Tension and Energy: Components of Arousal and their Effect on Intention to Give

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ABSTRACT

In the current study we explore a multidimensional conceptualization of arousal to better understand the effect of donation appeals incorporating negative messages on intention to give. More specifically, an experiment is conducted to determine whether varying the level of message negativity has an impact on donor intentions to give where the mechanism by which intentions increase is examined. Using structural equation modeling, the relationship between message negativity, two dimensions of arousal (tension and energy) and intention to donate is estimated.

We collected data using the background of an on-campus fund raising program for abused Afghani women held at a mid-size, southern university. The university’s freshman reading program using the book “Three Cups of Tea” generated a student fund raising initiative to support an educational initiative in Afghanistan. We developed a simulated donation message to induce activation/arousal and then measured arousal and intention to give.

Two descriptions of the life of women in Afghanistan were developed as the stimuli messages for the experiment and presented to the subjects under the heading “EDUCATION FOR AFGHAN WOMEN.” The scenarios were developed from the descriptions in “Three Cups of Tea” to portray a negative and arousal-producing situation. Scenario Two was designed to produce a higher level of arousal with description of assaults with acid and self-immolation.

The findings suggest message negativity positively influences donor intentions to give via the generation of tension. While increased energy levels were also observed among participants exposed to more negative messages, this did not translate into greater donation intentions. The implications of these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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