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RESEARCH PAPER
Developing campaigns in the context of a disaster
Content of and reactions to advertising following the earthquake in Chile on February 27, 2010

Rodrigo Uribe, Pedro Hidalgo and Carolina Martinez
Business School, University of Chile, Santiago, Chile

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper are to determine: how disasters are used as a theme in advertising; how the public evaluates different ways of using disasters in advertising; what dimensions directly affect these evaluations; and what aspects should be taken into account by an organization that wants or need to develop a campaign after a disaster.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper presents two studies examining the relationship between catastrophes and advertising in the context of the February 2010 earthquake in Chile. The first study scrutinizes the characteristics of print ads that used this event as their main theme. The second study evaluates the reactions of consumers to different types of post-catastrophe ads. This issue was explored in a survey on the attitudes toward and credibility of these ads and in a qualitative examination, which explored the reasons for the interviewees' evaluation.

Findings – The first study identified nine types of advertisements as the most used by advertisers. The second study showed that the most common ad types had the worst evaluations by the public. In addition, the evaluation of the ads was directly related to three dimensions: opinion with regard to the advertised brand, evaluation of the ad's performance, and perception of commercial intent.

Research limitations/implications – It is important to consider some limitations of this study: this paper used only print advertising, and the sample was selected from Chilean internet users (50 percent of the population).

Practical implications – This paper provides recommendations for for-profit and non-profit organizations that need or want to effectively develop campaigns in the context of a disaster.

Originality/value – Within the context of a few studies on the development of campaigns in the context of a catastrophe, this paper seeks to test and expand upon the scarce findings in this field.

Keywords Disasters, Earthquake, Advertising, Content analysis, Credibility, Attitudes

Paper type Research paper

1. Antecedents

Disasters generate a high degree of public concern and attract the attention of large audiences because of their negative consequences for material resources and human lives (Adams, 1986; Quarantelli, 1989; Sood *et al.*, 1987). In this regard, a study in the USA reports that 77.4 percent of people immediately use electronic media to search for information when they hear about a disaster (Van Belle, 2000).

In the literature, the relationship between media and catastrophes has previously been studied from different, yet complementary perspectives. From a sociological viewpoint, it has been proposed that mass media enables common social experience in heterogeneous societies by making the same information available to all. In the current context in which the mass media constantly cover current issues in terms of crises and

spectacle, natural and human-caused disasters have been transformed in a favorite content. Broadcasting corporations usually presents disasters as TV shows that mixes charity and spectacle (Baudrillard, 2000; Korstanje, 2011; Miles and Morse, 2001).

From a journalistic standpoint, a group of studies has examined the news coverage of catastrophes. Examples include Schramm's seminal article on the press coverage of the Kennedy assassination (Schramm, 1965) and several studies on the context and content of news coverage of different disasters around the world (Singer and Endreny, 1993; Pasquarè and Pozzetti, 2007; Quarantelli and Wegner, 1991; Quarantelli, 1996) as well as other contemporary studies related to the quantity and characteristics of the post-Hurricane Katrina coverage (Sommers et al., 2006; Stock, 2007) or after the attack on the Twin Towers (Coleman and Wu, 2006; Bouvier, 2007; Mogensen et al., 2002).

Another relevant perspective comes from the disaster management field. From this angle, several studies have stressed the significant role that media can play in disasters in terms of a suggestive, educational and guiding role before, during and after a disaster. The authors of these studies have assumed that mass media and technology in general are crucial management tools because of their immediacy and their ability to reach large audiences and then transmit information about disaster threats, preparedness and recovery. Studies in this area have covered the public health, public information, economic, political and managerial implications of the best use of mass media during catastrophes, including both traditional media (television, radio, and print media) and new technologies, such as the internet and social media (Wenger and Quarantelli, 1989; Wenger and Friedman, 1986; Perez-Lugo, 2004; Lowrey et al., 2007; Rodríguez et al., 2004; Vasterman et al., 2005; Glik, 2007; Ng and Lean, 2012; Rubin et al., 2014).

The field of marketing communications has also shown interest in the relationship between media and catastrophes. The largest volume of work has focussed on tourism marketing, particularly on the development of strategies for restoring the image of tourist destinations affected by catastrophic events (Beirman, 2003; Durocher, 1994; Hystad and Keller, 2008; Pottorff and Neal, 1994). A less-developed approach has applied the principles of marketing to improve the public and private sector strategies for preventing and managing the consequences of a catastrophe (Guion et al., 2007; Baker et al., 2007; Manfredo and Shultz, 2007; Leonard and Scammon, 2007; Klein and Huang, 2007). In this vein, some academic efforts have examined and evaluated communication actions developed by private organizations (both for-profit and non-profit) in the post-disaster stage from a marketing perspective. These studies have stressed that, in the wake of a disaster, many of these organizations carry out fundraising activities, want to send a supportive message to the community, or inform to the public about relevant issues related to the product or service that they provide (Bennett and Kottasz, 2000a; Elliott et al., 2005). In the latter line of research, this paper seeks to provide information about how disasters are used as a theme in advertising and how the public evaluates different ways of using disasters in advertising, which provides significant information for these organizations interested in developing communication campaigns in the aftermath of a disaster.

2. Developing campaigns in the context of a disaster
Despite its importance in terms of developing effective and ethical actions of marketing communication, literature on the development of advertising campaigns after a disaster is extremely scarce. On one hand, there is a line of work that had assumed a critical

perspective on this activity, in which the actions varied out by the companies are part of their business and, in that regard, are seen as part of the "commodification of the other" in the business of fundraising (Forstorp, 2007) or as a media show that exploits feelings of nationalism in order to control the threat to the social order stemming from the panic and sensationalism generated by media coverage (Korstanje and Fernandez-Montt, 2011).

On the other hand, other studies have assumed a more neutral perspective and examined the characteristics of effective communication campaigns undertaken by for profit and for non-profit agencies. In that context, a study developed by Bennett and Kottasz (2000a) identified elements that could help increase the effectiveness of fundraising activities for disaster relief. Bennett and Kottasz carried out 200 interviews asking for elements that might encourage or inhibit donations. They found that depictions of children in need represent a major fundraising trigger. Similarly, media representations of the poverty of aid recipients, portrayals of people helping themselves, and highly emotive advertising imagery can play similar role. Factors discouraging donations included media reports of unfair aid distributions, warfare or internal insurrection, and inefficiency in the relief operation. Combined fundraising efforts covering several organizations were viewed more favorably than individual initiatives. Finally, these authors found that government endorsements of specific campaigns exerted little influence in encouraging donations.

McMellon and Long (2004, 2006) also carried out studies along the same line. Using the case of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in 2001, these authors examined the characteristics of and public's reactions to advertising campaigns that appeared immediately after that disaster. In the absence of relevant prior evidence, the examination of the specific content of advertising campaigns began with a pre-analysis of a series of previous disasters similar to the attack on the Twin Towers (all of them man-made). First, they reviewed advertisements that appeared after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and found 29 ads alluding to the catastrophe that could be classified into three categories: "informative," "patriotic," and "commercial." In analyzing the case of the World Trade Center in 1993, they detected 15 ads that focussed on the event and were also classified into three categories: "image," "informative," and "commercial" (they did not detected any "patriotic" ads but they did find "informative" ones). They then examined the 1995 terrorist attack in Oklahoma and found 70 ads referring to the event, most of which were "image" and "informative" ads. Very few were "commercial," and in this case, none were "patriotic" (McMellon and Long, 2006).

After this preliminary analysis, they began studying advertising that focussed on the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 that appeared in major newspapers in New York just after the disaster. They detected 519 different ads alluding to the attack, which they analyzed based on a classification previously proposed by Meadow (1981) for corporate-level advertising campaigns. Upon completing the review, they proposed the following classification of post-catastrophe advertisements:

- image, 52 percent of the ads sought to empathize with the disaster and improve the advertising company's "image";

- patriotic, 18 percent of the ads communicated pride in the country and its values, with patriotic images being a dominant element;

- commercial, 13 percent of the ads used the catastrophe motif with a clearly commercial intent;

- participatory, 12 percent of the ads sought public commitment for support, whether through donations or fundraising campaigns; and

- Informative, 5 percent of the ads provided useful information to citizens about the catastrophe or measures to take.

Finally McMellon and Long (2006) investigated consumer attitude toward the different types of print advertising that appeared after 9/11. They applied the MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) to a convenience sample of 621 people who evaluated graphic pieces in the "image," "participation," "patriotic," and "commercial" categories. Results indicated that "commercial" or "image" ads generated more negative attitudes than those that were "informative" or "patriotic."

3. The case of the earthquake in Chile

On February 27, 2010, at 3:34 in the morning, a 8.8 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of central Chile, generating a subsequent tsunami that affected a large portion of the Chilean coastline. In varying degrees, the earthquake affected an area where 80 percent of the Chilean population is concentrated (about 15 million people), causing heavy human and material losses. The official report indicates that 512 people died, 16 went missing and 800,000 people were injured. The earthquake caused problems in the areas of energy, due to power cuts; water supply and sanitation; transport, because of extensive damage to roads, bridges, and airports; communications, caused by the absence of electricity and failure of telephone networks; education, since many educational institutions suffered structural damage; and housing, as 370,051 residences were damaged by the earthquake and/or tsunami. The total gross damage (public and private) was estimated at US$30 billion, equivalent to 18 percent of the country's GDP (OPS, 2010).

The disaster spurred a reaction from all civil defense entities, government agencies and NGOs to come to the aid of those affected, and the media outlets likewise played a part. They organized solidarity campaigns (collecting money, food, hygiene items, drinking water, etc.) for the victims. Several private companies made campaign to simultaneously gather funds and encourage purchases (mainly the retail food, clothing, and construction industries). Meanwhile, the National Association of Television, the Government of Chile, private companies and charities like Caritas Chile, Un Techo Para Chile, and Hogar de Cristo, organized a special television program to collect approximately US$60 million, 55 percent of which was donated by companies and 45 percent by the Chilean people. In addition, various companies developed campaigns to share information about their services (Gómez, 2011; Torres, 2006).

4. Purpose of the paper

Within the context of the few studies examining how to develop more effective campaigns in the post-disaster stage, this paper seeks to test and expand upon the findings of previous research by McMellon and Long (2006) through two studies. The first aims to provide empirical evidence on how advertisers used the Chilean earthquake as an advertising theme by applying a content analysis of print advertising based on a natural hazard (as opposed to the man-made disasters studied by McMellon and Long), which has not been addressed in previous literature. The second study seeks to evaluate consumer reactions to advertising that used this earthquake as a theme and addresses two dimensions. On one hand, it examines attitudes toward and credibility of post-catastrophe advertising of a random sample of about 2,000

consumers. It is important to note that this case includes the evaluation of credibility, a variable that had not previously been examined, and that uses as a large, random sample of consumers, lending greater rigor to the study. The second study also takes a randomly selected sub-sample of these consumers and carry out a qualitative analysis of the justifications given by the participants who evaluated the ads, which is a new development of this study.

Summarizing, the main implications of this research are: how disasters have been used for advertising purposes (in Chile); how the public evaluates these different forms of using disasters; what dimensions directly affect these evaluations, and what aspects should be taken into account by an organization that wants or need to develop a campaign after a disaster.

5. Study 1: analysis of advertising content
Methodological design and discussion
To investigate the types of ads most often used by companies after the earthquake in Chile on February 27, 2010, we looked at all of the print advertisements that appeared between February 28 and March 14, 2010, in two newspapers: El Mercurio and La Tercera. Together, these two periodicals account for more than 60 percent of the print advertising expenditure in the country, they are the newspapers with the largest circulation in Chile, and they are the major outlets most often used to develop campaigns in print media (ACHAP, 2009; Gonzalez, 2008).

In this sense, this piece of research represents a case study. This approach allows to the researcher an in depth examination of a particular event within a real-life context and it is particularly useful when the sample size is not particularly large (Yin, 2003). It has been criticized that the results using this approach cannot necessarily be generalized to the wider population as well as the control over certain variable and events. Nevertheless, the external validity of the results the deep understanding of the case allow one to justify the use of this methodology.

For that reason, we included all of the different pieces of advertising (i.e. non-duplicated sample) that made visual or verbal reference to the catastrophe. These ads were operationally defined as those using words such as "catastrophe," "earthquake," or any verbal allusion that would allow an unequivocal understanding that the ads used the catastrophe as a theme. Using this definition, a total sample of 209 different advertisements was identified.

The sample was initially analyzed based on the classification proposed by McMellon and Long (2006), but with the addition of the option "other" for all cases that did not correspond properly to the previously proposed types. The "other" responses were later re-coded in keeping with the set of advertising types finally proposed in this study. Then, their presence was examined based on this final classification.

Two coders with experience in content analysis performed the coding process. One of them analyzed 15 percent of the sample and the other, 100 percent of the same, to achieve > 0.85 correlation between them in accordance with Scott's formula, which exceeds the minimum levels of agreement among judges as defined in the analysis of media content (Riffe *et al.*, 1998).

Results
This study aimed to determine the way in which companies developed campaigns using the earthquake as a theme. After the first analysis, a taxonomy of nine different

types of post-earthquake advertising was created, which is an adaptation of the original McMellon and Long (2006) categorization: "image," "informative," "commercial," "fundraising promotion" "participation," "mixed," "gratitude," "patriotic," and "other" (see Table I). This classification presents two changes from the previous taxonomy of McMellon and Long. The first modification refers to the inclusion of the type "fundraising promotion," those ads that use an indirect commercial attempt to subtly promote the sale of a product/service, like 1-for-1 promotions. The second change concerns the inclusion of a classification called "gratitude," which primarily appears toward the end of the period and recognizes the consumers themselves, company employees, a public service (such as the police) or Chileans in general (see Table I).

Once the classification was determined, the frequency of each advertising type was established in order to determine the most common ways in which this disaster was used as advertising theme. This analysis showed that two types of ads were most commonly used: "image" and "informative" represented 35.9 and 23.4 percent of the advertisements analyzed, respectively. A secondary group hovered around 10 percent: "participation" (11 percent) and "mixed" (10.5 percent). Then came ads that were "commercial" (6.1 percent) and "fundraising promotion" (6.3 percent). There was also a limited presence of ads expressing "gratitude" (4.3 percent). Interestingly, there were few advertisements whose primary appeal was "patriotic" (1.9 percent) (see Table I).

Type of ad	Presence (%)
Image: these ads show the human side of organizations. Included in this category are the types of ads that try to evoke feelings of empathy with phrases like "with us" and "we are here to support you." These ads try to portray the company as kind and charitable	37.5
Informative: in this case, the advertiser provides information as a service that is not available through other media or in supplement to other messages. For example: information about cancellations, business hours, work shifts, and general announcements	21.4
Participation: these ads are designed to promote community involvement. Some examples are the ads that encourage customers to donate money or goods to the company's relief efforts. In general, these ads try to entice the reader to do something	11.0
Mixed: these ads may belong to more than one classification or have different elements that do not merit a specific classification	10.5
Fundraising promotion: these ads attempt to sell products by associating them with a donation (campaigns like the "1-for-1 solidarity basket" or "buy a brick, donate another") or companies may make "matching" donations	6.3
Commercial: these ads seek commercial gain and use the earthquake merely as a theme, with an explicit and direct attempt to sell	6.1
Gratitude: these ads give thanks to employees, partners, suppliers, customers or donors (usually not used immediately after the disaster)	4.3
Patriotic: these types of message communicate pride in the country and its values. Symbols such as flags, the national colors of white, blue and red, and even phrases like "Come on Chileans!" or "Go Chile!" are predominant and evoke patriotic sentiment. Images of heroes and reconstruction efforts are used to portray feelings of hope or a persevering Chilean spirit	1.9
Other: ads that do not fit into any of the above categories	1

Table I.
Taxonomy of advertising

6. Study 2: consumer reactions to different types of post-earthquake ads
Methodological design and discussion
Once the researchers determined the ways in which a disaster was used as advertising theme, a second case study sought to determine consumer perceptions when faced with the types of print ads that advertisers most commonly used. This issue was explored in two parts: first, people's attitudes toward the ads and the credibility of these ads were collected; then, the reasons they gave for these evaluations were explored.

Using the classification developed in Study 1, a group of ten marketing and advertising experts were asked to choose the pieces most representative of the five categories most often used by advertisers: image, informative, participation, fundraising promotion, and commercial (mixed was excluded because it incorporated the other ad types).

These selected ads were presented online in July 2010 to a probability-based internet panel, which was originally developed using a traditional survey sampling frame (address-based sample frame). A probabilistic sample by quotas of 1,961 cases drawn from the urban population, age 18 and over, throughout Chile, internet users (who accessed the internet at least once a week), which represents 50 percent of the Chilean population[1][2]. The margin of error for overall results was ±2.2 percent, with a confidence level of 95 percent. The sample was composed by 50 percent of women and 50 percent of men, with an age average of 32 years old (SD 5.1).

After providing information for demographic classification, each participant in the study observed each piece for 15 seconds. The order of presentation was rotated to remove any order bias in the evaluation (Malhotra, 2004; Pope, 2002). People viewed and evaluated each ad in terms of "attitude" and "credibility" based on a semantic differential scale of seven values – good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, favorable/unfavorable, convincing/dubious, credible/non-credible, partial/impartial) (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989) – and finally, they answered an open-ended question about the reasons for their evaluation of the ad (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989; McMellon and Long, 2006). The average application of the instrument took approximately six to seven minutes.

The second part of this study sought to understand the reason for the participants' evaluations in order to understand what could make an ad more credible and/or more attractive. In all, 200 cases were selected from among all of the participants using a special type of sampling for qualitative studies called "random sampling." This method was used because the original sample was too large, and there was no reason to include some responses over others (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These responses were qualitatively analyzed using the procedures described by Grounded Theory: coding was first open and then selective in order to determine the underlying concepts behind the participants' responses, and these gave rise to the codes presented in the results (Strauss, 1987).

Results
Before examining the response scales to the attitudes toward and credibility of the ads, the psychometric properties of the scales were analyzed. They demonstrated high internal consistency for each of the parts tested, both with alphas above 0.8 (Cronbach, 1951). We also examined the unidimensionality of the components and observed that both constructs loaded on one factor. In the case of the attitude scale, the factor explained 88.86 percent of the variance and in the case of the credibility scale, 77.69 percent.

The average attitude and credibility for each ad type was used to determine the most favorably evaluated types of ads. Results showed that the participants in

the study more positively rated "participation," followed by "fundraising promotion,"
"informative" and "image" ads occupied an intermediate position. Finally "commercial"
ads received the worst evaluations (see Table II).

We then proceeded to explore qualitatively the reasons that respondents
spontaneously gave for their attitudes toward and credibility of the post-earthquake
advertisements. In coding these responses, the researchers found that the evaluations
were based on three main elements:

(1) the brand;

(2) the ad itself; and

(3) the explicitness of commercial intent perceived in the advertisement.

Brand. This element refers to the attitude toward the brand advertised. The justification
is therefore related to people's pre-existing beliefs and judgments about a particular
company (e.g. a particular bank) or the industry in general (all banks), thus directly
contributing to the valence of the opinion issued (positive/negative) as well as to the
credibility of the offer contained in the advertisement:

> This brand (a nonprofit entity) is a transparent institution, which inspires confidence and is
> always willing to help, that's why I like what they do and I believe them.

> That company has never been supportive in the past; if you fall behind in your payments, the
> next day they're looking for you.

> Being a bank you know immediately that they are not going to lose money. There's always
> something hidden, the fine print. I don't think you can expect much from them.

> I do not believe in that company because its owner is a liar.

The ad itself. This element refers to the evaluation of the ad execution. In this dimension,
there were references to the different types of creative elements in the ads, ranging from
the color, the text, the endorsers used, and even the overall aesthetic of the piece:

> I liked it because everyone likes the animated characters of this brand, they're fun.

> The ad is impressive, a little strong, but it's necessary to shake us up and see the suffering.

> The ad seemed very disorganized, with many ideas together, a lot of text.

> I like the colors, because this ad is clear and delivers light.

> The worst thing is that it has this celebrity, who at this point in time is the opposite of credibility.

Explicitness of commercial intent. The third reason mentioned by people evaluating
these pieces was related to the perception of commercial intent. The perception that a

Ads	Average (1-5 scale)	
	Attitude	Credibility
Participation	2.28*	2.32*
Fundraising promotion	2.02*	1.81*
Informative	1,91*	1.80*
Image	1.85*	1.43*
Commercial	1.25*	1.09*
Note: *p-value < 0.000 (with respect to the following average in the column)		

Table II.
Attitudes toward
and credibility of
different types of
advertising (average
scores)

company or brand may be profiting from a catastrophe that affects people provokes a negative evaluation. The participants' responses denoted clear skepticism or disbelief when they detect commercial intent as the priority. This reason was partially present in the case of indirect commercial pieces (fundraising promotion) and image promoting ads. However, the opinions were particularly severe in the case of direct commercial advertisements, in which people tended to believe that the company was trying to make money by taking advantage of the national catastrophe, which was compounded by being related to a service contracted for a specific period of time:

> I think it is a company that should have helped more: the advertisement should not be 10% of the income, it should be at least 30%. It shows that they are still making money.

> The donation is part of a registration, and then later, they have you tied for a year. It's clear that they are only doing it so people take the service; here they are using the suffering.

The interaction between the three dimensions of the participants' responses reveals a continuum between the aspects of attitude and credibility. The discourse of the participants shows that when the three dimensions are aligned in one direction (positive or negative), attitudes and credibility follow the same course (see Figure 1).

7. Lessons learned and recommendations

This study aimed to expand the knowledge of how to develop more effective campaigns immediately after a disaster. For that reason, it was examined print advertising campaigns carried out in Chile following the February 2010 earthquake. Study 1 developed a content analysis of advertising campaigns in which the disaster was a theme, in order to determine what different organization did at that point in time. Nine types of advertisements were identified: "image," "informative," "commercial," "fundraising promotion," "participation," "mixed," "gratitude," "patriotic," and "other." The first two categories clearly predominated, accounting for nearly 60 percent. This classification is very consistent with the previous one proposed by McMellon and Long (2006) in their study in the USA. This finding shows that companies in different places tend to react using similar appeals. The main difference between these studies is that in the Chilean case, we identified two new types of ads: "fundraising promotion" and
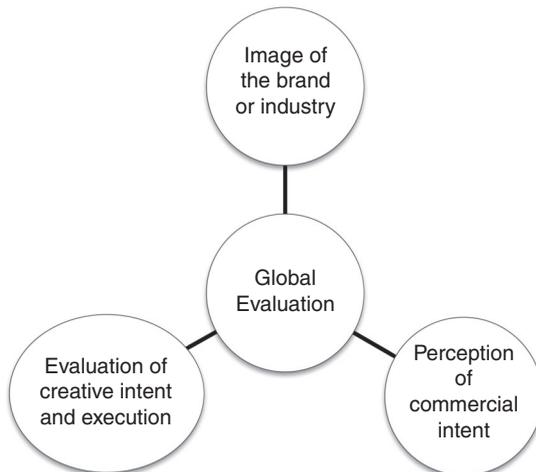
Figure 1.
Dimensions used by people evaluating ads with the earth-quake as a theme

"gratitude." The first category refers a type of ad in which commercial intent is mixed with fundraising efforts, which allows the organization overcome some of the problems of the "commercial" ads. "Gratitude" ads, instead, represent another way to achieve the objective of the "image" ads (see the list below for a summary of the main findings of this study):

(1) Nine types of advertisements were identified using the earthquake as a theme: "image," "informative," "commercial," "fundraising promotion," "participation," "mixed," "gratitude," "patriotic," and "other," which is very consistent with the prior study of McMellon and Long (2006).

(2) The "image" (35.9 percent) and "informative" (23.4 percent) advertisements were the most often used, accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total number of ads.

(3) The evaluation of these different types of advertising appeals showed that the "participation" ads received the most positive evaluations, followed by "fundraising promotion" and "informative" ads, which are not the most frequently used.

(4) The bases of people's evaluation of the advertisements using the earthquake as theme were three main elements: the attitude toward the brand, the perception of the ad's execution and the explicitness of commercial intent.

Regarding the most common types, we found that most advertisers intend to improve the image of the company (35.9 percent) or provide information (23.4 percent). Both in this study and that of McMellon and Long (2006), "image" ads were used most often. This might imply that companies primarily seek to bolster their reputation by using campaigns associated with a disaster, as some critics have proposed (Forstorp, 2007). It is also interesting to note that in the case of the US, "patriotic" ads were frequently used and "informative" ads seldom employed, yet in the Chilean study the situation was the reverse. These findings seem to represent cultural differences: the use of patriotic elements in Chilean advertising is not common (Han and Shavitt, 1994; Albers-Miller and Gelb, 1996).

Study 2 examined how people evaluated the strategies detected in the first study. These results showed that the "participation" ads received the most positive evaluations, followed by "fundraising promotion" and "Informative" ads. In other words, the importance that advertisers and companies place on a specific type of ad does not correlate with the public's evaluation. In fact, "image" (the most frequently used type of ad) was poorly received by the public and "participation" (the ad type with the best evaluation) represented only 11 percent of the total ads. This finding clearly reveals an opportunity for this type of campaign to be more in tune with the public's expectations and evaluations.

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the responses showed three main variables relevant to how people evaluate these campaigns: the attitude toward the brand, the perception of the ad's execution and the explicitness of commercial intent. The first two are consistent with what has been reported by several authors in relation to classic dimensions that influence the evaluation of a piece of advertising (Lodish et al., 1995; Young, 2005). The third dimension may be designated as a novel element detected in this study. In this regard, it can be hypothesized that feelings about commercial intent arise primarily because the audience manifests a greater degree of "skepticism" (Boush et al., 1994; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 2000) as a defense against the perception of

attempted persuasive intent/commercial advertising, particularly in a context in which the theme was a catastrophic event (Lehman and Dufrene, 2008).

In conclusion, if an organization wants or needs to develop a communication campaign in the context of a disaster, it should take the following concerns in to consideration:

(1) Whether people might perceive that it is trying to profit from the action. Since disasters imply human suffering, audiences are much more sensitive and therefore skeptical when evaluating a campaign.

(2) Prior brand perception, which can amplify the positive or negative reaction from the audience. This is directly related to skepticism and disbelief in the good intentions of the advertiser.

(3) The aesthetic elements and execution of the ad, in order to produce an enjoyable and memorable piece of advertising.

With respect to the limitations of this study, it is important to note the exploratory nature of this study. This research was done in a specific country (Chile) and taking only one type of media format (print ads) into account. Moreover, even though a random sample was used, the universe from which it was extracted had a relevant bias: they were frequent internet users, at that time only 50 percent of the population (with a relevant overrepresentation of the wealthier segments of Chilean society). It is therefore necessary to replicate this work in other socio-economic and cultural contexts (i.e. in other countries), as well as to incorporate more media (especially television because of its penetration), in order to compare the findings, and provide more reliable and extrapolate data. Likewise, the qualitative findings in general and the hypothesis on the relevance of the perception of commercial intent in the context of advertising with a catastrophic theme needs to be quantitatively tested to determine their strength.

Notes

1. According to the SUBTEL National Telecommunications Services Consumer Survey for the second semester of 2009, this number was 6,154,381 inhabitants, which represents an internet penetration of the 50.5 percent of the population 18+.

2. Since we needed to reach a large sample, show graphic material, rotate the presentation of the stimuli, and Chile had 50 percent of internet penetration at that point in time, the best – and most economic – way to obtain a random sample was to use an online format.

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Corresponding author

Dr Rodrigo Uribe can be contacted at: ruribe@unegocios.cl