predicted that the RC ad would evoke stronger negative emotions than the PCC ad. Results from repeated-measure MANOVA (Table 6; Fig. 3b) were significant, $F(1,772)=170.67, p<.000$ indicating overall differences between the four emotions between the two ads. To examine each emotion separately, results from the follow-up ANOVA between-subjects mean scores comparisons supported predicted differences for sadness ($M_{RC}=3.67; M_{PCC}=2.64, F(1,772)=81.6; p<.0001$), sorrow ($M_{RC}=3.56; M_{PCC}=2.94, F(1,772)=65.81; p<.0001$), shame ($M_{RC}=3.59; M_{PCC}=2.57, F(1,772)=161.11; p<.0001$), and distress ($M_{RC}=3.66; M_{PCC}=2.63, F(1,772)=178.5; p<.0001$). Based on these results, H3 is supported.

H4 suggested that for RC appeal, negative emotion would positively enhance advertisement evaluation more than positive emotion. The results show this prediction to be holding (Fig. 2). The negative emotion $\rightarrow$ Ad Evaluation directional path
Table 5 Descriptive and repeated-measures ANOVA for post-ad emotions across ad appeals

| AD APPEAL | NEGATIVE EMOTIONS | POSITIVE EMOTIONS |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
|           | Sadness | Sorrow | Shame | Distress | Interest | Hope | Altruism | Determination |
| PCC Ad    | 2.64     | 2.94    | 2.57  | 2.63     | 3.59     | 3.4   | 3.65     | 3.7           |
|           | 1.091    | 1.007   | 1.161 | 1.066    | 1.021    | 0.982 | 1.011    | 1.034         |
| RC Ad     | 3.67     | 3.56    | 3.59  | 3.66     | 2.9      | 2.82  | 2.66     | 3.34          |
|           | 1.117    | 1.031   | 1.074 | 1.097    | 1.106    | 1.051 | 1.022    | 0.932         |

Test of Sphericity

Mauchly’s W=0.982, $p<.015$; G-G $^*$ = 0.989

Between-Subjects Effects

F(1, 772) = 170.67, $p<.000$

Multivariate Tests

F(3, 770) = 12.64, $p<.000$

One-way ANOVA

F(1, 772) = 81.6, $p<.000$

$F^*(1,772) = 81.6, p<.001$

F value DF = (1,772)

P-value

$F^*(1,772) = 81.6, p<.001$

Within-Subjects *

F(2.966, 2289.5) = 12.71, $p<.000$

Main Effects

F(2.865, 2211.9) = 66.72, $p<.000$

* Greenhouse-Geisser parameter used as Mauchly’s Test of Sphericity was significant $p<.001$; Negative Emotions Partial Eta$^2$ = 0.08, Positive Emotions Partial Eta$^2$ = 0.224
was strong and significant ($\beta = 0.57$, $CR = 13.90$, $p < .0001$), while the effect of positive emotion on ad evaluation was significant but weak ($\beta = 0.30$, $CR = 7.47$, $p < .0001$). These results support H4.

Consistent with the predictions of H5, the results of this study support the positive directional relationship between advertising evaluation and donation intentions for both ad appeals. More specifically, the ad evaluation $\rightarrow$ donation intentions for the PCC appeal were strong and positive ($\beta = 0.58$, $CR = 13.77$, $p < .0001$), and similar results were observed in the RC ad appeal ($\beta = 0.83$, $CR = 28.92$, $p < .0001$).

H6 postulated that ad appeals evoking significant negative and positive emotion (dual emotional intensity) are more likely to produce stronger donation intentions than appeals evoking either positive or negative emotion alone. The results in Fig. 3 show that the PCC ad produced strong positive emotions only (M = 3.57), with a significant positive impact on donation intentions (mediated through ad favorability) that explained 33% of the variance. In contrast, the RC ad appeal generated significant positive emotion (M = 2.93) and negative emotion (M = 3.62), with a significant positive impact on donation intentions that explained 68% of the variance.
5 Discussion

In the context of celebrity endorsement ads in nonprofit philanthropic marketing communications, this study sought to assess the impact of evoked emotion on post-ad evaluation and, consequently, on donation intentions. This study focused on PCC and RC ad appeals to motivate potential donors to respond to human suffering donation using vivid imagery (Burt & Strongman, 2005). Both positive and negative emotions showed distinct and reliable unidimensionality, lending strong support to their content and convergent validity. The obtained results from testing the hypotheses provided important findings that help in the construction of the ads to increase compliance with the cause by understanding the efficacy of both ads in driving the expected emotional and behavioral intention responses to these major philanthropic advertising appeals.

This study holds the level of emotional intensity and the type of emotions generated by the ads to be important determinants of message compliance. The results from testing H1 show that PCC appeal generated more positive emotional responses than negative emotions, indicating that, even with the pictorial depiction of human suffering, the presence of celebrities was more influential in determining the type of emotion evoked. Using a famous singer and actor with a well-recognized status in the performing arts and entertainment, as well as in international humanitarian relief circles, created a favorable attitude toward the ad via positive emotions only. The feelings of interest, hope, altruism, and determination were more pronounced compared to negative feelings reflecting sadness, sorrow, shame, and distress. It seems more plausible that source likability (Chebat et al., 1992) coupled with overt positive affect (smiling, well-dressed celebrities) enhanced the elicitation of positive emotions in the context of a child suffering donation campaign. Furthermore, based on the analysis performed to test H2, these results showed that a strong positive emotional intensity can affect ad evaluation. More specifically, the relatively weak level of negative emotion failed to have any effect on the recipients’ judgments of ad favorability, while the strong level of positive emotion intensity positively influenced these ad favorability judgments.

The results of testing religious celebrity’s ad appeal underscore the potentially effective dual influence of intense negative and positive emotions on ad evaluation and donation intentions. The combined presence of featuring child suffering and religious icons have activated strong negative emotional responses that have been recognized by previous literature to create stronger inclinations to donate (De Luca et al., 2016; Huber et al., 2011) but this seems to be inconsistent with other research, where positive emotion is more likely to lead to donation (Peterson et al., 2018). Interestingly, the combinations of these imageries and the call for help also produced positive emotions that may have been less emotionally intense but exerted noticeable effects on ad evaluation. Although both emotions are incompatible, they seem to be jointly influencing ad evaluation and subsequently leading to higher donation intentions, with twice as much as explained variance reported by the PCC ad appeal with single emotional intensity. The ability to explain donation intention was substantially stronger when the ad appeal managed to elicit both emotions than when the ad triggered a single emotion. The combined effects of dual emotions are consistent with recent...
findings from the literature (Bae, 2021). As such, it appears that the duality of triggered emotions seems to be more conducive to producing ad message compliance.

Another major finding of this study is that it confirms the direct link between the perceived quality of the ad and the propensity to donate across the two ad appeals. The influence of emotion is completely mediated through ad evaluation since emotions failed to exert any significant direct influence of ad evaluation on donation intention. The level of emotions failed to produce significant and substantive direct effects on donation intentions. Therefore, even with intensely evoked emotions, failure to generate strong ad favorability may not lead to stronger message compliance.

6 Conclusions and implications

6.1 Conclusions

Even though the use of celebrities as human brands continues to be an expensive tool in philanthropic marketing communication, the value of their endorsements in generating donations has shown varying degrees of success (Peterson et al., 2018), even as potential donors are aware of celebrity profile and poverty-reduction (Samman et al., 2009). This renewed skepticism toward the usefulness of celebrity endorsement may not be confined to Western markets and could extend to other parts of the world, where the third sector is essential to respond to urgent humanitarian needs and social problems. In this study, we shift the research focus toward exploring the role of celebrities in generating message compliance in Kuwait as a part of the Middle Eastern culture where the interplay of religion, customs, traditions, and social values may be different than Western or Eastern cultures. This research is the first to be undertaken to explore the usefulness of celebrity endorsements in motivating donations to the cause and based on the results and discussion, it is possible to make the following conclusions.

It is possible to conclude from this study that while the use of celebrities is important in soliciting charitable contributions, employing RCs is more effective in drawing donations than using PCCs in this part of the world. This is supported by our findings that indicated a higher intention to donate in the RC ad than in the PCC ad (refer to Table 2). RC congruity with soliciting for the cause seems to be stronger and more accepted by potential donors than PCC. Therefore, it might be recommended that philanthropic marketers examine both source credibility and the celebrity’s congruity with the cause before recruiting PCCs.

6.2 Theoretical implications

Regarding ad-induced emotions, our findings showed that not only the co-occurrence of positive and negative emotional responses is possible, but it has also shown that ads evoking such dual emotional intensity can be more successful in creating stronger donation intentions. It seems that, while negative emotions are a direct response to the observed human calamity, which is often inner-directed and uncomfortable, positive emotions can help regulate such distress. This is relevant as our measures of
positive emotions represent relevant positive responses to alleviate human suffering. In conclusion, ads showing pain and suffering while providing positive outcomes that are dependent on expected donations may have a better chance of increasing donation message compliance.

6.3 Practical implications

The results obtained in this research show that charities can use RC to obtain significantly better donation intentions than using PCC. Particularly, RC can project donations as an important activity that aligns the fulfillment of religious values and the need to respond to relieve human suffering that ultimately improving how individuals view themselves and relieving induced negative emotions. Charity promoters need to select RCs that enjoy both trust and a positive image to produce post-ad message compliance.

Limitations and directions for future research.

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions of this study on exploring emotional responses to two types of celebrity endorsement appeals and their impact on ad evaluation, as well as the participants’ willingness to donate, there are potential limitations that may need to be considered. The message appeals in this study were focused on portraying child human suffering. The tragic nature of human suffering in this study has severely limited the use of other more pronounced positive emotional appeals (e.g., humor, adventure, challenge). Therefore, to achieve this, research may be extended to other socially worthy causes, such as supporting the arts, education, and sciences.

This study is focused on examining the effects of copy advertisement used in digital media or print. Since copy ads are inherently static and lack the support of other, stronger, elements of audio-visual ads, the added effects of music, voice tones, and a succession of images were not examined in this study. While our choice of copy ads coincides with its wide use by organizations due to relative ease and its low cost, research into other forms of advertising may be fruitful.

Another limitation of this study is its inability to study donation intentions in a competitive context, where other concurrent calls for donations for worthy causes may alter the emotional reactions and behavioral intentions following ad exposure. As this study is primarily focused on the initial exposure to the two advertisement appeals and the triggering of specific responses, the results may be different if the recipients were exposed to recent past exposures to donation advertisements and the carry-over effects related to prior experiences. The relatively adequate sample has helped in reducing the effects of baseline differences, including prior exposure experiences, mood, and ad-skipping tendencies; however, future studies may need to assess the impact of these potential individual differences.
7 Appendix 1: Message Appeals

A. Popular Culture Celebrities (PCC) ad appeal

B. Religious Celebrities (RC) ad appeal

Declaration

Conflict of interest  The author of this research has no conflict of interest.
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