

Does Non-profit Brand Image Mean the Same Across Cultures? An Exploratory Evaluation of Non-Profit Brand Image in Three Countries

Abstract

Purpose –The current challenges international charities face with regards to their deteriorating image, as a result of recent scandals (e.g. Oxfam, Save the Children), provide the impetus for this exploratory research, which examines the conceptualization and dimensionality of non-profit brand image across national cultures.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employs a quantitative research design, using multi-country samples from India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the UK. We first examine the psychometric properties of the non-profit brand image scale via confirmatory factor analysis across countries, identifying the optimal model for invariance testing. Further, we use multi-group invariance analysis to evaluate whether non-profit brand image (using an 18-item scale and six factors) provides equivalent measurement across cultures.

Findings – The study shows that individuals in the three countries perceive non-profit brand image equally, and as consisting of perceptions of usefulness, efficiency, affect, dynamism, reliability and ethicality. However, our results also indicate that the means of the dimensions of non-profit brand image are not comparable across different cultures.

Originality/value – The study extends limited current literature on non-profit brand image in international contexts, deriving insightful suggestions for further theoretical approaches in this under-developed research domain. It also yields key implications for charities and other nonprofit organizations operating internationally, as they can use nonprofit brand image and its dimensions as actionable tools in their communication campaigns to shape their brand image.

Does Non-profit Brand Image Mean the Same Across Cultures? An Exploratory Evaluation of Non-Profit Brand Image in Three Countries

Introduction

Prior research in the domain of international marketing suggests that non-profit organizations, despite being different from commercial ones, they equally seek to employ traditional marketing tools and ideas to achieve their mission (Dolnicar and Lazarevski, 2009). Specifically, the notion of branding is very crucial for the non-for-profit sector (Stride and Lee, 2007; Waters and Jones, 2011; Michaelidou, Micevski, and Siamagka, 2015b), with charitable organizations utilizing branding techniques in order to stand out from other similar organizations (Mort *et al.*, 2007). Indeed, branding is of particular significance to charities that operate at a global or international level (e.g., Unicef, Red Cross, Save the Children, ActionAid, WWF, Oxfam etc.), as it applies to a wide range of decisions in developing and communicating a globally consistent and stable image (e.g., see Whitelock and Fastoso, 2007) across different countries. For example, in comparing their brand image across countries, international charities may be able to identify problem areas (e.g., negative perception of ethicality) across different countries, diagnose the nature and cause of the problem, and take corrective action. Equally important is the fact that, charitable organizations that seek to leverage their scarce resources across countries need to know whether their image has equivalent measurement across national cultures [e.g., is understood the same by individuals]. Indeed, cross-cultural benchmarking is useful for tracking performance and developing strategies in domestic and international markets, and serves as a basis for designing global marketing campaigns.

Nevertheless, current literature in the area of non-profit brand image (Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Michaelidou, Micevski and Cadogan, 2015a) has been exclusively developed in a single national context (*see* Netemeyer *et al.*, 1991; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Having no information about non-profit brand image measurement equivalence across different national contexts presents an important research gap from theoretical but also from practical standpoint. From theoretical view, without a strict proof of the equivalent and stability of measures of non-profit brand image, scholars cannot fully understand the conceptual comparability of the measure. In other words, we do not know whether similarities or differences observed across national contexts can be seen as related or should the conclusions regarding the brand image of non-profits be made in isolation, on country by country bases. From the standpoint of practitioners, without information of generally accepted scales to measure the non-profit brand image across nations, it is difficult to justify investment in international brand building initiatives. Indeed, national contexts within which international non-profit organizations are operating may vary greatly from country to country, and therefore, cross nationally invariant measures of non-profit brand image that work across national contexts would allow managers to more accurately decide about their brand positioning and communications strategies. In view of these gaps in the current international branding literature, this research attempts to answer the following questions: (RQ1): Does non-profit brand image conceptualization differ across national cultures? (RQ2): Is non-profit brand image and its dimensions comparable across national cultures?

To address these questions, we focus on assessing the cross-national invariance of a recently developed 18-item measure of non-profit brand image (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a) across three countries – India, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UK- and which show an adequate range of cultural variation. Data were drawn from 622 respondents in total, and initially analyzed

via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to identify the optimal model for invariance testing. Measurement invariance was assessed through a set of sequential testing procedures and omnibus assessment that include testing for configural invariance, measurement invariance, scalar invariance and factor variance invariance. As such, the study offers the several contributions. First, we contribute to knowledge by extending scarce research in the international branding and non-profit field (e.g., Christodoulides, Cadogan, and Veloutsou, 2015), focusing on the equivalence of non-profit brand image in three national contexts. More specifically, and from a theoretical point of view, our study places the notion of non-profit brand image in the domain of international marketing, hence extending prior research focusing on non-profit organizations in an international context (e.g., Bruce, 1995; Dolnicar and Lazarevski, 2009). A second contribution is that the study examines the dimensionality/stability of the facets of non-profit brand image (e.g., Netemeyer *et al.*, 1991) across three national contexts; thus, offering a methodological assessment of the validity of the construct as a brand management tool and advancing current research in the domain of non-profit brand image (e.g. Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a). Third, our results have an incremental practical value, in that they have the potential to shape managerial decisions. For example, to improve how charities and other non-profit organizations manage their image, and subsequently their resources, internationally (e.g., Corley and Gioia, 2011). The latter point is particularly important, as lack of accepted and cross-nationally valid scales to manage non-profit brand image suggests that it may be more difficult for charities and other non-profit organizations to justify investment in brand building activities internationally.

The following section provides a theoretical background, and subsequently the methodology and analytical procedures are presented. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and contributions to theory and practice.

Theoretical Background

Conceptualization and Measurement of Non-profit Brand Image

In line with Keller (1993; 2001), non-profit image indicates individuals' perceptions of non-profit brands as reflected by different brand associations held in memory, and which seem to appeal to both emotional and rational considerations. The importance of brand image for non-profit organizations is well documented in the literature (e.g., Bennett and Sargeant, 2005; Ewing and Napoli, 2005; Sargeant *et al.*, 2008). Non-profit brand image is acknowledged as a "*critical element of a [charity's] promotional program*" (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996, p.37) to drive charitable donations, given the intense competition non-profit organizations face to secure individuals' monetary and time donations (Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Michaelidou, *et al.*, 2015b; Stride and Lee, 2007). More specifically, Bendapudi *et al.*, (1996) argue that the image of charities provides cues as to how well the charity represents its donors, thus charities which are perceived as effective will be more successful in influencing donations including money and time contributions (Bendapudi *et al.*, 1996; Stark, 1989).

Non-profit brand image has been previously conceptualized using primarily commercial variables that do not generally underpin non-profit aspects of brand image (Michel and Rieunier, 2012). In particular, authors such as Sargeant *et al.*, (2008), Venable *et al.*, (2005), Voeth and Herbst (2008) use personality traits, including Aaker's (1997) brand personality inventory (i.e.

sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness) initially created to apply to commercial brands (e.g., Sung and Kim, 2010), to measure non-profit brand image. However, such measures have been criticized for having weak predictive validity (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a). Similarly, Bennett and Gabriel's (2003) conceptualization of non-profit brand image, which is underlined by five factors, namely, compassion, dynamism, political orientation, idealism and focus on beneficiaries, has also been criticized for drawing on 'for-profit' notions to capture non-profit brand image (Michel and Rieunier, 2012). Lately, notable attempts have been made to create a better conceptualization and measure of brand image specifically within the non-profit domain (e.g., Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a). In particular, Michel and Rieunier (2012) conceptualize non-profit brand image as consisting of four dimensions - usefulness, efficiency, affect and dynamism, which encompass different attributes of image, within the context of local French and international humanitarian aid charities. For example, usefulness and efficiency reflect a functional image of the non-profit brand, linked to rational perceptions that fulfil utilitarian considerations (Huang and Ku, 2016; Keller, 2001); such as, whether the charity is managed-well, uses assets wisely, and it is efficient and useful in achieving its mission. On the other hand, non-profit brand can encapsulate a symbolic or affective image, reflecting individuals internally-generated and psychological needs (Keller, 2001). For instance, a symbolic or affective image comprises perceptions of charities being compassionate, friendly and favorable, and it is thought to resonate with emotional considerations (Keller, 2001). Michaelidou *et al.*, (2015a) further extend the conceptualization of non-profit brand image, arguing that as charitable giving is grounded on moral principles and values (e.g., such as benevolence and helping others, Webb *et al.*, 2000), non-profit brand image should also include perceptions of ethicality and reliability; delineated via associations pertaining

to the charity being perceived as: responsible, reputable, sincere, ethical, moral and righteous. These perceptions highlight an 'ethical image' of the non-profit brand, and can be thought to appeal to individuals' moral principles of being honest, trustworthy, sincere and righteous (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a).

Non-profit Brand Image in International Context: The Research Gap

In international business literature, there is abundance of evidence pointing to the importance of tests establishing cross-nationally valid and reliable scales of measurement instruments that exhibit the same dimensionality as initially intended, before employing such measures as means of capturing phenomena abroad (Davis, Douglas, and Silk, 1981; Douglas and Craig, 1983; Sekaran and Martin, 1982). Such tests enable drawing consequent conclusions from the cross-national research with valid inferences. Indeed, limited work to date has mostly focused on brand equity and examined the equivalence of brand equity measures across different countries (e.g., Buil, de Chernatony and Martinez, 2008; Christodoulides, *et al.*, 2015; Yoo and Donthu, 2001). For example, Christodoulides, *et al.*, (2015) evaluate consumer brand equity across Germany, Greece and the UK. Their results failed to provide clarity as to the discrimination of brand equity across the three national contexts. Other researchers have focused on the question of variability of brand associations and image across countries. For instance, previous research in branding shows differences in perceptions of brands across countries/cultures with individuals relating different associations to them (Aaker *et al.*, 2001; Foscht *et al.*, 2008; Kocak *et al.*, 2007; Sung and Tinkham, 2005). In a similar line, Foscht *et al.*, (2008) identify differences in brand associations attributed to a single global brand with the same positioning across countries. Specifically, the authors find that respondents in the UK and

Austria have stronger perceptions of 'competence' (e.g., efficiency) towards a global brand, relative to individuals from Singapore who, instead, show stronger emotional associations. Indeed, previous research argues for cross-national differences in image perceptions and brand personality (Grohmann, 2009; Lieven and Hildebrand, 2016).

However, extant research has failed to examine whether image consists of the same associations across countries in the non-profit sector, and whether the salience of such associations will be equivalent across these same countries. And although previous studies have examined the image of brands in the for-profit sector across countries (e.g., Buil *et al.*, 2008; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2015), the non-profit context differs in terms of the value that charitable organizations produce, that relates to the achievement of social purposes and the fulfilment of donors' expectations when contributing to a cause supported by the charity (Moore, 2000). Given the intangibility and abstraction which surrounds the 'non-profit brand' and its value, it may be difficult for individuals and/or donors to discriminate between specific image associations, but rather being easier for donors only to formulate an overall image of the charity (Christodoulides *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the extent to which charities enjoy consistent brand image across national contexts remains seriously unclear. Additionally, as a lot of charities operate mostly at an international level (e.g., Oxfam, Unicef, Red Cross, Save the Children), managers base their decision making on research that involves comparing samples from two or more national contexts on non-profit brand image. A methodological consideration in conducting comparisons focuses on ruling out alternative explanations for differences and, thus, enhancing the interpretability of the results. Lack of awareness of the level of equivalence of the measures will constitute any observed differences in mean scores across samples subject to varied explanations. In other words, results

could be due to differences in national contexts, or merely due to measurement artifacts, which makes observed image scores non-comparable directly.

Finally, how donors and the general public perceive charities and other non-profit organizations is very relevant and important to the charitable sector, considering the recent scandals involving humanitarian and children charities (e.g. Oxfam, Save the Children). For instance, the Oxfam /Haiti scandal was characterized as "a blow to the charity sector" and has tarnished the image of Oxfam, leading to high profile cancellations in individual donations, as well as tensions between Haiti and other charities working in the country (Brindle, 2018; BBC, 2018). Examining whether the notion of non-profit brand image [and its dimensions] is conceptually, functionally and metrically equivalent across national contexts (e.g., Meredith, 1993; Rosenzweig, 1994), will allow charities to ascertain if their image has the same meaning, structure, pattern and comparable scores and means across national cultures; and will inform the development of international charitable campaigns. Our study fills this important void in the current scholarly research, as we use a set of diagnostic invariance measurement tests to assess equivalence of non-profit brand image across three national contexts (e.g., India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, UK).

Methodology

Country Selection

Data were collected in three countries: India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the UK. The selection of the three countries is underpinned by the following rationale. First, within the non-profit domain, most studies are limited to, so called, WEIRD societies (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) (e.g., Schlegelmilch *et al.*, 1997) which represent only a small proportion of humankind (Henrich *et al.*, 2010). However, scarce empirical evidence in the non-profit domain and outside the scope of Western countries confirms the legitimacy of inclusion of Asian cultural contexts for the improvement of relevancy and accuracy of charitable giving behavior (Hsu *et al.*, 2005). Compared to the rare non-profit domain studies conducted in Asia, studies conducted in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are even more scarce. Thus, in addition to the UK, CEE as well as Asian countries offer useful and appropriate contexts to cross-nationally examine non-profit brand image. Second, Bosnia and Herzegovina and India reflect sufficient economic and cultural variation between each other and the UK simultaneously, which enables the examination of the conceptual equivalence of the non-profit brand image. Specifically, in terms of economic development, both, India and Bosnia and Herzegovina belong to the group of developing countries [compared to the UK]. Further, the selected countries present a great linguistic variation with English being an official language in India, and the first foreign language in Bosnia and Herzegovina (O'Reilly, 2001). Finally, India tops the list for the number of people donating money, while Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced a significant rise in money donations to charities in 2018 [compared to the previous years]; and also, compared to other developed and developing economies, which have experienced marginal

declines in giving money. In fact, Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the 5 biggest movers in terms of donation levels since 2015 (CAF, 2018).

Pre-Tests and Data Collection

The selection of the charities in each country was based on a series of pre-tests based on previous research (Michel and Rieunier, 2012; Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a). Respondents were asked to indicate the charitable sector that comes to mind first, and then name a 'typical' charity reflecting the sector. In the case of India, 73% of respondents in the pre-test opted for the children humanitarian aid sector, whereas the results of the pre-test in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed highest spontaneous recognition of the humanitarian aid sector (80% of respondents). In the case of the UK, respondents indicated the children's charity sector (58%). In the second pre-test India respondents ranked the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as the highest scoring non-profit organization on the typicality measure (mean = 5.15; sd. = 1.33; Likert scale 1-7). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, respondents identified the Red Cross to be the most typical representative of that charity sector (typicality mean = 4.26; sd. = 0.77; Likert scale 1-5). In the case of UK, the chosen charity was National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (typicality mean = 5.08; sd. = 1.2; Likert scale 1-7). Subsequent to the choice of the charity, a large-scale questionnaire approach was used to collect data which included measures of non-profit brand image, awareness of the charities, items capturing past donation behavior, willingness to donate time and money to the chosen charities, brand typicality (adapted from Rosch and Mervis, 1975) and a set of demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, employment status and annual income). Non-profit brand image was measured via an 18-item scale developed by Michaelidou *et al.*, (2015a), which is the most recently-developed

scale measuring non-profit brand image. All items were measured on 7-point Likert scales. To ensure respondents' knowledgeability, they were instructed not to complete the questionnaire if they had no prior knowledge of the UNICEF (India), the Red Cross (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and NSPCC (UK). Responses which indicated no prior or poor knowledge (scoring low on the awareness level Likert scale, 1-5) were deleted from all samples. The questionnaire had an easy to follow layout and page design (Dillman, 2006), where it was emphasized to respondents that the questionnaire is anonymous in order to as to minimize concerns regarding social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985).

For the Indian sample (as well as the UK), the questionnaire was administered in English given that English is an official language in India. In contrast the questionnaire was back translated for administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the procedure outlined by Lonner and Berry (1986). Additionally, to assure that verbatim translation is avoided and true meaning of the items is transferred, a group of five multilingual marketing scholars carefully inspected the items. A total of 151, 271 and 200 responses were collected in India, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UK respectively. Table 1 summarizes descriptive statistics of the samples. There is a good spread in terms of gender in all the samples (56.3% female and 43.7% male respondents in the Indian sample; 55.7% female and 44.3% male respondents in the Bosnian sample, and 50.5% female and 49.5% male respondents in UK sample).

Table 1 here

Data Analysis

Measurement Model

The establishment of scale dimensionality in each country setting is one of the priorities in international studies if the scale is to be deemed applicable to other foreign settings (Netemeyer *et al.*, 1991). To this end, confirmatory factor analysis using Lisrel 8.71 with maximum likelihood estimation (ML) with covariance matrix as input, was conducted. For each of the three charities (UNICEF, Red Cross and NSPCC) all the 18 items loading on the pre-defined 6 dimensions of the non-profit brand image scale were specified. As per Table 2, the six-factor measurement model for UNICEF (India) yielded an excellent fit. Similarly, the six-factor measurement model for Red Cross (Bosnia and Herzegovina) also yielded excellent fit, which was the same for the UK. In addition, all items loaded on the same factors across the three samples.

Table 2 here.

Next, we assessed the internal consistency. As shown in Table 3, CR and AVE values are all above the recommended thresholds and consistent across all samples. With respect to reliability and CR values, in all three samples the values are all adequate, exceeding the critical threshold of 0.60 in all instances (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The same situation is observed for Cronbach's alpha values, which all exceed Nunnally's (1978) 0.70 recommended minimum value. Inter-items correlations show strong internal consistency, with all the items correlating strongly, hence meeting the minimum recommended threshold value of 0.35 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). In addition, the path coefficients returned high t-values (significant at the 0.01 level), indicating

superior convergent validity (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Further, convergent validity assessment through the average variance extracted (AVE) indicates that all AVE values in all the samples exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 3 provides a full list of the items for the 6 dimensions of non-profit brand image, their CR and AVE values. To assess discriminant validity, highest shared variance (HSV) was examined by comparing the AVE scores with the square of correlations between constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (see Table 3). All AVE estimates for each of the constructs and for each of the samples is greater than the squared correlation estimate for each pair of construct and hence, we achieve discriminant validity.

Table 4 here.

Measurement Invariance Tests

Researchers test for measurement invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998), in order to demonstrate evidence which supports a scale's cross-cultural validity and stability.

Establishing measurement invariance implies that the set of indicators is measuring the same latent variables across groups or countries (Kline 2004). However, the form of invariance that needs to be established is a function of the goals and objectives of the study. According to Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998) if the objective of the study is to explore the basic meaning and the structure of the constructs cross-nationally, then configural invariance should be established. Configural invariance reflects a lower level of invariance, which is a prerequisite prior to obtaining higher-level invariance (e.g. metric). Configural invariance is satisfied if the basic factor structure (i.e. the pattern of fixed and nonfixed parameters) is identified as invariant across groups (Milfont and Fischer, 2015). Thus, one should establish this baseline model

without constraints on estimated parameters, permitting different parameter values to be freely estimated across countries. This implies that respondents across different groups conceptualize a construct in the same way. Having achieved configural invariance, Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998) suggest that one should conduct a stronger test, metric invariance, to examine whether different groups of respondents understand the items in the same way. Thus, the test of metric invariance requires constraining the factor pattern coefficients to be equal across countries. Indeed, the model with metric invariance is more restrictive than the baseline configural model. Having achieved metric invariance, factor variance invariance could be tested. If achieved, the test indicates that the range of scores on a latent factor do not vary across groups. Factor variance invariance is tested by constraining all factor variances to be identical across all three groups. Finally, scalar invariance could be examined. This highest level of invariance is required if one would like to compare (latent) means across groups. Scalar invariance is a precondition for comparing latent factor means across multiple groups (Marsh *et al.*, 2009; Meredith, 1993; Widaman and Reise, 1997). Achieving scalar invariance implies that the individuals who have the same score across different dimensions of non-profit brand image, would obtain these same scores regardless of the country they are coming from.

Results of Measurement Invariance Tests

The objectives of this study concern whether non-profit brand image can be conceptualized in the same way, across three different countries, namely India, Bosnia and Herzegovina and UK. To examine this pre-condition, we initially tested for configural and metric invariance. Subsequently, we examined higher levels of invariance (scalar invariance and factor variance invariance), which allows for assessing the extent to which the measures are

comparable across the three countries. First, to test for measurement invariance, an omnibus examination was undertaken. The omnibus test imposes the strictest level of invariance (we examined whether these levels of invariance are fully satisfied or not, without considering partial invariance). Therefore, through omnibus test, we assessed the measures across the three countries for configural, metric, scalar, and factor variance invariance. The stability of the measures was assessed using sequential testing procedures involving assessment of measurement invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998) in LISREL 8.71.

The requirement for configural invariance is that the number of factors should be the same across the groups and that factor loading pattern is invariant. Inspection of fit indices suggests that non-profit brand image has a consistent factor structure across all three countries with a good fit to data (RMSEA was 0.047 and the other indices of fit were above 0.9). Subsequently, metric invariance was assessed. A model with factor pattern coefficients was constrained to be equal and yielded a good model fit. Results were compared with the previously estimated model of configural invariance in terms of chi-square difference. The chi-square difference test indicates that the metric invariance model did not significantly deteriorate from the less restrictive configural model. However, having in mind that $\Delta\chi^2$ is sensitive to sample size (e.g., Kelloway, 1995; Cheung and Rensvold, 2002), model size (Herzog *et al.*, 2007), and non-normality (Brown, 2006) scholars (e.g., Cheung and Rensvold, 2002) recommend observing ΔCFI as well. If the reduction in the value of CFI is smaller or equal to 0.01 in the constrained model, then it is suggested that the constrained model does not deteriorate from the original model. In this case, CFI went from 0.984 to 0.983, which indicated that both configural and metric invariance are supported showing that the relationships between the items in the scale are

equivalent across countries. To ensure that these results are accurate and not affected by the items with loadings fixed to 1 (requirement for measurement model identification), the model was re-estimated after fixing the loadings of other items to 1.0 (Kline, 2004). Results suggested that measurement invariance is achieved regardless of which items are fixed to 1.

When testing factor variance invariance and scalar invariance, the results indicate significant changes in χ^2 and in all other fit indices, suggesting that factor variance invariance and scalar invariance could not be established. In practical sense this implies that systematic differences in the average item responses between countries exist, and that these differences could not be attributed to differences in the mean level of latent variables. Model fit indices and $\Delta\chi^2$ are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 here.

In summary, measurement invariance results show that the non-profit brand image scale has identical dimensionality and factor structure across sampling countries, i.e. India, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UK. In addition, respondents answered questions in the same manner. However, the analysis shows that cross-national differences in the means of the observed items are not due to differences in the means of the underlying construct. Namely, as scalar invariance is not reached, this indicates that there is no consistency between cross-national differences in latent means and cross-national differences in observed means.

Common Method Variance and Reliability Tests

To avoid CMV several procedural and statistical remedies were applied. In terms of procedural remedies, careful consideration of the questionnaire design was applied. Different format scales were used to minimize the potential for Common Method Variance (CMV) (Dillman, 2006). In addition, respondents were assured of their anonymity and were asked to agree to terms and conditions of the study provided at the introduction page of the questionnaire (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Statistical remedies applied in the study were twofold. First, the Harman's single factor test was used. The results in the three countries' samples indicated that CMV is not a threat. The CMV single factor model fit is poor: $\chi^2 (135) = 861.66$; NNFI = 0.759; CFI = 0.787; SRMR = 0.127 and RMSEA = 0.189 for UNICEF (India); $\chi^2 (135) = 2107.132$; NNFI = 0.878; CFI = 0.851; SRMR = 0.10 and RMSEA = 0.231 for the Red Cross (Bosnia Herzegovina) and $\chi^2 (135) = 1192.962$; NNFI = 0.89; CFI = 0.861; SRMR = 0.09 and RMSEA = 0.198 for NSPCC (UK) and the improvement in model fit on moving from the CMV single factor model to the six-factor model is significant at 1% for all charities.

Discussion, Implications and Limitations

The present research assesses a significant topic with practical impact and relevancy, and for which prior research does not exist. The results provide support for the potential applicability of the non-profit brand image scales (Michaelidou, *et al.*, 2015a) in a cross-national setting, indicating, however, some limitations. Specifically, we examine the measurement equivalence of non-profit brand image across three countries (India, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the UK) using a set of invariance tests. The results of multi-group invariance analysis show that non-profit brand image (an instrument consisting of 18-item scales and six factors) is equivalent in terms of having the same dimensionality and structure, and being perceived the same across the three

countries (configural and metric invariance). More specifically, the achieved configural and metric invariance indicates that the items comprising the measurement instrument exhibit the same pattern of factor loadings across the three countries. This means that the structure of non-profit brand image, and the number of dimensions is conceptualized in the same way across countries, with individuals perceiving non-profit brand image as having six dimensions, in line with prior works - usefulness, efficiency, affect, dynamism, reliability and ethicality (e.g., Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a).

Additionally, the results indicate that, the item loadings of these six dimensions show that the items are generally good measures of their corresponding dimensions, and that the number of factors and observed variables associated with each factor are the same across countries.

Therefore, the 18 items proposed by Michaelidou *et al.*, (2015a) capture the dimensions of the non-profit brand image scale satisfactorily. This finding suggests that the number of dimensions and observed variables associated with each dimension are the same across countries. We also find that each item contributes to the latent construct to a similar degree across groups. As we show that the internal consistency and dimensionality exhibit a similar pattern across nations, we can conclude that non-profit brand image and its dimensions hold the same meaning across groups.

First, 'usefulness' refers to perceptions of effectiveness in achieving the mission, and being helpful to others, while efficiency denotes managing assets and resources well. These reflect important non-profit image dimensions, given the declining trust towards charities (Charity Commission, 2016), and particularly the recent negative attention towards non-profit organizations following the Oxfam Haiti scandal (BBC, 2018). Additionally, 'affect' and

'dynamism' pertain to how friendly, favorable and innovative the non-profit organizations are perceived to be; while 'reliability' and 'ethicality' reveal emotional considerations, and refer to perceptions of responsibility, reputation, morality and righteousness respectively. In the three countries studied, respondents view these dimensions as integral to the notion of non-profit brand image for the specific charities. This suggests that perceptions associated with the non-profit organizations are underpinned by similar values across the three countries, though the specific magnitude of the effect of the construct may vary across countries. In a similar line, our analysis shows metric invariance, confirming that individuals in the three countries respond to the items in the same way. This finding shows that the strength of the relationship between the observed variables and their underlying constructs is equivalent across the three country contexts, again providing additional support for the equivalence of the meaning of non-profit brand image across countries.

Overall, the results of this study are valuable for researchers as they establish that the same conceptual frame of reference is being utilized across groups of respondents when answering on non-profit brand image items (i.e., construct holds the same meaning across groups). On the contrary, our results do not provide support for scalar invariance, suggesting that inconsistency exists between cross-national differences in latent means and cross-national differences in observed means. More specifically, even though the items measure the latent construct with equivalent metrics across groups (metric invariance), scores on those items are either systematically upward or downward biased (e.g., a score of five may be regarded as very high in one country and only moderately so in another). Such lack of invariance may suggest that the

non-profit brand image scales (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a) should be researched further, either conceptually or empirically.

Theoretical, Methodological and Practical Contributions

The results of the study have important implications for the international non-profit research domain. In terms of contributions, by investigating non-profit brand image in a cross-national setting, the study provides strong theoretical evidence regarding the consistent dimensionality of the concept across three different countries. This is a novel finding, which extends current limited understanding of the cross-national validity of non-profit brand image constructs. Concurrently, the study offers an important methodological and practical contribution: we confirm the psychometric properties of the nonprofit brand image measure, as an actionable brand management tool or solution to international charities and non-profit organizations, that seek to evaluate the image of their brand in the eyes of the general public. Indeed, our study confirms the factor structure, internal consistency and construct validity of the scale and shows that the scale is free from cultural connotations (Douglas and Craig, 2006). This indicates that the scale measures a ‘universal’ non-profit brand image, and as such it is relevant to non-profit organizations and charities, as it can be applied in diverse cultural and linguistic settings for assessing non-profit brand image. Indeed, this work add incremental value in the ability of charities to evaluate and manage their non-profit brand as it has the potential to shape practice at an international level. Our findings suggest that the scale reflects a reliable and valid practical measure/tool, that is able to capture non-profit brand image across international contexts.

Reflections and Conceptual Considerations Regarding the Non-profit Brand Image Scale

Further to the contributions of our study, we identify that the non-profit brand image scale (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2015a) is limited in terms of achieving factor variance and scalar invariance. Without evidence of scalar invariance researchers are unable to make inferences regarding the sources of differences in item means (e.g., are these differences a function of differences in the latent factor itself or the intercept?). Therefore, the question that is left unanswered is why is there a lack of consistency between cross-national differences in latent means and cross-national differences in observed means? One possible explanation might be found in donors' mindset across these three countries stemming from socio-economic differences and differences in their charitable spending habits both in terms of money and time donations (CAF, 2018). For example, although India tops the list for donations, it ranks only 89th for participation rates when calculated as a proportion of the population (CAF, 2018). On the other hand, UK's population ranks 6th in overall charitable giving. Additionally, the advertising expenditure of charities varies across these countries: whereas advertising has tripled in the last 8 years in the UK (NPF Synergy, 2017), it has been negligible in Bosnia-Herzegovina and India. Socio-economic factors may, therefore, influence the awareness levels of potential donors, as well as the strength of associations they hold for the charities, thus influencing brand image (Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000).

Moreover, finding scalar non-invariance in this study, leaves various suggestions for further research. For example, scholars investigate the cause of non-invariance by conducting additional tests, following procedures advocated by Putnick and Bornstein (2016). Additionally, and in reflection, we suggest that scholars consider gaining more insights into the particular

dimensions or items that failed to exhibit scalar invariance. It might be that certain dimensions or items of the scale are especially susceptible to cultural or religious differences, indicating that the scale should be 'conceptually' revisited in order to enhance its content validity. Hofstede's dimensional model of culture, and particularly the individualism-collectivism heuristic, is relevant to international marketing and has been commonly used to highlight differences in values, perceptions, emotions, personality and image in cross-cultural and cross-national consumer contexts (Aaker *et al.*, 2001; De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011; De Mooij and Hofstede, 2002; Steenkamp *et al.*, 1999; Steenkamp, 2001). Prior research, for example, suggests that collectivistic countries place strong emphasis and greater value on socially-shared norms, welfare and duties (Iwao and Triandis, 1993) than individualistic countries (Triandis, 1995). Collectivists are generally found to exhibit higher levels of affect towards brands compared to individualistic countries (e.g., Siamagka *et al.*, 2015). People in individualistic countries place more value on the achievements of tasks (Triandis, 1995), whereas collectivistic countries emphasize high ethical sensitivity (Blodget *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, the religiosity of the population is another factor that may be looked at to conceptualize non-profit brand image. In the context of this study, our samples come from multi-religious countries and according to Smith (2018), relative to the UK, in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and India, religion is perceived to be important in daily life for a large share of the population (e.g., 65% in Bosnia Herzegovina to 76% in India, compared to only 30% in UK). This variation may provide an explanation for the scalar noninvariance observed in this study, providing the impetus for additional research to consider religion in re-conceptualizing and/or operationalizing non-profit brand image. To this end, theoretical reasons may be derived for the lack of scalar invariance across the three countries, such as culture and socio-economic differences. Indeed, culture presents a stronger theoretical

platform for further consideration in the study of international non-profit brand image, which has yet to receive adequate scholarly attention. We, hence, propose that researchers and scholars utilize cultural frameworks for a subsequent study of international non-profit brand image.

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