

**Third Sector Research**

**Guilt Appeal and Charitable Giving**

Charities and public sector organisations are heavy users of advertising to raise funds, solicit support, change attitudes and influence behaviour. When consumers view advertisements, they are not empty vessels that unthinkingly absorb the message in the advert. Rather they interpret adverts in relation to their beliefs and feelings about advertising in general, about particular types of advert and about the organisation responsible for the advertising.

Sally Hibbert, Andrew Smith and colleagues examined how beliefs about persuasive advertising influence people's responses to charity fundraising advertisements that use guilt appeals to encourage donations to the cause. Specifically, we hypothesised that feelings of guilt aroused by charity guilt appeals would be positively influenced by individuals' attitudes towards the charity and credibility of the advert and negatively influenced by perceptions that the advertising was manipulative and general scepticism about advertising.

Furthermore, they hypothesised that individuals would be more likely to donate to charity when the fundraising advertisement successfully aroused feelings of guilt.

A survey of people who had given to charity in the past showed that individuals use their knowledge of persuasive advertising to cope with marketers' efforts to influence them. An appreciation that consumers actively interpret advertising messages highlights the need to better understand the interplay between advertisers and their audiences.

This study provides insights for charity fundraisers and donor relationship managers confronting the delicate balance of engendering support and commitment without creating tension and stress by applying unwelcome pressure through persuasion tactics and strategies.