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**Assertive Language, how does it change  
individuals' willingness to donate?: A Construal  
Level Theory perspective.**

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## Introduction

Nowadays it can be difficult for charitable organizations (i.e., charities), to reach their results because of the increasing number of competition that makes more difficult to attract funds (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996), which are vital to reach their objectives. For instance, in Italy the number of charities, especially non-governmental organizations (i.e., NGOs), is growing year by year: From 2001 to 2017 the number of charities passed from 235.232 to 350.492 organizations. Hence, as suggested by several scholars, in order to attract fund, especially from individuals', charities must refine the way they ask contributions (e.g., Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013; Reed, Aquino and Levy, 2007; White and Peloza, 2009). Indeed, in my thesis I want to contribute to the literature on charities' advertisements' effectiveness, by increasing the knowledge of how charities could manipulate their communications with their donor audiences in an effective way especially focusing on the language used and its interplay with the type of image featured. Specifically, I focus my attention on a specific language's dimension that refers to assertiveness, which refers to degree to which a statement obliges receivers to act in a certain manner or give some options of refusal (Grinstein and Kronrod, 2016), whereby according to the literature I distinguish between assertive language and non-assertive language. Assertive language refers to statements or requests that use imperative forms for direct individuals' actions, while non-assertive language refers to more polite and less direct statements (e.g., Kronrod, Grinstein, & Wathieu 2012). For example, an assertive message contains words like "do, go, must or donate", or one that leaves no option for refusal, (e.g. you must help) (Brown and Levinson 1987; Vanderveken 1990) such as the slogan "Stop the violence, don't drink and drive". Conversely, non-assertive language is characterized by the use of propositions or indirect suggestions (Miller, Lane, and Deatrick., 2007) such as the Emergency slogan "Your donation can save lives". Importantly, I study the effectiveness of language assertiveness in improving individuals' responses to charities' requests of monetary donations by applying a novel theoretical perspective that is construal level theory (e.g., Trope and Liberman, 2010), and more specifically by using its link with politeness theory (e.g., Stephan, Liberman, and Trope, 2010). Indeed, since assertiveness is closely associated with politeness, with non-assertive language being perceived as more polite than assertive language (e.g., Kim, Baek, Yoon, Oh and Choi, 2017; Zemack-Rugar, Moore and Fitzsimons, 2017) and politeness has been linked with higher level of construal, it could be argues that non-assertive language as compared to assertive language would be associated with a higher level of construal (i.e., more abstract level of metal representations). Further, and in order to test the idea that assertive and non-assertive language might differ in terms of construal levels, I explore how the effectiveness of assertive language is affected by another communication's components that

refers to the image used. Indeed, it has been showed in literature that vivid and colourful images are more likely than black and white and shape images to pertain to a lower level of construal (Lee, Deng, Unnava and Rao, 2014; 2016). Hence, based on the so-called fit from construal effect that is the idea that matching two features associated with the same level of construal is more effective, I predict and test the idea that non-assertive language (vs. assertive language) would be more (vs. less) effective when paired with an image that is associated with a higher (vs. lower) level of construal, that is an image featuring a shape (e.g., Lee et al., 2016).

In the first chapter, is going to be analysed the prosocial behaviour and charitable giving, trying to uncover the main reasons on the drivers of people' s prosocial behaviours, including charitable donations of money. In chapter 2, I am going to analyse more in detail the NGOs and how they manipulate the appeals of their advertisement in order to trigger certain responses from the donors. For this reason are going to be analysed the message framing, the image valence and the type of victim, with a particular focus on assertive and non-assertive language, the variable of interest of this thesis. In chapter 3, is going to be analysed the theory behind the formulation of the hypotheses: Construal Level Theory, Politeness Theory and Fit Effect. In chapter 4 is going to be illustrated the experiment, along with a pre-test, conducted to test the hypotheses. It is going to be explained the construction of the survey, how the data was gathered and the processes of the analysis. Finally, are going to be discussed the theoretical implications, managerial contributions and limitations of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Prosocial Behaviour and Charitable Giving

In the literature, prosocial behaviour represents a broad set of actions that can be summed up as the intent of a person or a group of people to be beneficial to other people (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin and Schroeder 2004; Eisenberg 2006; Fabes et al. 1999). This behaviour is expressed by humans by act of cooperation, helping, volunteering etc. In our society the act of helping others is considered to be very valuable, and it is possible to see this emphasis from many sources that go from the news in television, to the stories and folklore of many cultures: basically this is the expression of the value of helping others vs the trouble of that result of being selfish (Dovidio, Hebl., Richeson and Shelton, 2006). From an evolutionary point of view, humans “*are well tuned in to others’ needs and desires and have a penchant for treating others with care and concern*” (Hawley, 2014, p. 43), and gives us insights on why, as species, we are thriving on earth. There are various reason why people can act prosocially, and for a long time philosophers are debating about why human embrace this behaviour: if the motivation are purely altruistic or if there is something more to be accounted (Small and Cryder, 2016). Even in ancient Rome (and way before) philosophers were already aware that human privilege to live in social groups: “*Non nobis solum nati sumus*” (We are not born just for ourself) (Cicero, 44 B.C). So, why people act prosocially? To answer this question, we need to look in the literature that give us various motivations and there is not a defined answer. To sum up, humans act prosocially because:

- Self-interests: being perceived as a generous person make people gain social status (Flynn, 2003).
- Self-perception: humans, sometimes need to demonstrate to themselves how good they are (Gneezy, Gneezy, Nelson and Brown, 2010; Gneezy, Gneezy, Riener and Nelson, 2012).
- Hedonic motivation: many studies demonstrate that people feel pleasure when they make donation or when they help others (Klein, 2016; Dunn, Aknin and Norton, 2008; Baumann, Cialdini, and Kendrunk, 1981).
- Empathic motivation: it has been shown that people will help more often victims in which they are able to identify themselves. (Kogut and Ritov, 2005; Small, Lerner and Fischhoff, 2006; Small, Loewenstein, 2003).
- Sympathetic motivation: humans tend to help people when they feel sympathy toward the individual that receive the help (Loewenstein and Small, 2007; Hsee, Shen, Zhang, Chen, and Li, 2012).

- Religious motivation: many religions push their people to be charitable for a greater good. (Monsm., 2007; Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis, 1993).

Far from implying that pure altruistic behaviour does not occur, in general, we can say that the motivation that lead to a prosocial behaviour are a mix between egoistic (self-interest, pleasure etc.) and altruistic (empathy) stimulus. Related to prosocial behaviour is charitable giving, one of the key elements to understand how donation affect donors. Nowadays it can be difficult for charities to reach their result due to competition and the increasing number of charities. As we can see from the data provided by ISTAT (Censimenti Permanenti, 2019), the number of charities passed from 235.232 organizations in 2001 to 350.492 in 2017. There are several ways to deal with this problem related to the best way to stimulate fund-raising. When a fundraising campaign is to be started, the organizations' management and the marketing experts must consider various aspects, such as identification of a single or general aspect of the campaign, the emotional impact of the campaign on the potential donors and the perception, by the donor, the proximity or otherwise of the target. Another important point to focus on, is the type of solicitation that is requested. Financial is not the only target that can be identified: other support may be required such as blood donation, time to devote to the organization, availability of one's skills, etc. It has to be taken in account also if the need is for an emergency situation or not. There are several ways to deal with this problem related to the best way to stimulate fund-raising. There are essentially two theories for setting up these campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the private donor. Both theories are addressed to the general public and present different methods and approaches. Bendapudi et al. (1996) analysed the "Helping Behaviour" meant as, for the charities, as actions able to support the needs of others, without any counterpart. Actions such as financial support, volunteers involving personal experience or donation of blood, organs, tissues etc, can be considered helping behaviour. The same Authors (Bendapudi et al., 1996) have defined a flow map for charities analysing the possible variables in all the part of the process. According to this work, there is an antecedent structure of the project, where the donor recognizes the seriousness and commitment of the organization, the perceived message and the kind of support required. Then, there is moderator structure, where there are several variables, most of them not controlled by the applicant. In this part of the framework are included variables such as economical situations, local critical emergency in general and of the donor, media impact, tax deduction, fund raising campaign on the same topic by other organizations, etc. Then there is a behaviour stage were the donors can react in different way: from zero to the maximum of its possibilities. In the last part of the framework defined as consequences, there is the collection of the results of the campaign with the impact that this will determine. This aspect is very important because a lack of the feedback of the obtained

results from the charity can reduce the attitude of the donor to contribute in future campaigns. Furthermore, this can determine a motivation in supporting private organizations compared to public institutions. Various authors have defined the concept of help from the donor and the motivation that drives him to do it (Piliavin and Charng 1990, Krebs and Miller 1985). This may be due to the desire to improve the beneficiary's economic, well-being or health status or to satisfy an egoistic motivation, in order not to feel guilty. Burnet (1981) and Guy and Patton (1988) have explained that the different motivations for donation can determine the choice of the donor. There has been an analysis of all the process related to the factors that can motivate the donors. It is analysed the perception of the problem and of the organization that launches the campaign. In this phase it is important to give the message that the results will be consistent with the request and it is important the target population. According to Bendapudi et al. (1996) donations are higher if the purpose of the campaign is related to problems not caused by the individual (i.e. sexual abuse, racial and sexual discrimination, etc.). The second aspect is related to the motivation: why a donor is motivated to the donation. As mentioned earlier there are motivations related to reasons that lead to charity to be considering having an altruistic or egoistic feeling. The aim of the altruistic feeling is related to the need of equity and wellness, while the egoistic one is related to not feeling guilty compared the exposed problem. The third aspect is related to behaviour. This can be considered as the quantification of the help, that can be minimal or substantial and it is related to the motivational aspect. In altruistic motivation donors consider the impact of the donation and its effect on the target. For egoistic motivation, behaviour is more related to an economic analysis of the cost -benefits of the action. Last step is related to the entire donation process and is related to the consequences of the donations. As proposed by Piliavin and Callero (1991) and Burnett and van Wood (1988) there are several considerations to be done. If a donor has contributed in the past he can continue to donate or he can interrupt this action. Obviously, the charitable associations must aim at the loyalty of the donors. This process can take time starting with small donations for a specific aim, which can increase later on. Another aspect that has to be taken in account in this step is tracking the donating subjects. This is important to focalise the efficacy of the action of the charity, to monitor the donor if he has switched to another charity, with same or different aims, and the quality and entity of donation (economic, social, work power and professional time).

### **1.1.1 Factors determining charitable giving**

Every day, a large number of people often make pro-social actions for the benefit of others, but they have a cost for those who carry them out. Donations are among the most evident actions



as they involve a gift - in terms of money, nature or time - aimed at a specific cause or group of individuals. Moreover, this pro-social behaviour has always been the object of interest and acknowledgment, considering the historical and social importance of donations in different contexts, from religion to the assistance to the people most in need, up to the support of praiseworthy causes concerning, for example, environment, cancer care and culture.

Although empirical evidence (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2007) has shown that the phenomenon of donations is positively linked to socioeconomic variables such as income, wealth and education, understanding what drives people to donate and do selfless acts, from an economic point of view, is one of the most intriguing research issues. The economic analysis is based on the idea that individuals are "selfish", i.e. rationally interested in their choices and actions for their own personal well-being. For this reason, it is not immediately clear how economics is capable of explaining a phenomenon, like that of donation, that is so deeply rooted in human behaviour, which in modern societies contributes significantly to the production of public goods and that seems to be in contradiction with the axiom of the rationality of the "homo oeconomicus".

In order to understand and analyse this interesting phenomenon, in recent decades, economists have begun to open up to other disciplines, in particular to social psychology and sociology; for some time, with other schemes and analytical hypotheses, these have contributed to explain the pro-social behaviour of individuals. This contamination has led to new theoretical models and empirical research activities that now attempt to explain individual behaviour in the context of donations.

In general, three main groups of personal motivations can be distinguished: intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations and reputation-related motivations (e.g., Small and Cryder, 2016). Therefore, any donation act implies a mix of these motivations, arising from environmental and social contexts influencing the act of donating. A first possibility to explain the act of donating concerns the intrinsic motivations, namely those that arise within people. According to Deci (1975), an action is provoked by intrinsic motivations when the person who performs it apparently receives no form of material reward but the action he has performed.

Since donations are targeted to sectors that generate numerous public and collective goods - just think of medical research, culture and environment - a first economic explanation is that the intrinsic motivations arise simply from the preferences that individuals have in their task of usefulness for the existence and production of this type of public and collective goods.

This idea underlies both the public intervention for the provision of collective and praiseworthy goods, and the way in which people can be willing to contribute voluntarily to private organizations and causes that they believe they can offer a collective good.

However, based on this simple economic explanation, many economists (Andreoni, 1988; Bergstrom, Blume and Varian, 1985) have observed that state support for organizations that receive donations should decrease the level of individual donations to that cause or organizations accordingly. In fact, if people prefer a certain level of production of collective goods, they should not be interested in how these goods are produced, whether through public support or through voluntary donation. On the contrary, empirical evidence on many organizations that receive both donations and public aid - such as American theatres and symphony orchestras - shows that individual contributions are not significantly influenced by the presence of state support (Borgonovi, 2006; Brooks, 1999). This means that the preference for collective goods alone cannot explain the complex mechanism of intrinsic motivations underlying the pro-social behaviour of donations.

In an attempt to explain the intrinsic motivations underlying the choice to donate, Andreoni (1990) suggested that when individuals donate, they do not express only preferences for the cause or collective good to which the donation is addressed, but more directly they acquire a certain moral satisfaction that is comparable to a privately consumed good. This effect, called warm glow, would induce people to donate even in contexts where the result of the donation is not clearly traceable or easily calculable, since they would seek satisfaction from the act itself. In this respect, Kahneman and Knetsch (1992) highlighted this sense of moral gratification in the act of donating when people were asked to contribute to a collective cause, but with different levels, such as protecting 1 km or 10 km of maritime coasts from pollution. In this case, people tended to donate similar sums of money to safeguard 1 km or 10 km of coastline because they were more interested in getting moral gratification from the donation, than in getting a certain level of common good.

In addition to the preferences for collective goods and the achievement of moral satisfaction, a third possibility to explain the reasons inherent in the donation is that of considering the ethical and moral codes of people. According to Sugden (1984), the economic model of the rational individual interested only in his own well-being can be changed by taking into account moral and ethical constraints. Among these, the most useful one to explain the attitude to donation is the principle of reciprocity: donating and contributing is not an absolute moral obligation; a person feels an obligation when expecting that the other members of the group will also behave equally. In this case, reciprocity is not to be understood as direct between two people, where the gift plays a relational role of exchange, but it must be understood as a general principle that pushes to pro-social actions, and which will generate benefits only indirectly to those who perform them.

This "Kantian" explanation highlights both the general and universal principles of human

behaviour and the cultural differences that can arise in different societies, where ethical codes are influenced by the historical evolution of different contexts.

As far as extrinsic motivations are concerned, they arise from economic incentives and material rewards that are proposed by the State or by organizations receiving individual contributions. This class includes forms of monetary compensation such as tax deductions for the donated sums, or fringe benefits offered by numerous institutions receiving individual donations and contributions. For example, the donation schemes of many museums and theatres throughout Europe offer donors (according to the level of donation) special events, discounted entrance tickets to exhibitions and shows. The most characteristic element of the extrinsic motivations in the choice of donating is that the donation is part of an economic calculation and a logic of prices whereby the will to donate people is "purchased" through more or less direct forms of monetary compensation. Since donation is a pro-social act that has a cost from the donor, tax incentives or material rewards can make this gesture cheaper. Indeed, according to a simple scheme of supply and demand, the main objective is to reduce the opportunity cost for the donors to increase the general supply of donations. This economic argument, together with the fact that the sectors and causes of donation are recognized as having a social and praiseworthy value, lays the foundations for the justification of the fiscal support policies for donations in many countries (Schuster, 2006).

However, it is necessary to dwell on a significant point in order to better understand the effect of economic incentives on the propensity of individuals to donate. First, although the idea that extrinsic incentives increase people's willingness to donate is fairly accepted, it is more difficult to understand if and how different levels of monetary compensation change the willingness to donate or lead to an increase in donors' contributions. This dilemma is particularly important for policy-makers in designing fiscal incentive schemes to encourage donations, because excessively low levels of benefit may be ineffective in changing people's propensity to donate. In this context, a recent experiment by Karlan and List (2007) showed that the propensity to donate and the amount of the contribution increase if the donor knows that, for every euro donated, the non-profit organization to which the donation is addressed will receive an additional euro from a philanthropic organization. However, the propensity to donate and the amount of the contribution do not increase significantly and remain almost unchanged if, for every euro donated, the philanthropic institution increases the support to the organization by 2, 3 or 4 Euros. This result suggests that different levels of financial incentives may not affect the overall level of donation. However, there are also cases in which the presence of extrinsic rewards and incentives can create a crowding-out effect on the propensity to act in a pro-social way. In many situations we may undertake prosocial actions for free, which, if rewarded, we

would no longer want to carry out. In this case, extrinsic incentives do not combine with the individual's intrinsic motivations, but rather they make them die out.

Moreover, an important aspect is that of reputation and how this can be influenced in relation to the act of donation. Reputation stems from the search for social acknowledgment. In general, for cultural and historical reasons, donating to people has always been commonly considered as a positive act. For this reason, in addition to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, donations can be driven by the search for reputation.

For example, Glazer and Konrad (1996) proposed a rational behaviour model in which the main reason to donate is to indicate the donor's social status. In this way, donations from rich people would replace the consumption of luxury goods in specific cases, which, according to the economic theory, would sometimes be aimed at showing their social status.

In more general terms, donations based on reputational motivation serve not only to show one's own status and wealth, but more simply to obtain social recognition or to value the judgment of others on one's own actions. These factors depend more on social norms and people's expectations of how their actions will be judged (Benabou and Tirole, 2006).

Since gaining reputation through donation stems from the search for distinction, this behaviour depends on the visibility of the act. If the donation is anonymous, it is difficult to gain reputation. For this reason, anonymous donations are considered to be the most praiseworthy. Similarly, it is for this reason that organizations and bodies receiving donations tend to make extensive use of the donors' desire to demonstrate their generosity through visibility tools, ranging from small badges and T-shirts, up to nameplates for major donors in museums and theatres (Fig 1).

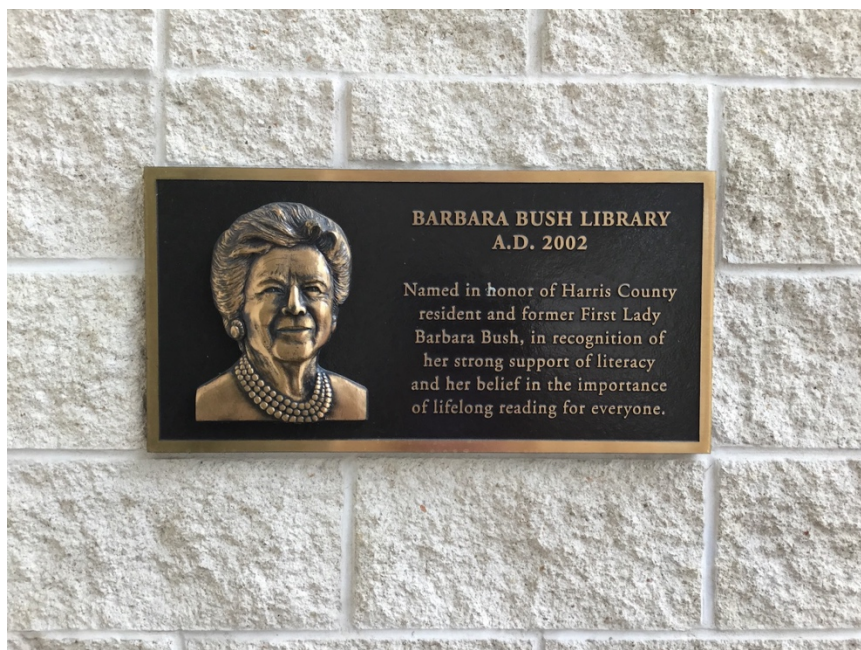


Fig. 1: Example of thanking donors for their sponsorship.

Moreover, although there are mechanisms allowing making the donation visible, reputational reasons are more effective if potential donors expect their gesture to be visible to a target social group. For example, Glazer and Konrad (1996) highlighted how the many non-anonymous contributions to American universities made by former students can be traced back, among other things, to the desire to show their status and be recognized by the group of their former peers.

As stated before, charitable giving and helping others may not always be motivated by pure altruism but also by self-benefits appeals and in the literature it has been studied deeply (Bendapudi and Singh, 1996; Brunel and Nelson, 2000; Fisher, Vandenbosch and Antia, 2008; White and Peloza, 2009). First of all, the stimuli of self-benefit have been shown to encourage positive donation intentions and behaviours in various situations. For example, social exchange theory is frequently used to demonstrate the effectiveness of self-benefits: this theory explains that people invest in relationships comparing the levels of cost and benefits (Blau, 1964a, 1964b), and it has been demonstrated in many studies that this model works really well in marketing and in charitable contributions (Bagozzi, 1975; Gundlach and Murphy, 1993; Watters, 1995; Mathur, 1996; Wilson, 2000). These studies suggest that donors act prosocially and make more donations when the benefit outweighs the costs. More specifically, the self-benefit stimuli is particularly effective because they show to the donor a favourable cost-benefit relation (White and Peloza, 2009). Moreover, when the donations and act of charity are placed on an egoistic focus instead of an altruistic point of view, it is shown that they are more successful: when people want to take part in charitable acts, they tend to be uncertain to help a cause if they are not sure if there will be a benefit for their own self-interests (Holmes, Miller and Lerner, 2002). Furthermore, following the rational choice theory that pictures humans as self-interest individuals, it has been studied how tax incentives increase the donations (Andreoni, 1990; Clotfelter, 1985; Brown and Lankford, 1992): when the price to make a donation falls, there are going to be more donations. For this reason, it can be argued that people make donation for the self-interest. However, there are also evidences that the model that focus on altruistic stimuli are more effective to gain more support by donors, so this kind of argument has some intrinsic flaws (Wang and Graddy, 2008). First of all, this self-interest model doesn't explain why there are donors who still donate and do not enjoy tax benefits. Secondly, this model should take in consideration also the relationship that the donor has with the contractor. As is going to be seen further in the chapter, there are many other interaction and stimulations

that humans have when acting in a prosocial way. Moreover, to give more examples, in the cases of organ donations, is more important to show altruistic incentives otherwise, a self-benefit appeal will get a worst effect (Pessemier, Bemmaor and Hanssens, 1977). Furthermore, it has been shown that funding gathered from public television get a much better response when altruistic appeal are specified (Fisher, Vandenbosch and Antia 2008).

Moreover, beyond individuals' motivation also their emotions might affect their behaviour, as well as the psychological distance perceived from those in need.

Prosocial behaviour is closely related to the mood of the subject receiving the solicitation. The person who is in a positive feeling such as psycho-physical well-being, is more inclined to carry out actions related to donation and collaboration. It has been shown that a worker is more likely to help colleagues in difficulty if he has a positive mood (Williams and Shiaw, 1999). Often prosocial attitudes and actions are able to increase a positive mood and sensations. These actions are also able to have effects on self-esteem and its own satisfaction with life. However, it has been shown that even a negative mood has effects on prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg, 1991).

Bartlett and DeSteno (2006) verified how the gratitude of people receiving the action can significantly influence the behaviour of the benefactor, even if effort to obtain it has a high cost. In their work, considered one of the cornerstones in the study of prosocial behaviours, they emphasize how gratitude can increase support for strangers even without social ties. Furthermore, Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato and Keltner (2015) have demonstrated, by applying games and economic components, how awe is another important factor capable of stimulating the benefactor with a positive emotional state. Bartlett's work in particular has been the subject of a thorough re-analysis by Peng (2019). Their starting point were Bartlett's conclusions (2006) where gratitude is a fundamental element of prosocial behaviour as well as social attachment to the benefactor (Bartlett 2012) In their study they have added indebtedness as a variable. The results they have reached are inconsistent with what has been accepted so far, as they have not found that receiving help can somehow influence prosocial behaviour.

As stated by Tomasello and Brandt (2009) humans are inclined to socialize but also, under specific stimulations, on behalf of others. Several sociologic studies have tried to determine what are the motivations that push an individual to help a stranger (morally sharing, cooperating, donating – Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998, Greener and Crick, 2001) in the absence of an obvious and immediate benefit for the benefactor.

In a recent review (Tuminelli, 2014) it has been analysed an evolutionary model related to the development of prosocial behaviour. According to the Authors this evolution model is related to natural selection, where the help of the donor will contribute to for the future generations,

and adaptative conditions that induces prosocial behaviour. According to modelling theories prosocial behaviour is related to three moral motivations: judgment, elevation and identity (Haidt, 2003). It has been reported that one motivation is not sufficient to predict social behaviour, as well as two can show limitations. It has to be considered that also the gender has an impact: it has been found that females are more involved in social behaviour compared to males. It seems that this is related to motivation, in particular moral elevation and identity is higher in females while in male is predominant moral judgement (Einolf, 2011). Furthermore, prosocial behaviour is influenced by the local situations, and is known as bystander effect. According to this theory, each individual is less motivated in assisting others if there are several other people involved in the situation. This situation can be overcome if the individual knows the person who needs support (in all senses), if he has the knowledge and the means to bring help and for the possible empathy of the condition.

According to Penner et al. (2004) prosocial behaviour can be divided in levels multilevel of analysis and perspectives: the meso, micro and macro level. The meso level is related the help given by an individual at an interpersonal level with another. In the years the individual help is passed from “when helping” someone to “why helping”. In this level there is of the importance of nonconscious and intergroup influence, that can modify social behaviour.

The micro level analysis starts with the consideration why often people do not help and on the other hand someone is ready to act even if the action is life threatening for the helper. For this level several aspects have been proposed related to evolution theory, personality and development processes, seen previously. The macro level is related to prosocial behaviour in a specific situation, such as volunteering in a specific context. The willing to volunteer is related to the education and the economic situation of the individual. This level differs from the meso level where the interpersonal help is more related to an obligation and an interaction with the other individual.

As said before, another important aspect to consider in order to understand how an individual's behaviour toward an event can modify is psychological distance. It has been demonstrated that there is an important psychological role, related to the perceptions of the events due to their psychological distance to the donor: in other words, the space/time distance that the donors' perception has to an event. Mittelman and Dow (2018) gave a clear definition on what psychic distance is, and made it simple to understand what are the mechanisms and elements that affect donor willingness to give. The Authors stated that from their results the psychic distance in charitable giving can be related to several factors such as race, language, culture, religion etc. Moreover, they have showed how important is the donor perception in detecting the difference in economic and educational conditions with the recipient. All these conditions will influence

the donor's and the willingness to donate to someone that is distant and in difficult conditions. It has been also shown a correlation of the perceptions of the events, that can be considered to be near or far in terms of psychological distance (space, time, social, community), using the strength of the message: it has been highlighted that if the campaign has a strong message and the perception of the event has been correctly positioned in terms of time of action and contents, with higher donations (Choi J.,H., Choi, Ryoo and Mackert, 2012; Fujita, Eyal, Chaiken, Trope and Liberman, 2008).

This theory is related to donation focused on the charities directly. This means that there is no identification of persons and the focus is related to the activity and aims of the charity and/or the perception of the populations needs and action that will be pursued. Applying this theory there are several aspects to be considered. It has been shown that the donor involvement can be influenced and this reflects on donations in terms of fund raising. Ein-Gar and Levontin (2012) have demonstrated that there is an increase of donations if it has been established a low social distance and the message is referred to the needs of a single subject, compared to a general aim or purpose of the action. On the over hand, other Authors have demonstrated that the high social distance involvement seems to be more effective on donations if there is a group of people or victims that will benefit of the action, compared to having a single subject (Fujita et al., 2008). In another study the results are different: Kogut and Ritov, (2007) are of the opinion that if there is a high distance psychological perception there is no difference in terms of donations if it is presented a single victim or a group of them. All these variables, analysed by single authors, have been tested by Ein-Gar and Levontin (2013). From the results of this study the Authors conclude that it is important to determine the psychological distance and the purpose of the donation. In fact, they highlighted that if the psychological distance, both temporal and/or social, is far away, the best results are obtained by focusing on the aims and characteristics of the organization. Furthermore, the topic of psychological distance is related with the identifiable victim effect, since arguably, if a victim is perceived as "identifiable" is also considered to be closer to the donor. That being said, many studies in the literature showed clearly that the donors will have a better reaction when they are able to identify the victim rather than when they have been shown with statistical data (Small and Loewenstein, 2003, 2007; Dickert, Kleber, Västfjäll and Slovic, 2016): in other words, triggering empathy and identifiability can trigger greater sympathetic responses, and on the contrary, it has been studied that by showing an increasing number of the potential and actual victims, the amount of willingness to donated decreases. Indeed, many organizations stimulate potential donors by showing images with clearly identifiable subjects. According to this theory, the donation request is addressed to stimulate the donor, making him part of the problem and of the project.



The donor is thus sensitized by the image and less by the abstract concept of giving his economical support to a general organization, whose aims and places of intervention are sometimes unknown to the general public. The selected images tend to excite the donor, who identifies himself with the problem, hypothetically establishing a link between his donation and effect on the subject of the image (Loewenstein and Small, 2007; Small, et al., 2007; Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013). The selection of the image is essential: Small and Verrochi (2009) have reported that the donor is more inclined to donate if the image shows an expression of contentment compared to one with a sadness aspect. Furthermore, Chang and Lee (2009) highlighted the importance of combining the image with a message that must summarize and be in harmony with it. The identification of an image with the specific name or situation determines a greater willingness to contribute to the donation, compared to generic images (Jenni and Loewenstein, 1997). Identification of images are crucial: Small et al, (2003, 2007) showed a greater propensity to donate if the victim was somehow well identified at the time of solicitation, compared to the eventuality in which the victim to be supported would have been identified later, after the donation. Furthermore, the processes to identify a victim occur more often when the contributors are informed about the context of the local situation in which the subject of the image is located. In one study, for example, donors provided more donation when they were aware of the humanitarian emergency the victim was in, than when they had a reduced familiarity with the issue (Zagefka, Noor and Brown, 2013). Another hypothesis is to stimulate the donation directly to a charity and not through a single image. This theory is based on the concept of stimulating the donor to bestow its offer on a well-defined organization, whose aims and actions are clearly defined. This will also produce a retention of the donor to that specific charity (Nathan and Hallam, 2009). It is hypothesized that in the long period of time the "emotional stimulus" of the image may decline, while the solidity of each action remains constant, giving the latter the possibility to calibrate the interventions according to the needs and needs of their action. As reported by Kogut (2011) there could be also a reduction in donation if the presented image is perceived as the only action of the organization and the status of the is far away from reality and related to local situations. According to the Social Identity Theory, where each individual classifies himself in a category (Ashforth and Mael 1989), Kogut and Ritov (2007) have shown that if the donor feels to be in the "in-group" (i.e. part of the organization), the contribution is higher compared to the feeling of belonging of an "out-group". The other theory is related to donation focused on the charities directly. This means that there is no identification of persons and the focus is related to the activity and aims of the charity and/or the perception of the populations needs and action that will be pursued (Hong and Lee, 2010). Applying this theory there are several aspects to be considered. It has been shown that

the donor involvement can be influenced and this reflects on donations in terms of fund raising.

### **1.1.3 Situational Related factors**

Different situation can enhance or reduce the occurrence of a helping behaviour. Charities can use different ways in order to attract donor interests to achieve their objectives. Moreover, NGOs try to appeal different kind of donations by donors, for example, the use of petition signing, monetary contribution, voluntary work etc.

It has been studied that one of the best way to increase interest of donors is to give and promote incentives, such as a tax benefit, or a small gift prior to the donation request or just after. (Alpizar, Carlsson and Stenman, 2008; Falk, 2007; Koo, Fishbach and Park., 2018). Likewise, charities can use other strategies to increase interest and the amount of donations that go further from a monetary and material benefit: one of the ways is to stimulating the altruism of donors by receiving goods directly (food, clothes etc.); the phrasing of the donation request can enhance the amount of donations, as we will see in detail for assertive and non-assertive messages further in this study. That is to say, charities can enhance the amount of donations by not giving a reference price (or amount of product) for the donation request: this form of donation request is named “what you want” (Chen and Chin-Chang, 2019), and it has shown that using this strategy, donations are significantly higher (Kim et al., 2009). As said in the previous paragraph, the individual can be affected by the psychological distance (e.g. Choi, Choi, Ryoo, and Mackert, 2012; Fujita et al., 2008) and the “identifiable victim effect” (e.g. Small et al, 2003, 2007), so it’s a good practice for NGOs to shape their advertisement depending on the cause they are following, in order to increase donation.

Another example of a situation that can modify the behaviour of a donor can be found, commonly, in the bystander effect. This phenomenon occurs when an individual is surrounded by other passive individuals: it is shown a reduction in the occurrence of helping behaviour (Darley and Latané, 1968; Latané and Darley, 1970; Latané and Nida, 1981).

According to Latané and Darley (1970) in their work on bystander there are five levels that will influence the possible action. The first step is related to the perception of the situation: the individual needs to understand what is happening. In this situation is important the number of people watching the event: the more there are the less is the responsibility feeling and less are the motivations to interact. The second is the interpretation of the emergency situation, especially if there is an ambiguous situation where is not clear who is the victim. Also, in this case there is a reduction of the reaction if the number of viewers is high, even relatively. Under this condition if no one acts there is reluctance of the individual to intervene, for fear of

criticism. The third point is related to the decision if the bystander has the responsibility for the action. Once it has been analysed step one and two in the next step he has to decide to act: this can be more prompt if the bystander has a psychological connection with the victim (relative, friend, ethnicity, etc.). The fourth step is related to the decision to how to assist the victim. This step is influenced by the single experience of the bystander (work, emotional status, physical condition, etc.). This step is strictly related to the fifth one that is how to act, doing a conscious decision on how to offer assistance. An important aspect that has to be considered is that the bystanders has to decide in all steps if his assistance is unwanted and unwarranted, especially if other individuals are not acting. Piliavin, Callero and Evans, (1982) has shown that participation in the action and intervention by a motivated person is also aimed to obtain maximum benefit with minimum effort. The decision to take a prosocial action is linked to the perception of a minimum cost of aid (in economic, temporal or physical terms), if the individual who provides the help in some way is gratified and if the benefits for the recipient the help are high (Decety, 2011). In addition, the subject has the greatest tendency to help and intervene if the person requesting help is part of his social group or has common interests. In these cases, the altruistic subject provides assistance by creating a shared identity, supporting the action with more time available, energy efforts and material support. If the applicant for help is identified as part of his "in group" this raises an emotional state (closeness, emotion, responsibility for the well-being of the applicant) which increases the propensity for action. On the contrary, social exclusion leads to a significant reduction in the actions that underlie prosocial behaviour. Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco and Bartels, (2007) conducted experiments on a group of students. On these cohort they manipulated social inclusion or non-inclusion. The manipulation was aimed at observing the behaviours of subjects when they were informed that they had been excluded from participating in the group's activities. Furthermore, persisting this situation they would remain isolated in life. This social exclusion and estrangement from the group, led to a reduction in prosocial behaviour. In fact, people who felt socially excluded reacted with a lower propensity to donate a student fund, they were furthermore available to participate in other research activities, proved less efforts to bring their help in the event of an accident and they were not active in sport and motor interaction with other students (Twenge et al, 2007).

## **1.2 Data on donations**

### **1.2.1 World donations**

In this section, we intend to provide an overview of the progress of donations, of the behaviours

of donors and of the main methods of donation.

The World Giving Index is published yearly by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF, 2018). This report, through the submission of a questionnaire, investigates the attitude of people around the world to donate, according to three main lines of action: support to strangers, monetary donations and voluntary activities. The countries involved are 146, which together represent more than 90% of the world's population.

The 2018 survey on the 2017 data, shows a trend growth in the number of people who offered help or chose to volunteer, and a significant reduction in the number of people who donated money, confirming the negative trend already recorded in 2016.

The negative trend is more evident in developing countries, while a positive trend reversal can be observed in countries with more developed economies.

If we examine the data in relation to the profile of "donors" by age and gender, we can see that the percentage of people over 50 who donated money in 2017 is still negative - from 31.8% in 2016 to 30.6% in 2017 - while the propensity to act through the offer of aid increases (Fig.2 ). First in terms of voluntary activities and offer of help are people aged between 30 and 50 years - 22% and 54% respectively - mainly of male gender, followed by under-30 people - 21.4% and 53.2%.

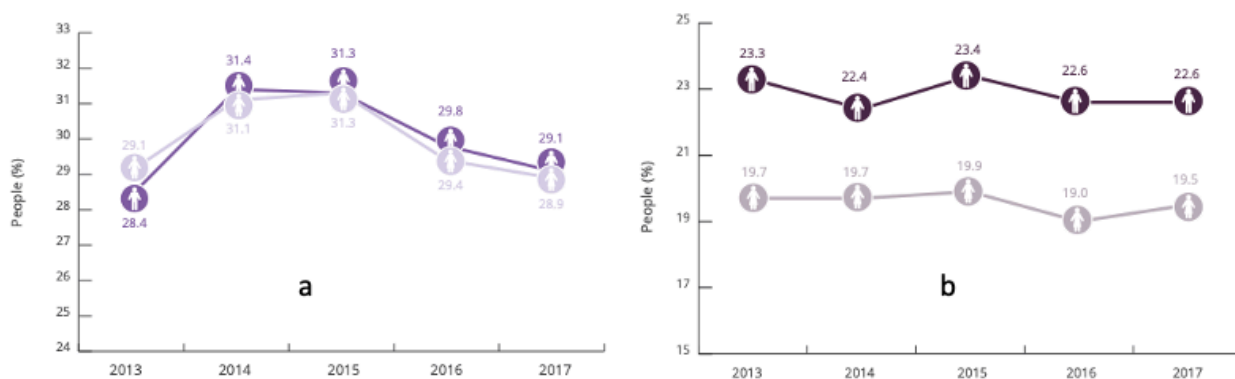


Fig. 2: Global participation by gender in a) donating money, b) volunteering time. (from CAF World Giving Index 2018, modified by the Author)

### 1.2.2 Italian donations

According to the World Giving Index, Italy ranks 68th in the overall ranking, with a reversal of the trend compared to the negative positioning trend of recent years, gaining 16 positions compared to 2016; this is a sign of generosity and a propensity to help, in the broadest sense, which keeps growing in our country. In particular, by investigating the positioning with respect

to monetary donations, offers of help and voluntary activities, Italy shows an increase in the economic dimension, in line with the trend of countries with more advanced economies, compared to which it places 44th in the world ranking. On the contrary, there is no increase in the propensity of Italians with respect to the dynamics of volunteering and help, where Italy ranks 82nd and 95th respectively.

The general trend leads us to ask ourselves what is happening to the Italian donation market and how (and if) the scenarios, attitudes and donation behaviour of Italians are changing.

About 10,000,000 Italians made donations in 2018, with an increase of 385,000 donors compared to 2017: 49% of Italians donated in 2018, compared to 41% in 2017.

This growth trend is driven by informal donations: in fact, the percentage of those who have donated solely to associations has decreased, while the percentage of those who have donated without the intermediation of an association has increased.

At the same time, the estimated value of donations from individuals on the basis of the 2017 tax return has increased, confirming the positive trend which began in 2015. We can therefore say that there is an overall increase in the number of donors acting through non-intermediated channels, while there is a decrease in the number of donors giving money to associations who, at the same time, choose to increase their value: the average annual value of donation to associations was € 67 in 2018, with an average of about € 13 more than in 2017, while the average volume of informal donations remained at about € 35. The data already give us a clear indication of the value and importance of the dynamics of direct and/or intermediate relationships, which are the fundamental driving force behind the donors' action.

The main "causes" of donor support reflect a change in the attitude of the Italians to donate, linked to aspects of everyday life and the personal dimension of their relationship with their needs. Among all the solicitation received, it is evident that the highest donations are related to public events, face to face, public collections and paper mailing. The "5 x 1000" devolution, a form of autonomous donation that each citizen can destine to non-profit, scientific and health research bodies, (Info-Cooperazione 2020) and direct mailing are effective donation tools used by individuals (Fig.3). The amount of fundraising by businesses continues to grow, while legacies, even if they represent a high potential channel, are not yet perceived by organizations as a highly effective tool.

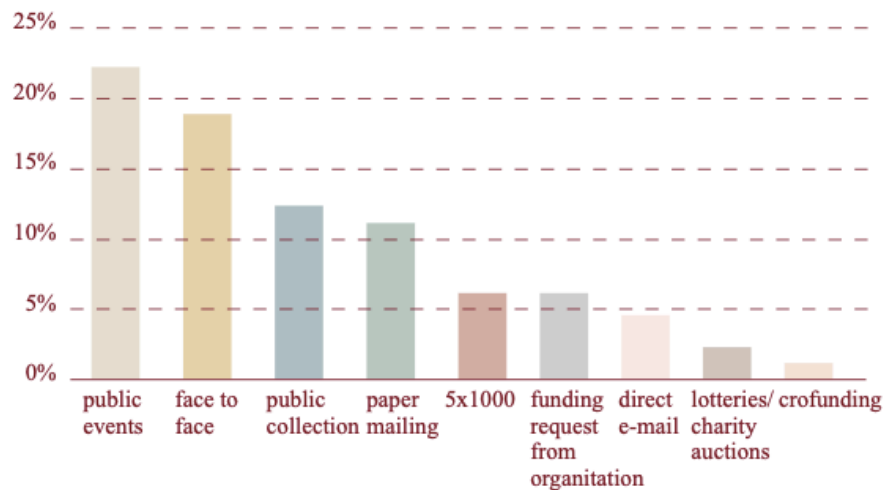


Fig. 3: Percentage of donations based on the type of solicitation received by the Italian population.

Furthermore, in Italy there are more than 25 million people who daily connect to the Internet via PC, tablet and smartphone. The growth is evident for social networks, with Facebook confirming to be the most used channel, with 71% of internet users with active profiles: about 63% of these people are aged between 25 and 54 years, with almost equal percentages between both sexes.

A vast majority of internet users (>80%) claim to be a donor (Donare 3.0 Doxa). The interviewed indicated that Internet can be considered their preferred channel for donations: 63% of responses identified it at the first place, although only 18% uses it for this purpose.

This difference can be explained according to the donors age: some charities do not accept online donation and this is a major difficulty for young people, while for older there is a lack of trust in online money transfer.

The growing role in the use of Internet in everyday life and its penetrations in consumers decisions needs a strategic management of interactions with donors. This can be obtained by using personalized tools such as landing page, ad hoc messages and direct video, etc.

The increased social networks utilizations and their engagement must change the actual approach of strategies (Fig. 4).

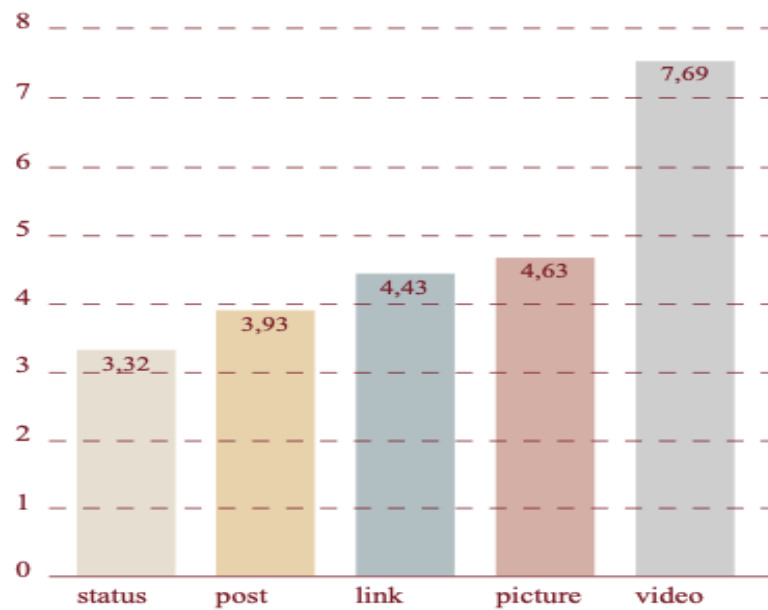


Fig. 4: Engagement rate according to the different internet conditions

Another aspect that has to be considered the emotional one. It is necessary to understand this aspect to determine the correct dialogue and strategies to be adopted with the single and the target group.

A successful campaign will be determinate if it is known the correct dynamic behind the donation: this include the selection of correct tools for the fund raising the models of communications: these can be also consistent with the image of the organization itself, their aims and the results obtained. This will produce also loyalty for further donation at the organization, especially in selective areas of action.

It is well evident that building a positive and constructive relationship with the donor is fundamental. There are several ways to bring this engagement stable in time, and are (Fig. 5):

- transparency;
- tangible results;
- information and dissemination of the achieved results;

These three elements are even more significant if the donor is within the emotional category where values such as loyalty, sense of justice, reliability and rationality are considered essentials. For this reasons psychological and emotional status of donors is fundamental for the relationship of trust with charities, especially for the increase of informal donations, that are not related to any campaign. In Fig. 5 there are reported some examples of transparency, obtained results disseminated through internet

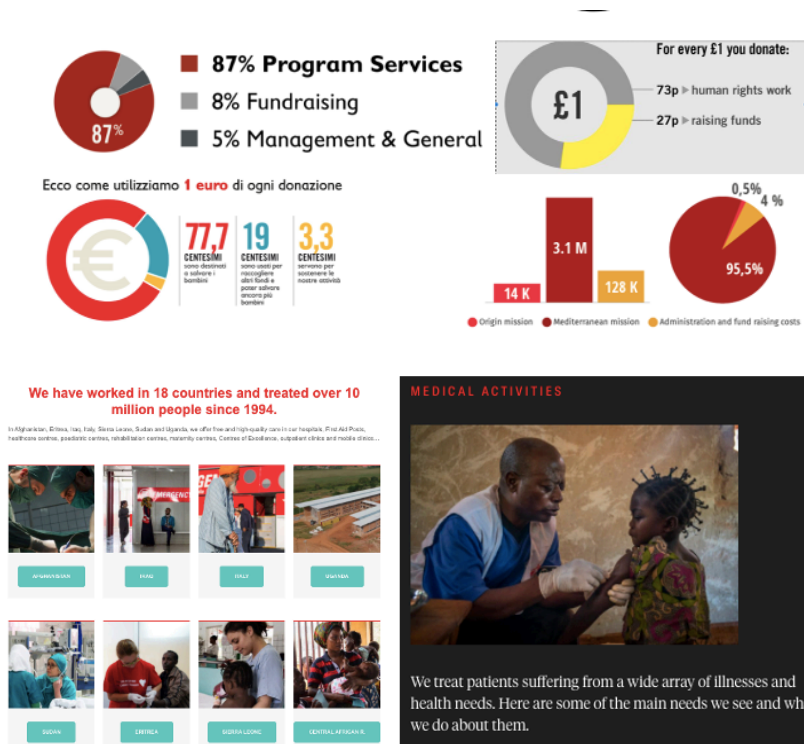


Fig. 5: Examples of transparency, results and internet disseminations of the objectives obtained by some NGO

### 1.3 Donors profiles

Beyond the tools and opportunities in the field of fundraising, it is important to define and understand who our donors are and how they act.

According to several investigations, in particular the data referred by ISTAT (published in October 2019 reporting data of 2017), most of the Italian donors (>45%) are resident in the Northern Italy, with the North East region is the most generous geographical area. There is differentiation in donations among sex: men are more generous in terms of economical support, while women are keener in volunteering, while their average age for both is over 55 years.

Under 34 years and over 65 demonstrate the highest spending time donation.

It is quite evident that donors have a higher education level and economic situation, are more involved in culture, political and social problems.

Under a motivational point of view, donors feel the need of solidarity, care for others, feel to be part of a changing process.

As represented in Fig. 6 in Italy episodic donors are the highest category (34,5%), followed by the potential donors (32%). The percentage of constant donors and how declares intending to donate are constant (17%). Summing the constant donors and the occasional ones the percentage is of 52%.



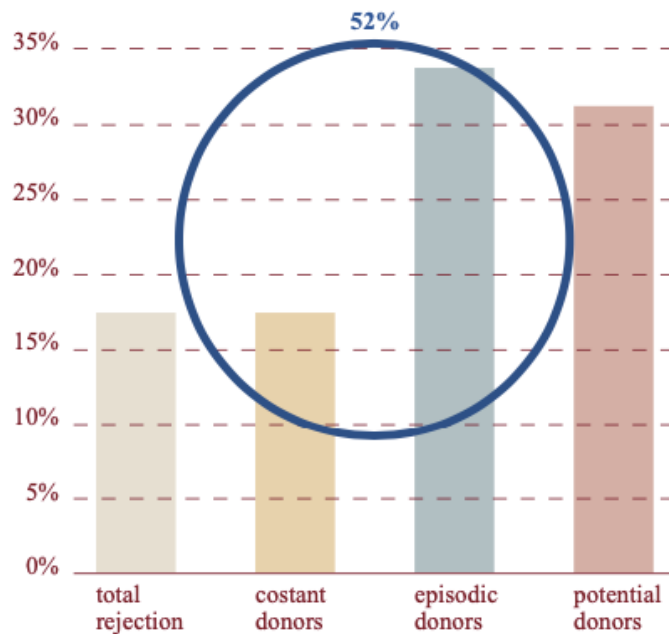


Fig. 6 Sample of the Italian population related to donations to charities. In the circle is indicated the sum of percentage of constant and episodic donors.

Several studies and analysis on profiling the donors have shown that it is not enough to consider the social and demographic situation. (McKinney, 2004).

The choices of donating is represented by the emotions and the act that itself generates, and that they may or may not be in line with the relational and emotional dynamics that organizations are able to arouse and trigger (Grow, 2016).

As shown in the studies of McGovern, 2017, the Author proposed donor profiles to identify persons that potentially can donate to a charity. According to this work the profiling is important to identify new potential donors or to classify the ones that have already donated. A correct donor profile will reduce the efforts in targeting the potential individuals: this will save money and time. On the over hand profiling current donors can be used to find major donors that are already donating but not adequately motivated.

#### 1.4 Modalities of fundraising in Italy

Since 2008 the introduction of SMS and phone campaigns have a predominant role with important opportunities for fundraising in Italy. These campaigns have to be planned in terms

of budgets to be invested and ability according to media and communication plans. According to donors' declaration SMS fundraising campaigns is the preferred action of donation: it is simple, easy to use and the required amount affordable. This has been supported from 2018 by the introduction of some initiatives such as the availability to use 30 fix phone numbers per year where is possible to create fundraising campaigns.

To obtain fix phone number, it is mandatory to schedule a minimum of 2 annual campaigns. Moreover, it has been seen that, on average, NGOs that use this system do 3 campaigns per year. The average fee for obtaining a fix phone number is around € 20.000, including standard and variable costs. Phone companies can provide several information, comparison and analysis of the accessibility to the number especially during the found rising campaign, with an additional cost of € 8.000. Furthermore, there is also the possibility for the charities to obtain donor records from phone donations. The Italian Data Protection Authority has stated that telephone companies, if there is the consent by the donor, can communicate to non-profit organizations their data and the non-profit organizations will have then the possibility to contact them in the future and communicate the results of the program.

With these actions there has been an increase in the economic investment to activate this tool, but is important to have a continuity, using always the same permanent phone number.

It has been stated that SMS campaign needs a strategic choice in planning and management, an initial allocation of resources, key role of ambassadors and testimonials.

The web qualifies in the organizations as a relatively effective fundraising channel, if we take into account the current overall level of digitalization, it shows interesting potentialities (Fig. 7).

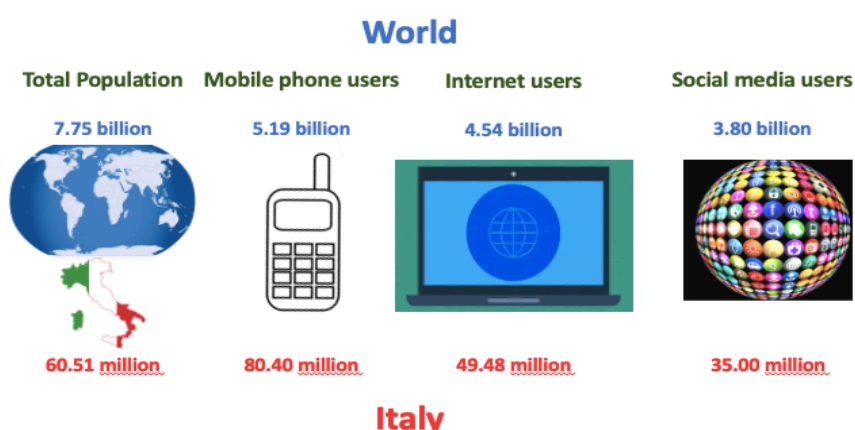


Fig. 7: Digital situation in the World and Italy, data as of January 2020 (from Kemp, datareportal 2020 and UN Local Government Bodies, modified by the Author)

Considering the new digital era, it has to be seen that charity fundraising campaigns had a

significant reduction in 2017 using phone Short Message Service – SMS- with 18.5 million Euros compared to 46 million in 2016. This reduction is connected with the earthquake in central Italy, where most donations were devoted directly to the critical situations using other tools. This reduction (Fig. 8) happened probably because the events of controversy committed by some organizations with the SMS fundraising tool (Maccaferri, 2018). (Fig.9)

However in the future, it is possible that the fundraising tool of SMS will collapse due to the use of new fundraising tools: as it was seen in the first quarter of 2020 due to COVID-19, crowdfunding campaigns were really popular, for example Fedez and Chiara Ferraghi that raised more than 3 million euros for the San Raffaele hospital, or the 99 years old war veteran that raised more than 32 million euros by walking.

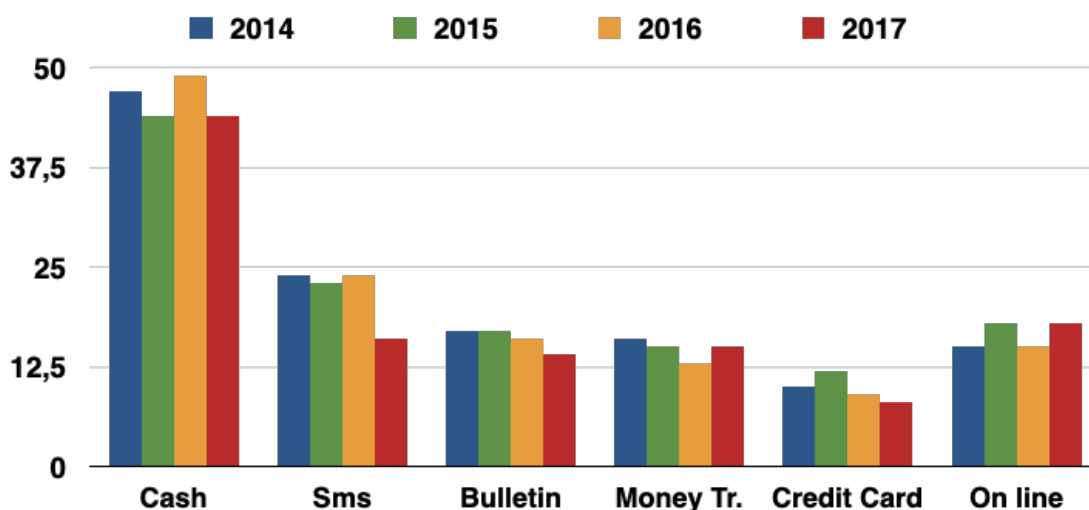


Fig. 8: Modalities of money donation in Italy from 2014 to 2017 (from Maccaferri 2018, modified by the Author), where is evident the reduction of fundraising through SMS.

Even if SMS fundraises were not very popular in this period, donations were extraordinarily high, and the global amount of 525 Million Euro was gifted -default estimate- in the period March-22 April (Affinito and Gabanelli, 2020). The updated information about the fundraising initiatives showed that in period between March and June the amount of donation was around 1 billion euros (Atlantis report, 2020) (Fig. 9).

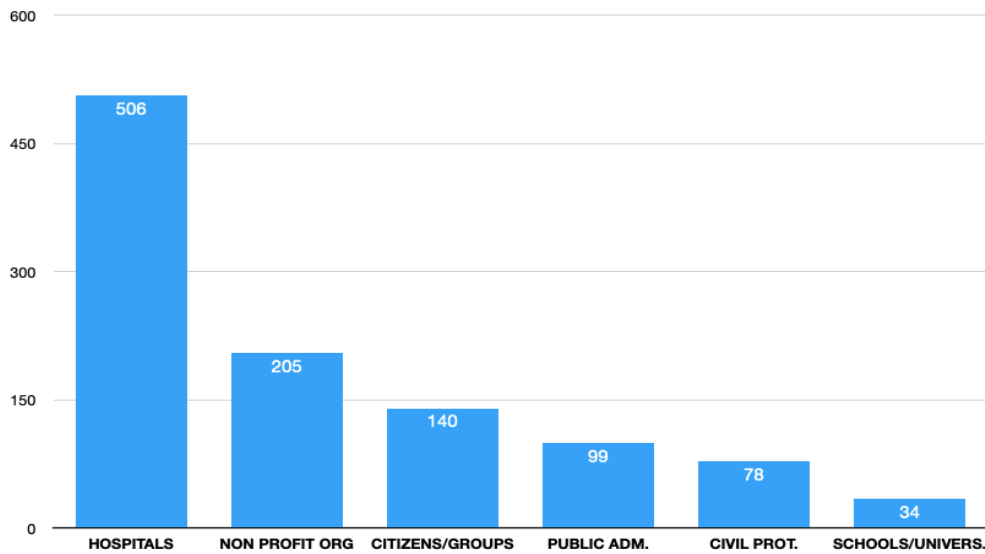


Fig.9 Atlantis report, Total Donation between March and June 2020. (modified by the Author)

This may imply, that NGOs should start looking at these new tools more in the future since they have been shown to be quite successful. During the pandemic, the most used social network for the campaign are showed in the figure below (Atlantis report, 2020)(Fig. 10).

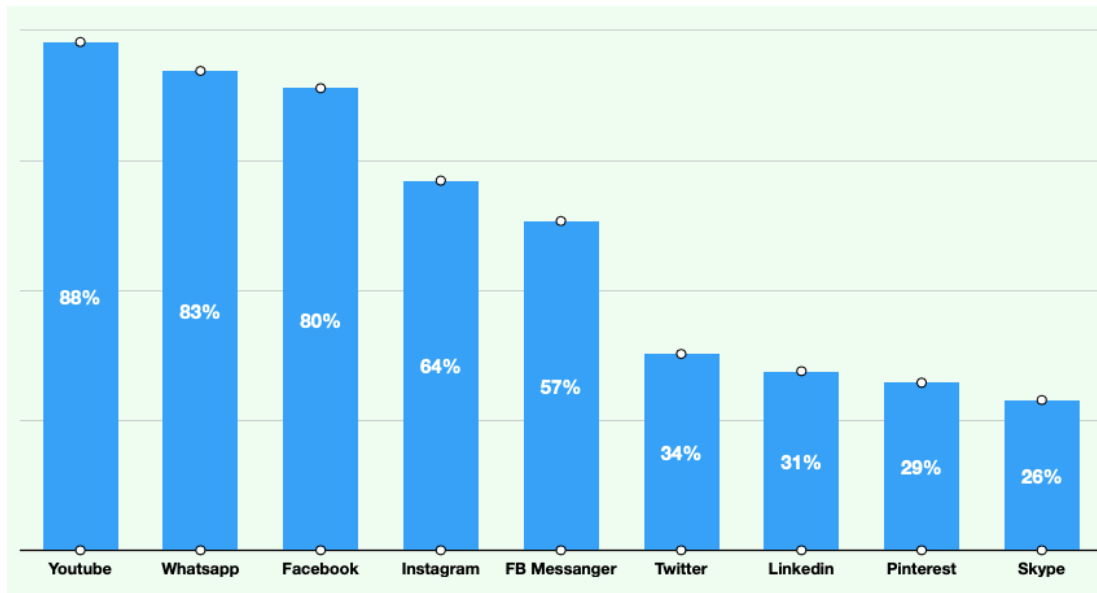


Fig. 10: Atlantis report on the social network for fundraising campaigns. (modified by the Author)

### 1.5 NGOs during coronavirus in Italy

The Italian Institute on Donations has made an overview on the impact of COVID-19 on the NGOs. On a sample of 126 organizations, the 81% has declares an impact of the pandemic disease on their fund-raising campaign, while 9,5% didn't have any impact (Fig.11)

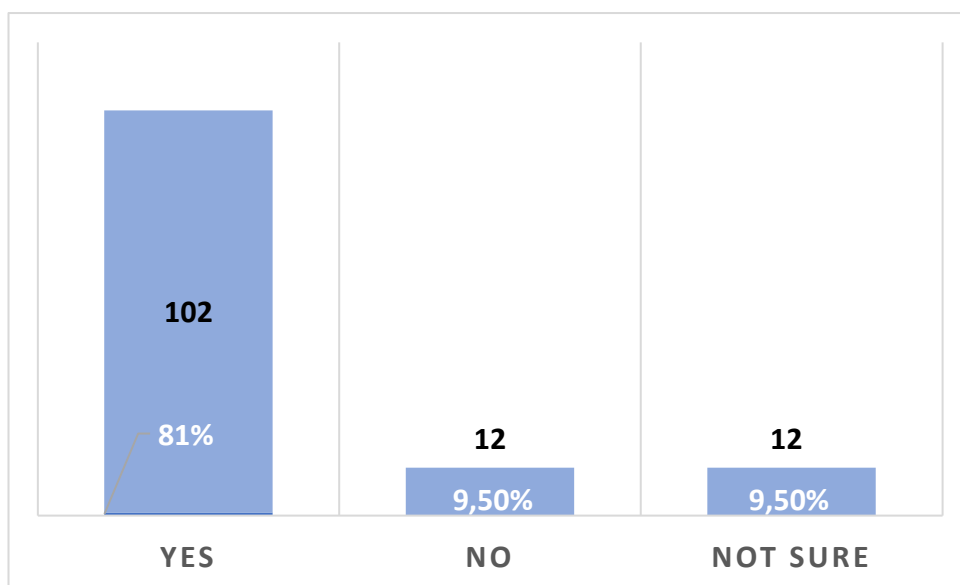


Fig. 11: Impact on fund-raising after the COVID 19 pandemia on 126 ONG (from Istituto Italiano Donazione, modified by the Author)

Most of the ONG (87%) have declared a reduction of fund raising (Fig.12 a), and the amount variation registered (Fig. 12 b) during the pandemic, was significantly reduced for more than 50% in the 38% of the NGOs..

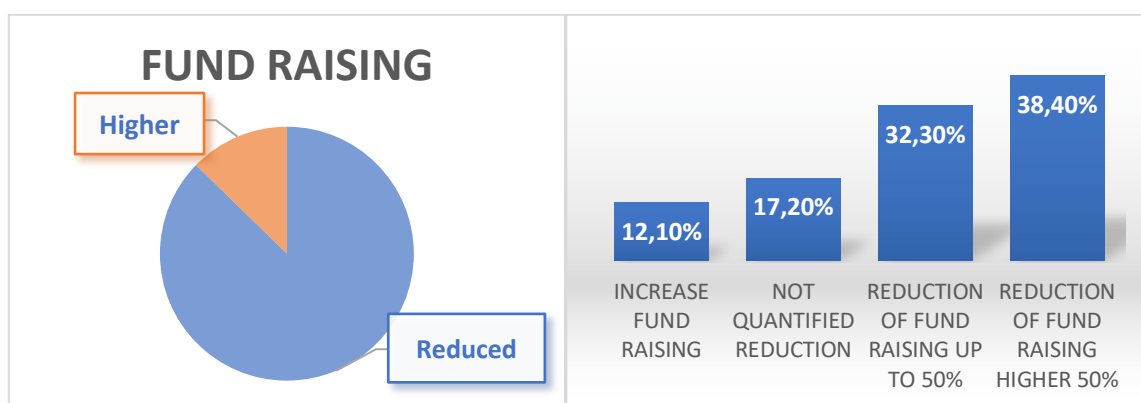


Fig. 12 a: Effects on fund-raising on ONG: 88% of the ONG have declared a reduction of fund raising while 12% declared an increase (from Istituto Italiano Donazione, modified by the Author). b) The effects of the pandemic on fund-raising (from Istituto Italiano Donazione, modified by the Author)

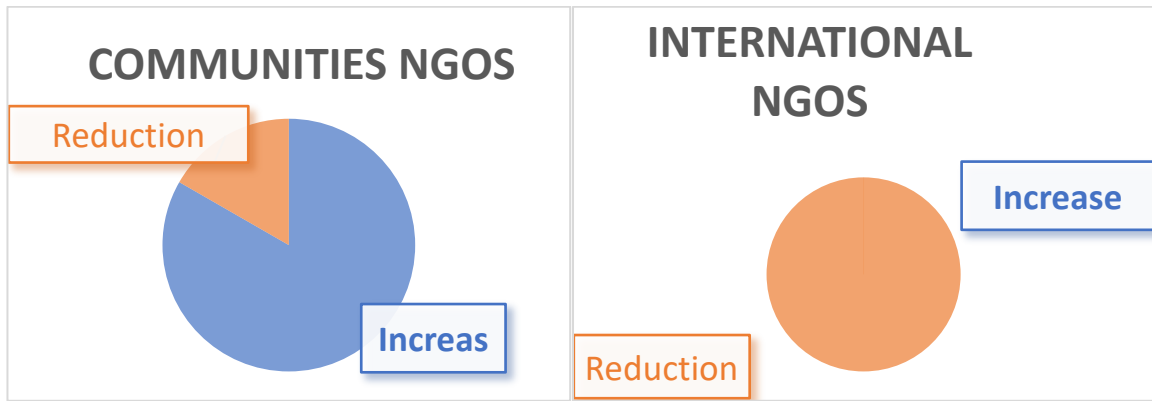


Fig. 13: example of NGOs that received more donation vs less donations. (from Istituto Italiano Donazione, modified by the Author)

The data provided from the “Istituto Italiano Donazione” shows how donation toward NGOs changed during the pandemic of Covid-19: more donation toward closer distance communities, less toward international charities (Fig. 13). This behaviour may be explained by the fact that, in this situation donors prefer to donate toward people that are considered to be “in group”, or in their social and geographical circle, but less willing to donate to aid people that are considered part of an “outgroup” (Branas-Garza, Jorrat, Espin and Jaromir, 2020). For this reason, in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, charities should try to put their focus on families and workers that are front lining the pandemic the most. Other aspect that have been shown to be important in order to solicit online donation, in light of the tools that have been used the most during the pandemic, is to focus the attention on the IT features (such as, effectiveness, privacy and security) and the strengthen the importance to help vulnerable group and region (Bin-Nashwan, Al-Daihani, Abdul-Jabbar and Al-Ttaffi, 2020).

## CHAPTER 2

Language can be considered as a "symbolic communication system", in which the information among two entities (both individuals or groups) are encoded symbolically. In a more general way with the term language, we can consider the faculty of communicating symbolically and this concept goes far back in time in western world thought Aristotle (384-322 BC), in his work "De Interpretatione", where "the sounds emitted by the voice are the symbols of the states of the soul, and the words written are the symbols of the words emitted by the voice". Some definitions are still valid and nowadays, and we can define them as possible combinations for issuers - recipients (men, animals), communication of particular conditions (sign language) and symbolic structures such as conventional signs, interlocutions, emblems, etc..

### **2.1 NGOs' communication: Examples of factors affecting Individuals' responses**

First of all, in order to obtain the maximum result from a humanitarian aid support campaign, the analysis of information and communication is required. This system is based not only on the IT component, but also on the knowledge of experts in the psychological, environmental, communication and even political sectors. This shows how NGOs must create a well-established organizational structure that can define strategies, coordination, the ability to raise funds and also the political impact. Such an organized structure is able to rapidly change strategies and respond to the needs of sudden crises (Maiers, Reynolds and Haselkorn, 2005). Several Authors have pointed out the need for an NGO communication programme a strategic plan. The communication plan is a fundamental part in the life and structure of NGO's. It has been considered that an organization without a communication plan is connecting with the counterpart, blindly (Funds for NGO, 2020). As mentioned earlier this has to be structured and has to be a dynamic process, ready to react and not a linear situation, with defined limits and perspectives. The communication plan has to be focused on the efforts that the NGO will perceive, according to the mission of the organization. The first aim of the communication action is to define the messages that have to reach the target populations (i.e. potential donors) even using gadgets and marketing materials. All the plan has to be monitored constantly to detect eventual pitfalls and promote action to correct them. Another important aspect related to the communication plan is related to the involvement of the entire organization and not the single camping. This is important to avoid misinterpretation, superimposition with potential donors and stakeholders. In fig. there is a step-by-step process to reach an impact of the communication plan.



Fig.14: step by step process needed to prepare a communication campaign for NGOs

According to “The NGO Communications Guide 2013” although related to HIV infection, the communication strategy is considered as a dynamic cycle (Fig.15)

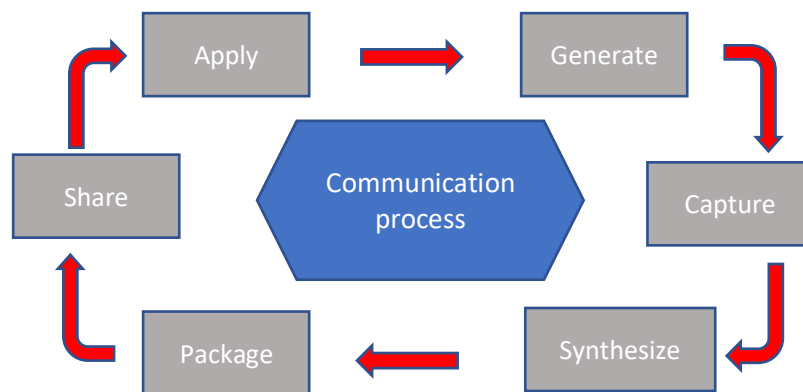


Fig.15: life cycle of communications for NGO’s

The first step is the generation of information that the NGO has received and wants to share. Then there is the capture phase where all documents, information qualitative and quantitative are recorded. These are needed to pass to the synthesis phase. In this step the NGO has to analyse the data acquired and has to evaluate their use according to the its mission and porpoise. Then it is suggested to pass to the creation of the structure that will deliver the information and the request of support that is the prelude to sharing it with the potential external world and then to apply it. For these reasons, it is not easy to promote prosocial campaigns, because people may feel a limitation in their freedom of choice. Fundraising campaigns for human rights cannot be based on fear or on the concrete possibility of making the victim fall back into critical



conditions, but a hope for a better future must be given. This message must be pragmatic and must be assessed and conceived from multiple aspects which include knowledge of the situation and the historical moment in which the victim finds himself, has to evaluate linguistics, communication, psychology and neuroscience aspects. As mentioned before, according to prior research, NGOs can affect individuals donation related outcomes (i.e., attitudes and behaviors) through their communication. Indeed, it has been shown that the way information are delivered in charitable advertisements can importantly determine whether potential donors are more vs. less willing to donate their money to support a charitable cause (e.g., Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013). Accordingly, several scholars have shed light on a number of factors that can be manipulated by charities to improve the effectiveness of their donation appeals and thus to attract individual donors. Among others, emotional appeals (e.g., Bagozzi and Moore, 2004; Basil, Ridgway and Basil, 2007; Pham and Septianto, 2019), message frame valence (e.g. Chang and Lee in 2009, 2010; Spacey, 2017; Rothman and Salovey, 1997), the image valence (e.g., Small and Loewenstein, 2003; Kougut and Ritov, 2005) and the type of victim (i.e., identified vs. statistical) (e.g., Small, Loewenstein and Slovic, 2007; Sharma and Morwitz, 2016) have been investigated. In this research I focus my attention on a particular factor that relates to Language Assertiveness, which is conceived as the extent to which a statement or a request obliged the receivers to behave in a certain manner without giving the possibility to refuse (e.g., Grinstain and Riefler, 2015; Kronrod et al., 2012; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2018), and that has been demonstrated to affect consumer prosocial behaviours. In particular, I want to shed light by using Construal level theory (CLT, Trope and Liberman, 2010) on a novel factor that might determine whether using a more versus less assertive language can improve (vs. decrease) individuals donation of money toward a charity. In this chapter, first I will review briefly some of the message-related factor that can affect charitable advertisements' effectiveness (i.e., message frame valence, image valence, emotional appeals, type of "victim") and then I will focus my attention on language assertiveness.

## **2.1. Message Frame Valence, Image Frame Valence, Type of "victim", Emotional Appeals**

Message framing is based on the communication that is sent to the recipient and is used to create the approach in which the information is given, and is one of the main variables that can influence the effectiveness of the message. Message framing strategy consists in presenting the same information in different ways within advertising messages (e.g., Amatulli, Pino, De Angelis and Cascio, 2018). Indeed, individuals' response to a solicitation can be different depending on the message frame strategy used.

According to Spacey (2017) there are 26 influencing techniques that can have an impact on

decisions of the receiver. There are many studies that suggest how important is for charities to make the right choices in order to achieve the best results in their advertising campaigns. For this reason it is important to point out that charities need to properly consider how to frame their advertisement. Indeed, there are many factors that non-profit organizations need to adjust in order to increase donation. For instance, among other strategies it has been highlighted the role played by appeals to emotions, frame valence, and the way the “social issue” is presented through representations of the victim (i.e., beneficiary of the advocated behavior) (Merchant, Ford and Sargeant 2010).

Focusing on message frame valence, which refers to the approach that is used to communicate the information, is an important component of charitable ads for promoting positive donation-related outcomes (Chang and Lee, 2009). According to prior literature we can distinguish between loss-framed and gain-framed messages. Gain-framed messages are those that highlight the positive consequences of behaving in the advocated way (i.e., donating to a charity), conversely loss-framed messages are those that highlight the negative consequences of not complying with the advocated behaviour (i.e., donating to a charity). Studies have shown how the message framed in a positive way, will have better results when the behaviour is perceived as safe (Rothman and Salovey, 1997), this is particular evident for health-related decisions. Focusing on charitable giving, prior research has shed light on different conditions in which either gain-framed or loss-framed messages might be more effective. Indeed, depending on the story, personal characteristics of the receivers, the way the advertisement is shown, and the outcome measured both positive and negative message frame can have a positive effect in order to increase donation. For instance, to give some examples, positive frame message has been demonstrated to be better in order to increase donation for identifiable humanitarian causes while negative frame message is better when the data used by the charities is statistical to underline the charity goal (Das, Kerkhof and Kuiper, 2008). These Authors have shown that *“personalized stories about the ill fate of one individual victim will work best when combined with a positive frame that focuses on ways to help better this fate and explicitly mentions how this will help”* (pp. 172) (Das, Kerkhof and Kuiper, 2008). Moreover, Chang and Lee (2009) demonstrated the importance of pairing message frame valence with image valence. Indeed, these authors have argued and shown that *“image valence enhances framing effects on advertising effectiveness of a charitable appeal when the image is congruent with the framed message, especially when the image and the message are presented negatively”* (pp. 2910) (Chang and Lee, 2009). Cao (2016) showed that people with higher susceptibility will be more likely to donate when a negative framed appeal is used in a message. For negative appeal they have meant a picture with a single subject in distressed situations, with a clear evidence of the

terrible consequences that could occur if the subject is not helped or assisted. Furthermore, even if it was shown that positive appeals were enhancing the attitude toward an ad, negative appeals worked better for increasing the donation of the advertisement (Erlandsson, Nilsson and Västfjäll 2018). For instance the role of psychological feelings has been highlighted also by Chang and Lee (2009): they have analysed the effects of advertising on charity campaigns, evaluating the role of message framing and the importance of images in the advertising. Moreover, it was demonstrated the pivot role of images when there is a strict correlation with message framing. This is more evident if the message is considered to have a negative appeal, in a short-term framing. In a long-term situation, the message can be more effective if it has a positive appeal. These terms have several synonymous expressions: for negative appeal can be used term such as sad, guilt and loss-framed, while for positive altruistic, warm, gain-framed. As it was seen in Chapter 1, one of the most important aspect that has to be analysed is the way the beneficiary of the advocated behaviour is represented. Particularly relevant is the so-called: “identifiable victim effect”. According to Shafir, Simonson and Tversky (1993), the identification of a victim creates an empathy with the situation and is able to stimulate in the donor the willing to take action, also with money donations. Empathy with the victim has been discussed by Weiner (1980, 1995). The author has defined the victim as a person not responsible for the situation he is living and this is the first step for the reaction induced in the observer. The reaction can be of anger, if the observer identifies the situation (war/crisis/persons etc.) that has induced the effects on the victim or of compassion to the victim and the need to help. Small and Loewenstein (2003) have demonstrated that identifiable victims have a higher impact on potential donors, but they assume that this could be due to the information related to the picture more than the picture its self. They demonstrated the potential donors were keener in donations if their support was used for a family already selected by the organization, instead of a family that would have been selected later on. These conclusions support the theory of the presence of an identifiable victim effect. Also, Kougut and Ritov (2005) in their work on identified victim effect have analysed the impact of pictures on donors. They showed that the potential donor is more sensitive helping someone if he sees a picture showing an identifiable victim. This situation is significantly increased if there are information accompanying the image, which highlights the particular state in which the victim is standing. Instead if are used images where more than one person is represented, and it is therefore impossible to identify the victim or an individual subject, the effects on the donor were indifferent. Analysing the reactions of the participants, the authors highlighted that the identification of the victim and the explanation of the situation of need in which he is, determines a distress situation for the donor, with a significant propensity in offering his help, also in economic terms. These emotional situations

are not caused by images in which the victims are not identified and consequently have no impact on the propensity to donate. In more recent studies, it is possible to notice that also the feeling of self-efficacy of the individual moderate the “identifiable victim effect”: if the sense of self efficacy (the believe of the donor to have an impact) is lower, then it will be more effective to use an image of a single child in comparison to an image of many (Sharma and Morwitz, 2015). Conversely, when the perceived efficacy is high, is better to use images of multiple individuals. Furthermore, there are also other aspect to consider when regarding the use of images. In a very recent study by Moche, Erlandsson, Andersson and Västfjäll (2020), the Authors have analysed another aspect that could influence potential donors to make economical donations according to identifiable and non-identifiable victims: opportunity costs. This term, often used in decision-making situations when there is also an economical aspect, was used to verify its impact on the potential donor and the effects on donations. The Authors have used two sets of images: one with a non-identified victim and one with an identified. In both the situations they provided or not to the potential donors some reminders that could be related to opportunity costs (Moche et al, 2020). The results showed that for a single donation the potential donor was negatively influenced when opportunity cost where reminded. This was particularly evident when using not identified pictures of the victims.

As mentioned before, charities try to appeal certain emotion to increase donations. It is possible to trigger a positive or a negative emotion using stimuli such as sound, images and slogans. These messages can express joy, love or compassion if they are framed in a positive way, or a sense of fear, guilt or harm if framed in a negative way. Positive emotions are usually used to promote hedonic products, and conversely negative emotions are mostly used in prosocial behaviour (Brennan, Binney, 2010). For example, the fear arousing appeals are the most used when the campaign is trying to stop a unhealthy behaviour (i.e. Smoking kills). The most common emotion that NGOs try to trigger in the donor is guilt (Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997; Alden & Crowley, 1995). It has been shown that triggering guilt in the donor can increase donation (Batson, 1998; Tangney, 1995) especially when the message is send together with a sad face of a child (Pham and Septianto, 2019). This behaviour can be explained because donors try to respond to this sense of guilt by taking responsibility. One of the ways that charities use to trigger guilt is by trying to make the donor empathize with the victim, since empathy have shown to be a strong mediator of guilt (Basil, Ridgway and Basil, 2008).

## 2.2 Assertive and non-assertive language

Assertive Communication (from Latin "Asserere", or assertion) is the human capacity to express emotions and ideas in a clear and effective way, without overhanging and offending others. This concept has been demonstrated to require balance. There are 3 pathways to behave and act on life's stimuli:

1. Aggressive way: This is related to an aggressive subject/situation, self-centred, hostile to the others, arrogant. The person must have full control of the situation and always tends to overwhelm others trampling them with his apparent superiority.
2. Passive Mode In this case a person is weak and submissive, he cannot express himself, he is hesitant, he always fears the judgment of others and rather than exposing himself, he remains silent, passive and suffer events.
3. Assertive situation is related to the situation were the subject is fully aware of the situation and his ability abilities, knows how to assert himself and how to communicate in all the situations of his life.

Assertive language is as the language of imperative forms such as command or orders. There are many examples of companies that use the approach of assertiveness, because the messages can be sent clearly and in a simple way, due to the fact that few words are needed. There are several examples of assertive messages that use imperative words and concepts in various fields, such sport, transportation, food, politics, ect. (Fig. 16)



Fig. 16: Examples of assertive language for social and political campaigns.

Who receives such a direct and imperative message with the assertive slogan, adopts a personal reaction with the perception: not adopting the content is not an option but is a must. (Dillard, Wilson, Tusing, and Kinney 1997; Dillard and Shen, 2005; Grandpre, Alvaro, Burgoon, Miller

and Hall, 2003; Kronrod et al, 2012; Kronrod et al, 2011). The results are that consumers feel the imperative pressure to do what is contained in the slogan with no other choice. Intuitively, such pressure should increase compliance but ironically, as demonstrated in the Reactance Theory and Persuasion Knowledge Model (Baek, Yoon and Kim, 2015; Dillard and Shen, 2005; Gibbs, 1986; Holtgraves, 1991; Yoon, Choi and Song, 2011) there is a well-defined evidence that these assertive messages can generate an adverse reaction: consumers acts in the opposite way to the content of the slogan. A general finding in the literature is that forceful language has a boomerang effect (Gibbs 1986; Holtgraves, 1992, Dillard et al, 1997; Edwards, Li and Lee, 2002). This can produce a minor obedience to the slogan in almost all the fields, including physical activity (Quick and Considine, 2008), personal requests (Wilson, 2000) and flossing/alcohol consumption (Dillard and Shen, 2005). On the other hand, it has been highlighted that politeness is a major pivot for communication when making effective requests (Kellerman, 1996; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Levine and Boster, 2001; Sanders, 2001). In particular, since the assertive language presupposes that the consumer carries out his content in a peremptory way, this creates situations of pressure for the consumer to adapt to the content. As mentioned earlier, according to Reactance Theory, this pressure to comply, generated by requests that are too assertive and too explicit, can produce opposite effects (Clee and Wicklund, 1980; Wicklund, Slattum and Solomon, 1970). The major motivation to react in a negative way to the content of the slogan is the protections of its own freedom and possibility to make choices according to their ideas, which produces a negative motivational state known as reactance that might lead individuals to act in the opposite manner than the advocated one (Brehm, 1966). Indeed, reactance reduces compliance and leads not to follow assertive slogan messages, and to negatively evaluate both the content and the advertising proponent (Fitzsimons, 2004; Grandpre et al, 2003; Miller, et al, 2007; Bhattacharjee, Berger and Menon, 2014; Edwards, Li and Lee, 2002; Kronrod et al., 2011). For example, in a study about anti-smoking (Grandpre et al, 2003) and pro-exercise campaigns (Miller, Markman and Handley, 2007) participants were dividend in two groups: one exposed to an assertive advertisement, the other to a less assertive preposition of the same slogan. The conclusions were that consumers preferred the less assertive preposition of the advertise. Assertive communication requires consumer action with a direct invitation to participate. In previous studies it has been shown that this involves the use of the cognitive abilities of consumers, who often realize the attempt of manipulation induced by the slogan and reject the message and its persuasion (Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Zemack-Rugar et al, 2017). The continual solicitation that occurs from advertising campaigns means that an increasing number of consumers react in a negative way to these solicitations. From knowledge on persuasion and manipulation, it means that when

consumers identify the message as a possible manipulation, they reject it and this phenomenon determines a negative thought and an opposite result to what was hoped by the proposer (Friestad and Wright, 1995). Although these results are evident and well established, assertive language is continuously proposed for advertising (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012) and these campaigns are prevalent. Moreover, according to recent studies, assertive messages might backfire especially when they intend to support social and environmental problems (Kim et al., 2017; Baek and Yoon, 2017; Baek, Yoon and Kim, 2015; Kronrod et al., 2011; Yoon, Kim and Baek, 2016), because it has been demonstrated that consumers don't want someone to order them which social behaviour they should adopt (e.g., Kim et al., 2017; Zollo, Yoon, Rialti and Ciappei, 2018) while preferring to choose freely. Hence, when individuals, especially those valuing their freedom of choice, recognize that a message is trying to order them how to act (recycle paper or plastic, reduce energy consumption, etc.), they could perceive a limitation in their freedom of choice and therefore, being less likely to act in the desired manner (Kim et al., 2017). . For example, assertive slogans such as the WWF "Save Paper – Save The Planet" or "Stop the violence, don't drink and drive" (Fig.17) may drive off customers, and instead in this field the more polite way to present the campaign can be more persuasive such as the Emergency slogan "Your Donation Can Save Lives" (Fig.18).



Fig. 17: Examples of assertive slogans. Source: [www.demilked.com/social-advertisement-powerful-ads](http://www.demilked.com/social-advertisement-powerful-ads)

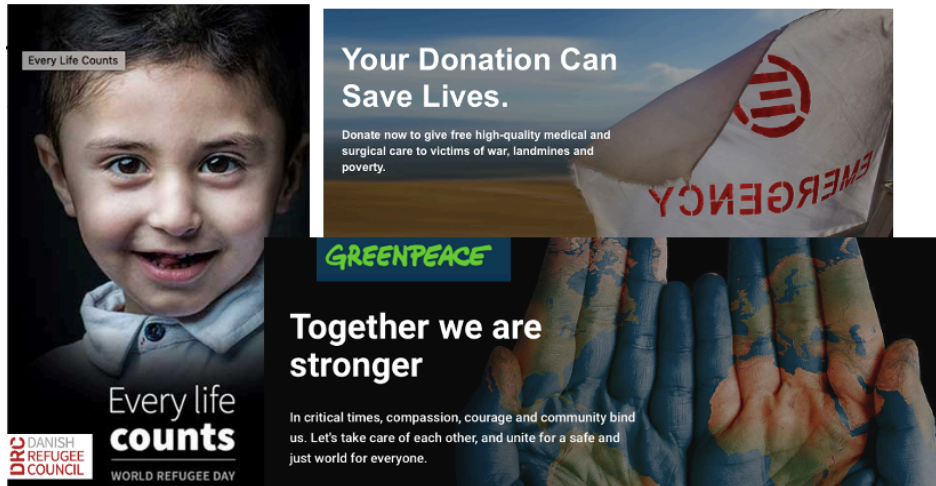


Fig 18: Examples of non-assertive language

In contrast, consumers seem to justify for-profit marketers that use assertive persuasion (Kim et al., 2017). In other words, customers appear to admit assertive slogans for commercial advertisements (food, tech products, cars etc.), but they feel non-profit advertisements for green behaviours as threats to their freedom of choice and independence (Kim et al., 2017). However, it is important to highlight that under some circumstances assertive messages might be more effective than non-assertive messages when promoting prosocial behaviours, especially environmental ones. To illustrate, Kronrod et al (2012) have shown that assertive messages are more effective than non-assertive ones when the recipients feel the importance of the environmental issue promoted. Indeed, these authors have highlighted the connection between language, environmental problems and awareness of the perceiver suggesting that the recipients understand the importance of the problem, especially if it is already known, they are more receptive to assertive language and more willing to follow its advice. Moreover, the mood of the individuals have shown to be a key variable. People with a positive mood tend to use for their requests predominantly assertive language (Forgas, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Bless, Mackie and Schwarz, 1992; Mackie and Worth, 1989, 1991; Sinclair and Mark 1992). As a result, the groups with a positive mood are more attracted by a direct advertisement and way of speaking. This situation appears to be consistent with language theories that argue that the best results are obtained if the message is adapted with the expectations of the receivers (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Forgas, 1998). Specifically, it has been demonstrated that the use of assertive language compared to the non-assertive is more attractive when is related to events and situations that can produce a positive mood (Kronrod et al, 2012). Similarly, Grinstein and Kronrod (2016) have shown that assertive language might be more effective when paired with a message that praises individuals for their good behaviours (vs. scolding them for their



negative deeds). On the other hand, if the person listening does not understand the importance of the reference topic, not considering it important, engaging or is in a negative mood, it has been highlighted that the non-assertive language can have greater effects on consumers (Kronrod et al, 2012).

In this thesis, I want to advance knowledge into the effectiveness of assertive language in the domain of prosocial communications, especially focusing on charitable donations and more specifically on humanitarian messages. Indeed the main research question I want to answer is:

**Research question:** *Under what conditions charitable advertisements promoting monetary donations for humanitarian causes using assertive vs. non-assertive language can be more effective?*

One study has already started to focus on this specific domain: Juanchich, Sirota and Bonnefon (2019) showing how individuals might adapt their evaluations of message's politeness according to their decision to donate or not. Indeed, they have shown that individuals who decide to donate tend to evaluate a message more politely than those who decide not to donate independently of the kind of language used. However, they have also shown that in hypothetical context less assertive message might slightly improve individuals' intention to donate and be seen as more polite. I go further and pinpoint to novel conditions, related to communications' messages, that might affect the effectiveness of assertive and non-assertive language.

Specifically, in order to answer this question, I am going to use a novel theoretical framework that is Construal Level Theory, which is going to be briefly introduced in this paragraph. Then in Chapter 3, the theoretical knowledge needed to answer this question will be examined more deeply. First of all, CLT describe the relation between psychological distance (spatial, temporal, social and hypothetical) and how concrete or abstract people perceive, for example, an event or an object (Trope and Liberman, 2010). Since assertive language can be considered to be less polite than non-assertive message (Kim et al, 2017), and that higher level of construal are correlated with higher level of politeness, and conversely lower level of construal are related with lower levels of politeness (Stephan, Liberman and Trope, 2010). For this reason, it is possible to associate these language frames with CLT to propose a new framework through which further explore the role of assertive and non-assertive in the effectiveness of charitable campaigns.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Construal Level Theory

Construal Level Theory (CLT) theory describes to what extent people think that something, such as an object or an event is abstract or concrete (Trope and Liberman, 2010). In general, the more psychologically distant, temporally, spatially, socially and hypothetically, is an event or an object from the individual, the more it will be represented at a high level of construal (i.e., more abstractly). Conversely, the closer an event or an object is, the more concrete it will appear, that is individuals will represent it at a low level construal. Therefore, individuals might perceive a stimulus (i.e., an object, event, another person or an action) at two different levels of abstraction, low and high: low level means that individuals focus on the detail and concrete aspects of a stimulus while high level means that individuals focus on the superordinate and central features of a stimulus. Importantly, the different levels of mental representations affect how individuals process information (Fujita et al. 2006), guiding individuals' choices, desires and attitudes (Liberman et al, 2007). For example, as reported by Anouk Griffioen (2019), when a person choose to recycle a plastic bottle he can react with a low or high construal level: at low construal level, he can search for a recycle bin, while at high level, the subject can think about the effect of his actions on the environment. Indeed, construing an action at a low level means focusing on the ways or means for performing it (how representation) whereas construing an action at a high level of construal means focusing on the reasons for performing it (why representation) (e.g., Vallacher and Wegner, 1989).

In the literature is possible to find studies that have shown how the effectiveness of an advertisement is affected by different construal levels (e.g. Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2011; Akin, Van Boven and Johnson-Graham, 2015). For instance, it was seen that campaigns that ask for an immediate help are processed with a low level of construal, and instead campaigns that ask for donation further away in the future are processed with high level of construal: this behaviour is caused by the differences in the perceived time distance. (Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2011). Moreover, it was argued that people are more likely to have a better response to a prosocial action when the advertisement campaign adopted an high level of construal rather than a low level of construal (Akin et al., 2015; Williams, Stein and Galguera-Garcia, 2014). To illustrate, it was demonstrated that psychological distance and abstract thinking have impact on the emotional reactions and the effectiveness of donations of the individuals; but these two mental construct differ and have conflicting results (Williams, Stein and Galguera, 2014). Furthermore, it was demonstrated that emotional disengagement is induced by distance, while

positive feelings are pushed by abstract thought. Specifically, it was observed that psychological distance reduces the effectiveness of donations, but conversely, abstract thinking has shown to increase donation to charities. Naturally, individual that have shown to have abstract mindset were donating more to charitable campaigns compared to participants thinking concretely because they were concentrating more on the positive elements of helping others. Hence, it could be argued that charitable fundraising advertisements, in order to get the maximum benefit, should evoke a higher level of construal (e.g., Roose, Vermeir, Geuens and Kerckhove, 2019; Williams et al., 2014). Importantly, it has been proposed and shown that not only psychological distance perceived from a stimulus might affect individuals' construal level but also other situational factors, also related to communications' messages features such as visual and verbal representations (e.g., MacDonnell and White, 2015; Roose et al., 2019; White, MacDonnell and Dahl, 2011). Reasoning on politeness theory and its association with construal level theory, it could be possible to expect an association between language assertiveness and construal level. The next paragraph will introduce this idea.

### **3.2 Theory of Politeness**

Politeness is defined as the application of the good manners and etiquette in order to not offend others. Politeness theory focus on the concept of politeness, and it tries to explain how these effort to maintain social values and positive interaction affect the response of people. The idea of politeness has been studied for years, but it became more relevant when Brown and Levinson published their research about the topic in 1987. For them, the politeness theory can be considered universal for every language. Even if they received various critique during the year, it still remains very important in order to understand how people behave in regard of the language. The key element of the theory is the face, representing the self-image, that every person tries to show and protect. The face can be divided in two parts: positive face and negative face. Firstly, the positive face is defined as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others executors" or "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants". Secondly, the negative face is defined as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others", or "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—i.e. the freedom of action and freedom from imposition". In short, positive face involves a desire for connection with others and negative face needs include autonomy and independence (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013). In the previous chapter it was studied that assertive request is one that uses the imperative form (i.e., commands

and orders), such as “do, go, must or donate, or one that leaves no option for refusal, such as “you must help” (Brown and Levinson 1987; Vanderveken 1990). Conversely, non-assertive language is characterized by the use of propositions or indirect suggestions (e.g., “Please be considerate and try to print less”) (Miller Lane, Deatricks, Young and Potts, 2007). It is clear that there are many correlation between non-assertive language and Politeness, since non-assertive language correspond with a less imposing wording, a more considerate language and, in general, polite requests (Kronrod et al., 2012). Specifically, assertive language is generally perceived to be less polite than a non-assertive language (e.g., Kim et al, 2017). Therefore, in order to understand in which way assertive and non-assertive language differ in their construal levels, it going to be important to review the studies that have been conducted with regard to politeness and Construal Level Theory. In lot of the interactions between individuals, politeness has a really important role. These interaction may differ a lot, depending on how the speaker chose to communicate to another individual. Accordingly, we can use expression to decide the degree of politeness to use (such as “dear colleague”) compared to more friendly approach (such as “hello”). Depending of the degree of politeness, it changes the perception that a person has toward another human regarding proximity and distance. According to Goffman (1959) face theory politeness is used to determine social distances that are the first level of social establishment. Brown and Levinson (1987) added that politeness is able to produce, regulate or reflects social distances. Stephan, Liberman and Trope (2010) demonstrated that politeness influences abstract thinking. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that politeness is determined by three aspects of interpersonal situations:

- the influence that the auditor has over the addresser
- the extent of the demand on act that has to be performed
- the speaker and the auditor social relationship (that can be proximal or distant).

If there is a social distance in a formal context it is used polite language (Brown and Levinson, 1987). A simple example can be the use of the professional title over the a more friendly approach (such are the use of the name) (Holtgraves and Yang, 1992). According to CLT (Liberman, Trope and Stephan, 2007; Trope and Liberman, 2003), several factor can induce social distances such as construal levels and psychological factors. Moreover, in situation where there is a small amount of information CLT explains that the responses are guided by abstract construal because of the psychological distance of the subject. Furthermore, politeness has been linked with social distance:. Indeed, based on the idea that politeness signifies and created social distance (i.e., more polite phrases are used when talking with socially distant others), Stephan, Liberman, and Trope (2010) showed that politeness is associated with higher level of construal as well as with greater temporal distance and spatial distance. To illustrate, these authors have

shown that people led to think at a more abstract level (i.e., higher level of construal) tend to prefer the use of more polite phrases. In the other direction, more polite thinking led individuals to prefer using more abstract words. Moreover, Slepian, Ferber, Gold and Rutchick. (2015) have shown that wearing more formal clothing, which can be associated with politeness, leads to a higher level of thinking.

Overall, it could be argued that if politeness is associated, through its association with social distance to higher level of construal, and conversely, assertiveness can be associated to low construal level.

### **3.3 Fit effect**

Importantly, studies on construal level theory have extensively suggested and demonstrated that advertising effectiveness can be enhanced if there is a concordance between consumer processing mode and the one induced by advertisement campaign (Thompson & Hamilton, 2006). The external solicitation present in advertising campaign is more effective if it fits with the abstractive level of the consumer (Dhar and Kim, 2007; Zhao, 2007; Zhao and Xie, 2011). In the literature on prosocial behaviour is possible to find studies that show the interaction of message framing (gains vs. losses) and social distance (proximal vs. distal) on blood donations. Results showed that blood donation campaigns are more effective when a gain frame message combined with the endorsement of an older person compared to the receiver, and when loss-framed messages are related with the endorsement of a person of similar age of the respondent (Balbo, Jeannot and Estarague, 2015). Similarly, for charitable giving, it was studied how the effect of celebrity endorsement is moderated by construal level messages (Choi, 2017). Depending on the familiarity and likeability of the endorser it was seen that the effectiveness of the campaign was changing (McGuire, 1985; Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008). This is explained because familiarity and likeability determine how psychologically distant an individual thinks of the endorser: this dimension of psychological distance is defined as social distance: if the individual think of the endorser to be closer to him, the construal level will be low; conversely if the endorser is considered to be distant the construal level will be high. Endorser are used to promote campaigns because very often they are perceived to be psychologically closer to individuals than non-celebrities. Moreover, it was shown that when the interest and the familiarity of the celebrity are higher, individuals feel to be closer to them. Furthermore, it was shown, confirming what it was said above, that high familiarity and interest of a celebrity for an individual resulted in a low construal level: indeed, the donation of the

campaign, resulted to be higher when the concrete messages (low level construal) were used, compare to abstract messages (high level construal).

For example, when people make decisions of consumption for distant future, there is higher probability of modification in preferences if it felt high social and temporal distance compared to short term decision (Zhao and Xie, 2011). Indeed, it was shown that consumers are influenced by the constructive level of advertising messages and its content (White, MacDonnell and Dahl, 2011). Moreover, an abstract message with a concrete purpose and the possibility for the consumer to induce a benefit leads to a more collaborative behaviour for the collection and recycling of materials. If this hypothesis is transferred to campaigns that aim to raise funds, the perception of consumers is different, both as regards the time to be made available and for economic donations (Leclerc, Schmitt and Dubé., 1995; Okada and Hoch, 2004). Moreover, it was also studied that money donations might be viewed more concretely than time (Macdonnel and White, 2015). This can be explained by the fact that economic support is considered by the recipient as a concrete, low-level act that potentially can be performed by everyone. On the other hand, giving time is a more abstract condition, which requires any previous experience and a propensity to do so. Therefore, the content must reflect these prerogatives and these must be connected to vivid images consistent with the aims of the campaign. In fact, the link between slogans and images are more attractive and when the connection is clear, and lead to increase in attention (McGill and Anand, 1989). Furthermore, it has been similarly shown that pairing two advertising features that are likely to evoke the same construal levels is more effective than pairing two advertising features associated with different construal levels (e.g., Roose et al., 2019). Recently, the same Authors have shown that verbal messages focused on distal benefits (i.e., temporal distance) paired with images having a low-horizon and messages focused on short term benefits (i.e., temporal proximity) paired with images having high-horizon are processed more fluently and thus evoke more positive attitudes and behavioural intentions. Such an effect has been attributed to the idea that in both cases, the verbal and visual stimuli of the ads evoke the same levels of construal.

In this research, I focus my attention on the role played by visual representations of social causes in the relationship between language assertiveness and donation-related outcomes and base my hypotheses on CLT and fit effect. In particular, I will investigate the moderating role of vividness vs. shape images. Therefore, the use of vivid images associated with correctly placed slogans makes the recipient remember them and can easily come back to mind (Schneider, Salovey, Pallonen, Mundorf, Smith and Steward, 2001). But if the perception of the image and the slogan are not coherent, the ability to process a message could be reduced by a vivid image. Therefore, when and individual needs to deal with incongruent information, it is

harder to understand the meaning of the message, or even to remember the content of the slogan (Smith and Shaffer, 2000). In charity campaigns, the incorrect use of an image can change the mood of the recipient, causing a bad mood or, even a negative reaction. Furthermore, it has been noted that the use of slogans and images that are too complex can lead to a disaffection of possible donors and consequently a reduction in the contribution (Isen and Noonberg, 1979). Chang and Lee (2009) have shown that an inconsistency between the graphic and the verbal message reduces the positive effect of the advertising campaign. Moreover, advertising campaigns that induces a high level of constructs, show that there is an increase in the effectiveness of the campaign (Roose et al. 2018). In the literature it has been demonstrated the adaption between image and the construal level is recalled by a specific advertising aspect (Lee et al. 2010, Zhao and Xie, 2011). In these experimentations the subjects were exposed to the visualization of panoramic images, demonstrating that according to the positioning of the horizon (lower or upper part of the image) there are different reactions, an if associated with verbal stimuli (as a possible benefit for the future donor) induces an increase in the advertising effectiveness. As it will be seen more specifically in the next paragraph, also the colour and the shape of the image is an important factor for the fit of the advertisement, since if the image is in black and white the construal level will be high, and if the image is coloured the construal level will be low and the shape represents the major element for the recognition of an object (Lee, Deng, Unnava and Rao, 2014; Lee, Fujita, Deng and Unnava 2016).

### **3.4 Shape vs. Colourful Images**

As said before, the choice of images in all advertising and marketing campaign is crucial. In the last decades most of the pictures (photographs and videos) used are coloured. Several Authors (Bohle and Garcia 1986; Click and Stempel 1976, Schindler 1986, Grønhaug, Kvitastein and Grønmo, 1991; Hornik 1980; Lohse 1997), have studied the impact for the pictures and tried to define the differences in using full coloured or black and white format. The conclusions are that coloured images are more attractive, remembered for the consumer and are able to promote favourable feeling. These conclusions are in accordance with the massive use of coloured pictures in advertising campaigns. Lee et al (2014, 2016) have hypnotized that according to the presentation of the picture (black and white vs colour), there could be some situation where the black and white format can be more impressive for the consumer due to the fact that colours can distract the observer form the aims of advertising and of the product. They assume that the difference of image presentation is related to various factors, including visual imagery and construal level. Furthermore, they noticed that the temporal distance is a very

important aspect. Indeed, A temporal far away event should be more persuasive using a black and white image compared to a coloured one. This was highlighted by the same authors (Lee et al., 2016) also adding the analysis of shape: they demonstrated that attention to colour images related to shape decreases with increases of temporal distance to the event. This is also evident when there is a change of attitudes in a short or long period of time. Black and white images are more effective in a long period of time, and this could be useful in health promotion and prevention campaigns. According to their conclusions, the subject who is stimulated by the promotion campaign may be more affected by a black and white image compared to colour if it is represented a far-away location in a socially distant condition. On the other hand, nearby locations, socially near conditions and possible events, are more effective using coloured images. For this reason, it's possible to affirm that black and white images can induce a mental construct experience independently by the perception of the image while coloured images can be considered the visual representation of participation in direct experience (Lee et al., 2016). In order to summarize, black and white images are perceived by people to be more abstract, and for this reason, they have an higher construal level. Instead coloured images have shown to be perceived as more concrete than black and white images, and indeed, they have shown to work better for event that are temporally close, and for this reason, these images are perceive to have a low construal level. This argument is also confirmand using neuroscience tools: by using the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), it was demonstrated that when people think of images distant in the future, the individual tend to visualize monochromatic images; conversely, when people think of images near in the future images tend to be visualized colourful (Stillman, Lee, Deng, Unnava and Fujita,. 2020). The visual perception of the black and white images was an important premise for the moderator that is going to be studied for this thesis. Since, arguably, BW images increase the attention of the individual to the form and shape of the image, and colour increase the intrinsic details of the image (Arnheim 1974; Janiszewski 1998), it's possible to argue that the shape of the image is a fundamental component that is perceived to have an high construal level in comparison to colourful images. As many studies showed in the course of the years (e.g. (Arnheim 1974; Biederman 1987; Biederman and Ju 1988; Lowe 1984; Mapelli and Behrmann 1997) the global shape represents the identity, resembles the meaning and the functionality of an object in the mind of people. Even if sometimes the shape of an object is not the only crucial identification detail (for example the colour of vegetables can be argued to be crucial in order to understand if it's edible or not), it's not improper to assert that the shape resemble the main component to determine an object (Brockmann 1991; Dooley and Harkins 1970; Rossiter 1982). So it is possible to affirm that since the shape of an object is a central element of an object, following the CLT, it will be



perceived to pertain to high level construal. Instead, the color of an object which is more a detailed aspect of it can be considered as a low-level (Lee et al, 2016).

My investigation for my experiment, since the lack of evidence in the literature, will be to see if the vividness of an image (shape vs. the detailed colourful image) of the images will moderate the effectiveness of assertive and non-assertive language for an humanitarian NGO.

### **3.5 Research Hypotheses**

As said before, it is important for images and messages to fit together in order to increase the effectiveness of the advertisement. Since it can be argued that non-assertive language is correlated with politeness, and that politeness is associated with high level construal, we should expect to see that non-assertive language will have a higher effectiveness when paired with shape images. Additionally, as postulated above, shapes of objects are associated with high level construal, because these portray more the boundary of an object and focus more on the general and on the essence of it. Conversely, coloured images direct individuals' attention to objects' details, as these are more clearly represented, thus focusing more on the concrete and incidental aspects of a stimuli thus pertaining to a more concrete level of construal than shapes (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; 2016). Indeed, based on the idea that assertive language, by being likely to be associated with a lower level of politeness as compared to non-assertive language, induces individuals to adopt a relatively lower level of construal to process the behaviour promoted than non-assertive language and following the fit effect, I predict that assertive language versus non-assertive language, should be more effective (i.e., more positive donation-related outcomes including attitudes and behavioural intentions) when paired with vivid images. Conversely, non-assertive language should be more effective than assertive language when paired with an image reporting the shape of the social cause at hand. Formally, I hypothesize the followings:

**H1a: *Assertive language will be more effective than non-assertive language when the image used is vivid***

**H1b: *Non-assertive language will be more effective than assertive language when the image use is a shape***

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 Method

In this chapter is going to be explained how the hypotheses were testes. Indeed, it was created and performed a 2 (language assertiveness: assertive vs. non-assertive language) x 2 (vividness of the image: vivid image vs. shape) between-subject experiment. Before going in to the detail to illustrate the main study it is going to be delineated the pre-test, that was performed in order to choose witch manipulation of the independent variable (assertive language) would work better for the purpose of the main experiment<sup>1</sup>.

### 4.2 Pre-test

The data for the pre-test were gathered by posting on Facebook a link of an experiment designed on Qualtrics, that was used as a survey provider. Participants who took part to this pre-test did not participate to the main experiment.

In particular, the pre-test was a within subject experiment with a four levels one factor (language assertiveness) variable. Participants were 196, 103 individual were excluded from the analysis because of missing data, hence the sample used for conducting the analyses was composed of 93 individuals, (77,4% of female  $M_{age} = 34$ ,  $SD = 10$ , age range = 19-65).

Indeed, the respondents were exposed to these images (Appendix A.1) ostensibly from a fictitious charity called as “Libere di vivere” asking to stop child marriage. Two messages were used to manipulate assertive language and two to manipulate non-assertive language. Before the evaluation of assertiveness, respondents were exposed to the definition of assertive language. Specifically, based on extant literature (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012a, b; Kim et al., 2017) the assertive messages used imperative terms such as “must” and “give”, while the non-assertive messages used terms such as “could” and “should”(Appendix A.1). Afterwards, and more specifically after each messages, participants were asked to answer to few questions aimed respectively at assessing perceive politeness, perceive threat to freedom and perceive assertiveness. In detail, politeness through 3 items 7-point semantic scale (polite/kind/respectful vs impolite/unkind/disrespectful;  $\alpha = 0,952$  for assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,982$  for non-assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,968$  for assertive message 2;  $\alpha = 0,987$ ) adapter from Kim et al. (2017), threat to freedom using 4 items 7 point Likert scale (the message threatened my

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<sup>1</sup> The pre-test and the main test were in Italian.

freedom of choice; the message tried to make a decision for me / to manipulate me / to pressure me; anchored 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $\alpha = 0,929$  for assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,925$  for non-assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,929$  for assertive message 2;  $\alpha = 0,86$  adapted from Dillard and Shen (2005) ( $\alpha = 0,86$ ) and assertiveness was measured as a 7 point Likert scale (anchored 1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, demographic information were collected. In order to select the two conditions that were perceived as more different and as the most assertive vs. non-assertive, a paired t-test sample was conducted with perceived assertiveness acting as comparison variable. The first condition was created by pairing the assertive message 1 with the non-assertive message 1, the results were the following:  $M = 2,419$ ;  $SD = 2,223$ ;  $t = 10,495$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Then the assertive message 1 was paired with the second assertive message, the results were the following:  $M = 2,720$ ;  $SD = 2,283$ ;  $t = 12,35$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Then assertive message number 2 was paired with non-assertive message number 1:  $M = 1,935$ ;  $SD = 2,191$ ;  $t = 8,519$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Lastly, assertive message number 2 was paired with non-assertive message number 2:  $M = 2,237$ ;  $SD = 1,919$ ;  $t = 11,239$ ;  $p = < 0,001$  (Appendix B.1, fig.). Afterwards, the same test was performed to measure perceived politeness and treat to freedom; since treat to freedom is an important measure to distinguish an assertive and a polite language. The results of politeness and treat to freedom were in line with the assertive perception (Appendix B.1, fig.), the paired assertive message 1 and non-assertive message 2 had a better performance. As it is possible to notice from the results in appendix A.1 (fig.), since the paired couple assertive message 1 and non-assertive 2 had a better performance in all the measurements for the purpose of the main experiment, they were chosen in order to create the manipulation of the main survey. After the analysis of the pre-test, the main experiment was created.

### **4.3 Main study's Results**

In order to test the hypotheses 1a and 1b, hence to test if the relationship between assertive and non-assertive language on charitable advertisements' effectiveness is moderated by the use of vivid images vs. less vivid image representing a shape, it was designed a 2 (assertive vs. non-assertive) x 2 (shape vs vivid) between subject experiment. Participants were recruited by posting on social networks (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp) the link of the study designed on Qualtrics. Totally, 524 answers were collected, but due to missing data, specifically people who just opened the link but not filling it, 239 responses were excluded and 20 responses were excluded because the participants did not answer correctly to the attention check which asked whether they saw a social media post featuring a vivid image vs. not vivid image but a shape

of a little girl. Hence, the final sample used for conducting the analyses aimed at testing the hypotheses was composed by 265 Italians (51% of total responses) (50,2% female,  $M_{age} = 33$  years,  $SD = 12.14$ , age range = 18-70).

Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (Appendix A.2, fig.) designed as a Facebook's Fundraising post of a fictitious charity called as "Libere di vivere" asking fund for stopping child marriage. 68 responders were randomly assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> condition (assertive + shape), 63 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> condition (non-assertive + shape), 65 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> condition (assertive + vivid) and 69 to the 4<sup>th</sup> condition (non-assertive + vivid). As far as language assertiveness manipulation is concerned participants either read a message using imperative forms, such as "you must save", "donate", or less imperative and more polite forms such as "it's worth donating." Such manipulations were adapted from prior studies testing the effectiveness of language assertiveness in pro-social and especially pro-environmental behaviours (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012b). Moreover, as far as image vividness is concerned participants either saw a post that along with the text (i.e., language assertiveness manipulation) featured either a vivid and colourful image of a little bride or an image of the shape of a little bride.

Afterwards, participants were asked to answer to some questions aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the message. Specifically, Intention to Donate was assessed by 2 different dependent variables, using a three items 7 point Likert (How likely/inclined/willing would you be to donate your money to *Libere di Vivere?*;  $\alpha = 0,929$ ), adapted from White, MacDonnell and Dahl (2011, p. 483  $\alpha = 0,914$  ) and a 5 item 7 points Likert scale (I would like to donate/think it is important to donate/think it is the right thing to donate/think that everybody should donate/ I would donate as much as I can afford for the promoted cause;  $\alpha = 0,927$ ) adapted from Zagefka et al.(2012, p. 644;  $\alpha = 0,83$ ).

Then it was measured Brand Liking with a 3 items 7 points Likert scale (How much do you like/ How favourable do you feel to/How adverse do you feel to the organization *Libere di Vivere?*;  $\alpha = 0,784$  ) adapted from Rugar , Moore and Fitzsimons (2017, p.6;  $\alpha = 0,89$ ). Then it was measured Ad Liking by using a 7 point semantic differential scale with 6 items (boring/inappropriate/bad/negative/ I really didn't like it/unpleasant vs interesting/appropriate/good/positive/I really like it/pleasant;  $\alpha = 0,899$ ) adapted from Kim et al (2017, p. 554  $\alpha$ ).

Then it was measured a control variable, the Attitude Toward Charities, not specific to *Libere di Vivere*, with a 4 items 7 points Likert scale (Money donated to charities contributes to a good cause; Money donated to charities is often wasted; The image I have of charities is positive;

Charities are able to help people in trouble;  $\alpha = 0,809$ ) and it was adapted from Webb, Green and Brashear (2000, p. 303;  $\alpha = 0,81$ ).

Then, the correctness of language assertiveness manipulation was assessed by asking participants to indicate on a 7 point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree ) the extent to which they perceived that the message they read was assertive, providing also a brief definition of assertive message. Afterwards, they were asked to indicate on a 3 items 7-point semantic scale (polite/kind/respectful vs. impolite/unkind/disrespectful) the extent to which they perceived the message they read was polite ( $\alpha = 0,941$ ). These latter scales were both adapted from Kim et al. (2017). Subsequently, the attention check about the image they saw was given, and finally demographic information were collected.

Then it was asked to the respondents if they saw a shape or a vivid image, in order to check their attention. If the response would not met the picture shown, the survey would be discarded. Finally, the demographic of the sample (age and gender) where gathered.

First of all, the results from the independent T-test showed that messages framed as assertive, received higher assertive scores ( $M = 4.65$ ;  $SD = 1,59$ ;  $t(df) = 5,868$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ) compared to non-assertive framed messages ( $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = 1,59$ ;  $t(df) = 5,868$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ); and messages framed as non-assertive received higher politeness scores ( $M = 5.09$ ;  $SD = 1,60$ ;  $t(df) = -3,752$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ), compared to assertive messages ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = 1,52$ ;  $t(df) = -3,752$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ). Hence, in line with the pre-test the two conditions were perceived differently and in the expected direction.

Then, to test the hypotheses, a serial of separate two-way ANOVAs with language assertiveness (assertive language vs. non-assertive language) acting as independent variable, image vividness (vivid vs. shape) acting as moderator and the two Intention to Donate, brand Liking, ad Liking and attitude toward charities acting as dependent variables. Two variable new variable were created for to make this analysis: the Independent Variable with two conditions (1 = assertive language; 2 = non-assertive language) and the moderator with two conditions (1 = vivid image; 2 = shape image) (Appendix A.2).

The two-way ANOVA with the first Intention to Donate as dependent variable showed that the main effect of the moderator (image vividness) with the DV (intention to donate) was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 0,088$ ;  $p = 0,767$ ) and for the main effect of IV (language assertiveness) was relevant ( $F(1, 264) = 11,030$ ;  $p = 0,001$ ). The interaction effect of the IV (assertive language), the Moderator (Image vividness) and the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,243$ ;  $p = 0,266$ ). Although the interaction effect is not significant, by looking at the cell mean (Appendix B.2, fig.), it possible to notice that at least the direction of the mean of the shape and non-assertive language condition is in the expected direction ( $M = 3,6$ ;  $SD = 1,757$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with the second Intention to Donate as dependent variable also showed the main interaction of the moderator was not significant with the DV ( $F(1, 264) = 0,910; p = 0,341$ ) and the main interaction of the IV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 10,856; p = 0,001$ ). Also for this interaction effect the result was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,223; p = 0,270$ ). Looking at the cell means showed that the manipulation of shape and non-assertive message was in the expected direction.

Then the two-way ANOVA with the Brand Liking as dependent variable showed that the main effect of the moderator with the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 0,009; p = 0,925$ ), the main effect of the IV with the DV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 16,072; p < 0,001$ ). The interaction effect also in this case was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 2,069; p = 0,157$ ). The cell means also in this case showed that the mean of the condition non-assertive+shape was in the right direction ( $M = 5,12; SD = 1,343$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with Ad Liking as dependent variable showed the main effect of the moderator with the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,523; p = 0,218$ ), the main effect of the IV with the DV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 10,774; p < 0,001$ ). The interaction effect also in this case was just marginally significant ( $F(1, 264) = 2,910; p = 0,089$ ). The cell means always shown that the condition of non-assertive+shape is in the expected direction ( $M = 4,54; SD = 1,36$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with Attitude Toward Charities as dependent variable showed the main effect to be not significant for the moderator ( $F(1, 264) = 0,54; p = 0,817$ ) and not significant for the main effect of the IV ( $F(1, 264) = 0,911; p = 0,34$ ). The interaction effect in this case, is significant ( $F(1, 264) = 4,105; p = 0,044$ ). Indeed, for this interaction is possible to notice that both the condition non-assertive+shape ( $M = 4,69; SD = 1,20$ ) and assertive+vivid ( $M = 4,58; SD = 1,08$ ) are in the expected direction.

Lastly, due to the fact that this last interaction is significant I proceeded to make a pairwise comparison to compare the mean of the condition of interest, specifically assertive+shape vs non-assertive+shape and assertive+vivid vs. non-assertive+vivid. In order to make this analysis I created a new variable to set the conditions: 1 = assertive+shape; 2 = non-assertive+shape; 3 = assertive+vivid; 4 = non-assertive+vivid. As it is possible to notice from appendix B.2, when the conditions 1 and 2 were confronted in the dependent variable Attitude toward Charities (mean\_AttitudeToC) there was a significant interaction ( $t = -2,037; df = 128,850; p = 0,044$ ). For this reason is possible to say that H1b is partially confirmed, since only the variable Attitude toward Charities had significant interaction.

To sum up the result of the main study, non-assertive language had a better performance than assertive language, especially when the image used was shape. This result is in line of what it

is expected from the literature (e.g. Lee et al. 2014; 2016). However assertive + vivid did not had the expected interaction since it should have performed better than non-assertive + vivid according to the CLT (e.g. Lee et al. 2014; 2016), instead the difference was non statistically relevant. It can be clearly observed in the two-way ANOVA interaction for the Attitude toward Charity were the mean assertive+vivid had a mean of 4,5 and the mean of non-assertive+shape was 4,4 (Appendix B.2)

#### **4.4 General Discussion**

Nowadays, charitable donations are a very important source of financial support for humanitarian Ngos (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996). For this reason, it is important that charitable organization use all the tools available to gather more donations in order to help people in difficulty. Without doubt, it is also crucial that the research of the correct marketing practices to promote charitable campaigns goes further, in order to enhance the capabilities of the Ngos to gather resources. As it was shown in the literature, many charities still use assertive language quite often, even if non-assertive language has shown to be more effective in various cases (e.g. Kronrod, Grinstein and Wathieu, 2012). Since the a growing body of research is supporting the notion that research on Charitable Giving is strongly influenced by the ways in which appeals for donations are presented (e.g. Chang and Lee, 2009; Small and Verrochi, 2009; White and Pelozo, 2009), the aim of this project is to enrich the literature in order to give the right suggestion to NGOs to which appeal they should use in order to ask for donation. Since this the era of the social media communication, I decided to investigate further how the verbal and visual stimuli will affect the reaction and behaviour of the individuals, since the main communication happens through images and verbal messages. Since the NGOs are in direct control of these appeals and the stimuli on their social campaigns, my purpose was to apply the literature under a new light. In order to do so, it was studied message framing, with the different uses of assertive and non-assertive language, with the moderating role of vividness of the image. The hypotheses derived from the use of Politeness theory applied to Construal level Theory and Fit effect. Following this idea, non-assertive language is considered to be perceived as polite (e.g. Kronrod et al., 2012) and socially distant (e.g. Stephan et al., 2010), that Construal Level theory associate assertive language as a low construal, polite messages as high construal, vivid images as low construal, shape images as high construal and that due to the Fit effect the use of the same construal will work better. In other words, the literature suggests that advertisement features that fit together in regards of construal level, rather than when they are divergent, will work better. Indeed the hypotheses h1a assumed that assertive+vivid would

work better than non-assertive+vivid, and H1b assumed that non-assertive+shape would work better than assertive+shape. Furthermore, it was possible to test the two hypotheses for which appeal is best suited for charitable organization to create their campaigns. In other words, in this thesis it was studied if the use of assertive and non-assertive message would have a better effect if moderated by vivid and shape images. Although it was not seen a relevant effect through all the dependent variables (except for Attitude toward Charities) while testing the hypotheses with the 2(assertive vs non-assertive) x 2(vivid image vs. shape) ANOVA design, the non-assertive+shape seems to be the most effective text and image combinations to be used when conveying charitable messages. By using the Construal Level Theory and the Fit effect discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible to explain, in part, the result of the experiment, confirming partially the H1b hypothesis. To sum up, across all the interaction that were created, non-assertive+shape had a better outcome when paired together, in line with the theory that associate high construal level to non-assertive messages and shape like figures (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; 2016). These results provide further evidence that ads composed by non-assertive language have a better effect compared to the messages that use assertive language in a prosocial environment, since the interaction of H1b was partially confirmed. Regarding to h1a that was not proven statistically, except for the dependent variable attitude toward donations, it is possible to see through all the dependent variables that assertive language+vivid was performing slightly better than assertive language+shape (Appendix B.2).

#### **4.5 Theoretical contribution**

This study reveals a novel moderating factor, which refers to image vividness, on the performance of assertive vs. non-assertive language in the domain of prosocial communications and specifically on those promoting humanitarian (social) causes. In particular from the analysis, it is possible to extrapolate that, non-assertive language is better than assertive language, which is a finding consistent with prior works (e.g., Dillard and Shen, 2005; ; Kim et al., 2017; Kronrod et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2007), and that, even if not in substantial way across all the dependent variable, this might especially true when this language is paired with a shape image rather than vivid and colourful image. Indeed, it seems that when the image is vivid the differences between assertive and non-assertive language are removed. To give an explanation to this outcome, is possible that the condition of vivid image is acting as a sort of boundary condition (boundary condition: condition in which the theory does not apply), because in this case there is not a noticeable effect. Further investigation is needed to see if it is the case. Hence, this project increase the literature on language assertiveness effectiveness by shedding light on how the interaction of visual+verbal stimuli in the might affect recipients'



responses, especially in terms of their general attitudes. The approach of this thesis, indeed, tried to seek a new approach to have a better understanding of the proper language to use for charities, specifically for humanitarian NGOs. Furthermore, the thesis increased the knowledge on language assertiveness by proposing a novel perspective for studying it that refers to Construal Level Theory.

#### 4.6 Managerial Implication

This thesis provides further insight to advertisement specialist that work in the pro-social sector. As it was suggested in previous researches (e.g. Kronrod et al., 2012) non-assertive language has better effectiveness when is used for prosocial campaigns. In particular, the insight that this thesis offers to humanitarian NGOs is that they should use a non-assertive message paired with a shape image. It is important to notice that it is possible to find NGOs and agencies that increasingly more likely to use shape-like images to promote their campaign (e.g. Save the Children, MPG agency) (fig. 19).



Fig. 19 shape-like advertising campaigns.(source: Save the Children; MPG)

This study supports, even if partially, that NGOs should create their advertisement keeping in mind of the Fit Effect that occurs when the messages and images have the same construal level. Moreover, although it was marginally significant, the main study suggests that if the NGOs what to improve the attitude of their supporters for charitable organizations they should use non-assertive language and shape like figures, or if they really want to frame the advertisement as assertive, it is slightly better to use a vivid image instead of a shape figure. These findings

could be used by social marketers who want to enhance the effectiveness of their advertisements.

#### **4.7 Limitation and future research**

The limitation of this studies provide many opportunities for future research to increase the knowledge and the comprehension of the effectiveness of language assertiveness and image vividness. First of all, while the theoretical framework relies on the idea that language assertiveness, due to its association with politeness might be associated with construal levels, I do not directly empirically test this association but rather I test it using moderation analyses with a feature that has been already shown to be associated with construal level and provide partial support. Hence, future studies could directly test the relationship between assertiveness and construal level. Second, as can be seen in the results it seems that non-assertive language is more effective than assertive language and that this effect might be more likely to occur when the image used to represent the promoted social cause present its shape (high level construal), hence future studies might better investigate while when the vivid image is used there is not a inversion of language assertiveness effectiveness while there is only a mitigation. Possibly, it could be argued that since higher level of construal is particularly effective in promoting charitable behaviours pairing two low level concepts might still produce a negative effect but mitigated by the fit effect. Additionally, it could be possible that some problems are related to the manipulation used that might not have elicited in the case of vivid images the right construal. Particularly, the images had all the same “light-blue” background: it is possible that just having the figure of vivid individual and an empty monochrome background is not enough to create a low construal image and it is possible that also the background needs to be vivid to increase the perception of low construal level. Future researches could answer this question and investigate if the background could have an effect on the perceived construal of the individuals. Furthermore, another issue that might have had an impact on the results, could be the composition of the sample: since the sample had a SD of 12 years (Appendix B.2), and the age range was between 18 years old and 70 years old, the income level, the education and the diverse geographical area across Italy of the individuals, may have had an impact. I suggest that further investigation should seek to prove how these differences can results in different outcome, in regards to the willingness to give of the people. In the literature is possible to find example of the impact that different geographical areas had on the reaction to environmental advertising (Kim et al., 2017). Thirdly, always looking at the concerns of the dataset, being the fact that the sample was heterogenous in regards of the individuals, question rises if the personality of the participants, such as their reactance sensitivity to assertive language that

many studies have shown to have a strong effect (e.g. Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996; Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004; Kronrod, Grinstein and Wathieu, 2012), could have had an impact on the results, especially in regards to H1a. Future research may find an answer for this question. Future research could also further measure the perceived social distance when it is bounded to Construal Level Theory. Finally, this thesis provided to the literature interesting observations in regards to the study of the language paired with visual vividness, and it is clear that there is still a gap of understanding that needs to be filled also with respect to other prosocial domains.

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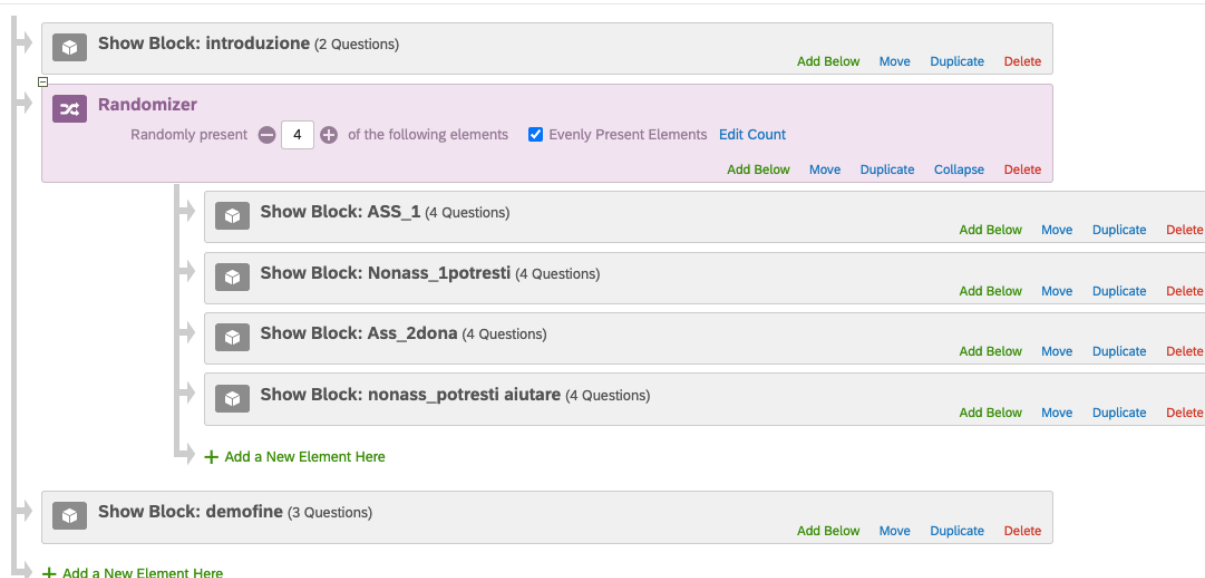
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## Appendix A.1

### Pre-test

### Survey Flow

Survey Flow Pretest tesi



### Intro

1

**Benvenuto e grazie moltissimo per la tua partecipazione a questo questionario. Questa ricerca è volta a comprendere le percezioni delle persone rispetto ad alcuni possibili messaggi di comunicazione da parte di organizzazioni caritatevoli.**

**Per favore, leggi attentamente i messaggi che seguono e poi rispondi ad alcune brevi domande. Nel rispondere, ricordati che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate, conta solo la tua opinione!**

**Ancora grazie per le tue risposte!**



## Intro2

Come detto prima, a breve vedrai diversi messaggi e ti chiederò di rispondere ad alcune brevi domande.

I messaggi che leggerai sono volti a promuovere la consapevolezza e le donazioni monetarie per aiutare i bambini più vulnerabili, in particolare le bambine che sono costrette a sposarsi contro la loro volontà.



## The manipulations

### Assertive message 1



Libere di vivere

"Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi.  
Devi salvare le bambine-spose.  
Dai il tuo contributo e dici basta a questi matrimoni"

### Assertive message 2



Libere di vivere

"Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi.  
Aiuta a fermare i matrimoni delle spose-bambine: DONA"

### Non-assertive message 1



Libere di vivere

"Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi.  
Potresti aiutare a fermare i matrimoni delle spose-bambine:  
Può valere la pena donare"

### Non-assertive message 2



Libere di vivere

"Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi.  
Potresti salvare le bambine-spose.  
Perché non contribuire a dire basta a questi matrimoni?"

### Questions

#### Politeness check

Per favore, indica sulla scala seguente come valuti il messaggio letto:

non rispettoso	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	rispettoso
scortese	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	cortese
non educato	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	educato

#### Threat to freedom

Per favore, indica su una scala da 1 (per nulla d'accordo) a 7 (estremamente d'accordo) quanto sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni relative al messaggio letto:

	Per nulla d'accordo 1	2	3	4	5	6	Estremamente d'accordo 7
Il messaggio ha cercato di prendere una decisione per me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Il messaggio ha cercato di manipolarmi	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Il messaggio ha cercato di farmi pressione	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Il messaggio ha minacciato la mia libertà di scelta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Assertive check

In letteratura, viene definito un linguaggio assertivo come una frase sicura, forte e che non lascia molta libertà di scelta.

Infatti, un messaggio o una richiesta assertiva è una che usa forme imperative come "fai", "vai" o forme non lasciano la possibilità di rifiutarsi di comportarsi nel modo desiderato dalla fonte: "devi andare" "devi fare".

Sulla base di queste definizioni, usa la scala seguente per indicare da 1 (per nulla d'accordo) a 7 (estremamente d'accordo) la misura in cui sei d'accordo con l'idea che il messaggio che hai appena letto è un **messaggio assertivo**.

Per nulla d'accordo 1	2	3	4	5	6	Estremamente d'accordo 7
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## Appendix A.2

### Main experiment

#### Survey Flow

The screenshot displays a survey flow editor with the following elements:

- Show Block: Introduzione** (2 Questions) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Randomizer** block: Randomly present  1 of the following elements  Evenly Present Elements. Edit Count. Options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Collapse, Delete.
- Show Block: Manipolazione\_Ass+Shape** (1 Question) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: Manipolazione\_NonAss+shape** (1 Question) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: Manipolazione\_Ass+Vivid** (1 Question) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: Manipolazione\_NonAss+Vivid** (1 Question) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- + Add a New Element Here**
- Show Block: Intention to donate** (4 Questions) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: atteggiamento verso charity/donazioni** (3 Questions) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: manipulation check ass e Politeness** (2 Questions) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: attention check** (1 Question) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.
- Show Block: info demografiche** (2 Questions) with options: Add Below, Move, Duplicate, Delete.

## Manipulations

### Assertive + vivid

 **Libere di vivere** 🇪🇺 sta cercando donazioni  
5 Agosto 🌐

**Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi. Devi salvare le bambine spose. Dai il tuo contributo e dici basta a questi matrimoni.**



 **5 € Raccolti per Libere di vivere**

 62

### Non-assertive + shape

 **Libere di vivere** 🇪🇺 sta cercando donazioni  
5 Agosto 🌐

**Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi. Devi salvare le bambine spose. Dai il tuo contributo e dici basta a questi matrimoni.**



 **5 € Raccolti per Libere di vivere**

 62

### Non-assertive + vivid

 **Libere di vivere** 🇪🇺 sta cercando donazioni  
5 Agosto 🌐

**Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi. Potresti aiutare a fermare i matrimoni delle spose bambine. Può valere la pena donare.**



 **5 € Raccolti per Libere di vivere**

 62

### Non-assertive + shape

 **Libere di vivere** 🇪🇺 sta cercando donazioni  
5 Agosto 🌐

**Mentre vivi la tua vita, delle bambine sono costrette a sposarsi. Potresti aiutare a fermare i matrimoni delle spose bambine. Può valere la pena donare.**



 **5 € Raccolti per Libere di vivere**

 62

## Intro 1

**Benvenuto e grazie moltissimo per la tua partecipazione a questo questionario. Questa ricerca è volta a comprendere le percezioni delle persone rispetto a messaggi volti a stimolare le donazioni monetarie.**

**Nel rispondere alle domande che seguono, per favore, ricordati che non ci sono risposte giuste o sbagliate ma che conta esclusivamente la tua opinione. Inoltre, le tue risposte resteranno anonime e verranno usate esclusivamente per lo scopo di questa ricerca.**

**Grazie ancora per il tuo aiuto!**



## Intro 2

Come detto prima, a breve vedrai un messaggio, in particolare un post, da parte di un'organizzazione non-profit: **Libere di vivere**, volto a raccogliere fondi per sostenere le bambine e ragazze più vulnerabili.

In particolare, Libere di vivere è un'organizzazione non-profit con lo scopo di prevenire il matrimonio minorile, specialmente nei paesi in via di sviluppo.

Per favore, mentre vedi il prossimo post immagina di farlo dalla tua pagina social (ad esempio Facebook), questo ti aiuterà nel rispondere alle domande successive.



## Intention to donate (adapted from White and Peloza, 2009)

Quanto è probabile che tu decida di donare all'organizzazione Libere di Vivere?

Molto improbabile 1	2	3	4	5	6	Molto probabile 7
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Quanto sei incline a donare all'organizzazione Libere di Vivere?

Per nulla incline 1	2	3	4	5	6	Molto incline 7
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Quanto sei disposto a donare all'organizzazione Libere di Vivere?

Per nulla disposto 1	2	3	4	5	6	Molto disposto 7
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### Intention to donate (adapted from Zagefka et al., 2012)

Per favore, indica su una scala da 1 (per nulla d'accordo) a 7 (estremamente d'accordo) quanto sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni relative al messaggio letto:

	Per niente d'accordo 1	2	3	4	5	6	Estremamente d'accordo 7
Vorrei fare una donazione per la causa promossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Penso sia importante donare per la causa promossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Penso sia la cosa giusta da fare donare per la causa promossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Penso che tutti dovrebbero donare per la causa promossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donerei il massimo che posso permettermi per la causa promossa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Organization liking (adapted from Zemack- Rugar et al., 2017)

Per favore, indica su una scala da 1 ( per nulla ) a 7 ( molto ) il tuo giudizio alle seguenti domande:

	Per nulla 1	2	3	4	5	6	Molto 7
Quanto ti piace l'organizzazione no-profit Libere di Vivere?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quanto ti senti favorevole nei confronti di Libere di Vivere?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quanto ti senti contrario nei confronti di Libere di Vivere?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Ad Liking (adapted from Kim et al., 2017)**

Per favore, indica sulla scala seguente il tuo giudizio sul post (messaggio) che hai appena visto:

Noiosa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Interessante
Inopportuna	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Appropriata
Sgradevole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Gradevole
Negativa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiva
Non mi è proprio piaciuta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mi è piaciuta molto
Spiacevole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Piacevole

**General Attitude toward charities (adapted from Webb et al., 2000)**

Per favore, indica su una scala da 1 (per nulla d'accordo) a 7 (estremamente d'accordo) quanto sei d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni relative al messaggio letto:

	Per nulla d'accordo 1	2	3	4	5	6	Estremamente d'accordo 7
I soldi donati verso gli enti caritatevoli contribuiscono ad una buona causa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spesso i soldi donati agli enti caritatevoli sono sprecati	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L'immagine che ho degli enti caritatevoli è positiva	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gli enti caritatevoli riescono ad aiutare le persone in difficoltà	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Assertive check

In letteratura, viene definito un linguaggio assertivo come una frase sicura, forte e che non lascia molta libertà di scelta.

Infatti, un messaggio o una richiesta assertiva è una che usa forme imperative come "fai", "vai" o forme non lasciano la possibilità di rifiutarsi di comportarsi nel modo desiderato dalla fonte: "devi andare" "devi fare".

Sulla base di queste definizioni, usa la scala seguente per indicare da 1 (per nulla d'accordo) a 7 (estremamente d'accordo) la misura in cui sei d'accordo con l'idea che il messaggio che hai appena letto è un **messaggio assertivo**.

Per nulla d'accordo 1	2	3	4	5	6	Estremamente d'accordo 7
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## Politeness check

Per favore, indica sulla scala seguente come valuti il messaggio letto:

non educato	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	educato
scortese	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	cortese
non rispettoso	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	rispettoso

## Attention check

Ripensando al post che hai visto precedentemente, indica se era presente un'immagine che rappresentava:

La Sagoma di una bambina

Una figura vivida di una bambina

## Appendix B.1

### Pre-test Analysis

#### Demographics

##### Frequenze

###### Statistiche

genere

N	Valido	93
	Mancante	0
Intervallo		1

		genere			
		Frequenza	Percentuale	Percentuale valida	Percentuale cumulativa
Valido	M	21	22,6	22,6	22,6
	F	72	77,4	77,4	100,0
	Totale	93	100,0	100,0	

##### Frequenze

###### Statistiche

age

N	Valido	92
	Mancante	1
Media		34,1848

#### Reliability of the scales: Cronbach Alpha

##### Assertive message 1

###### Politeness

###### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

###### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,952	3

###### Treat to freedom

###### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

###### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,929	4

##### Non-Assertive message 1

###### Politeness

###### Treat to freedom

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,982	3

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,925	4

## Assertive Message 2

### Politeness

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,968	3

### Treat to freedom

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,929	4

## Non-Assertive message 2

### Politeness

### Treat to freedom

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	93	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	93	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,987	3

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,860	4

## T-test Analysis

### Assertivity

#### Test t

### Statistiche campioni accoppiati

		Media	N	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media
Coppia 1	assertivenesscheck_1	5,14	93	1,797	,186
	assertivit_nonass_1	2,72	93	1,664	,173
Coppia 2	assertivenesscheck_1	5,14	93	1,797	,186
	assertivit_ass2	4,66	93	1,754	,182
Coppia 3	assertivenesscheck_1	5,14	93	1,797	,186
	assertivit_nonass2	2,42	93	1,378	,143
Coppia 4	assertivit_nonass_1	2,72	93	1,664	,173
	assertivit_ass2	4,66	93	1,754	,182
Coppia 5	assertivit_nonass_1	2,72	93	1,664	,173
	assertivit_nonass2	2,42	93	1,378	,143
Coppia 6	assertivit_ass2	4,66	93	1,754	,182
	assertivit_nonass2	2,42	93	1,378	,143

## Correlazioni campioni accoppiati

		N	Correlazione	Sign.
Coppia 1	assertivenesscheck_1 & assertivit_nonass_1	93	,177	,090
Coppia 2	assertivenesscheck_1 & assertivit_ass2	93	,374	,000
Coppia 3	assertivenesscheck_1 & assertivit_nonass2	93	,125	,231
Coppia 4	assertivit_nonass_1 & assertivit_ass2	93	,179	,086
Coppia 5	assertivit_nonass_1 & assertivit_nonass2	93	,298	,004
Coppia 6	assertivit_ass2 & assertivit_nonass2	93	,267	,010

## Test campioni accoppiati

		Differenze accoppiate					t	gl	Sign. (a due code)
		Media	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media	Intervallo di confidenza della differenza di 95%				
					Inferiore	Superiore			
Coppia 1	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_nonass_1	2,419	2,223	,231	1,962	2,877	10,495	92	,000
Coppia 2	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_ass2	,484	1,987	,206	,075	,893	2,348	92	,021
Coppia 3	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_nonass2	2,720	2,123	,220	2,283	3,158	12,356	92	,000
Coppia 4	assertivit_nonass_1 - assertivit_ass2	-1,935	2,191	,227	-2,387	-1,484	-8,519	92	,000
Coppia 5	assertivit_nonass_1 - assertivit_nonass2	,301	1,817	,188	-,073	,675	1,598	92	,113
Coppia 6	assertivit_ass2 - assertivit_nonass2	2,237	1,919	,199	1,841	2,632	11,239	92	,000

## Dimensioni effetto campioni accoppiati

			Standardizza	Stima del	Intervallo di confidenza 95%	
			tore <sup>a</sup>	punto	Inferiore	Superiore
Coppia 1	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_nonass_1	D di Cohen	2,223	1,088	,830	1,343
		Correzione di Hedges	2,232	1,084	,826	1,338
Coppia 2	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_ass2	D di Cohen	1,987	,244	,037	,449
		Correzione di Hedges	1,995	,243	,036	,447
Coppia 3	assertivenesscheck_1 - assertivit_nonass2	D di Cohen	2,123	1,281	1,005	1,554
		Correzione di Hedges	2,132	1,276	1,000	1,548
Coppia 4	assertivit_nonass_1 - assertivit_ass2	D di Cohen	2,191	-,883	-1,122	-,642
		Correzione di Hedges	2,200	-,880	-1,117	-,639
Coppia 5	assertivit_nonass_1 - assertivit_nonass2	D di Cohen	1,817	,166	-,039	,370
		Correzione di Hedges	1,824	,165	-,039	,368
Coppia 6	assertivit_ass2 - assertivit_nonass2	D di Cohen	1,919	1,165	,900	1,427
		Correzione di Hedges	1,927	1,161	,896	1,422



## Politeness

### Test t

#### Statistiche campioni accoppiati

		Media	N	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media
Coppia 1	MediaPOLass1	3,6631	93	1,80344	,18701
	MediaPOLnon1	4,4767	93	2,25778	,23412
Coppia 2	MediaPOLass1	3,6631	93	1,80344	,18701
	MediaPOLass2	3,9642	93	2,05625	,21322
Coppia 3	MediaPOLass1	3,6631	93	1,80344	,18701
	MediaPOLnon2	4,7419	93	2,31626	,24018
Coppia 4	MediaPOLnon1	4,4767	93	2,25778	,23412
	MediaPOLass2	3,9642	93	2,05625	,21322
Coppia 5	MediaPOLnon1	4,4767	93	2,25778	,23412
	MediaPOLnon2	4,7419	93	2,31626	,24018
Coppia 6	MediaPOLass2	3,9642	93	2,05625	,21322
	MediaPOLnon2	4,7419	93	2,31626	,24018

#### Correlazioni campioni accoppiati

		N	Correlazione	Sign.
Coppia 1	MediaPOLass1 & MediaPOLnon1	93	,481	,000
Coppia 2	MediaPOLass1 & MediaPOLass2	93	,364	,000
Coppia 3	MediaPOLass1 & MediaPOLnon2	93	,431	,000
Coppia 4	MediaPOLnon1 & MediaPOLass2	93	,538	,000
Coppia 5	MediaPOLnon1 & MediaPOLnon2	93	,799	,000
Coppia 6	MediaPOLass2 & MediaPOLnon2	93	,564	,000

#### Test campioni accoppiati

		Media	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media	Intervallo di confidenza della differenza di 95%		t	gl	Sign. (a due code)
					Inferiore	Superiore			
Coppia 1	MediaPOLass1 - MediaPOLnon1	-,81362	2,10501	,21828	-1,24714	-,38010	-3,727	92	,000
Coppia 2	MediaPOLass1 - MediaPOLass2	-,30108	2,18640	,22672	-,75136	,14921	-1,328	92	,187
Coppia 3	MediaPOLass1 - MediaPOLnon2	-1,07885	2,23952	,23223	-1,54008	-,61763	-4,646	92	,000
Coppia 4	MediaPOLnon1 - MediaPOLass2	,51254	2,08025	,21571	,08412	,94097	2,376	92	,020
Coppia 5	MediaPOLnon1 - MediaPOLnon2	-,26523	1,45177	,15054	-,56422	,03376	-1,762	92	,081
Coppia 6	MediaPOLass2 - MediaPOLnon2	-,77778	2,05500	,21309	-1,20100	-,35456	-3,650	92	,000

### Dimensioni effetto campioni accoppiati

			Standardizza tore <sup>a</sup>	Stima del punto	Intervallo di confidenza 95%	
					Inferiore	Superiore
Coppia 1	MediaPOLass1 – MediaPOLnon1	D di Cohen	2,10501	–,387	–,596	–,175
		Correzione di Hedges	2,11364	–,385	–,594	–,174
Coppia 2	MediaPOLass1 – MediaPOLass2	D di Cohen	2,18640	–,138	–,342	,067
		Correzione di Hedges	2,19536	–,137	–,340	,067
Coppia 3	MediaPOLass1 – MediaPOLnon2	D di Cohen	2,23952	–,482	–,695	–,266
		Correzione di Hedges	2,24870	–,480	–,693	–,265
Coppia 4	MediaPOLnon1 – MediaPOLass2	D di Cohen	2,08025	,246	,039	,452
		Correzione di Hedges	2,08878	,245	,039	,450
Coppia 5	MediaPOLnon1 – MediaPOLnon2	D di Cohen	1,45177	–,183	–,387	,023
		Correzione di Hedges	1,45772	–,182	–,386	,023
Coppia 6	MediaPOLass2 – MediaPOLnon2	D di Cohen	2,05500	–,378	–,588	–,167
		Correzione di Hedges	2,06342	–,377	–,586	–,166

a. Il denominatore utilizzato per stimare le dimensioni dell'effetto.

Il D di Cohen utilizza la deviazione standard del campione della differenza media.

La correzione di Hedges utilizza la deviazione standard del campione della differenza media, più un fattore di correzione.

### Threat to Freedom

### Test t

#### Statistiche campioni accoppiati

		Media	N	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media
Coppia 1	MediaTTFass1	4,1667	93	1,79800	,18644
	MediaTTFnon1	2,6478	93	1,64360	,17043
Coppia 2	MediaTTFass1	4,1667	93	1,79800	,18644
	MediaTTFass2	3,6694	93	1,82344	,18908
Coppia 3	MediaTTFass1	4,1667	93	1,79800	,18644
	MediaTTFnon2	2,0430	93	1,07505	,11148
Coppia 4	MediaTTFnon1	2,6478	93	1,64360	,17043
	MediaTTFass2	3,6694	93	1,82344	,18908
Coppia 5	MediaTTFnon1	2,6478	93	1,64360	,17043
	MediaTTFnon2	2,0430	93	1,07505	,11148
Coppia 6	MediaTTFass2	3,6694	93	1,82344	,18908
	MediaTTFnon2	2,0430	93	1,07505	,11148

## Correlazioni campioni accoppiati

		N	Correlazione	Sign.
Coppia 1	MediaTTFass1 & MediaTTFnon1	93	,375	,000
Coppia 2	MediaTTFass1 & MediaTTFass2	93	,389	,000
Coppia 3	MediaTTFass1 & MediaTTFnon2	93	,334	,001
Coppia 4	MediaTTFnon1 & MediaTTFass2	93	,239	,021
Coppia 5	MediaTTFnon1 & MediaTTFnon2	93	,552	,000
Coppia 6	MediaTTFass2 & MediaTTFnon2	93	,304	,003

## Test campioni accoppiati

		Differenze accoppiate					t	gl	Sign. (a due code)
		Media	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media	Intervallo di confidenza della differenza di 95%				
					Inferiore	Superiore			
Coppia 1	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFnon1	1,51882	1,92743	,19987	1,12187	1,91577	7,599	92	,000
Coppia 2	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFass2	,49731	2,00254	,20765	,08489	,90973	2,395	92	,019
Coppia 3	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFnon2	2,12366	1,75992	,18250	1,76120	2,48611	11,637	92	,000
Coppia 4	MediaTTFnon1 - MediaTTFass2	-1,02151	2,14383	,22230	-1,46302	-,57999	-4,595	92	,000
Coppia 5	MediaTTFnon1 - MediaTTFnon2	,60484	1,38132	,14324	,32036	,88932	4,223	92	,000
Coppia 6	MediaTTFass2 - MediaTTFnon2	1,62634	1,81316	,18802	1,25293	1,99976	8,650	92	,000

## Dimensioni effetto campioni accoppiati

			Standardizza	Stima del punto	Intervallo di confidenza 95%	
			tore <sup>a</sup>		Inferiore	Superiore
Coppia 1	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFnon1	D di Cohen	1,92743	,788	,553	1,019
		Correzione di Hedges	1,93533	,785	,551	1,015
Coppia 2	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFass2	D di Cohen	2,00254	,248	,041	,454
		Correzione di Hedges	2,01075	,247	,041	,452
Coppia 3	MediaTTFass1 - MediaTTFnon2	D di Cohen	1,75992	1,207	,937	1,472
		Correzione di Hedges	1,76713	1,202	,933	1,466
Coppia 4	MediaTTFnon1 - MediaTTFass2	D di Cohen	2,14383	-,476	-,690	-,261
		Correzione di Hedges	2,15262	-,475	-,687	-,260
Coppia 5	MediaTTFnon1 - MediaTTFnon2	D di Cohen	1,38132	,438	,224	,650
		Correzione di Hedges	1,38698	,436	,223	,647
Coppia 6	MediaTTFass2 - MediaTTFnon2	D di Cohen	1,81316	,897	,654	1,136
		Correzione di Hedges	1,82059	,893	,652	1,132

a. Il denominatore utilizzato per stimare le dimensioni dell'effetto.

Il D di Cohen utilizza la deviazione standard del campione della differenza media.

La correzione di Hedges utilizza la deviazione standard del campione della differenza media, più un fattore di correzione.

## Appendix B.2

### Demographics

#### Descrittive

##### Statistiche descrittive

	N	Minimo	Massimo	Media	Deviazione std.
age	265	18	70	33,89	12,141
Numero di casi validi (listwise)	265				

#### Frequenze

##### Statistiche

gender

N	Valido	265
	Mancante	0

##### gender

		Frequenza	Percentuale	Percentuale valida	Percentuale cumulativa
Valido	1	133	50,2	50,2	50,2
	2	132	49,8	49,8	100,0
	Totale	265	100,0	100,0	

### Reliability of the scales: Cronbach's Alpha

#### Intention to Donate 1

##### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

#### Intention to Donate 2

##### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

##### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,929	3

##### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,927	5

## Brand Liking

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,784	3

## Ad Liking

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,899	6

## Attitude Toward Charities

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,809	4

## Politeness Check

### Riepilogo elaborazione casi

		N	%
Casi	Valido	265	100,0
	Escluso <sup>a</sup>	0	,0
	Totale	265	100,0

a. Eliminazione listwise basata su tutte le variabili nella procedura.

### Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	N. di elementi
,941	3

## Independent T-test

### Politeness assertive vs non-assertive

#### Test t

##### Statistiche gruppo

	IV_Ass_NonAss	N	Media	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media
MEAN_pol	1	133	4,3709	1,60421	,13910
	0	132	5,0934	1,52909	,13309

##### Test campioni indipendenti

		Test di Levene per l'eguaglianza delle varianze		Test t per l'eguaglianza delle medie						
		F	Sign.	t	gl	Sign. (a due code)	Differenza della media	Differenza errore std.	Intervallo di confidenza della differenza di 95%	
									Inferiore	Superiore
MEAN_pol	Varianze uguali presunte	1,098	,296	-3,752	263	,000	-,72251	,19255	-1,10165	-,34337
	Varianze uguali non presunte			-3,753	262,572	,000	-,72251	,19252	-1,10158	-,34343

##### Dimensioni effetto campioni indipendenti

		Standardizzazione <sup>a</sup>	Stima del punto	Intervallo di confidenza 95%	
				Inferiore	Superiore
MEAN_pol	D di Cohen	1,56724	-,461	-,705	-,217
	Correzione di Hedges	1,57173	-,460	-,703	-,216
	Delta di Glass	1,52909	-,473	-,719	-,224

a. Il denominatore utilizzato per stimare le dimensioni dell'effetto. D di Cohen utilizza la deviazione standard raggruppata. La correzione Hedges utilizza la deviazione standard raggruppata, più un fattore di correzione. Il delta di Glass utilizza la deviazione standard del campione del gruppo di controllo.

## Assertive check assertive vs non-assertive

#### Test t

##### Statistiche gruppo

	IV_Ass_NonAss	N	Media	Deviazione std.	Errore standard della media
Ass_check	1	133	4,65	1,591	,138
	0	132	3,51	1,590	,138

##### Test campioni indipendenti

		Test di Levene per l'eguaglianza delle varianze		Test t per l'eguaglianza delle medie						
		F	Sign.	t	gl	Sign. (a due code)	Differenza della media	Differenza errore std.	Intervallo di confidenza della differenza di 95%	
									Inferiore	Superiore
Ass_check	Varianze uguali presunte	,308	,579	5,868	263	,000	1,147	,195	,762	1,531
	Varianze uguali non presunte			5,869	262,988	,000	1,147	,195	,762	1,531

##### Dimensioni effetto campioni indipendenti

		Standardizzazione <sup>a</sup>	Stima del punto	Intervallo di confidenza 95%	
				Inferiore	Superiore
Ass_check	D di Cohen	1,590	,721	,472	,969
	Correzione di Hedges	1,595	,719	,470	,966
	Delta di Glass	1,590	,721	,464	,976

a. Il denominatore utilizzato per stimare le dimensioni dell'effetto. D di Cohen utilizza la deviazione standard raggruppata. La correzione Hedges utilizza la deviazione standard raggruppata, più un fattore di correzione. Il delta di Glass utilizza la deviazione standard del campione del gruppo di controllo.

## Two-way ANOVA on Dependent Variable Intention to Donate 1

## Fattori tra soggetti

		N
Moder_Vivid_shape	0	131
	1	134
IV_Ass_NonAss	0	132
	1	133

## Statistiche descrittive

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_ITD\_ok

Moder_Vivid_shape	IV_Ass_NonAss	Medio	Deviazione std.	N
0	0	3,6508	1,75714	63
	1	2,7941	1,57091	68
	Totale	3,2061	1,71143	131
1	0	3,4928	1,53458	69
	1	3,0667	1,40954	65
	Totale	3,2861	1,48518	134
Totale	0	3,5682	1,64011	132
	1	2,9273	1,49485	133
	Totale	3,2465	1,59848	265

## Test di Levene di eguaglianza delle varianze dell'errore<sup>a,b</sup>

		Statistica di Levene	gl1	gl2	Sig.
MEAN_ITD_ok	Basato sulla media	1,918	3	261	,127
	Basato sulla mediana	1,818	3	261	,144
	Basato sulla mediana e con il grado di libertà adattato	1,818	3	258,962	,144
	Basato sulla media ritagliata	1,954	3	261	,121

Verifica l'ipotesi nulla che la varianza dell'errore della variabile dipendente sia uguale tra i gruppi.

a. Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_ITD\_ok

b. Disegno: Intercetta + Moder\_Vivid\_shape + IV\_Ass\_NonAss + Moder\_Vivid\_shape \* IV\_Ass\_NonAss

### Test di effetti tra soggetti

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_ITD\_ok

Origine	Somma dei quadrati di tipo III	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
Modello corretto	30,500 <sup>a</sup>	3	10,167	4,120	,007
Intercetta	2797,272	1	2797,272	1133,573	,000
Moder_Vivid_shape	,217	1	,217	,088	,767
IV_Ass_NonAss	27,218	1	27,218	11,030	,001
Moder_Vivid_shape * IV_Ass_NonAss	3,067	1	3,067	1,243	,266
Errore	644,059	261	2,468		
Totale	3467,667	265			
Totale corretto	674,559	264			

a. R-quadrato = ,045 (R-quadrato adattato = ,034)



## Two-way ANOVA on Dependent Variable Intention to Donate 2

### Fattori tra soggetti

		N
Moder_Vivid_shape	0	131
	1	134
IV_Ass_NonAss	0	132
	1	133

### Statistiche descrittive

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_brand\_lkng

Moder_Vivid_shape	IV_Ass_NonAss	Medio	Deviazione std.	N
0	0	5,1217	1,34311	63
	1	4,1569	1,76428	68
	Totale	4,6209	1,64278	131
1	0	4,8502	1,12246	69
	1	4,3949	1,45523	65
	Totale	4,6294	1,30973	134
Totale	0	4,9798	1,23544	132
	1	4,2732	1,61893	133
	Totale	4,6252	1,48092	265

### Test di Levene di eguaglianza delle varianze dell'errore<sup>a,b</sup>

		Statistica di Levene	gl1	gl2	Sig.
MEAN_brand_lkng	Basato sulla media	5,628	3	261	,001
	Basato sulla mediana	4,805	3	261	,003
	Basato sulla mediana e con il grado di libertà adattato	4,805	3	241,221	,003
	Basato sulla media ritagliata	5,565	3	261	,001

Verifica l'ipotesi nulla che la varianza dell'errore della variabile dipendente sia uguale tra i gruppi.

a. Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_brand\_lkng

b. Disegno: Intercetta + Moder\_Vivid\_shape + IV\_Ass\_NonAss + Moder\_Vivid\_shape \* IV\_Ass\_NonAss

## Test di effetti tra soggetti

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_brand\_lkng

Origine	Somma dei quadrati di tipo III	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
Modello corretto	37,388 <sup>a</sup>	3	12,463	6,006	,001
Intercetta	5675,612	1	5675,612	2735,108	,000
Moder_Vivid_shape	,018	1	,018	,009	,925
IV_Ass_NonAss	33,362	1	33,362	16,078	,000
Moder_Vivid_shape * IV_Ass_NonAss	4,293	1	4,293	2,069	,152
Errore	541,600	261	2,075		
Totale	6247,889	265			
Totale corretto	578,988	264			

a. R-quadro = ,065 (R-quadro adattato = ,054)

## Two-way ANOVA on Dependent Variable Ad Liking

### Fattori tra soggetti

		N
Moder_Vivid_shape	0	131
	1	134
IV_Ass_NonAss	0	132
	1	133

### Statistiche descrittive

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_adliking

Moder_Vivid_shape	IV_Ass_NonAss	Medio	Deviazione std.	N
0	0	4,5423	1,36422	63
	1	3,7451	1,34308	68
	Totale	4,1285	1,40612	131
1	0	4,0725	1,13705	69
	1	3,8205	1,35154	65
	Totale	3,9502	1,24739	134
Totale	0	4,2967	1,26784	132
	1	3,7820	1,34264	133
	Totale	4,0384	1,32871	265

### Test di Levene di eguaglianza delle varianze dell'errore<sup>a,b</sup>

		Statistica di Levene	gl1	gl2	Sig.
MEAN_adliking	Basato sulla media	2,643	3	261	,050
	Basato sulla mediana	2,246	3	261	,083
	Basato sulla mediana e con il grado di libertà adattato	2,246	3	253,830	,083
	Basato sulla media ritagliata	2,650	3	261	,049

Verifica l'ipotesi nulla che la varianza dell'errore della variabile dipendente sia uguale tra i gruppi.

a. Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_adliking

b. Disegno: Intercetta + Moder\_Vivid\_shape + IV\_Ass\_NonAss + Moder\_Vivid\_shape \* IV\_Ass\_NonAss

### Test di effetti tra soggetti

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_adliking

Origine	Somma dei quadrati di tipo III	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
Modello corretto	25,014 <sup>a</sup>	3	8,338	4,934	,002
Intercetta	4330,493	1	4330,493	2562,549	,000
Moder_Vivid_shape	2,574	1	2,574	1,523	,218
IV_Ass_NonAss	18,208	1	18,208	10,774	,001
Moder_Vivid_shape * IV_Ass_NonAss	4,918	1	4,918	2,910	,089
Errore	441,068	261	1,690		
Totale	4787,806	265			
Totale corretto	466,082	264			

a. R-quadrato = ,054 (R-quadrato adattato = ,043)

## Two-way ANOVA on Dependent Variable Attitude toward Charities

### Fattori tra soggetti

		N
Moder_Vivid_shape	0	131
	1	134
IV_Ass_NonAss	0	132
	1	133

### Statistiche descrittive

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_AttitudeToC

Moder_Vivid_shape	IV_Ass_NonAss	Medio	Deviazione std.	N
0	0	4,6905	1,20040	63
	1	4,2537	1,25298	68
	Totale	4,4637	1,24272	131
1	0	4,4275	1,21654	69
	1	4,5846	1,08818	65
	Totale	4,5037	1,15442	134
Totale	0	4,5530	1,21144	132
	1	4,4154	1,18261	133
	Totale	4,4840	1,19677	265

### Test di Levene di eguaglianza delle varianze dell'errore<sup>a,b</sup>

		Statistica di Levene	gl1	gl2	Sig.
MEAN_AttitudeToC	Basato sulla media	,438	3	261	,726
	Basato sulla mediana	,350	3	261	,789
	Basato sulla mediana e con il grado di libertà adattato	,350	3	249,934	,789
	Basato sulla media ritagliata	,406	3	261	,749

Verifica l'ipotesi nulla che la varianza dell'errore della variabile dipendente sia uguale tra i gruppi.

a. Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_AttitudeToC

b. Disegno: Intercetta + Moder\_Vivid\_shape + IV\_Ass\_NonAss + Moder\_Vivid\_shape \* IV\_Ass\_NonAss

## Test di effetti tra soggetti

Variabile dipendente: MEAN\_AttitudeToC

Origine	Somma dei quadrati di tipo III	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
Modello corretto	7,171 <sup>a</sup>	3	2,390	1,682	,171
Intercetta	5333,258	1	5333,258	3752,493	,000
Moder_Vivid_shape	,076	1	,076	,054	,817
IV_Ass_NonAss	1,294	1	1,294	,911	,341
Moder_Vivid_shape * IV_Ass_NonAss	5,834	1	5,834	4,105	,044
Errore	370,948	261	1,421		
Totale	5706,188	265			
Totale corretto	378,119	264			

a. R-quadro = ,019 (R-quadro adattato = ,008)

## 1-way ANOVA

### Condition Assertive shape vs. Non-Assertive shape

#### A una via

		ANOVA				
		Somma dei quadrati	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
MEAN_ITD_ok	Tra gruppi	30,500	3	10,167	4,120	,007
	Entro i gruppi	644,059	261	2,468		
	Totale	674,559	264			
MEAN_ITD_DON	Tra gruppi	31,284	3	10,428	4,381	,005
	Entro i gruppi	621,285	261	2,380		
	Totale	652,570	264			
MEAN_brand_lkng	Tra gruppi	37,388	3	12,463	6,006	,001
	Entro i gruppi	541,600	261	2,075		
	Totale	578,988	264			
MEAN_adliking	Tra gruppi	25,014	3	8,338	4,934	,002
	Entro i gruppi	441,068	261	1,690		
	Totale	466,082	264			
MEAN_AttitudeToC	Tra gruppi	7,171	3	2,390	1,682	,171
	Entro i gruppi	370,948	261	1,421		
	Totale	378,119	264			

#### Coefficienti di contrasto

Contrasto	Condizione			
	1,00	2,00	3,00	4,00
1	1	-1	0	0

#### Test di contrasto

		Contrasto	Valore del contrasto	Errore std.	t	df	Sig. (a due code)
MEAN_ITD_ok	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,8567	,27470	-3,119	261	,002
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,8567	,29206	-2,933	124,596	,004
MEAN_ITD_DON	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,8347	,26980	-3,094	261	,002
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,8347	,29289	-2,850	128,875	,005
MEAN_brand_lkng	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,9648	,25190	-3,830	261	,000
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,9648	,27278	-3,537	124,426	,001
MEAN_adliking	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,7972	,22732	-3,507	261	,001
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,7972	,23679	-3,367	127,904	,001
MEAN_AttitudeToC	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,4368	,20847	-2,095	261	,037
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,4368	,21438	-2,037	128,850	,044

### Condition Assertive vivid vs. Non-Assertive vivid

## A una via

### ANOVA

		Somma dei quadrati	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
MEAN_ITD_ok	Tra gruppi	30,500	3	10,167	4,120	,007
	Entro i gruppi	644,059	261	2,468		
	Totale	674,559	264			
MEAN_ITD_DON	Tra gruppi	31,284	3	10,428	4,381	,005
	Entro i gruppi	621,285	261	2,380		
	Totale	652,570	264			
MEAN_brand_lkng	Tra gruppi	37,388	3	12,463	6,006	,001
	Entro i gruppi	541,600	261	2,075		
	Totale	578,988	264			
MEAN_adliking	Tra gruppi	25,014	3	8,338	4,934	,002
	Entro i gruppi	441,068	261	1,690		
	Totale	466,082	264			
MEAN_AttitudeToC	Tra gruppi	7,171	3	2,390	1,682	,171
	Entro i gruppi	370,948	261	1,421		
	Totale	378,119	264			

### Coefficienti di contrasto

Contrasto	Condizione			
	1,00	2,00	3,00	4,00
1	0	0	1	-1

### Test di contrasto

		Contrasto	Valore del contrasto	Errore std.	t	df	Sig. (a due code)
MEAN_ITD_ok	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,4261	,27153	-1,569	261	,118
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,4261	,25435	-1,675	131,919	,096
MEAN_ITD_DON	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,4152	,26668	-1,557	261	,121
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,4152	,24204	-1,715	130,542	,089
MEAN_brand_lkng	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,4554	,24899	-1,829	261	,069
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,4554	,22548	-2,020	120,282	,046
MEAN_adliking	Presumi varianze uguali	1	-,2520	,22470	-1,121	261	,263
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	-,2520	,21642	-1,164	125,349	,247
MEAN_AttitudeToC	Presumi varianze uguali	1	,1571	,20607	,762	261	,447
	Non presumere varianze uguali	1	,1571	,19916	,789	131,655	,432



## Summary

### CHAPTER 1

#### **Prosocial Behaviour and Charitable Giving**

In the literature, prosocial behaviour represents a broad set of actions that can be summed up as the intent of a person or a group of people to be beneficial to other people (Penner et al. 2004; Eisenberg 2006; Fabes, Carlo, Kupanoff, and Laible, Dal. 1999). This behaviour is expressed by humans by act of cooperation, helping, volunteering etc. In our society the act of helping others is considered to be very valuable, and it is possible to see this emphasis from many sources that go from the news in television, to the stories and folklore of many cultures: basically this is the expression of the value of helping others vs the trouble of that result of being selfish (Dovido et al. 2006). From an evolutionary point of view, humans “are well tuned in to others’ needs and desires and have a penchant for treating others with care and concern” (Hawley P., 2014), and gives us insights on why, as species, we are thriving on earth. There are various reason why people can act prosocially, and in general, we can say that the motivation that lead to a prosocial behaviour are a mix between egoistic (self-interest, pleasure etc.) and altruistic (empathy) stimulus. Related to prosocial behaviour is charitable giving, one of the key elements to understand how donation affect donors. Bendapudi et al. (1996) analysed the “Helping Behaviour” meant as, for the charities, as actions able to support the needs of others, without any counterpart. Actions such as financial support, volunteers involving personal experience or donation of blood, organs, tissues etc, can be considered helping behaviour. Various authors have defined the concept of help from the donor and the motivation that drives him to do it (Piliavin and Charng 1990, Krebs and Miller 1985). This may be due to the desire to improve the beneficiary's economic, well-being or health status or to satisfy an egoistic motivation, in order not to feel guilty. According to Bendapudi et al. (1996) donations are higher if the purpose of the campaign is related to problems not caused by the individual (i.e. sexual abuse, racial and sexual discrimination, etc.). The second aspect is related to the motivation: why a donor is motivated to the donation. As mentioned earlier there are motivations related to reasons that lead to charity to be considering having an altruistic or egoistic feeling. The aim of the altruistic feeling is related to the need of equity and wellness, while the egoistic one is related to not feeling guilty compared the exposed problem. The third aspect is related to behaviour. This can be considered as the quantification of the help, that can be minimal or substantial and it is related to the motivational aspect. In altruistic motivation donors consider the impact of the donation and its effect on the target. For egoistic motivation,

behaviour is more related to an economic analysis of the cost -benefits of the action. Last step is related to the entire donation process and is related to the consequences of the donations.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Message Frame Valence, Image Frame Valence, Type of “victim”, Emotional Appeals**

Message framing is based on the communication that is sent to the recipient and is used to create the approach in which the information is given, and is one of the main variables that can influence the effectiveness of the message. Message framing strategy consists in presenting the same information in different ways within advertising messages (e.g., Amatulli et al., 2018). Indeed, individuals' response to a solicitation can be different depending on the message frame strategy used. According to prior literature we can distinguish between loss-framed and gain-framed messages. Gain-framed messages are those that highlight the positive consequences of behaving in the advocated way (i.e., donating to a charity), conversely loss-framed messages are those that highlight the negative consequences of not complying with the advocated behaviour (i.e., donating to a charity). Another one of the most important aspect that has to be analysed, is the way the beneficiary of the advocated behaviour is represented. Particularly relevant is the so-called: “identifiable victim effect”. According to Shafir et al (1993), the identification of a victim creates an empathy with the situation and is able to stimulate in the donor the willing to take action, also with money donations. Empathy with the victim has been discussed by Weiner (1980, 1995). The author has defined the victim as a person not responsible for the situation he is living and this is the first step for the reaction induced in the observer. Small and Loewenstein (2003) have demonstrated that identifiable victims have a higher impact on potential donors, but they assume that this could be due to the information related to the picture more than the picture its self. They demonstrated the potential donors were keener in donations if their support was used for a family already selected by the organization, instead of a family that would have been selected later on. As mentioned before, charities try to appeal certain emotion to increase donations. It is possible to trigger a positive or a negative emotion using stimuli such as sound, images and slogans. These messages can express joy, love or compassion if they are framed in a positive way, or a sense of fear, guilt or harm if framed in a negative way. Positive emotions are usually used to promote hedonic products, and conversely negative emotions are mostly used in prosocial behaviour (Brennan, Binney, 2010). For example, the fear arousing appeals are the most used when the campaign is trying to stop a unhealthy behaviour (i.e. Smoking kills). The most common emotion that NGOs try to trigger in the donor is guilt (Huhmann & Brotherton, 1997; Alden & Crowley, 1995). It has been shown

that triggering guilt in the donor can increase donation (Batson, 1998; Tangney, 1995) especially when the message is send together with a sad face of a child (Pham and Septianto, 2019). This behaviour can be explained because donors try to respond to this sense of guilt by taking responsibility. One of the ways that charities use to trigger guilt is by trying to make the donor empathize with the victim, since empathy have shown to be a strong mediator of guilt (Basil, Ridgway and Basil, 2008).

### **Assertive and non-assertive language**

Assertive Communication (from Latin "Asserere", or assertion) is the human capacity to express emotions and ideas in a clear and effective way, without overhanging and offending others. Assertive language is as the language of imperative forms such as command or orders. Who receives such a direct and imperative message with the assertive slogan, adopts a personal reaction with the perception: not adopting the content is not an option but is a must. (Dillard et al, 1997; Dillard and Shen, 2005; Grandpre et al, 2003; Kronrod et al, 2012; Kronrod et al, 2012). The results are that consumers feel the imperative pressure to do what is contained in the slogan with no other choice. Intuitively, such pressure should increase compliance but ironically, as demonstrated in the Reactance Theory and Persuasion Knowledge Model (Baek, Yoon and Kim, 2015; Dillard and Shen, 2005; Gibbs, 1986; Holtgraves, 1991; Yoon, Choi and Song, 2011) there is a well-defined evidence that these assertive messages can generate an adverse reaction: consumers acts in the opposite way to the content of the slogan. Although these results are evident and well established, assertive language is continuously proposed for advertising (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012) and these campaigns are prevalent. Moreover, according to recent studies, assertive messages might backfire especially when they intend to support social and environmental problems (Kim at al., 2017: Baek and Yoon, 2017; Baek et al, 2015; Kronrod et al, 2011; Yoon et al, 2016), because it has been demonstrated that consumers don't want someone to order them which social behaviour they should adopt (e.g., Kim et al., 2017; Zollo et al., 2018) while preferring to choose freely. Instead in this field the more polite way to present the campaign can be more persuasive such as the Emergency slogan "Your Donation Can Save Lives". However, it is important to highlight that under some circumstances assertive messages might be more effective than non-assertive messages when promoting prosocial behaviors. To illustrate, Kronrod et al (2012) have shown that assertive messages are more effective than non-assertive ones when the recipients feel the importance of the environmental issue promoted. Indeed, these authors have highlighted the connection between language, environmental problems and awareness of the perceiver suggesting that the recipients understand the importance of the problem, especially if it is already known, they are more

receptive to assertive language and more willing to follow its advice. On the other hand, if the person listening does not understand the importance of the reference topic, not considering it important, engaging or is in a negative mood, it has been highlighted that the non-assertive language can have greater effects on consumers (Kronrod et al, 2012). In this thesis, I want to advance knowledge into the effectiveness of assertive language in the domain of prosocial communications, especially focusing on charitable donations and more specifically on humanitarian messages. Indeed the main research question I want to answer is:

**Research question:** *Under what conditions charitable advertisements promoting monetary donations for humanitarian causes using assertive vs. non-assertive language can be more effective?*

Specifically, in order to answer this question, I am going to use a novel theoretical framework that is Construal Level Theory. In Chapter 3, the theoretical knowledge needed to answer this question will be examined more deeply.

## CHAPTER 3

### Construal Level Theory

Construal Level Theory (CLT) theory describes to what extent people think that something, such as an object or an event is abstract or concrete (Trope and Liberman, 2010). In general, the more psychologically distant, temporally, spatially, socially and hypothetically, is an event or an object from the individual, the more it will be represented at a high level of construal (i.e., more abstractly). Conversely, the closer an event or an object is, the more concrete it will appear, that is individuals will represent it at a low level construal.. Therefore, individuals might perceive a stimulus (i.e., an object, event, another person or an action) at two different levels of abstraction, low and high: low level means that individuals focus on the detail and concrete aspects of a stimulus while high level means that individuals focus on the superordinate and central features of a stimulus. Importantly, the different levels of mental representations affect how individuals process information (Fujita et al. 2006), guiding individuals' choices, desires and attitudes (Liberman et al, 2007). In the literature is possible to find studies that have shown how the effectiveness of an advertisement is affected by different construal levels (e.g. Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2011; Akin, van Boven et al., 2015).

## **Theory of Politeness**

Politeness is defined as the application of the good manners and etiquette in order to not offend others. Politeness theory focus on the concept of politeness, and it tries to explain how these effort to maintain social values and positive interaction affect the response of people. In the previous chapter it was studied that assertive request is one that uses the imperative form (i.e., commands and orders), such as “do, go, must or donate, or one that leaves no option for refusal, such as “you must help” (Brown and Levinson 1987; Vanderveken 1990). Conversely, non-assertive language is characterized by the use of propositions or indirect suggestions (e.g., “Please be considerate and try to print less”) (Miller et al., 2007). It is clear that there are many correlation between non-assertive language and Politeness, since non-assertive language correspond with a less imposing wording, a more considerate language and, in general, polite requests (Kronrod et al., 2012). Overall, it could be argued that politeness is associated through its association with social distance to higher level of construal, and conversely, assertiveness can be associated to low construal level.

## **Fit effect**

Importantly, studies on construal level theory have extensively suggested and demonstrated that advertising effectiveness can be enhanced if there is a concordance between consumer processing mode and the one induce by advertisement campaign (Thompson & Hamilton, 2006). The external solicitation present in advertising campaign is more effective if it fits with the abstractive level of the consumer (Dhar and Kim, 2007; Zhao, 2007; Zhao and Xie, 2011). In this research, I focus my attention on the role played by visual representations of social causes in the relationship between language assertiveness and donation-related outcomes and base my hypotheses on CLT and fit effect. In particular, I will investigate the moderating role of vivid vs. shape images. In other words, for the purpose of my thesis, it will be interesting to study how the vividness will moderate the effectiveness of assertive and non-assertive message, in regard to humanitarian aid, since there is a lack of studies for this particular model.

## **Shape vs. Colorful Images**

As said before, the choice of images in all advertising and marketing campaign is crucial. In the last decades most of the pictures (photographs and videos) used are coloured. Several Authors (Bohle and Garcia 1986; Click and Stempel 1976, Schindler 1986, Gronhaug, et al,

1991; Hornik 1980; Lohse 1997), have studied the impact for the pictures and tried to define the differences in using full coloured or black and white format. In order to summarize, black and white images are perceived by people to be more abstract, and for this reason, they have a higher construal level. Instead coloured images have shown to be perceived as more concrete than black and white images, and indeed, they have shown to work better for event that are temporally close, and for this reason, these images are perceived to have a low construal level. This argument is also confirmed using neuroscience tools: by using the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), it was demonstrated that when people think of images distant in the future, the individual tend to visualize monochromatic images; conversely, when people think of images near in the future images tend to be visualized colourful (Stillman et al. 2020). The visual perception of the black and white images was an important premise for the moderator that is going to be studied for this thesis. Since, arguably, BW images increase the attention of the individual to the form and shape of the image, and colour increase the intrinsic details of the image (Arnheim 1974; Janiszewski 1998), it's possible to argue that the shape of the image is a fundamental component that is perceived to have an high construal level in comparison to colourful images. So it is possible to affirm that since the shape of an object is a central element of an object, following the CLT, it will be perceived to pertain to high level construal. Instead, the colour of an object which is more a detailed aspect of it can be considered as a low-level (Lee et al, 2016). My investigation for my experiment, since the lack of evidence in the literature, will be to see if the vividness of an image (shape vs. the detailed colourful image) of the images will moderate the effectiveness of assertive and non-assertive language for an humanitarian NGO.

## **Research Hypotheses**

As said before, it is important for images and messages to fit together in order to increase the effectiveness of the advertisement. Since it can be argued that non-assertive language is correlated with politeness, and that politeness is associated with high level construal, we should expect to see that non-assertive language will have a higher effectiveness when paired with shape images. Additionally, as postulated above, shapes of objects are associated with high level construal, because these portray more the boundary of an object and focus more on the general and on the essence of it. Conversely, coloured images direct individuals' attention to objects' details, as these are more clearly represented, thus focusing more on the concrete and incidental aspects of a stimuli thus pertaining to a more concrete level of construal than shapes (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; 2016). I predict that assertive language versus non-assertive language,

should be more effective (i.e., more positive donation-related outcomes including attitudes and behavioural intentions) when paired with vivid images. Conversely, non-assertive language should be more effective than assertive language when paired with an image reporting the shape of the social cause at hand. Formally, I hypothesize the followings:

**H1a:** *Assertive language will be more effective than non-assertive language when the image used is vivid*

**H1b:** *Non-assertive language will be more effective than assertive language when the image use is a shape*

## CHAPTER 4

### Method

In this chapter is going to be explained how the hypotheses were tested. Indeed, it was created and performed a 2 (language assertiveness: assertive vs. non-assertive language) x 2 (vividness of the image: vivid vs. shape) between-subject experiment. Before going in to the detail to illustrate the main study it is going to be delineated the pre-test, that was performed in order to choose which manipulation of the independent variable (assertive language) would work better for the purpose of the main experiment<sup>2</sup>.

### Pre-test

The data for the pre-test were gathered by posting on Facebook a link of an experiment designed on Qualtrics, that was used as a survey provider. Participants who took part to this pre-test did not participate to the main experiment.

In particular, the pre-test was a within subject experiment with a four levels one factor (language assertiveness) variable. Participants were 196, 103 individual were excluded from the analysis because of missing data, hence the sample used for conducting the analyses was composed of 93 individuals, (77,4% of female  $M_{age} = 34$ ,  $SD = 10$ , age range = 19-65).

Indeed, the respondents were exposed to these images (Appendix A.1) ostensibly from a fictitious charity called as “Libere di vivere” asking to stop child marriage. Two messages were used to manipulate assertive language and two to manipulate non-assertive language. Before the evaluation of assertiveness, respondents were exposed to the definition of assertive

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<sup>2</sup> The pre-test and the main test were in Italian.

language. Specifically, based on extant literature (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012a, b; Kim et al., 2017) the assertive messages used imperative terms such as “must” and “give”, while the non-assertive messages used terms such as “could” and “should”(Appendix A.1). Afterwards, and more specifically after each messages, participants were asked to answer to few questions aimed respectively at assessing perceive politeness, perceive threat to freedom and perceive assertiveness. In detail, politeness through 3 items 7-point semantic scale (polite/kind/respectful vs impolite/unkind/disrespectful;  $\alpha = 0,952$  for assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,982$  for non-assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,968$  for assertive message 2;  $\alpha = 0,987$ ) adapter from Kim et al. (2017), threat to freedom using 4 items 7 point Likert scale (the message threatened my freedom of choice; the message tried to make a decision for me / to manipulate me / to pressure me; anchored 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree;  $\alpha = 0,929$  for assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,925$  for non-assertive message 1;  $\alpha = 0,929$  for assertive message 2;  $\alpha = 0,86$ ) adapted from Dillard and Shen (2005) ( $\alpha = 0,86$ ) and assertiveness was measured as a 7 point Liker scale (anchored 1= strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, demographic information were collected. In order to select the two conditions that were perceived as more different and as the most assertive vs. non-assertive, a paired t-test sample was conducted with perceived assertiveness acting as comparison variable. The first condition was create by pairing the assertive message 1 with the non-assertive message 1, the result were the following:  $M = 2,419$ ;  $SD = 2,223$ ;  $t = 10,495$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Then the assertive message 1 was paired with the second assertive message, a this were the results:  $M = 2,720$ ;  $SD = 2,283$ ;  $t = 12,35$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Then assertive message number 2 was paired with non-assertive message number 1:  $M = 1,935$ ;  $SD = 2,191$ ;  $t = 8,519$ ;  $p = < 0,001$ . Lastly, assertive message number 2 was paired with non-assertive message number 2:  $M = 2,237$ ;  $SD = 1,919$ ;  $t = 11,239$ ;  $p = < 0,001$  (Appendix B.1, fig.). Afterwards, the same test was performed to measure perceived politeness and treat to freedom; since treat to freedom is an important measure do distinct an assertive and a polite language. The results of politeness and treat to freedom were in line with the assertive perception (Appendix B.1, fig.), the paired assertive message 1 and non-assertive message 2 had a better performance. As it is possible to notice from the results in appendix A.1 (fig.), since the paired couple assertive message 1 and non-assertive 2 had a better performance in all the measurements for the purpose of the main experiment, they were chosen in order to create the manipulation of the main survey. After the analysis of the pre-test, the main experiment was created.



## Main study's Results

In order to test the hypotheses 1a and 1b, hence to test if the relationship between assertive and non-assertive language on charitable advertisements' effectiveness is moderated by the use of vivid images vs. less vivid image representing a shape, it was designed a 2 (assertive vs. non-assertive) x 2 (shape vs vivid) between subject experiment. Participants were recruited by posting on social networks (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp) the link of the study designed on Qualtrics. Totally, 524 answers were collected, but due to missing data, specifically people who just opened the link but not filling it, 239 responses were excluded and 20 responses were excluded because the participants did not answer correctly to the attention check which asked whether they saw a social media post featuring a vivid image vs. not vivid image but a shape of a little girl. Hence, the final sample used for conducting the analyses aimed at testing the hypotheses was composed by 265 Italians (51% of total responses) (50,2% female,  $M_{age} = 33$  years,  $SD = 12.14$ , age range = 18-70).

Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (Appendix A.2, fig.) designed as a Facebook's Fundraising post of a fictitious charity called as "Libere di vivere" asking fund for stopping child marriage. 68 responders were randomly assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> condition (assertive + shape), 63 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> condition (non-assertive + shape), 65 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> condition (assertive + vivid) and 69 to the 4<sup>th</sup> condition (non-assertive + vivid). As far as language assertiveness manipulation is concerned participants either read a message using imperative forms, such as "you must save", "donate", or less imperative and more polite forms such as "it's worth donating." Such manipulations were adapted from prior studies testing the effectiveness of language assertiveness in pro-social and especially pro-environmental behaviors (e.g., Kronrod et al., 2012b). Moreover, as far as image vividness is concerned participants either saw a post that along with the text (i.e., language assertiveness manipulation) featured either a vivid and colourful image of a little bride or an image of the shape of a little bride.

Afterwards, participants were asked to answer to some questions aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the message. Specifically, Intention to Donate was assessed by 2 different dependent variables, using a three items 7 point Likert (How likely/inclined/willing would you be to donate your money to libere di vivere?;  $\alpha = 0,929$ ), adapted from White, MacDonnell and Dahl (2011, p. 483  $\alpha = 0,914$  ) and a 5 item 7 points Likert scale (I would like to donate/think it is important to donate/think it is the right thing to donate/think that everybody

should donate/ I would donate as much as I can afford for the promoted cause;  $\alpha = 0,927$ ) adapted from Zagefka et al.(2012, p. 644;  $\alpha = 0,83$ ).

Then it was measured Brand Liking with a 3 items 7 points Likert scale (How much do you like/ How favourable do you feel to/How adverse do you feel to the organization Libere di Vivere?;  $\alpha = 0,784$  ) adapted from Rugar , Moore and Fitzsimons (2017, p.6;  $\alpha = 0,89$ ).Then it was measured Ad Liking by using a 7 point semantic differential scale with 6 items (boring/inappropriate/bad/negative/ I really didn't like it/unpleasant vs interesting/appropriate/good/positive/I really like it/pleasant;  $\alpha = 0,899$ ) adapted from Kim et al (2017, p. 554  $\alpha$ ).

Then it was measured a control variable, the Attitude Toward Charities, not specific to Libere di Vivere, with a 4 items 7 points Likert scale (Money donated to charities contributes to a good cause; Money donated to charities is often wasted; The image I have of charities is positive; Charities are able to help people in trouble;  $\alpha = 0,809$ ) and it was adapted from Webb, Green and Brashear (2000, p. 303;  $\alpha = 0,81$ ).

Then, the correctness of language assertiveness manipulation was assessed by asking participants to indicate on a 7 point scale (1 = strongly disagree , 7 = strongly agree ) the extent to which they perceived that the message they read was assertive, providing also a brief definition of assertive message. Afterwards, they were asked to indicate on a 3 items 7-point semantic scale (polite/kind/respectful vs. impolite/unkind/disrespectful) the extent to which they perceived the message they read was polite ( $\alpha = 0,941$ ). These latter scales were both adapted from Kim et al. (2017). Subsequently, the attention check about the image they saw was given, and finally demographic information were collected.

Then it was asked to the respondents if they saw a shape or a vivid image, in order to check their attention. If the response would not met the picture shown, the survey would be discarded. Finally, the demographic of the sample (age and gender) where gathered.

First of all, the results from the independent T-test showed that messages framed as assertive, received higher assertive scores ( $M = 4.65$ ;  $SD = 1,59$ ;  $t(df) = 5,868$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ) compared to non-assertive framed messages (  $M = 3.51$ ;  $SD = 1,59$ ;  $t(df) = 5,868$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ); and messages framed as non-assertive received higher politeness scores ( $M = 5.09$ ;  $SD = 1,60$ ;  $t(df) = -3,752$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ), compared to assertive messages (  $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = 1,52$ ;  $t(df) = -3,752$ ;  $p = <0,001$ ). Hence, in line with the pre-test the two conditions were perceived differently and in the expected direction.

Then, to test the hypotheses, a serial of separate two-way ANOVAs with language assertiveness (assertive language vs. non-assertive language) acting as independent variable, image vividness (vivid vs. shape) acting as moderator and the two Intention to Donate, brand Liking, ad Liking

and attitude toward charities acting as dependent variables. Two variable new variable were created for to make this analysis: the Independent Variable with two conditions (1 = assertive language; 2 = non-assertive language) and the moderator with two conditions (1 = vivid image; 2 = shape image) (Appendix A.2).

The two-way ANOVA with the first Intention to Donate as dependent variable showed that the main effect of the moderator (image vividness) with the DV (intention to donate) was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 0,088; p = 0,767$ ) and for the main effect of IV (language assertiveness) was relevant ( $F(1, 264) = 11,030; p = 0,001$ ). The interaction effect of the IV (assertive language), the Moderator (Image vividness) and the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,243; p = 0,266$ ). Although the interaction effect is not significant, by looking at the cell mean (Appendix B.2, fig.), it possible to notice that at least the direction of the mean of the shape and non-assertive language condition is in the expected direction ( $M = 3,6; SD = 1,757$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with the second Intention to Donate as dependent variable also showed the main interaction of the moderator was not significant with the DV ( $F(1, 264) = 0,910; p = 0,341$ ) and the main interaction of the IV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 10,856; p = 0,001$ ). Also for this interaction effect the result was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,223; p = 0,270$ ). Looking at the cell means showed that the manipulation of shape and non-assertive message was in the expected direction.

Then the two-way ANOVA with the Brand Liking as dependent variable showed that the main effect of the moderator with the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 0,009; p = 0,925$ ), the main effect of the IV with the DV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 16,072; p = <0,001$ ). The interaction effect also in this case was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 2,069; p = 0,157$ ). The cell means also in this case showed that the mean of the condition non-assertive+shape was in the right direction ( $M = 5,12; SD = 1,343$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with Ad Liking as dependent variable showed the main effect of the moderator with the DV was not significant ( $F(1, 264) = 1,523; p = 0,218$ ), the main effect of the IV with the DV was significant ( $F(1, 264) = 10,774; p = <0,001$ ). The interaction effect also in this case was just marginally significant ( $F(1, 264) = 2,910; p = 0,089$ ). The cell means always shown that the condition of non-assertive+shape is in the expected direction ( $M = 4,54; SD = 1,36$ ).

Then the two-way ANOVA with Attitude Toward Charities as dependent variable showed the main effect to be not significant for the moderator ( $F(1, 264) = 0,54; p = 0,817$ ) and not significant for the main effect of the IV ( $F(1, 264) = 0,911; p = 0,34$ ). The interaction effect in this case, is significant ( $F(1, 264) = 4,105; p = 0,044$ ). Indeed, for this interaction is possible

to notice that both the condition non-assertive+shape (  $M = 4,69$ ;  $SD = 1,20$ ) and assertive+vivid (  $M = 4,58$ ;  $SD = 1,08$ ) are in the expected direction.

Lastly, due to the fact that this last interaction is significant I proceeded to make a pairwise comparison to compare the mean of the condition of interest, specifically assertive+shape vs non-assertive+shape and assertive+vivid vs. non-assertive+vivid. In order to make this analysis I created a new variable to set the conditions: 1 = assertive+shape; 2 = non-assertive+shape; 3 = assertive+vivid; 4 = non-assertive+vivid. As it is possible to notice from appendix B.2, when the conditions 1 and 2 were confronted in the dependent variable Attitude toward Charities(mean\_AttitudeToC) there was a significative interaction ( $t = -2,037$ ;  $df = 128,850$ ;  $p = 0,044$ ). For this reason is possible to say that H1b is partially confirmed, since only the variable Attitude toward Charities had significative interaction.

To sum up the result of the main study, non-assertive language had a better performance than assertive language, especially when the image used was shape. This result is in line of what it is expected from the literature (e.g. Lee et al. 2014; 2016). However assertive + vivid did not had the expected interaction since it should have performed better than non-assertive + vivid according to the CLT (e.g. Lee et al. 2014; 2016), instead the difference was non statistically relevant. It can be clearly observed in the two-way ANOVA interaction for the Attitude toward Charity were the mean assertive+vivid had a mean of 4,5 and the mean of non-assertive+shape was 4,4 (Appendix B.2)

## **General Discussion**

Since this the era of the social media communication, I decided to investigate further how the verbal and visual stimuli will affect the reaction and behaviour of the individuals, since the main communication happens trough images and verbal messages. Since the NGOs are in direct control of these appeals and the stimuli on their social campaigns, my purpose was to apply the literature under a new light. In order to do so, it was studied message framing, with the different uses of assertive and non-assertive language, with the moderating role of vividness of the image. The hypotheses derived from the use of Politeness theory applied to Construal level Theory and Fit effect. Following this idea, non-assertive language is considered to be perceived as polite (e.g. Kronrod et al., 2012) and socially distant (e.g. Stephan et al., 2010), that Construal Level theory associate assertive language as a low construal, polite messages as high construal, vivid images as low construal, shape images as high construal and that due to the Fit effect the use of the same construal will work better. In other words, the literature suggests that advertisement features that fit together in regards of construal level, rather than when they are

divergent, will work better. Indeed the hypotheses H1a assumed that assertive+vidid would work better than non-assertive+vidid, and H1b assumed that non-assertive+shape would work better than assertive+shape. Furthermore, it was possible to test the two hypotheses for which appeal is best suited for charitable organization to create their campaigns. In other words, in this thesis it was studied if the use of assertive and non-assertive message would have a better effect if moderated by vivid and shape images. Although it was not seen a relevant effect through all the dependent variables (except for Attitude toward Charities) while testing the hypotheses with the 2(assertive vs non-assertive) x 2(vivid vs shape) ANOVA design, the non-assertive+shape seems to be the most effective text and image combinations to be used when conveying charitable messages. By using the Construal Level Theory and the Fit effect discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible to explain, in part, the result of the experiment, confirming partially the H1b hypothesis. To sum up, across all the interaction that were created, non-assertive+shape had a better outcome when paired together, in line with the theory that associate high construal level to non-assertive messages and shape like figures (e.g., Lee et al., 2014; 2016). These results provide further evidence that ads composed by non-assertive language have a better effect compared to the messages that use assertive language in a prosocial environment, since the interaction of H1b was partially confirmed. Regarding to H1a that was not proven statistically, except for the dependent variable attitude toward donations, it is possible to see through all the dependent variables that assertive language+vidid was performing slightly better than assertive language+shape (Appendix B.2).

### **Theoretical contribution**

This study reveals a novel moderating variable (vivid vs shape) on the performance of assertive vs. non-assertive language in the domain of prosocial communications and specifically on those promoting humanitarian (social) causes. In particular from the analysis, it is possible to extrapolate that, non-assertive language is better than assertive language, which is a finding consistent with prior works (e.g., Dillard and Shen, 2005; ; Kim et al., 2017; Kronrod et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2007), and that, even if not in substantial way across all the dependent variable, this might especially true when this language is paired with a shape image rather than vivid and colourful image. Indeed, it seems that when the image is vivid the differences between assertive and non-assertive language are removed. To give an explanation to this outcome, is possible that the condition of vivid image is acting as a sort of boundary condition (boundary condition: condition in which the theory does not apply), because in this case there is not a noticeable effect. Further investigation is needed to see if it is the case. Hence, this project increase the literature on language assertiveness effectiveness by shedding light on how the

interaction of visual+verbal stimuli in the might affect recipients' responses, especially in terms of their general attitudes. The approach of this thesis, indeed, tried to seek a new approach to have a better understanding of the proper language to use for charities, specifically for humanitarian NGOs. Furthermore, the thesis increased the knowledge on language assertiveness by proposing a novel perspective for studying it that refers to Construal Level Theory.

### **Managerial Implication**

This thesis provide further insight to advertisement specialist that work in the pro-social sector. As it was suggested in previous researches (e.g. Kronrod et al., 2012) non-assertive language has better effectiveness when is used for prosocial campaigns. In particular, the insight that this thesis provide to the humanitarian NGOs is that they should use a non-assertive message paired with a shape image. It is important to notice that it is possible to find NGOs and agencies that increasingly more likely to use shape-like images to promote their campaign (e.g. Save the Children, MPG agency). This study supports, even if partially, that NGOs should create their advertisement keeping in mind of the Fit Effect that occurs when the messages and images have the same construal level. Moreover, although it was marginally significant, the main study suggests that if the NGOs what to improve the attitude of their supporters for charitable organizations they should use non-assertive language and shape like figures, or if they really want to frame the advertisement as assertive, it is slightly better to use a vivid image instead of a shape figure. This findings could be used by social marketers who are willing to enhance the effectiveness of their advertisements.

### **Limitation and future research**

The limitation of this studies provide many opportunities for future research to increase the knowledge and the comprehension of the effectiveness of language assertiveness and image vividness. First of all, while the theoretical framework relies on the idea that language assertiveness, due to its association with politeness might be associated with construal levels, I do not directly empirically test this association but rather I test it using moderation analyses with a feature that has been already shown to be associated with construal level and provide partial support. Hence, future studies could directly test the relationship between assertiveness and construal level. Second, as can be seen in the results it seems that non-assertive language is more effective than assertive language and that this effect might be more likely to occur when the image used to represent the promoted social cause present its shape (high level construal),

hence future studies might better investigate while when the vivid image is used there is not a inversion of language assertiveness effectiveness while there is only a mitigation. Possibly, it could be argued that since higher level of construal is particularly effective in promoting charitable behaviours pairing two low level concepts might still produce a negative effect but mitigated by the fit effect. Additionally, it could be possible that some problems are related to the manipulation used that might not have elicited in the case of vivid images the right construal. Particularly, the images had all the same “light-blue” background: it is possible that just having the figure of vivid individual and an empty monochrome background is not enough to create a low construal image and it is possible that also the background needs to be vivid to increase the perception of low construal level. Future researches could answer this question and investigate if the background could have an effect on the perceived construal of the individuals. Furthermore, another issue that might have had an impact on the results, could be the composition of the sample: since the sample had a SD of 12 years (Appendix B.2), and the age range was between 18 years old and 70 years old, the income level, the education and the diverse geographical area across Italy of the individuals, may have had an impact. I suggest that further investigation should seek to prove how these differences can results in different outcome, in regards to the willingness to give of the people. In the literature is possible to find example of the impact that different geographical areas had on the reaction to environmental advertising (Kim et al., 2017). Thirdly, always looking at the concerns of the dataset, being the fact that the sample was heterogenous in regards of the individuals, question rises if the personality of the participants, such as their reactance sensitivity to assertive language that many studies have shown to have a strong effect (e.g. Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996; Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004; Kronrod, Grinstein and Wathieu, 2012), could have had an impact on the results, especially in regards to H1a. Future research may find an answer for this question. Future research could also further measure the perceived social distance when it is bounded to Construal Level Theory. Finally, this thesis provided to the literature interesting observations in regards to the study of the language paired with visual vividness, and it is still clear that there is still a gap of understanding that needs to be filled also with respect to other prosocial domains.