

# A Model to Classify Television Social Advertisements According to the Use of Positive or Negative Appeals

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## 1 Positive and Negative Appeals in Social Marketing

Social Marketing consists on the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence behavior change with the goal of improving society and welfare (Andreasen 1994, 2003; Dann 2010; Kotler and Zaltman 1971; Smith 2000). There is evidence that interventions adopting social marketing have been effective in changing behaviors with expressive use and effectiveness in public health (Evans 2006; Evans and McCormack 2008; Gordon et al. 2006; Grier and Bryant 2005; Morris and Clarkson 2009; Stead et al. 2007; Walsh et al. 1993). One of the most important and effective tools of social marketing in public health has been social advertising, especially in television (Abroms and Maibach 2008; Block and Keller 1995; Della et al. 2008; Hastings et al. 1998).

Social marketing appeals may be expressed in a positive or negative way according to the intention of guiding behaviors. Positive appeals aim to show the direct benefits of a specific behavior, as an incentive to adopt it. Negative appeals describe unintended consequences of certain attitudes and behaviors, by creating psychic discomfort that leads to a disincentive or inhibition to behave in a certain way (Brennan and Binney 2010; Dillard and Anderson 2004). In order to inhibit people from continuing or adopting unhealthy behaviors, social marketing explores viewer reactions such as fear, guilt and shame with negative appeals such as threats (Boudewyns et al. 2013; Cauberghe et al. 2009; LaTour and Rotfeld 1997; Lewis et al. 2007; Ray and Wilkie 1970). On the contrary, positive appeals are based on humor, irony, hope, the exploration of benefits, and the use of celebrities or social models, who activate the coping response (Brennan and Binney 2010; Hastings et al. 2004; Lewis et al. 2007). A better understanding about the effectiveness of message appeals has long been a research challenge (Block and Keller 1995; Janis 1967; Lewis et al. 2007; Lewis et al. 2009) because the existing conclusions for the best direction – positive or negative – are not consistent (Block and Keller 1995; Brennan and Binney 2010; Dillard and Anderson 2004; Gardner and Wilhelm 1987; Hastings et al. 2004; Lewis et al. 2007; Lwin et al. 2010; Reeves et al. 1991). This topic is related to the self-efficacy understood by the receptor and efficacy levels of the message response (Block and Keller 1995; Manyiwa and Brennan 2012), as well as the motivation and involvement of the target, according to regulatory focus theory and the demographic factors that characterize it (Gygax et al. 2010; Higgins

1997; Jäger and Eisend 2013; Keller 2006; Keller and Lehmann 2008; Krisjanous et al. 2013; Yoon and Tinkham 2013).

It is crucial to analyze advertising appeals in order to understand the feelings evoked next to the receptors (Aaker et al. 1988). The research about social advertising involves several studies which require the analysis of the appeals used in advertisements which is a complex and subjective task. It is common to combine both positive and negative appeals in social ads, as the Ordered Protection Motivation Theory suggests (Eppright et al. 2003; Tanner et al. 1991) or the new tendency of combining fear with humor (Mukherjee and Dubé 2012; Yoon and Tinkham 2013). A methodological model to classify social advertisements according to their proportion use of positive and negative appeals might simplify the task and give a contribution to these research challenges.

## **2 A Model to Classify Social Advertisements**

The literature uses to classify advertisements by the simple identification of presence/no presence of appeals, following their definitions without any model for qualitative analysis (Cismaru et al. 2009; Paek et al. 2010). Another methodology found is to classify advertisements using a population inquiry with a Likert scale from one to seven - one being totally negative, seven totally positive and four a combination of both (Biener et al. 2004). We also note the use of qualitative interviews or focus group in order to understand if people consider a social advertisement as positive, negative or a combination of both appeals (Brennan and Binney 2010; Soscia et al. 2012). Existing methodologies are difficult and expensive to develop, because they need respondents for inquiries or interviews. They can also be subjective and poor because the results may vary according to the respondents' technical knowledge of marketing and communication, who may not analyze the diverse forms of communication, since positive and negative appeals may be presented in advertisements in verbal or non-verbal forms (Anderson et al. 2006; Barthes 1964; DeRosia 2008; Mick 1986).

This research suggests a model to classify social advertisements focusing on health according to their use of positive or negative appeals with content and discourse analysis. The model is built from the definitions of positive and negative appeals in social marketing found in the literature and from an exploratory research conducted with external judges. It proposes to resolve this absence in the literature and assist rigorous qualitative research on this topic.

## **3 Methods**

The authors started to build a first version of the model with the theoretical background of advertising creation and with the state of the art about the definitions of positive and negative appeals. That model was improved and strengthened