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public perceptions of humanitarian and
international development NGOs**

**Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)**

Original citation: Seu, Irene Bruna, Flanagan, Frances and Orgad, Shani (2015) *The Good Samaritan and the Marketer: public perceptions of humanitarian and international development NGOs*. [International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing](#) . ISSN 14654520

DOI: [10.1002/nvsm.1520](https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1520)

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This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6268/>
Available in LSE Research Online: August 2015

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***The ‘Good Samaritan’ and the ‘Marketer’*: public perceptions of humanitarian and international development NGOs**

Irene BrunaSeu, Frances Flanagan, ShaniOrgad

Abstract

This article reports on a nationwide study investigating public responses to humanitarian communications. Based on focus groups data with members of the UK public, the paper discusses two key models through which NGOs identities and activities are understood and judged, both positively and negatively: the *Good Samaritan* and the *Marketer*. The thematic analysis of the focus groups extracts exposes the salience of these models in people's thinking, how they speak to each other, and how they inform and affect the relationship between NGOs and public. The paper discusses the themes in relation to current debates on organisations' image, and trust and confidence in non-profit organisation and humanitarian agencies. The data show the public's deep disillusionment and disappointment deriving from the recognition of the *Marketer* model being applied to and employed within the realm of humanitarianism. This suggests that completely moving away from traditional notions of charity might be premature and counterproductive.

Introduction

This article reports on a nationwide study conducted in the UK¹ to investigate public responses to humanitarian and international development issues and their communications². The qualitative project had a broad scope and was interested in how members of the public understand and respond – cognitively, emotionally, and through actions – to humanitarian communications and how these responses relate to audiences' everyday morality and biography.

This article focuses on participants' perceptions of NGOs and how these affect both their relationship with the agencies and with humanitarian causes in general. The paper builds on the extensive literature on public trust and confidence in charities (Sargeant and Lee, 2002, 2004, 2004a 2008), touching on issues of charity branding and values (Venable *et al.* 2007; Sargeant *et al.* 2008, Hudson and West, 2008) in the context of a recognised climate of increased competition in the non-profit and voluntary sector in the UK (Bennet & Gabriel, 2003) and the adoption of management and marketing methods (Saxton 2004; Bennet, 1998). The analysis of participants' perceptions of NGOs discussed here identifies two key models of humanitarian agencies, descriptively anthropomorphised into the figures of *the good Samaritan* and *the Marketer*. Although some of our conclusions concur with some of the extant work in the field, particularly the perception of the figure of the *Good Samaritan* and its qualities as positive, the work described here is unique in several respects. First, it identifies a new key model through which NGOs identities and activities are understood by the UK public, *the Marketer*, which hasn't been recognised and researched so far.. Second,

¹ For further information on '*Mediated Humanitarian Knowledge; audience responses and moral actions*' study please refer to the project website: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/psychosocial/our-research/research-projects/mediated-humanitarian-knowledge>. We are grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for generously funding this project (grant F/07 112/Y)

² For sake of brevity, in this paper the term 'humanitarian' will refer to both humanitarian and international development causes.

the qualitative and exploratory data presented here emerged ‘naturally’ from the participants rather than being prompted by specific questions from the researchers, which might explain to some extent why this model of humanitarian operations has not been picked up by deductive studies. This quality, together with the emergent and ubiquitous nature of the statements in the focus groups, highlights the importance of this previously unidentified perception of NGOs.

Third, we also differ from existing work as we don’t focus on the role of these perceptions in stimulating donations, which largely characterises current research. On the contrary, we don’t take monetary donations to be intrinsically signifiers of responsiveness and, indeed, have found that monetary donations can be an effective way of only fleetingly engaging with humanitarian issues (Seu & Orgad, 2014). Instead, we wanted to explore more broadly public responsiveness to and engagement with humanitarian issues, and resulting moral actions. To this end, the focus groups were participant-led and, although following a semi-structured schedule of questions, respected the natural flow of the conversation and created space for the emergence of naturally occurring themes.

We found that, invariably, focus group discussions started unprompted with a commentary on NGOs. Hence, although not exclusively interested in donor behaviour, similarly to what has been documented by Sargeant *et al.*(2006), we also found that participants to our study were preoccupied with the behaviour of humanitarian agencies, and repeatedly touched on issues of trust and how this affected their attitude towards humanitarianism in general. These issues are the focus of this paper.

Public perceptions of NGOs, trust and commitment.

The voluntary sector plays a highly significant role in modern society, dealing with difficult social issues and occupying a distinct space, separate from government and private sector enterprise (Sargeant & Lee, 2004, 200a). Although small when compared with either of these, the sector possesses a moral authority that belies its relative size (Hind, 1995). Indeed, it has been argued that voluntary organisations play a pivotal role in generating broader trust (Fukuyama, 1995) and that, when non-profit organisations fail, the breach of public trust can be devastating (Herzlinger, 1996)

According to a survey conducted by the Charity Commission in the UK (2010), charities enjoy a high level of trust from the public, as the third most trusted group after doctors and the police. However, a recent study carried out in the UK found that the relationship between the UK public and humanitarian and international development NGOs is in crisis (Seu & Orgad, 2014), a view shared by others, including NGOs themselves (see Crompton, 2010; Darton & Kirk, 2011; Orgad and Vella, 2012). Saxton (2004) argues that “ironically it is the very success of professionalization in delivering the goods in terms of income and effectiveness, direction and impact that is the root of the problem” (Saxton, 2004: 188).

Many (e.g. Bruce, 1994; Mullin, 1995; Sumption, 1995) have commented on the critical role played by trust in “defining both the credibility and legitimacy of the charity sector and in affording it a higher moral tone in the minds of key stakeholder groups such as supporters, the media and the general public.” (Sargeant & Lee, 2004a:614). According to the Charity commission (2002, 2001) the maintenance of public goodwill necessary to support both donating and volunteering activity is consistently tied directly to the presence of, and the promotion of, trust as the enduring and central relationship that sustains the sector as a whole

(Sargeant, 2004a:186). Recent studies lend further support to the idea that the strength of a donor's commitment to the relationship with a non-profit is a function of a complex causal structure driven by trust (Sargeant, 2004, 2004a), which is fostered, amongst other factors, by the perceived ethics/judgement of the organisation, and the extent to which the purpose of the organisation is felt to be benevolent (Kennedy, Forrell & LeClair, 2001; McFall, 1987; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

However, over the last 20 years the way that charities and humanitarian and international development NGOs³ work has changed beyond recognition (Calhoun, 2010, Chouliaraki, 2012) in a move away from the traditional 'charity' model. Competition among general charities *vis-à-vis* attracting public donations is intense (Bennet & Gabriel, 2003) due to the proliferation of charities resulting from the British government's withdrawal from many areas of medical and social welfare (Sargeant, 1995), and the adoption by charities of a market focus and the latest management and marketing methods (Bennet & Gabriel, 2003, 1998; Bennett, 1998) According to Saxton (2004) non-profits and charities now run operations like professional businesses; they set performance target, employ professionals –fundraisers, marketers, campaigners, CEOs – to do their work.

Reflecting on the historical and political changes affecting humanitarianism Calhoun (2010) has similarly pointed out that, differently from the old fashioned model of charitable practices, since the 1980s organisations have been increasingly concerned with achieving best practice, with many of their executives coming from backgrounds in consultancy, advertising and communications industries. Hilton *et al.* (2012) claim that the ethos of 'business' in the British NGO sector broadly coincided with the Thatcher years, when the government attacked public sector services, expecting NGOs to provide public services, but do so in a manner which increased accountability requirements. A wave of professionalism and managerialism then became further entrenched in the 1990s (Benthall, 1993).

The political implications for NGOs immersion in commercial norms have been analysed by numerous commentators. For example, on the basis of in-depth interviews with top communications managers of major international aid agencies, Cottle and Nolan (2007) found that these organisations were foremost structured by corporate media practices and priorities, concluding that these agencies were deeply ensnared in global media logic. In marketing terms, organisations strive to project a strong and positive corporate identity, because this is the ideal image that an organisation wants its public to hold (Johnson & Zinkham, 1990) and is crucial in determining whether people enter into a relationship with an organisation or not (Venable *et al.* 2005). But people's *perception* of this identity is complicated (Seu & Orgad, 2014)

According to Saxton (2004), although non-profits and their communicators – most notably fundraisers – tend to play down and gloss over the size, shape, scale and sophistication of modern charities, this has complicated considerably charities' relationship with the public. Humans need symbolic representations to simplify buying decisions and a persons' image of an organisation can be viewed as a preliminary heuristic for deciding whether to become involved with the organisation (Venable *et al.* (2008). Venable *et al.* (2008:307) found that

³The specific use of the term NGO in this paper refers to humanitarian and international development NGOs. However, when referring to relevant research and only when used by the author we will use the broader term of 'charities'.

the respondents in their study ascribed human personality traits to non-profit organisations and that many of the dimensions used to describe the non-profit organisations were similar to those previously found for consumer brands Aaker (1997: 347) defines ‘brand personality’ as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (quoted in Venable *et al.*, 2008: 298), and Berger & Gainer (2002) have found that, because giving carries important psychosocial meanings, donors are drawn to brands that are perceived as having a personality encompassing values congruent to their own, be they actual or aspired (De Chernatony *et al.*, 2004, quoted in Sargeant *et al.* 2007)

The organisation’s ‘brand personality’ has also been found to be intimately connected to trust and commitment to the organisation (Sargeant *et al.* 2008), a crucial components of which is its image. *Image* concerns the knowledge, feelings, and beliefs about an organisation that exist in the thoughts of its audience (Bennet & Gabriel, 2003, Hatch & Schultz, 1997); that is “the set of meanings through which people know, describe, remember and relate to an organisation (Dowling, 1986, quoted in Bennett & Gabriel, 2003: 277). Because image is the *mental representation* which can be manipulated in the minds of an organisations’ audiences, it has been argued that “an organisation’s image needs to be consciously managed.” (Nennet & Gabriel, 2003)

Sargeant *et al.* (2008) conducted a qualitative exploratory study to investigate whether brand personality traits (e.g. ‘trustworthiness’ or ‘caring’), that are ostensibly ‘charitable’ in nature, generate higher levels of support for the agency. They found that participants employed the notion of ‘charity’ to imbue the organization with a distinctive set of characteristics, which were regarded as the necessary base to include the organisation in their consideration set. Additionally, responsive and engaging, ability to effect a change, approachable, compassionate, helpful and, importantly, the perception of heroism, were considered desirable characteristics in the organisation.

Stride (2006), who also looked at the relationship between charities’ branding and values, questioned whether branding is an appropriate and effective tool in the charity context and argued that it is precisely the non-negotiability of charity values that differentiates them from commercial organisations (see also Vestergaard, 2008). Chouliaraki (2012), in her study of what she terms ‘post-humanitarian’ communication, also discusses the role of brand recognition in spectators’ response to humanitarian. She argues that, when using post-humanitarian communication, humanitarian agencies are positioning themselves within the world of corporate branding and ‘obeying market logic’ with detrimental effects on an ethical discourse on public action.

In summary, a confusing picture emerges from these different strands of literature. One strand of work, although rarely supported by empirical evidence, critiques and problematizes the increased professionalization of NGOs internal operations and the changing norms in NGOs communications, and draw conclusions on how the commercialisation of NGOs has affected public perception of NGOs and their operations. However, because of the paucity of empirically-based data, it is difficult to get a real sense from these studies of the extent and the nature of these tensions.

On the contrary, the second strand of work provides robust empirically based insights into the role of trust, image and brand in donor perceptions of the organisation. However, these studies don’t problematize the marketization of NGOs and openly aim at finding effective strategies towards increasing donations. With few exceptions, these studies are deductive in

nature and predominantly quantitative and the interest in public-agencies relationship appears to be instrumental.

Overall, as Sargeant *et al.* (2007, 2006) have pointed out, a noticeable gap in research still exists that concerns the role that the characteristics of a recipient organisation might play in stimulating donations and developing trust. In particular there is little empirical evidence and understanding of how members of the public, donors and non-donors, view NGOs, how they understand and assess their activities, and how these opinions and perceptions affect their relationship with and to NGOs.

Method

This paper presents a study⁴ that seeks to address this lacuna. It discusses data from a nationwide study in the UK on public responses to humanitarian and international development communication⁵. It seeks to understand, amongst other things, how the UK public relates to distant suffering, and how it understands and reacts to humanitarian communication. As well as interviewing representatives from ten UK-based international humanitarian, international development and human rights NGOs, the study gathered data both through focus groups and individual interviews with the public. Three key research questions directed the investigation. We wanted to know, firstly, what reactions and responses were generated in members of the public by humanitarian communications. We were particularly interested to find out what emotions are evoked by humanitarian issues and their communications and how do people manage them. Second, we were interested to know what socio-cultural scripts do people use to make sense of humanitarian communications and what are the ideological, emotional and biographical underpinnings of these responses. Part of this involved investigating how people get to think and behave the way they do in terms of their biography and their own history of engagement with humanitarian issues. Third, we wanted to understand the relationship between the moral scripts audiences draw on and those informing humanitarian organizations and how audiences' responses to humanitarian appeals relate to those intended by humanitarian organizations.

The first two research questions were investigated through focus groups and individual interviews with members of the UK public, the third through individual interviews with representatives from International humanitarian and international development NGOs, and a comparison between the audience and practitioners data sets. The focus groups took place first, then the individual interviews with practitioners and, lastly, the individual biographical interviews with a selection of participants who had taken place in the focus groups.

The data discussed here comes from the 20 focus groups (each with 9 participants) with members of the UK public. Groups were selected to represent a range of age, gender, socio-economic class, sexual orientation and family formations. Although the interviewers (first author [xx] and second author[xx]) loosely followed a schedule of questions, participants

⁴We are grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for funding this project through the research grant (F/07 112/Y)

⁵ Although there are important differences between humanitarian and international development causes, here the term 'humanitarian' will be used as a shorthand to refer to both. This is partly for the sake of brevity, but also and more importantly, because participants discussed humanitarian and international development causes (and indeed charities in general) interchangeably.

were encouraged to develop the discussion in as natural way as possible, with questions being asked at opportune moments in order not to break the natural flow of the interaction.

Participants were given a folder containing 12 examples of communications from the 8 key humanitarian agencies (Oxfam, Save the Children, Disasters Emergency Committee, Plan UK, ActionAid, Medicine sans Frontiers, UNICEF⁶, Amnesty International) collaborating on the study. All these agencies are registered charities in the UK. The appeals were given in different and random order for each participant to prevent bias. Participants were given time to look through the folder and were asked to pay attention to their thoughts and feelings while reading the information. Collaborating agencies were asked to select communications that represented their work for us to use as props during the focus groups. Out of these the research team (the three authors and the project's consultant) selected the 12 examples as enabling technique, but also to reproduce what members of the UK public are normally exposed to.

One of the aims of the focus group discussions was to gather views, attitudes and emotional reactions towards NGOs and charities in general. The schedule contained specific questions asking which NGOs participants recognised and trusted, as well as to which they donated, but only a small minority of the quotes discussed in this paper were in response to individual questions about NGOs and their communications. Noticeably, almost invariably, impressions, perceptions and experiences of humanitarian agencies were spontaneously offered by participants as a way of opening group discussions, and these 'naturally occurring' comments also peppered the whole discussion. These opening remarks often consisted, as it is frequently the case in focus groups, of general comments and 'stock answers', that is familiar general comments, although often expressed in the first person, on what the participants understood to be the topic of the research. Additionally, participants frequently returned to the topic of NGOs whilst discussing other issues. Overall, the focus group data suggest that NGOs and the charitable sector figure large in the public imagination and that their actions and communications elicit strong emotional reactions.

The data was read many times by the interviewer and the research assistant (authors 1 and 2) and thematically analysed. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns(themes) within data. Many qualitative analyses start from a thematic analysis of some sort – e.g. Discourse Analysis, Grounded Theory, IPA - that is, a 'chunking' of the data according to specific selection criteria. However, these selections are theoretically and epistemologically bounded (e.g. IPA is underpinned by a phenomenological epistemology). Contrary to these, "thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework. [...]Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality". (Braun and Clark, 2006:81)

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. The most basic criterion for a chunk of text to be considered a theme is the frequency in which that pattern appears across the interviews. However, the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily

⁶ With the exception of UNICEF, representatives from these agencies were interviewed and actively participate in the project's knowledge exchange and action research activities. We also interviewed representatives from CARE International and CONCERN Worldwide, but the pack did not contain their communications.

dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun and Clark, 2006:82). Thematic analysis is particularly useful when studying under-research topics, especially when an inductive approach is applied and themes are identified in a ‘bottom up’ way (eg, Frith and Gleeson, 2004).

“In this approach, if the data have been collected specifically for the research (eg, via interview or focus group), the themes identified may bear little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants. They would also not be driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest in the area or topic. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions. In this sense, this form of thematic analysis is data-driven” (Braun and Clark, 2006:83). All these criteria – frequency, relevance, richness, data driven – were applied in the selection of the two themes discussed in this paper.

To begin with and to ensure triangulation when analysing the data, the team made a random selection of 6 focus groups which the three authors coded independently. The resulting combination formed the basis of our first grouping of broad themes, which were then applied to another set of 6 focus groups, also coded independently by the three authors. The original set of themes was then refined and divided into high level and subordinate categories and themes, and applied to the whole of the focus groups data.

The two themes discussed in this paper – ‘the Good Samaritan’ and ‘the marketer’ are a selection from all the instances in which opinions about NGOs were directly or indirectly expressed. Numerically, the two themes are significant for opposite reasons. One theme – *the Marketer* – was mentioned in all focus groups, while the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ theme appeared in only a few instances. Although our primary concern is to identify key ways in which the UK public understand NGOs and their activities, based on their talk in the focus groups, these understandings and descriptions are not neutral, but carry implicit value judgements. It is not just that many participants openly suggested a causal link between these perceptions of NGOs, their feelings of trust and distrust towards NGOs, and their own responses to donations. We suggest that the themes discussed here might operate as ‘scripts’ or ‘frames’ (Lakoff, 2008), whose function is to provide a ready-made understanding of how some part of the world works (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). According to Lakoff (2008) frames have roles, relations between these roles, and scenarios carried out by those playing the roles. Frames can only be understood contextually and in relation to others.

Overall, participants’ comments made use of two distinct and contrasting models to characterise NGOs in positive and negative ways. Positive views of NGOs and their activities were organised around descriptions of NGOs as *Good Samaritans*. As captured by its dictionary definition - “charitable or helpful person (with reference to Luke 10:33)” -, the figure of the *Good Samaritan* in ordinary parlance is shorthand for pure altruism. The Christian parable tells the story of how a Samaritan spontaneously helped an injured stranger, from a different ethnic group to his own, at a cost to himself and without expectation of reward or compensation. Although participants never literally used this definition, the figure of the *Good Samaritan* encompasses many of the positive qualities attributed by participants to NGOs when viewed as helping strangers with no benefit to oneself.

On the other hand, strong negative views were expressed in terms of accountability and the increased marketization of NGOs, what we have called ‘*the Marketer*’ model of NGOs. The two sets of views were not equivalent in their expression across the groups. Whilst negative

views were continuously and consistently mentioned within and across different focus groups, the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ characterisation of NGOs only appeared in 4 out of the 18 focus groups.

We start our analysis with the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ theme primarily because it was consistently presented and experienced, implicitly or explicitly, as the ‘true spirit’ of charitable work and because it illustrates ways in which NGOs were perceived by audiences to ‘get it right’. It is through the stark contrast with the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ characterisation that NGOs as ‘*Marketer*’ comes across as one of the most disliked aspect of agencies work.

The next section presents the two themes at their ‘face value’. It is not our aim to question the truthfulness or accuracy of the extracts. Rather we intend to take note of these two polarised views of NGOs as they emerged in the focus groups discussions, and how they speak to each other. In the final section of this paper we will discuss the themes in relation to current debates on humanitarianism and their implications for humanitarian communications

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The following 8 extracts represent those participants’ responses that most explicitly illustrate the *Good Samaritan* theme, which appeared only in 4 focus groups. The largest concentration (4 extracts) was in group C⁷ (a group composed of women over 65 with average income) followed by group B (females between 56-65 with low income), group I (females between 46-55 with high incomes) and J (males between 26-35, with low income). It should be noted that with the exception of Jonathan’s, all the quotes in this category came from women. Considering that the 18 focus groups discussions lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, these preliminary findings illustrate that, however powerful and cherished this view of NGOs may be in public imagination, it is far from dominant and widespread in terms of how humanitarian agencies are currently perceived.

Differently from the extracts using the ‘*Marketer*’ theme, which were found throughout the focus group discussions, all the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ comments stemmed from a request to look through the pack of communications to identify which ‘worked’. We chose not to impose our definition of what ‘working’ means; rather we wanted to let the participants define it for themselves through their engagement with the communication. Some participants focussed on style, others on content, some took ‘working’ to mean what made them give money, others responded in terms of what causes they would respond to and so on. For the vast majority of participants, however, their view, knowledge and experience of the agency making the communication was closely linked to their response to the communication.

The following have been selected on the basis of positive views of specific agencies. The aim here is not to draw attention to a particular agency, but to illustrate the kind of qualities participants seem to judge as positive and why.

Bruna Bridget, which ones did you pick?

⁷For ease of reference in reading the extracts, participants to the same focus group were given a pseudonym starting with the same letter of the alphabet. The letter were allocated to groups in the chronological order in which the group took place: group 1 =A, 2=B, 3=C and so on.

- Bridget* This one. (MSF) basically, yes, because I've heard of doctors in that and you do feel as though they go there and they stay there and they've got some kind of positive commitment that they are with people.
- Belinda* And I saw this one, Médecine Sans Frontières. I've always admired them for the same reasons that have already been discussed, that we know they're on the ground, you know, and lots of them... most of them are doctors, I believe, and they're actually administering the medicines and doing the wounds and all that, so I like it. I don't know a lot about it; I know it's French, so there's that one. And then these two, funnily enough I didn't realise they were both Amnesty. [...] So these I really, really like. Amnesty, I do subscribe... I've been subscribing to Amnesty for many years because with their work, you know, you can even ring the Amnesty office and find out exactly what's going on in a particular situation and they send something, I think, monthly, don't they?

The first two quotes, from the same group, capture the key characteristics of the 'Good Samaritan' construction of agencies. Starting from Belinda's statement, the 'Good Samaritan' NGO works *on the ground* and in *direct contact* with sufferers. The workers' identity is clear - they are medical staff – and their mandate is easily recognisable, familiar, and down to earth. Belinda approves that “*they're actually administering the medicines and doing the wounds and all that, so I like it*”. Her depiction implies that the doctors behave humbly and are in direct contact with the sufferers in whatever way is needed. Bridget, before her, identifies another important dimension of the 'Good Samaritan' type of NGO. As well as the already mentioned direct contact with sufferers – “*they are with the people*” – they are in for the long haul, committed in the long-term. So, they don't just “*go there*”, also “*they stay there*”. This temporal emphasis is particularly important as it seems to suggest a dislike for NGOs (seeming to be) carrying out short-term 'fleeting' interventions.⁸

The quality of NGOs' accessibility and direct contact to both the sufferers and/or the UK supporters seems crucial to these positive representations. In the case of MSF it is that agencies are accessible to the sufferers, but others thought that agency's accessibility to donors was also important. For Belinda, this is one of the things that make her subscribe to Amnesty International. As she put it: *you can even ring the Amnesty office and find out exactly what's going on in a particular situation and they send something, I think, monthly, don't they?* In both cases the emphasis is on NGOs' 'hands on', long-term engagement, both with victims and supporters.

The idea of a clear and visible outcome and NGOs' mandate also seemed important to participants who talked of wells, homes, bandaging wounds and, in the case of Amnesty, getting a good solicitor:

Chloe: but Amnesty International if you are in trouble at least you know the money is going to a solicitor or whatever to go and help them.

⁸This corresponds with Author 3 critique of the limits of the fleeting intimacies constructed by contemporary humanitarian communication.

Of course, as these are big organisations, what participants refer to is only a part of their operations. For example, not all people working for MSF are medics, or are on the ground. Like all other agencies they have offices, administrators, fundraisers, etc., but the infrastructure doesn't seem to be resented as long as there is sufficient and consistent evidence that agencies are primarily motivated by being *Good Samaritans* and prioritise sufferers' needs. This was also a key criterion in Cathy's choice, from a different focus group.

Cathy: Number eight (UNICEF) because they do try to help the ones that are starving and on the streets abroad and all that. There are different people go out and get these buildings and house them [...]I mean they all sort of... you know, they [appeals] all pull at you but this one in particular because the children can't speak for themselves.

In Cathy's extract there is a similar reference to NGOs' 'hands on' direct intervention, looking after sufferers and achieving visibly effective changes. Additionally, according to Cathy NGOs as *Good Samaritans* fight for the underdog and canvass on behalf of the weak and disenfranchised.

In summary, the relationship between NGOs and those in need emerged as a key factor in the *Good Samaritan* theme. We have already mentioned direct contact with the beneficiaries and advocating for the voiceless. Caroline introduces the additional element of NGOs' helping as a way of enabling beneficiaries to help themselves.

Caroline:[...]one of the charities that I've supported for a long time is Oxfam and what I've always like about them is its, you know, helping people to get themselves out of poverty. So when you get a report from Oxfam, you know, they've helped this village to build a well or solar heat or whatever and now they are doing this for themselves...

The elements of NGOs' visibility and willingness to risk themselves, mentioned before by Belinda, were also important to Christina, Iris, Isabella and Jonathan, and directed their choice of agencies with whom they engage.

Bruna But Christina it sounds like you trust Amnesty.

Christina I think... I think, yes, when you see what they do.

Bruna Okay, that's what I was trying to get at, right.

Christina And they go with whaling, you know, to stop the whaling. I just wish they'd get into these Muslim countries and stop them from beheading women and things like that but then I'm afraid they'd very likely shoot them.⁹

⁹The misrepresentation of Amnesty's mandate and activities contained in this comment illustrates how trust is not necessarily grounded in understanding or accurate knowledge of a particular NGO

Iris Because it's, they're (MSF) very well-known and that's not too distressing. And very often on the news you see them in action, you know, particularly in war zones and you recognise them and I feel I've got a lot of respect for people who work for them. And they put themselves in danger and they've had quite a few deaths and...

Isabella Those programmes are very emotive and again, you know, you can see how people, they're good people, they deal with doctors and...

Jonathan This one, is number seven, the Medicine Sans Frontier [...] I remember I've seen some stuff from Medicine Sans Frontier before, and they actually go, I know for a fact that they go some places that a lot of people just won't go to, because they go into war zones and stuff, so they're pretty hard-core, so to speak.

These extracts illustrate the importance of several factors in the 'Good Samaritan' model and their role in public's trust and support.

First, visibility appears to be crucial in three ways. In terms of visibility of NGOs as public profile, many participants mentioned as a positive thing that the particular NGO they chose was 'well known', thus suggesting that the agency's visibility, brand recognition and performance over time is important for participants' trust.

There is also visibility in terms of NGOs' actions. Importantly, participants mentioned news or documentaries that featured the *Good Samaritans* in action. This suggests that the agency's visibility beyond their appeals and through relatively independent media adds to the agency's credibility and respect (indeed, for this very reason, NGOs put great emphasis, executed through their media relations practitioners, on creating and enhancing their connection with the media).

Additionally, visibility was important in terms of clearly identifiable and measurable effectiveness. As seen earlier, housing, solar heat, wells, lawyers are some of the tangible examples mentioned by participants of what NGOs appear to do. The desirability of a concrete and transparent quality of NGOs activities was constantly referred to by participants.

Second, the primacy of the Other emerged as an important criterion in the *Good Samaritan* type of agency. Put it simply, if we were to personify agencies as *Good Samaritans*, we would say that the public sees them as selfless. They put themselves at risk to help others. They are heroic and 'hard-core', but there is no arrogance or machismo in this vision. Agency workers as *Good Samaritans* are primarily perceived as profoundly caring for the victims to their own detriment. In fact, as some commented, they are seen as humble, available and accessible, both to the sufferer and the public. As a couple of participants put it "*They are good people*".

Finally, there is universalism. In the *Good Samaritan* model, place or specificity of the cause is unimportant. Whether NGOs provide medical aid, development programmes or fight for human rights seemed irrelevant. What seemed to matter, like in the parable of the *Good Samaritan*, was that these agencies could be found anywhere and at any time of human suffering and people being in need.

These characteristics seem to produce two important outcomes. First, there is a clear sense that to be seen to behave as a *Good Samaritan* engenders trust and respect in the NGOs. We are not suggesting these are the only factors engendering trust and respect in NGOs, but that the *Good Samaritan* seemed to generate overall positive feelings towards NGOs. Second,

NGOs' 'positive commitment' towards victims and/or beneficiaries, according to the participants, engenders a mirroring of this commitment through the donors' continuous support to NGOs. Notwithstanding the contextual nature of these connections – for example, that negative views of NGOs might rhetorically warrant participants' refusal to donate and unresponsiveness to humanitarian appeals (see Seu 2013, 2011, 2010) – it seems important to pay attention to the polarised and passionate nature of feelings evoked by the two models. This is particularly important when considering that the potency of the *Good Samaritan* model was not limited to the characteristics identified above, but seemed to exist as a foundational principle informing more broadly public's reactions to NGOs. See, for example, how it is invoked to argue that NGOs employees should donate their time for free.

Monica *At the end of the day, I think that if they're doing it for charity, why don't they do it for charity and not take their bit out of it? Give certain hours for the admin. If they're asking us to donate £1, why can't they donate their time, if that's what they've chosen to do? But fair enough, the expenses to be taken out of it but not 95p out the pound because that's what's been happening.*

We can see in Monica's speech how the *Good Samaritan* principle is implied even though not directly referred to. It is in comparison with the *Good Samaritan* who works for NGOs out of the goodness of their heart, that the *Marketer* is implicitly presented as self-serving (resonating with what Cohen, 2001 in his discussion of altruism calls 'the banality of goodness'). That the *Good Samaritan* is still implied as the desired norm is revealed by the question "If they are doing it for charity, why don't they do it for charity [...] and donate their time?" This suggests a taken for granted notion that NGOs should use a 'charity model' which is about giving something one holds dear – time, money, safety – to help others in need, voluntarily and with nothing in return. The core of Monica's argument is that NGOs fail to act as they preach. On the contrary, not only are NGO workers seen to not give their time for free – constructed here as the fair equivalent of the monetary donations expected from the public – they are perceived by Monica as using inappropriately the donations they receive from the public. Importantly, we begin to see a note of antagonism – us and them – between public and NGOs, which coloured the majority of the discussion. This is the focus of the next section, on the second model of NGOs as '*Marketers*'.

THE MARKETER

In stark contrast with the positive connotations of agencies perceived as '*Good Samaritans*', the construction of the agency worker as '*Marketer*', is steeped in distrust and criticism. NGOs' perceived use of funds and employment of marketing techniques are key to this theme. Although discussions around these topics took a myriad of forms, a common thread was that the participants repeatedly returned to discussing the motives behind NGOs operations, as well as of their workers in joining the humanitarian field. The three aspects of the '*Marketer*' model discussed below – the 'professional', the 'glamour' and the 'pure business' – are informed by the ways in which NGOs operations and agency workers' motives were discussed by participants

The ‘professional’ aspect

We start with comments about the ‘professional’ aspect of the *Marketer* model, which was the only one discussed in positive terms. Although there were only few comments on this aspect, they nevertheless reflect a recognition of the changing character of NGOs practices. Many participants rehearsed the familiar view (repeated in UK media coverage in the last couple of years) of NGO salaried staff as wasteful. However, some people, like Caroline and Adam (from different groups) expressed a view that recognizes the benefits of a professionally trained management of NGOs, provided that the costs were kept reasonable.

Thus, taking a diametrically opposite view to the *Good Samaritan* NGO worker, who donates time for free, they believed that paying NGO workers a salary was a sign of the organizations’ professionalism. For example:

Caroline: I wouldn't be against paying administrators of charities. I mean, for example, most of the high street charity shops actually have paid managers now and I have no problem with that because I think that brings a degree of professionalism into the charity so that it is, you know, run more efficiently as long as the administrative costs aren't excessive.

Others focused on how to maximise the effectiveness of NGOs’ operations, arguing that this could only be guaranteed through the work of highly trained staff. Within this model, high salary was seen as a good investment of funds. For example:

Adam: But they have to, to employ the best people. Obviously we'd all like an ideal kind of communal situation where everyone works just because it's the right thing to do. But you know, running a charity like Oxfam or Amnesty International or Save the Children, it is probably a serious, important, busy, difficult job, and in order to attract the best people so that they can raise the most money and give the most money to those who need it, they need to employ the best and they need to be able to offer a competitive wage.

We have already heard from Caroline when using the ‘*Good Samaritan*’ model of NGOs. The current statement should be considered in that context to illustrate how models are not mutually exclusive and that ideas of professionalism can be articulated concurrently with traditional models of charitable behaviour. However, considering her previous statements about the *Good Samaritan* model, it is not surprising that Caroline’s support here is conditional and comes across as a concession rather than fully embracing of the professional model. Adam’s statement, on the other hand, provides much stronger and unconditional support of agencies’ increased professionalism. It should be noted that Adam’s was very much an isolated voice as the next extracts will illustrate.

The ‘glamour’ aspect

In contrast with the above examples, other participants saw NGO workers as being motivated by the glamour and perks of the job, rather than being driven by altruistic motives. In this type of account, working for an NGO is ‘the job to have’:

Hugh I've just been over to Cambodia and there's a big discussion there about all the NGOs over there driving round in their big, flash cars, and it's the job to have. And

even the Cambodian people who are wealthy enough to get an education, that's what they aspire to be, to work with the NGOs, because that's where the money is. So, you hear... I mean, you hear all these stories. There was something recently about in Africa, about the money there.

It is clear that this kind of motivation to join an NGO is frowned upon and reinforces the distrust towards agencies.

Bruna Would it make a difference if any of these organisations reported back to you with a breakdown of how much they spent...?

Hugh I think so, but...

Bruna It would...?

Hugh ...I don't know whether I'd believe it or not.

Bruna Ah

Hugh You'd have to inspire trust from somewhere because there's that many.

The implication of Hugh's statement is that this type of characterisation of NGO workers seems to have a negative knock on effect on a potentially trusting relationship between NGOs and the public.

The 'pure business' aspect

The two aspects discussed so far were not openly disputed by other members of the speaker's focus group, thus suggesting recognition and some degree of social acceptability. However, they were not expressed with much frequency. The final aspect of the *Marketer* model was the most recurrent. It was mentioned in all the focus groups and was always voiced negatively with some participants expressing strong animosity. This model portrays NGOs as corporate businesses, in competition with each other, preoccupied with targets, and striving towards expansion. Such construction of NGOs as corporate businesses is contrasted with an alternative and preferable view of NGOs as cooperating rather than competing. Together with the expectation that NGOs workers should behave 'charitably' and donate their time for free, this view points to an expectation from some members of the public that NGO practitioners should apply the same principles participants perceive or expect to underlie their campaigns and appeals; i.e. they should practice as they preach.

Alistair: I think honestly, I used to work for a humanitarian aid group quite a while ago, and I think a lot of people within the humanitarian aid groups also make too much money themselves. I think most of these adverts are actually there to actually keep directors in jobs, to keep the organisation going, also to, how do I say, make the organisation bigger. I think too many organisations nowadays, they're competing with each other, which is wrong when it comes to charity. They should be working together and actually helping people instead of competing, Q< oh, our organisation can get more funding than this one¹⁰>Q, because at the end of the day they're not reaching the target they are supposed to. While they're competing, they're spending too much money on advertising on TV or newspapers when that could have been going to whatever they are campaigning about.

¹⁰This was voiced mockingly as if from a child triumphing over another

This extract contains several important allegations, which are rendered more damning by the first person account. First Alistair is critical of what are in his view overinflated salaries of NGO personnel. It is important to bear in mind that Alistair was in the same group as Adam, who supported the ‘professional’ model. Alistair’s comment can be seen as a counterargument to Adam’s, particularly in his second accusation, that NGO professionals are not brought in to help distant sufferers but to “*keep directors in job, to keep the organisation going, to make the organisation bigger*”. It is the combination of these two points – that NGO workers are greedy *and* self-serving - that makes Alistair’s claim particularly damaging. This is compounded by his third point that, instead of helping others, NGOs use their energy and resources to compete with each other. The mocking tone used by Alistair in the speech attributed to NGOs – as if they were taunting children triumphing over each other – betrays Alistair’s veiled contempt and disapproval of NGO behaving as corporate businesses. His concluding statement positions NGO appeals and communications as self-advertising aimed at competing with other NGOs rather than ameliorating the plight of distant sufferers.

It is not surprising to see that this type of characterisation of NGO workers seems to have a negative effect on a potentially trusting relationship between NGOs and the public. Because of the expressed distrust in the agencies, the lack of accountability and mismanagement of funds referred to by many, the damage to the NGOs’ relationship with the public cannot be addressed and repaired by simple accountability of resource usage.

See for example the following exchange:

Bruna: Would it make a difference if any of these organisations reported back to you with a breakdown of how much they spent...?
Hugh: I think so, but I don’t know whether I’d believe it or not.

This type of comment was far from being an isolated incident. In fact there was widespread sensitivity about trust and alertness of NGOs’ manipulation. Some, like Harold below, likened NGOs to door to door salesmen and manipulative con artists.

Harold: I... my view about charity at home is that I’ve got just as much suspicion about those who collect at home in equal amount to those who collect for overseas charity, because, I tell you for what, I’m an avid watcher of Crime Watch and over the years there’s been a massive amount of fraudsters who go around with collection tins, rah-rah-rah, go in the pubs and all that, manipulating... They’re no different to the people that go on people’s doorsteps and manipulate them out of their money. I just have a real low disdain for people like that. So I don’t have a different image for the ones who collect locally in the UK compared to the ones who collect for, you know, overseas charities at all.

According to some, lack of accountability and, for others, suspect morals are exacerbated by the size of the organisations, as mentioned already. Participants seemed to believe that the larger the size of the NGO, the less resource is used for helping beneficiaries. Other participants also blamed the size of the organisation for an alleged NGO’s disconnection from their original aims. These two kinds of disconnections – financial investment in the beneficiaries and a principled investment in the original values and aims of the NGO – were considered one of the key characteristics of pure ‘business’ model:

Hugh: The bigger the charity, the bigger the business, I feel like, the less actually gets to where it's intended. If you've got some... I don't know; you get some, like, small Christian charities who actually collect stuff and actually take it over to India, and it might be just a family and they do it, or it might be a church and they do it, but once you get to this stage there's less going. That's all, it becomes..., a business venture employing X amount of people. I mean, it's... and then they've got all the laws that they have to pay, obviously - basic wages and all that.

Harold It's like this...

Hugh The higher they get up the more they earn.

Particularly telling in the extract above is the repeated use of 'actually' in relation to smaller charities which *actually* do what they say they would: *small Christian charities who actually collect stuff and actually take it over to India*. The subtext here is that, on the contrary, NGOs as *Marketers*, don't do that and use the funds for their '*business venture*'. The next extract takes this point further and illustrates a clash between the view that NGOs need professional fundraisers to procure funds to help people, and the view that this 'marketisation' of NGOs is antithetical to helping others.

Alan: Going back to what Alistair said, I think I agree with him 100% in the way the businesses are set up, the charities are set up, because they're set up as businesses, and you've got the people at the top who go in, go into that position as a general manager or, you know, as an administrator, whatever you go in as. They are going in as a job, they're not actually going in for the sake of helping. I mean I don't know if you went in... I mean, I'm just guessing, like, because just, you know, the way they advertise in the papers, they are advertising for, you know, a successful career or whatever, rather than actually helping someone.

Adam What makes you think that though?

Alan Just, I mean...

UM¹¹3 It's all about money at the end of the day.

Adam Of course it is. It's about raising money to help people, so if they didn't think like a business, they wouldn't raise as much money, and they wouldn't make any profit.

Alan But for the middle men, I think it's all about money for them.

UM2 If they have competitive like wages, then obviously they are taking...

This long interaction contains two significant components that are worth reflecting on. Firstly, it illustrates the polarisation between a market ideology and motives, and what is implied as the 'true spirit' of charity of helping selflessly. It is particularly important to reflect on this, in light of the data provided in the first part of this paper. It points to a strong expectation that NGOs should be driven by traditional principles of charity and altruism, and the deep disappointment that this is no longer the case. Thus while only few people believe that currently NGOs are *Good Samaritans*, the majority of participants still hold these values. This suggests an important gap between public views on humanitarian principles and those principles they perceive to drive NGOs activities.

Secondly, the widespread concern that the business side of NGOs is antithetical to the original and 'true' aims of charity was believed to affect NGOs' activities in many ways. Whilst some were primarily concerned with the self-serving quality of NGOs

¹¹UM denotes Unidentified Male, when it was impossible to identify a particular quote during transcription.

asintermediaries between donors and beneficiaries, others worried about the effects on the relationship with the beneficiaries. Some suggested that as the size of the NGO grows, the distance between its workers and the beneficiaries also expands. As a consequence, many participants believed that the operations of large NGOs are in danger of becoming impersonal and saw NGOs' communications as forms of marketing and advertising.

Keith You see there... there again... It's Keith. It's, when you think about it, whoever produced these [the appeals],(has) done a good job, because that's the idea of producing things like this, is to actually get to people, especially the older generation, older than me. And they are doing a good job of actually putting these type of photographs on the [...] It's how they get you. I think personally, yes, it is. It's is a form of advertising, marketing

Bruna What do you think they're advertising?

UM Well, they're preying for your money, aren't they?

Keith They're advertising to get your money. It's like a car, or something. They're advertising for you to go and buy that car. I think they're advertising for money, really. That's it.

Bruna So it's like a business?

UM Yes.

UM I think so personally. It is a business. I think it is a business.

These findings provide important information on how the public perceives NGOs and their operations, and begins to shed light on some of the reasons why members of the public might resist NGOs appeals for donations. For example:

Bruna So are you saying it's not so much the issue of where the victim is and the need is; it's more that there's something about the intermediary, the charity, that is the problem?

Harold Yes, I think it's a risky... Sometimes... I see charity donation as ¹²sometimes a risky thing to get into.

Hamish It's lack of trust now.

Bruna Lack of trust?

Hamish No one trusts them.

DISCUSSION

Based on focus groups data with members of the UK public, this paper has identified and discussed two key models through which NGOs identities and activities are understood by the UK public: the *Good Samaritan* and the *Marketer*. In this section we summarise the characteristics of these two models through which NGOs activities are judged both positively and negatively. Our aim is not to privilege one model over the other. Rather, we want to offer an empirically grounded examination of views as expressed by focus group participants, in order to expose the salience of these models in people's thinking and how they inform and affect the relationship between NGOs and public.

We identified four key characteristics of the *Good Samaritan* model of NGO.

The first was visibility, discussed in three contexts: visibility through direct action (through public profile, brand recognition, performance over time) and indirect means (through independent media, particularly documentaries) and clearly identifiable and measurable effectiveness (e.g. provision of housing, wells, solar power to sufferers). The stress on NGOs visibility highlights the desirability of a concrete and transparent quality of NGOs activities. This confirms Sargeant *et al.* (2006) findings that trust (and indirectly commitment) are significantly affected by the performance of the non-profit, and is predicated on the perceived benefits supplied to beneficiaries. Further support comes from Sargeant *et al.* (2001), Harvey & McCrohan (1988) and Bennett and Savani (2003) who have highlighted the significance of the notion of perceived efficacy to giving behaviour and that, in general, charities perceived as more efficient tend to generate higher levels of compliance and levels of giving (Sargeant *et al.* 2008).

The second was primacy of the Other. In the *Good Samaritan* model, NGO workers offer help to Others selflessly and sometimes putting themselves at risk, with no expectation of reward. This resonates with Venable *et al.* (2005) who stress the social importance of non-profit being kind, caring and compassionate, and with Sargeant *et al.* (2008) and Sargeant *et al.* (2007), who found that humanitarian workers' heroism generated excitement and emotional engagement with agencies.

The third characteristic of NGOs workers in this model was their visible and verifiable accessibility, both to sufferers and supporters.

Finally, the *Good Samaritan* model is underpinned by Universalist principles. Similarly to the biblical figure, the helpfulness of the *Good Samaritan* is not reliant on their identification with the sufferer in terms of shared ethnicity of other characteristics. NGOs as *Good Samaritans* can be found anywhere and anytime of human suffering and people being in need.

As repeatedly demonstrated in existing research (Sargeant & Lee, 2004, Sargeant *et al.* 2006,) and further supported by our findings, the perceived performance and qualities of the organisation impact on the level of trust afforded to the organisation by the public. In particular, while agencies perceived to be wasteful of or mismanaging funds have been found to struggle to foster trust in members of the public (Sargeant & Lee, 2004; Bailey & Bruce, 1992), the perceived ethics of the organisation and its benevolence foster trust and inclusion of an organisation in an individual's consideration (Sargeant *et al.* 2007)

Similarly to our study, others have also found that participants employed the notion of *charity* to imbue an organisation with a distinctive set of characteristics Sargeant *et al.* (2007) and that being benevolent values-based in which they manage and organise themselves is the distinguishable characteristic of charitable organisations (Sargeant *et al.* 2008, Werther & Berman, 2001) Our study takes these points further and shows that , the potency of the Good Samaritan model was not limited to the characteristics identified above, but seemed to exist as a *foundational principle* informing more broadly public's reactions to NGOs. Indeed, a closer examination of the extracts shows thatthe *Good Samaritan* model underpinnedall

discussions of NGO activities. It is against this, sometimes ideal and idealised, model that NGOs are being judged by the public.

Conversely, and particularly when compared, openly or not, with the *Good Samaritan*, the *Marketer* model of NGOs was consistently judged negatively and generated hostility and animosity. With the exception of Venable *et al.* 2005), who have commented that “a new generation of donors has emerged that increasingly perceives the non-profit sector as a “big business” that should be held accountable for the effectiveness of its operations and services” (2005:295), the *Marketer* model has not been investigated or given due attention so far. This is particularly striking considering the dominance of this perception of humanitarian agencies in our study and the high level of distrust and strong emotional responses associated with this model.

In direct contrast with the *Good Samaritan* model, NGOs considered as *Marketers* displayed the following characteristics. First, the *Marketer* appears to carry a negative direct visibility in terms of flash cars, glamorous careers, inflated salaries, scandals. Agencies as marketers were viewed as greedy and self-serving, and NGO appeals and communications as self-advertising aimed at competing with other NGOs rather than ameliorating the plight of distant sufferers.

In line with Sargeant *et al.* (2008) and Sargeant & Lee, (2004), this generated distrust. Crucial for current research and theory, our data suggests that, because of the expressed distrust in the agencies, and the lack of accountability and mismanagement of funds referred to by many, the damage to the NGOs’ relationship with the public cannot be addressed and repaired by simple accountability of resource usage. Indeed, many participants blamed the size of the organisation for an alleged NGO’s disconnection from their original aims. These two kinds of disconnections – financial investment in the beneficiaries and a principled investment in the original values and aims of the NGO – were considered one of the key characteristics of pure ‘business’ model. Considering the robust evidence in the literature that trust is significantly affected by the performance of the charity and is predicated on the perceived benefits supplied to beneficiaries and the manner in which the impact of these benefits is communicated back to donors (Sargeant *et al.* 2008 and Sargeant *et al.* 2006), the marketer model seem to have a profoundly damaging impact on trust and confidence in the agency.

Additionally, NGOs generated visibility through communications to the public is viewed with suspicion, considered overall as manipulative self-promotion. Connected to this and crucial in terms of how its comparison with the *Good Samaritan* engenders animosity, NGOs as *Marketers* actions are seen as self-serving, rather than Other-oriented and in aid of strangers. In this view, NGOs are seen as businesses employing marketing techniques aimed at expanding and beating other competing NGOs.

A very small minority of participants held the view that the marketization of NGOs operations is justifiable by a more efficient provision of aid to sufferers. However, what the data shows clearly is, that even when there is recognition of the increased complexity of humanitarian work and some degree of acceptance for NGOs’ need to professionalise, the intense and often passionate criticism of the *Marketer* model, and the distrust it engenders, is

widespread and expressed across all the demographic groups. This suggests that urgent attention should be given to the negative impact of this model on public trust and commitment to humanitarian agencies and causes in general. Further research should explore also the separate aspects of this model, some of which are perceived as potentially positive and/or necessary by some members of the public, through further in-depth studies.

Conclusions

This study has shown that The *Good Samaritan* model of humanitarian work even when not explicitly articulated, appears to be very much alive in people's minds and is used as the yardstick against which to evaluate and make judgments about NGOs and their activities. Despite efforts made by NGOs to shake off associations with charitable endeavour, the evidence indicates that aspects of an imagined Victorian charitable ideal still exercise a remarkably powerful hold on the British public imagination, particularly in relation to expectations of voluntarism and amateurism from NGO staff members. This model continues to be adhered to, desired, and used by participants to actively resist a more professionalised model of humanitarian work. However much fundraising might be intended to generate more funds and help sufferers more efficiently, current practices are perceived to go against the much cherished values of the *Good Samaritan*. This suggests an important clash of values and resistance to a model of operating that betrays what the public seems to perceive as the 'true' spirit of charitable work/operations.

The data further suggest that the humanitarian principle of helping distant others in need is not in crisis, but the relationship of NGOs with the public might be. First, it is worth noting that for all the secularity of the NGOs involved, for all the claims that are made about the basis for their work in principles of 'global justice', feminism, human rights etc., it is an old Christian concept that animates peoples' moral sense of the legitimacy of their work.

In this sense, the data discussed in this paper support assertions made in *Finding Frames* (Darton and Kirk, 2011) about the persistence of 'charitable' frames for audience understanding and about the problematic knock on effects of the 'cheque book', transactional mentality which has generated increased revenue for NGOs, but has kept the public at arm's length. This is corroborated by the expressed salience for the public of NGOs approachability, both to sufferers and supporters, and further feedback from members of the public expressing worry about the unwelcome distancing effect of bureaucratisation of NGOs¹³, compared to the desired 'hands on' and human touch approach.

The findings also resonate with Hopgood's (2006) claim that humanitarian activism is a social practice best understood as a secular religion where internal conflict between sacred and profane – the mission and the practicalities of everyday operations – are both unavoidable and necessary. Commerce and the economic considerations function as profane concept, in binary contrast to the 'sacred', values-based work of human rights protection.

¹³See Knowledge exchange 2 (website to be added after reviewing)

Our conclusions have implications for NGOs current practices. In terms of the desirability of the *Good Samaritan*, two elements seem at odds with current practices. First, one of the key characteristics of the iconographic Christian figure of the Samaritan is that he was a stranger *and* remains a stranger to the beneficiary. Yet, NGO communication and branding works precisely against this anonymity of the stranger, and is geared towards familiarising audiences with NGOs and their workers, stressing recognition. Second, the *Good Samaritan* provides aid to the sufferer, without articulating their deed and their justification and, importantly, without expressing emotion (Boltanski, 1999). Again, NGOs' contemporary practice is antithetical to these important features of the *Good Samaritan*.

In conclusion, however romanticised and idealised, it is the *Good Samaritan* model that evokes positive responses, trust and public loyalty to NGOs, while the *Marketer* is perceived to be out of touch with both the public and beneficiaries.

The data points to a deep disillusionment and disappointment deriving from the recognition of the *Marketer* model being applied to and employed within the realm of humanitarianism. This suggests that completely moving away from traditional notions of charity might be premature and counterproductive. Our aim was not to question the accuracy in which these two models represent, or not, NGOs activities, or to favour one over the other. Nor are we naively recommending that NGOs abandon their current practices to return to an idealised and romanticised way of operating. More modestly, on the basis of this study, we want to draw attention to the persistence of the *Good Samaritan* model, despite its rejection by NGOs, and suggest that it might offer some creative opportunities for NGOs to engage with questions around the endurance of such powerful ideas of encounter, victimhood and strangeness.

As a final comment we would like to reflect on the pervasiveness of a transactional model in humanitarian work in current research. In social psychological and in particular, but perhaps unsurprisingly, in the marketing literature, the connection between public trust in humanitarian and charitable organisations and donations is consistently normalised and unquestioned. The vast majority of studies in the field openly state an interest in enhancing public trust in humanitarian and charitable organisation *in order to* increase donations (e.g. Sargeant *et al.* 2006), and indeed members of the public are unproblematically classified in terms of 'current and potential donors (e.g. Venable *et al.* 2008). Although this might be understandable within the field of marketing research on humanitarian and charitable organisation, nevertheless it highlights that the view of humanitarian and charitable organisations as 'marketers' is uncritically treated as endemic to their relationship with their public, which consequently can only be transactional and instrumental. This is, in our view, highly problematic both intellectually and politically. Intellectually the normalisation of agencies as marketers is in danger of potentially foreclosing the investigation of multifaceted aspects of the complex public-agencies relationship by reducing it to a marketing based 'sellers and buyers' interaction. This in turn is in danger of overlooking the potentially corrosive impact of the marketer model on public trust in the sector in general and engagement with humanitarian issues (see Seu and Orgad, 2014 for further discussion). This could also explain, to some extent, why the figure of the marketer has not been previously identified in research. To put it simply, if the trust and commitment are viewed primarily as instrumental to donation, the figure of marketer is intrinsically taken for granted.

This might also have wider political and social repercussions. If, as stated by many, the voluntary sector plays a highly significant role in modern society, carries a fundamental and

unique moral authority, and plays a pivotal role in generating broader trust, then it is likely that the strength of disillusionment, distrust and animosity against humanitarian agencies as marketers expressed in our study, can impact negatively on individual agencies viewed as marketers, but also on the non-profit sector as a whole and to some extent on public attitudes towards humanitarianism in general (see Seu & Orgad, 2014 for further discussion). We suggest that these hypotheses require further urgent investigation that is also critically reflexive of its ideological underpinnings.

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