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# Giving to Be Seen: the Influence of Facebook Charitable Advertisements on Conspicuous Donation Behavior

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GIVING TO BE SEEN: THE INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK  
CHARITABLE ADVERTISEMENTS ON CONSPICUOUS  
DONATION BEHAVIOR

by

Lei Jia

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
in Media Studies

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

December 2013

## ABSTRACT

### GIVING TO BE SEEN: THE INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK CHARITY ADVERTISEMENTS ON CONSPICUOUS DONATION BEHAVIOR

by

Lei Jia

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013  
Under the Supervision of Xiaoxia Cao, Ph.D.

The arduous financial environments that nonprofit organizations face today motivate nonprofits to continuously search and leverage new communication platforms such as social media to approach a wider individual donor base. This thesis examines whether a Facebook charitable appeal promoting a donation via Facebook Gifts may attract Facebook users to give for conspicuousness (a public display of a donation behavior). Findings of this thesis revealed a gender difference in responses to the Facebook charitable appeal due to the gender difference in self-construals such that men were more likely to give via Facebook Gifts when the ad promoting the donation via Facebook Gifts signaled a lower level of popularity (with fewer “Likes”) whereas women tended to give via Facebook Gifts when the ad signaled a higher level of popularity (with more “Likes”). This thesis has theoretical contributions to existing literature on self-construals and prosocial behavior as well as significant practical implications for nonprofits to design compelling, effective charitable appeals to attract male and female social media users respectively.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Two years ago, I came to UWM's Media Studies graduate program with a goal of studying and conducting research on media effects. To be specific, I was interested in the roles that mass media play in strategic communications applied to various organizational settings (e.g., government, business, and nonprofits). With the research interests in mind, I took courses within and outside my department so as to earn a panoramic view of mass media and their impacts at both the societal and the organizational level. In spring 2012, I took a graduate seminar in nonprofit marketing management at UWM's business school. Other than teaching students the marketing principles that are applicable in nonprofit domain, the seminar also focused on social media strategies that are practical for nonprofits to fulfill their persuasion and fundraising goals. Since the first class in the snowy February of 2012, the seminar had been an eye-opening experience through which I learned American nonprofits as a mature, legitimate, and advanced societal sector that contributes to the development of a democratic, wealthy America. My experience with this course and other related research projects afterwards ultimately inspired me to choose nonprofit fundraising via social media as the topic of my master's thesis.

The majority of the students taking the seminar were MBA students working at different nonprofit enterprises in Wisconsin such as the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Children's Hospital in Wisconsin, Milwaukee Public Museum, and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Milwaukee. Through in-class discussion and off-class casual chat with my classmates, I learned that most American nonprofits today are operating in a

businesslike fashion so as to improve efficiency and attract individual donors to address the financial challenges. What my classmates concerned most was echoed with the emphasis of the course which was placed on the importance of social media platforms in nonprofits fundraising campaigns.

Although the seminar did not offer a cross-cultural perspective, as an international student, I could not help comparing Chinese nonprofits and their American counterparts in terms of social media strategies in fundraising. In China, as of 2010 less than 10% of Chinese nonprofit organizations had adopted certain type of social networking sites (7% of 227 nonprofits under research; Chen, 2010), revealing a sharp contrast with America where the social media adoption rate by nonprofits was almost 100% (Seo et al., 2009; Chen, 2010). In addition, Chinese nonprofits (e.g., Friends of Nature, a Chinese nonprofit organization promoting environmental protection) primarily use domestic social networking sites (such as Weibo, the Chinese Twitter, and RenRen, the Chinese Facebook) for informational and educational purposes only (Chen, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. American nonprofits, however, use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Youtube, and Flickr) more diversely such as building relationship, engaging in fundraising and volunteer recruitment, as well as branding.

Both Chinese and American nonprofit organizations exist to address social and environmental problems ranging from HIV prevention to the promotion of environment-friendly consumption. At the same time, both Chinese and American nonprofits are facing tremendous financial pressure to fulfill their persuasion goals. However, American nonprofits have already realized the significant influence that social media exert and

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<sup>1</sup> They use domestic social networking sites because the internationally-popular social media e.g., Facebook and Twitter are blocked in China.

started using social media to attract donations. On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, Chinese nonprofits seem reluctant to embrace social networking sites in their fundraising efforts. The existing discrepancy between the two countries in terms of nonprofit fundraising by leveraging new media technologies will not decrease shortly. However, I believe conducting research examining possible social media fundraising techniques even in the context of American nonprofits will at least provide Chinese nonprofits certain insights and references for their future fundraising efforts, which makes this thesis important in terms of its practical implications. In addition, although leveraging social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) for fundraising has become a national trend in the United States, research investigating such practice by nonprofits has been quite sparse. Hence, this thesis also fills in this gap.

Beyond the efforts of nonprofit organizations to promote social changes, American for-profit businesses are also actively involved in fundraising for social causes. Many companies across industries engage in cause-related marketing such as making a philanthropic commitment to a social cause with the participation of consumers (Strahilevitz, 1999; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). For example, in 2008 Starbucks donated 50 cents from the sale of each Starbucks RED beverage to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). In 2009 for every pink lipstick sold, Mirabella contributed \$1 to the City of Hope (a cancer research hospital in California, USA). It is undeniable that corporate donations have made meaningful contributions to American philanthropy; however, this thesis focuses on nonprofits' social media fundraising campaigns rather than the charity efforts of for-profit companies such as cause-related marketing efforts.

The remainder of this thesis proceeds as follows: in chapter two, I review the literature on the history of American charity and philanthropy, Facebook charitable appeals, the psychology of giving and conspicuous donation behavior, as well as BCOS (Benefits, Costs, Others, and self-assurance) behavior –change model. The review is followed by hypotheses tested in the thesis. In chapter three, I present the research method and test the proposed hypotheses. Results are detailed in chapter four. Finally, in chapter five I discuss research findings; highlight the theoretical contributions and practical implications of my findings for nonprofit marketers and practitioners. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Most nonprofit organizations today rely on external funding (e.g., government funding and private giving) to fulfill their goals and promote social change. Although charitable contributions totaled \$298 billion in 2011 (Giving USA, 2012), American philanthropy is still facing ongoing challenges and experiencing the second slowest recovery following any recession since 1971 (Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 2012). Today, most nonprofits perceive individuals as a crucial financial source not only because of the shrinkage of government and corporate funding (Stringfellow, 2012) but because of the significant charitable contributions (70% of \$298 billion in 2011) individuals make every year.

To solicit gifts, nonprofits have leveraged a variety of communication tools — ranging from advertising and personal persuasion to public media and public advocacy — to tactically approach citizens (Andreasen & Kotler, 2008). When selecting tools, nonprofits normally consider two factors: budget and the level of control. Paid advertising allows a flexible control over messages, the nature of the medium, and the demographics of target audiences, but it requires nonprofits to squeeze a budget from limited resources (Meyers, 1989). Unpaid advertising such as public service announcements (PSAs), on the other hand, sets nonprofits free from spending but gives them very limited control. For example, many PSAs are broadcasted after midnight when the audience is small (Andreasen & Kotler, 2008). When social media came along and started integrating into today's media landscape, many charities began turning to

social networking sites such as Facebook to solicit gifts (Glazer, 2012). Social media are not only free but also allow nonprofits to use grassroots approaches to attract individual donors particularly younger generations (Grant, 2012). In recent years, Facebook has become a popular fundraising vehicle for nonprofit organizations (Nah & Saxton, 2013), which raises an important question of how nonprofits can tactically leverage Facebook to solicit donations.

To increase the effectiveness of charity appeals, it is crucial to understand why people give (Andreasen & Kotler, 2008). To date, researchers across disciplines have uncovered a plethora of factors that are related to charitable giving (Bennett, 2002). These factors include social influences (Croson & Shang, 2011), media coverage and effects (e.g., Phil & Minty, 2008; Mihye, et al., 2012), demographic factors (e.g., Hodgkinson et al., 2005), community affiliations (Lohmann, 1992), self-identity (Strahilevitz & Meyers, 1998), personality traits (Bennett, 2002), values and moral identity (Reed, Aquino & Levy, 2007), emotional reactions elicited by messages such as sympathy (Small, Loewenstein & Slovic, 2007; Cryder & Loewenstein, 2008), the relief of guilt (Strahilevitz & Meyers, 1998; deHooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2007; Liu 2011), and happiness and personal satisfaction from giving (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999; 2003; Harbaugh, Mayr, & Burghart, 2007; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008). Psychologists and economists exploring human decision making have demonstrated that people in general are motivated to give by selfless motivations, namely pure altruism (e.g., to increase the welfare of people in need; Becker, 1974), selfish motivations, or both. Several behavioral economic models have developed to explain the selfish motives: (1) the warm-glow altruism (feeling emotional satisfaction from giving;

Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Croson & Shang, 2011); (2) conditional cooperation (giving personal resources to a public project provided that others in the group are willing to do the same; Fischbacher, Gächter, & Fehr, 2001; Croson & Shang, 2011); (3) competitive altruism (competing for status by acting to be seen as relatively more altruistic; Barclay & Willer, 2007; Griskevicius, 2010), (4) reciprocal altruism (helping with the expectation of being helped in return; Trivers, 1971; Griskevicius, 2007), and (5) personal utility (e.g. demonstrating wealth in a socially-accepted way, improving social standing and reputation, as well as gaining approval and enhancing self-image through giving; Rabin, 2002; Vesterlund, 2006; Batson, 2010; Meyvis, Bennett, & Oppenheimer, 2010).

For a charitable act primarily driven by a donor's self-interested concerns, recent research (Grace & Griffin, 2009) has proposed that such an act may be partly inspired by conspicuous compassion – ostentatious caring to promote visible displays of compassion to realize ego enhancement. Grace and Griffin (2009) assert that a new segment of donors— whose donation behavior is driven by the desire of self-presentation and the ostentatious display of caring—might have emerged. Giving out of conspicuous compassion is defined as conspicuous donation behavior (Grace & Griffin, 2006; 2009).

High visibility in behavior for self-enhancement, as is the nature of conspicuous donation, is consistent with the ingrained psychological and behavioral needs of narcissists who have a grandiose sense of self-importance and a strong motivation to bolster self-image through self-presentation (Campbell & Miller, 2011). In the United States, the narcissistic personality traits rose very quickly in the last two decades (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Research has suggested that the influence of commercial media (such as celebrity-endorsed advertising and reality TV shows) and the rapid

diffusion of social media (Facebook and Twitter) have contributed to the rise of narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Davidow, 2013). Social media users especially millennials and women have increasingly enjoy grandiose self-presentations and conspicuous exhibition of personal lives for ego-enhancement. Because of this, Facebook has become not only a handy fundraising tool for nonprofits but also a gathering place for people who may consider putting compassion on their “display to-do lists” and make a donation for the need of conspicuousness.

Although Facebook has become a vital part of nonprofit fundraisings, research examining charitable solicitations through new media especially social media has been quite sparse. Existing studies mainly focus on how to leverage organizational websites to attract donations. For example, Bennett (2009) found that people might give impulsively while browsing an organization’s website. Burt & Gibbons (2011) examined the effects of the design of web page donation links (donation buttons) on nonprofit agency transactional trust. To the best of my knowledge, no previous studies have empirically tested the effectiveness of Facebook charity appeals in eliciting donations from the perspective of psychology of giving in general and conspicuous donation in particular. Hence, this thesis is designed to not only fill in this gap but also shed light on the strategic practice of social media fundraising by nonprofit organizations.

#### *Why do people give? A historical sketch of American charity and philanthropy*

American charity and philanthropy, the practice of benevolence, can trace its roots back to the seventeenth century when the Puritans started setting foot in New England (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003). It is not until recent decades when philanthropy research was taken seriously that the two terms “charity” and “philanthropy” were clearly



distinguished (Payton & Moody, 2008). In the work *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003), historian Robert Gross asserted that “charity expresses an impulse to personal service; it engages individuals in concrete, direct action of compassion and connection to other people,” while “philanthropy represents a second mode of social service,” it aims to promote the progress of community and eliminating the problems of human society through the advance of knowledge rather than alleviating pain within the scope of individuals (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003). In other words, philanthropy documents the act of benevolence in a macro scope—abstract and institutional whereas charity represents humanitarianism in a micro level—concrete and individual. This conceptualization is echoed by Payton and Moody (2008) in their work *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*, where they conclude that philanthropy represents the entire spectrum of compassionate actions for the social good whereas charity is used more narrowly for acts to alleviate sufferings.

Inspired by the ideas of Christian love, American charity first manifested in small communities of colonial time through ameliorating the misfortune of local inhabitants by concrete acts such as providing a bowl of soup or a night’s shelter (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003). Charitable behavior at this time was personal and concrete. The rich in New England communities enjoyed giving because such deeds would win them credit through showing gratitude to God (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003). Charity was as important to the giver as to the recipient because the kindness was essential to express a giver’s religious faith (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003).

From early eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the growing role of the state, the tapering role of the church, and the escalating influence of commercial ethos transformed the practice of early charity in a fundamental way. People, at this period of time, gave not only to show religious beliefs but also to display social status and to gain emotional gratifications (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003). As American society became less communal and began to rely more on the rationales of state and law, early American charities developed into organized philanthropic institutions. This transition from the intuitive, individual charity to the systematic, institutionalized philanthropy demonstrated the expanding benevolent intention to solve deeper social problems.

In the nineteenth century, “scientific philanthropy” was officially introduced in America (Payton & Moody, 2008). The movement urged people to cease giving out of emotions and impulses and to start acting on systematic analysis, hard evidence, and detailed planning (Payton & Moody, 2008). This idea was consistent with modern philanthropic principles: building the capacity for the needy to live rather than merely giving. The “scientific philanthropy” movement also contributed to the inception and the development of “social work” in the United States in the nineteenth century, making philanthropy the third sector of American society following government and business (Payton & Moody, 2008).

Wealthy individuals who shaped the development of American philanthropy emerged in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century (e.g., Andrew Carnegie<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Carnegie (November 25, 1835 – August 11, 1919) was a Scottish-American industrialist who led the enormous expansion of the American steel industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; Andrew Carnegie made significant contributions to American philanthropy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Data borrowed from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew\\_Carnegie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Carnegie)).

and John. D. Rockefeller<sup>3</sup>). Specialized foundations and staffed, professionalized mechanisms were established within the philanthropic institutions to manage the business of giving. Education, within this period of time, became a major focus for business-generated philanthropy. One example is the University of Chicago which was revived, by the wealth of Rockefeller, from a bankrupt Baptist college (Payton & Moody, 2008). Cornell, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins were also established with the support of wealthy entrepreneurs (Payton & Moody, 2008).

In the view of Friedman and McGarvie (2003), a giver's intention is the "acid test" to discern a real philanthropist whose motives lie in establishing good societies through collective, missionary-like endeavors. Wyllie (1958) in his work *The Reputation of the American Philanthropist: A Historian's View* argues that (1) a philanthropist's "charity flowed from love and not from vanity or self-interest, (2) he accepted the dominant values and aspirations of his society and identified himself in a personal way with his city or the nation, and (3) he contributed something toward the solution of one or more of the significant problems of his age (p.216)." Although influential corporate leaders like Rockefeller were widely recognized as philanthropists, they can be hardly defined as real philanthropists according to Wyllie (1958)'s definition because of their benevolent ventures adulterated with their own economic or/and political intentions. Despite the controversy related to the motives of their benevolent behavior, they did play a prominent role in making philanthropy more scientific and strategic (Payton & Moody, 2008), shaping the development of today's business-like, professionally managed philanthropy.

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<sup>3</sup> John Davison Rockefeller (July 8, 1839 – May 23, 1937) was an American industrialist who founded the Standard Oil Company - a corporate giant dominated the oil industry and was the first great U.S. business trust. Rockefeller revolutionized the petroleum industry and defined the structure of modern philanthropy (Data borrowed from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_D.\\_Rockefeller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_D._Rockefeller)).

Since the late twentieth century, philanthropy has increased blurring the line between nonprofit sectors and for-profit enterprises (Payton & Moody, 2008). Philanthropic institutions have developed new fundraising strategies through the cooperation with for-profit businesses such as joint campaigns. Nonprofits borrowed, absorbed, and adapted newest methods, logics, and concepts from the business world but for serving philanthropic goals (Payton & Moody, 2008).

From the nineteenth century to today, throughout the transition from traditional charity to modern philanthropy, the role of individuals who spare their own resources to help the needy never diminished (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003), no matter what motives were behind the charitable act, selfless or selfish. Today, American philanthropy has developed into an industry worth almost 3 billion and more than 70% of the total contribution comes from individual donors (Giving USA, 2012) Studies have revealed that most people give today because of being asked and many people donate only when they are approached and requested, even though many of them complain about being asked too often (Payton & Moody, 2008). Research has also shown that people who attend religious services regularly, who had experiences in volunteering and giving as a youth, and who have generous parents are more likely to give more and more frequently (Payton & Moody, 2008). Recently, many donors across the United States form groups, namely “giving circles,” in which people pool their money together and jointly decide their gifts (Havens, O’ Herlihy, & Schervish, 2003). America continues seeing ordinary people making donations to the causes they care about or with whatever other reasons.

*Facebook, nonprofits, and charity appeals*

As a social medium, Facebook enables donors to find and share information about charities they deem worthy (Aaker & Smith, 2011). Hence, other than using traditional communication tools such as door-to-door and direct-mail to solicit donations, nonprofits today are increasingly turning to social media such as Facebook to fulfill their fundraising goals. As an interactive free medium, Facebook provides nonprofits big or small with the opportunity to build networks, engage in conversations with target audiences, and broaden communication impacts (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Compared with charity appeals distributed offline, those disseminated through social media have the advantages of reaching people with diverse characteristics —especially young people who are more inclined to donate online than their older counterparts (Goecks, Voida, Voida, & Mynatt, 2008). Reaching diverse audiences is of great importance for nonprofit organizations that mainly rely on individual donations for funding.

Other than providing a platform for nonprofit organizations to communicate with potential donors, Facebook also has APPs (applications) to support the “social good.” One example is Facebook’s “Gifts” application that embraces donations to nonprofits. Originally, Facebook Gifts allowed users to buy items (e.g., wine, birthday cookies or a Starbucks gift card) for a friend in their social networks on special occasions. The recently added charitable contribution feature of Facebook Gifts supports users who donate in others’ honor to any of the 11 nonprofit organizations with whom Facebook has partnerships (e.g., The American Red Cross, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, and Blue Star Families). After a maximum of a \$25 gift is given, the donation automatically

shows up on donor's and their Facebook friends' Timeline and News Feed for maximum exposure (Olanoff, 2012).

*The psychology of giving and conspicuous donation*

Most research examining donation motivations in psychology and behavioral marketing focuses on individuals spending for others' welfare, namely for public interests. Such research suggests that people donate for altruistic reasons with various variables coming into play particularly emotions (e.g., empathy & sympathy; Batson, 1987; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007; Decety & Meyer, 2008; Liu, 2011), feeling good and happy (Aaker & Akutsu, 2009; McGowan, 2006; Dunn et al., 2008). A growing body of literature has detailed strategic communication appeals to increase donation intentions such as asking for time instead of money first (Liu & Aaker, 2008), picturing sad facial expressions of victims (Small & Verrochi, 2009), making the victim vivid, identifiable, and concrete instead of unidentifiable or statistical (Slovic, 2007; Small & Simonsohn, 2008; Kogut & Ritov, 2011), depicting a single victim rather than a group of victims (Small et al., 2007), using nostalgia advertisements to increase social connections and attachment (Zhou, Wildschut, Sedikides, Shi, & Feng, 2012), designing charitable causes to which target audiences have a personal connection (Miller & Ratner, 1996; Wuthnow, 1991; Ratner, Zhao, & Clarke, 2011), framing victims as similar and proximate (Small, 2011), and asking donors who have folks suffering from the misfortune of the same kind (Smith, Faro & Burson, 2012; Small & Simonsohn, 2008).

Although scholars have documented that charitable behaviors are also driven by self-interests such as gaining self-esteem and approval, signaling status and wealth, as well as building advanced career opportunities for the donor (Strahilevitz, 2011), a

relatively small amount of research has explored the communication strategies boosting donation behavior driven by selfish motives. Research examining the causal relationship between giving and emotional well-being indicates that advertising the benefits of “self-interested giving” attracts consumers to experience feeling good from donations (Anik et al., 2011). Moreover, charitable giving and happiness run in a circular motion in which giving promotes happiness and happier people give more (Anik et al., 2011). These findings are consistent with the “feel-good” campaigns engaged by many organizations (e.g., a long-running Red Cross slogan “Feel Good, Give Blood” and the message used by the New York Philanthropic Advisory Service “Give a gift to charity and make a lot of people happy, including you;” Strahilevitz, 2011).

Under the umbrella of self-interested giving, Grace and Griffin (2006; 2009) introduced “conspicuous donation behavior,” the charitable behavior by people who weigh situational factors that offer a chance of display when being approached with a charitable request. To be specific, people who give for conspicuousness are driven by conspicuous compassion and request immediate satisfactions of conspicuously displaying their benevolence for the need of self-presentation and ego-enhancement (Grace & Griffin, 2006; Grace & Griffin, 2009).

The construct of conspicuous donation behavior is derived from West’s (2004) concept of conspicuous compassion which originated from Veblen’s (1912) conspicuous consumption theory (Grace & Griffin, 2009). Conspicuous consumption theory posits that people consume commodities as a method to enhance self-image and social standing. West (2004) borrowed this idea and proposed that a visible exhibition of compassion is also a mechanism of self-enhancement and developed the concept of conspicuous

compassion, defined as ostentatious caring to promote visible displays of compassion to realize ego enhancement (West 2004; Grace & Griffin 2009). West (2004) argues that modern compassions are all about feeling good not doing good, disclosing how selfish people have become but not how altruistic people are. Although this point of view sounds extreme, examples manifesting this idea are not rare in the real world (Grace & Griffin, 2009). For example, donors allow their names to be listed in newsletters (Kotler & Lee, 2005), and wear pink ribbons after a donation to breast cancer (Moore, 2008; Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013). To be clear, donations out of self-interested motives such as giving for conspicuousness are not necessarily inferior to those out of altruistic motives because the former, like the latter, can help people in need or promote social change.

Given that Facebook Gifts provides maximum publicity of one's donation behaviors among one's social networks through updates on News Feed and Timeline, Facebook users who are exposed to charity appeals (on News Feed) that solicit donations via Facebook Gifts might be driven by conspicuous compassion and ultimately engage in conspicuous donation behavior.

**H1:** Facebook users exposed to a charity advertisement that encourages donations through Facebook Gifts will be more likely to express donation intentions than their counterparts exposed to an advertisement that does not promote donations via Facebook Gifts.

### *BCOS behavioral model, bandwagon heuristic, and Likes on Facebook*

Why do people perform a behavior desired by a communicator? Researchers have come up with a model to understand factors that motivate desired behavioral change (Andreasen, 1995). The model suggests that individuals weigh four factors—benefits (B),



costs (C), others (O), and self-assurance (S)—for certain behavior to occur. Persuasive communicators have leveraged this model in various communication campaigns such as those promoting environmentally sustainable (Khan & Canny, 2008) and healthy behaviors (Roberson, 2011).

The BCOS model proposes that people frequently make a trade-off between benefits and costs (the B and C in the BCOS model) when exposed to persuasive messages. People understand that they need to pay some costs to get benefits in return (Andreasen, 1995; Andreasen & Kolter, 2008). When it comes to making donations for charities, a potential donor may consider the donation as a cost that he/she sacrifices. This becomes particularly salient in today's commercial society where people hold a mindset that giving to charities means one's resources are being taken away and the person could not fulfill his/her personal goals (Liu & Aaker, 2008; Liu, 2011). A potential donor might concentrate on the negative financial impact of giving when approached with a philanthropic request (Liu, 2011) and expect a possible return from a charitable act. Scholars have identified a host of ways in which donors earn benefits through charitable giving such as receiving tax breaks (Reece & Zieschang, 1985; 1989; Anik, Aknin, Norton, & Dunn, 2011), signaling personal wealth and status (Becker 1974; Glazer & Konrad, 1996; Griskevicius et al., 2007; Lara et al., 2011), and experiencing emotional well-being from helping (Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Thoit & Hewitt, 2001; Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008).

Aside from benefits and costs, the influence of others (O) also matters because others can affect one's behavior via interpersonal pressure and social norms (Andreasen, 1995). For example, Croson and Shang (2011) found that being informed about the

amount of money donated by other listeners of public radio could significantly influence how much one wanted to give. Similarly, Frey and Meier (2004) found that revealing the information about donation frequency of others influenced participants' propensity to give. These findings underscore the impact of social influence on conformity and behavior change in philanthropy and social marketing (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Croson & Shang, 2011).

One way for Facebook users to sense the opinions of others is through the "Like" function of Facebook. Research suggests that the "Like" function makes it possible for Facebook users as a collective to articulate their positive attitude toward items on the News Feed such as posts, pictures, news articles, and ads (Sundar, Oh, Kang, & Sreenivasan, 2013). Individual actions of "Like" aggregate and generate a number of "Like." The number indicates an overall popularity of or a perceived consensus on an item being rated, which indirectly represents others' opinion toward the item. The number of "Likes" is a cue that allows for evaluation of an item by triggering heuristics (Sunder, 2008; Sunda, Xu, & Oeldorf, 2009). Heuristics are simple decision rules that help people evaluate an item without laborious scrutiny of the item (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). The heuristics triggered by the "Likes" function on Facebook is bandwagon. A bandwagon heuristic induces information receivers to blindly rely on collective opinions of others to form judgments without adequate assessment of their own opinions (Sundar, 2008). One study examining news consumption in digital media environments suggests that news readers favor online news stories recommended by other users more than stories selected by editors because they rely on bandwagon heuristics to form their opinions (Sunder, 2008). Other research examining health knowledge sharing on Twitter

suggests that bandwagon heuristics (by manipulating the number of “Retweet” and the number of “Favorite”) are positively associated with one’s liking of certain content (Lee, 2011). Taken together, this thesis tests the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Bandwagon heuristics will influence Facebook users’ donation intention such that Facebook users exposed to a charity advertisement with more “Likes” —as opposed to fewer “Likes” —will be more likely to express donation intentions.

According to the aforementioned BCOS (i.e., benefits, costs, others and self-assurance) behavioral model, Facebook users likely consider the donation cost, potential benefits, as well as others’ attitudes toward the charity appeal when making donation decisions. Given that Facebook Gifts provides a mechanism of conspicuousness in charitable giving (displaying donation behavior on the Newsfeed and Timeline) and the number of Likes received by a charity ad allows potential donors to sense other’s attitudes toward the ad, the perception of others’ attitudes may interact with the perception of possible benefits of conspicuousness of one’s donation decisions.

**H3:** Facebook users will be more likely to donate when exposed to a charity advertisement with more “Likes” and promoting donations through Facebook Gifts than when exposed to an advertisement that is lack of either of the two features.

#### *The moderating role of narcissistic personality*

Individual differences matter in decision making (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004) and personality has been identified as a major variable that explains the variance in human behavior. The personality trait relevant to conspicuous donation behavior is narcissism. Narcissism is characterized by extraversion, self-assurance, and exhibitionism (e.g., Campbell & Miller, 2011). Narcissists have a grandiose sense of self-

importance, thinking themselves unique, special, and superior to others. They are eager for admiration and hypersensitive to criticism.

In fact, scholars have suggested that the American culture has fundamentally shifted from traditional values toward a tremendous focus on self-admiration and narcissism (Lasch, 1979; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In the work *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, historian Christopher Lasch (1979) argues that ordinary Americans were increasingly becoming pessimistic, insecure, and showing narcissistic tendencies in the twentieth century because of the loss of Vietnam war, the declining economy, and the fear of the depletion of natural resources (Lasch 1979; Scott, 2004). Lasch argues that since the 1960s with the loss of resilience and confidence in their ability to confront problems, Americans had focused more on self-serving and extensively relied on experts in everyday life (Lasch, 1979). He identified this self-serving tendency and the growing therapeutic climate as collective narcissism (Lasch, 1979; Scott 2004). To overcome and forget the depressive past, Americans resorted to self-centered preoccupations with an emphasis on material consumption and “living for the moment,” avoiding political involvement and concerns for social issues (Lasch, 1979; Scott, 2004). Americans were deprived of the confidence of living on their own and dependent on the expanding social service industry with specialists, experts, media and advertising constantly undermining people’s confidence, skills, and qualities of life so as to sell more services and products (Lasch, 1979). In response to the anxiety and a lack of the sense of security, Americans adopted narcissistic strategies to protect themselves. People became more self-conscious and were instigated by therapeutic experts to present themselves in a “healthy,” “self-admired,” and

“celebrity-like” way. The collective narcissism was created by modern social conditions with the evolution of a consumption-oriented, materialistic social environment.

Although Lasch’s analysis on collective narcissism back to 1970s lacks empirical evidence, social psychologists Jean Twenge and W. Keith Campbell (2009) demonstrated the relentless rise of narcissism in American culture in a more systematic way by combining both qualitative and quantitative investigations. Empirically, based on data from 37,000 college students, they observed a rising tendency of narcissism from 1980s to the present with the NPD (Narcissism Personality Disorder) scores rising significantly faster in 2000s than in 1990s and previous decades (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Even non-narcissistic people (low in NPD) today are inundated with the escalating emphasis on material wealth, physical appearance, and attention seeking in modern American society (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). They argued that American culture has transformed from traditional values (e.g. demonstrating one’s worth through hard work in the eyes of God and others, and self-reliance) to the one promoting self-admiration, self-centeredness, and narcissism. Fewer people valued self-admiration in the first half of the twentieth century, but movements of individual rights and liberties since 1960s, a transformed culture of self-admiration, the boost of overconsumption and materialism, celebrity culture and media have forged a narcissistic America (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Arguably, the rises of the Internet and social media which promote self-presentation and self-expression have made things worse (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Social media such as Facebook provide a gateway for narcissists engaging in self-enhancement through self-presentation and self-portraits. Research has suggested that the increasing tendency of narcissism in American society is also correlated with the massive

diffusion of social networking sites (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Davidow, 2013). Today more and more Facebook users care a great deal about the aesthetic qualities of the pictures they uploaded, number of friends they have, and what kind of achievements they could present within their online networks (Campbell & Miller, 2011). Given that narcissists have a strong motivation to maintain, bolster, and enhance a positive self-view through self-presentation (Campbell, Goodie & Foster, 2004; Robins & John, 1997; Campbell & Miller, 2011), individuals with a narcissistic personality may be more likely to engage in conspicuous donation than those with a low narcissistic tendency. Consequently, a donation method with a conspicuousness mechanism (e.g., giving through Facebook Gifts) may satisfy a narcissist's needs for self-presentation and ego-enhancement through displaying their passions.

**H4:** The expected positive effect of a charity advertisement promoting donations via Facebook Gifts on donation intentions (H1) should be more evident among Facebook users high in narcissistic personality traits than among those low in the traits.

*Gender difference in self-enhancement strategies: the moderating role of self-construals*

Psychology and behavior research has shown a plethora of differences between men and women in social behaviors such as helping others and self-enhancement (Cross & Madson, 1997). Many of these observed differences can be explained by the gender difference in self-construals (Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Surrey, 1991; Cross & Madson, 1997). The self-construal refers to the construction of a psychologically meaningful self (Hardin, Leong, & Bhagwat, 2004; Guimond et. al, 2006). Markus and Kitayama (1991) identified two primary types of self-construals: the independent and interdependent self-

construals. Individuals with an independent self-construal consider the self as “separate from others.” The primary goals of these individuals are to maintain a sense of autonomy (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Cross & Madson, 1997). In contrast the interdependent self-construal refers to the self as “connected to others.” The principal goals of individuals with an interdependent self-construal are to develop and maintain relationships with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Cross & Madson, 1997). In the United States, men tend to develop and maintain a more independent self-construal, whereas women are more likely to form a more interdependent self-construal. More recent studies have largely supported this assertion (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002; Kashima et al., 2004; Guimond et al., 2006).

The gender difference in self-construal is shaped by gendered social interactions, gender-typed social roles, and gender-related expectations (Damon & Hart, 1988; Eagly, 1987; M. Rosenberg, 1981; Cross & Madson, 1997). For example, men are expected to be independent whereas women are expected to be relational. People frequently cater to and comply with these gendered social norms and expectations (Cross & Madson, 1997). Consequently, men and women tend to internalize gendered social roles and expectations and develop different self-construals such that men compared to women are more likely to have independent self-construal whereas women are more likely to have interdependent self-construal.

Given the gender difference in self-construals men and women hold different information processing and self-enhancement strategies, particularly in public situations (Blaine & Crocker, 1993; Harter, 1993; Cross & Madson, 1997). Specifically, men are more likely to attend closely to information that manifests their uniqueness or

individuality; in contrast, women are expected to pay close attention to information relevant to connectedness and social interaction (Cross & Madson, 1997). In terms of self-enhancement to reinforce a positive view of the self, men may conduct social comparisons and would be more likely to engage in self-enhancement under the context in which one's unique attributes and distinguishing characteristics become apparent in the presence of others (Cross & Madson, 1997). When the sense of autonomy or the ability to express one's characteristics and attributes are lost, men would perceive that their self-esteem and uniqueness are threatened. In other words, men in general tend to maintain a positive view of themselves by displaying and signaling attributes that promote a sense of uniqueness and individuality in public (Cross & Madson, 1997). In contrast, women in general are inclined to self-promote through strategies that allow them to connect with others (e.g., complying with others' opinions/wills; Cross & Madson, 1997). This gender difference in self-enhancement strategies is also due to gender difference in sources of self-esteem such that men's self-esteem in part derives from their ability to be independent from others, whereas women's are partly from their ability to maintain connections with others (Cross & Madson, 1997).

Applying the gender difference in self-enhancement strategies to the context of the present study suggests that men and women will use different self-enhancement strategies when exposed to a charity appeal on Facebook that suggests a conspicuous donation mechanism (i.e., donating via Facebook Gifts). Specifically, women (with a more interdependent self-construal) will be more likely to engage in self-enhancement — showing donation intention—when approached by an ad with a significant number of “Likes,” because being compliant with others' opinions enhances relatedness,



connectedness, and belonging to the group. On the contrary, men will be less likely to show donation intentions when exposed to the ad with too many “Likes,” because “jumping on the public-opinion bandwagon” with the presence of others will jeopardize their sense of uniqueness, individuality, and autonomy. Hence, I predict that there will be three-way interaction among conspicuousness of the donation behavior, levels of Likes, and potential donor’s gender on donation intentions.

**H5:** Female Facebook users will be more likely to engage in conspicuous donation via Facebook Gifts when exposed to the ad with many “Likes,” while male Facebook users will be more likely to donate via Facebook Gifts when the ad has a few “Likes.”

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHOD

#### *Method*

To test the proposed hypotheses, an online experiment was conducted via Qualtrics, an online survey tool. The experiment used a 2 (donation method: conspicuous vs. inconspicuous)  $\times$  2 (level of “Likes:” high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (participants’ levels of narcissism: high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (participants’ gender: male vs. female) between-subject design.

#### *Stimuli*

Participants were exposed to an advertisement sponsored by St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, a real nonprofit organization. The portrait-shaped ad contained four parts. On the top was a banner displaying St. Jude’s slogan: *Finding Cures, Saving Children*. Right below the banner showed a solicitation message: *Your gift helps St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital continue finding cures and saving children*. A recommended donation method was displayed right below the solicitation message. Finally, at the bottom of the ad was St. Jude’s logo and how many Facebook users had “Liked” the ad.

To manipulate donation methods, the ad in Facebook Gifts (i.e., conspicuousness) condition asked participants to make a donation to St. Jude via Facebook Gifts. Specifically, the ad stated that *“Make a donation to St. Jude through Facebook Gifts. Your Philanthropic act will be published on your Facebook Timeline and Newsfeed right away. Your kindness deserves to be known!”* The ad promoting an inconspicuous donation method asked participants to make a donation via St. Jude’s website by saying that

“*Donate now via St. Jude’s website!*” In the conditions with more Likes, the ad had “118,110 Likes” whereas in the conditions with fewer Likes, the ad had “2 Likes.”

### *Participants*

The 200 participants recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in this study in exchange for a \$0.70 incentive had a mean age of 27.66 ( $SD = 6.04$ ). Forty-one percent of them were male and 59% were female. Regarding race, the majority of participants were white Americans (74.3%), followed by African Americans (9.5%), Hispanic Americans (8.2%), and Asian Americans (8.0%).

### *Procedures*

Participants were first asked to indicate whether they had used Facebook (owned an account and used it on a regular basis) and whether they had any associations with St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital (i.e., family member(s) or friends who had been treated by St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital or work(ed) at St. Jude). These two screen questions served to lower the bias and increase the validity of the data. Non-Facebook users ( $N = 3$ ) and participants who had associations with St. Jude’s ( $N = 12$ ) were ruled out from the study without receiving the \$0.70 incentive. After passing the screen questions, participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. All participants first answered questions on gender, age, race, narcissistic personality traits, Facebook engagement with nonprofits, and past experience with Facebook Gifts. After that, participants read a charity advertisement (including suggested donation method and number of “Likes”) and answered questions on donation intentions, and conspicuous donation behavior. Finally, participants answered questions about general Facebook-

using behavior (e.g., years of use and number of friends), previous donation behavior, and income.

### *Measures*

*Facebook using behavior* was captured by questions in two categories: users' Facebook characteristics and Facebook Gifts/nonprofit organization engagement. Participants were asked to report their Facebook characteristics by answering three multiple-choice questions measuring "years have had Facebook," "frequency of logging in," and "frequency of reading Newsfeed," and one text-entry question measuring "number of Facebook friends." Facebook Gifts/nonprofit organization engagement was measured by five multiple-choice questions such as "Have you followed a nonprofit organization on Facebook?" and "Have you seen a charity appeal on your Facebook Newsfeed (See the full questionnaire in the appendix)." Descriptive statistics were used to delineate participants' Facebook using behavior.

*Conspicuous donation behavior* was captured by the scale developed by Grace and Griff (2009). The measure includes two subscales: self-orientated conspicuous donation behavior and other-orientated conspicuous donation behavior. Both were used in this study. Participants were asked to rate, on a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree), the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with seven statements such as "If I make a donation through Facebook Gifts it makes me feel like I will make a difference," "It will increase my self-respect if I make a donation through Facebook Gifts from where my friends could see my kindness," " Having my donation published on my Facebook Timeline and Newsfeed will make me feel good," and "I would consider donation through Facebook Gifts because I get to show something for my kindness. Each

participant's score on the eight items was averaged ( $M = 3.03$ ;  $SD = 1.52$ ; *Cronbach's Alpha* = .94).

*Narcissism* was captured by The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1988). As a standard measure of subclinical narcissism, the NPI contains 40 pairs of forced-choice items. Each pair of the statements contains one indicating high in narcissism and one indicating low in narcissism (e.g., "Sometimes I tell good stories" vs. "Everybody likes my stories"). Participants selected one that is closer to their own feelings about themselves. A participant's score on the NPI is the number of high-narcissism items he/she endorsed. Each participants' score on the 40 items were summed. High NPI scores indicate higher levels of narcissism. Participants in the present study reported a mean NPI score of 14.39 ( $SD = 7.79$ ; *Cronbach's Alpha* = .87).

*Intentions to donate* was captured by one question asking participants to rate, on a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree; 7= strongly agree), the extent to which they were willing to make a donation to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to help children with life-threatening diseases.

*Manipulation check* was captured by four questions asking participants to rate, on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree), the extent to which they had identified the donation method recommended and the number of "Like" the ad carried. Two questions checked the manipulation of conspicuousness such as "The ad asks me to make a donation to St Jude Hospital through Facebook Gifts" and "The ad asks me to make a donation through St Jude's website" showed a strong correlation ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Responses to the second question were reverse coded (e.g., 1=7) if participants were in the conspicuous condition. In contrast, responses to the first question were

reversed coded if participants were assigned to the inconspicuous condition. The Two questions checked the manipulation of number of “Like” such as “A significant amount of people on Facebook has ‘Liked’ this ad” and “A few people on Facebook have “Liked” this ad” also significantly correlated ( $r = .44, p < .001$ ). Similarly, responses to the second question were reversed coded if participants were in the low level of “Like” condition; responses to the first question were reversed coded in participants were assigned to the high level of “Like” condition.

#### *Analytical procedure*

First, descriptive statistics were used to delineate participants’ Facebook-using behavior. After that, a one-way ANOVA was performed to check the manipulation (manipulation conditions as independent variable and manipulation check questions as dependent variable). Then, a 2 (donation method: conspicuous vs. inconspicuous)  $\times$  2 (level of “Likes:” high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (level of narcissism: high vs. low) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then conducted to test the effect of conspicuousness of the donation methods, the number of “Likes,” and narcissism on participants’ donation intentions. After that, I performed a 2 (donation method: conspicuous vs. inconspicuous)  $\times$  2 (level of “Likes:” high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (gender: male vs. female) analysis of variance (ANOVA) to investigate whether participants’ gender would influence the interaction effect of donation methods and the levels of “Likes” on donation intention. Finally, a bi-variate correlation examining the correlation between donation intention and conspicuous donation behavior was performed with conspicuous donation behavior as independent variable and donation intention as dependent variable.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### *Descriptive of Facebook-using behaviors*

Table 1 presents an overview of participants' behavior on Facebook. On average, participants had 255 Facebook friends, had been using Facebook for slightly more than four years, 76% of participants logged onto Facebook several times a day, and 68% of participants checked the Newsfeed more than once a day. Table 2 depicts an overview of participants' engagement with nonprofit organizations on Facebook and their Facebook Gifts activities. In general, more than half (58%) of the participants report having followed a nonprofit organization on Facebook and 44% of the respondents have seen a charity appeal on Facebook. For Facebook Gifts activities, the majority (80%) of the respondents has heard of Facebook Gifts, but only very a few of them have sent or received a gift via Facebook Gifts (7% and 5% respectively).

Table 1

#### *Overview of Facebook Using Behavior*

Users' Facebook Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Number of Facebook Friends	255.82	259.98	3.00-1500.00
Years have had Facebook	4.26	1.07	0.50-7.00
Number of times logging onto Facebook per day*	2.51	1.09	1.00-4.00
Frequency of checking Facebook Newsfeeds**	1.71	1.15	1.00-6.00

Note. \*This item is based on a 4-point scale where "1" indicated *often* and "4" indicated *never*. \*\* This item is based on a 7-point scale where "1" indicated *several times a day* and "7" indicated *never* (no participants checked "7").

Table 2

*Overview of Engagement with nonprofits via Facebook and the Use of Facebook Gifts*

Questions	Yes	No
Have you followed a nonprofit organization on Facebook?	58%	42%
Have you seen a charity appeal on your Facebook Newsfeed?	44%	56%
Have you heard of Facebook Gifts?	80%	20%
Have you sent a gift via Facebook Gifts?	7%	93%
Have you receive a present through Facebook Gifts?	5%	95%

*Manipulation checks*

As expected, compared to participants reading the ad promoting donations via St. Jude's website, those exposed to the ad promoting donations via Facebook Gifts were more likely to agree that the ad suggested making a donation via Facebook Gifts ( $M_{\text{Facebook Gifts}} = 10.70$ ,  $SE = 1.56$ ;  $M_{\text{St. Jude's website}} = 6.68$ ,  $SE = 1.68$ ;  $F(1, 146) = 84.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and less inclined to agree that the recommended donation method was through St. Jude's website. Respondents in the high level of "Like" as opposed to the low level of "Like" conditions were likely to agree that a significant amount of people on Facebook had "Liked" the ad ( $M_{\text{high level of "Like"}} = 9.81$ ,  $SE = 1.60$  vs.  $M_{\text{low level of "Like"}} = 6.16$ ,  $SE = 1.69$ ;  $F(1, 146) = 70.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and disagree that the ad had only a few "Likes."

*Donation intention*

The 2 (donation method: conspicuous vs. inconspicuous)  $\times$  2 (level of "Like": high vs. low)  $\times$  2 (level of narcissism: high vs. low) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on donation intention did not show a significant main effect of conspicuous donation method ( $F(1, 140) = .25$ ,  $p = .62$ ,  $\text{partial } \eta^2 = .002$ ), as such Hypothesis 1 (H1) "Facebook users



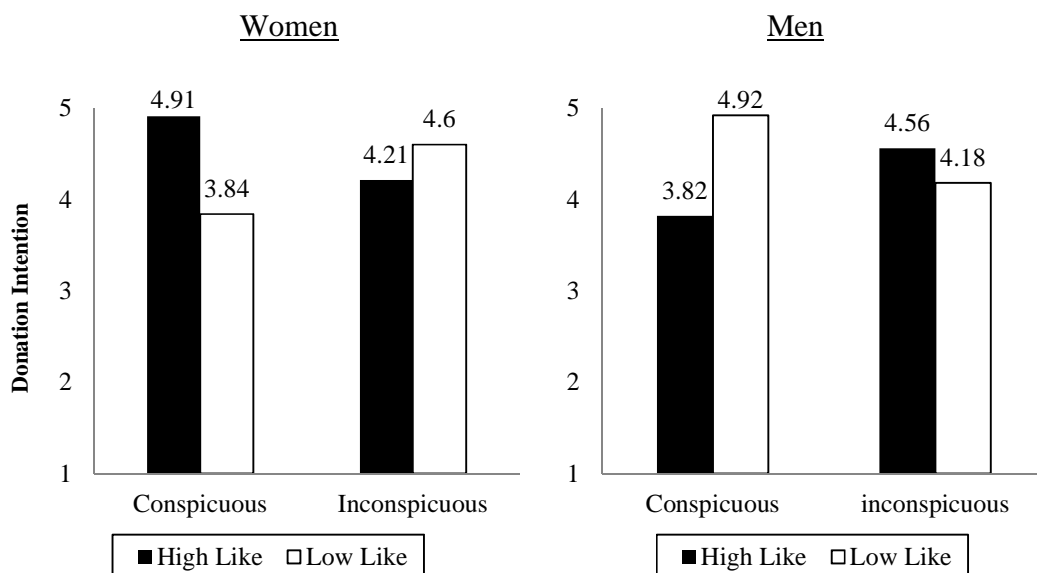
exposed to a charity advertisement that encourages donations through Facebook Gifts will be more likely to express donation intentions than their counterparts exposed to an advertisement that does not promote donations via Facebook Gifts” was not supported. Second, the main effect of level of “Like” on donation intention was not significant ( $F(1, 140) = .00, p = .99, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$ ), thus Hypothesis 2 (H2) “Bandwagon heuristics will influence Facebook users’ donation intention such that Facebook users exposed to a charity advertisement with more “Likes” —as opposed to fewer “Likes” —will be more likely to express donation intentions” was not supported. The analysis did not show a two-way interaction between donation method and the level of “Like ( $F(1, 140) = .80, p = .37, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .006$ )” or a two-way interaction of narcissism and donation method ( $F(1, 140) = .59, p = .44, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .004$ ). These findings indicate that the intention to donate did not vary only depending upon the interaction of donation method and level of “Like.” Also, the interaction of donation method and number of “Like” did not vary depending upon narcissism. Thus, both Hypothesis 3 (H3) “Facebook users will be more likely to donate when exposed to a charity advertisement with more “Likes” and promoting donations through Facebook Gifts than when exposed to an advertisement that is lack of either of the two features” and Hypothesis 4 (H4) “The expected positive effect of a charity advertisement promoting donations via Facebook Gifts on donation intentions should be more evident among Facebook users high in narcissistic personality traits than among those low in the traits” were not supported.

The analysis, however, revealed a significant three-way interaction of donation methods, number of likes and participants’ gender on donation intention ( $F(1, 140) = 8.85, p < .005, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .059$ ). Further analyses showed a significant two-way

interaction occurred between donation method and level of “Like” ( $F(1, 140) = 5.37, p < .03$ ) among female participants. Follow-up contrasts indicated that in conspicuous condition (a donation via Facebook Gifts), female participants reported significant higher donation intentions when the ad has a higher level as opposed to a lower level of “Likes” ( $M_{\text{highlevelof“Like”}} = 4.90$  vs.  $M_{\text{lowlevelof“Like”}} = 3.84; F(1, 140) = 5.43, p < .03$ .)” For males, a significant two-way interaction between donation method and level of “Like” also occurred ( $F(1, 140) = 3.93, p = .05$ ) such that in the conspicuous condition (a donation via Facebook Gifts), male participants reported a significant higher donation intention when exposed to the ad with a low level as opposed to a higher level of “Likes” ( $M_{\text{lowlevelof“Like”}} = 4.91$  vs.  $M_{\text{highlevelof“Like”}} = 3.82; F(1, 140) = 3.93, p = .05$ .)” No significant two-way interaction occurred between the level of “Like” and gender ( $F(1, 140) = 1.29, p > .05$ ) in inconspicuous condition. The results supported Hypothesis 5 (H5) that men would be more likely to donate in conspicuous condition (via Facebook Gifts) when the ad has only a few “Likes,” on the contrary, women would be more likely to donate via Facebook Gifts when the ad has many people “Liked.”

Figure 1

*The influence of the conspicuous donation method on women's and men's intention to donate depending on the number of Likes received by the advertisement*



#### *Conspicuous donation behavior*

For participants exposed to the ad promoting a donation through Facebook Gifts, a significant, strong correlation between donation intention and conspicuous donation behavior was found ( $r = .44, p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that participants under the conspicuous appeal condition who showed intentions to donate might be primarily inspired by the need of conspicuously displaying their compassion, generosity, and kindness. In addition, although no significant interaction effects of narcissism and donation method were found, a regression analysis (narcissistic personality traits as independent variable and conspicuous donation behavior as dependent variable) revealed a strong correlation between narcissism and conspicuous donation behavior ( $\beta = .32, t = 2.76, p < .01$ ). The finding indicated that if to give, people with narcissistic personality traits would be more likely to give to be seen.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

Most nonprofit organizations rely on external funding to promote social change, and more than 70% of annual charitable giving in the United States comes from individuals (Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, 2012). Consequently, leveraging communication tools such as social media to tactically approach individual donors has become pivotal in the fundraising endeavors. Facebook, with its two-way communication and multi-demographic user base, has been increasingly adopted by nonprofit organizations for building relationships and fundraising. This thesis explored how nonprofit organization could effectively harness Facebook to attractive individual donors.

The results did not show a main effect of conspicuous donation method on donation intention (H1). This suggests that a mechanism promoting conspicuousness in donation via Facebook may not affect have a discernible effect on potential donors as a whole and across contexts. Its effectiveness may vary depending upon other factors (e.g., donor's gender, number of "Likes" an ad received). In fact, the motives behind a donation behavior may be quite complex — selfless, self-interested, and sometimes both. Certain people will not donate anyhow even when offered incentives such as recognition and conspicuousness in donation. On the other hand, many people would like to give regardless of recognition (Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013). Findings of this thesis suggest that promoting conspicuousness in donation may not have a sweeping effect on people's donation behavior and its effect likely vary depending on other factors.

Second, the analysis failed to reveal a main effect of bandwagon heuristic (indicated by a high level of “Likes” received by the ad, H2) on intention to donate even though previous studies (e.g., Sunder, 2008; Lee, 2010) have found that a higher level of bandwagon cue links to a higher level of liking of certain content on digital media. This discrepancy may be due to the difference in study context in that previous research examined the effect of Likes on people’s evaluation of an item whereas the present study examined the effect of Likes on donation behavior. In addition, the expected main effect of Likes may vary depending upon other factors. For example, when taking into account the gender of message recipients and donation methods, my analyses found that the level of “Like” had a negative effect on donation intentions among male participants but a positive effect among female participants in the conspicuous donation method condition. These divergent effects of Likes among male and female participants may have canceled out each other which resulted in an insignificant main effect of the levels of “Like.”

Third, the analyses did not find the predicted interaction effect between conspicuousness and the number of “Like” on donation intentions (H3); nor did they showed the anticipated interaction effect of donation methods and narcissism (H4). Because the current literature suggests that younger generations may be more likely than older generations to engage in grandiose self-presentation on social media (i.e., conspicuous donation via Facebook) due to a relatively stronger tendency of narcissism among the former group (Twenge & Campell, 2009), someone may suspect that the predicted interaction between donation methods and narcissism on donation intentions may be observe if my analyses focused on younger participants (i.e., under the age of 30).

However, follow-up analyses showed that the interaction effect of donation methods and narcissism did not vary depending upon participants' age.

Another possible explanation for my failure to find support for these hypotheses (i.e., H1, H2, H3, and H4) is that this study relied on a convenience sample recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk—an internet marketplace where researchers could use human intelligence to perform tasks (e.g., answering surveys)—to test the hypotheses. Although the final pool of subjects recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk was more diverse than a typical student sample, the subjects are still not representative of American adults in many aspects. For example, they are more likely than average American to be adapted in online survey, tech-savvy, and motivated to earn money through the exchange of mental work. The unrepresentativeness of the sample might have contributed to the negative findings of Hypothesis 1, 2, 3 and 4. As such, future research could reexamine these hypotheses using a more representative sample.

As predicted this thesis found a gender difference in response to a Facebook appeal promoting a conspicuous donation method (i.e., donations via Facebook Gifts; H5). Specifically, both men and women are more likely to show donation intention when exposed to the ad promoting a donation via Facebook Gifts (a conspicuous donation method) than the ad suggesting a donation via St. Jude's website (an inconspicuous donation method). However, this choice of donation through Facebook Gifts depends upon the level of popularity the conspicuous appeal signals (the number of "Like" the ad carries). Male Facebook users tended to donate when conspicuous appeal suggested that the ad had only a few "Likes;" in contrast, female Facebook users were inclined to give when the ad promoting a donation via Facebook Gifts had more Likes. This finding

indicate a gender difference in reactions to heuristic cues (e.g., number of “Like”) in social media, which contributes to a better understanding of the effect of heuristic cue in social media.

Previous research (e.g. Sundar, 2008) asserts that a higher level of heuristic cue in social media help social media users form a positive, favorable attitude toward the mediated messages. The finding of this thesis indicates that the effects of a higher level of heuristic cues might be quite pronounced in private and anonymous settings for both men and women without publicly demonstrating one’s own attitude, but this effect may be attenuated for men in public situations such as signaling personal opinions and making a donation on Facebook. A significant amount of “Likes” on Facebook might not be always persuasive, particularly for male Facebook users.

This gender difference in reactions to “the number of Likes” supports the assertions that men and women have different self-presentation strategies due to their differences in self-construals. Specifically, men (with a more independent in self-construal) tend to engage in self-enhancement in public when their sense of uniqueness, individuality, and autonomy can be displayed. For this reason, this study only found a positive effect of the conspicuousness of donation methods on male participants’ donation intention when the ad received fewer as opposed to more Likes. Complying with a request (i.e., a Facebook ad in the case) with a lower level of popularity may have allowed male participants to boost their sense of uniqueness. Given that women (with a more interdependent self-construal) are more inclined to engage in self-promotion when their sense of connectedness and relationship can be achieved, this thesis found that a positive effect of the conspicuousness of donation methods on female participants’ donation intention

when the ad received more as opposed to fewer Likes. For female participants, engaging in a behavior promoted by an ad with a higher level of popularity may increase their sense of connectedness to others. As such, findings of this thesis not only support the existing theory but also shed light on the effect of the gender difference in self-construals on self-presentation strategies in social media environment.

Moreover, the finding of a strong correlation between donation intentions and conspicuous donation behavior suggests that both men and women may consider donating through Facebook Gifts, corroborating the notion that people may give for vanity, ego, self-enhancement, and feeling good about themselves (Anik et al., 2010). Beyond this, the strong correlation between narcissism and conspicuous donation behavior reveals that people with narcissistic personality traits may donate via a conspicuous method to satisfy their ingrained needs of grandiose exhibition. Although narcissists are less likely to empathize with people in need and reluctant to offer help (Campbell & Miller, 2011), this finding suggests that a conspicuous donation method (e.g., donations via Facebook Gifts) may attract them to give to be seen. However, I believe that there may be other, unexamined potential variables that can work in revealing a strong, significant interaction effect between narcissism and conspicuousness. For example, narcissists might be strongly attractive to stylish, fashionably-designed advertisements and the so-called halo effect or “what is beautiful is good” may be quite salient among the narcissist group. Hence future research may examine whether a stylish, aesthetic charitable appeal promoting conspicuousness in donation may induce narcissists to respond to the appeal positively.



Finally, the findings of this thesis contribute to a better understanding of the link between prosocial behavior and public recognition. Although some studies have been conducted to examine similar concepts such as “public philanthropy” and “blatant benevolence (Griskevicius, 2007; 2010),” this research differs from these studies in theorization and implications. Public philanthropy was developed based on costly signaling theory. The theory suggests that to signal their ability and status, people may conspicuously display resources and generosity through costly sacrificing or wasting one’s resources (e.g., time, energy and money; Griskevicius, 2007; 2010). The construct of conspicuous donation behavior, however, does not highlight costly sacrificing or wasting. For example, a donation via Facebook Gifts (the behavior tested in this study) can hardly be considered as costly sacrifice for most of people. Conspicuous donation behavior in this sense is applicable to a broader scope in understanding giving out of conspicuousness for self-enhancement. On the other hand, the concept of blatant benevolence refers to prosocial behavior that is costly in terms of time and effort, but not monetary. Thus, blatant benevolence also differs from conspicuous donation behavior (Griskevicius, 2007). The findings of this thesis extend the current literature on donation out of recognition and contribute to better understanding of the link between prosocial behavior and publicity.

In addition to the theoretical implications, the findings of this thesis also have significant practical implication for nonprofits to design and carry out effective fundraising campaigns. To begin with, the findings suggest that nonprofits can link people’s intrinsic self-interested motives to conspicuous, feel-good fundraising programs to attract individual donors. One way to increase the conspicuousness (or public

recognition) of one's donation behavior is to utilize social media tools such as Facebook, especially given the relatively low costs associated with such media. Other than monetary donation, nonprofits could also strategically engage in volunteer recruiting and management.

With regard to the gender difference in response to the Facebook charitable appeal, Marketing and PR/advertising managers of nonprofits could design different charitable donation solicitations targeting male and female Facebook users respectively. For female, managers could foster a higher level of popularity of a charitable ad being circulated online by encouraging Facebook users who have already "Liked" the organization's Facebook page to like the advertisement. For male, managers could first design a different version of donation appeal (with the same or different causes) and send customized private messages to male Facebook users who have "Liked" the organization to solicit donation. This procedure is to ensure a perceived uniqueness by men.

However, providing incentives for people to give as suggested in this research might be controversial. Titmuss (1970) argued that prosocial behavior such as paying for blood donations will undermine the social utility of act, degrading charitable acts which are within social realm into economic realm. Offering selfish, commoditized incentives for charity might suffer the danger of jeopardizing people's intrinsic motives to do well (Anik et al., 2010). But this controversy might be mollified out of the domain of nonprofits. Many American for-profit businesses across industries have implemented campaigns that link sales to various social causes such as cancer research and the poor in need, namely linking the company's donation directly to consumers' buying behavior (Strahilevitz, 1999; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). Although this thesis focuses on

nonprofit fundraising tactics, findings of current research could apply to commercial companies. For example adding incentives such as conspicuousness in their cause-related marketing campaigns to increase sales and at the same time contribute more to social causes.

Admittedly, this study had some limitations. Aside from the aforementioned sample issue (convenience sample), this thesis measured participants' donation intentions instead of the actual donation behavior. Even though, decades of psychology research has shown that behavior intention is a strong predictor of actual behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Petty & Cacioppo, 1996; Griskevicius, 2007), future research may test whether the findings presented here extend to actual donation behavior.

Moreover, this study only considered the effect the heuristic of the number of "Likes" received even though social media such as Facebook provide many other cues that users can rely on to make decisions (e.g., the number of "share," and the comments left by other users). These cues may work together to help Facebook users form their opinion. Future research may continue to examine the effects of these cues to delineate the conjunctive effects of the cues on persuasion and behavior change.

Beyond this, this study tested the proposed hypothesis using a children related charitable cause. As suggested by previous study (Polonsky & Grau, 2008), children related issues such as childhood cancer and infant death can generate an extensive social support. However, other causes such as prostate cancer might not be as effective as childhood cancer in generating public support. In addition, because the stimuli used in this research was developed under the name of St Jude Children's Research Hospital, a highly visible and reputable nonprofit organization in the United States, participants may

have shown donation intention due to brand knowledge acquired from media and advertising. Future research could test whether my findings extend to causes unrelated to children and to less-known nonprofit brands.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

**Screen Question:**

**Do you use Facebook (that is, having an account and using it on a regular basis)?**

- Yes
- No

**Do you have any associations with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (former/current patient families of St. Jude, work at St. Jude, family/friend works at St. Jude)?**

- Yes
- No

**1) What's your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**2) What's your age? Please write down \_\_\_\_\_**

**3) What's your race?**

- White
- Black or African-American
- Hispanic origin or descent
- Asian or Asian-American
- Some other race

**4) In each of the following pairs of attitudes, choose the one that you MOST AGREE with.**

- I have a natural talent for influencing people.
- I am not good at influencing people.
  
- Modesty doesn't become me.
- I am essentially a modest person.
  
- I would do almost anything on a dare.
- I tend to be a mostly cautious person.
  
- When people compliment me, I sometimes get embarrassed.
- I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so.
  
- The thought of ruling the world frightens me.
- If I ruled the world it would be a much better place.

- I can usually talk my way out of anything.
- I try to accept the consequences of my behavior.
  
- I prefer to blend into the crowd.
- I like to be the center of attention.
  
- I will be a success.
- I am not concerned about success.
  
- I am not better or worse than most people.
- I think I am a special person.
  
- I am not sure if I would make a good leader.
- I see myself as a good leader.
  
- I am assertive.
- I wish I were more assertive.
  
- I like to have authority over other people.
- I don't mind following orders.
  
- I find it easy to manipulate people.
- I don't like it when I find myself manipulating people.
  
- I insist upon getting the respect that is due me.
- I usually get the respect I deserve.
  
- I don't particularly like to show off my body.
- I like to display my body.
  
- I can read people like a book.
- People are sometimes hard to understand.
  
- If I feel competent, I am willing to take responsibility for making decisions.
- I like to take responsibility for making decisions.
  
- I just want to be reasonably happy.
- I want to amount to something in the eyes of the world.
  
- My body is nothing special.
- I like to look at my body.
  
- I try not to show off.
- I am apt to show off if I get the chance.
  
- I always know what I am doing.



- Sometimes I'm not sure what I'm doing.
- I sometimes depend on people to get things done.
- I rarely depend on anyone else to get things done.
- Sometimes I tell good stories.
- Everybody likes to hear my stories.
- I expect a great deal from other people.
- I like to do things for other people.
- I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.
- I take my satisfactions as they come.
- Compliments embarrass me.
- I like to be complimented.
- I have a strong will to power.
- Power for its own sake doesn't interest me.
- I don't care about new fads and fashions.
- I like to start new fads and fashions.
- I like to look at myself in the mirror.
- I am not particularly interested in looking at myself in the mirror.
- I really like to be the center of attention.
- It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention.
- I can live my life in any way I want to.
- People can't always live their lives in terms of what they want.
- Being an authority doesn't mean much to me.
- People always seem to recognize my authority.
- I would prefer to be a leader.
- It makes little difference to me if I am the leader or not.
- I am going to be a great person.
- I hope I'm going to be successful.
- People sometimes believe what I tell them.
- I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.
- I am a born leader.
- Leadership is a quality that takes a long time to develop.

- I wish somebody would someday write my biography.
- I don't like people to pry into my life.
  
- I get upset when people don't notice how I look when I go out in public.
- I don't mind blending into the crowd.
  
- I am more capable than other people.
- There is a lot I can learn from other people.
  
- I am much like everyone else.
- I am an extraordinary person.

**5) Have you followed a nonprofit origination (by Liking its page e.g. American Red Cross) on Facebook?**

- Yes
- No

**6) Have you seen a charity appeal on your Facebook newsfeed?**

- Yes
- No

**7) Have you heard of Facebook Gifts (an application allowing a user to send a gift e.g. a \$5 Starbucks gift card to his/her friends on Facebook and the generosity will be published on both the sender and the receiver's Timeline and Newsfeed)?**

- Yes
- No

**8) Have you sent a gift through Facebook Gifts?**

- Yes
- No

**9) Have you received a present via Facebook Gifts?**

- Yes
- No

Next you will see a screenshot of a Facebook newsfeed from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, a non-profit organization that treats children with cancers. Please read carefully of this newsfeed that you might see on your Facebook and, then, answer several questions.



10) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1= strongly disagree      7=strongly agree						
The ad asks me to make a donation to St Jude Hospital through <i>Facebook Gifts</i> .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A significant amount of people on Facebook has “Liked” this ad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The ad asks me to make a donation to St Jude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

through the hospital's website

A few people on Facebook have "Liked" this ad.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

**11) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?**

	1= strongly disagree				7=strongly agree		
I'm willing to make a donation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to help children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**12) How much would you like to donate? Please write in the amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**13) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	1= strongly disagree				7=strongly agree		
If I make a donation through Facebook Gifts it makes me feel like I will make a difference.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It will increase my self-respect if I make a donation through Facebook Gifts from where my Facebook friends could see my kindness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Having my donation published on my Facebook Timeline and Newsfeed will make me feel good.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would consider donating via Facebook Gifts because I get to show something for my kindness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would like to make a donation that benefits charities through Facebook Gifts so that people know I am a good person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to show people I donate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would like to make a donation through Facebook Gifts because it makes me look cool.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**14) When did you first start using Facebook?**

- Within the last six months
- 1 year ago
- 2 or 3 years ago
- 4 or 5 years ago
- 6 or 7 years ago
- More than 7 years ago

**15) On average, how many times do you log onto Facebook a day?**

- 0 - 1 time
- 2 - 3 times
- 4 - 5 times

- 6 or more times

**16) About how often do you check Facebook newsfeed?**

- Several times a day
- About once a day
- Three to five days a week
- One to two days a week
- Less often
- Don't know
- Never

**17) About How many friends do you have on Facebook? \_\_\_\_\_**

**18) Have you made a donation online before?**

- Yes
- No

**19) Which category best represents your household's total income in 2012 before taxes and other deductions?**

- Less than \$10, 000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$29,999
- \$30,000 to \$39,999
- \$40,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

**20) In total, in the past 12 months, my contributions to non-profit organizations or charities (in money or property) were worth approximately \_\_\_\_\_**

- No contributions to charities or nonprofit organizations
- \$1-\$49
- \$50-\$99
- \$100-\$199
- \$200-\$299
- \$300-\$399
- \$400-\$499
- \$500-\$999
- \$1000 or more

*-End of the Questionnaire-*