

The Phoenix Society: A Prosocial Donation Campaign

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Abstract

This paper discusses a hypothetical donation campaign supporting the Phoenix Society, a treatment and rehabilitation organization. For this donation campaign a brochure was created to persuade people into donating to the Phoenix Society. This paper explains the different persuasion techniques used in the brochure: the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), guilt appeals, the social norm approach, attitude functions, and the reasoned action approach. Each of these techniques are examined to demonstrate why they would be effective at persuading people to donate.

Keywords: persuasion, donation, influence, elaboration likelihood model, guilt appeals

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Addiction and overdose are becoming an increasing social justice issue in British Columbia (BC). Since 2016, BC has been in a public health crisis due to the province's opioid epidemic, which has only continued to get worse. The year 2020 was deemed the deadliest year for drug overdose, with an average of five deaths per day in BC (Ross, 2021). This crisis has made it even more important for treatment facilities to be available to those who need them. The Phoenix Society (www.phoenixsociety.com) is one of these organizations; they are a multi-service charity that focuses on drug and alcohol rehabilitation and support for homelessness. Located in the Lower Mainland of BC, the Society provides addiction recovery programs for men and women, employment, education, and housing assistance. One of the Phoenix Society's goals for 2020 was to increase donations from the community. With this in mind, the present project proposes and analyzes a hypothetical campaign to solicit donations for the Phoenix Society. This was accomplished through the creation of a fictitious brochure (Figures 1 and 2) meant to promote the organization through various persuasion techniques, including the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), guilt appeals, the social norm approach, attitude functions, and the reasoned action approach.

The intended audience for this brochure is people living in neighbourhoods such as Newton, Surrey, which has a high rate of addiction and homelessness (Meuse, 2016). People in this neighbourhood are more familiar with issues pertaining to addiction. Targeting an audience with a higher involvement in the issue of addiction may help persuasion techniques be more effective (Perloff, 2020).

One persuasive approach used in the brochure is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)—a model that determines when people are likely to think deeply about persuasive messages (Perloff, 2020). The ELM explains the conditions under which people will process information either centrally (i.e., critical thinking) or peripherally (i.e., simple cues). Through the central processing route, people will think more critically about the presented arguments and carefully evaluate them to inform their attitude on the message. Whereas through the peripheral processing route, people will rely on external cues such as the expertise or attractiveness of the speaker to inform their attitude on the message. When people use the central processing route, they are more likely to create stable attitude changes (Perloff, 2020).

This project aims towards central processing route to create a more stable attitude change in the target audience.

Messages that encourage peripheral processing are avoided, such as celebrity endorsements and availability heuristics. Availability heuristics are examples that immediately come to mind about a certain topic (which is addiction in this brochure). Peripheral routes of processing create shorter and more unstable attitude changes (Perloff, 2020). Thus, to persuade people to donate, this route was avoided.

A study by Petty et al. (1981 as cited in Perloff, 2020) showed that people with higher levels of involvement with an issue thought more critically about it. Therefore, these brochures are intended for circulation in neighbourhoods with higher rates of addiction. This would encourage people who are frequently exposed to these issues to support the Phoenix Society. The brochure provides strong arguments as to why people should donate; it includes information on the success rate of the Phoenix Society's programs (see Figure 2). This information provides evidence that the Phoenix Society is effective and therefore, allows people to critically evaluate the evidence listed on the brochure. The combination of high involvement and strong arguments supports the engagement of central processing of information and stable changes in attitudes towards addiction (Perloff, 2020). Hence, the use of central processing approach for the brochure is likely to persuade people to donate to the Phoenix Society.

The second approach involves the use of guilt appeals to persuade people to donate. Evidence has shown that guilt and guilt appeals can be useful in persuading people to change their behaviours and attitudes (Perloff, 2020). Guilt appeals are most effective when they create a sense of empathy and efficacy within the audience. Messages that use guilt appeals should create empathy, instill a responsibility to help, and convince people that their actions can make a difference (Perloff, 2020). However, it is also important that guilt appeals do not evoke a negative reaction such as anger or irritation. According to Hibbert et al. (2007), guilt appeals that evoke a moderate level of guilt are the most effective. A moderate level of guilt avoids a negative response of anger, irritation, and shame, which may arise when guilt messaging is overly explicit and graphic. When designing the brochure, to create a sense of empathy, a panel in the brochure explains the impact of addiction on individuals and on the community in BC (see Figure 2). The following phrases highlight negative effects of

addiction: “severe consequences,” “opioid epidemic,” and “individuals suffering.” These phrases are chosen to create a sense of guilt and empathy in the reader. Phrasing was kept from being too intense (graphic or overly explicit) to avoid inciting too much guilt. Additionally, because the audience includes members of communities highly effected by addiction, the presented negative consequences were intended to make these members feel a sense of responsibility to help. To create a sense of efficacy the brochure presents information on how to donate (see Figure 1), how donations help the Phoenix Society, and how the Phoenix Society helps battle addiction in the community (see Figure 2). This includes phrases like “you too can help” and “you can directly support the Phoenix Society.” These phrases show that actions help, and that the audience can effectively contribute to battling addiction in their communities. These guilt appeals would create a strong sense of efficacy in the readers which would convince them to donate to the Phoenix Society.

A third approach taken in designing the brochure is the social norms approach, which focuses on communicating social norms, persuading people into acting in alignment with presented norms. By communicating the importance of social norms, people feel an increased pressure or obligation to change their behaviours and attitudes (Perloff, 2020). This approach is related to social adjustive attitude functions and the reasoned action approach. To create a descriptive norm on charitable giving, the brochure provides statistics on charitable giving in Canada. Descriptive norms show what the majority of people do. Research shows that when people “learn that a majority of other people have donated to charity, they are more likely to donate themselves” (Agerström et al., 2016, p. 148). In the brochure, statistics like “84% of Canadians donate to charity” (Turcotte, 2012, p. 34) and “The average annual donation in Canada is \$446” (Turcotte, 2012, p.18) convey a normative belief to the reader that Canadians are charitable and regularly give to charity. Awareness of this social norm motivates the reader to donate to the Phoenix Society. This approach was also very similar to a study by Lapinski et al. (2013 as cited in Perloff, 2020). Advertising posters with statistics on men’s hand washing behaviours in men’s washrooms led to an increase in hand washing and positive attitudes towards hand washing. Therefore, by following a similar approach with the brochure, it is likely that the brochure will be effective at changing attitudes and behaviours towards donating to the Phoenix Society.

The social norms approach is related to the social adjustive attitude function and as such, the brochure is designed with this attitude function in mind. Functional theories of attitudes focus on the reasons why people hold the attitudes they do, and the types of functions these attitudes have. The social adjustive function serves as a way for people to fit into a reference group—a standard for comparison. With this attitude function, people adapt their attitudes to that of the reference group even if they do not truly believe in the position. Then, the attitude becomes functional, as it allows individuals to gain social approval and be accepted into the reference group (Perloff, 2020). The brochure appeals to the social adjustive function because it makes use of descriptive and social norms, towards which, people would adjust their attitudes. For instance, if someone read the brochure and see the descriptive norms, they would adjust their attitude to fit the descriptive norm—in this case, they will donate to align with the described charitable giving in Canada. However, the social adjustive function is not persuasive to everyone. Research has shown that people who are high self-monitors are more likely to have attitude functions that are social-adjustive (DeBono, 1987). High self-monitors are more aware of their public perception and thus, more likely to change their attitudes to match a situation. This means that they are more likely to have a social-adjustive attitude function because it allows them to gain approval and acceptance from others by changing their attitude to that of the reference group. Therefore, the brochure is more effective at persuading high self-monitors than low self-monitors. According to DeBono (1987), high-self monitors are likely to show more consideration in thinking about an argument and elaborating on it after being presented a message appealing to the social adjustive function. Since the brochure takes a social adjustive approach, it would be effective at persuading people who are high self-monitors into donating to the Phoenix society.

Finally, the brochure uses aspects of the reasoned action approach. In this approach there are three main factors that predict behaviour: attitude, perceived norms, and perceived behavioural control. Perceived norms are the perceived social expectations towards a behaviour: what other people do and what other people think someone should do. Perceived behavioural control is how much someone believes they can perform a behaviour, and this is very important because a lack of perceived behavioural control can prevent someone from completing a behaviour, even if the other two factors are positive. Each of these factors can help predict someone's intentions of completing a behaviour, and the intention predicts the

actual likelihood of completing the behaviour (Perloff, 2020). Although the brochure has no way of measuring these factors, each of these factors was considered when designing the brochure to best reflect this model. To influence a positive attitude towards donating to the Phoenix Society the brochure addresses how the Phoenix Society helps with addiction, and how people's donations directly help the Phoenix society (see Figure 2). Then, as mentioned earlier, statistics on charitable giving are included to create perceived norms around giving to charity. Finally, to instill a sense of perceived behavioural control, the brochure provides the website address to donate to the Phoenix Society along with the minimum recommended amount of money to donate (see Figure 2). These factors allow people to believe they can donate to the Phoenix society and that this would make a difference. Thus, increasing their perceived behavioural control on donating. By following this model it is likely that people will have greater intentions to donate after reading the brochure and would be more likely to follow through on this behaviour.

In conclusion, the brochure aims to encourage people to donate to the Phoenix Society, an organization that helps battle addiction in Surrey, BC. To do this, multiple strategies of persuasion are followed: ELM, guilt appeals, the social norms approach, the social adjustive attitude function, and the reasoned action approach. The intended audience is people living in neighbourhoods in the Lower Mainland that are severely impacted by addiction, such as Newton, Surrey. This would increase involvement in the issue and lead to more effective persuasion. The brochure was also aimed towards people who are high-self monitors. By following these strategies and establishing relevant targets, this brochure would be effective at persuading the audience to donate to the Phoenix Society.

Figures

Figure 1. *Phoenix Society Brochure Page 1*



**DONATE TODAY
TO HELP OTHERS
CHANGE THEIR
WAY**

84% of Canadians donate to charity. You too can help. Donate today at:
[Phoenixsociety.com/community/donate-now](https://phoenixsociety.com/community/donate-now)

JOIN US

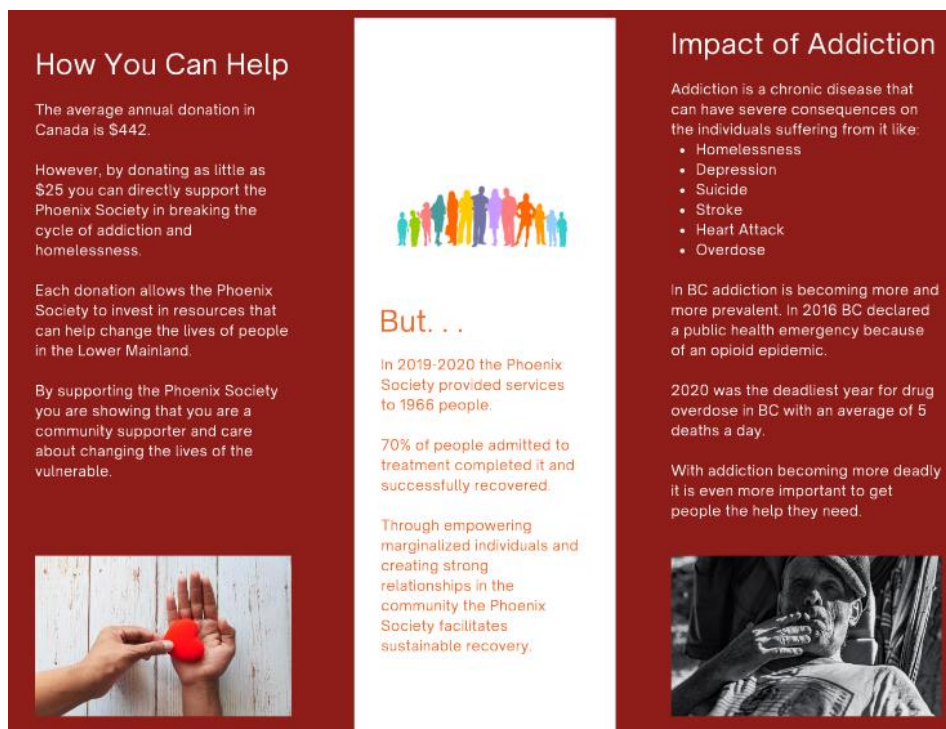
On April 22 at 7PM for an online banquet. For more information go to:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/phoenix-societys-recovery-banquet-tickets-151843960373>

PHOENIX SOCIETY

The Phoenix Society is an addiction treatment and education facility located in Surrey BC

Note. Photos retrieved from Dukhin (2016) and Fauxels (2019).

Figure 2. *Phoenix Society Brochure Page 2*



How You Can Help

The average annual donation in Canada is \$442.

However, by donating as little as \$25 you can directly support the Phoenix Society in breaking the cycle of addiction and homelessness.

Each donation allows the Phoenix Society to invest in resources that can help change the lives of people in the Lower Mainland.

By supporting the Phoenix Society you are showing that you are a community supporter and care about changing the lives of the vulnerable.

Impact of Addiction

Addiction is a chronic disease that can have severe consequences on the individuals suffering from it like:

- Homelessness
- Depression
- Suicide
- Stroke
- Heart Attack
- Overdose

In BC addiction is becoming more and more prevalent. In 2016 BC declared a public health emergency because of an opioid epidemic.

2020 was the deadliest year for drug overdose in BC with an average of 5 deaths a day.

With addiction becoming more deadly it is even more important to get people the help they need.

But...

In 2019-2020 the Phoenix Society provided services to 1966 people.

70% of people admitted to treatment completed it and successfully recovered.

Through empowering marginalized individuals and creating strong relationships in the community the Phoenix Society facilitates sustainable recovery.

Note. Photos retrieved from Altmann (2017), Antoniadis (2020), and Barbhuiya (n.d.).

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