

# Branding for non-profits: explaining new donor decision-making in the charity sector

Gary Gregory and Liem Ngo

School of Marketing, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, and

Ryan Miller

Anglicare Australia, Sydney, Australia

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study develops and validates a model of new donor decision-making in the charity sector. Drawing upon dual process theory, the model incorporates brand salience and brand attitude as antecedents of brand choice intention, moderated by donor decision involvement.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Study 1 generates measures using interviews with marketing, media and research managers, and new donors from two international aid and relief organizations. Study 2 uses an experimental design to first test scenarios of disaster relief, and then validate and confirm a new donor decision model using large-scale consumer panels for the international aid and relief sector in Australia.

**Findings** – The results replicated across four leading international aid-related charities reveal that brand salience is positively related to brand choice intention through the mediating effect of brand attitude. Furthermore, the effect of brand salience on brand choice intention is significantly stronger when donor decision involvement is low. Conversely, the effect of brand attitude on brand choice intention is stronger for higher levels of donor decision involvement.

**Practical implications** – Managers should understand the importance of brand salience/attitudes and the implications for the communication strategy. Managers should also strive to understand the level of decision involvement and the relative influence of brand attitude/salience on brand choice intention.

**Originality/value** – This study advances the literature on charitable giving by proposing and testing a moderated mediation model of donor choice when selecting a charity for donation. Findings provide new insights into the extent to which brand salience, brand attitude and donor decision-making influence how new donors choose between charities for donation.

**Keywords** Brand salience, Brand attitude, Non-profit, Charities, Donor decision involvement, Brand evaluation, Brand choice, Cause-related marketing, Donor acquisition, Not-for-profit marketing

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Growth in the non-profit sector looks very optimistic, with some predicting a potential rise in worldwide charitable giving of approximately \$233bn by 2030 (Charities Aid Foundation, 2012a). In 2017 alone, Americans gave in excess of \$410bn-\$1.6m registered non-profits (GivingUSA, 2018), a number that had escalated by 25 per cent since 2011 (Blackwood *et al.*, 2012). As the non-profit sector expands so does the number of organizations vying for attention, supporting the contention that charities face severe competition for potential donors' time, effort and money (Faulkner and Romaniuk, 2019; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2019; Wymer and Casidy, 2019). Research suggests that for charities to differentiate themselves from others, they must focus on key elements of their brand (Mort *et al.*, 2007; Chapleo, 2013; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015b). Creating awareness and

prominence using various brand elements such as logos, slogans and messaging is widely thought of as effective in bringing the brand to mind, providing it with an advantage over other brands in a purchase-related situation (Sääksjärvi *et al.*, 2015). These elements are valuable for creating and maintaining a strong identity. They create awareness and symbolism and may, therefore, positively influence attitudes toward a brand (Keller, 2003).

Brand strength is a leading indicator of marketing outcomes specific to non-profit organizations and particularly in relation to peer brands (Wymer *et al.*, 2016). It is, therefore, surprising that although much research attention has been directed to *why* people donate to charity (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Webb *et al.*, 2000; Lee and Shrum, 2012; Boenigk and Helmig, 2013; Konrath and Handy, 2018), little has been paid to brand choice and *how* people decide who they give to (Bennett and Sargeant, 2005; Michel and Rieunier, 2012). This dichotomy is evident in the most prominent models of giving behavior within the mainstream, sector-specific and interdisciplinary literature

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(Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Sargeant, 1999; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007a), where the factors involved in the choice between charities for donation in unsolicited giving situations remain relatively unclear. Where choice does receive some exposure within contextual literature, it is commonly paired with the belief that differentiation is central to a charity being selected by a potential donor. In such cases, brand personality is regularly proposed as a strategy for differentiation between charities (Venable *et al.*, 2005; Voeth and Herbst, 2008), facilitating choice through the projection of organizational values (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998). Unfortunately, few personality traits are shown to be genuinely distinctive between organizations within a cause type, with many shared across organizations just by virtue of being known to be a charity (Sargeant *et al.*, 2008). More recently, researchers suggest brand choice in the charity sector may be more about how well-known a brand is or how “typical” it is in its sector (Michel and Rieunier, 2012). The role of “the non-profit brand, through its identification system (e.g. via a name, logo, design, jingle, etc.) is becoming an important element in differentiating charitable organizations” (Michel and Rieunier, 2012, p. 701). Consequently, both practical and theoretical need exist for a deeper understanding of how donors choose between brands in the charity sector.

This empirical paper contributes to the limited body of research in this area by proposing and testing a model of donor choice when selecting a charity for donation. Drawing upon dual process theory (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006), we bring together charity brand attitudes with relative charity brand salience as factors influencing the intention to donate a specific organization in relation to others. Specifically, we argue that brand salience is seen as associative processes (i.e. implicit attitudes) activated automatically with little cognitive capacity, while brand attitude is evaluative judgments (i.e. explicit attitudes). Brand salience, “the brand’s propensity to be noticed or come to mind in buying situations” (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004, p. 327), are considered to be both a valid and effective form of distinction between competing brands across a range of categories (Ehrenberg *et al.*, 1997; Vriens *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, brand attitudes are psychological tendencies to evaluate brands a degree of liking. Recent research suggests that involvement has a positive impact on consumer brand engagement and willingness to donate to non-profit organizations (Algharabat *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, we also test the moderating effect of donor decision involvement on the relationships between brand salience and brand attitude with charity choice intention, as well as the potential effects of control variables. Managerially, the findings have important implications for charities in their marketing strategy, and specifically how they communicate their brand.

Following discussion of the conceptual background of key constructs, we present a conceptual model of new donor decision, accompanied by relevant research hypotheses. Next, we detail the conceptualization and operationalization of the focal constructs in the model. This includes the presentation of the results of a qualitative study devised to develop a representative range of items for the main constructs within the context of study. We then present the results of two Australian surveys conducted with a sample of potential donors to charity, facilitating the purification of measures, testing of the outer

measurement models and assessment of the relationships between constructs within the structural model. Finally, we discuss the research implications, study limitations and propose areas of future research.

## 2. Conceptual background

### 2.1 Brand salience

The relative salience of a brand reflects its accessibility or prominence in memory (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). It is a measure of the probability of a specific brand being thought of or noticed in relation to others, in a certain situation (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004). Traditionally defined as the “degree to which a given brand comes to consumers’ minds in the context of a particular purchase or consumption occasion” (Moran, 1990, p. 11) or is evoked under various circumstances or situations (Keller, 2003), it refers to the prominence of that brand in memory, the chance that a specific brand will be thought of. Hence, the more salient a brand, the greater its propensity to be recalled and the greater its likelihood to be considered for donation or purchase (Vieceli and Shaw, 2010).

Brands are considered to function as nodes in memory, with associations linked to them in that links between a brand and associations are created and reinforced as consumers are exposed to the brand in a specific context over time (Keller, 2003). This increases the relative prominence of the brand, reflected in the quantity and quality of links between the brand and its associations (Sharp, 2010). Given the theory of memory as an associative network, the brand salience concept incorporates peripheral constructs and measures as constituents. These include brand image and brand knowledge. The brand image reflects an individual’s perceptions of a brand, which is a function of the associations in memory related to that brand (Keller, 2003). In Vieceli and Shaw’s (2010) empirically based model of brand salience, brand image is subsumed by the broader brand salience concept. Brand knowledge consists of both the brand node in memory, as well as the associations linked to it, incorporating both basic brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 2003). Brand knowledge comprises components such as familiarity and expertise, which influence the prominence of the brand in memory because of the associations created through previous brand-related experiences (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Ehrenberg *et al.*, 2002). Brand salience should not be confused with brand awareness or brand knowledge, which are less-comprehensive measures, and not the focus of the current study. Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, brand awareness only considers the link between a product category and the brand (Sharp, 2010), while brand salience is more comprehensive and recognizes that there are more associations than just the product category, such as consumption situations that can cause customers to think of brands (Nedungadi, 1990).

The current study examines two dimensions of brand salience, namely, prominence and distinctiveness (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004). Prominence is characterized by an inherent element of order, reflected in greater importance being attributed to specific brands being thought about over others in a particular situation, rather than how they are perceived (Miller and Berry, 1998). Distinctiveness refers to the extent to

which a brand stands out visually or is distinguished from its competitors because of its distinctive properties such as colors, logos and symbols (Romaniuk *et al.*, 2007; Van der Lans *et al.*, 2008). Distinctive brands are more likely to be noticed in buying situations and increase the likelihood that brands are correctly linked to advertising or messaging, thereby creating or strengthening associations in memory (Sharp, 2010).

## 2.2 Brand attitude

Contrasting with the situational and memory-based nature of brand salience, an attitude toward a brand is considered to be a relatively enduring state, expressed by evaluating that brand (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Hence, brand attitudes are a function of the salient beliefs of an individual with regard to brands in terms of the extent to which they possess certain benefits and the evaluative judgment of these beliefs. Attitudes are regularly central to models of brand choice and choice intention that are more cognitive in nature (Laroche *et al.*, 1996). Attitudes form the basis for evaluation of competing brands, where the goal is to maximize utility by making the best choice from amongst a range of options based on a set of criteria. Past models of charitable giving also express attitude as a component of a predominantly cognitive view of donor behavior. For example, Sargeant and Woodliffe (2007b) include “judgmental criteria” as decision processing determinants, which are composed of attitudinal dimensions.

Although the majority of sector-related conceptualizations of attitudes and constituent perceptions are presented within a context of general giving, a small number of studies specifically consider charity perceptions as a means of comparison between them (Sargeant *et al.*, 2006; Sargeant *et al.*, 2004). These perceptions can be considered to represent dimensions of an overall attitude toward charity brands on the part of donors, characterizing various aspects of how organizations are evaluated or compared, in relation to others. The efficiency of the organization is using donations and its effectiveness in achieving its objectives (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007b) create a perception of potential charity performance. The performance itself can also be a proxy for the trust placed in an organization to perform the work they say they will do (Sargeant *et al.*, 2004). The perceived professionalism of an organization reflects beliefs of how it is run or managed (Sargeant *et al.*, 2004), while an expectation of performance in terms of demonstrable, tangible benefits from assisting a charity (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007b) may also influence comparative charity brand attitude.

## 2.3 Donor decision involvement

Involvement is widely considered to represent a “state of arousal and product interest” (Richins and Bloch, 1986, p. 280). It measures the degree of personal interest in a goal object, which can be either a product or a purchase decision. When considered separately, product involvement is enduring and relatively stable, representing an ongoing concern with a product independent of context (Richins and Bloch, 1986). In contrast, purchase decision involvement is situational and transitory, representing a temporary concern aroused by a particular purchase decision such as a choice from amongst a range of brands (Richins and Bloch, 1986). It follows that the

levels of product and purchase decision involvement are not necessarily uniform. For example, an individual may be highly involved with a product category, but demonstrate little involvement with the purchase decision because of caring little about the brands in the category (Kassarjian, 1981). Hence, where product involvement may be of value when considering whether an individual will make a purchase from a particular product category or not, the level of purchase decision involvement exhibited by an individual may have a significant bearing on the process whereby a choice between specific brands within that category is made.

Situational donations to charity by donors similarly reflect the distinction between product and purchase decision involvement. For example, potential donors may be highly involved with a cause because of the urgency or immediacy of need following a natural disaster (Micklewright and Wright, 2005), yet be detached or lack interest in the marketing of the various charities on offer (Kassarjian, 1981). Drawing on the work of Mittal (1995) definitions of product and purchase decision involvement can be adapted to the not-for-profit marketing context. The charity product is generally referred to as the “offer,” the combination of benefits existing in a good or service to satisfy a need of a charity’s target market (Wymer *et al.*, 2006, p. 123), and is related to a cause. As there may be several target stakeholders for a charity, “donor cause involvement” can be defined as the perceived importance of the cause on the part of the donor, where a number of charities may provide solutions to the related need. “Donor decision involvement” relates to the perceived importance of the choice between these charities in satisfying the underlying need on the part of the donor. As with purchase decision involvement, the level of involvement exhibited by a new donor in the charity choice decision should influence the process whereby a charity is selected for donation. Research supports that involvement in a non-profit/charity cause leads to more favorable attitudes toward the brand (Patel *et al.*, 2017) and greater likelihood to choose one charity brand over another.

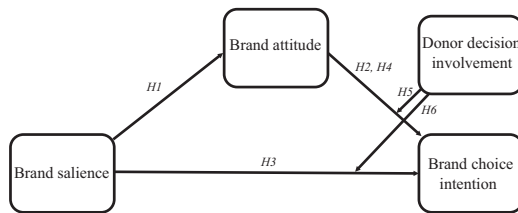
## 3. Hypotheses development

Given the absence of research on factors influencing the choice of charity for new donors, we propose a brand choice model with brand salience and brand attitudes as central factors influencing brand choice intention. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the model and hypotheses (paths), which are discussed, in turn. Donor decision involvement is presented as a possible moderator.

### 3.1 Brand salience, brand attitude and brand choice intention

A significant body of research considers the brand choice to include a stage of brand evocation prior to any evaluation of these brands taking place (Holden and Lutz, 1992; Nedungadi, 1990; Roberts and Lattin, 1997). Evocation involves brands being “brought to mind on a particular choice occasion” (Nedungadi, 1990, p. 264), a function of their relative salience, particularly where choice becomes reliant on memory to a greater or lesser degree (Lynch and Srull, 1982). Potential donors to charity may use brand salience as a means to quickly reduce, discount or discard options to arrive at a decision, given

Figure 1 New donor decision model



a lack of expertise in product comparison (Lynch and Srull, 1982). Hence, the brands included within the evoked set for consideration can be limited to those sufficiently prominent to be retrieved from memory, with evaluation considered to be separate from but contingent on brand consideration (Holden and Lutz, 1992). This is especially true for non-profit organizations that rely heavily on establishing brand identity cues to signify trust and reliability, reducing uncertainty and leading to greater brand attitudes (Richie *et al.*, 1999). Brand prominence (salience), for non-profit brands especially, plays an important role along with brand attitudes in leading to positive customer reaction (Baghi and Gabrielli, 2018). Brand salience also helps non-profit brands to set themselves apart from the competition clutter when it comes to competing for funds (Paco *et al.*, 2014). Brands that are more salient are likely to be more positively evaluated, as that which is familiar tends to be more liked (Zajonc and Marcus, 1982; Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004; Baghi and Gabrielli, 2018). Liking is reflected in individual attitude toward the brand; thus, we expect:

*H1.* There is a positive link between relative brand salience and the evaluative attitude toward the charity brand.

Brand attitudes are regularly modeled and measured as a means of evaluation between competing brands. For example, Laroche *et al.* (1996) consider the composite attitudes toward a range of competing brands to provide an indication of the likely intention to purchase a particular brand. The desire to maximize utility by making the best choice from amongst a range of options is a common thread.

There are some instances in non-profit literature where the attitude toward the charity in question is explicitly included as an antecedent to the intention to donate to this organization. For example, Diamond and Gooding-Williams (2002) consider attitude toward the non-profit to influence the intention to donate following a direct mail appeal, while Meijer (2009) provides further support for the relationship of brand attitude with brand choice, by using binary logistic regression and actual giving data to determine the likelihood of an individual being a donor to that organization or not, based on their attitude toward it. In light of this support, we offer the following:

*H2.* There is a positive link between the evaluative attitude toward a charity brand and the intention to select this organization for donation.

Brand salience is not only used as a heuristic to create a prominence-based consideration set for evaluation but also directly influences the final selection (Hoyer and Brown, 1990; Macdonald and Sharp, 2000). Known brand names are repeatedly chosen within categories as a means of lowering risk

and dealing with uncertainty (Hoyer and Brown, 1990), often in situations where a perceived lack of experience or prior knowledge can cause donors to expend little effort in evaluation between charities and instead seek a simpler solution (Bettman and Park, 1980). The more prominent a brand implies that knowledge on the brand is salient and accessible for consumers. Continued exposure to salient features of the brand (e.g. logo, trademark and colors) can have a positive effect on outcomes such as brand attitude, brand commitment or purchase behavior (Sääksjärvi *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, with repeated exposure brands become more salient, and hence, accessible in memory. This increases the ease with which consumers identify and recognize the brand. Hence, the easier it is for a brand to be processed in memory, the more positive the individual is toward it, increasing the likelihood of choice. The dimensions of brand salience correspond closely with those of processing fluency. Conceptual fluency reflects the ease with which target brands come to mind and the processing of this meaning, aligned with prominence, while perceptual fluency reflects the ease of identifying a stimulus on subsequent encounters through the processing of physical features such as shapes and sounds, aligned with distinctiveness (Lee and Labroo, 2004). In both cases, the ease of processing is believed to yield a positive effect, illustrating how relative brand salience can be used as a heuristic for choice.

Being able to retrieve brands can lead to forming favorable attitudes. Then, as attitude has a valence and a magnitude, it serves as a means of assessing the degree of favorability with which the organization or other branded object is perceived by its target group (Wymer *et al.*, 2016). Like brand salience, a favorable attitude is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for choosing a brand. Charities such as the Red Cross are well-known, perceived favorably by the public, and enjoy very favorable attitudes by donors. For a charity to be considered the top choice in its class, however, something more is required. The charity must also stand out from others, being the most prominent and distinctive among other charities having similar missions. Recent research suggests that how typical a charity is a sector has a significant impact on the intention to donate money and time (Michel and Rieunier, 2012). Determinants of a charity's typicality (i.e. being a representative brand in its product category, e.g. Red Cross in blood donations), compared to others in the same group, increases exposure and signifies an "ideal" charity to the public (Loken and Ward, 1990; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015b). While brand salience is expected to impact on the choice of charities directly, its impact on donor choice also operates through brand attitudes. Based on the interactive nature between brand salience and brand attitudes, the following hypotheses are offered:

*H3.* There is a positive link between the relative brand salience of a charitable organization and the intention to select this organization for donation.

*H4.* Brand attitude mediates the effect of brand salience on brand choice intention.

### 3.2 Moderating effect of donor decision involvement

Given the heterogeneity of potential donors to charity, the influence of brand attitudes and brand salience on charity

brand choice is likely to vary across groups. We believe the level of donor decision involvement will influence the relationships between these variables significantly.

Consideration of attitude toward respective charity brands is generally deemed to be synonymous with high involvement choice decisions within contextual literature (Hibbert and Horne, 1996). A relatively high level of involvement in the choice between potential charities may cause it to be more evaluative and cognitive, given this choice may be deemed “important, expensive, high risk or ego-related” (Kassarjian, 1981, p. 31). In such situations, a potential donor is more likely to retrieve and choose a preferred charity from memory based on previously formed attitudes (Van Kerckhove *et al.*, 2011). Thus:

H5. Donor decision involvement has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention.

In contrast with the attitude-dominant, high involvement view of charity choice, new donors may demonstrate relatively low levels of involvement in this decision. Although intensely focused on an important cause, for example, they may be detached from charity marketing with little interest or involvement in the choice between the available charities (Kassarjian, 1981). Perceived costs associated with extended evaluation (Lynch and Srull, 1982) and a lack of category expertise can cause simplifying heuristics such as brand salience to be more highly favored and influential in such situations, regardless of the level of interest in the related cause (Mittal, 1995). Van Kerckhove *et al.* (2011) demonstrate that where the charity choice is considered to be of little importance, there is an increased chance of a more salient charity brand being chosen over one that is more preferred. Furthermore, causal monetary donations could be categorized as a “low involvement” situations whereby donors are more influenced by peripheral cues such as brand salience and less motivated to process information in depth (Bennett and Gabriel, 2003). Based on this logic, it is expected that:

H6. Donor decision involvement has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention.

## 4. Methods and data

### 4.1 Measurement instrument development

Romaniuk and Sharp (2004) provide guidelines as to how a measure of brand salience might be constructed. It should contain a representative range of attributes or cues relevant to all category brands, where these should cover a variety of aspects that could cause the brand to be thought of by consumers, such as consumption situations, benefits and functional qualities (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003, 2004). Such a measure is inherently situational, requiring a range of attributes to be identified and tested within the context of the category under investigation. The salience score should demonstrate a propensity for a brand to be thought of across the range of attributes in relation to the other brands, reflecting whether they cause a brand to be thought of (prominence),

rather than an evaluation of it (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004). In addition to prominence in memory, measurement of the unique linkages of distinctive brand assets is also of importance in capturing brand salience (Romaniuk *et al.*, 2007). Distinctive brand assets could include colors, logos, taglines or other brand markings unique to a charity brand.

A small number of scales in relation to the perceptions of and attitudes toward individual charities have been published (Sargeant *et al.*, 2006; Sargeant *et al.*, 2004). However, attitudes toward the sector have on occasion been mixed with those toward the organizations, while samples comprising existing or lapsed but not new donors have been used. There is value in basing an attitudinal measure for new donors on these existing scales, but selectivity is required when choosing the factor dimensions and devising items of relevance for this sample group. Organizational performance, perceived professionalism and expectation of demonstrable utility were considered relevant attitudinal dimensions from which to proceed (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007b).

A mixed method approach was used to develop these measures, commencing with semi-structured interviews with marketing, media and research managers from two international aid and relief organizations. These were conducted to generate representative items for the dimensions of brand attitude and compile a list of attributes and distinctive brand assets for the brand salience measure. We selected the cause of international aid and relief because of the relatively high levels of awareness of related charity brands, regular exposure of the public to cause-related needs and high levels of public interest in poverty and international assistance (Micklewright and Schnepf, 2009). The expert interviews were supplemented with interviews with new, first-time donors to these charities. Results from the qualitative research component were used as a basis for two cross-sectional surveys for the purposes of scale purification. Following the first survey, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for the brand attitude construct, as well as an analysis of the prevalence of brand salience attributes, resulting in some scale revision. The second survey facilitated the testing of constructs for reliability and validity, where partial least squares regression was used to test the measurement and structural components of the structural equation model.

### 4.2 Study 1 – qualitative study

#### 4.2.1 Data collection and analysis

We conducted semi-structured, in-depth expert interviews with nine marketing, media and research managers from World Vision Australia and Oxfam Australia. Experts firstly provided responses relating to their perceptions of the international aid category and its competitive nature, donor behavior and organizational brand strategy. Thereafter, they assisted with the generation of attributes and distinctive brand assets for the brand salience measure following explanation of the nature of the construct. Next, each charity recruited five donors who had made a “once-off” donation following the Haiti earthquake of 2010. Once-off donors were required to describe how they decided to donate to the cause in question and how they selected a charity brand. Given the situational nature of the brand salience measure, donors’ associations with natural

disasters and the needs arising from them were captured to reflect the prominence aspect of the construct in the giving situation. Participants were screened to ensure that they were not regular givers to the stated cause and had only given once to the relevant organization. These formed the basis for representative category attributes, the cues that would cause brands to be thought of. Following unprompted generation of brand assets that donors believed were distinctive to brands in the category, a prompted matching exercise of a range of these with brands was conducted to test the prevalence of distinctive brand assets identified by the category experts. This exercise assisted with the development of the distinctiveness dimension of the brand salience measure. Experts assisted with the generation of attributes, distinctive properties and items following explanation of the nature of the two constructs. In contrast, donors were required to describe how they decided to donate to the cause in question and how they selected a charity recipient. Finally, perceptions of various charity brands reflecting overall positive or negative attitudes toward them were captured in relation to the brand attitude construct.

Interviews lasted for between 60 and 90 min each. They were recorded, transcribed and then subjected to a content analysis using QSR NVivo 9 software. Coding techniques follow those prescribed by Miles and Huberman (1994), with codes being assigned to segments of text to reduce “large mountains of raw data into small, manageable piles” (Neuman, 2006, p. 460). Illustrative quotations detail key findings, to represent the predominant views that were expressed. Where relevant, the designation of expert respondents is included prior to each relevant quotation, while pseudonyms are used to identify the responses of individual donors.

#### 4.2.2 Findings

Following discussion of the charity choice decision with both experts and first-time donors, broadly supporting the hypothesized relationships between the key constructs in the model, respondents from each group informed the generation of representative items for the dimensions of brand attitude and a list of attributes and distinctive properties for the brand salience measure.

When considering the dimensions of brand salience specifically, practitioners identified aspects of natural disasters that they believe because the public to take notice, consider a donation and by association, think of brands. The scale and broad impact of the disaster, immediacy and unforeseen nature of the event, high level of casualty, difficulty of the operation for rescue personnel and the need for long-term rebuilding were identified as attributes that could cause various brands to come to mind. In terms of noticing and identifying the brand, logos and colors were most pervasive, although campaigns, visual imagery and representative ambassadors were also considered distinctive for representative brands. Taglines and slogans were universally rejected.

Similarly, new donors revealed the attributes and needs they associated with natural disasters, confirming many of those identified by experts, but adding additional attributes such as the need for immediate assistance, rescue, basic services, longer-term rebuilding and the care of children. New donors were easily able to think of distinctive brand properties for category brands without prompting, particularly logos, colors

and campaigns. This was also the case when being required to link charities with brand properties in a prompted matching task. Distinctive images and ambassadors appear subjective with little consistency in matching these with the “correct” brand. These categories are deemed unsuitable for use in a relative measure of distinctiveness as a dimension of brand salience.

Most practitioners questioned believe that the attitude of potential donors toward charities, reflected in evaluative perceptions and beliefs, can influence their choice decisions. They note that donors evaluate charities based on credibility, professionalism, effectiveness and efficiency with which they use funds. In contrast, it is evident that few new donors actively evaluate charities based on perceptions or strong prevailing attitudes, although clearly positive or negative attitudes are held, which may be deep-seated. Many default into the types of work the charities do, demonstrating an inherent lack of knowledge or means of distinguishing between them. There is little support for the contention that donors specifically select a charity for the potential to receive a demonstrable benefit in return, a view shared by practitioners.

#### 4.2.3 Measure construction

Following conceptualization of brand salience by drawing from existing literature and qualitative research, we propose that it be modeled as a formative measure. In formative specifications, a higher-order construct is viewed as being caused by its dimensions, which do not need to be correlated (Uлага and Eggert, 2006). The more prominent and distinctive a charity brand is in the mind of a potential donor, the more likely it is to be thought of or noticed in a specific donation situation. These two dimensions clearly cause the higher-order construct, not the reverse, while they do not necessarily need to correlate. For example, a charity brand may be highly salient in memory because of its distinctive logo, and hence, be noticed yet may not be thought of as related to the representative attributes of a specific occasion. The Red Cross may represent such a situation. Their logo is one of the most recognized and distinctive of any organization in the world, yet much of their aid-related work is rarely advertised, which would hinder the formation of links between the brand and associations in memory. While brand salience is considered a formative measure, the brand attitude construct is best modeled as a reflective measure. Items depicting the evaluative perceptions and beliefs of an individual regarding the performance and professionalism of a charity reflect his or her prevailing attitude toward it.

### 4.3 Study 2 – quantitative research

#### 4.3.1 Measure development

Prior to quantitative analysis of the higher-order constructs, the items generated from the literature and interviews were assessed for content and face validity. The item pool of 14 prominence-related attributes, a representative range of logos, colors and activities to reflect distinctiveness along with 13 evaluative perceptions reflecting brand attitude were subjected to scrutiny by a panel of judges comprising four marketing and research managers from leading international aid and relief organizations. To improve face validity, we provided each judge with definitions of the constructs and then required them

to appraise each item for appropriateness and clarity, using a measurement scale from one to five (Pritchard *et al.*, 1999). To be included in a final item pool, a majority of the judges were required to score the item a three or higher on each criterion. Judges were also requested to provide comments on the representativeness of the item groupings for construct validity. Following the exclusion of items because of the lack of face validity, 12 prominence-related attributes, all the original distinctive brand properties and 8 evaluative perceptions were retained.

#### 4.3.2 Survey instrument development

Scale purification was conducted by means of two online surveys, developed with the primary objective of informing a new donor decision model and thereby simultaneously providing a means whereby constituent latent variable scales could be purified and tested. A natural disaster scenario (Appendix 1), comprising a fictitious report of a devastating Tsunami, was used as stimulus prior to respondents answering questions relating to their intended charity choice, relative brand salience and attitude toward a range of brands. This scenario, crafted to simulate the feeling and emotion of a natural disaster, to the extent that individuals are absorbed into a story or transported into a narrative world. Transportation is a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in a narrative where readers get lost in a story, experience emotions and motivations and become changed by the story (Green and Brock, 2000). This scenario had been prior tested for its ability to facilitate transportation, whereby individuals become immersed in the narrative and consider it as if real (Green, 2004). The scenario that was ranked highest according to Green and Brock's (2000) transportation scale was used as a stimulus for the surveys.

The four largest charity brands in the international aid and relief sector [Red Cross, World Vision, Oxfam and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)] based on a historic share of disaster donations (ACFID, 2005) and brand awareness in Australia (WVA, 2010) were prompted to provide choice comparison. Although all are well-established brands in Australia, Red Cross and World Vision are significantly larger than Oxfam and UNICEF. Brands are prompted to reduce the risk of brands with smaller market shares being crowded out in memory by brands with high levels of awareness, with attributes or associations less likely to be elicited (Laurent *et al.*, 1995). The use of a prompted measure in contrast to unprompted is not expected to impact on validity. Reported linear relationships between aided and spontaneous awareness, for example, illustrate that brands with low salience "score low on any awareness measure, and high salience brands score high" (Romaniuk *et al.*, 2004, p. 77). The four brands command a high global profile, strengthening the case for external validity. All are ranked within the top 40 of charities in the UK by private donation (Charities Aid Foundation, 2012b) and in Australia (Third Sector, 2018), with three of the four ranked in the top 20 in the USA (Forbes.com, 2011).

Proportional scales are used for both formative indicators comprising the brand salience construct. To generate a score for prominence, we used a free choice "pick any" prompted measure whereby respondents identified the brand or brands they think of when considering each attribute, such as "when

help is needed immediately." Each brand's relative prominence score is the number of attributes that cause the brand to be thought of, if any, as a percentage of the total number of attributes. Similarly, to generate a score for distinctiveness, respondents linked the prompted brands with items, such as logos or colors from a range of distinctive property types, which include some decoys. This differs from the prominence measure in that the respondent must link the correct asset(s) with the brand in question for the association to count. Each brand's relative distinctiveness score is the number of brand properties correctly associated with that brand as a percentage of the total number of possible asset associations. Both measures tap into the number of links in memory, as they capture the number of associations, as well as the quality of links, as they are measured relative to other brands. Free choice is preferred over forced choice scales or ranks, as these can confound unawareness or indifference.

Adapted from a selection of perceptual scale items devised by Sargeant *et al.* (2006) and Sargeant *et al.* (2004) reflecting dimensions of performance and professionalism of non-profit organizations, each evaluative item comprising the composite brand attitude construct used a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree"). Respondents rated each brand consecutively on each item. Two items were used to measure the brand choice intention construct, reflecting the likelihood of the respondent to donate to the charity in question, as well as the proportion of a designated donation budget that would be allocated to that brand in comparison to the others. Two items were included as measures of intention rather than just a single measure to increase the comprehensiveness of the construct and improve the estimation of the parameters in the measurement model in line with the principle of consistency at large (Reinartz *et al.*, 2009). A composite single item measure was used for the donor decision involvement moderator. This consisted of four items taken directly from Mittal's (1995) purchase-decision involvement scale with an only minor amendment to match the charity giving context. The four items measuring donor decision involvement were captured using a seven-point semantic differential scale and include:

- 1 selecting amongst many brands (1 = "do not care at all" and 7 = "care a great deal");
- 2 importance in making the right choice (1 = "not at all important" and 7 = "extremely important");
- 3 the outcome of choice (1 = "not concerned" and 7 = "very much concerned"); and
- 4 comparison of brands (1 = "all very similar" and 7 = "all very different").

Additional control variables such as age, income and gender were also included in the final analysis.

Respondents could only move forward through the survey and were not permitted to move backward or change responses once they had moved beyond the page in question. This was done to ensure that exposure to prompted salience and attitude-related information in latter sections of the survey did not influence choices made in earlier sections or "jog" the memories of respondents where associations or distinctive brand assets had not been spontaneously associated with brands. In addition, the brand order was randomized, as well as

the order of the attitudinal items and distinctive brand assets to reduce the likelihood of pattern answering by respondents.

4.3.3 Sampling procedure and sample characteristics

A leading market research provider was contracted to administer a two-stage survey procedure using their online panel. The integrity of the data was maintained through random selection of sampling frame from quota groups and the exclusive use of unique respondents. For both stages, a sample of potential donors to international aid and relief was selected, corresponding with the demographic profile of Australian givers to charity (Lyons and Passey, 2005) and the geographical spread of the population across Australia (ABS, 2011). Selected respondents were screened to exclude those who contributed once or more per year to associated charities, with the sample skewed slightly toward younger respondents given the higher relative propensity for these individuals to be first time donors within this category (Aeberhard, 2008). Respondents were required to be over 18 years of age and be Australian citizens to prevent any confounding based on culture or nationality within the sample.

4.3.4 Measurement models

For Stage 1 of data collection, responses were received from 51 respondents as the first step in purification of items. Eight reflective brand attitude-related scale items across two dimensions (professionalism and performance) were subjected to an EFA across all four prompted brands, in turn. Although two dimensions were expected, only one factor emerged based on the Kaiser criterion. This factor represents the composite attitude of the respondents toward the brand in question, explaining approximately 80 per cent of the variance of the eight items for each brand. All eight items were retained, as alpha coefficients across the brands exceeded 0.96 with corrected item-to-total correlations greater than 0.75, demonstrating reliability.

In addition, attributes composing the prominence dimension of brand salience were reduced to 10 from 12, as two attributes had markedly lower levels of association with the prompted brands than the others. All distinctiveness properties of brand salience were retained. The final list of brand salience measures is included as Appendixes 2 (prominence) and 3 (distinctiveness), while brand attitude measures are included in Appendix 4.

For Stage 2 of data collection, responses were received from 402 respondents. Table I presents information on weights and loadings of the latent variable measures and the associated *t*-values for UNICEF, as well as other data of relevance for validity testing. All items have significant path loadings or weights (*p* < 0.01) for UNICEF. The same pattern of significant path loadings (*p* < 0.01) was also observed for the other three other charities (Red Cross, Oxfam and World Vision). To reduce redundancy in presenting similar findings on item loadings across all four charities, we only report results for the item loadings as they relate to the UNICEF brand. However, we evaluated the specific path coefficients in testing our hypotheses for each of the four charities separately (Table III).

Conceptualized as a reflective measurement model, brand attitude should be assessed for both reliability and validity. Composite reliability of brand attitude was 0.98, which far

Table I Table of measurements – UNICEF

Construct	Item	Weight	Loading	<i>t</i> -value
<b>Brand salience (formative)</b>				
	Prominence	0.88		22.05
	Distinctiveness	0.39		5.24
<b>Brand attitude (reflective)</b>				
CR <sup>a</sup> = 0.98	Attitude 1		0.93	96.74
AVE <sup>b</sup> = 0.85	Attitude 2		0.91	59.38
	Attitude 3		0.92	60.38
	Attitude 4		0.92	63.32
	Attitude 5		0.93	98.35
	Attitude 6		0.94	122.07
	Attitude 7		0.90	55.93
	Attitude 8		0.94	98.31
<b>Brand choice intention (reflective)</b>				
CR <sup>a</sup> = 0.82	Choice intention		0.91	69.80
AVE <sup>b</sup> = 0.70	Donation magnitude		0.76	22.12

Notes: <sup>a</sup>CR = composite reliability; <sup>b</sup>AVE = average variance extracted

exceeds the acceptable cut-off of 0.7 (Henseler et al., 2009). Indicator reliability is also demonstrated, with each indicator’s standard loading greater than 0.7, as shown in Table I. Discriminant validity was satisfactory with the square root of the brand attitude’s AVE greater than its correlation with the reflective brand choice intention construct (0.92 > 0.51). The case is further strengthened by an examination of cross-loadings of the reflective measures in Table II. We found similar results when considering the constructs in the models for Oxfam, World Vision and Red Cross, with reliability and validity demonstrated throughout. Furthermore, our focal constructs demonstrated adequate distribution and variance: brand salience (mean: 0.47 and sd: 0.14), brand attitude (mean: 4.75 and sd: 1.02), donor decision involvement (mean: 5.15 and sd: 1.33) and brand choice intention (mean: 2.50 and sd: 0.99).

Conceptualized as a formative measurement model, brand salience cannot be meaningfully assessed for reliability and validity as latent variable indicators represent the causes of the construct, and hence, may not correlate highly (Hair et al., 2011). As is evident in Table I, both indicators conceptualized

Table II Loadings and cross-loadings for reflective measures – UNICEF

Reflective measures	Brand attitude	Brand choice intention
<b>Brand attitude</b>		
Attitude 1	0.93	0.48
Attitude 2	0.91	0.49
Attitude 3	0.92	0.43
Attitude 4	0.92	0.46
Attitude 5	0.93	0.49
Attitude 6	0.94	0.50
Attitude 7	0.90	0.47
Attitude 8	0.94	0.47
<b>Brand choice intention</b>		
Choice intention	0.53	0.91
Donation magnitude	0.30	0.76



to form the brand salience construct have significant path weights, and hence, make a meaningful contribution to the constructed index. Assessment of the level of multicollinearity amongst the formative indicators, determined by calculating a variance inflation factor (VIF), highlights the existence of redundancy. Excess collinearity can cause the influence of individual indicators on the latent variable to become indistinct (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001), thereby causing indicators to be non-significant and face exclusion. The VIF for both the indicators is 1.01, which is well below the threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2011).

Given the theoretical support for the current conceptualization of the brand, salience construct in conjunction with its performance against the relevant statistical criteria, the quality of the formative measurement model is evident. Of note, however, is that although prominence demonstrated significance in terms of weight and loading across all brands, the results for “distinctiveness” varied. We believe there to be significant support for its retention, despite displaying less influence on the construct for the bigger brands. Firstly, distinctiveness contributes meaningfully to the magnitude of the influence of the construct, especially for smaller brands. Secondly, an indicator demonstrating a lack of significant effect should have almost no effect on parameter estimates, thereby demonstrating no real benefit by its removal from the measurement model of such constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Finally, agreement on the inclusion of the indicator as evidenced in the tests of content and face validity supports its retention.

4.3.5 Non-response bias

Drawing from the recommendations of Mentzer et al. (2001), we assessed non-response bias by contacting a sample of 54 individuals from amongst those that had qualified for the second online survey but had not submitted or failed to complete it. These individuals were required to provide answers to the items composing the brand attitude scale, across the four brands (Appendix 4). *t*-tests of group mean revealed no significant differences between those who had responded to the original survey and those who had failed to respond to it. For this reason, non-response bias was not considered a problem.

4.4 Hypothesis testing

We used data from Stage 2 data collection to test the structural model, with relationships among constructs set up as hypothesized in the conceptual model in Figure 1. Table III

shows results of the hypothesized paths for the core model for all four brands.  $R^2$  values for brand choice intention could be considered high from a consumer behavior perspective varying from 0.293 for the Red Cross to 0.346 for World Vision. These values are particularly notable given the criterion variable has only two antecedents. The following sections discuss the results in greater detail, in line with hypotheses.

Support was found for *H1-H4* across all brands. Relative brand salience and brand attitude are positively related (*H1*), as is evident in Table III in the results obtained for all four charities. There is a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention (*H2*) and between brand salience and brand choice intention (*H3*) again for all four charities. The direct influence of brand attitude on brand choice intention appears stronger than that of brand salience on brand choice intention across all brands, although the magnitude of this difference does vary. However, both relationships demonstrate significance, and both contribute meaningfully to explaining the variation in the focal construct. By calculating the variance accounted for (VAF), we sought to determine the size of the indirect effect in relation to the total effect. The indirect effects of brand salience on brand choice intention were also evidence across Red Cross ( $\beta = 0.12$  and  $VAF = 0.28$ ), World Vision ( $\beta = 0.25$  and  $VAF = 0.58$ ), Oxfam ( $\beta = 0.24$  and  $VAF = 0.56$ ) and UNICEF ( $\beta = 0.20$  and  $VAF = 0.47$ ). As recommended by Hair et al. (2014), partial mediations take place in the current study as the VAF scores are in between 0.2 and 0.8; thus, our findings lend support to the consistent mediating role of brand attitude on the brand salience – brand choice intention relationship (*H4*).

To test *H5* and *H6*, we conducted moderation analysis with donor decision involvement as the contingency factor. An interaction term was created to test its significance as a moderator. As the measurement model of the independent variable brand salience is formative, a two-stage approach to create the interaction term with donor decision involvement is used as the pairwise multiplication of indicators is not feasible (Chin et al., 2003; Henseler and Chin, 2010). This is because of the assumption that formative indicators can be independent and can measure different factors, therefore, the product indicators of such sets may “not necessarily tap into the same underlying interaction effect” (Chin et al., 2003). This method is suitable for use with a mix of formative and reflective measurement models and given its high level of statistical power in comparison to other methods, shown to be

Table III Significance of paths and variance explained – all charity brands

Charity brand	<i>n</i>	Path significance						$R^2$ Brand choice intention	Indirect effect(VAF) Brand salience to the brand choice intention
		Brand salience to brand attitude		Brand attitude to the brand choice intention		Brand salience to the brand choice intention			
		$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>		
Red Cross	402	0.37	7.77	0.34	5.76	0.319	5.26	0.293	0.12(0.28)
World Vision	402	0.51	14.53	0.48	10.78	0.179	3.44	0.346	0.25(0.58)
Oxfam	402	0.51	14.80	0.47	10.67	0.189	3.60	0.345	0.24(0.56)
UNICEF	402	0.48	12.35	0.41	8.90	0.222	4.76	0.303	0.20(0.47)

Note: VAF = variance accounted for

particularly suitable where the significance of an interaction effect is the goal (Henseler and Chin, 2010). We include *t*-values of the interaction terms, along with the scores from Cohen’s *f*<sup>2</sup>-test across brands in Table IV, to demonstrate significance, as well as the effect size resulting from the inclusion of the moderator.

We found empirical support for *H5*, but not *H6* across all brands. As illustrated in the results obtained for UNICEF, donor decision involvement exerts a positive moderating effect on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention ( $\beta = 0.13$  and  $p < 0.01$ ), but the hypothesized negative moderating effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention is not significant. In terms of strength, the moderating effect has a weak, but the meaningful effect ( $0.02 \leq f^2 \leq 0.15$ ) on the model (Cohen, 1988), resulting in an improvement in the variance explained.

Despite a non-significant finding for the hypothesized negative moderating effect of donor decision involvement on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention, there is still an indication of a negative influence across all brands (Table IV). We decided to split the sample to observe the differences in path coefficients across “low” and “high” donor decision involvement conditions. A median split was performed on the data based on the additive scores given for the measure of donor decision involvement composed from four seven-point scales (median = 21). This was done to create a grouping variable, resulting in a low decision involvement ( $n = 178$  and mean = 16) and a high decision involvement group ( $n = 224$  and mean = 24.3). The path coefficients were estimated for each sub-sample as shown in Table V, where the differences between them can be interpreted as moderating effects across each of the four brands.

Differences in the path coefficients across groups reflect the valence of the interaction terms depicted earlier in Table IV. Although varying in magnitude across brands, the positive moderating effect of donor decision involvement on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention is clearly evident in Table V (e.g. UNICEF low:  $\beta = 0.28$  and  $p < 0.01$ ; UNICEF high:  $\beta = 0.48$  and  $p < 0.01$ ), while there is a consistent indication of the hypothesized negative moderating effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention across all brands (e.g. UNICEF low:  $\beta = 0.25$  and  $p < 0.01$ ; UNICEF high:  $\beta = 0.20$  and  $p < 0.01$ ).

A comparison of the path coefficients across all brands, but within each condition, provides further statistical support. The difference between non-independent path weights was tested for significance by bootstrapping with 5,000 samples. This non-parametric procedure allows for *p*-values to be calculated (Table V), based on the proportion of samples for which the

hypothesized relationship (e.g.  $\beta_{\text{Path A}} > \beta_{\text{Path B}}$ ) is not true in relation to the proportion for which it is. The differences in the path coefficients across low and high-donor decision involvement conditions are reinforced. For example, where there is no significant difference in the coefficients for the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention and that of brand salience and brand choice intention in the low decision involvement condition for UNICEF ( $p = 0.43$ ), there is a highly significant difference in the high decision involvement condition ( $p = 0.01$ ).

What is particularly evident in the path comparison is the relative effect of brand attitude and brand salience on brand choice intention. In the “low” condition, brand salience has a relatively greater effect on brand choice intention than brand attitude, although brand attitude exerts a stronger absolute influence on all brands except the Red Cross. The reverse is true in the “high” condition, where brand attitude has both a relatively and greater effect. Although *H6* was not supported, there is still an indication of a consistent, negative moderating effect attributable to the level of donor decision involvement and evident within the split samples.

4.5 Control variables

Demographic control variables were tested as further potential sources of influence. Although gender and age were found to be insignificant, income had a seemingly significant effect on the model. Categorical data bands reflecting the income ranges of respondents who chose to reveal their incomes ( $n = 325$ ) were collapsed into two groups, “high” and “low,” to allow for group comparison. With Australian gross household median income recorded as \$68,640 (Year Book Australia, 2012), respondents with gross household incomes of less than \$75,000 were considered “low” while those earning more were included within the “high” grouping. Similar to the split sample analysis of donor decision involvement, the path coefficients were estimated for each income-related sub-sample as shown in Table VI, where the differences between them can be observed.

By observation, the data reveal differences in the path coefficients across groups. Although varying in magnitude across brands, income appears to have a positive effect on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention (e.g. UNICEF low:  $\beta = 0.24$  and  $p < 0.01$ ; UNICEF high:  $\beta = 0.511$  and  $p < 0.01$ ) while exerting a negative effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention (e.g. UNICEF low:  $\beta = 0.332$  and  $p < 0.01$ ; UNICEF high:  $\beta = 0.194$  and  $p < 0.01$ ). Where respondents are characterized by lower incomes, there appears to be a comparatively stronger relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention, while for high-income groups the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention is relatively stronger.

Table IV Moderator significance of donor decision involvement (all charity brands)

Charity brand	<i>n</i>	Interaction with brand attitude		Interaction with brand salience		<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (with moderator)	<i>f</i> <sup>2</sup> score
		$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>		
Red Cross	402	0.12	2.40	−0.07	1.34	0.31	0.03
World Vision	402	0.13	2.42	−0.09	1.54	0.36	0.02
Oxfam	402	0.14	3.25	−0.06	1.15	0.36	0.03
UNICEF	402	0.13	2.97	−0.06	1.21	0.32	0.04

Table V Moderator significance of donor decision involvement – split sample (all charity brands)

Charity brand	Donor decision involves	n	Brand attitude to the brand choice intention		Brand salience to the brand choice intention		R <sup>2</sup>	Path comparison p-value
			β	t	β	t		
Red Cross	Low	178	0.199	2.087*	0.424	5.796**	0.283	0.01*
	High	224	0.387	6.301**	0.261	3.069**	0.288	0.17
World Vision	Low	178	0.412	5.471**	0.217	2.762**	0.301	0.09*
	High	224	0.536	10.191**	0.126	2.038*	0.377	0.00**
Oxfam	Low	178	0.33	4.399**	0.242	2.921**	0.239	0.28
	High	224	0.564	10.338**	0.149	2.126*	0.433	0.00**
UNICEF	Low	178	0.278	3.629**	0.248	3.124**	0.202	0.43
	High	224	0.48	8.374**	0.201	3.476**	0.364	0.01*

Notes: \* = significant at 0.05 level; \*\* = significant at 0.01 level

Table VI Moderator significance of income (all charity brands)

Charity brand	Income	n	Brand attitude to the brand choice intention		Brand salience to the brand choice intention		R <sup>2</sup>	Path comparison p-value
			β	t	β	t		
Red Cross	Low	185	0.239	2.835**	0.347	4.313**	0.225	0.20
	High	140	0.554	5.814**	0.153	1.102	0.411	0.03*
World Vision	Low	185	0.479	6.894**	0.212	3.006**	0.378	0.03*
	High	140	0.534	7.557**	0.037	0.391	0.308	0.00**
Oxfam	Low	185	0.434	7.327**	0.278	3.722**	0.392	0.12
	High	140	0.562	8.036**	0.069	0.806	0.358	0.00**
UNICEF	Low	185	0.24	3.194**	0.332	4.448**	0.248	0.24
	High	140	0.511	7.794**	0.194	2.801**	0.395	0.01**

Notes: \* = significant at 0.05 level; \*\* = significant at 0.01 level

Once again, a bootstrapped comparison of the path coefficients between brand salience and brand attitude with brand choice intention across all brands, but within each condition, provides further support. For example, where there is no significant difference in the coefficients for the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention and that of brand salience and brand choice intention in the low-income condition for UNICEF ( $p = 0.24$ ), there is a highly significant difference in the high-income condition ( $p = 0.01$ ). This result demonstrates the reduced effect of brand salience, but increased effect of brand attitude in the high-income condition, with attitude in the ascendancy in the reverse condition.

Although potentially unexpected within the context of charity choice, these findings are consistent with prevailing research in information processing. Because of the tendency for income and education to be positively correlated, as demonstrated in numerous studies (Cooil *et al.*, 2007), consumers with higher incomes tend to have a greater understanding and consciousness of the product quality within a category as they are better able to process information in relation to low-income, less educated consumers (Walsh and Mitchell, 2005). For this reason, such individuals should have more strongly developed attitudes toward category brands, with these being relatively more influential for choice. In contrast, low-income earners are less able to process large amounts of information, and hence, are more likely to use simplifying heuristics when making buying or donation

decisions (Walsh *et al.*, 2008). This is motivated by the desire to avoid excess information processing and the associated “cost of thinking” (Walsh *et al.*, 2008). These findings are discussed in greater detail in the section to follow.

We also made a comparison on the relative contribution of prominence and distinctiveness to the brand salience construct across the four brands, ranked by turnover (size). In Table VII, prominence is clearly the more dominant of the two formative indicators, in contributing to brand salience compared to that of distinctiveness. Interestingly, the strength of prominence appears to be more important for larger charities, whereas distinctiveness appears to be more prevalent for smaller charities.

## 5. Discussion and implications

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

In the 50 years since the call first went out for the concept of marketing to be broadened to include charitable causes (Kotler and Levy, 1969), the nature and scope of the charity sector have evolved significantly. The emergence of composite models of giving and donor decision-making behavior within marketing journals in the mid-to-late 1990s (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Sargeant, 1999) synthesized disparate strands of literature within the field and arguably increased the profile of this aspect of non-profit marketing. These models tended to and continue to be causal in nature (Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007a) and grounded in cognitive choice theory, such as that of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2002). However, these and many of

Table VII Comparison of weights and loadings for formative indicators across charity brands

Indicator	Charity	Turnover (2010) \$'000's	Weight	t-value	Loading	t-value
<i>Prominence</i>	UNICEF	23	0.88	22.05**	0.92	29.77**
	Oxfam	82	0.94	28.06**	0.98	60.98**
	World Vision	347	0.96	36.17**	0.99	70.17**
	Red Cross	798	0.99	37.55**	1.00	94.58**
<i>Distinctiveness</i>	UNICEF	22	0.39	5.24**	0.47	6.14**
	Oxfam	82	0.20	2.44*	0.39	4.61**
	World Vision	347	0.17	2.19*	0.31	3.46**
	Red Cross	798	0.06	0.57	0.22	2.02*

Notes: \* = significant at 0.05 level; \*\* = significant at 0.01 level

the studies that followed afford much attention to “why” people donate money to charity and how to maintain loyalty once they have started to give, and little to “how” they donate (Hibbert and Horne, 1996, p. 5), such as how the choice between charities is made. Our research extends the literature on charitable giving by providing insight into how new donors choose between charities for donation. We believe this to be the first time that brand salience is combined with attitudes in a choice model. Donor decision involvement, a sector-specific adaptation of purchase decision involvement, was also included as a potential moderator of these relationships. The significant moderating effect of contingency factors demonstrates how potential new donors to charity should not be treated as a homogenous group. Although donor decision involvement is found to exert a significant moderating effect on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention only, we found a consistent, negative effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand attitude. This is evident when examining a split sample of the data, divided into “low” and “high” donor decision involvement. In the low decision involvement sub-sample, brand salience has a relatively greater effect, while in the high decision involvement sub-sample, brand attitude has a relatively greater effect. A demographic variable that had not been hypothesized, income was found to exert a positive moderating effect on the relationship between brand attitude and brand choice intention and a negative effect on the relationship between brand salience and brand choice intention. The significant moderating effect of contingency factors demonstrates how potential new donors to charity should not be treated as a homogenous group.

Our study is also a response to the call by Vieceli and Shaw (2010) to modeling both brand salience and brand attitude within the same model demonstrates the potential links that exist between these constructs, and with brand choice intention. We believe that the interplay between brand salience, brand attitude, donor decision involvement and brand choice intention may hold the key to advancing the understanding of new donor choice. Importantly, our result was replicated across four brands within the international aid and development category, demonstrating a measure of its generalizability. More broadly our research also fits with recent advancements in capturing the impact of brand strength in the non-profit and charity sector suggest (Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Wymer et al., 2016) where non-profit brand

strength is shown to be antecedent to a target group’s affective dispositions and behavioral intentions toward the non-profit brand. Our findings provide some evidence supporting the impact of brand prominence/distinctiveness independently and together with brand attitudes in forming donation behavior.

Finally, our study also addresses the influence of memory in the choice decision, which is an important but overlooked issue. We believe this aspect to be particularly important for new donors as they may rely more heavily on memory-based heuristics for choice because of a lack of category knowledge and the ability to easily compare charity brands. Brand salience, the propensity for a brand to “be noticed or come to mind in buying situations (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2004, p. 327) is one such memory-related mechanism. It is increasingly considered to be both a valid and effective form of distinction between competing for category brands (Ehrenberg et al., 1997; Sharp and Dawes, 2001), where the relative prominence of the brand in memory increases the propensity for that brand to be thought or chosen. Our study is an extension of existing conceptualizations, measuring brand salience as a formative measurement model to best represent the latent variable in the structural equation model. Where prominence is clearly the more dominant of the two formative indicators, distinctiveness makes a particularly significant contribution to the brand salience construct for the smaller brands, and hence, should be retained to prevent underreporting of the influence of the construct. Although the projection of organizational values remains an important means of influencing an enduring positive attitude toward a charity on the part of a potential donor, the relationship of brand salience with charity choice cannot be ignored if acquisition of new donors is to be taken seriously as an organizational objective.

### 5.2 Practical implications

Managers must be conscious of how brand salience is built and the implications of this for communication and marketing strategy. Increasing the quantity and quality of links to and from the brand in memory and regularly refreshing them is the most quoted means by which to achieve this (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003, 2004; Sharp, 2010; Vriens et al., 2019), where the quality of links refers to how unique the concepts and associations linked to a brand are. Practically, the charity brand and its distinctive properties should be given frequent exposure in media and communications to build the links between the

brand node and associations in memory to increase the chances of being thought of (Sharp, 2010). The brand must be presented regularly to refresh links and consistently to ensure it is recognized and associations correctly linked to it.

Managers should also strive to understand the level of decision involvement on the part of potential donors regarding different charitable appeals and causes, given the effect this may have on the relative influence of brand attitude on brand choice intention. For example, the urgent and immediate nature of the need resulting from a significant natural disaster (Micklewright and Wright, 2005) may result in potential donors becoming involved with the cause but have little interest or involvement in the charity choice decision as their primary motivation is to give as quickly as possible. In such situations, brand attitude would be expected to have a lesser relative influence on the choice decision, although still important, with brand salience relatively more influential. Charity marketing communications should focus more on distinctive brand cues for the brand to be noticed, rather than content laden messaging. Maintaining a consistent media and advertising presence increases the chance that donors will think of and ultimately choose the brand when such unexpected events occur. In contrast, a potential donor may be highly involved in the choice decision of which cancer-related charity to bequeath a donation to in his or her will. In such situations, brand attitude would be expected to have a greater influence on choice, given the time available to make the decision and the likely influence of emotion. Targeted promotional material to such individuals, for example, should provide a greater quantity of information pertaining to the performance, professionalism and trustworthiness of the organization to influence the evaluative attitude of the donor regarding the charity brand.

The nature of marketing or fundraising communications and advertising should also vary, based on the income level of the targeted group. Given research findings, managers should target wealthier individuals with messages characterized by a greater level of content and explanation of brand values. In contrast, charities should focus on developing communication designed primarily to grow and strengthen the number of associative links with the brand, thereby increasing the prominence of the brand in memory for lower-income individuals. The value in targeting each group specifically, rather than a “one-size-fits-all” approach is evident as both contribute significantly, but differently to charity. Although donors with high incomes generally give more to charity and in larger individual amounts than those on low incomes (Bennett, 2011), less affluent individuals consistently give a higher percentage of their income to charity and have a higher participation rate than their wealthier counterparts. An explanation for this can stem from feelings of solidarity and affiliation on the part of the poor in relation to others in need (Bennett, 2011). This trend appears to be universal, observed in the USA, Australia and the UK (Ward, 2001; Davis, 2010). Tactical managers may want to specifically target lower-income communities for donation. These gifts, although small, maybe easier to win than donations from the wealthy, who may have far more developed attitudes toward charity brands than the poor and be more dismissive of communication received.

## 6. Limitations and future research

As with any study, this research is subject to limitations given the choices made during and constraints placed upon the study. Firstly, the contextual nature of the brand salience construct required the selection of a specific donation situation in which to base the study, which in this case was the aftermath of a natural disaster. Representative charity brands were prompted, but this is not expected to impact on validity (Romaniuk *et al.*, 2004). Secondly, although considerable time and effort was expended on ensuring the survey scenario stimulus was realistic and facilitated transportation (Green, 2004; Green and Brock, 2000), it is still only an approximation of a real event with the potential for associated error. Thirdly, although the respondent sample of new donors was drawn to approximate the demographic profile of Australian givers to charity, the potential for a cohort effect exists, as they were all sourced via an online panel. Finally, the data used is cross-sectional, as opposed to longitudinal. Therefore, certain brands may demonstrate relatively higher or lower levels of brand salience, depending on whether there has been a recent communications campaign by a certain charity, for example.

There is much scope for extension of this work or future research in relation to it. A longitudinal analysis of the effect of time on the relative influences of brand attitude and brand salience on brand choice intention could be conducted, particularly in relation to the influence of charity brand-related communication or advertising over that time, and the nature of the advertising content. The model can also be applied to other giving situations and causes, such as cancer research and animal welfare, to compare the results obtained with those for natural disasters. Appeals for international aid in comparison with local welfare causes may also provide an interesting comparison. We believe the inclusion of brand salience as a variable within the prevailing content and structural models of donor behavior within the sector (Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007b) would be of particular value to provide a more holistic view of why and how people donate.

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## Appendix 1

Figure A1 Survey stimulus scenario

### Disaster unfolding in Bali

It has now been two days since a Tsunami slammed into the coast of Bali and southern Java in Indonesia. The tsunami was similar in size to that which hit the northern part of the country in 2004, and more powerful than the Tsunami that hit Japan earlier this year.



With the death toll rising and many people still missing, the southern coastline is unrecognisable. The Tsunami has flattened holiday resorts and whole neighbourhoods. Electricity and communication lines have been cut, causing residents to wander the waterlogged streets in search of food and missing family members. For many, the only possessions they have left are the clothes they are wearing.

The town of Denpasar, particularly the area around Kuta Beach, has been destroyed. Locals and tourists, including a number of Australians, were given only 10 minutes to escape the wall of water after the Tsunami warning system failed. For many, this was not enough time to get to higher ground.



Almost no building survived the Tsunami without extensive damage. Wayan Pedjeng, a carpenter, stands on the street where he used to sell wooden furniture. His shop is gone, but of greatest concern to him is his son, who he has not heard from since the wave hit.

For those lucky enough to escape the Tsunami, very little food or clean drinking water is available. Medical attention is needed for the injured, while thousands of frightened children need to be reunited with their parents. Shelters must be built to house the homeless and more rescue teams are needed to search for survivors.

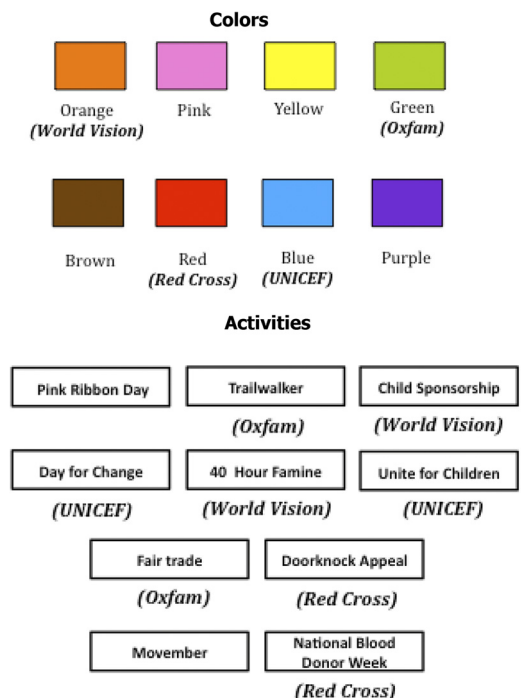
Apart from the immediate need, Bali will require continued support. It is going to take a long time to rebuild the homes and lives of the many people so tragically affected by this disaster. However, if Bali is to return to the happy, thriving island it once was, help from the rest of the world is vital.

## Appendix 2. Brand salience – prominence-related attributes

- When help is needed immediately.
- When children are in danger.
- When people have lost everything.
- When long-term assistance is needed.
- When people need to feel safe.
- When those affected are very poor.
- When basic services need to be restored (water, electricity and shelter).
- When people have no food.
- When a large portion of the community is affected.
- When those affected are in remote areas.

## Appendix 3

Figure A2 Brand salience – distinctiveness



#### Appendix 4. Charity brand attitudes – items reflecting evaluative brand beliefs

- This charity has a good reputation (Pr).
- This charity appears professional (Pr).
- This charity is an expert in the field (Pr).
- This charity knows a lot about dealing with need (Pr).
- This charity is likely to have an impact on this cause (Pe).
- This charity acts in the best interest of those in need (Pe).
- This charity uses donations appropriately (Pe).
- This charity has a good track record of delivery (Pe).

Pr = original professionalism dimension and Pe = original performance dimension.

#### About the authors

**Gary Gregory** is Senior Lecturer in the School of Marketing at the Business School of University of New South Wales, Australia. His research interests are in branding, advertising and cross-cultural consumer behavior. His work has been published in *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *Journal*

*of Product and Brand Management*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, amongst others. Gary Gregory is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: [g.gregory@unsw.edu.au](mailto:g.gregory@unsw.edu.au)

**Liem Ngo** is an Associate Professor in the School of Marketing at the Business School of University of New South Wales, Australia. His research focuses on resources and capabilities management in relation to marketing, innovation and entrepreneurship in cross-cultural contexts with particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region. His research has appeared in *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Long Range Planning*, *British Journal of Management*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, among others.

**Ryan Miller** is currently Head of Customer Strategy and Innovation at Anglicare Sydney, a large Australian not-for-profit organization supporting tens of thousands of people at all stages of life. He has extensive experience in the fields of product and service innovation, customer experience, brand management, property development, market research, channel management and sales within the not-for-profit welfare, aged care, fast moving consumer goods and education sectors.

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