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The Effects of Model Ethnicity in Charity Appeals for Local and Global Charities

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Abstract

We investigate the effect of model ethnicity (in-group vs. out-group) in a charity appeal and how this interacts with the scope of the charity (local vs. global) on message recipients' attitude toward and intention to donate money to the charity. We also test the mediating role of the perceived trustworthiness of the models in the appeal and ad skepticism. In a controlled experiment, we exposed Caucasian (French, $n = 201$) and Indian ($n = 194$) respondents to a group of Caucasian or Indian models for either a local or a global charity. Models of the same ethnicity as the message recipient (in-group) lead to more positive responses for a local charity, while models of a different ethnicity than the message recipient (out-group) lead to more positive responses for a global charity. As expected, these effects are mediated by the perceived model trustworthiness and ad skepticism.

Keywords: Charity appeal, ethnicity, social identity, congruity

Charitable donations have always been a vital funding source for charities.

Confronted with an increasingly global and competitive environment, an increased need for charitable support and the economic crisis of 2008 that caused individual donations to decrease, raising support and money has become more challenging than ever for charities (Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013). Charities therefore increasingly use marketing and advertising techniques to promote their cause and to raise money (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009). The question of how charities should best design and frame their support and fundraising appeals is of critical importance (Abreu, Laureano, Silva, & Dionísio, 2015; Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013).

Using an experimental study in France and India, we investigate the interplay between the ethnicity of the models used in a charity appeal, the ethnicity of the message recipient and the local or global nature of the charity in determining message responses to the charity appeal. Our research question is:

To what extent does the ethnic similarity between message recipients and the models in a charity appeal determine message responses (attitude towards the charity and intention to donate), and to what extent is this similarity effect moderated by the geographical scope of the charity (local or global) as positioned in a charity appeal? Also, what is the mediating role of model trustworthiness and skepticism towards the ad in forming this attitude and intention?

We develop our hypotheses and explain our results based on social identity theory (Stephenson and Bell, 2014; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and schema congruity theory (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). Social identity theory posits that, by using social categories, people categorize themselves into one social group (the in-group) and out of others (the out-group) (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). In the current study, we operationalize ‘similarity’ based on the ethnicity of the message recipient and the models used in the

advertisement. Social identity theory predicts that a greater similarity leads to a greater willingness to support and donate to the charity.

Schema congruity theory states that people strive for harmony and conformity among their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Heckler and Childers (1992) define congruity as a bi-dimensional construct defined by the *relevancy* and *expectancy* of the association. More congruent stimuli will lead to more positive evaluation and intentions (Moore, Stammerjohan, & Coulter, 2005). Based on schema congruity theory, we argue that the geographical scope of the charity will moderate the model- message recipient similarity effect (based on social identity effects).

Spokesperson trustworthiness and (a lack of) skepticism towards the message are crucial factors for charity advertising effectiveness (de los Salmones and Dominguez, 2016; J. Dean and Wood, 2017; Wymer and Drollinger, 2015). We expect that the effect of the interaction between model ethnicity, message recipient ethnicity and the geographical scope of the charity on the attitude toward the charity and the intention to donate money is mediated by the perceived model trustworthiness and ad skepticism.

Our research makes several contributions to the charity literature. First, it expands the research on framing donation outcomes as benefits to the in-group or benefits to the out-group by examining the effect of the ethnicity of the model. Ye, Teng, Yu, & Wang (2015) suggested that charitable behavior research should explore in-group versus out-group appeals. To study in- and out-group effects, we examine the effects of model ethnicity, as ethnicity is one of the major characteristics that induce a sense of social category membership that may induce in-group oriented behavior (Karande, 2005). Therefore, the current study helps to better understand how consumers respond to different ethnicities in charity appeals.

Our second contribution is that we examine whether the geographical scope of the charity (local versus global) moderates the effect of in-group versus out-group models. Ein-

Gar and Levontin (2013) found that there has to be a fit between the scope of a charity and the model in the appeal. We argue that the model in the appeal should also be congruent with the geographical scope of the charity. If the geographical scope of the charity is narrow and the charity is mostly locally active, in-group models are more schema congruent. On the other hand, if the geographical scope of the charity is broad (worldwide) or foreign, out-group models may be more schema-relevant and expected. Studying this interaction allows us to explore a boundary condition of the effects of ethnic similarity between a model and the message recipient.

Following Cao's (2016) suggestion, our third contribution is that we explore the mechanisms through which donor-beneficiary similarity and charity scope congruity affect attitudes and donation intentions. To that end, we explore the mediating role of model trustworthiness and ad skepticism in explaining this effect. The relationship between model ethnicity and model trustworthiness and ad skepticism has largely remained outside the scope of empirical analyses, especially in charitable advertising.

Finally, there have been several calls for more research into effective promotional strategies for charities. Mason (2013) suggests that theoretical models on charity can and should be tested using well-controlled experiments with manipulated variables to measure and analyze the relationships between variables. Our approach answers this call. The results of our study are not only relevant for theory, but also for charitable organizations by suggesting strategies that can help increase the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Literature Review and Hypotheses development

Helper-beneficiary similarity

Multiple studies suggest that the similarity between a helper and a beneficiary has a positive influence on the intention to help (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996; Bennett, 2003; Dovidio, 1984; Mainardes, Laurett, Degasperi, & Lasso, 2016; Mussweiler and Ockenfels, 2013). This effect can be explained by *social identity theory* (Ashmore, et al., 2004; Burke, 2006). Social identity theory proposes that the groups (e.g., social class, family, football team, etc.) people belong to are an important source of their social identity, pride, and self-esteem. We divide the world into in-groups ('us') and out-groups ('them'), based on a process of social categorization (i.e., we put people into social groups). Consequently, we identify with the groups we belong to (social identification). Self-enhancement guides the social categorization process so that groups substantially favor in-group members (Sierra, Hyman, & Torres, 2009).

Based on this mechanism, the similarity between donors and recipients is an important determinant of charitable giving (James and Zagefka, 2017). For instance, Andorfer and Otte (2013) found that categorizing victims of natural disasters as members of one's own group increases donors' willingness to donate. Mussweiler and Ockenfels (2013) found that donations increased when participants focused on the similarity between themselves and the group of beneficiaries.

Helping similar others may also be a "selfish" way of ensuring that a person's own in-group is preserved (Bendapudi, et al., 1996). Wiebe, Basil, & Runté (2017) found more positive affect and behavioral intention for causes that were psychologically near (vs. far). Knowles and Sullivan (2017) and Tremblay-Boire and Prakash (2017) found that potential

charity supporters have a preference for giving to a local charity, rather than an international one.

The current study investigates similarity based on ethnicity (Karande, 2005), which is one of the possible factors to induce group membership. Ethnicity is often an important and early dimension of self-identification (Jenkins, 2014). People have a psychological connection to their ethnic in-group (Tropp and Wright, 2001). Ethnicity considerations call for decisions that are "good for the group" and, consequently, ethnicity leads to altruistic in-group behavior, such as supporting same-ethnicity causes, since group members strive for gains for the whole group (Simon, 1993). However, we argue that ethnic similarity will not always have a positive impact on the support of and the intention to donate to a charity, as explained in the next section.

Cause and message congruity and the geographical scope of the charity

To understand how social identity theory may not always explain responses to charity appeals, *schema congruity theory* (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989) provides important insights. A schema is "a cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among the attributes" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 98). Central to schema theory is the notion that pre-existing schemas affect how people interpret and evaluate information. People like objects that fit with their schemas, conform to their expectations and allow predictability (Moore, et al., 2005). Therefore, schema congruity theory prescribes that people respond more favorably to a message that is congruent with their existing schemas about a particular object (for instance, a charity). Incongruent message elements result in less favorable evaluations and behavioral intentions (Moore, et al., 2005; Verberckmoes, Poels, Dens, Herrewijn, & De Pelsmacker, 2016; Wymer and Drollinger, 2015).

Based on schema congruity theory, we argue that the supporter-beneficiary similarity effect will be moderated by the nature of the charity, more specifically by its geographical scope. Heckler and Childers (1992) define congruity as a bi-dimensional construct defined by the *relevancy* and *expectancy* of the association between two stimuli. A message connected to a particular cause should, therefore, be relevant to the cause and should fit in the pre-existing schema of the message recipient to be persuasive.

Ein-Gar and Levontin (2013) found in five studies that the congruence between different scopes (i.e., temporal, social, and psychological) of a charity appeal positively influences how people respond. In one study, students were told that their donation would be allocated either to help one immigrant (close psychological scope) or to help out at an immigrant absorption center (distant psychological scope) and that they would be helping either immigrant students (close social scope) or elderly immigrants (distant social scope). When the donation targets were elderly immigrants (distant social scope), participants were willing to donate more when the donation targets were abstract (distant psychological scope), and vice versa. Their results indicate that message components should be congruent, namely a distant framing technique matches with a distant charity, and the other way around. Chang and Lee (2009) showed that, in the context of child poverty, an image corresponding to the message increased the impact of the message, and incongruity between the image and the text reduced the advertising effects.

In the current study, we apply the congruity principle to charity appeals with a different geographical scope (local versus global). The conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure 1. We argue that congruity between the geographical scope of the charity, the ethnicity of the message recipient and the ethnicity of the model in the advertising message is more important to explain attitudes and donation intentions to a charity than the helper-beneficiary similarity effect predicted by social identity theory. We argue that the

ethnic similarity between the advertising model and the message recipient should be congruent with the geographical scope of the charity.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

While people generally tend to trust members of their in-group more (Tanis and Postmes, 2005), this effect may be reduced, and even reversed, when the charity is more distant. This is because schema-congruent models should be perceived as more trustworthy and should evoke less skepticism toward the advertisement. Perceived model trustworthiness refers to the degree to which a message recipient perceives the assertions made by models in an advertisement to be valid (Nan, 2013). Skepticism is defined as a person's degree of willingness to believe or disbelieve advertising claims (Koinig, Diehl, & Mueller, 2018).

Lee and Jeong (2014) showed that online-offline brand image congruity positively influences trust toward the brand. Mazodier and Merunka (2011) found that perceived congruence between a sponsored event and the brand positively impacts trust. In the context of e-commerce websites, schema-congruent colors resulted in higher user trust than schema-incongruent colors (Sasidharan, 2010). For a local charity, local advertising models should thus be perceived as more trustworthy. People are more likely to accept a message from a trustworthy source and trustworthy sources are, therefore, more effective in causing positive attitude changes and behavioral intentions (e.g., de los Salmones and Dominguez, 2016; Till and Busler, 2000; Wymer and Drollinger, 2015). For example, trust is positively associated with charitable giving (e.g., Casale & Baumann 2015). A lack of trustworthiness likely undermines the credibility of the appeal, and reduces the chances of recipients accepting the message (Jung and Kellaris, 2006; Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Schema-congruent models should also induce less skepticism than schema-incongruent models. Schema incongruity or incompatibility can result in confusion, psychological distress, and negative evaluations (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). When the charity uses a ‘wrong’ appeal for help (for instance, an inappropriate model in the advertisement), it may be seen as manipulative or threatening to potential helpers’ freedom to not help (Bendapudi, et al., 1996). This perception may evoke skepticism. Ads that evoke higher levels of skepticism are likely less effective (Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). Skepticism may cause reactance, meaning helpers minimize the perceived need and/or avoid complying with the help request (Bendapudi, et al., 1996). Patel, Gadhavi, & Shukla (2017) found that consumers with a high level of skepticism respond more negatively to cause-related marketing campaigns than consumers with a low level of skepticism. Mardini, Peter, & Gibbert (2018) showed that skepticism has a negative effect on people’s willingness to purchase products and brands associated with a cause.

If the geographical scope of the charity is narrow and the charity is mostly locally active, local models are more schema-congruent. The ethnic scope should, therefore, also be local, showing a member of the message recipient’s in-group (a model with the same ethnicity as the respondent). If the geographical scope of the charity is broad (worldwide) or foreign, advertising elements with a broad (ethnic) scope are more relevant and expected. In that case, showing models with a broad ethnic scope, different from the message recipients’ ethnicity (out-group), are more schema-congruent and should lead to favorable attitudes and donation intentions.

H1: For a local charity, appeals with models of the same ethnicity as the message recipient will lead to a more positive attitude toward the charity and intention to donate than models of a different ethnicity, mediated by an increase in the perceived model trustworthiness and a reduction in ad skepticism.

H2: For a global charity, appeals with models of a different ethnicity from the message recipient will lead to a more positive attitude toward the charity and intention to donate than models of the same ethnicity, mediated by an increase in the perceived model trustworthiness and a reduction in ad skepticism.

Method

Experimental design

We used a well-controlled experimental design to test our hypotheses because this research method allows us to validly study the effects of carefully manipulated factors while excluding all other potentially confounding effects. We set up a 2 (message recipient ethnicity: Caucasian vs. Indian) x 2 (model ethnicity: Caucasian vs. Indian) x 2 (geographical scope of the charity: global vs. local) between-subjects experiment. The *message recipient ethnicity* was either Caucasian or Indian, as we selected participants from France and India. We conducted the study in two countries to build in a replication of the congruity effects studied, to partly assess the cross-cultural stability of our findings. Importantly, people in France and India donate similar amounts to charities. The World Giving Index ranks 136 countries on how charitable they are, and France holds the 56th place with a score of 30%, whereas India holds the 64th place (28%) in terms of donating money (CAF, 2017). Thus, there should be no initial bias toward donating money to charities between the two countries. Both countries also represent important markets for charitable donations. In France, between 30 and 49% of the population reportedly give to charity, which accounts for an estimated donor population of more than 25 million, the second largest number in Europe (CAF, 2017; Fondation de France, 2015). The average annual donation is 400 euro per person (a number that is still rising), which represents 1.25% of the GDP per capita (Fondation de France, 2015). The most popular causes people donate to are cancer, voluntary emergency services

and the underprivileged (Statista, 2016). 37% of donations are given to social welfare initiatives, mostly local (Fondation de France, 2015). In India, too, donations are on the rise and expected to grow further (Bain & Company, 2015). In 2016, 28% of the adult population donated money to an official charitable organization (CAF, 2017). India takes first place worldwide in the number of people donating, with a total of 265 million donors (CAF, 2017). The most popular causes are education, child welfare and old age (Bain & Company, 2015).

Model ethnicity was manipulated by including a picture of a small group of people of strictly Caucasian or Indian ethnicity, to either match or mismatch with the ethnicity of the respondents. Both the Caucasian and the Indian group contained an equal number of men and women. The ethnicity of the models was judged by 5 independent judges.

The third factor, the *geographical scope of the charity* was manipulated through the advertising copy, language and website suffix (cfr. Rajabi, Dens, De Pelsmacker, & Goos, 2015). The charity that was selected was YouBridge, a small Belgian charity that wants to bridge the digital gap by providing individuals with hardware support and knowledge sharing. YouBridge has projects both in Belgium and abroad (e.g., Nepal, Afghanistan), but is not currently active in France or India. This was important because we wanted to avoid potential confounds due to participants' prior knowledge of the charity. The advertising copy for the "global" scope was written in English in both countries and read: "YouBridge's mission is to empower the world's poorest people by providing them with laptops and free computer training. Find out how you can help people all across the world by visiting www.youbridge.org". For the local scope, the copy in India read as follows (in English): "YouBridge's mission is to empower the poorest people in India by providing them with laptops and free computer training. Find out how you can help in your local community by visiting www.youbridge.in". In France, we replaced the country name and the suffix of the

website (www.youbridge.fr) and translated the advertising copy to French (with back-translation). Examples of the Indian stimuli can be found in the Appendix. The stimuli for France were identical to the Indian stimuli, except for the advertising copy in the local scope conditions (as described above). We kept the layout and content of all ads as similar as possible to ensure a high degree of internal validity.

Data collection

We collected data through an online survey in France ($n = 204$) and India ($n = 209$) using Lightspeed Research, a professional international market research agency with an online consumer panel in both countries, using quota sampling based on age and gender. In cross-cultural research for theory testing, it is important that the samples for different cultures are as similar as possible on all aspects other than culture (Barbarossa, Beckmann, De Pelsmacker, Moons, & Gwozdz, 2015). Therefore, the same gender and age quota were applied in both countries. Respondents are part of the agency's panel database. They received an invitation from the agency via email to complete an online questionnaire in return for a small incentive (offered by the agency). The email contained the link to our online questionnaire programmed in Qualtrics. The survey opened with a brief introduction describing the purpose of the study in general terms (consumer responses to charity advertising), to not give away too much of the actual design. Respondents were randomly allocated to one of the experimental conditions through the survey software.

We asked for the ethnicity of the respondents to check whether they had the intended ethnicity (Caucasian in France and Indian in India) and removed those who did not. This procedure results in a final sample of 201 Frenchmen and 194 Indians. The sample composition is not significantly different between the two samples in terms of age (Caucasian sample: -35 years: 40%, 36-50 years: 32%, 50+ years: 28%, Indian sample: -35 years: 43%,

36-50 years: 38%, 50+ years: 19%, chi-square (2) = 4.46, $p = .11$) or gender (Caucasian: 47% men, Indian: 50%, $\chi^2(1) = 0.56$, $p = .62$).

The questionnaire was provided in French to French participants and in English to Indian participants. The French questionnaire was translated from English and back-translated by two native speakers (Douglas and Craig, 2006). Respondents were first asked to report their ethnicity, age, and gender. Next, they were randomly exposed to one of the four test charity appeals, and subsequently completed the measures for trustworthiness and skepticism, and the dependent variables (see Table 1 for full details). Intention to donate money and ad skepticism are measured by a single item since the object is easily and uniformly imaged (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2007; Rossiter, 2002). All constructs are measured by 7-point Likert or semantic differential scales. The Cronbach's alphas of the multi-item scales indicate a high internal consistency ($\alpha > .90$). Thus, we merged the items per construct and worked with the average scores on the variables. Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations per condition.

[Table 1 Here]

[Table 2 Here]

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis and measurement invariance testing

We first performed a confirmatory factor analysis within the samples of the two countries separately. There are two latent variables in the model: perceived model trustworthiness and attitude toward the charity. The models have a good fit in both samples (CFI > .99, TLI > .98). All factor loadings are larger than .82. In the two samples, the Composite Reliability is larger than .91 (> .70), confirming reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is larger than .77 (> .50), confirming convergent validity. Both the

Maximum Shared Variance and the Average Shared Variance are larger than the AVE, which confirms discriminant validity (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). We also assess the data for configural and metric invariance between the two countries using a multi-group CFA approach (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998) with AMOS. The configural invariance model fit the data well (CFI = .99, TLI = .99). Configural invariance is confirmed since all factor loadings are highly significant and the within-country standardized factor loadings are larger than .85. The samples are also metrically invariant, indicating that comparisons of factors across the two countries are meaningful.

Hypotheses testing

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a test of the indirect effects based on Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 8) with 5000 bootstrap samples. Because we were interested in the mediation of the use of "in-group" (same ethnicity as the message recipient) versus "out-group" (different ethnicity from the message recipients) models, rather than the effect of model ethnicity as such, we recoded the "model ethnicity" and "recipient ethnicity" factors into a single variable (0 = "out-group" when the model and message recipient have a different ethnicity from each other and 1 = "in-group" when the model and message recipient are of the same ethnicity). The scope of the charity was entered as a moderator (0 = Local, 1 = Global) and the perceived model trustworthiness and ad skepticism as parallel mediators. Two covariates were also added: the gender and age of the respondent. We controlled for age since older people tend to donate more than young people (Mainardes, et al., 2016). Additionally, prior research indicates that men and women react differently to charity appeals (Brunel and Nelson, 2000; Laufer, Silvera, McBride, & Schertzer, 2010). Table 2 presents the mean scores per condition for the two mediators and the two dependents in the Indian and the Caucasian sample. We mean-centered the dependent variables and the mediators per sample

to account for cross-cultural response bias (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 2001; Fischer, 2004). We ran separate analyses for our two dependent variables. The results are provided in Table 3.

[Table 3 Here]

The ethnic similarity x scope of the charity interaction on the perceived model trustworthiness is marginally significant ($b = -.467$, $p = 0.059$). The conditional effects show that, as expected, respondents tend to trust models of their own ethnicity more for a local charity (although the effect is not significant, $p = .382$), while they trust models of a foreign ethnicity more for a global charity (conditional effect = $-.284$, $p = .095$). The interaction is also significant for ad skepticism ($b = .927$, $p = .006$). Here, respondents are less skeptical towards an ad featuring models of their own ethnicity, when the charity is local (conditional effect = $-.585$, $p = .017$). When the charity is global, the effect of ethnic similarity is in the expected direction (meaning, models of a foreign ethnicity reduce ad skepticism), but the effect is not significant ($p = .142$). Model trustworthiness and ad skepticism, in turn, exert strong and significant effects on the attitude toward the charity and the intention to donate.

For the local charity, the indirect effect of ethnic similarity on both the attitude toward the charity and the intention to donate through perceived skepticism is positive and (at least marginally) significant, as the 90% confidence intervals do not contain zero (Table 4). The indirect effect through perceived trustworthiness is not significant. This result partly confirms H1. For the global charity, the indirect effects through trustworthiness are marginally significant (Table 4), but the effects through skepticism are not. H2 is, therefore partly confirmed.

[Table 4 Here]

Discussion

The present study examines the impact of the message recipient - model ethnicity similarity in a charity appeal and the geographical scope of the charity on perceived model trustworthiness and ad skepticism, and ultimately on the attitude toward the charity and the intention to donate money. The results indicate that for local charities, message recipients prefer models of their own ethnicity, while for a global charity, models of a distant ethnicity result in more positive responses. This pattern validates social identity theory, for a local charity, and effects of schema congruity, for both the local and the global charity.

In line with social identity theory, previous research has mainly found that respondents prefer models of their own ethnicity (Brumbaugh and Grier, 2006; Qualls and Moore, 1990). However, these studies often manipulated only the ethnicity of the model, ignoring potential moderators. Our results indicate that the positive effects of in-group models, such as documented by Erlandsson, Björklund, & Bäckström (2015), are not universal, and models' ethnicity should also be congruent with other message or cause elements such as the (geographical) positioning of the brand. In our research, positioning a cause as global may increase the (psychological and/or geographical) scope of the charity to message recipients. Because of this scope, models from a distant ethnicity induce higher trust perceptions because they may be perceived as more congruent with the cause. This increase in perceived model trustworthiness, in turn, translates into a positive attitude toward the charity, and a higher intention to donate money to the charity. The pattern for the local charity is a bit different, as here, local models do not necessarily induce more trust, but do significantly reduce ad skepticism.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The main theoretical implication of this paper is that social identity is not a universal principle, but seems to be “overruled” by other congruity considerations. The paper is the first to our knowledge to validate this hypothesis empirically. The practical implications of our study help charity managers to choose more effective advertising strategies when approaching international markets. First of all, our results show that a carefully designed campaign based on schema congruity principles is crucial for advertising effectiveness. More particularly, in the case that the charity works globally, developing advertising appeals with ethnicities other than the ethnicity of the prospective donor is recommended because of a greater congruency between the charity and the ad than when local ethnicity models are used. This congruence leads to less ad skepticism and higher perceived model trustworthiness, and indirectly to a more positive attitude toward the charity and a higher intention to donate money. Charities with a local scope should always use local-ethnicity models. While this latter recommendation may seem tautological, the noteworthy finding is especially that local-ethnicity models are NOT always preferred, while this is what would be suggested by social identity theory.

The current research suggests that the similarity between the message recipient and the advertising models (leading to social identification) seems subservient to the congruity between the charity and the models. Social identification can also be achieved through other characteristics, such as age, gender, education, profession, social class or lifestyle. Since its inception, the CAF World Giving Index has found that globally, the older we are, the more likely we are to give via financial means (CAF, 2017). People over 50s are most likely to report donating money. Also, in 2016, men were slightly more likely than women to have donated money (CAF, 2017). Based on social identity theory, it would be suggested in this case to depict relatively older men in charity appeals. These are of course general guidelines.

If a charity has a clearer understanding of its donor target group, models representative of that specific target group should be used in advertising. However, our research suggests that it is better to consider the congruity of the models used in advertising with the nature of the cause or the focus of the charity, rather than with the message recipients. Apart from the local or global scope of the cause explored in the current study, other relevant model-cause congruity criteria can be applied, such as children as models for a children-oriented charity, animals for animal-related causes, nature for environmental protection causes, and cancer patients for cancer charities. The perceived congruity between the model and the charity could also be enhanced through the advertising, e.g., by using testimonials or storytelling that appeal to the motivations of the target donor audience. In sum, charities should strive to select message elements (such as the models in the advertisement) that are preferably a priori congruent with both the message recipient (the potential supporter of the cause) and the cause itself. In addition, they can use their advertising to (further) explain or enhance the perceived congruity of the ad elements.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

There are limitations to this study that provide opportunities for further research. The most important limitation relates to the fact that the results of this study are based on a single experimental lab study. It would, therefore, be relevant to explore the generalizability of the findings to a broader range of charities and ethnicities in the field. The charity in the appeal aims at decreasing the digital gap. Other charities could lead to different reactions. We also did not measure respondents' actual donation behavior but focused on attitude and intention instead. The fact that the results are highly consistent for the two dependent variables supports the robustness of the findings. While attitude and intention are highly correlated with actual behavior (Kashif and De Run, 2015; Smith and McSweeney, 2007), further

research should, for example, give respondents a certain amount of money to either keep or divide between different charities or conduct a field experiment to monitor actual donations. These studies should consider the trade-off between external and internal validity that is inherent to experimental research.

Further research should also explore add-ons or variations of the current design, such as adding different combinations of ethnicities or examining other factors that could signal group membership. Since it appears that the fit between the scope of the charity and model ethnicity is important, it would be interesting to investigate how potential charity donors evaluate mixed groups. Also, social identity theory indicates that many factors can influence group membership, such as gender, age, and income. Further research could look into other social identity elements than ethnicity.

We collected data in France and India. Due to historical events, India could have a complex relationship with Caucasian individuals. Looking at countries that have not been colonized could further strengthen our results. Studies could also look into cross-cultural differences, as research indicates that cultural values influence volunteering and charitable donation behavior (e.g., Randle and Dolnicar, 2009, 2012). Overall, our Indian respondents reported greater intentions to donate money than their Caucasian counterparts. The World Giving Index (CAF, 2017) indicates that country-level differences in charitable giving are not easily attributable to economic factors. Personal and cultural characteristics could explain the remaining main effect of respondent ethnicity. Mainardes, et al. (2016) reviewed 57 variables that are related to personal characteristics explaining the donation of money or goods. This review indicates that many factors contribute to donation behavior, which explains the remaining variation in intention to donate money to the charity. This issue should be explored in further research.

Finally, concerns have risen that the nonprofit sector is uncritically taking on techniques of commercial environments. These techniques may sometimes conflict with the values of the charity or may lead to a struggle in juggling between ethics and effectiveness (Branigan and Mitsis, 2014; J. Dean and Wood, 2017). Since both charity and message credibility and internal buy-in are crucial for charity support and fundraising, future research should further explore the boundary conditions of message framing and persuasive communication techniques and their congruity with charity values and perceptions by charity staff and volunteers.

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Figure 1. Conceptual model

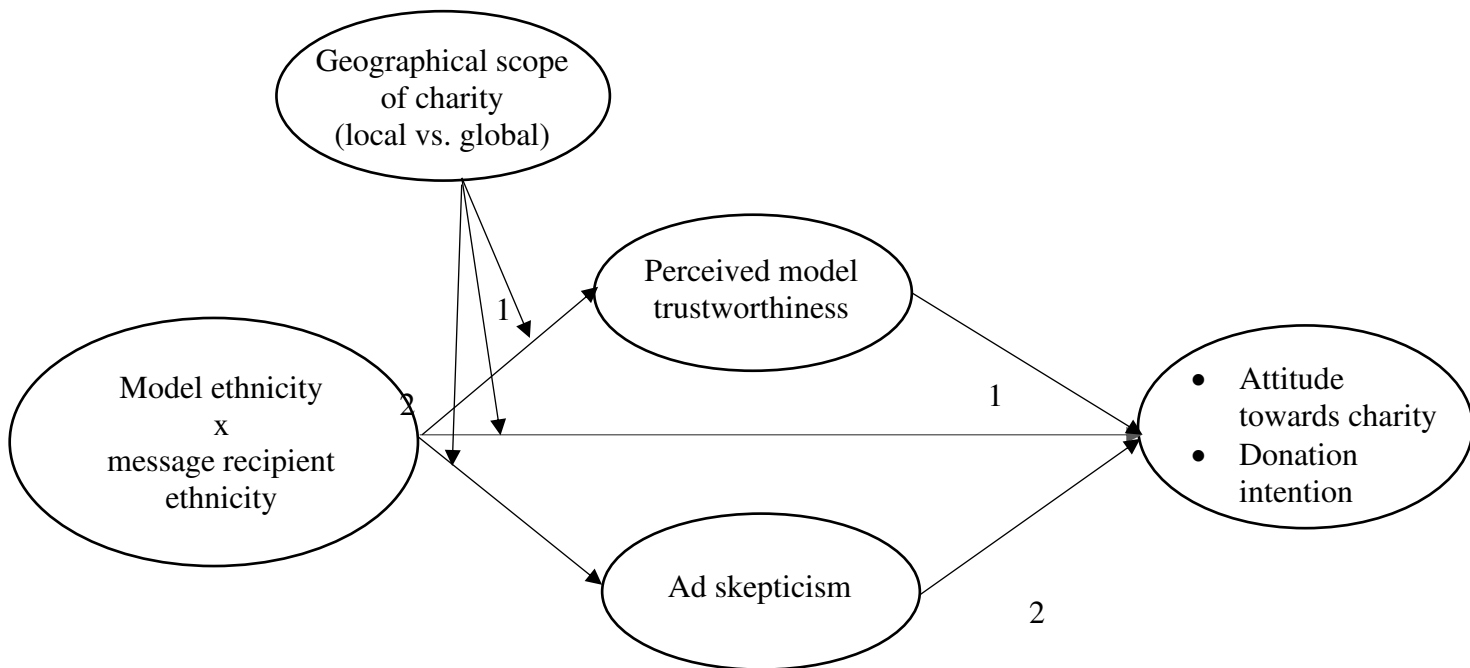


Table 1: Measures

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Sample item	Scale origin
Ad skepticism	1 item	/	I am skeptical about the message—I am not skeptical about the message	(Williams and Drolet, 2005)
Perceived trustworthiness of the model	3 items	.94	The people in the ad are: very unreliable—very reliable; very untrustworthy—very trustworthy; very insincere—very sincere	(Till and Busler, 2000)
Attitude toward the charity	3 items	.94	The objectives of YouBridge are worthwhile; I respect YouBridge; YouBridge is a worthy organization	(D. H. Dean, 2002)
Intention to donate money to the charity	1 item	/	Please mark how likely it is that you will donate money to YouBridge: very unlikely—very likely	/

Table 2: Mean scores of mediating and dependent variables

				Perceived trust-worthiness		Ad skepticism		Attitude toward the charity		Intention to donate money	
Message recipient ethnicity	Scope of the charity	Model ethnicity	n	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Indian	Local	Indian	52	0.70	0.17	-1.66	1.31	0.82	1.02	0.16	1.45
		Caucasian	47	0.47	0.18	-0.96	1.98	0.62	1.17	0.08	1.17
	Global	Indian	48	0.51	0.18	-1.61	1.28	0.67	0.98	-0.17	1.34
		Caucasian	60	0.71	0.16	-1.92	1.54	0.85	1.01	0.13	1.36
Caucasian	Local	Indian	44	0.30	0.19	0.13	1.51	0.36	1.20	-1.30	1.40
		Caucasian	44	0.42	0.19	-0.37	1.78	0.86	1.02	-0.87	1.68
	Global	Indian	50	0.75	0.17	-0.42	1.53	0.82	1.11	-1.22	1.71
		Caucasian	50	0.39	0.17	-0.28	1.55	0.68	1.27	-0.54	1.71

Table 3: Unstandardized regression coefficients

Independent variable	Perceived model trustworthiness	Ad skepticism	Attitude toward the charity	Intention to donate
Intercept	.058	-.669°	.245	-.704*
Ethnic similarity (1 = Same)	.183	-.585*	.199	-.012
Scope of the charity (1 = Global)	.344*	-.803*	.112	-.312
Ethnicity similarity * Scope of the charity	-.467°	.927*	-.197	.360
Perceived model trustworthiness	-	-	.483***	.415***
Ad skepticism	-	-	-.082**	-.335***
Gender	.001	.509*	-.020	-.009
Age	.008°	-.014*	.001	-.005
R ²	.020	.063	.383	.317

Notes: ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05, °p < .10

Table 4: Indirect effects of model similarity

Mediator	Dependent	Charity	Effect	90%CI
Perceived trustworthiness	Attitude to charity	Local	.088	[-.056; .234]
		Global	-.137	[-.270; -.007]
	Intention to donate	Local	.076	[-.049; .201]
		Global	-.118	[-.246; -.006]
Ad skepticism	Attitude to charity	Local	.048	[.007; .104]
		Global	-.028	[-.070; .003]
	Intention to donate	Local	.196	[.051; .347]
		Global	-.115	[-.252; .008]

Appendix

Caucasianmodels, global charity



Caucasianmodels, local charity (India)



Indianmodels, global charity



Indianmodels, local charity (India)

