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Course of Marketing

# The Effects of Guilt Appeal: Save the Children vs ActionAid

Prof. Maria Giovanna Devetag

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SUPERVISOR

Matteo Ioli - Matr. 233361

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CANDIDATE

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes the evolution of marketing throughout the years, with an important focus on advertising and all its different types. Among these types, guilt appeal stands out and its properties and characteristics are examined. Its practical application is then seen through the advertisings of two organizations that use guilt as amplifier for their messages, 'Save the Children' and 'ActionAid'. This thesis goes on analyzing the histories of the two NGOs and then compares them to see which one uses guilt appeal more effectively.

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# 1 Introduction

I would like to begin my thesis by introducing and defining the concept of marketing first. Although the word ‘marketing’ might be perceived as connected to the advent of modern technologies, the contemporary definition of the term, describing commercial activities with emphasis on sales and advertising, first appeared in 1897. In order to understand the concept better, we must know that marketers themselves separate the ‘practical’ marketing from its ‘theoretical’ side and study the histories of both, trying to understand how they evolved in the years. The history of marketing practice investigates how marketing has been practiced and how it evolved over time, in response of changing socio-economic situations. On the other hand, the history of marketing thought examines the ways marketing has been studied and taught. Entanglements among the two concepts happen when practitioners find innovative practices that attract scholars and, vice versa, when marketing academics theorize new research methods that will be adopted later on by practitioners.

According to some researchers, the history of marketing practice can be subdivided into key periods that were characterized by specific orientations that contributed to the evolution of marketing. Such orientations are defined as *“the type of activity or subject that an organization seems most interested in and gives most attention to”*. Scholars of this discipline tend not to agree on the orientations that constitute these periods. However, some of the orientations are more commonly cited than others and they are: Production Orientation, Selling Orientation, Marketing Orientation, and Relationship Orientation. I will briefly describe each one of them.

The Production Orientation is often seen as the first period to dominate business thought, spanning from the 1860s to the 1930s. Kotler and Armstrong believed the production philosophy to be *“one of the oldest philosophies that guides sellers, (...), still useful in some situations”*. This orientation is characterized by:

- Manufacturing, production, and efficiency;
- Economies of scale, of scope, and experience effects;
- Demand exceeding supply;
- Say’s Law stating that: *“Supply creates its own demand”* or *“if somebody makes a product, somebody else will want to buy it”*;
- More technical-product research over customer research;
- Environment presenting a shortage of manufactured goods relative to demand;

- Very little promotion and advertising, limited to raising awareness of the existence of a product or service.

The Selling Orientation is theorized to have started while the Great Depression was hitting the world and extended into the 1950s. This concept is “*typically practiced with unsought goods*”, as Kotler notes and it is characterized by:

- Door-to-door selling and other aggressive methods to promote products;
- The acceptance of every sale or booking even if not suitable for the business;
- High transactional focus.

The Marketing Orientation began right after the end of the Selling one in the 1950s and contains:

- Focus on and understanding that customer’s needs and behaviors should be the center of every marketing decision;
- Sales, ads, product management, and pricing to be all connected with the customer;
- The creation of new products coming after a thorough market analysis and testing.

The Relationship Orientation is the most recent one and emerged in the 1990s. The main objective of this concept is for companies to establish a long-term relationship with the customer, based on trust and commitment, that benefits both. This idea revolves around Kotler’s statement about how it costs five times more to acquire a new customer than to maintain existing ones. The Relationship Orientation’s goal is to maximize all future potential exchanges’ value and includes the following characteristics:

- Focus on relationships between buyer and seller;
- Calculation of the Customer Lifetime value (CLV) to invest in lifetime-long relationships;
- Product benefits and customer value orientation;
- Better customer service;
- Quality overall;
- Coordination of activities with customers;
- Customized offerings.

Theorists believe that marketing in general is moving from a relationship orientation mechanism towards a social media paradigm, whose environment is more controlled and provides marketers to better customize offers and messages.

Let's now switch our attention to the history of marketing thought. As for marketing practice, scholars do not agree on many things, one of which is the date of creation of the discipline. It was suggested by some historians to have made its first appearance prior to 1900, while others believe that it emerged only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it became a university course. The very first marketing course was offered by the University of Michigan in 1902, paving the path for other schools to implement it as well. Prior to this emergence, marketing was seen as a branch of economics, called *applied economics*. However, the separation of marketing from economics was inevitable, as economics' only focus on creating value from production failed to understand distribution. More and more marketing courses, books, and articles became to appear and in 1936, the publication of the *Journal of Marketing* gave the discipline a sense of distinct identity. Now that marketing was a real and well-established subject, scholars started to question whether different schools were teaching different variations of the common marketing theory, deriving in many 'schools of thought'. As a matter of fact, the discipline was divided into three main schools of thought: the commodity, institutional, and functional schools. A brief description of each follows.

The commodity school is believed to have appeared after an article by C.C. Parlin in 1916. Such article focused on the *objects of exchange* and classified different commodities. Later articles proposed the convenience-shopping-specialty goods classification and many others.

The institutional school gave much importance to the *agents of market transactions*, especially to those acting as intermediaries, as retailers. It documented channels of distribution, functions performed by the members, and the value-adding services provided. This school of thought was strongly influenced by economics, until the 1970s where it shifted its attention to behavioral science.

The functional school originated when Shaw publicized his article *Some Problems in Market Distribution* in 1912. He was interested in documenting the marketing functions and tried to answer to the question 'What work does marketing do?'. Many functional school's theorists added elements to the lists of marketing's functions, but many of them revolved around the work and the value added by intermediaries. At those times, advertising and promotion were not seen as key functions.

An honorable mention must be given also to the marketing management school, which appeared in 1957 after Wroe Alderson's *marketing Behavior and Executive Action* article. It completely overtook the functional school, shifting the emphasis towards problem-solving and managerial approaches. This school continued to borrow concepts from economics, but also

introduced theories from the fields of sociology and psychology, which helped explain some consumer behavior aspects. With the creation of this new school of thought, advertising also gained more importance, starting to take its place as one of the most relevant aspects of marketing.

## 2 Advertising Efficiency

To promote their products or their services, companies but also mere people have always used some kind of advertising. In fact, it was found that even Egyptians, Greeks and Romans used to write sales messages and lost and found advertising on papyrus. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern advertising came to life and his creator is considered to be Thomas J. Barratt of London. Barratt was working for a soap company when he came up with the first real advertising campaign for the company's products. Such campaign involved the use of targeted slogans, images and phrases and collected many consents from the public. Appointed as the company's brand manager, he kept stressing the importance of brand image and of constantly monitoring the changes in tastes in the market. As the economy faced a worldwide expansion, advertising grew and evolved with it; this led to the creation of mail-order advertising. Newspapers started including paid advertising in its pages, resulting in lower prices, extended readership, and increased profitability for them.

Even though the economy was booming at the time, the industry could not benefit from the increased productivity without greater consumer spending. This resulted in the development of mass marketing, influencing the economic behavior of consumer on a large scale. In the 1910s and 1920s, it was theorized that human instincts could be targeted and persuaded to buy different commodities. A quote from Edward Bernays, the founder of modern advertising and public relations and a nephew of Freud, states: *"The general principle, that men are very largely actuated by motives which they conceal from themselves, is as true of mass as of individual psychology. It is evident that the successful propagandist must understand the true motives and not be content to accept the reasons which men give for what they do."*

In other words, the new method of selling products that appeal to the unconscious human desires is far more effective than the old way of selling those products based on the rationality of a consumer's mind. In the 1920s psychologists started analyzing the advertising phenomenon, trying to explain why it was so successful. Famous psychologist Walter D. Scott once said: *"Man has been*



*called the reasoning animal, but he could with greater truthfulness be called the creature of suggestion. He is reasonable, but he is to a greater extent suggestible.”*

Advertising kept evolving and spreading. It was able to reach more and more people with the establishment of the first radio stations, televisions, and with the creation of the internet

## 2.1 Types of Advertising

There are several ways to classify advertising, based on different concepts. For example, it can be categorized according to means of communication or types of products. Amongst the many types of advertising the ones I would like to analyze are ‘Direct and Indirect Action Advertising’ and ‘Rational and Emotional Advertising’. Although the main aspects of the two elements of each category might be trivial, they hide peculiar properties.

Let’s start by defining ‘Direct Action’ advertising as a way to instigate the targeted buyer to take immediate action. Here, the ideal consumer, after being subjected to the ad, feels the urgency to do something to repair the broken reality that it has been presented to him/her. Usually, some kind of reward is given to the most devoted customers in order to positively reinforce customer retention (the ability to turn occasional clients into repeat buyers, preventing them to switch to a competitor). Technology advances, like the introduction of credit cards, have made direct action advertising more appealing by diminishing the effort needed by customers to take said action. Ultimately, improvements in computer technologies made possible for marketers to target customers that would better response to this type of advertising. Having said this, direct action ads can be found pretty much everywhere today. TV-watchers, radio-listeners, newspaper-readers, and social media users can all be subject to this type of advertising. Lastly, the secret behind successful direct-action campaigns is the use of clear and concise words, maybe accompanied by strong emotional images, obviously depending on the type of message that is being transmitted.



The second type of advertising is ‘Indirect Action’ advertising. It can be considered as the opposite of the previously analyzed type and it bases itself on building a strong, positive reputation for the brand. Advertisers are not keen on immediate action and customers don’t feel any sense of urgency. However, they start acknowledging the brand name, image, and message; point that will lead to better results in the future. Establishing this type of mental connection with the buyer is at the base for any long run engagement, especially if the product sold is a durable good. Another focal point of this advertising is customer relationship marketing (CRM), which can be defined as ‘*a process of acquiring customers by understanding their requirements, retaining customers by fulfilling their expectations and attracting new customers through customer specific strategic marketing approaches*’. Some benefits that might arise from using this type of advertising are expansion of the customer base, generation of more loyal customer, reduction of promotional expenses, increased scope of introduction of new products, patronization of customers, and overall customer satisfaction.



Sometimes, a combination of both direct and indirect action advertising might catch the interest of companies. In this way, they would both develop their brands’ images and encourage an instant buying decision from customers. The effects that arise from Direct-action advertising can be measured almost instantly and are based on the responses received. On the other hand, Indirect-action advertising can only be felt in the long run and cannot be measured accurately.

The third type I want to analyze is Rational advertising. This kind of publicity bases itself on highlighting the use value of a certain product and the customer’s functional need for such product. In other words, it persuades people by appealing to their sense of logic or reason by stating something that seem obvious enough to not be argued. The Rational Appeal is particularly effective for products that contain characteristics and features that ‘touch’ someone’s reason. Rational motives that can be used in these advertisements comprehend economy, convenience, and comfort.



Last but not least, we have Emotional Advertising. Columbia University’s professor Bernd H. Schmitt describes it as “*a memorable experience that the client has to feel, exceeding his expectations*”. In other words, the journey that this type offers anticipates and satisfies the buyer’s subconscious desires. Emotional advertisements use images and words that convey an emotional message to who watches, reads, or listens, intending to create a response based on attitudes and feelings. Usually, such advertisements appeal to a single emotion only, such as fear, anger, joy, or any other feeling that is strong enough to persuade the client and influence a decision. In 1999, when Schmitt first theorized Emotional Advertising, he did so by illustrating five different types of “SEMs” (Strategic Experimental Modules) that can also be combined amongst themselves. According to the professor, it is possible to control consumers’ irrational buying decisions generating the five SEMs, but also more complex sensory paths.



The modules are:

- SENSE Experiences: involving the senses;
- FEEL Experiences: involving emotions;
- THINK Experiences: involving the mind in a creative and cognitive way;
- ACT Experiences: focused on the physical aspect;
- RELATE Experiences: based on relationships.

## 2.2 Efficiency and Results

Many statistics and data have been collected on the efficiency of advertising in order to understand if the conspicuous investments behind it are wasted or not. Always more and more money is being spent on advertising, with a peak of \$33 million reached by Chanel in 2012. There exist many different platforms on which display a product or service, ranging from social media to TV and old-fashioned newspapers. One big online platform is internet colossus Google’s ‘Google AdWords’. It allows companies to advertise announcements and choose the exact spot, inside Google’s range of action, in which to show said ad. Also, Google AdWords automatically targets the most fit audience for your product, making the ad appear only to those who could be interested. Obviously, it all comes

with a cost that can be adjusted according to the company's budget. It has been shown that small businesses that use this platform earn an average of \$3 in revenue for every \$1.60 spent. The average 'click-through rate' (the percentage of people viewing a web page who see and click on a specific ad that appears on that page) on paid search ads is about 2%.

If instead one would like to focus on advertising something on television, he or she can expect the ad effectiveness to increase by 40%. Even with the appearance of mobile phones and social media, TV still plays a major role in people's lives. Experts have also predicted that TV advertising spending will grow steadily to \$75 billion by 2022, keeping TV the best way to target mass audiences with a single spot, all at the same time. Television remains as well one of the lowest-risk methods for investing in advertising, with a high chance of profit return, estimated to be 70% between three and six months, and 86% over three years. However, teens and millennials are spending less and less time in front of the TV (40% less than five years ago), preferring smartphones and social medias. This is bound to have a substantial negative impact on advertising effectiveness.

Seen the increasing usage of mobile phones, companies shifted their attention on mobile advertising as well. People are turning to their smartphones for advice and advertisers are exploiting this by offering their products as a solution for consumers' problems and fulfilling their needs. Consequently, global mobile ad spending was expected to grow and reach \$247.4 billion by 2020, alongside in-app advertising, which grew to \$201 billion. Nowadays, 68% of companies have integrated some sort of mobile marketing in their marketing strategy, showing how profitable mobile marketing has proven to be.

The marketing industry is definitely in a state of rapid flux, everchanging and always evolving, also due to the technologic advancements that happen almost daily. Advertising has never been this competitive and businesses need a great effort to stand out and reach clients in the best way possible.

### **3 Guilt Appeal**

Going back to the topic of the different types of advertising, among the feelings used in Emotional Ads we can find guilt. Guilt is a moral emotion that hits a person that believes to have done something that goes against a universal moral code for which he or she bears significant responsibility. It is also related in some way to the concepts of remorse, regret, and shame. Having said this, an ad that successfully uses guilt appeal toys around with these feelings and induces them to torment the viewer, who is obliged to do something to get rid of them. That is why guilt appeal falls under both the Emotional Advertising and the Direct Action Advertising types.

#### **3.1 History of Guilt Appeal**

Obviously, guilt is a feeling that has always accompanied humans during their existence. As people became more reasonable and started believing in moral codes, guilt appeared more often after actions that were once considered harmless. For example, cave men killed masses of animals because they only saw them as food, but now it would be considered immoral (and sometimes illegal) to do so. When cigarettes were first invented, people had no idea of the harms that smoking could cause and they would use them non-stop. Nowadays, one might feel emotionally bad even after a single puff from a cigarette. So, as feeling guilty was becoming more and more common in people, marketers saw the opportunity to exploit it for their own purposes.

#### **3.2 Efficiency and Results**

Using guilt appeal in advertisings is definitely a very effective way to ‘hit’ the audience and encourage a response. Such response, however, can happen either immediately or, as in many cases, in the long run. For example, an ad about the lack of physical exercise might make people feel the urge to become more active, but this view is often flawed. It takes time to change one’s habits and routines, so advertisings that aim at these adjustments are designed to be effective at a later point in time. As more research is conducted on this topic, it appears that guilt it is not about simply making people feel uneasy with themselves, but rather to engaging them deeply with an emotionally strong message that influences them. Such engaging is referred to ‘transportation’ and makes the audience feel as the message is personal and relevant to them. At the end of this process, people would have assimilated the exposed information more effectively.

However, some people remain skeptical about the actual effectiveness of guilt appeals and believe that they can lead to unwanted results that can ultimately backfire. Guilt, as other negative feelings, can be very profitable when used correctly, but they might lead to a non-desirable outcome whenever consumers feel that they are being manipulated through their emotions directly. In order to avoid negative reactions, advertisers must check if the audience that is being targeted would be prepared to receive a message based on guilt and accept it. Also, they must not put out a message that is too explicit or assertive, as people might grow suspicious and start doubting it.

### **3.3 Laboratory Experiments**

In the 1960s, guilt was being examined more closely in laboratories to understand if the adoption of transgressive behaviors led to a desire to repair the harm caused. For instance, professors Regan, Williams, and Sparling designed an experiment in which participants were asked to take a picture with a prop camera. After having done so, they were led to believe that they had damaged the object in some way. In the second phase, the participants were presented to a second experimenter whose bag or purse was open. More people thinking that they damaged the camera noticed and reported to the experimenter that the bag was open. This showed how even the simple act of kindness of helping someone to close his or her bag could favor the elimination of part of the guilt felt by participants. In these type of studies, restorative behavior was attributed to the desire of getting rid of a sense of guilt.

More recent types of studies focused on better formalizing the specific causal relationship between pro-social restorative actions and guilt. Professors Ketelaar and Au proposed two new experiments where participants played social-dilemma games. Between game turns it was possible to adopt a cooperative or an individualistic type of behavior. Guilt once again came into play and as players were experiencing it, they started getting more and more involved in cooperative behaviors than the ones in the control group. This causal relationship between guilt and pro-social behaviors explains why this feeling is widely used in advertisements for social marketing. Here, individuals are being exposed to situations that make them feel uneasy and later presented to opportunities of positive behavior adoptions that are designed to reduce their negative feelings. Another example focuses on a study around a children's dental health commercial message, designed by Coulter and Pinto. This message included sentences aimed at inducing guilt as: *"mothers who neglect their children's dental hygiene have children with dental problems. It is your responsibility to ensure the oral follow-up of*

*your children, do not let your family down!*”. These sentences were then followed by a suggestion for parents to improve their children’s dental health using floss. The hypothesis of this study was that the higher the level of guilt perceived, the higher the intention to buy dental floss. In the wake of this findings, guilt has been introduced to promote anti-alcohol messages and to encourage charity giving or pro-environmental actions.

However, the link between guilt and the prosocial behaviors is not as systematic as one may believe. Following the above-mentioned studies, some started questioning this association, led by Cryder, Springer, and Morewedge. In a series of experiments, they showed that guilt led to prosocial behaviors and reparative actions only when the victim was present and able to witness. Whenever he or she was absent, no reparation happened, even experiencing guilt, meaning therefore, that guilt is not a universal trigger for restorative actions. Analyzing these results, Coulter and Pinto proposed the existence of an “inverted U” curve of the effectiveness of guilt on persuasive messages. They saw that a greater support for the message happened due to a moderate level of guilt. A higher level of guilt, on the other hand, would likely lead to rejection from the audience. Explanations for this phenomenon might come from a psychological defense mechanism that humans activate when they feel their freedom of action to be threatened. In a state of reactance, an individual will act in such a way to grasp back his sense of freedom, maybe by maturing opposite behaviors from the ones suggested in the message. In other words, guilt induction evolved in prosocial behavior when subtle reparation proposals were attached to the persuasion messages. On the contrary, when the persuasion was explicitly exposed, guilt resulted in opposing behaviors.

To summarize, there seems not to be any systematic connection between prosocial behaviors and guilt in persuasion.

## 4 Save the Children

Theory aside, let us analyze one of the biggest players that use guilt appeal as a focal point in all its campaigns, English NGO ‘Save the Children’.

### 4.2 History

Save the Children (abbreviated STC) was founded the 15th of April 1919 in London, England. It was ideated by volunteer nurse Eglantyne Jebb and her political activist sister Dorothy Francis, with the intention of providing better education, health care, and economic opportunities for wounded and suffering children after World War I. In particular, its initial effort was to alleviate children starvation in Austria-Hungary and Germany during the Allied blockade. When the war finally ended, Europe was moved by images of sick and malnourished children. At that time, the Fight the Famine Council, started earlier in 1919, was putting pressure on the British government to relieve the blockade and collecting fundings. The two sisters managed to break away from the political side of the council and successfully founded a separate “Save the Children Fund”, which will be publicly established in May 1919 in London’s Royal Albert Hall to *“provide relief to children suffering the effects of war”*. The two sisters then worked to gain public support and sympathy, engaging also with Pope Benedict XV, who announced his support for the Save the Children initiative, and declared the 28 December ‘Innocents Day’ to collect donations. The organization kept growing and expanding and managed to open other branches in Scotland, Sweden, Swiss (where they teamed up with the Red Cross), and many other places. By August 1921, the UK Save the Children had raised over £1,000,000 and managed to improve Central Europe children’s conditions. But then, the Russian famine hit the world and Jebb realized that her organization must be permanent, and that children’s rights need to be constantly protected. Their mission then changed to *“an international effort to preserve child life wherever it is menaced by conditions of economic hardship and distress”*. In 1923, Jebb wrote an initial draft for what would become the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations. She wrote: *“I believe we should claim certain rights for the children and labor for their universal recognition, so that everybody—not merely the small number of people who are in a position to contribute to relief funds, but everybody who in any way comes into contact with children, that is to say the vast majority of mankind—may be in a position to help forward the movement”*. At the end of World War II, the staff from Save the Children were among the first to step into the liberated areas, working with refugees and displaced people, including Nazi concentration camps survivors. The organization kept following and intervening in most of the major crises that arose in

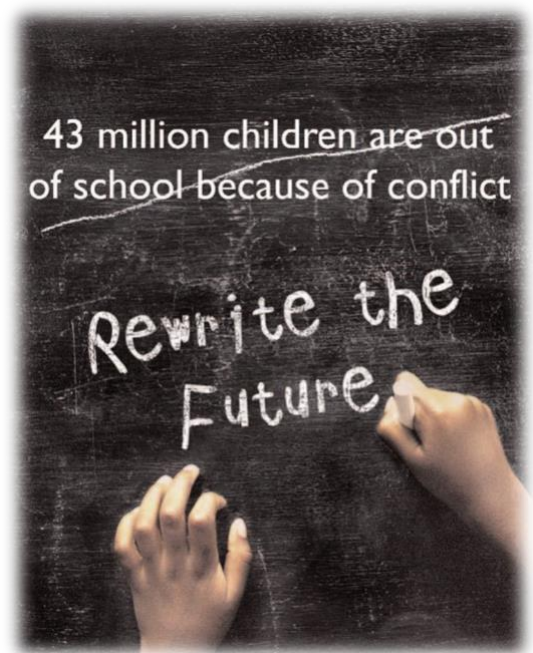


the following years, as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or the Vietnam War. Disasters in the African nations of Ethiopia and Sudan led to appeals that collected a huge amount of public donations, resulting in the consequent expansion of the organization's work. Save the Children was a major player even during the 2014 Ebola Outbreak and the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

### 4.3 Advertising Platforms & Campaigns

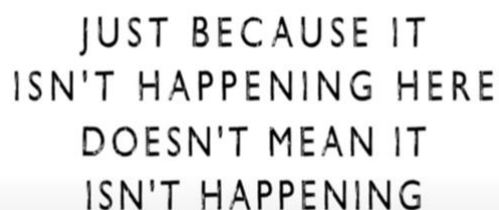
Undeniably, the success of Save the Children comes from their powerful campaigns that were able to hit the audience and sensitize the people to world crises. The advertisements that the organization used were also ground-breaking. Save the Children was the first charity in the United Kingdom to utilize page-length advertisements in newspapers, exploiting the help and expertise of doctors, lawyers, and other professionals to develop mass campaigns. In addition, in 1920 STC initiated individual child sponsorship in order to engage more donors. During the Russian famine, press campaigns, propaganda movies, and feeding centers were created in Russia and Turkey to help refugees. The advertisements campaigns saw the displaying of crude images of starving images and mass graves and gained massive national support. Save the Children hopped on the television boom during the Vietnam War, bringing publicities that exposed images of child starvation on the Western TV screens for the first time. These types of campaigns set the standard for all future advertisements, resulting in great success for fundraising.

Among the most famous ones, we find the 'Rewrite the Future' campaign which was Save the Children's first global movement involving all 28 members of the Alliance. It started in 2006 and focused on achieving equal and quality education for the children unable to attend school due to wars. This happened in 28 various states where conflicts were raging on, including Afghanistan, Somalia, Uganda, and many others. At the beginning of this campaign, the organization set the goal of improving the lives of eight million children, and in 2008, they surpassed it by reaching over ten million. It was able to do so by soliciting governments and other international organizations to mobilize greater resources to ensure quality education in states of acute emergency. As the



organization itself states in the Rewrite the Future campaign book: *“We’ve seen global education aid to countries affected by conflict increase by 50 percent and humanitarian aid to education double. Throughout this campaign, we’ve also gathered evidence on effective interventions and developed resources to help guide future programming”*. In this book, STC also explain ‘Why’ and ‘How’ this campaign was brought to life. First of all, they believe that education is the key foundation for future development and a right of every child. In some countries however, especially in the ones struck by conflicts, access to good formation is very difficult, at times impossible. Armed conflict forces schools to shut down, or simply makes going to classes very unsafe, making many children drop out and failing to receive a proper education. It may happen, as well, that the same tension that causes disrupts in the more fragile states, provokes inequalities in the access for schooling. Save the Children states how essential it is to get kids back into schools, enhancing peace and prospects of hope. All these factors, they say, contribute to political stability and long-term economic growth. Second, they proposed practical measures to adopt to remove the barriers that keep children out of school. For example, the establishment of alternative in the education delivery model like accelerated learning programs, multigrade classrooms, or flexible community-based schools. Another way may be to support the development of school infrastructures or to train teachers and professors to create more inclusive classrooms. The success of this campaign can be expressed not only by the numbers it hit but can also be extrapolated from the words of the children that were the target of this operation. Mary, a twelve-year-old Sudanese girl whose teacher was trained by STC, expressed her gratitude for the efforts made by the organization: *“Since I have gone to school, my life has changed. The lessons are interesting. Our teachers like us and don’t try to hit us. I’ve learned about children’s rights—that children have freedom of speech and freedom to be in school. Life is different for people who have an education and those who don’t”*.

Another great Save the Children campaign was “If London Were Syria”. To bring attention to the Syrian civil war three years anniversary in 2014, the English organization created a campaign video portraying the life of British children if a civil war were to strike the United Kingdom. It showed the happy life of a young English girl getting ruined and devastated after conflict arose in London. The little girl found herself in the middle of shootings and saw her family being separated from her. The overall



JUST BECAUSE IT  
ISN'T HAPPENING HERE  
DOESN'T MEAN IT  
ISN'T HAPPENING

images that appeared on screen were raw and uneasy to look at. Success for the video arrived immediately, with over twenty million views in less than a week and with the press describing it as “powerful” and “unsettling”. At the time, England’s prime minister David Cameron went against the acceptance of more Syrian refugees in UK’s territory. About this issue, his wife and Save the Children charity ambassador Samantha Cameron said: *“As a mother, it is horrifying to hear the harrowing stories from the children I met today, no child should ever experience what they have. With every day that passes, more children and parents are being killed, more innocent childhoods are being smashed to pieces”*.

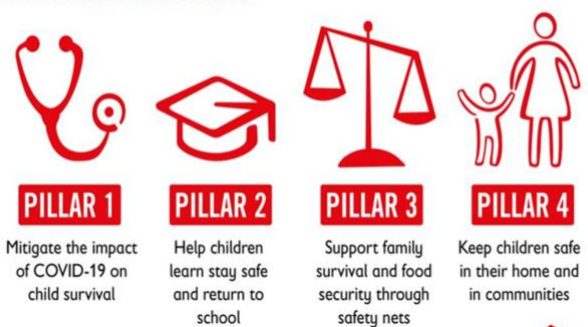
After the success of the video, STC started looking for other platforms on which to emit future advertisements. That meant the appearance of the organization on social media and a greater general commitment to global marketing. Nowadays, Save the Children reaches out to people by e-mail and regular mail, with advertisements on television and on social media.

#### 4.4 The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the whole world falling on its knees both socially and economically. As for any other past crises, Save the Children intervened quickly to help and protect children no matter where they lived. They started the biggest appeal in their 100-year history for \$100 million. Coronavirus highlighted even more the inequalities between rich and poor, with children and families least able to keep up being hit the hardest. Kids are not getting substantial life-saving health and nutrition services and over 1.5 billion children had to drop out from their education. Poverty conditions may cause children to never return to school and oblige them to work to make ends meet.

As a response, Save the Children sent out teams of activists working across 87 countries, helping nearly 8 million children, keeping them safe, healthy and in school. Also, they opened a new Isolation Treatment Center in the largest refugee camp of Cox’s Bazar, to take care of families who contracted COVID-19 and a camel library in Ethiopia to keep kids

### SAVE THE CHILDREN’S COVID-19 RESPONSE #PROTECTAGENERATION



educated. Overall, 2.9 million kids were supported with distance learning and nearly 800,000 households now benefit from having safe water and soap. Increased support activities were carried out in Malawi, India, Congo, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Nigeria.

## **5 ActionAid**

Another major player in the field of guilt appeals is another English NGO, 'ActionAid'.

### **5.1 History**

ActionAid was originally founded in 1972 by the English entrepreneur and humanitarian Cecil Jackson-Cole. Originally, the organization was called 'Action in Distress' and was a child sponsorship charity that developed when 88 supporters in the United Kingdom sponsored 88 children in India and Kenya. Their objective and focus were (and still remain) to provide education for kids, further everyone's human rights, and assist the poor and the discriminated ones. Nowadays, ActionAid is a federation of 45 different country offices that works, often via other local partner organizations, to help communities on many development issues. Its headquarters are located in Johannesburg, South Africa but it also holds hubs in Asia, the Americas, and Europe. ActionAid holds the record of being the first big International Non-Governmental Organization to transfer its head office from the global north to the global south. Currently, ActionAid's strategy aims to: *"build international momentum for social, economic, and environmental justice, driven by people living in poverty and exclusion"*. What this means in practice is that they closely work with people, civil society organizations, and social movements to deliver grassroots programs, provide emergency relief and fight for women's economic rights, and tax and climate justice. They firmly focus and fight for women's rights, with it being a thread common in all of their work.

### **5.2 Advertising Platforms & Campaigns**

Most of ActionAid campaigns revolve around the concept of justice, ranging from economic to climate justice. For example, the first tax justice campaign started in 2008, analyzing the effects of different international tax treaties and aiding local organizations to hold governments to account. The campaign expresses how tax avoidance results in minor tax revenues, ultimately harming the poorest and marginalized people who depend on tax-funded public services. Sometimes, it happens, as well,

that tax revenues lost in treaties exceed the international aid money amount sent to developing countries. In 2011, ActionAid also exposed how 98% of the United Kingdom's 'Financial Times Stock Exchange 100' companies used tax havens (or a country that has very low effective tax rates for foreign investors). In addition, from the 2013's research into corporate tax avoidance in Zambia, it emerged how the Associated British Foods resented from paying millions of dollars in corporate tax.



The climate justice campaigns see ActionAid attack rich countries and corporations, holding them largely responsible for climate change. They also portray how the poor people, who have not done anything to provoke this environmental problem, are the ones to bear the brunt of its effects, since they often live in vulnerable places such as flood plains or slums. With the term climate justice, ActionAid means making sure that suffering people get compensation and support in building more resilient livelihoods in the countryside or in cities. It also means that smallholder farmers have better control over their food sources and a fairer distribution of land is needed in order to do so. Better access for women, indigenous people, and other excluded groups is also vital. ActionAid's most significant engagement in influencing decision-making processes of vulnerable communities comes through the Conference of Parties, the supreme governing body of an international convention.



Jumping to the matter of women's rights, as stated before, ActionAid has always fought for equalizing them in those countries where women are still considered 'inferior'. Some of their notable campaigns saw raising awareness in Bangladesh for unpaid care work and sexual harassment, free cancer tests for Nigerian women, and fights against female genital mutilation in Sweden. ActionAid attributes the causes of





women abuse to beliefs, access to resources, and economics in those countries where this phenomenon is sadly common. Once again, the organization puts pressure on those nations' government, asking them to do more to help and provide for those who are in need. One example for this type of campaign is a commercial they filmed around the story of a Kenyan rape survivor, who used her traumatic experience to set up a helpline. That helpline now supports other survivors of sexual violence in Kenya and gets them access to justice.

Nowadays, ActionAid's advertisements are broadcasted on television and on radio (they even created an online radio station called Radio Kivuli), they pop-up on social medias and websites and are sent out via mail and e-mail.

### 5.3 The impact of COVID-19

During the COVID-19 outbreak, ActionAid fought the pandemic in all those countries in which it operates. They appointed women-led teams of activists to hand out food baskets, hygiene kits and masks to rural and urban communities, together with informing people on the steps to take to protect themselves and the others from the virus. Often, the food from the baskets comes from local smallholder farmers, who sell it to ActionAid, which then distributes it to the poor. This procedure also helps the smaller farmers, providing them with a significant source of income during these hard times. In January 2021, the numbers of this response against COVID-19 read that over 25 million people across 40 different countries were helped by the organization. Together with the increment of coronavirus cases, scenes of gender-based violence soared as well, in what the United Nations defines as a 'shadow pandemic'. In Bangladesh, women's shelters experienced a ten-times increase in reported cases of domestic violence since the beginning of the pandemic, while in Uganda, cases doubled compared to 2019. As we have seen for Save the Children as well, ActionAid also brings to attention the education problem that the pandemic created, with more and more kids being forced to drop out of school.



## 6 Save the Children vs ActionAid

Now that the two organizations are done being examined separately, it is time to compare them, focusing especially on the use of guilt appeal in their advertisements.

### 6.1 Differences and Similarities

First of all, let us look at structural differences and similarities between Save the Children and ActionAid. Starting from the differences, we can find one in the main focus of the two organizations. Save the Children's mission is that of protecting less fortunate children and enabling them to obtain better education, health, and justice. ActionAid's focus, on the other hand, is directed more toward protecting women from abuses, violence of any kind, and injustice. There are other small differences among the two, but they are definitely more similar than diverse. The most important trait that they have in common is of course being both International Non-Governmental Organizations that were founded in the United Kingdom to help those who are more in need. They both intervene in world countries where life conditions are not safe and provide people with the needs that all people have the rights to have.

### 6.2 Guilt Appeal in Advertisings

Here, the differences between the two NGOs are far more evident. In its advertisings, Save the Children has always used strong, shocking images to sensibelize the audience to the problems addressed. Starving kids, extremely poor living conditions, and cities in disrupt are the main subjects of STC's campaigns, which result in high levels of guilt felt by the audience. The message associated with the campaigns is designed to make people feel like they have the power to really do something to fix the situation, proposing restorative methods (often revolving around donating money) to lessen the sense of guilt.



On the other hand, ActionAid's advertisements are not as shocking as Save the Children's. They are often created based on real life stories and testimonials of survivors to make people realize that the problems described really happen in the world, and also to people just like them. In this way, the audience becomes attached to the story and feel the urge to help those people to let them know they understand and care.



## 7 Conclusion

In conclusion, marketing and advertising both evolved to a point where they obtained the capability to manipulate certain human feelings for different purposes. The feeling analyzed in this thesis, guilt, is one of the strongest and most insidious ones. If this emotion is struck correctly, it can force people to almost do anything in order to repair the harm that they believe to have caused, or to restore a sense of inner peace after breaking a certain moral code. However, when the attempt to generate guilt is too evident, it can lead to negative reactions from the audience, such as total indifference or worse, rejection. Among the ones that use guilt in the right way, there are the two big NGOs Save the Children and ActionAid. Even if in a slightly different way from one another, they found methods to properly induce the desired feelings off of their advertisements. Save the Children exploits shocking strong images of poverty, while ActionAid opened up stories of survivors to the public. Thanks to guilt appeals, they were able to grow and expand, providing help to always more people in need. Again, guilt is a double-edged weapon; it takes a thorough understanding of the customers' psyche to properly use it to influence purchasing patterns.



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