

Olena Bilovodska<sup>1</sup>, Oleksandra Zibarieva<sup>2</sup>

## CHARITY AS A MANIFESTATION OF WARTIME CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING AND A FACTOR IN BRAND AUTHENTICITY FORMATION UNDER CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TRANSFORMATION IN UKRAINE

*This research examines the transformation of consumer behaviour in Ukraine necessitated by the conditions of the full-scale Russian invasion. The purpose of the study is to identify and analyse the socio-psychological drivers that reconfigure the decision-making process of Ukrainian consumers, specifically focusing on the role of military charity and Wartime Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) as primary social incentives. Within the framework of the "Buyer's Black Box" model, the study seeks to determine how corporate support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU) translates into brand loyalty and competitive advantage in a crisis-driven economy.*

*The research methods include a systematic literature review of classical and contemporary consumer behaviour constructs, such as the Country-of-Origin (COO) effect, Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET), and Consumer Cosmopolitan Patriotism (CCP). The study utilises case study analysis of leading Ukrainian enterprises (OKKO, WOG, Nova Posta, Aurora, N-iX) to validate the theoretical framework empirically. Furthermore, statistical analysis of philanthropic data from 2022–2025 is used to quantify shifts in corporate and individual donation patterns and their impact on market dynamics.*

*The research results indicate that integrating military charity into corporate strategy has fundamentally redefined the hierarchy of consumer priorities. The analysis reveals a significant behavioural transition from Consumer Xenocentrism to robust Consumer Ethnocentrism, where the "moral utility" of a purchase often outweighs traditional factors such as price and functional characteristics. Data shows that by 2024, the business sector will become the dominant contributor to national resilience, providing 60% of total philanthropic volumes. This shift has given rise to "Wartime CRM," a unique marketing phenomenon where brand authenticity is directly tied to a company's contribution to national defence.*

*Ukrainian and international companies can utilise the practical application of the results to develop effective communication strategies in high-risk environments. The identified constructs (CET, CCP) provide a roadmap for marketers to build long-term brand equity by aligning corporate values with the national agenda. Additionally, the findings offer insights for non-profit organisations on optimising collaborative fundraising campaigns with the private sector.*

*The conclusions confirm that military charity in Ukraine has evolved from a discretionary CSR tool into a prerequisite for market survival. While the "citizen-consumer" model currently drives the market, the study emphasises the need for brands to maintain operational authenticity to avoid "charity fatigue." Future research should focus on the long-term sustainability of these patriotic consumption patterns in the post-war recovery period.*

*Keywords: consumer behaviour, social incentives, cause-related marketing, consumer ethnocentrism, societal marketing, national resilience, brand authenticity, corporate social responsibility.*

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<sup>1</sup> *ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3707-0734>*

<sup>2</sup> *ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1973-9659>*

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<sup>1</sup> Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Олена А. Біловодська, Олександра Ю. Зібарева

## БЛАГОДІЙНІСТЬ ЯК ПРОЯВ СОЦІАЛЬНО ОРІЄНТОВАНОГО МАРКЕТИНГУ ВОЄННОГО ЧАСУ ТА ФАКТОР ФОРМУВАННЯ АВТЕНТИЧНОСТІ БРЕНДУ В УМОВАХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ СПОЖИВАЧІВ В УКРАЇНІ

*Дане дослідження розглядає трансформацію споживчої поведінки в Україні, зумовлену умовами повномасштабного російського вторгнення. Метою дослідження є виявлення та аналіз соціо-психологічних чинників, що реконфігурують процес прийняття рішень українськими споживачами з особливим акцентом на ролі військової благодійності та маркетингу справ військового часу (Wartime CRM) як основних соціальних стимулів. У межах моделі «чорної скриньки покупця» у роботі досліджується, як корпоративна підтримка Збройних Сил України (ЗСУ) трансформується у лояльність до бренду та конкурентну перевагу в умовах економіки кризи.*

*Методи дослідження включають систематичний огляд літератури класичних та сучасних конструктів споживчої поведінки, таких як ефект країни походження (COO), споживчий етноцентризм (CET) та споживчий космополітичний патріотизм (CCP). У роботі використано аналіз кейсів провідних українських підприємств (ОККО, WOG, Нова Пошта, Аврора, N-iX) для емпіричної валідації теоретичної моделі. Крім того, застосовано статистичний аналіз даних філантропічної діяльності за 2022–2025 роки для кількісної оцінки змін у моделях корпоративних та індивідуальних пожертв та їхнього впливу на ринкову динаміку.*

*Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що інтеграція військової благодійності в корпоративну стратегію фундаментально перевизначила ієрархію споживчих пріоритетів. Аналіз демонструє значний поведінковий перехід від споживчого ксеноцентризму до стійкого споживчого етноцентризму, де «моральна корисність» покупки часто переважає над традиційними факторами, такими як ціна та функціональні характеристики. Дані свідчать, що до 2024 року бізнес-сектор став домінуючим учасником забезпечення національної стійкості, забезпечуючи 60% загальних обсягів філантропії. Це зрушення породило «Wartime CRM» — унікальне маркетингове явище, де автентичність бренду безпосередньо пов'язана з внеском компанії в національну оборону.*

*Можливе застосування результатів дослідження може бути реалізоване українськими та міжнародними компаніями для розробки ефективних комунікаційних стратегій у середовищах з високим рівнем ризику. Виявлені конструкти (CET, CCP) слугують орієнтиром для маркетологів у розбудові довгострокового капіталу бренду шляхом узгодження корпоративних цінностей із національним порядком денним. Крім того, результати пропонують ідеї для некомерційних організацій щодо оптимізації спільних фандрейзингових кампаній із приватним сектором.*

*Висновки підтверджують, що військова благодійність в Україні еволюціонувала з інструменту добровільної КСВ у передумову виживання на ринку. Хоча модель «громадянина-споживача» наразі рухає ринок, дослідження підкреслює необхідність підтримки брендами операційної автентичності, щоб уникнути «благодійної втоми». Подальші дослідження мають бути зосереджені на довгостроковій стійкості цих патріотичних моделей споживання в період післявоєнного відновлення.*

*Ключові слова:* споживча поведінка, соціальні стимули, маркетинг соціальних справ, споживчий етноцентризм, соціально-етичний маркетинг, національна стійкість, автентичність бренду, корпоративна соціальна відповідальність.

**Introduction.** The escalating geopolitical tensions and the ongoing processes of globalisation and deglobalization fundamentally reshape contemporary consumer behaviour. While classical models, such as the buyer's black box model, traditionally categorise environmental incentives into marketing mix variables and fundamental macro-environmental factors, the current Ukrainian context necessitates a deeper focus on sociocultural and national-identity-driven variables. The decision-making process is no longer exclusively driven by economic utility or standard social norms.

This research aims to analyse the pivotal role of corporate philanthropic activity, specifically, charity for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU), as a critical social factor influencing consumer purchase intentions. This context transcends conventional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and enters the domain of Wartime CSR or Marketing Activism Actions (MAA).

The object of the research is the consumer purchase decision-making process in a national crisis context, specifically focusing on the interactions between sociocultural environmental incentives and the buyer's responses.

The subject of the research is the influence of sales-linked charitable contributions to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU) — a specific form of wartime cause-related Marketing — on the purchasing intentions and behaviour of Ukrainian consumers, as mediated by patriotic, ethical, and national identity-driven consumption factors.

The theoretical framework extends beyond established social influences (reference groups, family) to incorporate advanced consumer behaviour constructs, which are particularly relevant in a period of national mobilisation and existential threat: Country-of-Origin (COO) effect, Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET), Patriotism, and the relatively novel Consumer Cosmopolitan Patriotism (CCP). Understanding the interplay between these sociopsychological factors and a company's stance on national defence is essential to accurately map the black box of the Ukrainian consumer's decision-making process.

Research indicates that integrating military charity into corporate strategy has fundamentally redefined the hierarchy of consumer priorities in Ukraine. Data indicates that businesses have become the primary drivers of national resilience, contributing 60% of total philanthropic volumes by 2024 [12]. Consequently, the act of purchasing has evolved into a value-driven response, in which the moral utility of supporting the Armed Forces (ZSU) frequently overrides traditional price-quality evaluations in the consumer's decision-making process.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The transformation of consumer behaviour in wartime. Recent research highlights a fundamental shift in Ukrainian consumer behaviour triggered by the ongoing war [8]. Studies indicate a transition towards "consumer patriotism", where purchasing decisions are increasingly driven by moral, ethical, and civic values rather than purely economic motives [19]. The authors [8] observe that social norms have evolved to prioritise collective security and mutual aid, prompting households to view consumption as a contribution to the national defence effort. Consequently, consumers consciously choose domestic brands and actively boycott products associated with the aggressor country [3; 8].

The emergence of defence-related cause-related marketing (CRM). In response to these behavioural shifts, businesses have adapted their marketing communications,

transitioning from traditional product-centric and hard-sell tactics to value-driven, empathetic approaches [3]. Kipnis E., Pysarenko N., Galalae C., Mari C., Martнн Ruiz V., Vorster L. [18] conceptualise this phenomenon as "war-related marketing activism actions" (MAA), defining them as acts through which brands and consumers draw on marketing meanings to convey and enact stances related to the war. A prominent manifestation of this activism is CRM directed at supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Zamula O. [5] evaluates marketing strategies and confirms that integrated socially significant campaigns, such as the collaboration between Nova Poshta and the "Come Back Alive" foundation, generate the highest behavioural effect, trust, and brand loyalty. Similarly, experts identify "sewing the donation into the product" as a highly effective mechanism to transform charitable giving into a daily habit for consumers [3].

**Impact on willingness to pay (WTP) and decision-making.** The direct influence of defence-related CRM on the customer decision-making process has been empirically substantiated in recent literature. Fonariuk A. [15] targeted study demonstrates that a brand's pledge to donate a share of profits to defence-related causes significantly impacts consumer willingness to pay (WTP), revealing that buyers are willing to pay up to an 81% premium for such products. This aligns with Buchkovska A. and Horbal N. [3], who note that 55% of consumers consider it vital for businesses to support the military, and nearly 90% of respondents consciously support enterprises that donate to the armed forces or volunteers. Furthermore, Reshetnikova I. [19] found that 49% of consumers indicate that a brand's commitment to transferring funds to the army from each product sold is a decisive factor in their purchasing choice.

**Psychological and emotional triggers.** The efficacy of these marketing strategies is deeply rooted in the psychological trauma and emotional needs of the wartime population. According to Fonariuk A. [15], pro-social consumer behaviour in this context is heavily driven by overwhelming gratitude towards the military and "survivor guilt" among civilians. Reshetnikova I. [19] argues that in a state of profound shock and tension, consumers struggle to decode standard commercial messages; however, brands that utilise patriotic advertising and demonstrate support for the army create a positive emotional anchor that calms and unites consumers. Skorokhod T. [11] corroborates this, stating that charity is the "safest context for brands" to organically integrate into wartime communication, generating positive emotions and strengthening trust without risking consumer trauma.

**Risks and critical perspectives.** Despite the proven effectiveness of supporting the army, scholars caution against the risks of implementing defence-related CRM insincerely. Kipnis E., Pysarenko N., Galalae C., Mari C., Martнн Ruiz V., Vorster L. [18] warn of consumer concern over pragmatic capitalisation on the war, akin to "woke-washing", where charitable marketing is perceived as a short-term trend to boost sales rather than a genuine societal commitment. Buchkovska A. and Horbal N. [3] also emphasise the danger of opportunistic "exploiting of pain". If a brand's communication lacks authenticity, is improperly toned, or contradicts its real corporate behaviour, it can lead to a severe reputational crisis and consumer rejection. Thus, absolute authenticity, systematic action, and contextual relevance are mandatory for CRM to positively influence the decision-making process without triggering a backlash [19; 5].

**The purpose of the study** is to identify and analyse the socio-psychological drivers that reconfigure the decision-making process of Ukrainian consumers, specifically focusing on the role of military charity and Wartime Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) as primary social incentives.

**Results.** The unprecedented scale of national mobilisation and corporate engagement described in the previous section indicates that the Ukrainian market is operating under a unique set of behavioural drivers. While the statistical surge in donations from both individuals and businesses provides an empirical foundation, it is essential to categorise the underlying psychological and social mechanisms that translate these "Wartime incentives" into specific purchase decisions.

To bridge the gap between the general macro-environment and the individual "Black Box" of the consumer, five key socio-psychological factors are identified as stated in. These factors act as the "invisible rules" of the decision-making process, shifting the consumer's focus from mere functional utility to national and ethical significance. The following table (Table 1) synthesises these environmental factors, providing their academic characteristics and the theoretical references that ground them in contemporary consumer research.

*Table 1. Socio-psychological factors of consumer behaviour, compiled by the author based on [14; 16; 17; 20]*

<b>Concept (Environmental Factor)</b>	<b>Key Characteristic</b>
<b>Country-of-Origin (COO) Effect</b>	The cognitive and affective influence that the country of manufacture or the brand's country of origin has on the consumer's evaluation and subsequent purchase decision. In wartime, the COO effect can be amplified by a "Buy Ukrainian" sentiment or boycotts against hostile countries.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	Values, traditions, norms, and symbols inherited from past generations shape consumers' national identity. In the context of supporting the Ukrainian army, this means purchasing products featuring national symbols or from brands that embody national resilience.
<b>Patriotism Effect</b>	A positive emotional bond (love, loyalty, pride) an individual feels toward their country translates into a desire to support national interests, particularly through buying domestic goods or supporting corporate donors. Unlike ethnocentrism, it doesn't necessarily include animosity toward foreign goods.
<b>Consumer Xenocentrism</b>	The opposite of ethnocentrism: the belief that foreign goods, cultures, or standards are superior to one's own. The unique Ukrainian context may weaken this effect, as national products supporting the army take precedence.
<b>Consumer Cosmopolitan Patriotism (CCP)</b>	The combination of patriotism and cosmopolitanism. The consumer highly values their national identity (supporting the ZSU) while simultaneously maintaining an openness to global cultures and the international market. This helps explain the support for international companies demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine.
<b>Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET)</b>	The belief that purchasing foreign products is morally wrong and harmful to the domestic economy, whereas buying national products is a duty. It is directly linked to the concept of the "moral" obligation to support the military.

**Contextual background: wartime philanthropy in Ukraine.** Due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, Ukrainian citizens have been compelled to intensify their efforts to support the national military to safeguard statehood and sovereignty. These efforts extend to assisting fellow citizens in occupied territories or evacuation zones, as well as protecting animals affected by hostilities. Consequently, there has been a significant surge in both the number of fundraising campaigns and the diversity of strategies employed to distinguish them within a highly saturated charitable landscape. According to data from the 'Come Back Alive' Foundation — one of the pioneering charitable organisations established in 2014 — the volume of aid provided to the army during the first two months of the full-scale war exceeded the total amount delivered over the preceding eight years [9]. Simultaneously, since 2022, the charitable sector has expanded exponentially. Data from Ukraine's three largest foundations — 'Come Back Alive', the 'Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation', and 'United24' — indicate that in 2024 they collectively raised 24.1 billion UAH, a 28% increase from 2023. As of February 2025, a total of 93 billion UAH has been mobilised over three years of full-scale warfare [4].

In parallel, high-profile media figures have actively participated in fundraising by leveraging their platforms and launching collaborative campaigns with businesses both in Ukraine and abroad. Furthermore, prominent international actors, musicians, and athletes have been appointed as ambassadors for the state-led 'United24' platform. Their involvement aims to globalise support, raise awareness, and promote the necessity of military and humanitarian aid across different countries and continents [1].

Concurrently, the Ukrainian business sector has become an integral part of the charitable movement, providing support through both humanitarian aid and financial contributions. While many companies do not publicly disclose the full extent of their philanthropic activities, prominent examples documented in the media and social networks illustrate the scale of corporate involvement. For instance, the IT company N-iX, in collaboration with a media personality, organised a charitable livestream that raised over 11 million UAH [13]. Major fuel retailers, such as OKKO and WOG, have launched creative campaigns specifically targeting the financing of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) for the Armed Forces [2;10].

The integration of the entertainment sector is further exemplified by the Atlas Festival, which partnered with the 'Come Back Alive' Foundation and PrivatBank to launch the 'Dronopad' project, aiming to raise 100 million UAH [7]. Beyond direct monetary donations, logistics leaders like Nova Posta have played a critical role in humanitarian efforts. During the first three years of the full-scale war, Nova Posta transported 3.1 million humanitarian parcels, weighing a total of 118,200 tonnes. Over the past ten years, the company has facilitated more than 3.4 million humanitarian shipments, totalling over 138,400 tonnes in weight [4].

Recent statistics corroborate this upward trend in corporate engagement. By 2024, businesses emerged as the dominant contributor group; for certain major foundations, 60% of total donations came from corporate entities, while individual contributions accounted for the remaining 40% [12]. These figures underscore the transition of corporate philanthropy from a supplementary activity to a primary driver of national resilience.

**The Buyer's Black Box in the Context of National Crisis.** To understand how military charity affects consumer choices, this study employs the classical Black Box Model of Consumer Behaviour. This model posits that marketing and environmental incentives enter the consumer's "black box," where they are processed based on specific buyer characteristics and decision-making steps, eventually leading to a measurable response.

In the context of wartime Ukraine, the traditional components of this model undergo a significant transformation:

1. Environmental incentives. Beyond standard economic or technological factors, political and cultural incentives become dominant. The war acts as a macro-environmental force that reconfigures consumers' perceptions of "value."

2. Marketing incentives. The "Promotion" and "Product" elements of the marketing mix are increasingly integrated with Cause-Related Marketing (CRM). When a brand like OKKO or Nova Posta aligns its product with ZSU support, it creates a powerful external stimulus that distinguishes the brand in a saturated market.

3. The Black Box (Buyer Characteristics). This is where the internal processing occurs. In our framework, the "Attitudes" and "Motivation" identified in the model are driven by Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET) and the Patriotism Effect. The buyer is no longer just a rational economic agent; they are a "citizen-consumer" whose internal characteristics are anchored in national survival and ethical responsibility.

While the Black Box Model provides the structural process, the specific internal variables must be detailed to accurately map the Ukrainian consumer's mindset. The following constructs represent the "Invisible Rules" that govern the internal decision process:

1. Re-evaluating the Country-of-Origin (COO) Effect. While COO traditionally relates to quality perceptions, in this study, it is viewed through the lens of solidarity. The preference for Ukrainian brands (or international brands with active pro-Ukrainian stances) is a conscious choice to keep capital within the national "defence ecosystem."

2. The Shift from Xenocentrism to Ethnocentrism. Historically, emerging markets often show signs of Xenocentrism (preference for foreign goods). However, the need to support the ZSU triggers a shift toward Ethnocentrism, where buying local is perceived as a moral imperative to ensure national resilience.

3. Consumer Cosmopolitan Patriotism (CCP) as a Balancing Force. This novel construct explains why Ukrainian consumers do not entirely reject global brands. Instead, they reward "Cosmopolitan" brands that demonstrate "Patriotic" local actions (e.g., international companies launching ZSU-linked charity campaigns). This allows consumers to maintain a global lifestyle while fulfilling their national duties.

The final stage of the model, the Buyer's Response, is the culmination of these internal processes. In the proposed research, the response is not merely a "Product choice" based on price, but a Value-Driven choice. The decision to purchase becomes a micro-act of philanthropy. By choosing a product that supports the military, the consumer completes the cycle from Environmental Stimulus (the war) to Internal Processing (Patriotism/CET) to Final Response (Purchase as Support).

**Exposition of the main research material: results in market practice.** The theoretical alignment of the Buyer's Black Box suggests that during a national crisis, the

internal decision-making process is significantly recalibrated by a moral and patriotic imperative. However, to validate this framework, it is necessary to examine how these internal characteristics translate into actual market behaviour.

The analysis of the Ukrainian market reveals that military charity has evolved from a voluntary corporate gesture into a primary marketing stimulus that directly affects the consumer's decision-making process. By examining the following categories of corporate engagement, we can map how these external factors penetrate the "Buyer's Black Box."

1. Direct sales-linked contributions (Cause-Related Marketing). In this category, the purchase of a standard product is transformed into a philanthropic act, simplifying the consumer's "Alternative evaluation" stage by providing an immediate moral reward.

1.1 Fuel retailers (OKKO & WOG): These companies have pioneered long-term CRM campaigns where specific products (e.g., "Pulls" fuel or "Volunteer Coffee") trigger automatic donations for military equipment like UAVs and demining vehicles. By linking a routine purchase to a national defence goal, these brands target the Patriotism Effect, effectively bypassing price-sensitive decision-making [2; 10].

1.2 Retail and impulse goods (Aurora): Through the sale of themed collectable items, Aurora demonstrated how CRM can drive high-volume sales by appealing to Consumer Ethnocentrism. The "moral duty" to support the army becomes a stronger driver than the goods' functional utility [6].

2. Collaborative philanthropy and media integration. This approach leverages Reference Groups (media personalities and influencers) to validate the consumer's choice and foster a sense of belonging to a "patriotic community."

2.1 IT and Digital Engagement (N-iX): The collaboration between the IT sector and media figures (e.g., charity livestreams) highlights the role of Consumer Cosmopolitan Patriotism (CCP). This initiative raised over 11 million UAH, demonstrating that digitally native consumers respond to brands that align global tech lifestyles with local patriotic values [13].

2.2 Cultural Symbols (United24 & Atlas Festival): The "Dronopad" project by Atlas Festival and PrivatBank, aiming for 100 million UAH, illustrates how entertainment can be converted into a powerful social stimulus. Furthermore, the United24 platform's use of global ambassadors (actors, athletes) reinforces the CCP construct, allowing consumers to feel globally connected while supporting national sovereignty [1; 7].

3. Logistical CSR and perceived brand authenticity. The "Black Box" of the consumer is also influenced by the perceived authenticity and reliability of the brand, which is built through operational support during the crisis.

3.1 Infrastructure as a pillar (Nova Posta): By transporting over 3.1 million humanitarian parcels (118,200 tonnes) during the first three years of the full-scale war, Nova Posta has shifted its image from a delivery service to a "National Resilience Pillar". This operational commitment directly affects the "Attitudes" and "Knowledge" segments of the buyer's characteristics, fostering deep, long-term brand loyalty [4].

3.2 Corporate Dominance in the Philanthropic Landscape. The shifting dynamics of donations corroborate the effectiveness of these marketing incentives. By 2024,

the business sector emerged as the dominant contributor, accounting for 60% of total contributions, compared to 40% from individuals. This shift highlights the transition of the Ukrainian consumer market: purchase decisions are increasingly viewed as a means of collective economic resistance [12].

**Conclusions.** The findings of this research confirm that in the contemporary Ukrainian market, military charity has transcended the boundaries of traditional Corporate Social Responsibility to become a decisive social factor that fundamentally alters the "Black Box" of consumer behaviour.

This study identifies the emergence of "Wartime Cause-Related Marketing" as a unique socio-economic phenomenon where the ethical utility of a purchase, specifically aid to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU), often outweighs traditional economic drivers such as price sensitivity or historical brand loyalty. The empirical analysis also reveals a significant behavioural transition from consumer xenocentrism to robust consumer ethnocentrism, in which Ukrainian citizens perceive the selection of supportive local or international brands as a moral imperative and a civic duty. Consequently, for businesses operating in this environment, active participation in military fundraising has shifted from a discretionary public relations tool to a prerequisite for brand authenticity and market competitiveness. By integrating ZSU support into their core marketing incentives, companies effectively recalibrate the internal decision-making processes of the "citizen-consumer," fostering deeper levels of trust and long-term resilience. Ultimately, while this shift provides a powerful mechanism for national mobilisation, future research must address the sustainability of this model, particularly regarding potential "charity fatigue" and the long-term evolution of these patriotic consumption patterns in a post-conflict economy.

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