POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF GLOBAL CHANGES

DISASTERS, MARKETS, AND GLOBALIZATION

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Disasters and disaster relief services have become globalized in five evident ways: (1) the widespread global economic impacts of disasters due to the interconnectedness of global markets, (2) more rapid and streamlined responses of relief providers on a global scale as a result of advancing communication technologies, (3) the increasing prominence of the marketization of disaster relief funding and consumption philanthropy, (4) the increasing disparity of relief efforts and resources afforded to different disastrous occurrences, and (5) the cross-cultural challenges that are present when human responders from a variety of cultural backgrounds attempt to meet the survival and coping needs of diverse victims. The following conceptual piece reviews some of the prior scholarly research and burgeoning issues on disasters and disaster relief services from the perspective of marketing and the globalization of disaster relief. Ideas for future research concerning how multi-disciplinary globalization scholarship can continue to address some of these issues are discussed prominently throughout this dialogue.

***Keywords:** disasters, disaster relief services, globalization.*

> Failing to take into account the role of markets and marketing in recovery fails to capture the actual experience of vulnerability to resilience.
>
> *Stacey Menzel Baker* (2009)

Introduction

According to the World Bank, the past decade has experienced the highest economic costs ever recorded from disasters. For instance, a 2010 flood in Pakistan caused damages that amounted to 6 per cent of the country's GDP. That same year, an earthquake and tsunami in Chile cost 14 per cent of the country's GDP, and a heavily publicized earthquake in Haiti amounted to 120 per cent of its GDP. The casualties from these three disasters alone resulted in more than 232,000 human lives. During this same period, an ongoing drought in the sub-Saharan African region has resulted in more than 13 million people facing drastic daily food shortages (World Bank Group 2012).

Concurrent to the increasing costs of major disasters has also been the changing landscape of the global response to them. Disasters have become 'globalized' in five

evident ways. First, due to major transnational corporations having manufacturing and distribution operations in several regions of the world, a disaster in one area has the potential to affect the production and provision processes in several other areas. For instance, due to heavy flooding in 2011 in Thailand, where 25 per cent of the world's supply of computer hard drive components is manufactured, Japan's Sony Corporation experienced major production disruptions, delays in fulfilling client orders, and a record $6.4 billion loss (Guha-Sapir *et al.* 2012). Second, improved communication and reporting networks has allowed for quick physical response from international relief organizations. For example, World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, warehouses relief goods in various global locations in order to be able to minimize transportation time during a disaster. As another example, satellite imagery, social networking, and mobile technologies made it possible to rapidly plan and coordinate relief action for several response organizations during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative 2011). Third, the marketization of disaster relief funding and the phenomenon of consumption philanthropy have become prominent. Celebrity services (*e.g.*, charity concerts and televised visits to disaster sites by celebrities) and consumer goods (*e.g.*, Gap's RED t-shirts and U2 One iPods) are increasingly replacing traditional appeals to the public to finance relief efforts (Nickel and Eikenberry 2009). Fourth, relief aid seems to be provided to a greater extent to those disasters that are aligned with the priorities of a culture of globalization, in its political, social, and economic domains. Certain disasters result in an outpouring of media attention and financial response while others are relatively disregarded. For instance, Oxfam reports that it stopped accepting donations for the heavily publicized 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and 2010 Haiti earthquake. The Red Cross reports that the tsunami crisis was its best-funded disaster and delivered fifty times more money per victim beneficiary than some of its worst-funded crises like the famines in Chad, Guyana, Cot d'Ivoire, Malawi, and Niger. Moreover, the former crisis had received record coverage by prominent media outlets, while the latter crises have been relatively ignored by the popular press (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2006). Finally, a fifth way that globalization has become a prominent factor in disaster relief is related directly to the cultural challenges that are present when human responders from a variety of cultural backgrounds attempt to meet the survival and coping needs of diverse victims. Major responders to international disasters, such as the Red Cross and various organizations of the United Nations, have attempted to integrate cultural sensitivity into the training of their volunteers. However, culturally differing perspectives on behavior, gender roles, religious adherence, and food, just to name a few examples, have created obstacles in providing relief to victims, as well as calling into question the human rights of both victims and disaster workers.

A disaster can be defined as a natural or man-made event that results in substantial physical damage to the natural environment, destruction of man-made infrastructure, or significant loss of life. Disasters are often unanticipated but may also be the result of improperly managed risk (Patton 2006). Since the severity of disasters as well as the victimization that results from disasters are predetermined and dynamically influenced by the social circumstances that surround them, disasters and victimization can be viewed as social constructs (Baker 2009; Tierney, Lindell, and Perry 2001). In other

words, disasters and victimization only have meanings as such in relation to their inter-connections with socially-specific constructs. Globalization, as well, is a socially constructed notion (Sumner 2007). While its definition is varied (*e.g.,* Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann 2006), this article adapts the (admittedly vague) perspective that globalization is the notion that social arrangements can be increasingly understood 'in the context of global-level structures and processes' (Robinson 2004: 12). Moreover, since social processes are inherently dynamic, effective disaster relief in the context of globalization has requirements beyond the basic provision of rescue services and subsistence aid. For academia, the social phenomena present within disaster relief efforts have introduced an array of issues that have just begun to be addressed by researchers.

The following conceptual piece will review some of the prior scholarly research and burgeoning issues on disasters from the perspective of marketing and the globalization of disaster relief. The five ways in which globalization has shifted the contexts for disaster relief services and aid, introduced above, will be elaborated within this dialogue. The final section will conclude with some ideas on how a multi-disciplinary globalization scholarship can continue to address some of these issues.

Disasters and Marketing

Marketing, as a discipline that is in large part concerned with the efficient distribution of resources in order to assess and fulfill demands, has a role in disaster studies. As such, there is a great deal of opportunity for marketing scholars to study, for example, the victim (*i.e.* consumer) dimension of disaster relief consumption as well as the provision of disaster relief services outside of the typically researched arena of its technical provision and management.

Baker (2009: 114–115) notes, 'underfulfillment of needs and insufficient resource distribution are common grievances and sources of real or perceived injustices'. For instance, adolescent survivors of a disaster often perceive insufficient support from relief organizations in replacing their lost possessions (Klein and Huang 2007). In times of instability, personal identity may become challenged, and people tend to hold on to those items which they perceive to contribute significantly to self-identity (Belk 1990). When such objects are lost in disasters, victims can feel self-loss, a shift in identity, and stress-induced depression (Sayre 1994; Sneath, Lacey, and Kennet-Hensel 2009), and since they are often valued as 'irreplaceable', items lost during disasters are often never replaced (McCracken 1986; Sayre 1994). Victims' perceived dependences on their own treasured items during disasters may help to explain why, when there has been no U.S. legislation to address the assistance of the elderly or sick in emergency relief response, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006, which mandates and provides federal funding for the accommodation of pets during emergency evacuation, passed quickly and with bipartisan support through federal lawmaking bodies (Leonard and Scammon 2007).

Disasters are distinct in the sort of consumption context it creates for human needs in that the losses created by a disaster often exceed the ability of the community it affects to respond to the immediate needs the disaster creates, and so recovery is dependent on the timely response of external resources (Baker 2009). The United States relies on several governmental as well as non-governmental and philanthropic organizations

to provide these resources, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Red Cross (which is also chartered by the federal government to coordinate certain disaster response services), the Salvation Army, Southern Baptists, and Samaritan's Purse, among a growing group of others. While FEMA and other governmental bodies are responsible for implementing disaster management policies, maintaining law and order during a disaster, and facilitating physical recovery, the latter organizations use a largely volunteer staff to provide immediate relief of consumption needs, such as food provision and preparation, debris removal, laundry, temporary shelters, and child care. In international markets, the Red Cross is also a prominent responder to disasters, along with organizations from the United Nations, World Bank Group, and European Union, among others. Businesses, as well, have provided support to disaster victims in form of immediate necessities as well as consumer goods and services, often using such opportunities to promote their corporate philanthropy (*e.g.*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2012).

The Red Cross reports that volunteers constitute 94 per cent of the workforce required to provide relief services (American Red Cross 2013) and is financially reliant on charitable donations (McGovern 2012). Marketing research has shown that appeals for charitable donations must take on a strategy that is different from appeals to consume ordinary consumer goods. For instance, the assertiveness of environmentalism messages has an effect on intention to comply with the environmental campaign (Kronrod, Grinstein, and Wathieu 2012). For charitable appeals, guilt arousal is positively related to donation intention (Hibbert *et al.* 2007). The expression of emotion on a victim's face in photographs to solicit charitable donations affects both sympathy and donation intention (Small and Verrochi 2009), but people are less likely to donate if advertisements stimulate them to take the perspective of the victim rather than imagining themselves as a potential helper (Hung and Wyer 2009).

While some of the goods and services provision from disaster relief organizations, such as food, water, clothing, and shelter, seem like obvious necessities towards recovery, others have presented problems, especially in an international context. For instance, the modern culture of business management that devalues emotional responses and emphasizes efficient and measurable successful outcomes is unsuitable for substantive disaster response provision (Lukaszewski 2012). Although the ultimate goal of relief services may be to meet the needs of disaster victims, disaster management has often been operationalized by meeting the immediate needs of the relief services personnel, such as requests for communication technology, rather than fully attempting to understand the perceived needs of the victims (Guion, Scammon, and Borders 2007). As an example of a cross-cultural complication in relief provision, American responders have been criticized for frequently providing peanut butter in international care packages, a food that is nutritious but unpalatable and perceived as inedible by disaster victims in certain countries (Scott *et al.* 2011). After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, victims reported that some relief goods were unusable (*e.g.,* canned goods without access to can openers), underprovided (*e.g.,* undergarments), overprovided (*e.g.,* instant noodles), or even undermined victims' self-esteem (*e.g.,* shoes and toys that very soon became unusable because of defective manufacturing) (Klein and Huang 2007).

Research in the marketing domain has only begun to address the social issues surrounding disaster relief. As disasters continue to have increasingly global effects and disaster responses become increasingly globalized, there is a need for marketing research to uncover explanations for the issues created by such a changing landscape. The following section will review the globalization of disasters and the marketization of disaster relief service provision and consumption.

Disasters and Global Markets

Although disasters themselves can be natural events, the product of such an event being a disaster is, in itself, a social phenomenon. It is the consequences surrounding the occurrence, in terms of its resulting economic, physical, and human casualties, as well as the affected community's ability to deal with them that determine whether an occurrence is deemed a disaster. For example, all else equal, a hurricane of the same magnitude striking an unpopulated island would not have as high of potential to garner the status of disaster as it striking a metropolitan coastal city. It is the social factors that include community infrastructure, preparedness, safety networks, population density, economic organization, as well as many other social factors that come into play in creating a disaster out of a disastrous occurrence.

On the same token, disaster response is also a social construction, and is thus, dependent on economic, political, and cultural factors. Alexander (2006: 1) observed:

> After the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004 donor countries subscribed to post-disaster relief appeals so copiously that all the money could not be spent quickly enough to justify the reasons for which it was donated. For other contemporary disasters, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, there was an alarming dearth of funds and a general failure to respond to international relief appeals. This paradox neither illustrates that the world is becoming more generous nor demonstrates the opposite.

Globalization has resulted in complex disaster response systems (*e.g.,* Katz *et al.* 2011; Sowinski 2003; van Baalen and van Fenema 2009) that have simultaneously helped to both hasten as well as fragment responses to disasters, depending on the priorities of the current global social system. For instance, the Indian Ocean tsunami received a great deal of international media coverage, while the sub-Saharan African droughts and consequential famines have received considerably less (Ball and Rice 2011). A report by the Red Cross found that the financial commitments of United Nations members in responding to disasters closely mirrors the amount of media coverage that the disaster receives (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2006). The World Bank notes that low-income countries are disproportionately affected by disasters, accounting for only 9 per cent of the world's disasters but 48 per cent of the fatalities resulting from them (World Bank Group 2012).

As illustrated in the quotation above, globalization has been often cited for the paradoxes that it creates, including the phenomenon that people seem to be more than ever connected in some ways while growing increasingly fragmented in others (*e.g.,* Cohen 2006; Firat 1995). Humans are able to communicate electronically faster and economically cheaper than ever (*e.g.,* Craig, Douglas, and Flaherty 2003). As a result, disaster

relief organizations are able to coordinate vast networks of resources including a broadly decentralized workforce. For instance, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has a pre-sourced staff present across the globe for rapid response regardless of the disaster location and a network of warehouses and transportation to store and quickly move aid (Sowinski 2003). However, disenchantment with globalization has also been cited as a major source of the current rise of fundamentalism (*e.g.,* Emerson and Hartman 2006; Moghaddam 2009; Turner 2001) that has slowed communication and travel to certain areas as well as created increasingly hostile environments to both local residents and disaster relief providers. Indeed, the location of the sub-Saharan African droughts has been described as one of the 'deadliest' areas for reporters and non-Muslim humanitarian workers, further exacerbating the lack of global popular attention to the disastrous famine that is ongoing there (Ball and Rice 2011: 8).

Cultural sensitivity and the rights of certain groups, such as women, is also an issue that continues to disconcert disaster relief. In large scale disasters that involve international assistance, relief workers often come from several different cultural and national backgrounds from the victims that they are serving. For instance, in the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, relief workers were criticized by the local community for showing cultural insensitivity because of their clothing, recreational activities, and perceived inappropriateness of females' behaviors. After initial rescue efforts gave way to the recovery stages of relief provision, many Pakistani local community leaders insisted on, for example, clothing and behavioral standards for women, both victims and workers, which called into question the differing perceptions of human rights between and among the multicultural group of victims and relief workers (Wilder 2008).

Capitalist globalization (*e.g.,* Sklair 2004) has resulted in the marketplace becoming a pivotal institution in the lives of individuals (*e.g.,* Firat 1995; Slater and Tonkiss 2000), including re-identifying the human individual as consumer (*e.g.,* Cohen 2006; Ewen 1988; Firat 1995). As a result of this modern way of constructing meaning in human lives, material possessions have become endowed with the ability to contribute significantly to its owner's sense of identity and self-esteem (Belk 1988). Just as consumer research has found that the loss of possessions can affect an owners' self-identity and result in profound mourning, the marketplace, as the basis of modern consumption, has also been found to be an emotional factor in the recovery of disaster victims. Specifically, research has found that consumers who perceived a negative change in retail facilities after a disaster had significantly weakened coping self-efficacy and post-disaster satisfaction with living conditions (Liu *et al.* 2012).

The hegemony of markets in people's lives has also shifted the financing of relief services that respond to disasters. Since World War II, the number of non-governmental organizations that specialize in delivering emergency aid has surged (Iriye 2002). The contemporary model of recovery services from centrally-organized governmental and non-governmental organizations continues to adopt market-based models of financing and distributing services (Bruce and Chew 2011; Grada 2007; Nickel and Eikenberry 2009). While consumption philanthropy has been a recognized phenomenon for decades, it is increasing in its use as a more profitable alternative over civic action and direct charitable appeals. Philanthropy is becoming progressively more conflated with

consumption, media, and celebrity promotion, as charity becomes increasingly associated with purchasing a private product or service. For instance, concerts for disaster relief and reality shows about humanitarian efforts such as home constructions 'increasingly narrates philanthropy as a source of amusement and amusement as a source of philanthropy' (Nickel and Eikenberry 2009: 980–981). Relief organizations' reliance on market-based disaster-related funding has also been criticized as an incentive for them responding to disasters where they may lack the necessary expertise to provide adequate relief. This, compounded with the proliferation of organizations providing disaster relief, has led to many organizations spreading themselves 'too thin' to provide the rapid and competent responses needed for large-scale disasters (Grada 2007: 18). Competition for and reliance on private funding of humanitarian services also has the potential for excessive influence over the agenda of relief providers by major donors, such as for-profit corporations (Bruce and Chew 2011). Indeed, major corporations are increasingly inserting themselves into the mix of organizations that provide relief services and aid in heavily publicized disasters (U.S. Chamber of Commerce 2012), evidence for the notion that there may be profitable outcomes, such as image enhancement, to doing so.

Similarly, the distribution of disaster relief services and aid in recent disasters reveals evidence of increased marketization. After the 2004 tsunami, there was such a large number of relief organizations devoted to helping the villages of coastal Thailand that they began to compete with one another. Pressure from media and donors to show tangible, illustrative results of the $25 million spent in that region in just one year resulted in oversupplying certain segments and neglecting others. For instance, charities competed to supply fishermen who had lost one fishing boat in the disaster with several fishing boats, and the surplus fishing boats ended up being hoarded and resold at market prices (Klein and Huang 2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Disasters cannot be avoided, but the responses to them can be, to an extent, managed. Aside from the management of the planning, implementing, and controlling of the technical aspects of disaster relief, marketing has a great deal of potential to contribute to the understanding of the social issues surrounding disaster relief. As a discipline that deals with resource distribution and demand construction and fulfillment, it is necessary for marketing to collaborate with other globalization relevant disciplines to study and comment on the ways in which globalization and marketization has changed the provision and consumption of disaster relief services.

The introduction to this conceptual note proposed that disaster relief has become globalized in at least five evident ways: (1) the widespread global economic impacts of disasters due to the interconnectedness of global markets, (2) more rapid and streamlined responses of relief providers on a global scale as a result of advancing communication technologies, (3) the increasing prominence of the marketization of disaster relief funding and consumption philanthropy, (4) the increasing disparity of relief efforts and resources afforded to different disastrous occurrences, which are seemingly connected to the political, social, and economic priorities produced by globalization and mirrored in the disparate media coverage of different disasters, and (5) the cultural chal-

lenges that are present when human responders from a variety of cultural backgrounds attempt to meet the survival and coping needs of diverse victims. The literature reviewed in the body of this article has laid some groundwork for research into these areas, but there is still a great deal of timely and pertinent research opportunities presented by the globalization of disaster relief. The following is a brief list of potential topics for future research in each of the five factors listed above.

Baker (2009) proposed the paradox that people live in disaster-prone areas, even with the knowledge that they are disaster prone. Continuing on this notion in the context of globalization, particularly the first factor listed above, there is a need for researchers to study to what extent globalization has truly dissolved borders and made humans mobile and interconnected. Globalization has come with the promise of rapid and quick mobility across the globe, but to what extent has that contributed to humans minimizing their individual risk to disaster by choosing not to have livelihoods in disaster-prone locations?

In terms of the contributions of globalization to technology and communications, services and other marketing researchers have an opportunity to fill the gap in existing research examining the demand, adoption processes, and outcomes of technology in crisis situations. Disaster relief organizations and their work offer interesting potential research opportunities for such studies, in that their work force is unique for its prominence of volunteers and multiculturalism. Moreover, the locations and situations where disaster relief is produced are unique in their variability.

As a discipline, it is appropriate for marketing to examine the effects of the increasing marketization of disaster relief organizations and consumption philanthropy on the outcomes of disaster relief. It should go without saying that such findings should have serious implications on not only public policy and organizational outcomes, but also the human lives of victims that depend on such aid. As such, it is critical to study, for example, whether a market-based model of financing disaster relief has encouraged competition among relief organizations, as anecdotal accounts have suggested. If so, what are the consequences for quality disaster relief service provision? Also, how have market-based strategies for appealing to the public for donations, including consumption philanthropy, changed cultural perspectives and values with regard to the role of philanthropy in consumers' lives? Nickel and Eikenberry (2009) propose that that marketized philanthropy has the potential to sustain rather than eliminate the disastrous conditions that require humanitarian relief. In a world that continuously experiences natural and man-made disasters, as well as the poverty, sickness, alienation, and environmental destruction that disasters create, uncovering explanations for these issues are imperative.

Similarly, it is important for researchers to find ways to alleviate the disparity in relief aid that is provided to victims of different disasters. As a discipline that studies the fulfillment of needs, it is essential for marketing to examine the needs that result from different disasters as well as discover ways to provide more equitable relief. Moreover, within particular disasters, it is important for researchers across scholarly disciplines to gain and communicate a deep understanding of the needs of different segments of victims.

With regards to the fifth factor on the list, for globalized disaster response to be effective, cultural issues cannot be ignored. There are already a number of anecdotal accounts in the marketing and trade literature concerning the obstacles produced by cultural misunderstandings and intolerance in providing relief to disaster victims. Organizational training programs for volunteers that are already in place are an inefficient use of the scarce resources of relief providers if they do not effectively prepare their workers for the cultural issues that arise in specific disaster contexts. This is a gap in the existing academic research that could be aptly filled by qualitative studies that seek to gain a deep and contextualized understanding of the numerous consumption cultures of disaster relief services. Additionally, researchers have a great deal of opportunity here to contribute to the dialogue concerning the human rights of disaster victims and relief workers such as, for example, issues of gender and religion in the context of rescue and recovery efforts.

Finally, it is the hope of the author that the preceding helped to illuminate the timeliness and urgency of the work that is necessary to understand disasters and disaster relief in the context of globalization. It is a forthcoming body of work that has the potential to truly impact individuals, communities, and the environment during the times of their greatest vulnerability.

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