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Received: 21 August 2023 | Revised: 22 May 2024 | Accepted: 19 June 2024
DOI: 10.1002/nvsm.1875

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Hot and cold: How do consumers hate and forgive offending charity brands?

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Abstract

When brands transgress, consumers often react by hating them and sometimes forgiving them. Charity brands transgress, too, including serious transgressions of a sexual nature or against children. Charity brands contribute greatly to the economy, but differ from for-profit brands in their nature and do transgress; yet whether charity brands are hated and forgiven similarly to for-profit brands has not been researched adequately. Our study aimed to build a framework that demonstrates the antecedents of charity brand hate, the emotions associated with different types of charity brand hate and the behavioural consequences of charity brand hate, including brand forgiveness. We adopted a qualitative approach that involved collecting data from 26 semi-structured interviews and analysing it thematically. The findings of this study advance the current understanding of brand hate and brand forgiveness by identifying the emotional outcome (feeling of suspicion and hurt) and behavioural outcomes (distancing from charity brands and practising financial punishment) associated with charity brand transgressions. In the long term, interviewees display the intention to reconnect with charity brands and to forgive transgressing charity brands due to the benevolence associated with them. Therefore, we also contribute to the brand forgiveness literature by highlighting the nature of the forgiveness (forgiving is given to the charity brands, not the individual employees responsible) and the steps consumers take to forgive the charity brands (step one when charity brands fix their wrongdoing, and step two when charity brands continue helping people in need). Finally, we identified that brand switching (switching to donating to new charity brands offering similar support and help) is the behaviour consequence when charity brands are not forgiven.

KEYWORDS
brand forgiveness, brand hate, brand transgressions, charity brands

Practitioner Points

What is currently known about the subject matter

- Existing studies conceptualised ‘brand hate’ by focusing on for-profit brands only.
- Need to further investigate the emotional and behavioural outcomes associated with how consumers hate brands in the charity sector.

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What your paper adds to this

- Build a framework that demonstrates the antecedents of charity brand hate, associated emotions with charity brand hate and different types of charity brand hate.
- Explore the behavioural consequences of charity brand hate, specifically, whether customers would forgive charity brands and restore their relationships with charity brands.

The implications of your study findings for practitioners

- Help charity brands in managing their relationships with consumers/donors, especially for charity brands who have in the past been or are currently involved in any wrongdoings.
- Providing guidance on how to minimise the level of brand hate and to maximise the possibility of brand forgiveness.

1 | INTRODUCTION

There are over 200,000 registered charities in the UK, including well-known charity brands such as Oxfam, Cancer Research and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Together, charity brands represent an estimated annual income of £90bn (The Charity Commission, 2024). However, recent scandals, including Oxfam's scandal in Ghana (Rudgard, 2022), Democratic Republic of Congo (BBC, 2021) and Haiti (O'Neill, 2018), Save the Children's former CEO facing allegations of inappropriate behaviour (Batchelor, 2018) and Medecins Sans Frontières' sexual harassment incident (Adams, 2018), indicate significant issues in the sector. Further, in 2022 the Charity Commission found Kids Company, a charity that aimed to provide support to deprived and vulnerable inner-city children and young people, had repeatedly failed to pay tax and its own workers (Butler, 2022; Meierhans, 2022). The Hamish Ogston Foundation has previously provided funds to charities, including English Heritage; however, due to the scandal in 2023, when the founder Hamish Ogston was accused of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and drug offences, charities have distanced themselves from him and his foundation, making the decision to sever ties and filing an incident report with the Charity Commission (English Heritage, 2023; Preston, 2023; Wait, 2023). Another charity that was hit with a series of scandals that subsequently forced its closure is the Captain Tom Foundation (Russell, 2023), following cases involving its accounts, trustees' decision-making, and other scandals (Franks, 2023). These charity brand scandals have also drawn attention to the issue of charity brand crises, managing consumers' negative attitudes and charity-donor relationships in a sector with fierce competition for funds (Hornsey et al., 2021).

Consumer brand relationship literature indicates that consumers can develop a range of different feelings towards brands: positive feelings (love), neutral feelings or negative feelings (hate) (Alvarez et al., 2023; Fetscherin, 2019; Saini et al., 2023). Although psychology studies show that negative emotions can have a greater impact on behaviour than positive ones (Escadas et al., 2019; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004), marketing scholars have begun to study the negative feelings or emotions consumers have for brands, particularly investigating brand hate, which is the most negative brand feeling (Pinto & Brandão, 2021). For example, brand hate studies have focused on exploring the different types of brand hate, emotional drivers of brand hate (Fetscherin, 2019), its relationship to brand love (Alvarez et al., 2023; Sarkar et al., 2020) and on developing and testing models which highlight driving factors and outcomes of brand hate (Hegner et al., 2017; Pinto & Brandão, 2021).

However, whereas these existing studies have conceptualised 'brand hate' by emphasising the antecedents of hate, types of hate and outcomes of 'hate', it seems that 'brand' itself has been homogenised in their studies to focus mostly on private-sector for-profit brands (Fernández-Capo et al., 2017; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). The most recent work, for example, covered brand hate and brand forgiveness in luxury fashion (Saini et al., 2023) and telecoms (Attiq et al., 2023; Costa & Azevedo, 2023). It is then automatically assumed that the developed conceptual models apply to brands beyond the private sector context. There is, however, limited research that recognises the need to further investigate the emotional and behavioural outcomes associated with how consumers hate brands in other sectors; specifically, the charity sector. There is some work about hate of destination brands (Farhat & Chaney, 2024), but 'hate' of charity brands has not been researched adequately, even though charities contribute significantly to the economy and do transgress, as stated above. To be precise, our search for ('brand hate' or 'brand hatred') and ('charity' or 'not-for-profit') in EBSCO Business Source in October 2023 retrieved zero results. A recent systematic review of literature on brand hate makes no mention of charities, not-for-profits, non-profits or the third sector (Mushtaq et al., 2024). Yet, charity brand hate could prove detrimental to the charity sector, where competition for funding is strong (Hornsey et al., 2021) and where complaints are being made against charities. For example, in the UK, the Fundraising Regulator (2023), in their annual complaints report, found misleading information to be a recurring theme in complaints; it was the single most complained about theme both this year and last year (12% in 2022–23 and 18% in 2021/22). In 2022–23, they received 1147 incoming cases overall, a 6% increase on 2021–22 (Fundraising Regulator, 2023). The Charity Commission Register is a source of reliable information about the charity sector for the public to make informed decisions about which charities to support: in 2022–23, the Register was viewed over 49 million times (The Charity Commission, 2023).

The charity sector is therefore an important and emerging area of research that is growing rapidly. Charity brands play an indispensable

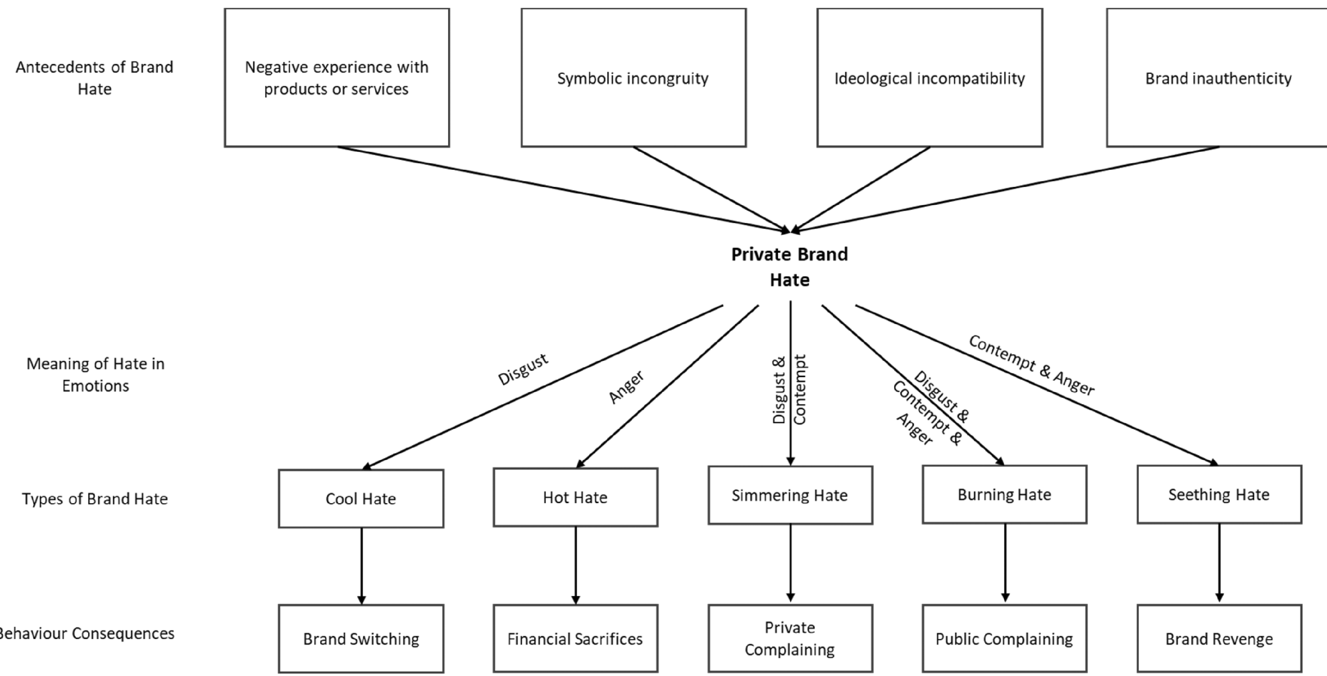

FIGURE 1 For-profit brand hate (created by the authors of this paper).

role in our society, as they aim to serve the public interest (Gourdie & Rees, 2009; Hyndman, 2020). The strength of charity brands rests on strong philanthropic beliefs and values (Saxton, 1995). In the UK, charities are organisations established following the purposes listed in the Charities Act, including prevention or relief of poverty, advancement of education, religion, health or the saving of lives, and so on. Charity organisations are established for the public benefit and not to promote personal benefit (The Charity Commission, 2013).

The nature of charity brands' 'being good' (Hyndman, 2020) versus for-profit brands' 'being profitable' makes charity brands unique. Accordingly, charities contribute a lot to economies and society. Nevertheless, charity brands transgress, and transgressing brands can be hated, as shown in brand hate literature and in our synthesis of it in Figure 1 in the literature review. Yet, charity brands are expected to be benevolent in nature, unlike for-profit brands. This benevolence could have an impact on the brand hate response. In this exploratory study, we set out to inspect whether the benevolent nature of charity brands could change how consumers express brand hate of charities after their transgressions. The aim of our research, therefore, is first to examine the extent to which findings of the existing for-profit brand hate studies, namely about types of hate and associated emotions, antecedents and consequences of hate, apply to charity brands. Further, we aim to identify unique consequences of hate towards charity brands and produce a framework of antecedents, associated emotions and consequences of charity brand hate.

In particular, when customers develop negative (hate) feelings towards a profit brand, they do not commonly show brand forgiveness towards such brands. While forgiveness is not a common behavioural consequence of brand hate (Fetscherin, 2019; Hegner et al., 2017; Pinto & Brandão, 2021), due to the 'good nature' of charity brands (Hyndman, 2020), we wonder if consumers would hate the brand first, then find a way to cope with their negative feelings and restore the broken brand relationship. We thus look at whether consumers display a different pattern of brand hate behaviour towards charity brands than towards for-profit brands and whether they eventually forgive charity brands they hated. Therefore, the objectives of this research include:

1. To build a framework that demonstrates the antecedents of charity brand hate, associated emotions with charity brand hate and different types of charity brand hate.
2. To explore the behavioural consequences of charity brand hate, specifically, whether donors would forgive charity brands and restore their relationships with charity brands.

Additionally, this research also aims to shed light on charity brand relationship management practise. Charity brands rely heavily on support from their donors (customers) and volunteers, who often have high expectations towards charity brands (Wymer & Akbar, 2018). Maintaining a positive brand relationship is crucial for charity brands to secure their support from donors and volunteers. Charity brands need to diagnose the potential factors that trigger customers' negative emotions, and to understand consumers' behaviour actions if they develop a 'hate' relationship with the brand, so that the charities can react accordingly, avoiding further damage to their brand.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Brand hate

As we aim to investigate charity brand hate, it is vital to first define brand hate and associated emotions. Brand hate is not simply the opposite of brand love, as hate is a multi-layered concept covering a

range of negative emotions, including anger, contempt, distancing, disgust, antipathy, devaluation, rejection, repulsion, and outrage (Sternberg, 2003). Therefore, brand hate describes consumers' different levels of negative emotions associated with a brand, and each of the negative emotions leads to a certain brand hate behaviour (Alvarez et al., 2023; Kucuk, 2019; Rodrigues et al., 2021; Saini et al., 2023).

Sternberg (2003) and Kucuk (2019) present a triangular theory of the structure of hate and identify three components of hate: distancing, passion in hate and commitment in hate. Distancing means that one seeks distance from certain subjects to express such 'hate' feelings; seeking distance can be associated with disgust. Passion in hate is expressed as intense anger or fear, whereas commitment in hate is expressed as an emotion of contempt. Consequently, these three negative emotions can lead to brand hate at different levels, including cool hate (disgust alone), hot hate (anger alone), simmering hate (disgust and contempt without anger), burning hate (disgust and contempt with anger), and finally seething hate (contempt with a level of anger) (Fetscherin, 2019; Kucuk, 2019).

However, as explained above, the research listed in this section focused on for-profit brands and hatred of them. Whether the same emotions will be elicited when charity brands transgress was a knowledge gap that we intended to fill in our research.

2.2 | Antecedents and behavioural consequences of brand hate

To further understand the concept of brand hate and the effect it has on brands, it is important to study its antecedents and consequences. Amongst the possible factors that trigger consumers to develop hateful emotions and attitudes, brand hate may be triggered by a negative experience with products or services, symbolic incongruity, or ideological incompatibility (Bayarassou et al., 2021; Pinto & Brandão, 2021). First, let us consider brand hate that is triggered by a negative experience with products or services. A negative experience on a product level usually involves a failure of the product, consumer dissatisfaction, violation of expectations or negative associations with the country of origin. However, these negative feelings towards a product would be accelerated and extended to the brand behind the product; eventually, hating a product becomes hating the brand of that product (Hegner et al., 2017; Zarantonello et al., 2016).

Symbolic incongruity means that there is a difference between the symbolic meanings of a brand and the way consumers identify themselves. While congruity of consumers' self-image and brand image (symbolic congruity) encourages brand engagement, symbolic incongruity lowers the level of brand engagement (Hegner et al., 2017). Especially when consumers' self-image conflicts with the brand image, consumers could develop a negative emotion towards the brand which triggers brand hate when the negative emotion accumulates to a certain level (Kressmann et al., 2006; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Ideological incompatibility describes consumers' disapproval of a brand's set of beliefs, including legal, social or moral corporate wrongdoings, such as disrespect for human rights, environmental damage or other unethical business practises, which lead to negative feelings towards the brand, brand hate and brand boycott (Hegner et al., 2017; Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009).

In addition, Rodrigues et al. (2021) demonstrated that brand inauthenticity, that is, the mismatch between the brand promise and its declared core values, is another antecedent of brand hate, although Lee et al.'s (2009) prior conceptualisation included inauthenticity as a type of symbolic incongruence.

Consumers' behavioural reactions towards brand hate also vary. Fetscherin (2019) discovered that cool hate (disgust alone) leads to brand switching, as haters want nothing to do with the brand anymore. Hot hate (anger alone) leads to willingness to make financial sacrifices when consumers use their own financial resources to hurt the brand; hot hate can also trigger brand retaliation. Simmering hate (disgust and contempt without anger) leads to private complaining, whereas burning hate (disgust and contempt with anger) leads to public complaining. The emotion of contempt with a level of anger (seething hate) will lead to brand revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009).

Figure 1 summarises the above discussion through highlighting the antecedents of brand hates, the emotions associated with brand hate, different types of brand hate and the consequences of brand hate behaviour.

2.3 | Charity brands: A special case of brand hate

To fully understand the concept of charity brand hate, it is essential to establish how charities are different from for-profit brands and the extent to which research about brand hate, its antecedents and consequences, mostly limited to for-profit brands and summarised in Figure 1, could apply to the charity sector context.

Similar to for-profit organisations, brands play a critical role for charity organisations, shaping how consumers perceive the charities (Michaelidou et al., 2019; Wymer & Akbar, 2018). However, charity brands are also 'fundamentally different from government and corporate sectors in terms of purpose of establishment, ways of generating revenues, missions that are not quantified in dollars and cents, as well as (their) governance and sustainability' (Zainon et al., 2014, p.156). Additionally, charity brands also differ in organisational structure, as they are dealing with a wider group of shareholders, including donors (customers), beneficiaries, supporters, stakeholders and regulators, who often have disparate communication needs. Amongst the different shareholders, charity brands rely heavily on support from their donors (customers) and volunteers, who usually hold a high expectation that charity brands should be completely accountable for spending and resource allocation, and that charity brands are 'to be good, only' (Wymer & Akbar, 2018). Therefore, any negative brand information or scandals, big or small, could erode the public's confidence in a charity brand due to transparency and accountability issues, as charity brands are constantly being judged in the public eye (Ebrahim, 2003), and because charities prioritise legitimising their brands in their reporting (Hyndman, 2020).

Amongst the factors which trigger brand hate, it seems that ideological incompatibility could potentially arise, since charity brands are set up to challenge legal, social and moral corporate wrongdoings and other unethical business practises that trigger brand hate (Hegner et al., 2017; Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009). Should charities not follow high ideological standards, or engage in unethical practises, consumers may potentially develop negative emotions, even brand hate towards the charity brands, as they do towards for-profit brands (Hegner et al., 2017; Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009). Moreover, any gap between the expected 'good only' charity brand and unethical practises this charity brand engages in could accelerate the level of hate and bring a more harmful effect to the charity brand's image and reputation than for a transgressing for-profit brand. Note, however, that we make these propositions tentatively, due to paucity of research about charity brand hate.

Charity brand hate, including the antecedents of hate, the associated emotions, types of hate and the consequences of hate, are yet to be researched widely in the existing literature (Fernández-Capo et al., 2017; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). The gap in current knowledge, the need for researching brand hate in a charity context, is evident from the fact that a recent systematic review of literature on brand hate (Aziz & Rahman, 2022) showed that brand hate has been studied in many contexts, mainly service industries, yet the words 'charity' or 'not-for-profit' were not even mentioned once as such contexts. Therefore, considering the special relationship customers (donors) develop with charity brands, there is a need to revisit the existing framework of brand hate (summarised in Figure 1) and to further explore the detailed underlying emotional responses a customer can develop with charity brands.

In addition, as noted above, one of the consequences of brand hate is brand avoidance (Costa & Azevedo, 2023; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). This refers to a consumer's decision to stop using the brand, rejecting it altogether (Faulkner et al., 2015), and not their inability to do so due to, for example, not knowing of the brand's existence. Lee et al. (2009) explored several reasons for which consumers may decide to avoid brands. Amongst them, moral avoidance, a response to ideological incompatibility of consumers' ideological beliefs with certain brand values and associations, appears to be the most relevant to our study, since values are at the core of charities' being (Stride & Lee, 2007). Charities are expected to be and do good, and we were interested to explore whether, for transgressing charities, their 'being good' would result in avoidance, as Lee et al. (2009) suggest is possible, or whether this 'being good' could neutralise consumers' negative feelings and restore the broken relationship with a charity brand. Therefore, answering the question whether the charities' good nature would lead to consumers hating them similarly to for-profit brands or to repair of the relationship would also constitute filling the current knowledge gap.

2.3.1 | Charities and organisational benevolence

Consumers perceive charities and not-for-profit organisations in general as caring and targeting a worthy cause (Aaker et al., 2010). The role of organised charities in relief of poverty, for example, was widely discussed in the social policy of 18th century England and Ireland (McGauran & Offer, 2017), with the focus on whether interpersonal benevolence that people can display should be organised. We therefore believe that research on benevolence and organisational benevolence needs to be reviewed, to clarify the role that benevolence can play in charity brand hate.

Benevolence means wanting the good of others, understood in management as concern and care for the good, well-being and personal development of others (Mercier & Deslandes, 2020). It is similar to altruism, in that the well-being of others is the primary concern, yet benevolence allows room for self-interest, even in the form of fulfilment, whereas altruism does not (Ferguson et al., 2008). Other research suggested that the common good of the organisation can rest on the community good, or doing good by the community, as necessary for personal good (personal flourishing, virtues and meaning derived from work) of those who work in an organisation (Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017; Sison & Fontrodona, 2012).

Benevolence can therefore be seen as central to the operation of charities and of trust in them (Zogaj, 2023), yet research in psychology suggests that benevolence can be problematic: people tend to evaluate the efforts of those who make charitable acts and maintain self-interest as worse than of those who act in pure self-interest (Newman & Cain, 2014). Furthermore, in a series of experiments, Hornsey et al. (2021) demonstrated that not-for-profit organisations suffered more severe losses of consumer trust after a transgression than for for-profit organisations. This is ostensibly due to higher ethical standards that consumers hold these organisations to. It is thus reasonable to expect that people would respond to charities' transgressions with outrage, potentially leading to brand hate. Our study therefore aimed to establish whether this would be the case.

2.4 | Behavioural consequences of brand hate: Brand forgiveness

Above, we made the case for why transgressing charity brands could potentially be hated even more than for-profit brands. To explore consumer behaviour fairly, we feel it is vital to also present a different side to the brand transgression and hatred storey. Research has shown that warm brands' failure on communal attributes (i.e., based on interests shared with others) reinforces their credibility and can foster forgiveness (Hassey, 2019). Charity brands are seen as warmer than for-profit brands (Aaker et al., 2010); perhaps, rather than hate offending charity brands, consumers may forgive charity brands more willingly, because of their good nature. We aim to develop this argument below by focusing on forgiveness, brand forgiveness, and applying this to charity brand transgressions.

Forgiveness is the desire to abandon one's resentment and negative judgement towards those who hurt us (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2012) and not to retaliate, alienate or be otherwise destructive (Xie & Peng, 2009). When people forgive, their responses to transgressions become more benevolent or less negative (McCullough et al., 2003).

Corporate forgiveness is also possible, although it poses an interesting question of who exactly is to be forgiven (Lang, 1994).

Nonetheless, consumers do forgive brands after transgressions, letting go of their resentment and negative judgement; sometimes brand forgiveness is even related to loving feelings for brands (Chiengkul & Junla, 2024; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). Brand transgressions can be stressful for consumers and brand forgiveness is one of the emotional coping mechanisms that consumers can use (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). It should, however, be noted that those who forgive brands are less likely to avoid or attack them (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019), showing motivational change that is in line with the conceptualization of forgiveness in psychology (McCullough, 2001). Consumers can be willing to forgive brands with a bad reputation (Costa & Azevedo, 2023).

There is an indication, however, that brand forgiveness is tied to the type of brand transgression (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). One of the most important classifications of brand transgressions splits them into performance-related transgressions, where the brand fails to deliver functional benefits, for example, selling a defective product, and values-related transgressions involving ethical or social issues around the values the brand espouses, for example, the use of sweatshops (Dutta & Pullig, 2011). This is similar to violations of trust in interpersonal relationships: competence-based violations where a person does not show satisfactory interpersonal or technical skills and integrity-based violations, or not adhering to the acceptable set of principles, respectively (Kim et al., 2004). Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019) further add image-related brand transgressions, where a brand ceases to be congruent with a consumer's identity to the classification of brand transgressions and show that brands are more likely to be forgiven if they perform a performance-related transgression, rather than an image-related or values-related transgression. The severity of the transgression, predictably, also influences forgiveness, with consumers forgiving less severe transgressions more readily, in line with the findings of Tsarenko and Tojib (2012).

Interestingly, the type of brand that has committed a transgression has an effect on the forgiveness of the transgression. Kim et al. (2019) showed that underdog brands, that is, brands that are at an external disadvantage compared to leading brands, are more likely to be forgiven if they commit non-relational (functional) transgressions, but not when they commit relational transgressions. This effect is mediated by the amount of anger that consumers feel. As anger is one of the components of brand hate (Fetscherin, 2019), this prompted us to explore how brand hate and brand forgiveness are felt when transgressions are serious, values-based, relational and are done by charities, arguably underdogs.

Apart from looking at top-dogs and underdogs, research has looked at how brand personality is related to brand forgiveness (Hassey, 2019). Perhaps the most important distinction in brand personality is that between warm and competent brands (Aaker et al., 2012; Bennett & Hill, 2012), based on the fundamental dimensions on which people make interpersonal stereotypes (Fiske et al., 1999). Hassey (2019) showed that competent (warm) brands will be more likely to be forgiven if they fail on functional (communal) attributes, ostensibly because the personality-congruent transgression enhances the brand's credibility. Accordingly, in a relational transgression, not-for-profit brands should be more likely to be forgiven as consumers stereotype not-for-profit brands as warmer, but less competent than for-profit brands (Aaker et al., 2010). This finding contrasts with the aforementioned finding of Kim et al. (2019); therefore, it is necessary to explore whether consumers would judge relational, communal, and values-based transgressions of charity brands harshly and why this might be the case. In addition, accounting for the findings of Hornsey et al. (2021), it would be useful to see if consumers can forgive charity brands over time, even if initially they should lose more trust in these brands after a transgression, compared to corporate brands.

An interesting addition to the findings of Hassey (2019) is the work of Wolter et al. (2019) that shows that forgiveness is fostered by good-quality customer relationships, but only those that are self-neutral (i.e., those that do not foster strong self-brand connection but are based on quality and satisfaction).

Accordingly, our research involves fostering participants' personal views on whether they would forgive charity brands more easily, because of their benevolent nature, as opposed to for-profit brands.

Please note that Figure 1 above did not include forgiveness, as it focused on the brand hate construct. While research about the link between brand hate and forgiveness exists (Costa & Azevedo, 2023; Costa & Azevedo, 2024), it does not include the full conceptualisation of brand hate, synthesised in Figure 1. We inspect what brand hate and forgiveness both looks like in a charity sector context and integrate both in the same framework, shown in our findings.

2.4.1 | Attribution in transgressions

To determine whether charities can be forgiven, it is important to understand who exactly is to be forgiven. To establish this, it is important to study to whom consumers attribute the blame in charity brand transgressions. Will they blame charities as institutions for transgressions or specific members of those charities, and if so, which? This is related to Lang's (1994) discussion of corporate forgiveness and the idea that corporate agency is not only a sum of the actions of all members of a corporation, but also involves the corporation's moral 'self'. We thus look at the literature about attribution of blame in organisational transgressions.

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958) postulates that to make sense of the world people search for causes of success and failures. An attribution is thus an individual's explanation for such causes (Martinko et al., 2011). There are several dimensions of attribution, the most studied of which is locus of causality, or whether the perceived cause of an outcome is internal (and thus reflects disposition, or some characteristic of a person) or external, where cause is a situational factor (Harvey et al., 2014). Attribution theory and locus of causality, in particular, have seen some use in organisational behaviour (Harvey et al., 2014; Martinko et al., 2011) and public relations literature (Jeong, 2009; Kessler et al., 2019).

TABLE 1 Summary of key literature sources and knowledge gaps.

Authors	Context	Type of work	Main concepts	Summary of relevant findings	Knowledge gap
Literature on hate, brand hate and charity brands					
Aziz and Rahman (2022)	For-profit brands. Charity or not-for-profit not mentioned	Literature review	Brand hate; antecedents; behavioural consequences	Reviews work about the construct, antecedents and consequences of brand hate. Concludes that literature overemphasises service-sector brands and developed countries	Charity brand hate. There is vast research on the construct of brand hate, its types and associated emotions, its antecedents and consequences. Almost all of this research is about transgressing for-profit brands. Charity brands do transgress, too, but research on charity brand hate is scarce. Charity brands are benevolent, operating for the good of others. Will charity brands be hated in the same way as for-profit brands are? Will there be the same types of hate, associated emotions, antecedents and consequences of charity brand hate as in for-profit brand hate?
Ferguson et al. (2008)	Charity organisations; not-for-profit organisations	Empirical	Benevolence; altruism; blood donation	Benevolence (donor and recipient benefit), rather than altruism (only the recipient benefits) was the driver for blood donation intentions. Donors also intended to donate blood more when exposed to benevolent, rather than altruistic messages	
Fetscherin (2019)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand hate; behavioural consequences	The types of brand hate (hot, cool, simmering, seething, burning) depend on combinations of anger, contempt and disgust. Specific behavioural outcomes (switching, complaints, revenge, retaliation) are related to specific types of brand hate	
Hegner et al. (2017)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand hate; antecedents; behavioural consequences	Brand hate is triggered by three antecedents (negative past experience, symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility and leads to negative WOM, brand avoidance and brand retaliation	
Kucuk (2019)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand hate; consumer personality	Demonstrates a multidimensional brand hate structure, where hot, cool and cold hate could be combined to form specific brand hate types. Consumers' personality is linked to the type of brand hate they display	
Lee et al. (2009)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand avoidance; symbolic incongruence; ideological incompatibility	Propose three types of brand avoidance: experiential, due to poor performance, identity, due to the brand's symbolic incongruence with self, and moral, due to ideological incompatibility. Inauthenticity was a theme under symbolic incongruence	
Mercier and Deslandes (2020)	For-profit organisations	Empirical	Benevolence; management; financial performance	Capture two types of benevolence in profit-driven organisations: formal, monitored by organisations' processes and leaders, and informal, in interpersonal and discretionary relationships	
Rodrigues et al. (2021)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Brand hate; antecedents; behavioural consequences	Four antecedents of brand hate are identified: negative past experience, symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility and brand inauthenticity. The consequences of brand hate are negative brand engagement, brand aversion, negative WOM and brand punishment intentions	

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Context	Type of work	Main concepts	Summary of relevant findings	Knowledge gap
Sternberg (2003)	Non-consumer context	Conceptual	Hate; emotions; genocides; massacres	Presents a triangular theory of hate and related emotions, where hate rests on negation of intimacy (repulsion and disgust), passion (anger and fear) and commitment (contempt). Presents various kinds of hate based on associated emotions	
Stride and Lee (2007)	Charity brands	Empirical	Charity brand; values	Define what constitutes a brand in the charity environment. Values are integral to charity brands	
Wymer and Akbar (2018)	Charity brands	Empirical	Charity brand; brand authenticity; intention to support; self-brand identification	Charity brand authenticity affects intentions to support the charity. This is mediated by self-brand identification	
Zarantonello et al. (2016)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand hate; behavioural consequences; approach and avoidance; transgressions	Constructed a measure for brand hate. Brand hate comprises different emotions and leads to negative WOM, complaining, abandoning brands and protest. Corporate transgressions lead to approach-like or attack-like responses	
Zogaj (2023)	Not-for-profit brands	Empirical	Benevolence; competence; self-concept; social media influencers	Social media endorsers for not-for-profits appear more benevolent when their communications match potential donors' actual self-concept. Benevolence positively affects behavioural outcomes for not-for-profits	
Literature on forgiveness and brand forgiveness					
Aaker et al. (2010)	For-profit brands; Not-for-profit brands	Empirical	Competence; warmth	Competence and warmth are two universal dimensions on which consumers judge brands. Consumers perceive not-for-profits to be warmer but less competent than for-profit brands	Charity brand forgiveness. Current research on brand forgiveness heavily focuses on for-profit brands. Charity brands are more likely to be seen as warm brands, but whether this would foster forgiveness of charity brands if failing on communal attributes or in a relational transgression is unclear in current research. Charity brands are also benevolent. Will this create expectations that will cause harsher reactions to charity brand transgressions and less forgiveness or will people be more likely to forgive benevolent brands, even if they make serious transgressions?
Costa and Azevedo (2023)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Brand hate; antecedents; behavioural consequences; brand forgiveness	Past negative experience, symbolic incongruence and ideological incompatibility lead to brand hate, which influences brand avoidance, brand retaliation and negative word of mouth. These behaviours are negatively related to brand forgiveness of brands with a bad reputation	
Fernández-Capo et al. (2017)	Non-consumer context	Literature review	Forgiveness	Forgiveness is a psychological response that is free from negative affect, judgement and behaviour and possibly includes positive ones. Receiving an apology or being in a close relationship facilitated forgiveness. Attributions also affected forgiveness	

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Context	Type of work	Main concepts	Summary of relevant findings	Knowledge gap
Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand forgiveness; transgressions; switching; brand retaliation	Brand forgiveness is more likely when the transgression is not severe and when it is performance-based (bad experience) rather than image or values-based. Consumers who forgive brands are less likely to attack or avoid them	
Hassey (2019)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Brand forgiveness; transgressions; brand personality	Consumers were more likely to forgive warm brands that failed on communal (e.g., firing a wrong employee), rather than functional, attributes. This was mediated by brand credibility, which was higher for warm brands failing on communal attributes	
Hornsey et al. (2021)	Not-for-profit organisations; For-profit organisations	Empirical	Transgressions; trust; WOM intentions	Consumers lost more trust after a not-for-profit's transgression than after a corporate transgression. This was explained by expectancy violation, as not-for-profits are expected to behave more ethically	
Kim et al. (2019)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Brand forgiveness; underdog brands; transgressions; anger	Consumers are more willing to forgive underdog, rather than top-dog brands, but only if their transgressions are non-relational. Anger mediates the effects of brand type and transgression type on forgiveness intentions	
Lang (1994)	For-profit brands; non-consumer context	Conceptual	Forgiveness; corporate forgiveness	Discusses whether forgiveness can be unilateral. Addresses the issue of agency in corporate forgiveness: corporations' agency should go beyond the agencies of its members. Corporate forgiveness should thus involve the corporation's 'moral self' as a whole	
McCullough et al. (2003)	Non-consumer context	Empirical	Forgiveness; attribution; personality	Forgiveness involves abstinence from and permanent and temporary reductions to avoidance and revenge motivations. It also involves maintenance or increases in benevolence towards the other. Explain various influences on temporal evolution of interpersonal forgiveness, including attributions of blame	
Tsarenko and Tojib (2012)	For-profit brands (likely). No charity brands reported	Empirical	Brand forgiveness; transgressions; consumer personality	Severity of transgression is negatively related to forgiveness. Emotional intelligence moderates this effect on emotional forgiveness, but not decisional forgiveness (intention to behave towards the transgressor as one did before the transgression)	
Wolter et al. (2019)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Self-brand connection; service failure; brand	Strong self-neutral relationships (based on quality, satisfaction and trust) lead to brand forgiveness and decreased complaints in a service	

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Context	Type of work	Main concepts	Summary of relevant findings	Knowledge gap
			forgiveness; entitlement	failure. Strong self-relevant relationships (high in self-brand connection) lead to consumer entitlement and increased complaints	
Xie and Peng (2009)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Brand forgiveness; transgressions; benevolence; brand trust	Brand forgiveness is a way to ensure brand trust. Perceived benevolence increases brand forgiveness. Affective initiatives (e.g., an apology addressing consumers' emotions) are effective at increasing the brand's perceived benevolence (acting in the interest of consumers) and integrity (being guided by sound principles)	
Literature on attribution in transgressions					
Harvey et al. (2014)	Non-consumer context	Literature review	Attribution; locus of causality; controllability; stability	A review of prior findings show that locus of causality, stability and controllability are useful dimensions of attribution in organisational research	Attributions in charity brand transgressions. There is limited research about who consumers attribute blame to in brand transgressions and especially in charity brand transgressions. Attributions are a factor in forgiveness. Could they explain why consumers hate and/or forgive charity brands differently to for-profit brands?
Jeong (2009)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Attribution; internal and external attribution; transgressions; distinctiveness; punitive actions	Consumers could perform internal (to brand) or external attribution (e.g., to the weather) in a brand transgression. Low distinctiveness (performing poorly in other contexts) led to more internal attribution and greater desire for punitive action	
Kessler et al. (2019)	For-profit brands	Empirical	Attribution; optimistic and pessimistic attribution; stakeholders	Attribution style and type of stakeholders interact to produce different degrees of attribution to 'leaders and organisations'. The latter meant various individuals and organisations, other than the offending brand	
Martinko et al. (2007)	Non-consumer context	Literature review	Attribution; leadership	Defined attribution and showed its role in organisational behaviour	
Menon et al. (1999)	For-profit organisations; Non-consumer contexts	Empirical	Attribution; national culture; causal theories	North Americans were more likely to blame individuals, rather than groups of individuals or organisations, in transgressions. This was linked to belief in individual autonomy	
Stiegert et al. (2021)	Employees of not-for-profits; Employees of corporations	Empirical	Warmth; competence; morality; transgressions; expectancy violation	Warmth and morality stereotypes of not-for-profits 'rub off' on their employees in transgressions. These employees are then perceived to violate expectations more and are seen as more deserving of punishment	
Zemba et al. (2006)	For-profit organisations; Public sector organisations	Empirical	Attribution; transgressions; national culture	Japanese, rather than Americans and Asian Americans, rather than European Americans, blame managers as proxies for organisation's failures, even if these managers are not involved in these failures	

Interestingly, internal locus of causality in a corporate transgression is conceptualised as blaming someone within an organisation, for example, 'the leaders and organisations' (Kessler et al., 2019, p. 1581). There appears to be limited research that takes this further and probes which specific stakeholders within organisations are to blame in an internal attribution. Hargie et al. (2010), for example, discuss the possibility of a CEO taking all the blame in a crisis, making an internal attribution of agency to the self. Will consumers attribute brand transgressions to the CEO?

It is important to understand that when people were presented with scenarios that employees of not-for-profit organisations committed transgressions in experimental studies, the positive stereotypes of not-for-profits' (including charities') warmth and benevolence were transferred onto employees (Stiegert et al., 2021). This then led to higher perceptions of expectancy violation and people's desire to punish these individuals. What is lacking in this result, however, is whether consumers, outside of experimental settings, would independently attribute blame to brands (likely leading to brand hate), management or specific individuals.

Some research has utilised cross-cultural comparisons in the tendency to make attributions, producing interesting results. For example, research shows that Koreans are, on average, more likely to make external attributions than Americans are, as Koreans consider more information when making an attribution (Choi et al., 2003) and that Americans, compared to Koreans, were more likely to blame an individual (Park et al., 2013). Importantly, Menon et al. (1999) differentiated between attributions to individual-level agents and collective-level agents, such as groups of people or organisations, and showed that East-Asian people were more likely to make an internal attribution to the disposition of collectives. One of the contexts in their study was organisational scandals covered by the news. Finally, further research showed that East-Asian people, more than Americans, and Asian Americans more so than European Americans, blamed managers as a proxy for organisational incidents, even when the managers were not factually involved in those (Zemba et al., 2006). Interestingly, all the incidents reported by Zemba et al. (2006) can be classified as performance-based, rather than relational. While we did not aim to make any cross-cultural comparisons, we set out to further explore how consumers explained their internal attributions to specific people or groups in organisations or the organisation as a whole in relational brand transgressions.

Another approach to studying attribution is looking at attribution styles: optimistic, where failures are deemed to be caused externally, unlikely to reoccur and controllable; and pessimistic, where failures are internal, uncontrollable, and likely to reoccur (Kessler et al., 2019; Martinko et al., 2007). Optimism and pessimism both appear to draw on a combination of attribution dimensions, that is,locus of causality, stability, and controllability (Harvey et al., 2014). In our research, we were thus curious to explore optimism and pessimism in attribution; in particular, in their interaction with a specific locus of causality.

Please see Table 1 below for the summary of key research findings referenced above. In this table we highlight the knowledge gaps we aim to address in our research.

Overall, as seen in Table 1, we set out to explore whether consumers would foster the same feelings of brand hate for transgressing charity brands as they would for for-profit organisations and what these feelings of hatred may look like. We looked at how and why charity brands may be forgiven, a theme first put forward by our participants, and how consumers attributed blame in charity brand transgressions.

3 | METHODOLOGY

From a methodological perspective, this study adopted a qualitative interpretive approach (Ivey, 2023; Takhar-Lail & Ghorbani, 2014) and involved 26 semi-structured interviews. A qualitative interpretive approach was chosen as it can allow us to gather rich, in depth and meaningful insights into donors, volunteers, employees of charity brands interpretation of brand hate, charity brand scandals and the behavioural consequences of charity brand hate.

3.1 | In-depth interviews

Twenty-six in-depth interviews were carried out in late 2021 to get an in-depth understanding of the brand hate construct and consumers' responses to charity brand scandals, and the role played by forgiveness. The sample comprised UK respondents who were 18 years or over and had some familiarity with charity brands, as in-depth interviews require 'information-rich cases' (Banerjee & Pal, 2023). Therefore, the participants recruited were all associated with certain charity brands (working/worked for charity brands, donors for charity brands or volunteers for charity brands: see Table 2 Participant profile). The participants in the study were recruited via advertisements placed on social media and through professional networks, selected using a snowball sampling approach following the guidelines offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to ensure that the participants had some association with charity brands. The sample size was not predetermined. Instead, it was determined based on saturation, which refers to 'information redundancy' or the point at which no new theme or code 'emerges' from data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The point of saturation was determined across the group; as the sample comprised different groups, saturation was determined as a whole, where no new codes or themes merged. The data started to saturate by the 22nd interview and four additional interviews were conducted to ensure no new theme or concept emerged. This approach is similar to prior studies such as Rodrigo et al. (2024), who conducted additional interviews to ensure no new themes emerged. Within our sample, some respondents answered based on their actual experiences, whereas others answered based on a case study scenario. Such a use of case study is an elicitation technique (e.g., projecting a scenario to elicit responses). We did not observe any significant variation in the responses that were given by those that relied on actual experience and those answering from case studies. Hence, there was no significant variation between the number or

TABLE 2 Participant profile.

Pseudonym	Gender identity	Relationship with charity brands
Rachael	Female	Regular donor[1] for multiple charity brands
Lisa	Female	Monthly donor[2] for multiple charity brands. Worked with McMillian Nurses
Kelsey	Female	Monthly donor for multiple charity brands
Charlotte	Female	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Luke	Male	Irregular donor[3] for multiple charity brands
Claire	Female	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Dean	Male	Irregular donor for single charity brand
Megan	Female	Monthly donor for a single charity brand
Laura	Female	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Tom	Male	Irregular donor for multiple charity brands
Patty	Female	Weekly donor for single charity brand
Caroline	Female	Monthly donor for a single charity brand
Sharon	Female	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Rebecca	Female	Monthly donor for multiple charity brands, has personal connection (received donations) with one of the charity brands
Catherine	Female	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Lynne	Female	Irregular donor for multiple charity brands
Dan	Male	Not supporting any charity brands currently
Jamie	Male	Irregular donor for single charity brands
Linda	Female	Monthly donor for single charity brand
Tracey	Female	Monthly donor for multiple charity brands
Emma	Female	Irregular donor for single charity brand
Katy	Female	Monthly donor for a single charity brand as the participant work associates with the charity
Mark	Male	Regular donor for a single charity brand
Jeff	Male	Regular donor for multiple charity brands
Tony	Male	Irregular donor for a single charity brand

[1]Regular donor means that the participant is donating regularly to the charity brands; however, they have not set up a monthly direct debit. The frequency of donating could be more than once a month.
[2]Monthly donor means that the participant is donating via direct debit to the charity brands.
[3]Irregular donor means that the participant's donating is less frequent (less than once per month); however, they were still donating when the interview was conducted.

the nature of the codes identified. Thus, it was evident that the inconsistency of having real experience versus real case study did not affect the responses, so did not have a significant influence on saturation point or the nature of the codes and themes identified. The overall sample size of 26 was comparable to studies that used in-depth interviews (Olaisen & Revang, 2017). In general, 16 in-depth interviews are usually considered sufficient for saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Hagaman & Wutich, 2017).

The use of in-depth interviews allowed us to use open-ended questions to uncover motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about the topic. An interview guide was developed to facilitate the interviews (see Appendix A for the interview guide). Social desirability refers to the respondents' tendency to deny socially undesirable traits and to claim what are socially desirable ones, and to say things that are considered by the speaker in a favourable light (Nederhof, 1985). It is linked with the tendency to 'present oneself and one's social context in a way that is perceived to be socially acceptable, but not wholly reflective of one's reality' (Bergen & Labonté, 2020, p.783). Social desirability bias can result in overestimation of the positive and diminished heterogeneity in responses, leading to a problematic appearance of consensus (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). Therefore, we took steps to reduce such bias. First, we conducted our interviews in private premises and not within the earshot of others. Moreover, we reduced social desirability bias by having regular, weekly, monthly donors, as well as those who did not support any charity brands at all: our sample also comprised both male and female respondents, as well as those who were donating to single versus multiple charity brands. All these variations in the sample helped us to reduce any bias associated with respondents' characteristics and donating behaviours, resulting in reduced social desirability bias. In line with the strategies employed by Bergen and Labonté (2020) to reduce social desirability bias, during the interviews, indirect questioning and probing were used to elicit more detailed responses. We also provided assurances to the participants that there were no right or wrong answers and all responses would be made anonymous so that participants who were hesitant to speak freely could feel confident to express their views.

Our interviews were conducted in person or remotely via Microsoft Teams. We started our interviews by discussing views on recent scandals involving charity brands, and the reactions developed towards those scandals. Examples of brands' scandals were shared as an elicitation technique (Barton, 2015; Copeland & Agosto, 2012); for instance, using one charity as an example to elicit responses. We then asked participants to reflect on the most relevant scandal for a charity that they are associated with (e.g., as a donor or as an employee) and then explain how they responded to charity brand scandals in general, and any actions they would take to show their resistance towards scandal-hit brands. Whether interviewed face-to-face or online using Microsoft Teams, the participants were just as open when discussing topics raised.

The involvement of donors and employees allowed us to obtain a deeper understanding from a wider group of stakeholders. The respondents were also asked to explain any other actions (e.g., retaliation /complaint) they would take to demonstrate their disappointment, anger, or resistance. Thereafter, we also explored the extent to which the consumers were willing to forgive the charity brands. During the data collection, we noted our thoughts, individual reflections and emergent ideas for potential themes in a memo (Saldaña, 2012). During the analytical process, we immersed ourselves in the data through 'reading, reflecting, questioning, imagining, wondering, writing, retreating, returning' (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p.333). Additionally, we held several discussions around the research themes, in parallel with ongoing data collection, and made constant comparisons with relevant literature (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

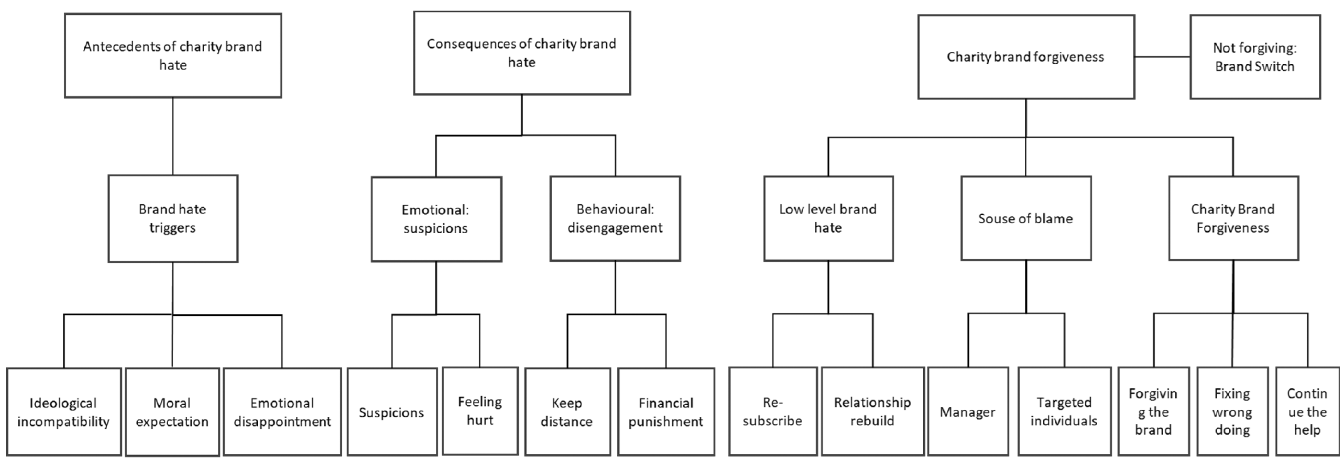

FIGURE 2 Three levels of themes from data analysis (created by the authors of this paper).

Antecedents of Brand Hate

Moral expectations on charity brands

Ideological incompatibility

Emotional disappointment and frustration

Charity Brand Hate

Meaning of Hate in Emotions

Suspicious about spending

Feeling hurt

Low level of hate

Immediate Behaviour Consequences

Distance from charity brands

Financial punishment

Long-term Behaviour Consequences

Rebuild relationship with charity brands

Forgiveness

Not-Forgiving

Forgive the charity brands, not the responsible individuals

Switch to support other charity brands

FIGURE 3 Summary of overall research findings (created by the authors of this paper).

All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed afterwards to enhance the accuracy and rigour of the data gathered (Krippendorff, 2013). Following transcription, the data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify and describe patterns and themes within the gathered data set (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The thematic analysis procedure we followed involved six phases: (a) familiarisation with data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) identifying themes amongst the codes, (d) reviewing the themes, (e) defining and naming the final

themes, and (f) writing the final report. In the first phase, all transcribed data were read multiple times by three of the authors, who made notes on initial ideas and observations for coding, both in relation to each individual data item (interview transcript) and in relation to the entire data set. Initial codes were then developed by coding interesting features of the data in a systematic manner, which involved looking at each data item (interview) with equal consideration, and identifying aspects that were interesting and could be informative in developing themes (Bryne, 2022) across the whole data set while organising the data that were relevant to each code.

The coding process progressed through open coding and through constant comparison (Williams & Moser, 2019). The three coders first independently coded a sample of interview transcripts (five each). After completing the coding of the first five transcripts, the three coders discussed emerging patterns with each other. The data were read and reread to confirm the initial codes.

Having three coders involved in the analysis process allowed us to take a collaborative approach to 'develop a richer, more nuanced reading of the data, rather than seeking a consensus on meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). Once all data were coded and agreed amongst the coders, the codes were aggregated into potential themes by combining different codes.

In the fourth phase, the themes were further reviewed and refined at the level of coded data extracts. Thereafter, the themes were reviewed against the entire data set to explore the validity of each individual theme in relation to the data set. The fifth phase involved defining and naming themes by determining the essence and aspects captured by each theme. Finally, in the sixth phase, the key findings were written, covering the key themes.

The next section outlines the key findings which emerged from this analysis. Overall, three overarching themes were identified from the thematic analysis: antecedents of charity brand hate, consequences of charity brand hate, and charity brand forgiveness. Figure 2 shows the different levels of themes that emerged from data analysis.

4 | FINDINGS

In this section, we introduce the findings reflecting the main themes identified in the data analysis stage. The first of the three main themes is 'Antecedents of charity brand hate', which explores the two main factors that trigger participants' negative attitudes towards charity brands. The second theme is the 'Consequences of charity brand hate', which discusses the two stages of behavioural reactions to hated charity brands. Third, the theme of 'Charity brand forgiveness' demonstrates how charity brands are forgiven. These three themes appeared to be interrelated as they influenced and informed each other: the relationships between them are discussed below and demonstrated in Figure 3, a process-based diagram that shows that the first theme (antecedents) triggers the second theme (consequences) and is further developed into theme 3 (forgiveness).

4.1 | Antecedents of charity brand hate

There are two main sources of charity brand hate which are identified in this research. They are ideological incompatibility, meaning that consumers disagree with charity brands' wrongdoings, and consumers' emotional disappointment when charity brands fail to maintain the expected moral standard.

4.1.1 | Ideological incompatibility

Participants in this study highlighted that ideological incompatibility (consumers' disapproval of a brand's set of beliefs, including legal, social, or moral corporate wrongdoings) triggers negative feelings, even hate, towards charity brands. For example, their comments show that when they disagree with charity brands' wrongdoings (for example, charity brand scandals, which were shared during the interview), consumers are disappointed as those charity brands are not performing what was initially promised. Therefore, negative feelings are developed towards the charity brand due to the gap between 'what was promised' and 'what was produced'. For example, Jeff mentioned that charity brands 'aren't doing what they say they are', so that Jeff feels disappointed and disrespected, as the performance of the charity brands is different from what the brands stand for.

4.1.2 | Moral expectation and emotional disappointment

Consumers' expectations of charity brands' performance, which were mentioned in the previous section, are identified as the second source of charity brand hate. The expectations of charity brands are mainly focused on brands' moral performance rather than their operations; for example, Charlotte mentioned that there is no 'bad charity', meaning charities should follow the moral standard to do 'the right thing'. Clearly, charity brands are to be always helpful and supportive to people who are in need and charity brands are expected to 'fix things' (Dean).

Consequently, consumers believe that it is against the nature of any charity brand's moral standard to engage in any wrongdoing. Therefore, any wrongdoing from the charity brands will lead to consumers' disapproval, and emotionally, consumers will develop a higher level of disappointment and negative feelings than when the performance of the charity brands is different to what these brands stand for (ideological incompatibility), as the wrongdoings also suggest that charity brands failed to follow their moral standards and consumers' moral expectations.

During the interviews, we felt the disappointment and frustration of participants; for example, Mark accused charity brands who engage in wrongdoings of causing more harm than for-profit brands, due to the moral expectations placed on them by people in need. Charity brands are said to abuse the power derived from being trusted and being helpful when they fail to deliver the level

of support which meets the expectations people develop of charity brands:

> And I suppose because they're in a position of trust… they're supposed to be there helping them and the fact that they've abused them, that it is shocking…they're abusing their power, and they're actually making these people's lives worse, aren't they? Then causing them more harm when they're there. Their entire job is to reduce harm.

4.2 | Consequences of charity brand hate

Different from the behavioural reactions consumers develop with a hated for-profit brand (discussed in the literature review), a new pattern of behavioural reactions is identified towards a hated charity brand. The new pattern involves two stages of reactions. First, suspicions about the charity brand's financial spending are developed, and second, the behaviour of disengagement from charity brands is shown.

4.2.1 | Emotional: Suspicions about spending and feeling hurt

The emotion of suspicion is mainly developed when participants question charity brands' financial spending; specifically, whether the donated money has reached people in need. The special relationship between consumers and charity brands, as a donor-recipient relationship, is the reason why such suspicion is triggered. For example, Rachael (participant in this study, donor of a charity) was concerned about the wrongdoing and questioned whether the financial donation had been used for a good purpose, including its distribution to people in need. Rachael asked in the interview: 'Does the money actually go there (people in need)?' Patty shared a similar view, that charity brands' wrongdoings encourage donors to suspect the brands' financial spending, since charity brands are funded by donors: 'I think you've just got to be a bit wary…where your money is going'.

The emotion of suspicion can also go beyond questioning charity brands' ability to manage the donated money, so that further suspicion is developed of the overall reputation of charity brands. For example, Lisa explained that they have developed further suspicion of charity brands' actions and requested a further investigation beyond checking the brands' financial spendings: 'It makes you question what else…happens…you know, what else happens'. The different levels of suspicion placed on charity brands' spending and reputation eventually damage the relationships between consumers and the charity brands. For example, Kelsey mentioned that they feel hurt and the suspicions of charity brands 'corrupts the relationship' between them and the brands.

4.2.2 | Behavioural: Disengagement and reconnecting

The second stage of reactions towards charity brand transgressions is disengagement, which involves two behavioural reactions: immediately stopping financial support to the charity brands and slowly reconnecting with them. First, once charity brands are found to engage in wrongdoing, consumers would immediately end financial support by stopping purchasing from and donating to the transgressing charity brands. Lisa, for example, shared that stopping purchases and donations is a way to financially punish charity brands' wrongdoings: 'I would potentially never buy or give to an Oxfam charity because of it (wrongdoings)'.

However, the financial punishment (stopping purchasing and donating) was found to be temporary in nature, meaning that financial punishment was an immediate reaction to the charity brands' wrongdoings. This shows that consumers are willing to reconnect with charity brands through financial support in terms of purchasing and donating. For example, Charlotte re-connected as the brand (who committed wrongdoings) only failed to help certain groups of people, rather than failing to help the entire populations of people in need. Consequently, the charity brand should only be punished temporarily over their wrongdoings and further support should continue, as these received donations will sponsor future good practise. Charlotte highlights that it is unwise to encourage further financial punishment to the charity brands: 'You wouldn't tell people to not give to them', as further support to the charity brands is 'helping someone somewhere down the line'.

Additionally, consumers were also found to refuse to take any further behavioural actions, including hurt or revenge on the brand through private or public complaining, or to damage the reputation of the brands, which the literature (Alvarez et al., 2023; Bayarassou et al., 2021; Fetscherin, 2019; Zarantonello et al., 2016) identified as consumers' behaviour reactions to a hated for-profit brand. Participants explained that hurt or revenge on charity brands is unnecessary; punishing the entire charity is inappropriate since the wrongdoings committed were led by the responsible individuals. This engages the theme of attribution of blame discussed in the literature review. For example, Kelsey highlighted that the ultimate punishment to charity brands in scandals is to punish the responsible individual (who works for charity brands and is directly responsible for the wrongdoing). There should be no further punishment to the whole charity organisation, to allow them to continue practising their good initiatives of helping and supporting: 'I would never stop supporting the charity as a whole, just because of one individual' (i.e., the person who is directly responsible for the wrongdoings, often the CEOs or senior managers of the charity brands).

Therefore, considering the consequences of charity brand hate and consumers' willingness to re-establish the relationship with a charity brand who committed wrongdoing, it seems that the level of charity brand hate is lower than the lowest level of hate developed with a for-profit brand who committed wrongdoings (cool hate).

4.3 | Charity brand forgiveness

When asked if charity brands that committed wrongdoing could be forgiven, participants in this study mentioned that hated charity brands should be forgiven and deserve to be given a 'second chance'. Three perspectives are identified to explain how and why forgiveness is given to charity brands.

First, participants distinguish between the role of 'charity brands' and 'responsible individuals (who work for the organisation)' in the event of wrongdoing; therefore, the responsible individuals' actions which lead to charity brands' wrongdoing are not seen as a reflection of the charity's overall value. Consequently, 'forgiveness' is given to the charity brand, not the individuals who are directly responsible for the brand's wrongdoing. For example, Kelsey mentioned that only the responsible individuals should be 'fired immediately', but charity brands as a whole, according to Charlotte, should not be punished.

Katy shared that charity brands are usually innocent, as the unforgivable individuals (identified as the director of the charity by Katy) not only authorised the wrongdoing, but also led the team who had direct involvement in the wrongdoings. Therefore, this individual was to take the main responsibility and there was a need to minimise the possibility of the same director being appointed by other charity organisations, in case of any repeated wrongdoing. This charity director, according to Katy, 'should have just been sacked, meaning that other charities or organisations that he would try to go into would have some knowledge of his actions'.

Second, forgiveness is given with the expectation that the charity brand will fix their wrongdoings. For example, Claire confirms that charity brands should be given a second chance if 'they acted and dealt with it' (i.e., with the wrongdoing). Mark further confirmed that forgiveness should be given to charity brands when 'they try to fix everything that has gone wrong'. Once the wrongdoings are fixed, it was found that charity brands were expected to continue practising helping and supporting people in need through their good nature. This is the third step of forgiveness, as charity brands are forgiven for the benefit of their service recipients; for example, Katy mentioned that there is a need to avoid the situation of charity brands being unable to continue offering long-term support and help to people in need: therefore, charity brands 'should all be forgiven'.

4.3.1 | Not forgiving: Brand switching

Some participants, however, refused to forgive the charity brands for their wrongdoings. There were various reasons for not forgiving them; for example, participants found it unforgivable when charity brands denied their wrongdoings. Luke mentioned that, when the charity 'continues to deny that there has been any scandals or issues internally then that is where they shouldn't be forgiven'. Additionally, if forgiveness is given to charity brands, the possibility of the same charity brand being involved in a similar scandal is high. Tony, for example, explained that forgiving charity brands is to encourage them to not learn from their mistakes, so the possibility of making the same mistakes is high: 'Are lessons really learnt? Because things happen again and again and again'.

Consequently, this study found that some participants would switch to different charity brands for donation, as a behavioural consequence of a brand's wrongdoing. For example, Laura mentioned that she would look at different charities, and Tom indicated that: 'I'd just try to find a different alternative'. However, it is worth noting that although switching donating charity brands shows a level of cool hate (low level of hate, similar to the hate consumers develop with for-profit-brand hate), a new follow-up behaviour is developed for unforgivable charity brands. Participants in this study highlighted that they would actively look for alternative charity brands who are practising the same level of help and support. For example, Laura mentioned that she would 'look at different charities who were also supporting Haiti'. Sharon also mentioned that she would seek 'others (charity brands) that easily do the same thing' (the same supporting activities). Clearly, participants recognise the good nature of charity brands' practise, and they are looking for a way to extend the same level of support to people in need, but through a different (alternative) charity brand.

Overall, Figure 3 is a summary of the research findings, demonstrating the process of 'charity brand hate and forgiveness' in an order similar to that in the literature about for-profit-brand hate: antecedents of brand hate; the emotions developed in association with brand hate; the immediate behavioural consequences of brand hate; and, finally, the long-term behavioural consequences of brand hate. For example, it was demonstrated in this study that charity brand hate can be triggered by ideological incompatibility and consumers' emotional disappointment and frustration (antecedents of brand hate). The figure also shows that consumers develop feelings of suspicion and hurt when charity brands commit wrongdoing. Consequently, the different types of behavioural consequences a consumer can engage in due to charity brand transgressions are immediate distancing from charity brands and imposing financial punishment on the hated charity brand. However, in the long term, consumers display the intention to rebuild their relationship with the charity brand and ultimately blame the responsible individuals for causing the brand transgression, whereas forgiving the charity brand overall. The figure also highlights that consumers who disagree with charity brands' wrongdoing and decide not to forgive the brands may switch to an alternative charity brand offering the same level of support and help towards vulnerable people who are in need.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this study were two-fold. First, it aimed to develop a framework that demonstrates the antecedents of charity brand hate. Second, it aimed to determine the consequences of charity brand hate from an emotional and behavioural perspective. In response to these objectives, our study reveals that antecedents of charity brand hate are somewhat different from those of for-profit-brand hate, except for the influence of ideological incompatibility. More specifically, in

addition to ideological compatibilities, our findings suggest that charity brand hate is also triggered by the moral expectations that the donors and employees have of charity brands. Concerning the consequences of charity brand hate, in contrast to earlier research results which argue in the context of for-profit brands, that consequences include negative emotions of disgust, anger, and contempt (Fetscherin, 2019), our research identified a completely new pattern of behavioural and emotional consequences of charity brand hate. For instance, we found that when charity brands are linked with scandals, consumers develop suspicion of charity brands' financial spending, and later, the level of suspicion escalates to questioning the brands' overall reputation. Moreover, charity brand consumers immediately disengage from the hated charity brands by stopping financial support (purchase or donating). Thus, in the context of charity brands, the feeling of suspicion leads to discontinuation of patronage of the charity brands. Therefore, we argue that the emotions expressed towards a brand after a transgression and subsequent behavioural consequences differ according to the nature of the brand (for-profit brand vs. charity brand). More specifically, in the context of charity brands, consumers tend to distance themselves from the charity brands as a consequence of suspicion. This suggests that the emotional reactions to charity brand scandals are driven through suspicion, in contrast to disgust, anger, fear or contempt that are identified within for-profit brand contexts.

We also explored the process of consumers restoring their relationship with the hated charity brands. Our findings suggest that the level of hate that consumers associate with charity brands is lower and such hate may only lead to a temporary discontinuation of patronage, with the potential to re-establish the brand relationship. This is unique to charity brands, as prior research (e.g., Fetscherin, 2019; Kucuk, 2019) suggests that, in the context of for-profit brand scandals, consumers demonstrate a diverse range of brand hate types that are linked with different, discrete, negative emotions as presented in Figure 1. However, consumers are found to refuse to take any further behavioural actions towards charity brands, beyond stopping purchasing or donating to charity brands; they reject brand retaliation, revenge and private or public complaining, or damaging the reputation of the brands. As mentioned in the literature, letting go of the resentment and negative judgement sometimes even leads to consumers having loving feelings for brands (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2015). Hence, such willingness to re-establish brand relationships could be an outcome of letting go of resentment through discontinuing donation.

Additionally, consumers often attribute blame when a brand transgression happens. The findings of this study suggest that, in the context of charity brands, blame is attributed to the management team and staff who are directly involved in the wrongdoings. Hence, in the content of charity brands, the attribution of blame is more direct and specific to the responsible individuals. This is significantly different from the case of for-profit brands, where blame is attributed to managers even when those managers were not actually involved in the wrongdoings (Kessler et al., 2019) Therefore, charity stakeholders clearly draw a distinction between the responsible individual and the charity brand.

Our study also revealed the feeling that forgiveness of charity brands by consumers encourages the brand to continue their practises of helping people in need. Hence, forgiving a charity brand could be considered a response to the benevolent nature of the charity brands, which also supports the view that warm brands' failing communal attributes reinforces their credibility and can foster forgiveness (Hassey, 2019). Even when some participants are not willing to forgive a charity brand's wrongdoings, the consequence is limited to switching to other charity brands who offer the same level of support and help, which further highlights the special connections consumers have with charity brands, due to their benevolent nature.

Overall, the findings suggest that the antecedents of charity brand hate and the emotional and behavioural reactions towards charity brand transgression are different from those in for-profit brand transgressions. The findings also highlight that the attribution of blame differs between charity and for-profit brands. Finally, forgiving charity brands helps those brands to continue their practises. Consumers' emotional reactions to charity brands are more driven by suspicion than by fear or disgust. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, our study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on charity brand hate literature by highlighting the need to distinguish between the emotional reactions towards charity brand scandals and for-profit-brand scandals. Our study also extends the current understanding of brand hate features, its antecedents and consequences (which have predominantly focused on for-profit brands in previous research) by presenting a new framework which captures the key features of charity brand hate, including its antecedents and its emotional and behavioural consequences. Additionally, this study also extends the current research on ‘brand hate behavioural outcomes’ by adding the action of ‘brand forgiveness’.

From a practical perspective, the findings of our study highlight that charity brands should pay attention to the role played by emotions such as suspicion, which could trigger negative behavioural consequences including financial punishment (e.g., ceasing to purchase or donate). To avoid consumer suspicion, our findings suggest that it is important for the charity brand to disclose its financial spending (over the period when the wrongdoing was committed) to the public. Moreover, our study revealed that consumers blame individuals at managerial level, when charity brands commit any wrongdoing. Therefore, managers need to take corrective and immediate actions by taking responsibility for transgressions in order to avoid any further damage to brand reputation. Especially since the responsible individuals are less likely to be forgiven, maintaining corporate benevolence will help to protect the charity's brand image to minimise the level of brand hate and to maximise the possibility of brand forgiveness.

This study is exploratory in nature and thus merits further research. The main limitation relates to the scope of studying the concepts of hate and forgiveness. For instance, further research is required to understand the role played by cultural and personal values in shaping consumers' perceptions of charity brands, as prior research

argues individuals with different cultural origins may attribute blame and hate differently (see the previous discussion on 'Attribution in transgressions'). Additionally, forgiveness is a subjective feeling shaped by emotional and social factors. We therefore suggest two-dimensional research to consider how cultural and social context impact on consumers' willingness to forgive a charity brand. Additionally, it would be beneficial to investigate how the donor's emotions and characteristics, such as compassion and personality, influence reactions and outcomes associated with charity brand transgressions. Furthermore, our sample comprises charity brand employees and donors. As charity brand employees are more involved and may feel attachment to the brands, the views shared by these employees may be biassed. Future research should therefore investigate if there is a significant difference in brand hate perceptions and willingness to forgive between employees and donors, ideally, using a quantitative approach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the research assistants for their contribution to data collection.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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How to cite this article: Ren, C., Moisieiev, D., Rodrigo, P., & Johnson, E. (2024). Hot and cold: How do consumers hate and forgive offending charity brands? *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*, *29*(3), e1875. https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1875

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Introduction
  - Welcome and introduction
  - Consent: double cheque if participant has completed consent, and if they fully understand it
- Warm up
  - Are there any organisations that you avoid using? If so, why?
    - Try to compliment the shared storeys from your participants
- Discussion topics on brand hate
  - Do you support any charity brands?
    - Encourage participant to share their experiences with brands
  - Do you avoid any charity brands?
    - if so
      - Encourage to share the storeys
      - If not, share the case study of Oxfam
  - What have disappointed you? The fact that charity brands did not delivery what they promised, or they have bridged the trust relationship between you and the brand? Or in this case, charity brands are not being 'charity' anymore?
  - Would you stop supporting/donating to charity brands, like Oxfam?
  - Do you think we should all stop supporting/donating to charity brands, like Oxfam?
- Discussion topics on brand forgiveness
  - Seems you have a mixed feeling about completely stopping supporting/donating to charity brands,
    - Who do you think should take the blame when a charity brand is in crisis? Management, or employees, or even our society or us? Or someone else?
    - What could these charity brands do to make up for their misbehaviour?
    - Do you think charity brands should be forgiven, giving the fact that charity brands are set up to 'be good'?
    - When do you think a charity brand can be forgiven, when do you think a charity brand should not be forgiven at all?
- Close the interview
  - Thank the participant
  - Invite for further thoughts and we may get in touch
  - Get in touch if you want to know the research findings