

How charities



use graphic design



to connect with

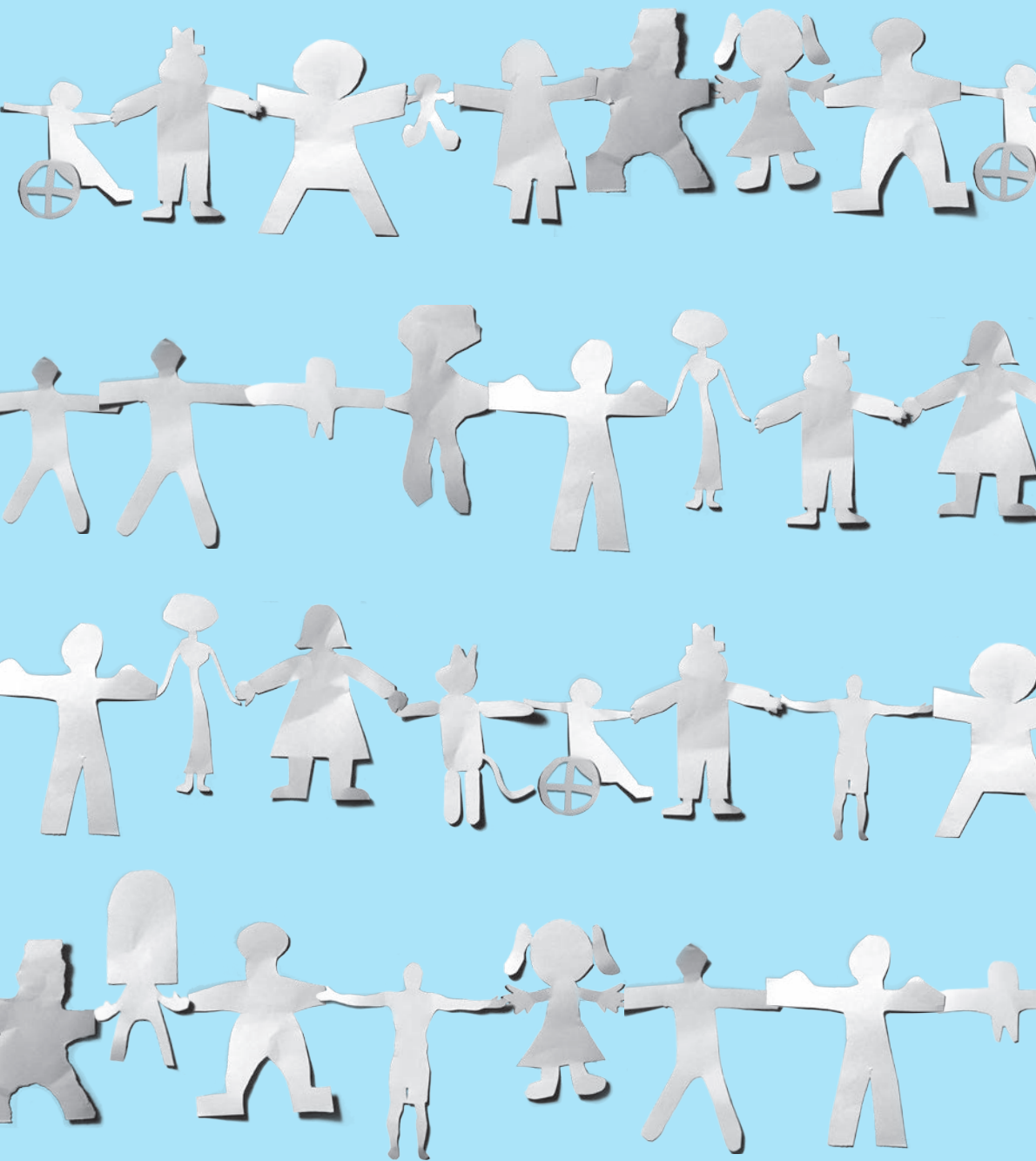


the public



*An exploration of four graphic design techniques used by charities,  
and their effect on the public's relationship with the charity sector.*

Adam Willis

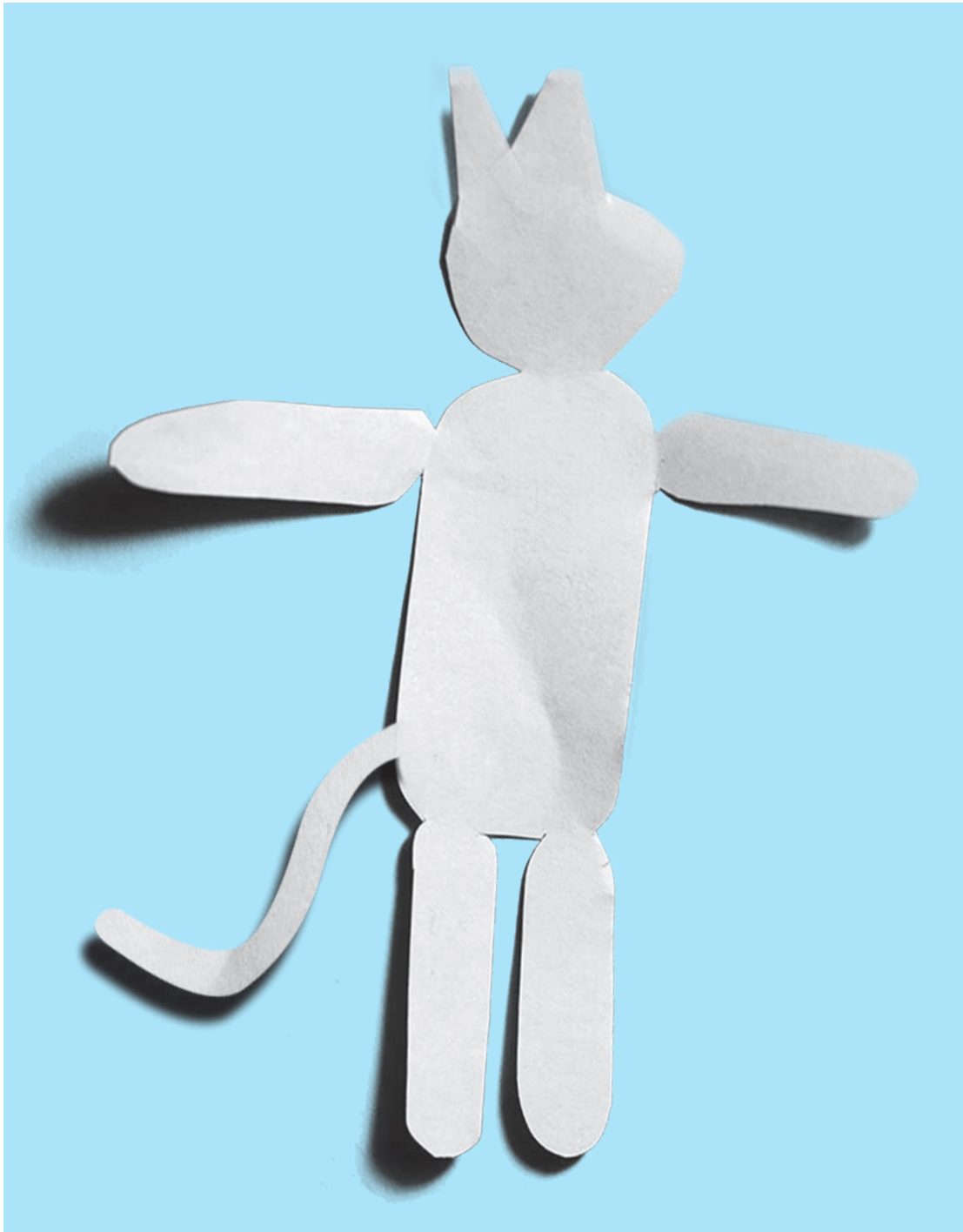


# How charities use graphic design to connect with the public

*Adam Willis*

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# Introduction

A graphic design technique is a strategy of communication (visual, textual, or experiential), where form and content are presented in such a way as to produce a specific effect on the viewer.

This dissertation will analyse four graphic design techniques used by charities:

- Informative design
- Empathy-based design
- Shock-based design
- Interaction design

Focus will be on the current public perception of the charity sector, how each design technique contributes to this, and highlighting potential areas for technique development.

This dissertation understands that many individuals give to charity regardless of what graphic design techniques have been used, if any. However, to be of maximum value to a charity, it is important that graphic designers look at fundraising relatively objectively and unemotionally, as this dissertation aims to do.



# Thematic Exposition

A selection of references and published material relating to this dissertation's themes.

Ambrose and Harris write in *The Fundamentals of Graphic Design*:

'For a charity to operate successfully, it needs to use design as a tool to convey the very specific messages that it thinks are important, in order to stir people and create the social leverage they require to affect change' (Ambrose and Harris, 2009, p.56).

This reference introduces how a charity's success depends greatly on its ability in communicating messages. We shall later explore how graphic design techniques can be of benefit or detriment to accurately communicating these messages.

The following research studies by Noble and Wixley underline the public's current understanding of charities. This data is undeniably linked with the charity sector's ability in communication.

The chart on the next page shows that when asked, 45% of participants said they knew either 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' about charities in the UK.

‘How much, if anything, do you feel you know about charities in the UK?’

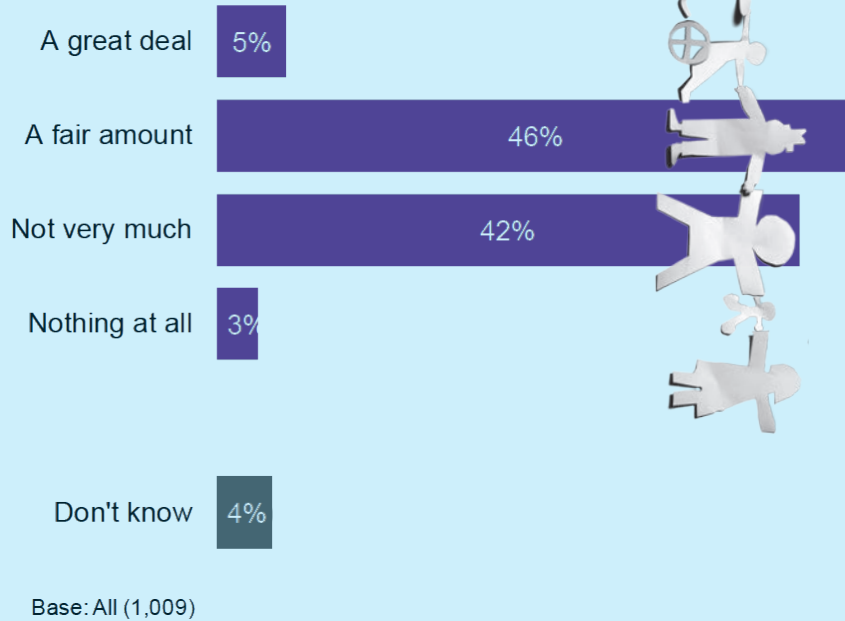
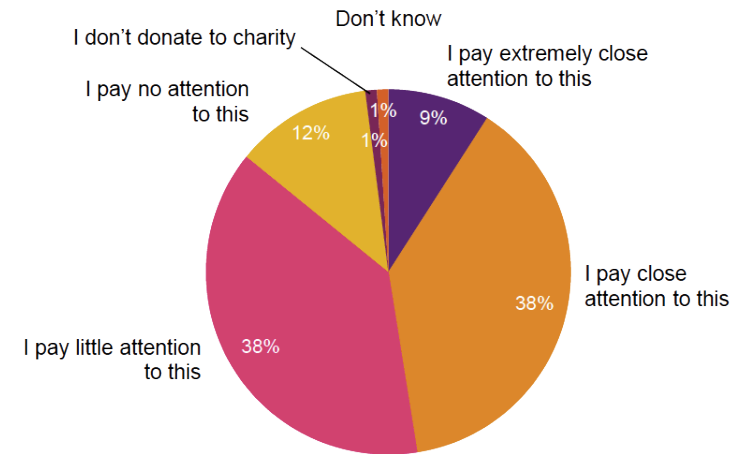


Figure 1: Public knowledge of charities in UK (Noble and Wixley, 2014, p.10)

Figure 2 shows that when giving to a charity, the same proportion of people pay *little* attention to ‘evidence that the organisation is having an impact’, as those who pay *close* attention.

‘How much, attention, if any, do you pay to evidence that the organisation is having an impact when you give to a charity?’



Base: 1,035 GB adults surveyed in January 2014

Figure 2: Attention paid to charity impact by donors (Noble and Wixley, 2014, p.9)

A potential reason for the lack of public attention may be because there isn't enough communicated evidence to pay attention to in the first place. This would mean improvements in charity communications are needed.

Donations in many ways depend on instinctive emotions; if the viewer isn't 'hooked' in the first few seconds, they are less likely to donate. If there was more space to do so, one technique this dissertation would look further into would be humour / satire based design, for which Cyril Kenneth Bird, or pen-name Fougasse, was well known for during World War II.

Fougasse writes the following in *School of Purposes*.

‘Whatever the treatment employed, something should always be left for the reader to “fill in” for himself. This undoubtedly assists him to carry the picture away in his memory, and, in flattering his imagination, it flatters itself.’

(Fougasse, 1946, p.30).

Fougasse understood that through telling visual stories wherein viewers' imaginations 'fill in' details, designs become more memorable and universal.

Observe Figure 3 (opposite) for example. Even without seeing a facial expression, the viewer understands this sailor is sad, and perhaps lonely. The viewer therefore feels sorry for the sailor, but crucially doesn't feel like they have been coerced into doing so through obvious means. Because of this 'personal' understanding process, the viewer feels they have connected on a more significant level, and is more likely to make a donation.

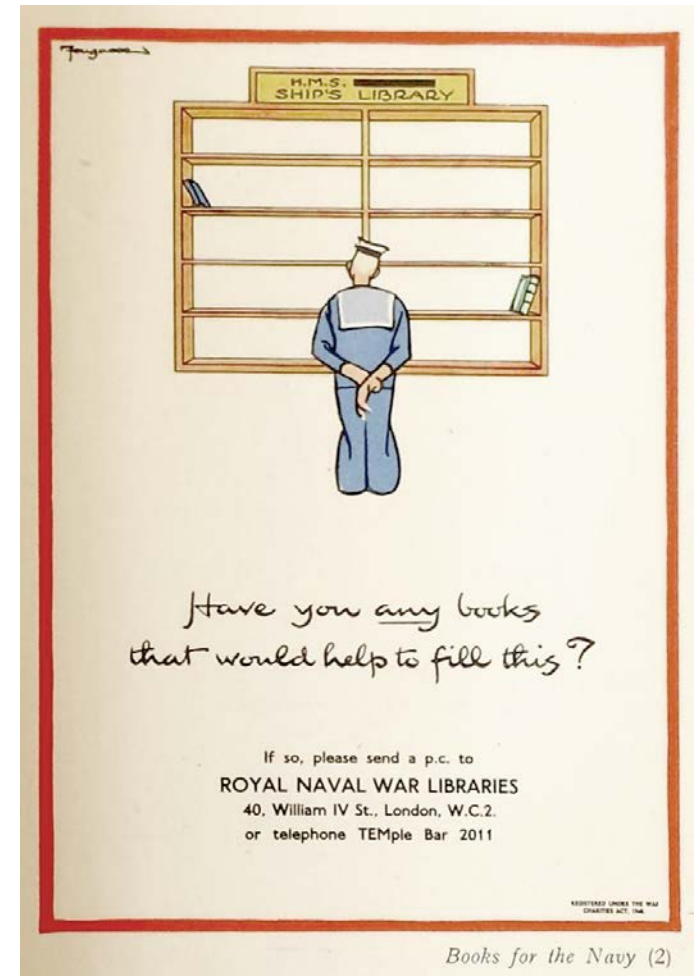


Figure 3: School of Purposes (Fougasse, 1946, p.25)



In their book *Fundraising Management*, Sargeant and Jay write the following:

‘A good many donors appear to be simply switching their support to other organisations that they perceive as equally or more deserving.’

(Sargeant and Jay, 2004, p.118)

Here, the word ‘perceive’ suggests that the public rely on their own perception of a charity to determine whether it is deserving. It is fair to consider that this ‘perception’ is largely shaped by a charity’s communication through graphic design, since unlike many commercial brands, donors have no real interaction with a product or service.

Sargeant and Jay also write that a level of transparency is required. ‘Personalised, clear and unambiguous requests for support are more likely to engender giving than those that are vague or general in nature’ (2004, p.113). Having said that, the following reference outlines how some return-on-investment based design can be damaging:

‘[...]donors are exalted to give “now” because of the urgency of a specific situation. They may then be approached in a few weeks or month’s time with a further seemingly urgent issue. [...] The donor thus receives a series of very similar communications, each designed with an eye to achieving the maximum possible return on investment’ (Sargeant and Jay, 2004, p.170).

Therefore designers need to be aware of the continuous tone of messages, and not consistently ‘shout’ through marketing. An example of good understanding is from Christian Aid’s *visual identity guidelines*, which show how simply adjusting a document header style can evoke friendlier, more legible, communication (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Old heading/new heading (Christian Aid, 2013, p.7)

Sargeant and Jay also point out that donors appear to favour charities that are ‘amateurish but effective’ (2004, p.113). This characteristic—which in essence relates to the public’s desire for approachable, personable, and ‘non-business-like’ charities, is greatly affected by how relationship-focused a charity’s graphic design is.

‘A relationship approach recognises that if treated with respect, donors will want to give again’

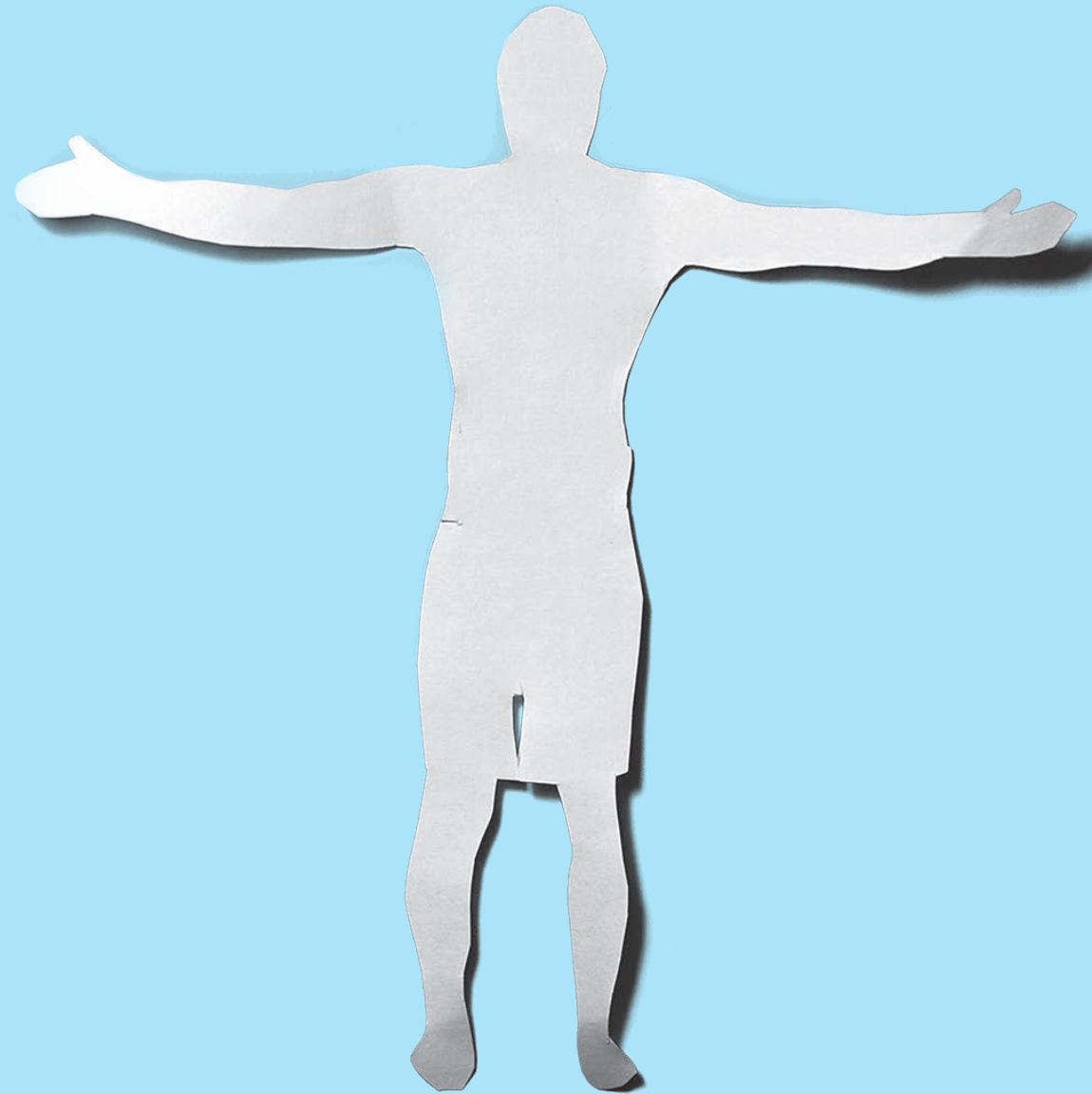
(Sargeant and Jay, 2004, p.170).

Certain graphic design techniques, such as empathy-based design, have research to back up their popularity with charities. The chart below, by Small and Verrochi, confirms that using ‘sad’ facial expressions in charity advertisements almost doubles donation amounts, compared to ‘happy’ or ‘neutral’ expressions.

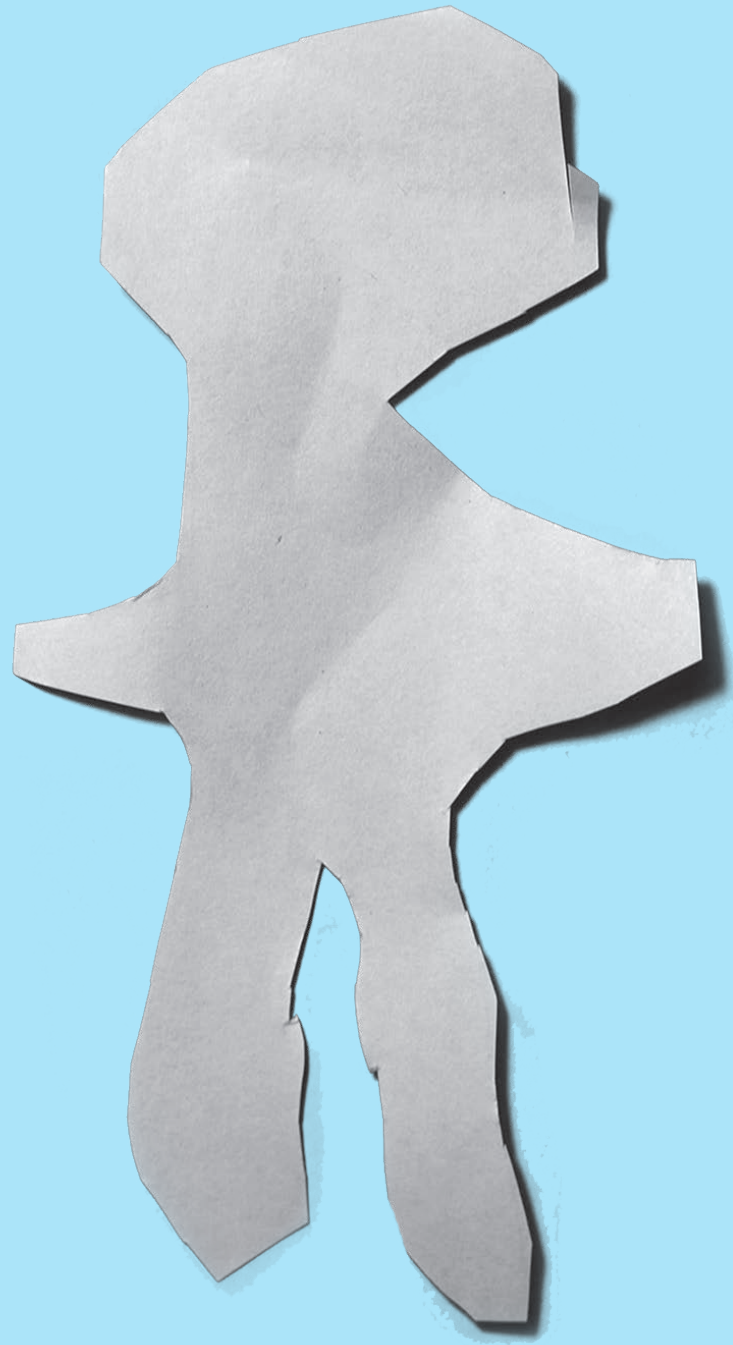


Figure 5: Donations by emotion expression  
(Small and Verrochi, 2009, p.779)

Small and Verrochi’s research also found that adverts with lots of information typically created a decreased emotional impact than adverts with less information. ‘When people read more information on charity advertisements, it engages their deliberative system, which lessens the impact of the emotion expression’ (Small and Verrochi, 2009, p.785). These observations are fascinating because they contend so well with the media’s criticism







against such adverts that feature high levels of empathy or shock-based imagery, but little information (see Fienberg, *Saying No to Pity*, 2012).

Kelly and Maier write in *The Good Giving Guide* that the public are ‘becoming immune to distressing images’ (2004, p.128). This dissertation will examine the use of shocking and empathy-based images, and analyse whether their use in the charity sector is valid, or effective.

Similarly Larson suggests in *Reception and Responsibility* that using shock-based design unhelpfully encourages an instinctive ‘dissonance reduction strategy’; unpleasant adverts are dismissed when viewers simply ‘change the channel or turn the page’ (1973, p.106). This reference along with Kelly and Maier suggest an ineffectiveness of well-known charity communication, which could suggest that adjustments to existing techniques, or the development of new ones is needed.

The following reference from *Nonprofit Marketing* by Wymer, Knowles and Gomes outlines three rules for appealing to the public:

‘A nonprofit’s prospective target publics must know about it, be able to access it, and find that is contains more value than their alternatives’

(Wymer et al. 2006, p.39).

This aspiration can be difficult for smaller, lesser well-funded charities, however a later example—Harrison’s

Fund and their use of shock-based design—will show how brave use of a graphic design technique can help a charity stand out.

Dan Pallotta imitates the view of some donors in his Ted Talk *‘The way we think about charity is dead wrong’*:

‘If you can get the advertising donated...you know, to air at four o’clock in the morning, I’m okay with that. But I don’t want my donation spent on advertising, I want it go to the needy’ (Pallotta, 2013).

This reference illustrates how some of the public perceive graphic design and marketing as a waste of donations. To respond however, Pallotta explained the strategy behind how his company raised \$581m through their ‘AIDS Ride’ bicycle-journey campaign.

‘We got that many people to participate by buying full-page ads in The New York Times, in The Boston Globe, in prime time radio and tv advertising’ (Pallotta, 2013). This remark serves to defend the value of investing charity capital in graphic design and marketing.

In preparation for this dissertation, I was pleased to meet and have a lengthy interview with Ken Burnett, who is an author, lecturer and consultant on fundraising, marketing and communications for not-for-profit organisations worldwide. His 40 years professional experience helped contribute to many arguments explored in the coming pages. The first of which is that:



‘Charities need to move away from the marketing mind-set, towards a more customer orientated mind-set’ (Burnett, 2015).

The result of this, in Burnett’s view, would be communication that empowers, educates, and develops relationships between charities and donors. ‘When people are giving voluntarily to support a cause, they don’t believe that it’s something they’ve been sold, persuaded, or pressurised into, they believe it’s something that should be voluntary’ (Burnett, 2015).

Burnett believes that in some organisations, too many decisions are made without input from graphic designers. ‘The graphic designer is brought in long after discussions have been settled and fallen by the wayside. He or she is then told: “Make something of this. Tell our story. Here’s the copywriter”’ (Burnett, 2015). Change is therefore needed. The professional expertise of the graphic designer needs as much respect and involvement as any other staff member.

‘Our bodies are hard-wired to respond to stories’ (Burnett, 2015).

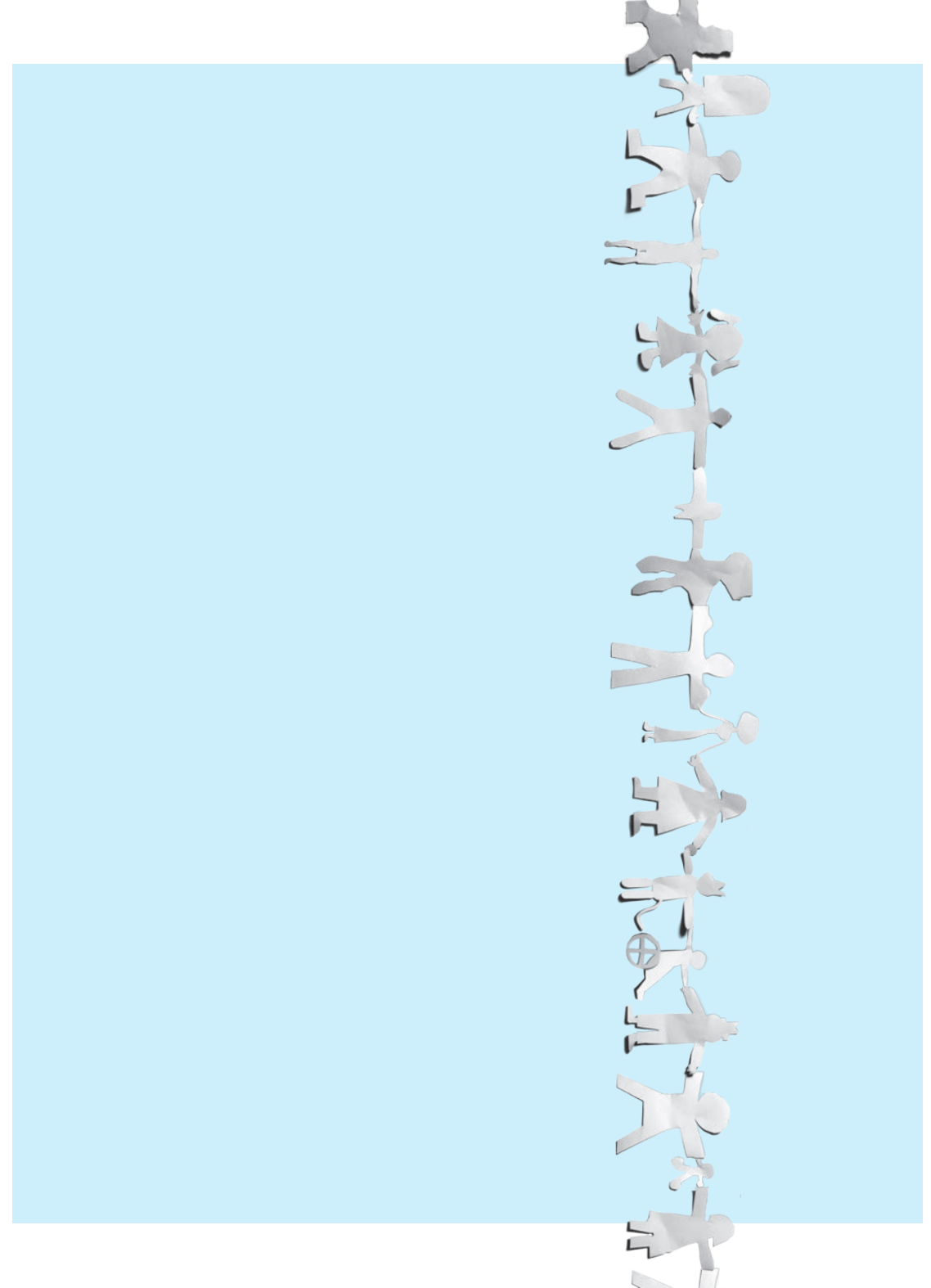
Burnett puts great significance on storytelling, and it is a major theme running throughout this dissertation. We shall explore later how storytelling could be further utilised in graphic design techniques.

Some design techniques, such as interaction-based design, may be appealing to a younger audience, however they

might not appeal to older generations, who make up the majority of donors (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014, p.5). Burnett explained that in some charities, '[...] staff will be young, political agitators, wanting social change. Their donors will be older, more comfortable, conservative...if those two don't gel, it's very easy to see how problems can arrive' (Burnett, 2015).

Whilst this dissertation make suggestions in how charities' could better utilise graphic design techniques, in response to Burnett's caution, it understands a realistic and patient approach is required.

In *Beyond Fundraising*, Kay Grace expresses an importance on communicating charity accomplishments, but also to surround them '[...] with information about what resources are required (human and financial) to further strengthen the programs and services' (Grace, 2005, p.30). This method of communicating achievements, whilst also inspiring giving is an example of transparent, modern communication, which sees fundraising as a journey of celebration and collaboration.



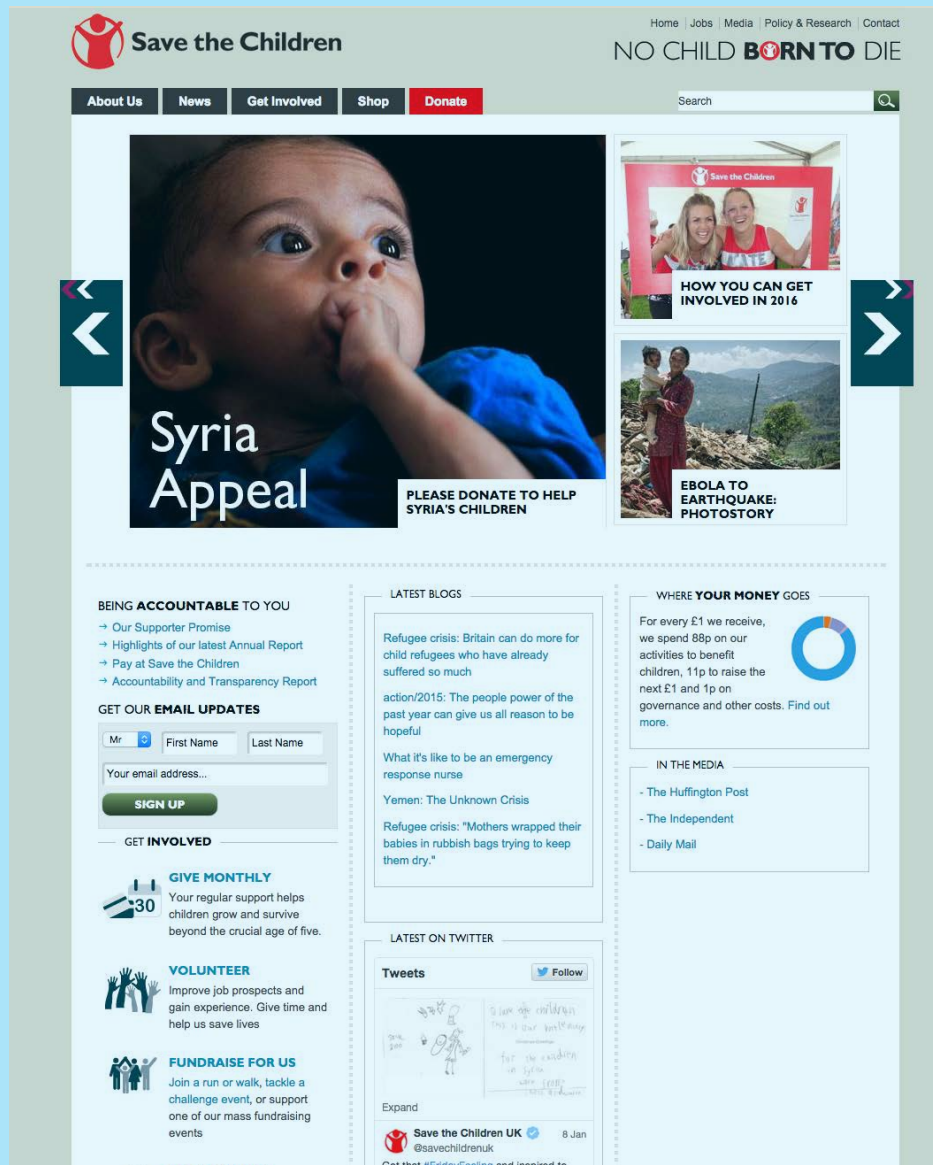


Figure 6: Save the Children Website (2016)

Technique 1:

## Informative design

Baer and Vacarra define informative design as: ‘[...] the translating [of] complex, unorganised, or unstructured data into valuable, meaningful information.’ (2008, p.12).

### Case study: Save the Children website (2015)

The first place the majority of the public go to find information about a charity, is their website. Therefore charity websites need to be rich in information, visually engaging, and simple to navigate for all ages.

Visitors browsing Save the Children’s website are initially made to feel comfortable through a simple layout (Figure 6). At the top of the homepage, information is presented sparingly, so as not to bombard the viewer, however more links are made available as visitors scroll down.

The homepage features a clear visual hierarchy, starting with the photograph of a child, which grabs attention and introduces the charity’s cause. The child’s eyes then lead visitors to the charity tagline, confirming their mission, ‘No Child Born to Die’. These two elements in conjunction with the main logo seem to encapsulate the central ‘donate’ button, putting final emphasis on leading visitors there (Figure 7).



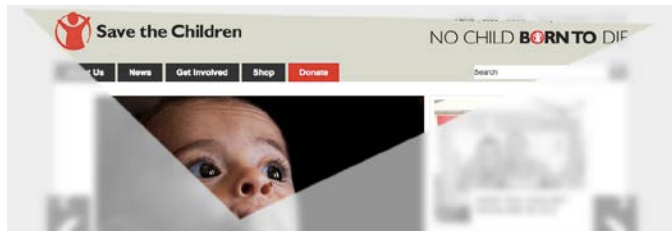


Figure 7: Three elements surrounding ‘donate’ button

The words ‘Syria Appeal’ seem to have less visual significance, which may have been designed to be so. In order to raise the words’ status, they could be moved to the top right section of the photograph (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Typography analysis

When visitors click through to the donate page, they read that ‘£3 could pay for life-saving treatment for eight children with diarrhoea’ (Figure 9). Through mentioning how money can help a cause, the tangibility of a visitor’s potential donation is increased, and they are therefore more likely to give.

[Right] Figure 9: Donation form (Save the Children, 2016)



Moving to other areas of the website, Figure 10 shows a news article—the headline reading ‘1 in 3 Yemeni Children Acutely Malnourished’. The inclusion of a newsfeed brings a real sense of ‘current urgency’ to the website, which perhaps couldn’t be achieved through a non-web-based design. In addition, the charity’s communication of a statistic contributes to the factual credibility of the charity’s cause. Through appealing to the visitor’s rational mind, they are more likely to feel secure in donating.



Figure 10: News article (Save the Children, 2016)

One area of the website’s informative design that could be developed is the communication of past achievements; they seem to be somewhat buried in news articles or annual reports. Inspiration could be taken from Macmillan Cancer Support’s website, which confidently presents positive quotes from those the charity has helped (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Visualised quote (Macmillan Cancer Support 2016)

## Informative design: Analysis

Informative design is the most important graphic design technique for charities to understand. Clear, succinct and honest communication of information cultivates donors who understand and trust a charity's mission.

One example of a charity *dishonestly* communicating information is that of Thomas Barnardo. In 1870, the founder of children's charity Barnardo's was sent to court for exaggerating the needy conditions of orphans in 'before' and 'after' photographs. He did so in attempt to embellish the positive impact of his boys' homes (Figure 12).

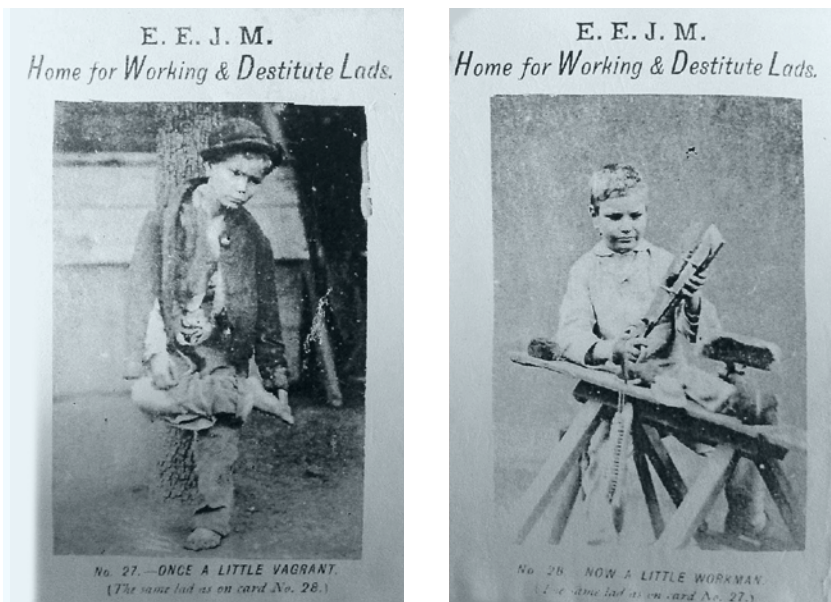


Figure 12: 'Once a little vagrant. Now a little workman.' 'Before' and 'after' photographs. (Barnardo, 1870)



In modern day, Noble and Wixley's research (2014, p.9) showed us that a concerning portion of the public pay little attention to the true impact charities are making. Therefore adjustments in informative design need to be made. Some charity professionals say being more transparent with data would help the public understand what charities do (Etherington, 2015). However, it's likely that not everyone would understand, or have time to read through said data. Alternatively, Ken Burnett has shared his belief that storytelling is the best way to communicate information to the public. Which leads us to a form of informative design, called 'edutainment'.

'Edutainment is the entertaining delivery of educational content. It means creating a seamless presentation that draws people to the message without hitting them over the head.'

(Heidelberg, 2008, p.264)

Edutainment breaks from conventionally 'serious' charity graphic design, which the public—as we've mentioned—have become somewhat desensitised to (Kelly and Maier, 2004, p.128). The technique contributes to a more easy-going, and fun public perception of the charity sector.

WaterAid's 'If Men Had Periods' (2015) spoof television advert has been watched online 1.5 million times, raising awareness of the women across the world who don't have access to a toilet during their period (Figure 13).



The video's effective because it's funny and highly sharable, and whilst the opportunity to find out more is mentioned, viewers aren't force-fed the underlying cause.



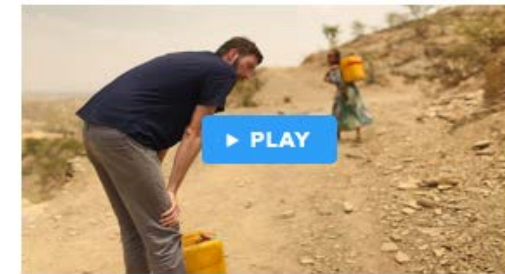
1.25 billion women don't have access to a toilet during their period.

Figure 13: 'If men had periods' video (WaterAid, 2015)

Videos in this style won't appeal to all ages, and some might say they have the potential to take away from the serious nature of some causes, and consequently offend viewers. Another perspective is that 'some viral campaigns charities raise awareness without really discussing the issues or addressing the problem directly' (Noble and Wixley, 2014, p.10).

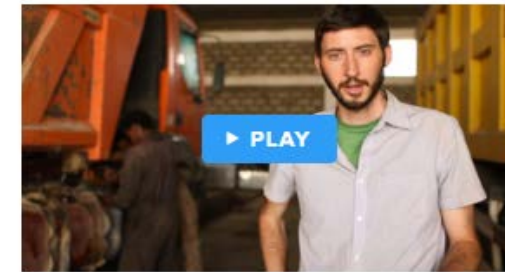
A strategy in response to this opinion could be to post on-going videos that develop a story. An example of this is 'The Journey' online video series by Charity: Water (Figure 14). These informal, engaging and honest 'video

blogs' show where donations are going, through following a charity employee. This style of information follows a growing popularity in online videos, where viewers watch content in their free time, and interact when they want.



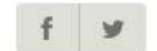
### Episode 3: Life with

Tarik Haftay is one of many who struggle for her family. Spend a c



### Episode 4: Meet C

Our local partner in Tigris is a local charity in the region they're incredible.



### Episode 5: Water

Having access to clean water in May Umeri Village are u



Figure 14: 'The Journey' video series (Charity: Water, 2015)



Figure 15: Red Cross Society poster (British Red Cross, 1915)

Technique 2:

## Empathy-based design

‘If your cause can draw on such legitimate emotion it will successfully raise funds’ (Burnett, 2002, p.113).

Much of the charity sector’s graphic design is based around empathy, which means it uses text and image in a way to create an emotional connection with the viewer. The technique’s effectiveness is supported by Small and Verrochi’s research, which, as we’ve explored, shows that using ‘sad’ facial expressions in advertising almost doubles donation amounts, compared to other expressions.

### Case study: Red Cross Society poster (1915)

In order to raise money for wounded soldiers in World War I, Tom Purvis designed a poster for the Red Cross Society, which asked Churches of all denominations to donate one day’s collection money (Figure 15).

The poster’s red border is a simple tactic to draw attention and evoke urgency. The soldier, who is dominant in size—is softly illustrated, evoking a fragility that reflects his physical condition. Unlike some modern adverts where subjects are represented as needy victims, this soldier actually looks past the viewer—he’s not begging.



Purvis understood the poster’s audience, which consisted mainly of families and friends of soldiers, who would most likely be worried about their loved ones. Purvis therefore attempts to create a soldier many could recognise; by covering his hair with a bandage, this soldier could resemble most men. This strategy generates maximum potential empathy, and alongside the cursively written call-to-action ‘Help Him’, it’s no wonder Church members donated £85,000.

### Empathy-based design: [Analysis](#)

The connection between the stimulation of empathy, and the chance of a donation being made, has been understood for some time by charities (Griffin et al. 1993). Sargeant and Jay wrote that ‘to be truly effective the arousal of empathy must be powerful enough to overcome indifference and stimulate giving, but not so powerful that it becomes personally distressing to the donor’ (2004, p.101). As we shall briefly explore, this balance can be difficult to find.

100 years on from Tom Purvis’s poster for the Red Cross Society, many charities use a similar strategy of empathy-based design. Figure 16 and 17 show Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) posters, which habitually feature a subject in distress, juxtaposed by bold text reading ‘PLEASE DONATE’. In analysis of DEC’s Nepal earthquake appeal poster (Figure 16), Burnett said, ‘[The subject does not] have eye contact with you, so he’s reduced in context to being a passive participant. He’s not looking out at you, saying, “do something”. A younger, more vulnerable person



Figures 16 & 17: Nepal earthquake poster, Philippines typhoon poster (DEC, 2013, 2015)

would work better in appeals’. When looked at in comparison with Philippines poster (Figure 17), one might agree.

As previously explored, too much information in a design can confuse viewers, leading to an emotional disconnection. However with empathy-based design, the opposite can be true, that too much emotion and not enough information can look untrustworthy.

Go too far into this latter category, and some may deem an advert to be ‘poverty porn’. As defined by Nonprofit Quarterly, poverty porn (or development porn) is ‘[...] using false or exaggerated images in donor appeals as a fundraising tactic’ (2015).



Figure 18: This style of advert raised millions of pounds during the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s (DEC, 1984)

A formulaic example of poverty porn would feature photos of starving, skeletal children covered in flies (Figure 18). The repetition of such adverts means some of the public instinctively look away (Larson, 1973, p.106). Yau writes, ‘we owe it to those we serve to avoid sensationalising their pain. Bad enough that they had to face trauma and obstacles without us using them or their situation as case studies to leverage public guilt’ (2012).

Conversely however, a research study by Breeze and Dean illustrated that some individuals a charity ‘served’ didn’t mind how they were represented. In the study, which was principally a discussion with participants who had been helped by a homeless charity, the following opinion was shared:

*‘If the organisations haven’t got their money in the first place to help you then the whole system breaks down, really and truly. Just get the money, hook or crook, y’know?’*

(Breeze & Dean, 2012, p.20).

Somewhat in agreement, Burnett writes in Relationship Fundraising, ‘It is not the images or the use of emotion that are obscene [...] What is obscene, I believe, is switching off or turning over in the hope that by doing so the problem, as well as the emotive images, will go away’ (2002, p.112). In this argument, Burnett defends empathy-based design, because although it has the potential to make someone uncomfortable, he believes it’s right to illustrate the reality of world issues, and challenge the public to action.

A responding point might be that consistently ‘sad’ imagery could give the impression that that donations have no effect. Making adverts happier, however, could evoke the opposite, that all the problems have been solved. Burnett believes there is a balance to be found, charities must:

‘[...] balance emotional impact with honesty and integrity’ (2002, p.124).

Similarly, Christian Aid’s visual identity guidelines read, ‘We shouldn’t compromise the dignity of our subjects but equally we shouldn’t sanitise reality’ (2013, p.30).

Ken Burnett once overheard employees from a cancer research organisation complaining about the difficulty in marketing their cause; it’s so complex, it’s long term, it’s not guaranteed to work, etc. He replied with the following:

‘Cancer research is about all those things. But, it’s also not really about any of those things. What is it about? It’s about me getting more time to spend with the people that matter to me. It’s about my mother, or my father, or any of my friends’ (2015).

Empathy-based design can empower both the donor and the recipient, through use of accurate information, alongside emotive, yet genuine imagery (Figure 19). Through telling the stories of those in need, instead of victimising them, and balancing progress with the action that’s still needed, charities can move collectively towards a more authentic standard of advertising.



Figure 19: Example of an advert that empowers the donor and the recipient through empathy-based design (White Collar Boxing, 2015)

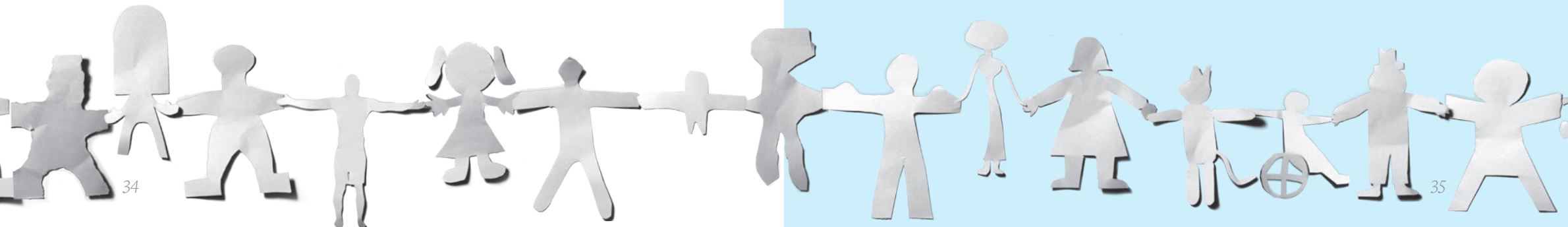






Figure 20: 'I wish my son had cancer' (Harrison's Fund, 2014)

Design technique 3:

## Shock-based design

As defined by Michael Hall in *Tourism and Social Marketing*, '[...] shock advertising is advertising that deliberately, rather than inadvertently, startles and offends its audience, and which attempts to surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms of societal values and personal ideals' (2014, p.98).

### Case study: Harrison's Fund 'I wish my son had cancer' print advert (2014)

This newspaper advert (Figure 20) was created to increase the profile of a currently-incurable disease called Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD). Whilst other shock-based designs might use potentially upsetting imagery, this advert seems more impactful by creating shock from the headline alone. 'I wish my son had cancer' were the honest feelings of charity founder Alex Smith, after his son was diagnosed with the disease. After the advert was published, the charity received criticism for grouping all cancers into one word, however the key message that DMD is currently incurable may have been diluted if a different wording had been used.

The use of negative space works on several levels. Firstly it draws attention through creating a 'gap' in the newspaper page; secondly it reflects a feeling of being empty and alone (further heightened the lack of a mother figure); finally, it



further draws attention back to the headline, almost suggesting the visual representation of an awkward silence.

### Shock-based design: Analysis

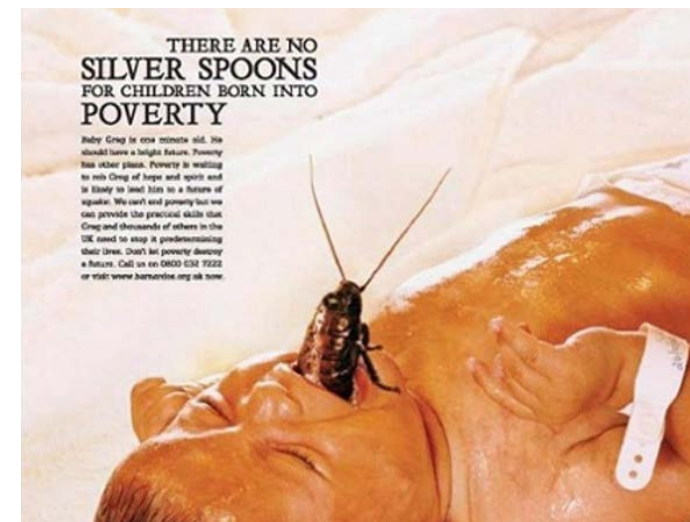
Effective shock-based design has several appealing qualities; it stands out, it's memorable, it creates publicity. The main risk of the technique is that it's inherently more likely to offend, especially if a member of the public has a close connection to a cause. Research by Burke and Edell outlines the other main risk; that by creating an advert that is somewhat repulsive, the public can consequently have a sense of repulsion to the responsible organisation (1989).

Shock-based designs typically put little emphasis on developing a charity's relationship with the public. Instead of proposing interaction with viewers, shock-based design sometimes feels one-sided; messages can visually 'shout'. However, it's this 'volume' that means adverts can be more memorable, whether or not a viewer 'likes' the design (Manchanda et al. 2002).

As referenced earlier, Kelly and Maier believe that the public are 'becoming immune to distressing images' (2004, p.128). However if shock-based design was not effective, charities would have long abandoned it. The truth is that whilst shock-based design can cause an outrage of complaints, beyond this there's a substantial target market of donors (Dahl et al, 2002). This target market isn't easily offended, or even interested in debating the appropriacy of adverts. They are however, receptive to the needs of others, and open to donating. This target market is extremely valuable to charities.



Figure 21: Child poverty adverts (Barnado's, 2003)



Also in defence of the technique, the Harrison's Fund advert (Figure 20), illustrated how even without a large design budget or reputation, a charity can use shock-based design to bring exposure to neglected causes. Charity founder Alex Smith said '[...] if you try to shock for the sake of it, people see through it. If what you say shocks and is based on honesty and truth, it rises above the cookie-cutter adverts and distinguishes itself from other items on the page' (2015).

Seemingly in agreement, children's charity Barnardo's said the following in justification of their personal catalogue of shock-based advertising (Figure 21):

*'[...] We feel it is our duty to ensure the issue of child poverty in this country is no longer neglected and that is the reason we have run such a hard-hitting campaign' (Cozens, 2004).*

Barnardo's point reminds us why shock-based design is popular. It's because the technique is extremely effective in doing what charities care about most: radically exposing a cause to the public.

Lancaster and Withey predict charities use of shock-based design to continue (2007, p.27). In order to contribute to a positive public perception of the charity sector, organisations should be wary not to overuse the technique, or shock for the sake of publicity. As Harrison's Fund showed us, perhaps stories that shock, rather than shock-based imagery, could elicit even more of an impact, and be less easy to criticise.

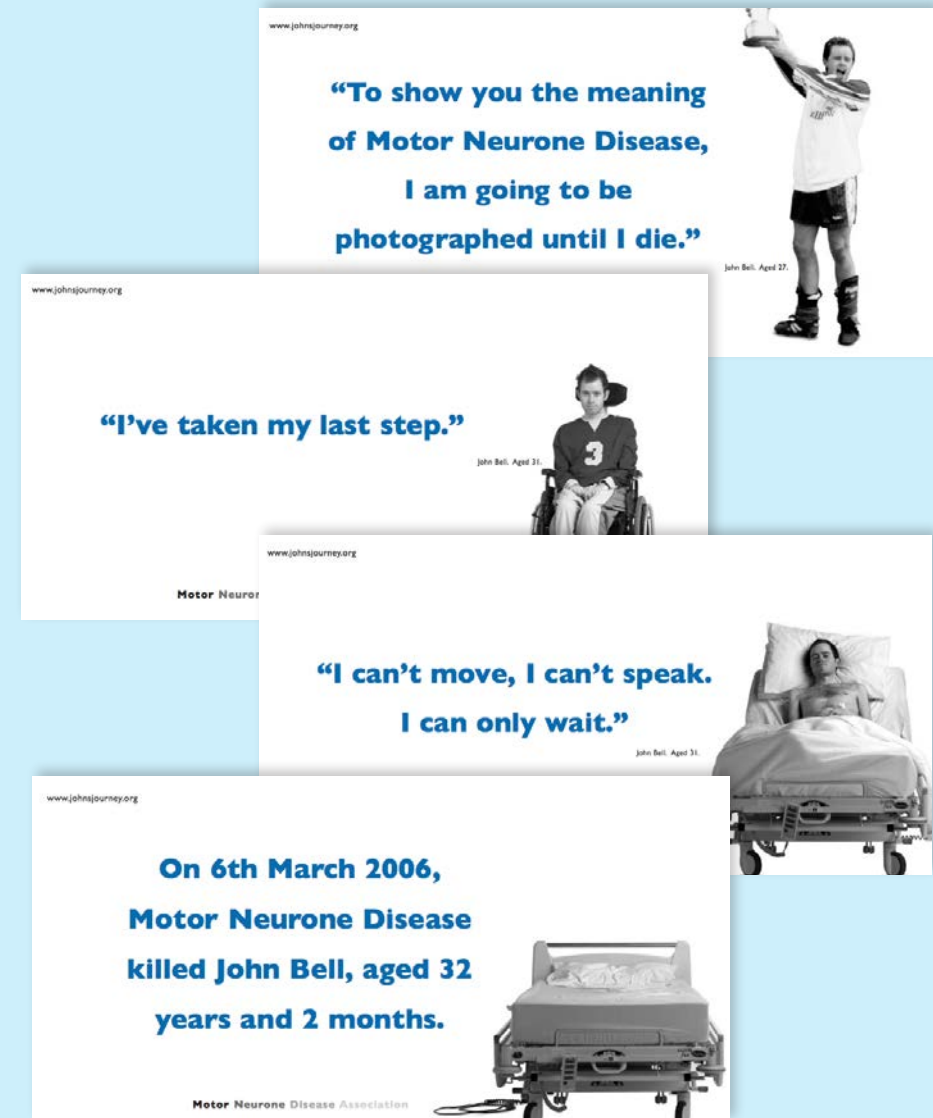


Figure 22: This campaign is an example of the power of shock-based storytelling. It followed motor neurone disease victim John Bell until he passed away. It raised £230,000 (MND Association, 2005).



Figure 23: Puzzle-solving interaction (Brainwave, 2014)

Design technique 4:

## Interaction design

The book *About Face* describes interaction design as ‘the design of behaviour’ (Cooper et al. 2014, p.xix). Hornecker says interaction design ‘[...] specialises on interfaces or systems that are in some way physically embodied, be it in physical artefacts or in environments’ (2015).

Simply put, interaction design involves physical installations, where participation is key.

### Case study: ‘Social Swipe’ (Misereor, 2014)

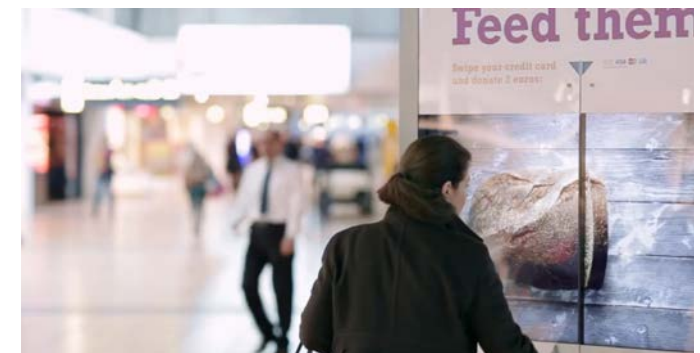


Figure 24: Social Swipe (Misereor, 2014)

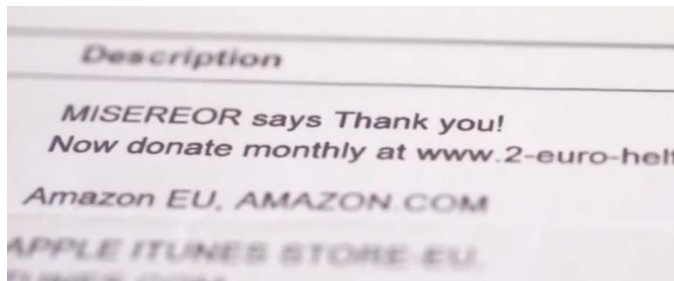
By swiping their credit card through a specially designed screen, participants donate €2 to German charity Misereor, and a video is activated. In one video, the credit card



cuts through a rope binding someone's hands (Figure 25), representing a Filipino child being set free, on another, a slice of bread falls from a loaf, representing the cost to provide a meal for a Peruvian family.

In comparison with collection buckets, this piece of interaction design allows donors to feel far more connected to those they are helping. Through reverse-engineering the card-swipe into the traditional action of cutting something, the design becomes more human, more archaic, which is appealing in technology-obsessed world. The same screen with a simple 'Swipe here to donate to a Peruvian family' wouldn't have had nearly as much appeal. To improve, a more child-friendly version could be considered, perhaps using coins.

One might argue however that Social Swipe only enables one-off donations, as opposed to regular donations, but in actual fact Social Swipe capitalises on the credit card functionality by leaving a message on donors' bank statements (Figure 26).



[Right] Figure 25: Video response (Misereor, 2014)  
[Above] Figure 26: Bank statement (Misereor, 2014)





Figure 27: Charity arcade (British Red Cross, 2015)

## Interaction design: [Analysis](#)

Traditionally, the public give to charities in generally unexciting ways. However by actually making the process of donating fun, charities can tap into a market of people who aren't normally motivated to give. Through interaction design, giving becomes exciting, memorable, and distinctive. What's more, as we've seen with 'Social Swipe', donors can feel more connected to those they are helping.

Another example of interaction design is 'Charity Arcade' (Figure 27). Created in collaboration between Red Cross and Swedavia, this interaction invites users to get rid of unwanted currency at an airport by using it to play arcade games. The design reached a recorded 350 million people, whilst online media platforms shared the concept further.

However there's a somewhat limiting characteristic to interaction design. Unlike online videos, which remain the same regardless of a viewer's location, participants in interaction design typically require being in one physical space to get the full experience. That being said, it's a quality that can actually play to an organisation's favour, since the exclusive nature might encourage users to share their experience through means of photos, videos, or word-of-mouth.

It is also in the best interest of charities to create their own video for physical interaction designs, which explains and describes the process for those who can't experience it in person (Figure 28).



Figure 28: Social swipe online video (Misereor, 2014)

One other risk of interaction design is that it can contribute to the public perception that charities ‘[...] spend too much on flashy adverts’ (thinknpc.org, 2013). Whilst it’s true that traditional design techniques can be just as effective, interaction design doesn’t always have to be expensive. In general, interaction design brings tangibility to fundraising that other techniques would struggle to create. In further defence of the technique, truly successful interaction design, which is inviting to the public, could replace the need for charity collectors on the streets.

The most effective examples of the technique relate back to the cause they are serving, allowing donors to feel connected to those they are helping. As Ken Burnett says, ‘In promoting causes, clever doesn’t work. Real works’ (2015). In this way perhaps the Charity Arcade perhaps could have reflected their cause better. There is lots of scope for this technique; using smart phones to provide interactions is another area charities could look further into.

## Conclusion

Graphic design for the charity sector involves many balancing acts. A balance between truth and embellishment, between emotion and information, between forceful shock and charming interaction. This dissertation has unpacked aspects of communication that can be beneficial to a charity and should be developed further, and aspects of communication that charities could collectively move away from.

The connection between how charities use graphic design techniques and the public perception of the charity sector is complex, but by no means fixed. Through using graphic design techniques to promote positive reciprocal attitudes, storytelling, authenticity and interaction, improved relationships can be cultivated between charities and donors. These improved relationships will allow donors to identify with causes better, be more receptive to information, and have a higher likelihood of contributing financially to charities’ missions.



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