

# The Neglected Victim Effect

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# The Neglected Victim Effect

## **Abstract**

Online, consumers are accustomed to choosing their preferred option from among personalized choice-sets. Websites of charitable organizations often follow this trend by offering prospective donors the option of choosing which victim they would support from a choice-set of two or more identifiable victims (e.g. sponsoring a child out of several needy children). We suggest that when prospective donors are faced with several identifiable victims, the choice to donate to any one of them is also a decision to neglect another. Results of three studies suggest that in such situations, prospective donors may prefer to avoid making a choice altogether, thereby not helping any victim at all. We call this donation avoidance the Neglected Victim Effect, and show that it is driven by the fear of making the wrong choice. We further show that when such perceived negative consequences of the choice are mitigated, this effect is attenuated.

**Keywords:** *donations; identifiable victim; Decision aversion*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour