

ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCE TOWARD CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING:
THE ROLE OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

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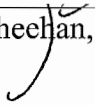
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THE ROLE OF PRODUCT INVOLVEMENT

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Are consumers more likely to favor brands offered by companies that engage in cause-related marketing (CRM)? This study investigated the effect of CRM messages on consumers' attitudes toward the sponsoring companies, brand preferences, purchase intentions, and recommendations to others based on personal involvement with the products. Participants were invited to take an online survey to evaluate four print advertisements. Zaichkowsky's Personal Involvement Inventory was applied to measure consumers' involvement with the products. The results suggest that when involvement is high, consumers develop more favorable responses toward the companies with CRM messages than those companies without CRM messages. When involvement is low, however, consumers' responses toward the sponsoring companies vary. In short, the positive effect of the perceived CRM advantages is found contingent upon consumers' involvement with the product. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marketing communication messages that highlight firms' attempts to contribute to social welfare issues are increasingly pervasive nowadays (Berglind & Nakata 2005; Barone et al. 2000; Brown & Dacin 1997). For example, companies can explicitly announce that a certain amount of revenue of their products or services will be donated to societal well-being programs such as AIDS prevention, racial harmony, disaster relief, and wildlife preservation (Drumwright 1996). Varadarajan and Menon (1988) defined the concept of cause-related marketing (CRM) as "*The process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specific amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives (p.60).*"

Cause-related marketing began to grab more public attention in the United States of America since the 1960s. One of the well-known campaigns covered in the mass media is about the Insurance Company of America guaranteed a contribution to CARE, a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty, with every policy it sold. Alike this campaign, in the 1980s, American Express introduced a campaign of donating one cent from each credit card use and one dollar from each new card to the restoration fund for the Statue of Liberty. It was a great hit at that time with 28% increase in card uses, 17%

increase in applicants, and millions of dollars raised (Gifford 1999). A more recent example of cause-related marketing is the Red Campaign initiated by the U2 lead singer Bono in March 2006. Participating companies including American Express, Gap, Converse, Giorgio Armani, and Apple each diverted a certain amount of the purchases to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Dyer 2006).

Over time cause-related marketing has become a viable tool to improve corporate performance as well as to promote societal well-being (Webb and Mohr 1998). During the past two decades, cause-related marketing has evolved from a curious attempt into an established and prevalent form of corporate philanthropy (Berglind and Nakata 2005). With considerable benefits, expenditures on cause campaigns in North America have soared up to approximately \$911 million in 2004, a rise of 57% since 1999 (Gard 2004). Analysts attribute the continuing growth to the positive outcomes experienced by corporations, such as profit increase, brand awareness, and reputation enhancement (Berglind and Nakata 2005; Brown and Dacin 1997).

However, the effectiveness of cause-related marketing remains questionable because not all campaigns are successful. From a behavioral research standpoint, are consumers always more willing to purchase products from the companies affiliated with social charitable causes compared to those not affiliated? Although the existing literature has documented a general positive impact of CRM on company image, brand equity, purchase intention, and product choice (e.g. Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Drumwright 1996), little research have investigated the boundary conditions of the CRM effect given different levels of consumer involvement with the products. Therefore, the

current study examines how cause-related marketing affects consumers' attitudes toward the sponsoring companies and purchase intention when the products are more or less personally relevant. This study adds insight to the CRM research literature by examining the extent to which involvement influences the CRM effectiveness.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) Concepts and Forms

Earlier cause-related marketing researchers, as represented by Bloom, Hussein, and Szykman (1995), defined cause-related marketing in relatively narrower terms as “*the money or gifts a company gives to a charitable cause with purchases made by consumers*” (p.9). The CRM is considered a marketing tool to promote purchases, and the companies can donate a proportion of the profits to the associated causes (Davidson 1997). Berglind and Nakata (2005) suggested the above conceptualization constrained to specific purchases and levels of sales. They argued that corporations’ sponsorships of social causes are not always tied with the short-term monetary value. Firms can also benefit from less tangible values such as brand equity (Hoffler and Keller 2002), public image (Marconi 2002), and brand preferences (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000). Therefore, CRM should include all of the firm’s marketing efforts through a mutually beneficial relationship with a non-profit or social cause organization.

Three forms of CRM are commonly practiced in the marketplace and represent an direct financial relationship between a social cause organization and a commercial firm. First, firms often adopt the classic purchase-based donation model called *transactional*

programs. That is, for every unit sold, a company contributes a share of profit to a particular social cause. Second, firms can use *message promotion programs* to promote a cause and make contributions that are not tied to a transaction and not necessarily monetary based. For example, the Anti-Defamation League, an anti-hate group, teams up with the Barnes and Noble to create the “Close the Book on Hate” initiative, which promoted racial and cultural tolerance through instructional materials and lectures. Over two million brochures covering ways to fight against prejudice have been passed out in stores, schools, and by government institution (101 Ways to Combat Prejudice). Third, firms can develop *licensing programs* to team up with a nonprofit organization that licenses the use of its name and logo to the labeling, packaging and branding of the products. A percentage of every transaction is donated to the nonprofit organization. In the case of the World Wildlife Fund, the licensing program with Visa and First USA has generated over \$10 million in donations.

Less transaction-based forms of CRM also exist and gain some popularity. *Issue-focused programs* are characterized by partnerships with non-profit groups focusing on one particular social issue. For example, Liz Claiborne, a female fashion company, initiated social care programs with the Family Violence Prevention Fund, a group dedicated to reducing domestic violence. These programs targeted women victims of domestic abuses and resonated with Liz Claiborne’s mission to improve women’s self-awareness and lifestyles. Another form of CRM is called *business activity programs* when corporations integrate ethical business practices into daily management and production operation. For example, Kraft Foods sells a brand of coffee that complies with

international fair-trade standards, which indicates that a product adheres to the high environmental, wage, and labor standards set by a nonprofit trade group called Trans Fair USA (McLaughlin 2004). Firms also practice *target - focused programs* to aid a particular group, often times the firm's core customer segment. Taco Bell, for example, has sponsored Boys & Girls Club of America with a variety of programs for a long term (Berglund and Nakata 2005).

To sum up, causes-related marketing (CRM) can involve a variety of promotional campaigns of social causes when the sponsoring firms donate to or collaborate with nonprofit organizations or groups. Firms can benefit from CRM when the strategy is appropriately executed, which leads to a critical question about to what extent consumers can resonate with CRM messages and form positive attitudes toward the sponsoring firms.

Consumer Attitude toward CRM

Attitude is a core psychological construct that represents people's overall evaluation of a specified target. An attitude consists of cognitive, affective and behavioral components that indicate one's degree of like or dislike for a person, a place, a thing, an event or a social group (Eagly and Chaiken 1983). Marketing researchers often use attitude as a pivotal measure of consumers' general response toward a persuasion agent such as an advertisement, a salesperson, and a firm.

Previous studies have examined consumer attitude toward the cause-related marketing and the consequential purchase intention (e.g. Brown and Dacin 1997; Ross,

Patterson, and Stutts 1992). There has been ample empirical evidence that cause-related marketing strategies can generate more favorable attitude toward a sponsoring company (Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992), preference of the promoted products or services (Brown and Dacin 1997), and more willingness to purchase (Webb and Mohr 1998). More specifically, Smith and Alcorn (1991) found that almost half (46%) of the consumers in their survey were more likely to switch brands to support socially responsive corporations. Nearly 30% respondents expressed that they were inclined to buy products simply because of the corporate sponsorship of charitable causes. In another study conducted by Cone Communications (a Boston-based consulting firm that specializes in developing cause-related marketing campaigns), researchers found that 86% consumers surveyed said that when price and quality were considered equal, they were likely to switch to the brands associated with a social cause (Cone Inc. 2004). CRM was also found to attenuate price sensitivity so that consumers were willing to pay more for the CRM associated brands (McDonald 1992; Meyer 1999).

On the other hand, previous studies also revealed that CRM may generate little or negative effect on consumer attitude toward the sponsoring firms (Smith and Stodghill 1994; Webb and Mohr 1998). It is speculated that the inconsistency of the CRM effect is a function of consumer skepticism about firms' self-serving motives for profits rather than charitable causes (Drumwright 1996). That is, consumers can become suspicious about to what extent the CRM campaigns are cause beneficial or cause exploitative. Friestad and Wright (1994) argued that consumers' persuasion knowledge about marketers' motives and tactics could reduce the effectiveness of a well-grounded

marketing campaign. In the context of cause-related marketing, consumers may consider CRM a persuasion tactic to increase sales, instead of a genuine attempt to promote a social cause. Accordingly, Barone and colleagues (2000) suggested that CRM will positively influence brand choice only when consumers positively evaluate a firm's motives in sponsoring social causes.

However, a question remains: when consumers trust the virtue nature of a CRM campaign, do they always have a positive attitude toward the brand and the firm? Barone and colleagues (2000) demonstrated that CRM campaigns influence consumer choice through a compensatory process involving small or moderate trade-offs of a social cause for product performance or price. When large performance or price trade-off is required to make a choice, however, changes in the perceived CRM advantages do not have a strong impact on brand choice. Their study, however, is based on the assumption that consumers actively search for information to make well-informed choices in relatively high involvement situations. The current study extends this research by examining the low personal involvement conditions to explore the effect of involvement from a theoretical perspective of dual-processing models.

Consumer Involvement

Involvement is generally referred to as “*a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests* (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 342)”. Previous research identified low involvement purchase conditions when consumer decisions do not involve extensive search for information or a comprehensive evaluation of the

alternatives, even for the purchase of relatively more expensive products (e.g. Olshavsky and Granbois 1979). The low or high involvement is considered a critical factor that influences consumers purchase behaviors in the literature. High involvement with products often leads to greater perception of attribute differences, product importance, and commitment to brand choice (Howard and Sheth 1969), search for more relevant information, and spend more time thinking about the right selection (Clarke and Belk 1987). The opposite is the low involvement conditions when consumers spend less time to make the decision without seriously evaluating the product attributes (Petty, Cacioppo and Schuman 1983, Zaichkowsky 1985).

High or low involvement is considered a critical processing moderator that affects consumer cognitive activities as illustrated in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM, Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The dual-process cognitive model claims two paths of eliciting attitude formation and change: the central route and peripheral route. The central route means that the recipient evaluates the messages more critically and exhaustively, whereby the individual focuses on the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the message's arguments. In contrast, the peripheral route is an automatic, superficial, and quick process that focuses on the contextual cues rather than the quality of the message's arguments (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The likelihood for instigating either of the two paths, according to Petty and colleagues (1994), depends on recipients' motivation and abilities to process the information. Consumer personal involvement with a product can lead to high or low motivation in processing messages through either central or peripheral

route, and therefore, influences the subsequent judgments and attitudes toward the persuasion targets.

In the marketing context, Petty and Cacioppo (1983) have demonstrated the moderating role of involvement regarding advertising effectiveness. In one study, subjects were manipulated to respond to a magazine advertisement under high or low product involvement conditions. The ads represented either strong or weak arguments for the products, and the products were endorsed by prominent sports celebrities or average citizens. The results show that the argument strength had a greater impact on attitude under high than low involvement condition; but the celebrity endorsers have a greater effect on attitude under low than high involvement conditions. This research suggests that involvement changes consumers' information processing routes: when involvement is high, consumers think about the messages more systematically and consider more utilitarian values; when involvement is low, consumers think more heuristically so that simple cues such as celebrity endorsement works more effectively.

The ELM has important theoretical implications for the cause-related marketing research, because essentially CRM provides consumers additional information in the judgment and decision making process— social causes associated with the purchase. Previous studies suggest that CRM can be processed either heuristically or systematically dependent on different presentations (Petty et al. 1983). For instance, a study observed that a physically attractive endorser might serve as a product-relevant argument for a beauty product (Petty and Caccioppo 1980). When CRM is processed as heuristic cues, in order to make CRM messages effective, it is critical for consumers to use that

heuristics in their judgment and decision making about the sponsoring company.

Consumer product involvement can regulate the extent to which such heuristics are accessible and diagnostic in the judgment process, and influence consumer attitude toward the sponsoring firms. Perceptions of high personal relevance of the product lead to high involvement, under which the central route of messages process will be activated so that consumers rely on analytical thinking to evaluate the CRM messages and consider CRM practice as relevant information of the company's overall performance. While perceptions of low personal relevance results in low involvement, under which the peripheral route will be activated so that consumers process messages relatively more quickly and tend to ignore social cause messages that often involves a significant amount of processing.

This pattern has been found evident in related marketing contexts. For example, Flora and Maibach (1990) found that for subjects involved in the AIDS issue, who are thus motivated to pay attention to message's arguments, rational messages with solid arguments are more effective. On the other hand, vivid emotional appeals were more effective on subjects with low involvement. The same theory applies in evaluating the CRM effectiveness. In some situations, CRM messages are intended to be emotional appeals that spark consumers' sympathy toward social causes, instead of the advanced product or service features. The purpose is to lead consumers to think the positive aspects of the product or service other than the performance or price only. Contrarily, in some other cases, CRM messages are considered to be quality argument added on top of

the product-relevant information as they demonstrate the ethic performance of the sponsoring company.

Therefore, recently it has become a common practice that companies emphasize the CRM in the campaigns when the product information becomes less salient while the CRM messages are processed in a more central route. The literature, however, remains largely silent on this issue. In this study, it is hypothesized that the CRM messages will provide consumers with favorable information about the sponsoring firms so that the overall consequential attitude will be more positive with more positive brand preference and stronger willingness to purchase. In high involvement conditions, consumers will process the messages more systematically, pay more attention to the CRM messages, and evaluate product and the company more thoroughly. As a result, CRM messages become more effective in the judgment process so that the positive CRM effect will be enhanced. In the low product involvement situation, however, consumers tend to care less about the product due to the lack of product relevance. Even when they pay some attention to the CRM benefits of the product, the cognitive processing can be easily terminated or switched so that the CRM effect will be attenuated.

Hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, the current study examined the moderating role of product involvement on consumer attitude, brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendation to others when they are exposed to the cause-related marketing messages. Consistent with the previous research, it is speculated that when consumers

perceive the CRM as genuinely beneficial in supporting a social cause, consumer perception of CRM advantage will lead to general positive responses toward the sponsoring firms. However, consumer product involvement will moderate the positive CRM effect. When product involvement is high, consumers are more likely to consider the CRM social benefits of the product, and therefore the positive effect of CRM will become more salient. In comparison, when product involvement is low, consumers are less likely to consider the CRM benefits of the product, and therefore the positive effect of CRM will be less salient. In essence, this study tested the ELM-based predictions in the context of cause-related marketing. Given these, three hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Advertisements with CRM messages will have a positive effect on attitude toward the sponsoring company.

H2: Advertisements with CRM messages will have a positive effect on brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendation to others.

H3: The positive effect of perceived CRM messages on attitude toward the sponsoring company will be stronger under high than low product involvement situations.

H4: The positive effect of perceived CRM messages on brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendation to others will be stronger under high than low product involvement situations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of cause-related marketing (CRM) messages on consumers' attitudes toward the sponsoring companies and purchase intentions based on personal involvement with the product or service. This study will compare consumer response toward the advertisements with or without CRM messages in the high or low product involvement conditions. Experimental study is the most appropriate method to test the hypotheses. This chapter describes the design, procedure, manipulation, and independent and dependent measures.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted for two purposes. First, the pretest was to validate that for the sample population of this study, the statements of a firm's donation to social causes in the print advertisements will effectively lead to positive perceptions of CRM advantage. This is an assumption as previously discussed, and the extraneous effect of participants' persuasion knowledge in this specific context is expected to be ruled out. Second, the pretest was to test and choose appropriate experimental stimuli to effectively manipulate high or low product involvement.

The primary researcher made a brief announcement about the study to a small journalism undergraduate class at the University of Oregon. Students were invited to complete a paper-and-pencil survey on a voluntary basis. They were asked to rate product involvement using Zaichkowsky's (1994) revised Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) with four fictitious brand personal care products: Brand A (Deodorant), Brand B (Shampoo), Brand C (Perfume/Cologne), and Brand D (Anti-cellulite lotion). Half of the questionnaires suggested that the brand company is involved with CRM by adding a short statement about this company besides the pictures and product features: "*Company X has supported a number of social causes and charities. Recently, X Company has jointed to donate a portion of profits to the Global Fund, which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa. If you buy this perfume/cologne, 50 % of the net sales proceeds will go to the Global Fund*". The other half does not contain this statement. A total of 39 students completed the survey within about ten minutes.

The one-way ANOVA results show that the product involvement of perfume (Mean = 3.8308, SD = .71662, N = 39) was significantly higher than that of anti-cellulite body lotion (Mean = 2.5154, SD = 1.3391, N = 39), $t(38) = 6.311, p < .001$. Also, those in the condition with CRM messages rated that the brand company was more likely supporting social causes on a 7-point Likert scale when the responses were aggregated (Mean = 22.41, SD = 5.39, N = 39) than those in the no-statement condition (Mean = 12.59, SD = 3.94, N = 39), $t(38) = 6.584, P < .001$.

The pretest suggests that by adding CRM messages in the print ads of personal care products would change the participants' perception of the CRM advantage. The effect of

general skepticism was minimal. Also, the personal care product categories (perfume vs. anti-cellulite body lotion) could effectively manipulate the product involvement to the sample population in this study.

Subjects

A total of 94 undergraduates from the J340 Advertising Principles class at the University of Oregon participated in the online survey to earn extra credits. Students voluntarily wrote down their names and email addresses on a registration sheet when the researcher came to the class to recruit participants. They were later contacted via emails. For those students who did not wish to participate, they could contact the class instructor to arrange an alternative assignment for 2.5 extra credits.

Design

The current study uses a 2 (Involvement: High vs. Low) X 2 (Perceived CRM Messages: Salient or Not Salient) mixed design. Participants received an email link directing them to the online survey. The online survey system was programmed to randomly assign subjects to two conditions with or without CRM statements (between-subject manipulation). They were asked to rate the four print advertisements that represented high or low product involvement (within-subject manipulation).

Procedure

After participants signed up the registration sheet, they received an email from the researcher that directed them to the survey questionnaire. They could complete the survey on any computer connected to the Internet at their convenience during a five-day period. Once opening the link in a Web browser, they first read a one-page consent form on the computer screen. If they agreed to participate, they clicked the “*next page*” button to proceed and read four print advertisements. After each print advertisement, participants were asked to report their attitudes towards the company and the product, how they like the advertisement, their purchase intention, whether they would recommend the product to their friends or families, and personal involvement of the product. Upon completion of the survey, they were thanked for participation and required to print out the last page to class as a proof to receive extra credits.

Stimuli

In the experimental condition, participants read four print advertisements with statements describing that the brand companies supported social causes and charities (as described in the pretest), while those in the control condition read the same four print advertisements without the cause-related marketing statements. The study has chose Global Fund which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa because Global Fund has partnered with RED campaign in real world. The RED campaign teams up with several iconic brands to raise awareness and money for the Global Fund.

Therefore, subjects in the study who were most college students should be familiar with this charity cause.

The four print advertisements represented four different personal care products, deodorant, shampoo, perfume/cologne, and anti-cellulite body lotion, respectively. Each advertisement contained a brief function description and a picture of a container with product/brand names on it: Deodorant, Shampoo, Perfume/Cologne, and Anti-cellulite lotion (Illustration 1). The brand names were generic: Brand A, Brand B, Brand C, and Brand D.

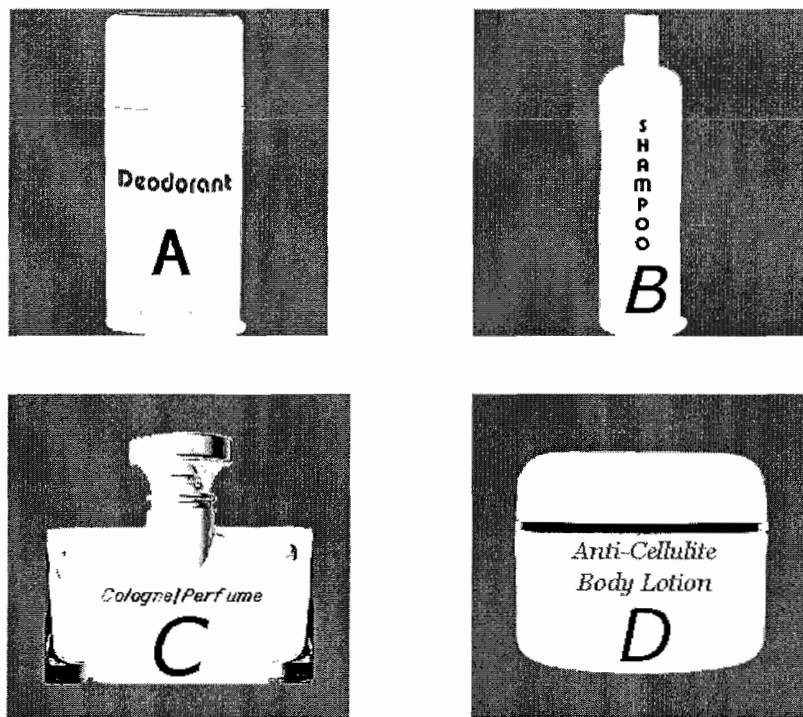


Illustration 1: Advertisement Pictures of Deodorant (Brand A), Shampoo (Brand B), Cologne/Perfume (Brand C), and Anti-cellulite Body Lotion (Brand D).

Independent Variables

Involvement: Involvement was measured by Zaichkowsky's (1994) revised Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) which comprises ten 7-point semantic differential items (unimportant, irrelevant, unappealing, boring, unexciting, unnecessary, worthless, unfascinating, uninvolving, and means nothing). The PII is a well-established scale with high reliability and validity, and provides a convenient and straightforward measure with the capacity to accurately reflect the motivational state of involvement (Zaichkowsky 1998). It was speculated that participants would have a higher involvement with the purchase of perfume than that of the anti-cellulite body lotion based on the pretest results.

Perceived Cause-related Marketing Advantage: As in the pretest, the experimental condition included an additional short paragraph of the firm's CRM effort besides the product description. The control condition presented the product descriptions only. It was measured by asking participants that the extent to which the brand company was supporting social causes on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not likely at all, 7 = very likely).

Dependent Measures

Attitude toward the firm: The first question following the print advertisement asked participants to rate their overall attitude toward the firm on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very negative to 7 = very positive).

Attitude toward the ads: Participants were also asked to rate their overall attitude toward the print advertisement on five 7-point semantic differential items (*unattractive-attractive, unappealing-appealing, unpleasant-pleasant, dull-dynamic, and not enjoyable-enjoyable*). The responses were averaged to assess a general positive or negative attitude toward the print advertisement. This question was included to control for a possible confounding factor - the quality of the advertisements.

Brand Preference: Participants were asked about brand preference on three 7-point semantic differential items (*bad-good, unfavorable-favorable, negative-positive*).

Purchase Intention: For each ad, participants were asked “*do you want to purchase this X from company X?*” on 7-point Likert scales (*1 = not likely at all, 7 = very likely*).

Recommendation: For each ad, participants were asked “*do you recommend the product X from company X to others, like your friends and families?*” on 7-point Likert scales (*1 = not likely at all, 7 = very likely*).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

A total of 94 students from an undergraduate advertising class at the University of Oregon participated in this study. Six responses were excluded due to excessive missing data or obviously careless answers. The cleared data with eighty-eight responses were submitted to SPSS for analysis. Consumer perception of the causes-related marketing advantage was manipulated by the descriptions with or without statements of companies' charity donation. A 7-point Likert scale was used to assess the extent to which the participants perceived the company was supporting social causes (*1 = not likely at all to 7 = very likely*). One-way ANOVA indicates that the CRM manipulation was successful: the average rating in the experimental condition with CRM messages (Mean = 5.44, SD = 1.29, N = 38) was significantly higher than that in the control condition without CRM messages (Mean = 2.74, SD = 1.03, N = 48), $F(1, 84) = 116.80, P < .001$. The manipulation of product involvement was also successful: the product involvement of perfume (Mean = 4.19, SD = 1.50, N = 83) was the highest while the product involvement of anti-cellulite body lotion was the lowest, (Mean = 3.16, SD = 1.59, N = 83). The product involvement of perfume (Mean = 4.19, SD = 1.50, N = 83) was significantly

higher than the mean of anti-cellulite body lotion (Mean = 3.16, SD = 1.59, N = 83), $t(82) = 5.35, p < .001$.

Hypothesis Testing

Attitude

Hypothesis 1 predicts that consumer perception of CRM advantage will have a positive on attitude toward the sponsoring company. The one-way ANOVA that compared the attitude mean difference between conditions with and without CRM message suggest that the average rating in the experimental condition with CRM messages (Mean = 5.43, SD = 1.01, N = 37) was significantly higher than that in the control condition without CRM messages (Mean = 4.36, SD = .91, N = 50), $F(1, 85) = 26.53, P < .001$. Hypothesis 1 was supported (Shown in Table 1).

Table 1: Mean Difference across Conditions- Hypothesis 1

	Conditions with CRM Messages		Conditions without CRM Messages	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Attitude toward the Company</i>	5.43 (n=37)	1.01	4.36 (n=50)	.91

Purchase Intention, Brand Preference, and Recommendation

Hypothesis 2 predicts that consumer perception of CRM advantage will have a positive effect on brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendation to others.

One-way ANOVA that compared the average mean differences between conditions with and without CRM message suggest that the average rating of brand preference in the experimental condition with CRM messages (Mean = 4.91, SD = 1.03, N = 36) was significantly higher than that in the control condition without CRM messages (Mean = 3.96, SD = .81, N = 47), $F(1, 81) = 21.84, P < .001$. Also, the average rating of purchase intention in the experimental condition with CRM messages (Mean = 3.45, SD = 1.33, N = 38) was significantly higher than that in the control condition without CRM messages (Mean = 2.07, SD = 1.01, N = 50), $F(1, 86) = 9.66, P < .05$. What's more, the average rating of willingness to recommendation to others in the experimental condition with CRM messages (Mean = 3.36, SD = 1.37, N = 38) was significantly higher than that in the control condition without CRM messages (Mean = 2.55, SD = 1.12, N = 49), $F(1, 85) = 9.26, P < .05$. Hypothesis 2 was supported (Shown in Table 2).

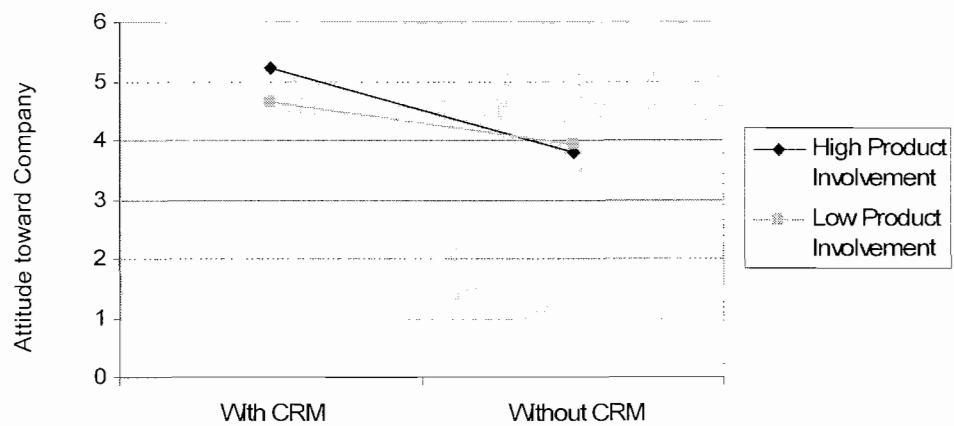
Table 2: Mean Difference across Conditions- Hypothesis 2

	Conditions with CRM Messages		Conditions without CRM Messages	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Brand Preference</i>	4.91 (n=36)	1.03	3.96 (n=47)	.81
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	3.45 (n=38)	1.33	2.07 (n=50)	1.01
<i>Recommendation to Others</i>	3.36 (n=38)	1.37	2.55 (n=49)	1.12

Interaction Effect on Attitude

Hypothesis 3 predicts an interaction between product involvement and the positive effect of perceived CRM on attitude toward the sponsoring company. The repeated-measure ANOVA were run to test the main effect of product involvement and the interaction effect (Figure 5). As expected, the main effect of product involvement was not significant, $F(1, 86) = 1.23, p > .05$. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 86) = 4.06, p < .05$. In the condition with CRM, the attitude toward the sponsoring company of the high involvement product (Mean = 5.21, SD = 1.19, N = 38) was significantly more positive than that of the low involvement product (Mean = 4.66, SD = 1.67, N = 38), $t(37) = 2.17, p < .05$. In the condition without CRM, the attitude toward the sponsoring company of the high involvement product (Mean = 3.78, SD = 1.27, N = 50) was not significantly different from the low involvement product (Mean = 3.94, SD = 1.56, N = 50), $t(49) = -.67, p > .05$. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

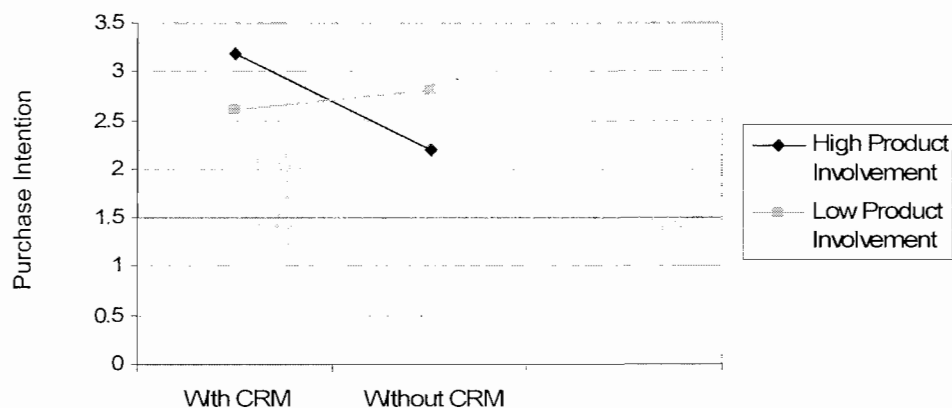
**Figure 1: Attitude Mean Difference
(By Product Involvement)**



Interaction Effect on Purchase Intention and Recommendation

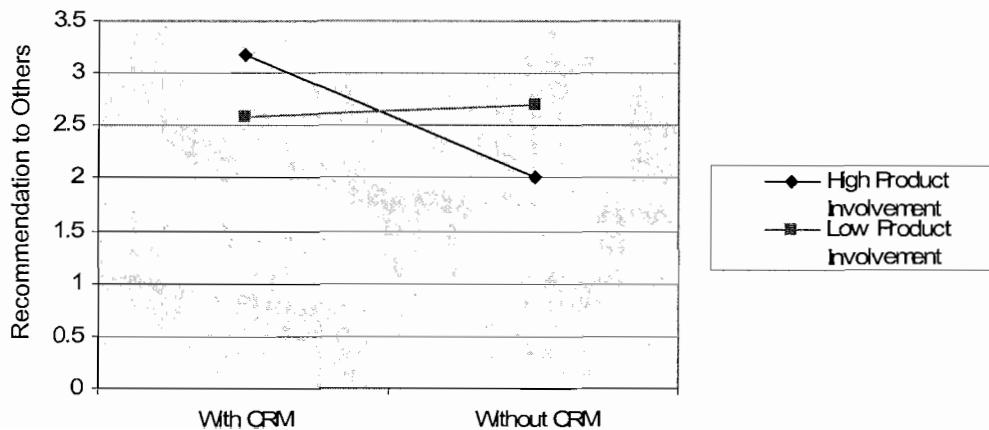
Hypothesis 4 predicts the same interaction between product involvement and the positive effect of perceived CRM advantage on brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendation to others. The same repeated-measure ANOVA analysis was applied. First, the interaction effect on brand preference was not significant, $F(1, 84) = 3.14, p > .05$. Second, the interaction effect on purchase intention was significant, $F(1, 86) = 9.86, p < .05$ (Figure 2). In the condition with CRM, the purchase intention of the high involvement product (Mean = 3.18, SD = 1.54, N = 38) was not significantly different from that of the low involvement product (Mean = 2.61, SD = 1.82, N = 38), $t(37) = 1.895, p > .05$. In the condition without CRM, purchase intention of the high involvement product (Mean = 2.20, SD = 1.02, N = 50) was significantly lower than that of the low involvement product (Mean = 2.80, SD = 1.94, N = 50), $t(49) = 2.62, p < .05$.

**Figure 2: Purchase Intention Mean Difference
(By Product Involvement)**



Interestingly, the opposite interaction pattern was found regarding recommendation to others. The interaction effect was significant, $F(1, 85) = 12.51, p < .05$ (Figure 3). In the condition with CRM, the willingness to recommend the high involvement product to others (Mean = 3.18, SD = 1.31, N = 38) was significantly higher than that of the low involvement product (Mean = 2.58, SD = 1.73, N = 38), $t(37) = 2.41, p < .05$. However, in the condition without CRM, the willingness to recommend the low involvement product to others (Mean = 2.69, SD = 1.77, N = 49) was higher than that of the high involvement product (Mean = 2.00, SD = 1.17, N = 49), $t(48) = 2.69, p < .05$. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

**Figure 3: Recommendation Mean Difference
(By Product Involvement)**



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implication

This study investigated the effect of cause-related marketing message and product involvement on consumers' attitude toward the sponsoring companies, brand preferences, purchase intentions, and willingness to recommend to others. The results suggest that salient CRM messages lead to overall more favorable responses toward the companies. More importantly, consumer product involvement can moderate the positive effect of CRM on attitude toward the company and the advertised brands.

This study makes significant contributions to the literature. First, it extends the cognitive information processing theories to the field of cause-related marketing. Results clearly demonstrated that the salience of CRM messages can significantly increase the positive response toward the company and the brand. It also reveals the boundary condition of the CRM effectiveness, that is, the CRM work better when the product or service has higher perceived relevance that lead to higher product involvement, if other things are equal. The perceived CRM advantage is only part of the judgment schema that shape consumers' beliefs and attitudes.

Second, this study suggests that the product involvement can also regulate consumers' purchase intention and willingness to recommend the product/service to others.

Intuitively, when the product involvement is high, CRM messages are more effective to induce stronger purchase intention. When the product involvement is low, CRM effectiveness is not as salient. This is not to conclude that CRM has no effect at all. In this study, the CRM effect may be attenuated by the specific product characteristics and the specific experiment design. Further, when product involvement is high, consumers appear to be more likely to recommend the product/services associated with CRM. When product involvement is low, consumers are less likely to recommend the product/services that are not associated with CRM. This adds another piece of evidence that CRM can be useful to attract consumers.

Practical Implication

The practical implication of this study is straightforward. Practitioners should first make sure the CRM messages are well received by the consumers without skepticism. To maximize the positive effect of CRM, the associated products should be highly relevant with consumers, which pose a challenge as well as an opportunity to practice well-grounded target marketing. For products in the low involvement category, in order to make positive CRM effect more salient, advertising campaigns are suggested to consider employing strategies that could activate peripheral routes of decision making. Along with CRM messages, some emotional appealing components could be added or celebrity/expert endorsement could be adopted. For example, advertisements could

feature a well-known expert or celebrity being supportive and part of the charity causes the company sponsors. By providing some peripheral cues, consumers will be more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward low-involvement products. Another strategy to target low-involvement consumers is to carefully choose the cause a company will partner with. Even though the product has low personal relevance, the charity cause sponsored by the company could have high personal relevance with target consumers. In this way, the consumer involvement is enhanced through the advertised social cause. However, companies should be cautious when considering the “FIT” between the company and the cause. If the “fit” is viewed by consumers as exploitive, the company could fall into a dangerous situation.

Limitations

The current study is subject to the usual limitations of quasi experiments based on written scenarios and lack of control. First, an experimental study requires some level of trade-off between the richness of CRM strategies and isolation of a single piece effect by manipulation. A simplified experiment using print ads and personal care products as stimuli may inform what could happen for this specific context, but not necessarily others. The next step is to replicate this study in other marketing contexts such as services, credit cards etc. Second, a number of other factors may have some influence on the CRM effectiveness, such as individual differences in need for cognition, advertising skepticism, and product knowledge. Third, as the survey questionnaire was completed at subjects' convenience outside a lab environment, this study did not control for some

extraneous factors. For example, the differences in screen size and resolution could have an impact on verbal test scores. The larger high-resolution display is associated with the better performance in verbal test (Bridgeman et al. 2003). Another research examines the effect of screen size on attention and arousal. Screen size, regardless of the content, can increase attention and arousal for media messages (Reeves et al. 1999). Future studies can measure or manipulate these factors to expand the theoretical boundary of this study.

Conclusion

This study starts with a simple question: “are consumers more likely to favor brands offered by companies that engage in cause-related marketing?” In an online-survey based experiment, this study revealed the effect of CRM messages on consumers’ attitudes toward the sponsoring companies, brand preference, purchase intention, and recommendations to others given different on product involvement situations.. The results suggest that when involvement is high, consumers develop more favorable responses toward the companies with CRM messages than those companies without CRM messages. When involvement is low, however, consumers’ responses toward the sponsoring companies vary. In short, the positive effect of the perceived CRM advantages is found contingent upon consumers’ involvement with the product. This study serves as a base-line research and contributes to the literature by testing the boundary condition of CRM and provides more insights about the CRM effectiveness.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Na Zhou from the University of Oregon, School of Journalism and Communication. I hope to study how people respond to cause-related advertisements. The results will contribute to my thesis for the master degree. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your response will help to address the research topic and you are taking an undergraduate level advertising class.

If you decide to participate, you will evaluate four printed advertisements and answer some questions in an online survey. It will take you about thirty minutes and no risks are anticipated of this study. You will receive 2.5 credits towards the completion of J340 Advertising Principles. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Subject identities will be kept confidential and no individuals' responses will be associated with their identities, and the original data will be kept on the UO computing center mainframe and only accessible to the principle investigator.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the class instructor, the researcher and the department faculty members. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to participate, the instructor will arrange an alternative assignment for 2.5 extra credits by doing additional ads for Portfolio #5.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Na Zhou, a master student from the School of Journalism and Communication, Cell: 541-731-9320, email: nzhou@uoregon.edu and her advisor, Professor. Kim Sheehan, Tel: 541-346-2088, email: ksheehan@uoregon.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Human Subjects Compliance, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510. You have been given a copy of this form to keep.

By clicking the "next page" button, you indicate that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you

have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

APPENDIX B

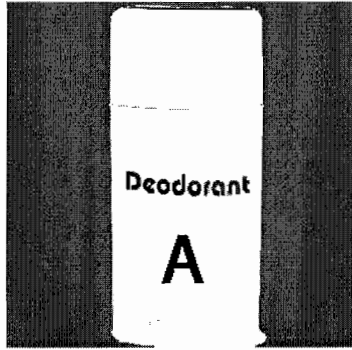
INVOLVEMENT MEASURE SCALE

	To me <i>purchase of</i>	is:
1. Important	____:____:____:____:____:____	Unimportant*
2. Boring	____:____:____:____:____:____	Interesting
3. Relevant	____:____:____:____:____:____	Irrelevant*
4. Exciting	____:____:____:____:____:____	Unexciting*
5. Means nothing	____:____:____:____:____:____	means a lot to me
6. Appealing	____:____:____:____:____:____	Unappealing*
7. Fascinating	____:____:____:____:____:____	Unfascinating*
8. Worthless	____:____:____:____:____:____	Valuable
9. Involving	____:____:____:____:____:____	Uninvolving*
10. Not needed	____:____:____:____:____:____	Needed

* Indicates item is reversed scored

APPENDIX C

EXPERIMENT STIMULI FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP



The deodorant (Left) is produced by Company A. Most of the products sold by Company A have acceptable market shares in their respective product categories.

The deodorant is made of natural mineral salts and is completely free of perfumes and chemicals. It eliminates body odor and will leave an invisible protective barrier against odor-causing bacteria on your skin. It is unscented, hypoallergenic, non-sticky and non-staining.

Company A has supported a number of social causes and charities. Recently, Company A has jointed to donate a portion of profits to the Global Fund, which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

If you buy this deodorant, a portion of the net sales proceeds will go to the Global Fund.

Based on the information above, Please put a check mark (Example: ___: : ___) to show how you think about Company A:

1. What's your overall attitude toward Company A?

Very Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Very Positive

2. What's your overall attitude toward this print advertisement?

Unattractive ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Attractive

Unappealing ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Appealing

Unpleasant ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Pleasant

Dull ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Dynamic

Not Enjoyable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Enjoyable

3. What is your opinion of Brand A?

Bad	_____	Good
Unfavorable	_____	Favorable
Negative	_____	Positive

4. Do you like this deodorant from Company A?

Not at all	_____	Like it very much
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5. Do you want to purchase this deodorant from Company A?

Not likely at all	_____	Very likely
-------------------	-------	-------------

6. Do you recommend the deodorant from Company A to others, like your friends and families?

Not likely at all	_____	Very likely
-------------------	-------	-------------

7. Do you think Company A is supporting social causes?

Not at all	_____	Very likely
------------	-------	-------------

8. How do you consider ***purchasing deodorant for yourself?***

Important	_____	Unimportant
Boring	_____	Interesting
Relevant	_____	Irrelevant
Exciting	_____	Unexciting
Means nothing	_____	Means a lot to me
Appealing	_____	Unappealing

Fascinating

_: _: _: _: _: _: _:

Unfascinating

Worthless

_: _: _: _: _: _: _:

Valuable

Involving

_: _: _: _: _: _: _:

Uninvolving

Not needed

_: _: _: _: _: _: _:

Needed



The Shampoo (Left) is produced by Company B. Most of the products sold by Company B have acceptable market shares in their respective product categories.

This shampoo stabilizes moisture levels as it cleanses and nourishes the hair and scalp. A unique formulation that gives your hair exceptionally improved appearance, condition and shine.

Company B has supported a number of social causes and charities. Recently, Company B has jointed to donate a portion of profits to the Global Fund, which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

If you buy this shampoo, a portion of the net sales proceeds will go to the Global Fund.

Based on the information above, Please put a check mark (Example: ___:√:___) to evaluate how you think about Company B:

1. What's your overall attitude toward Company B?

Very Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Very Positive

2. What's your overall attitude toward this print advertisement?

Unattractive ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Attractive

Unappealing ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Appealing

Unpleasant ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Pleasant

Dull ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Dynamic

Not Enjoyable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Enjoyable

3. What is your opinion of Brand B?

Bad ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Good

Unfavorable _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Favorable

Negative _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Positive

4. Do you like this shampoo from Company B?

Not at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Like it very much

5. Do you want to purchase this shampoo from Company B?

Not likely at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Very likely

6. Do you recommend the shampoo from Company B to others, like your friends and families?

Not likely at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Very likely

7. Do you think Company B is supporting social causes?

Not at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Very likely

8. How do you consider ***purchasing shampoo for yourself?***

Important _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Unimportant

Boring _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Interesting

Relevant _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Irrelevant

Exciting _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Unexciting

Means nothing _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Means a lot to me

Appealing _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Unappealing

Fascinating _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Unfascinating

Worthless _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:

Valuable

Involving

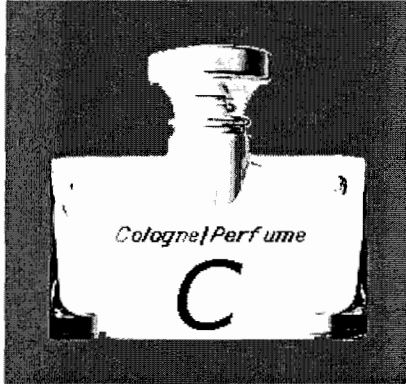
____:____:____:____:____:____:____

Uninvolving

Not needed

____:____:____:____:____:____:____

Needed



The Perfume/ Cologne (Left) is produced by Company C. Most of the products sold by Company C have acceptable market shares in their respective product categories.

Company C has supported a number of social causes and charities. Recently, B Company has joined to donate a portion of profits to the Global Fund, which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

If you buy this perfume/cologne, a portion of the net sales proceeds will go to the Global Fund.

Based on the information above, Please put a check mark (Example: ___:√:___) to show how you think about Company C:

1. What's your overall attitude toward Company C?

Very Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Very Positive

2. What's your overall attitude toward this print advertisement?

Unattractive ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Attractive

Unappealing ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Appealing

Unpleasant ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Pleasant

Dull ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Dynamic

Not Enjoyable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Enjoyable

3. What is your opinion of Brand C?

Bad ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Good

Unfavorable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Favorable

Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Positive

4. Do you like this perfume/cologne from Company C?

Not at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ Like it very much

5. Do you want to purchase this perfume/cologne from Company C?

Not likely at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ Very likely

6. Do you recommend this perfume/cologne from Company C to others, like your friends and families?

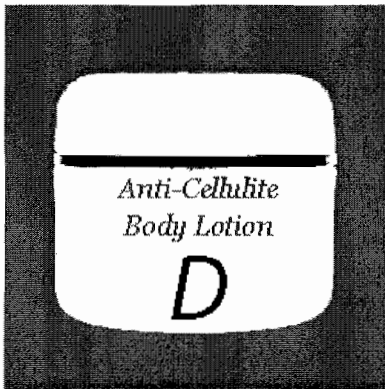
Not likely at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ Very likely

7. Do you think Company C is supporting the social causes?

Not at all _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ Very likely

8. How do you consider ***purchasing perfume/cologne for yourself?***

Important	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Unimportant
Boring	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Interesting
Relevant	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Irrelevant
Exciting	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Unexciting
Means nothing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Means a lot to me
Appealing	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Unappealing
Fascinating	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Unfascinating
Worthless	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Valuable
Involving	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Uninvolving
Not needed	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	Needed



The Anti-Cellulite Body Lotion (Left) is produced by D Company. Most of the products sold by D Company have acceptable market shares in their respective product categories.

The body lotion is clinically proven to reduce the appearance of cellulite.

D Company has supported a number of social causes and charities. Recently, B Company has jointed to donate a portion of profits to the Global Fund, which helps women and kids affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa.

If you buy this Anti-cellulite, a portion of the net sales proceeds will go to the Global Fund.

Based on the information above, Please put a check mark (Example: ___:√:___) to show how you think about Company B:

1. What's your overall attitude toward D Company?

Very Negative ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ Very Positive

2. What's your overall attitude toward this print advertisement?

Unattractive	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Attractive
Unappealing	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Appealing
Unpleasant	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Pleasant
Dull	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Dynamic
Not Enjoyable	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Enjoyable

3. What is your opinion of Brand D?

Bad	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Good
Unfavorable	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	Favorable

Negative _____ Positive

4. Do you like the Anti-Cellulite Body Lotion from D Company?

Not at all _____ Like it very much

5. Are you likely to purchase this Anti-Cellulite Body Lotion from D Company?

Not at all _____ Very likely

6. Are you likely to recommend the Anti-Cellulite Body Lotion from D Company to others, like your friends an family?

Not at all _____ Very likely

7. Do you think D Company is supporting the social causes?

Not at all _____ Very likely

8. How do you consider ***purchasing Anti-Cellulite Body Lotion for yourself?***

Important _____ Unimportant

Boring _____ Interesting

Relevant _____ Irrelevant

Exciting _____ Unexciting

Means nothing _____ Means a lot to me

Appealing _____ Unappealing

Fascinating _____ Unfascinating

Worthless _____ Valuable

Involving _____ Uninvolving

Not needed

____:____:____:____:____:____:____

Needed

Would you please indicate your gender and age?

Gender: M_____ F_____

Age: _____

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