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Containing CSR Scepticism: A comparison of Cause-Related Marketing Quantifiers on Customer Attributions of Corporate Motives

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Abstract

In this study we examine how companies can better manage corporate social responsibility (CSR)-induced unfavorable attributions through CSR communication from the perspective of an important stakeholder group, customers. Specifically, we focus on transaction-based cause-related marketing (CRM) initiatives, and investigate how CRM quantifiers, a major component of the message content of the CRM activity, can be designed in an effort to reduce perceptions of CSR induced self-centered motives and increase perceptions of CSR induces other-centered motives. Based on the psychology of money and CSR literatures, we find that the corporate philanthropy CSR type and the in-kind CRM quantifier have the greatest potential in reducing self-centered motives and increasing other-centered motives. Hypotheses were tested using a single-factor between subjects experimental design, in the context of a global FMCG brand implementing a CRM campaign during the Special Olympics 2011.

Keywords. Customers, Cause-Related Marketing Quantifiers, CSR Communications, Attributions, Other-Centered Motives, Self-Centered Motives.
1. Introduction

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a marketing incentive technique, whereby an organisation makes a monetary or non-monetary contribution to a designated cause each time s engage in transactions with the firm (Pracejus, Olsen and Brown, 2003; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Based on the IEG sponsorship report, CRM spending in 2011 will reach $1.71 billion. According to the same report, CRM is the fastest growing sponsoring category that IEG monitors (IEG, 2010). Similarly, Berglind and Nakata (2005) characterize CRM as one of the fastest growing forms of marketing, as reflected in increased spending.

CRM is thought to be a win-win for both the sponsoring organisation and the cause through providing several types of support to worthy causes (Liu and Ko, 2011) and by being morally right, since the ends (i.e., donations) justify the means (i.e., product sales) (Tangari et al., 2010). Yet, the technique is frequently accompanied by public cynicism and suspicion. For instance, in the case of American Express’s Statue of Liberty campaign, the company spent more on advertising the campaign (i.e., $6 million) while generated less than a third of that amount (i.e., $1.7 million) for the actual cause (Berglind and Nakata, 2005). Other critics, “…deride CRM as “charitainment,” trivializing important issues by wrapping them in ribbons and bracelets” (Stuart, 2009).

Similarly, recent empirical evidence suggests that CRM might reduce people’s willingness to make direct cash donations to charities, since people feel that through supporting CRM activities they have fulfilled their philanthropic duties (Frieswick, 2009; Lichtenstein, Drumwright and Braig, 2004; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988).

1 Though several marketing authors define CRM stressing the role of the revenue-producing characteristics of the relevant campaigns, we prefer to use the more general term transaction to include monetary and non-monetary transactions. Monetary transactions involve a donation when consumers purchase the product/service, whereas non-monetary transactions involve donations when consumers exhibit non-purchase marketing related behavior, for example “likes” on Facebook posts,
According to Eikenberry (2009, p. 54), “...consumption philanthropy lulls people into a false sense of doing good through their purchases”. Following these concerns, websites have emerged ([http://buylesscrap.org/](http://buylesscrap.org/)) urging people to stop consuming products tied to CRM campaigns and start donating directly to causes.

In all, corporate corruption scandals, accusations of corporate hypocrisy (Frynas, 2005), and anxiety for contemporary life leads to be sceptical of a firm’s reasons for engaging in corporate social responsibility initiatives (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Hillenbrand, Money, & Ghobadian, 2011; Wagner, Lutz and Weitz, 2009). This is especially the case with CRM, a concept that has been the source of considerable controversy in the academic and the business literature (Eikenberry, 2009; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Compared to other corporate social responsibility initiatives (e.g., philanthropy), CRM is especially vulnerable to raising suspiciousness about the motives of firms engaging in it (Barone, Miyazaki and Taylor, 2000). This vulnerability stems from CRM’s core philosophy, namely, the tying of product sales with donations to causes (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988).

Several researchers have pointed out the importance of perceptions of a company’s motivation to engage in CRM campaigns (e.g., Barone, Miyazaki and Taylor 2000; Barone, Norman and Miyazaki, 2007; Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006). Barone, Miyazaki and Taylor (2000), for instance, provide empirical evidence that CRM's influence on choice is dependent on the perceived motivation underlying the company's CRM efforts. Notwithstanding the importance of CRM-induced attributions in understanding how s respond to CRM initiatives, current research is silent with regard to how managers can design CRM campaigns that can generate less
suspiciousness, namely more positive, values-centered attributions and less negative, self-centered CRM-induced attributions.

To this end, the primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of different types of CRM quantifiers on s’ perceptions of a company’s motivation to support a social cause. To the best of our knowledge, the effectiveness of donation quantifiers against suspiciousness has yet to be examined in a single study. This is especially true in the context of transaction-based CRM, probably the most widely employed CRM implementation strategy today (Berglind and Nakata, 2005; Liu and Ko, 2011). This study builds on previous work on CSR from the perspective of stakeholders (Hillenbrand et al., 2011; Walsh, Mitchell, Jackson, & Beatty, 2009) CSR attributional processes (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006) and on the role of structural elements of CRM activities on behavior (e.g., Pracejus, Olsen and Brown, 2003; Grau and Folse, 2007; Tangari et al., 2010). It contributes to the current literature by investigating whether and which of the three most prevalent types of CRM donation quantifiers have an effect on s’ CRM-induced attributions as well as how they compare against one of the most widespread CSR activities, corporate philanthropy.

The paper is set out as follows: The following section of the paper presents the study constructs and the research hypotheses. The third section of the paper demonstrates the study methodology. Section four contains data analyses and results. The discussion of the findings and their implications for theory and practice appear in the fifth section of the manuscript, whereas the paper concludes with a presentation of the study limitations and suggestions for future research.
2. Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development

In a recent study, Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) suggest that “…the next key challenge of CSR communication is how to minimize stakeholder skepticism” (p.9). Similarly, Hillenbrand et al. (2011) note that CSR activities may backfire if stakeholders do not infer genuine motives. Barone, Miyazaki and Taylor (2000) also argue that, s’ perceptions of the underlying motives for a firm supporting a cause, that is, whether the efforts are designed to benefit the cause or to exploit the cause for the benefit of the company, are important determinants of customer responsiveness. Therefore, communicating CRM initiatives in a way that promotes favorable CRM-induced attributions is thought to be important both in minimizing customer scepticism and increasing acceptance.

2.1 CSR Attributions

Recent research shows that customer CSR-induced attributional processes are more complex than once believed and that customers differentiate between four types of motives (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006). Values-driven motives relate to benevolence-motivated giving. Stakeholder-driven motives relate to supporting social causes because of pressure from stakeholders. Strategic-driven motives relate to attaining business goals while benefitting the cause. Finally, egoistic-driven-motives relate to exploiting the cause rather than helping it (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006).

According to Vlachos et al. (2009), customers are likely to accept attributions of values-driven motives because these types of motives signal a company character that is caring and benevolent. Correspondence theory provides theoretical support for these effects (Jones and Davis, 1965). In particular, values-driven motives are
correspondent attributions, representing the true ‘feelings’ of the company investing in social issues, and are viewed positively.

On the other hand, customers are likely to view stakeholder-driven motives negatively, as they believe the company is acting out of sheer pressure from stakeholders and fear that a company’s worthy programs may disappear in the next downturn (Franklin, 2008). According to correspondence theory, stakeholder-driven attributions are non-correspondent, since they lead to a behavior that is in contrast with the company’s true dispositions and are therefore viewed negatively.

Strategic-driven motives, i.e., motives that relate to typical business performance goals, are likely to be viewed by customers either in a legitimate or unresponsive manner. If the cause-related marketing activity is seen as just another traditional promotional activity, customers’ attitudes towards the company are likely to be either positive (given that companies survival depends on keeping s using promotional activities), or remain unchanged (Vlachos et al., 2009). At the same time, customers may not like profit-maximizing organisations to interfere with moral issues. For example, in a recent study that follows a game-theory approach, findings suggest that after affiliating with a cause-related marketing project, companies will probably increase the prices of not just the products directly affiliated with the campaign, but also of other non-affiliated products (Krishna and Rajan, 2009). The same authors note that, “…actions of cause marketing firms should be looked on with some skepticism by customers and government officials—although the firms may be helping with charitable causes, they are also using cause marketing to increase their own prices and profits” (p. 1479).

Finally, egoistic attributions relate to attributing the firm’s involvement to more blatant self-centered reasons, such as, taking advantage of the cause or pocketing the
money (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006). According to Vlachos et al. (2009, p. 172), “…firms with egoistic-driven motives pursue excessive profiteering and are not reciprocal with respect to causes”. Therefore, it is likely that customers will view cause-related behaviors with egoistic-driven motives as unethical and manipulative, rendering negative evaluations of the company.

2.2 CRM Quantifiers

At present, there is no single exhaustive typology of CRM quantifiers that can be found in the literature. However, based on previous studies and current business practice, three types of donation quantifiers seem to be more prevalent among companies implementing transaction-based CRM activities: (a) monetary specific (donating a specific amount of money for every product sold); (b) in-kind (donating an item of use for every product sold) and (c) vague monetary (donating vague, i.e., non-explicitly stated amounts). As an example of an in-kind donation quantifier, D.W. Morgan in partnership with Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) foundation, donated six meals for every client shipment delivered in February 2011. General Mills-Yoplait, partner with Susan G. Komen for the Cure in the Save Lids to Save Lives campaign promising to donate $.10 for each pink lid redeemed by December 31, 2011, representing an example of a monetary specific quantifier.

The Cause Marketing Forum (www.causemarketingforum.com) compiled a list of several transaction and non-transaction-based CRM campaigns. Though this list is not a census of the whole universe of CRM campaigns it still provides some further evidence establishing the prevalence of the selected CRM quantifiers in business practice. Companies on this list seem to primarily invest in “monetary specific”
quantifiers and “corporate philanthropy” campaigns followed by investments in “in-kind” and “vague” quantifier.

A number of studies have already examined the effectiveness of several structural elements of CRM activities, namely messages that describe the activity presented to the customer. For example, Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) examined the role of product type, while Ellen, Mohr and Webb (2000), in the context of a non-transaction-based CRM campaign, examined, among others, the benefits of asking customers to make product rather than cash contributions to a disaster-related cause marketing campaign. Similarly, Polonsky and Speed (2001) investigated the influence of donation amount on customer perceptions. In another study, Grau and Folse (2007) found that local donations and positive message framing serve as effective message cues to produce favorable CRM evaluations, especially among low involvement customers. More recently, Tangari et al. (2010) further stressed the importance of the structural elements of the CRM activity on customer evaluations, uncovering the role of the temporal framing of the CRM activity (i.e., proximal or distal) and interactions with a relevant customer trait namely temporal orientation.

Currently, only few studies have examined the role of CRM quantifiers on customer attitudinal and behavioral responses (Ellen, Mohr and Webb, 2000; Pracejus, Olsen and Brown, 2003; Grau and Folse, 2007). For example, Pracejus, Olsen and Brown (2003) take on a public policy perspective on CRM and distinguish between different types of monetary CRM quantifiers (i.e., abstract, estimable and calculable). They find that the vast majority of CRM monetary quantifiers are abstract and that different, but legally equivalent CRM monetary quantifiers, result in large differences in mean perceived donation level. Grau, Folse and Pirsch (2007), using a cross-sectional survey design, examined the influence of how the donation is
quantified, the size of the donation relative to the price of the product, the presence of donation deadlines and caps, and the level of promotion used to publicize the campaign, on customer perceptions.

2.3 Hypotheses

We build on the above literature and examine the role of the three different types of CRM quantifiers (i.e., monetary-specific, in-kind, and vague-monetary on CSR attributions). Furthermore, in order to provide a more rigorous examination of the effectiveness of CRM donation quantifiers, one has to consider other CSR related company activities also aiming at improving company goodwill. Corporate philanthropy is one of the most widespread CSR activities (Brammer and Millington, 2008; Wang, Choi and Li, 2008), which due to its non-transactional-based nature (i.e., company is promising to contribute to a good cause without imposing this dilemma directly on customers through the purchase of products), can be thought to promote more favorable or less unfavorable company attributions than transaction-based CRM initiatives.

We expect customers to be more favorably predisposed towards the in-kind CRM quantifier especially when compared to (a) the currency-specific and (b) the vague monetary scenarios. It is likely that the in-kind CRM quantifier, generates perceptions among customers that the company involved in such a CRM campaign exerts extra effort in helping the cause, at least when compared to just giving money (i.e., the monetary CRM quantifiers). According to research, customers are willing to reward firms for extra effort, even when utilitarian related factors (e.g., product quality) are not improved (Morales, 2005).
The theoretical support for this position, can also be found in behavioral decision theories, which suggest that the effort directed towards some stimulus psychologically differs from equivalent amounts spent using money. The idea is that our society values doing more than paying, since exerting effort triggers different motivational inferences than giving money (Reed, Aquino and Levy, 2007). There are cases where giving money even leads to negative attributions. For example, Webley and Wilson (1989), find that money is not a universally acceptable medium of exchange, further providing empirical evidence on the unacceptability of giving money as a gift. They find that the major reasons for the unacceptability of money as a gift relate to the time and effort that needs to be spent on selecting a present.

More recently, Reed, Aquino and Levy (2007) report that, especially for people with high self-important moral identity, the act of giving time versus money is perceived as being more moral. Further theoretical support for the superiority of the in-kind CRM quantifier scenario can be also found in the literature examining the psychological consequences of money. According to Vohs, Mead and Goode (2006), reminders of money compared to non-reminders of money lead to more negative predispositions and behaviors, like reduced helpfulness towards others (operationalized as monetary donations), and preferences of working alone and putting more physical distance towards others. The major thesis of the same study was that money likely evokes a view that everyone fends for him-of herself (see Frank, Gilovich and Regan, 1993 for similar results). Based on these discussions we assume, that:

**H1:** The in-kind CRM quantifier when compared to the currency-specific monetary CRM quantifier will generate (a) less self-centered CRM-induced
motives (i.e., less egoistic/strategic-driven motives) and (b) more other-centered motives (i.e., that is more values/stakeholder-driven motives.

A similar pattern of results should occur when comparing the in-kind CRM quantifier with the vague monetary CRM quantifier. However, we expect more tempered results compared to the in-kind - monetary-specific dyad. The reason is that the vague monetary CRM quantifier only indirectly primes customers with money reminders. Therefore, we assume that:

\textit{H2: The in-kind CRM quantifier when compared to the vague monetary CRM quantifier will not generate (a) more self-centered CRM-induced motives (i.e., egoistic/strategic-driven motives and b) less other-centered motives (i.e., values/stakeholder-driven motives).}

Finally, we expect the in-kind CRM quantifier to perform worse than the corporate philanthropy scenario. Corporate philanthropy as a form of CSR is likely more positive in terms of attributions compared to CRM activities. The reason is that CRM activities have an inherently selling oriented nature compared to corporate philanthropy. Therefore, we assume that:

\textit{H3: The in-kind CRM quantifier when compared to the corporate philanthropy CSR type will generate a) more self-centered CRM-induced motives (i.e., egoistic/strategic-driven motives) and b) less other-centered motives (i.e., values/stakeholder-driven motives).}
Given that the monetary-specific CRM quantifier directly primes respondents with money reminders, it is likely that it will generate more self-centered motives. However, since (a) both scenarios prime respondents with money reminders, (b) the monetary-specific quantifier is more transparent when compared to the vague CRM quantifier (see Berglind and Nakata, 2005), and (c) customers exposed to the vague quantifier scenario, will probably overestimate the donation amount (see Pracejus, Olsen and Brown, 2003, and Polonsky and Speed, 2001) we expect the two scenarios to generate the same level of other-centered motives. Based on the above, we assume that:

**H4: The currency-specific CRM quantifier when compared to the vague monetary CRM quantifier will a) generate more self-centered CRM-induced motives (i.e., egoistic/strategic-driven motives) and b) generate the same level of other-centered motives (i.e., values/stakeholder-driven motives).**

Finally, we expect the corporate philanthropy scenario to be superior when compared to both the currency-specific and the vague quantifier. Again the rationale for this prediction builds on the different philosophies of these two different forms of CSR (Barone, Norman and Miyazaki, 2007; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). CRM activities by their own nature are more likely to be seen as cause-exploitative rather than cause-beneficial at least when compared to a corporate philanthropy form of CSR. Therefore we assume that:

**H5: The corporate philanthropy initiative when compared to the vague monetary CRM quantifier will generate) less self-centered CRM-induced motives, that is less egoistic - , and strategic-driven motives and b) more or the**
same other-centered motives, that is more or the same values-, and
stakeholder-driven motives.

H6: The corporate philanthropy initiative when compared to the currency-specific CRM quantifier will generate a) less self-centered CRM-induced motives, that is less egoistic -, and strategic-driven motives and b) more or the same other-centered motives, that is more or the same values-, and stakeholder-driven motives.

3. Materials & Methods

We opted for a real customer product or service instead of a fictitious one in order to increase the external validity of our findings and following this decision we sought for a company who had in place both CSR and CRM initiatives (quantifiers) similar to those suggested in the literature. Of the identified companies only one FMCG company was running at the time of the study both CSR (corporate philanthropy) and CRM (monetary specific) initiatives in the context of Special Olympics 2011. This company employed all four types of CRM implementation strategies suggested by Liu and Ko (2011) (i.e., sponsoring, transaction-based, joint promotion, and employee volunteering). Consistent with the way we defined CRM in the beginning of this article, we focused on the transaction-based CRM implementation strategy.

Based on previous literature on donation quantifiers (e.g., Pracejus, Olsen and Brown, 2003), current business practice, discussions with marketing executives of the partnering company, the idiosyncrasies of the Special Olympics cause, and the experimental nature of the study we differentiated between three major types of CRM
quantifiers: a) abstract monetary quantifiers (i.e., Company donated a portion of the sales of every product sold), b) specific monetary quantifiers (i.e., Company donated a portion of the sales (X cents) of every product sold), and c) non-monetary/in-kind vague quantifiers (i.e., Company donated [in-kind descriptor here] for every product sold). During the Special Olympics the company actually implemented the currency-specific monetary CRM quantifier scenario and the corporate philanthropy scenario.

We developed four scenarios (see appendix A for scenarios used): three CRM scenarios that differed on the CRM quantifier used (i.e., vague monetary, currency-specific monetary, vague in-kind) and a pure corporate philanthropy scenario (i.e., Company donated X euros) that did not use a donation to a cause as a purchase incentive. It should be noted that given the unique characteristics of the partnering cause (i.e., Special Olympics), and budgetary implications of the CRM quantifiers, care was taken so as to create an in-kind CRM quantifier scenario equivalent, cost-wise, to the corporate philanthropy and the currency-specific monetary quantifier scenario. We checked the external validity of these scenarios with the company. After minor adjustments based on expert opinion, we pre-tested all 3 scenarios and the corporate philanthropy scenario for communication clarity. Based on qualitative comments from respondents we finalized all scenarios.

The realism of the scenarios used were further ascertained using two seven-point Likert items (e.g., “The above scenario describing [COMPANY’s] philanthropic activity appears truthful” and “It is hard for me to imagine [COMPANY] implementing such an activity) (Ellen, Webb and Mohr, 2006). Respondents rate the scenarios as realistic (a median of 5.0/7.0 for the first item and 4.0/7.0 for the second item). Interestingly, respondents rate the in-kind quantifier scenario as being more realistic than the currency-specific monetary CRM quantifier (t=2.62).
As mentioned in the literature section, we expect that corporate philanthropy will outperform CRM quantifiers. As such, we use this as a manipulation check of the three CRM scenarios. That is, confirmation of the superiority of corporate philanthropy across all three CRM quantifiers is an additional indication of the external validity of the three CRM scenarios. To operationalize CRM-induced attributions, we draw on the attributions scale proposed by Ellen, Webb and Mohr (2006) (see Appendix B). Finally, in order to control for brand-related confounds we included brand trust as covariate. We measured brand trust using five items drawn from Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002).

To examine the research question at hand we employed a single-factor between-subjects design. We collected data using a mall intercept face-to-face personal interviewing method, employing six field workers trained on survey methodology. The mall intercept study is a more in-depth data collection procedure, especially suited for our study, since it allowed us to ensure that respondents clearly understood the scenarios used (Keen et al., 2004). Data collection took place both on weekdays and weekends, during a mix of daytime and nighttime hours, during the Special Olympics 2011 games. Field-workers were instructed to visit five geographic locations considered as representative of the metropolitan area that hosted the Special Olympics.

Data collection produced a total of 605 unique responses, comprised of 205 respondents for the monetary-specific condition, 200 respondents for the corporate philanthropy condition, 100 respondents for the vague monetary condition, and 100 respondents for the in-kind condition. The unbalanced sample design was due to the vested interest of the selected company in collecting more responses for the two

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2 Reliabilities for all four constructs across all four groups are greater than .80, with the exception of the reliability of the Egoistic-Driven construct measured in the vague monetary quantifier scenario. However, the composite reliability for this construct is greater than .6
Running Head: Cause-Marketing & Customer Attributions of Corporate Motives

initiatives actually implemented during the Special Olympics. Without significant
differences across the four conditions, 52% of the respondents were men, 51% and
21% belonged in the “25-44” and “45-64” age groups respectively, 40% were
married, whereas 55% hold a bachelor’s degree.

4. Results

We tested the hypotheses within the framework of multiple-group mean and
covariance structures analyses (MACS) following the guidelines of Little (1997).
First, we test for construct comparability across the four scenarios employing a
modeling rationale. Then, after establishing measurement equivalence we test for
latent means differences using a statistical rationale (Little, 1997). With a modeling
rationale, model constraints are evaluated using fit indices, especially if one works
with large models with numerous constrained parameters. A modeling rationale is
more appropriate in testing the measurement level whereas testing for hypotheses
should be done using a statistical rationale (Little, 1997).

For testing metric and scalar invariance between the four scenarios we use the
precise criteria suggested by Cheung and Rensvold (2002) and Little (1997).
Specifically, according to Little (1997) the tenability of measurement equivalence
using the modeling rationale may be justified primarily, if: a) overall model fit is
acceptable, b) the difference in fit between the invariant model and the non-invariant
model is negligible [e.g., $\Delta \text{Rho} < 0.022$ (McGaw and Joreskog, 1971), $\Delta \text{Rho} < 0.05$
(Tucker and Lewis, 1973), $\Delta \text{CFI} < 0.01$ (Cheung and Rensvold 2002)].

We fitted the four-factor attributions model as an unconstrained combined
multiple-group model, controlling for brand trust effects and several demographics
(i.e., gender, age, education, marital status). Model fit is acceptable indicating
configural invariance (i.e., the general structure is tenable across the four groups) \( (\chi^2(404) = 1605.7, \ p<0.00) \), RMSEA=0.04, Lo90=0.038-Hi90=0.044, CFI=0.908, SRMR=0.062). To test for measurement equivalence, we imposed invariance to the loadings across all four groups.

The overall fit for this model was still acceptable \( (\chi^2(374) = 1659.2, \ p<0.00) \), RMSEA=0.04, Lo90=0.038-Hi90=0.044, SRMR=0.062, CFI=0.906, \( \Delta \)CFI=0.002). To test for scalar equivalence, we imposed invariance to the intercepts across all four groups. The overall fit for this model was still acceptable \( (\chi^2(332) = 1824.7, \ p<0.00) \), RMSEA=0.044, Lo90=0.04-Hi90=0.046, CFI=0.89, SRMR=0.06, \( \Delta \)CFI=0.014). Therefore on the basis of a modeling rationale the results indicate that constructs are comparable across the four groups (Little, 1997). Based on these results we can test our substantive hypotheses, namely the equality of latent means across the four groups (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 here

Results suggest that there was a significant mean difference between the in-kind CRM quantifier and the currency-specific monetary CRM quantifier in the predicted direction (see table 1). Specifically, the in-kind quantifier when compared to the currency-specific monetary quantifier seems to generate less self-centered motives. Therefore H1a is supported. On the other hand, H1b is rejected. Our prediction was that the in-kind quantifier would generate more values-, and stakeholder-driven motives. The results indicate that the two scenarios generate the same level other-centered motives. In all, the in-kind quantifier seems to be superior from the currency-specific monetary quantifier.
In addition, H2a is supported since results indicate that the in-kind CRM quantifier when compared to the vague monetary quantifier generates the same level of egoistic-driven motives but less strategic-driven motives. H2b is also supported since the in-kind CRM quantifier when compared to the vague monetary quantifier generates the same level of other-centered motives. Therefore, one can conclude that the in-kind scenario seems to be superior from the vague monetary quantifier.

Moreover, we have to partially accept H3a. Specifically, our prediction was that the corporate philanthropy CSR type will generate the same level of egoistic and strategic-driven motives. This prediction fails to be rejected only in the case of the strategic-driven motives. The corporate philanthropy CSR type seems to generate less egoistic-driven motives but the same level of strategic-driven motives. We also have to reject H3b since results indicate that the corporate philanthropy CSR type generates more stakeholder and values-driven motives. Based on these results one can conclude that the corporate philanthropy CSR type is superior from the in-kind CRM quantifier.

H4a is partially supported. Specifically, we find that the currency-specific quantifier when compared to the vague monetary quantifier generates more egoistic-driven motives but the same strategic-driven motives. Furthermore, H4b is fully supported, since as predicted the two monetary CRM quantifier scenarios generate the same level of other-centered motives. In all, based on these results one can conclude that the vague monetary quantifier is superior from the currency-specific CRM quantifier.

In addition, H5a is fully supported. As predicted the corporate philanthropy CSR type when compared to the vague monetary quantifier generates less self-centered motives. Similarly, H5b is fully supported, since the corporate philanthropy CSR type generates the same stakeholder-driven motives and more values-driven
motives. Therefore, the corporate philanthropy CSR type is superior from the vague monetary quantifier.

Moreover, H6a is fully supported. The corporate philanthropy CSR type when compared to the currency-specific CRM quantifier generates less self-centered motives. Finally, H6b also is fully supported. As predicted the corporate philanthropy CSR type generates the same stakeholder-driven motives and more values-driven motives. Therefore, one can conclude that the corporate philanthropy CSR type is superior from the currency-specific monetary quantifier.

5. Discussion and Implications

In a recent special issue on CSR published in the International Journal of Management Reviews, Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) consider CSR communication and unfavorable CSR attributions as major impediments in companies’ efforts to maximize business benefits from their CSR investment. They call for more research in examining how companies can communicate CSR in such a way as to better manage stakeholders’ negative CSR-induced attributions. In this study we focus on an important component of the CRM message namely CRM quantifiers, and examine what types of CRM quantifiers are more likely to generate less self-centered and more other-centered motives.

Our findings indicate that CRM quantifiers do not seem to differ when it comes to managing values-driven motives and/or stakeholder-driven motives (i.e., other-centered motives). On the other hand, the role of CRM quantifiers is probably more important in managing self-centered motives (i.e., egoistic and strategic-driven motives). It is of interest to note that, according to recent research findings, strategic-driven motives are not necessarily unwelcomed by customers (e.g., Ellen, Webb and
Mohr, 2006). Similarly, other empirical findings indicate that stakeholder-driven motives are also not necessarily welcomed by customers (e.g., Vlachos et al., 2009).

One of the factors that will most likely determine the positivity or the negativity of these two constructs is the outcome variable, namely the strategic goal the company is trying to accomplish (i.e., purchase intentions, recommendation intentions, trust etc.). Therefore, managers before deciding on what type of CRM quantifier to use, they should first take into account that different types of CSR-induced motives may be viewed negatively or positively depending on the outcome variable. For example, if a company wants to focus on building trust, then probably only the communication of values-driven motives can do the job (Vlachos et al., 2009).

Our findings indicate that different types of CRM quantifiers are more likely to have a differential impact on egoistic and strategic-driven motives. Specifically, based on the results of the study, communicating in-kind CRM quantifiers should be preferred by managers as they create less negative attributions compared to all other types of CRM communications messages.

Another interesting finding of the study is that the corporate philanthropy CSR type performs better when compared to all CRM quantifiers. Interestingly, we find that corporate philanthropy is capable of generating more values-driven and less egoistic-driven motives, a very desirable outcome goal for every CSR campaign. A conjecture that can be made out of these findings is that companies communicating in-kind corporate philanthropy initiatives would be in an advantageous position compared to companies communicating monetary corporate philanthropy/and or CRM initiatives. However, as noted this is a conjecture that needs to be more formally tested against empirical data.
6. Limitations

Despite the potential contribution of the present study to a better understanding of the effectiveness of the various CRM/CSR quantifiers, a number of limitations call for a cautious generalization of the study findings, while open interesting avenues for future research in this area. First, the in-kind CRM quantifier scenario used was a vague rather than a specific in-kind CRM quantifier. Arguably CRM initiatives that are more transparent are likely to generate more favorable attributions, since they leave less room for suspicion. For example, recently Pampers launched the ‘1 Pack = 1Vaccine’ CRM initiative promising to give tetanus vaccines to expectant women in developing countries.

Future research could examine whether more transparent in-kind CRM quantifiers hold the potential to generate less egoistic-, and strategic-driven motives. Second future research should focus on more message content components of the CRM initiative. For example, building on regulatory fit theory one can examine whether prevention versus promotion-focused framing of the CRM initiative, in conjunction with different types of CRM quantifiers, could generate more favorable or unfavorable attributions. For example Unilever in order to promote its partnership with the United Nations’ World Food Program, uses terms like “preventing hanger”, clearly a prevention-focused framing of the CSR initiative.

Furthermore, future research should examine what types of CSR initiatives and corresponding components of the message content are capable in generating more values-driven motives. In this study we find that probably due to its sales-relevant nature CRM is not that useful for managers wanting to manage values-driven
attributions. Finally, an important limitation of the study that can be addressed through future research is that we cannot necessarily generalize our findings across other product categories. We tested our hypotheses in the context of a relatively inexpensive FMCG frivolous product category, during the 2011 Special Olympics. Future studies should replicate our findings across product categories and cause contexts.

References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Egoistic-Driven Motives (a)</th>
<th>Strategic-Driven Motives (a)</th>
<th>Stakeholder-Driven Motives (b)</th>
<th>Values-Driven Motives (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Kind vs. Currency Specific Monetary (H1)</strong></td>
<td>In-Kind &lt; Currency Specific Monetary .46, z=2.44, p=.015</td>
<td>In-Kind &lt; Currency Specific Monetary .53, z=3.17, p=.00</td>
<td>In-Kind = Currency Specific Monetary .25, z=1.36, p=.17</td>
<td>In-Kind = Currency Specific Monetary .10, z=.53, p=.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Kind vs. Vague Monetary (H2)</strong></td>
<td>In-Kind = Vague Monetary .04, z=.23, p=.87</td>
<td>In-Kind &lt; Vague Monetary .74, z=3.98, p=.00</td>
<td>In-Kind = Vague Monetary .19, z=.84, p=.40</td>
<td>In-Kind = Vague Monetary .06, z=.24, p=.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Kind vs. Corporate Philanthropy (H3)</strong></td>
<td>In-Kind &gt; Corporate Philanthropy -.42, z=-2.20, p=.03</td>
<td>In-Kind = Corporate Philanthropy .04, z=.24, p=.81</td>
<td>In-Kind &lt; Corporate Philanthropy .32, z=1.80, p=.07</td>
<td>In-Kind &lt; Corporate Philanthropy .73, z=3.93, p=.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currency Specific Monetary vs. Vague Monetary (H4)</strong></td>
<td>Currency Specific Monetary &gt; Vague Monetary -.43, z=-2.15, p=.03</td>
<td>Currency Specific Monetary = Vague Monetary .21, z=1.32, p=.19</td>
<td>Currency Specific Monetary = Vague Monetary -.06, z=-.29, p=.77</td>
<td>Currency Specific Monetary = Vague Monetary -.045, z=-.22, p=.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Philanthropy vs. Vague Monetary (H5)</strong></td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &lt; Vague Monetary .45, z=2.28, p=.02</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &lt; Vague Monetary .70, z=4.49, p=.00</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy = Vague Monetary -.125, z=-.65, p=.52</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &gt; Vague Monetary -.67, z=3.24, p=.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Philanthropy vs. Currency Specific Monetary (H6)</strong></td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &lt; Currency Specific Monetary .88, z=6.15, p=.00</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &lt; Currency Specific Monetary .49, z=3.68, p=.00</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy = Currency Specific Monetary -.07, z=-.49, p=.63</td>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy &gt; Currency Specific Monetary -.63, z=-4.07, p=.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A. Scenarios used in the study

Currency-Specific Monetary Quantifier Scenario: During May, [COMPANY/BRAND NAME] donated a portion of the sales (X cents) of every [FMCG BRAND/PRODUCT] sold, in support of athletes participating in Special Olympics.

In-Kind Quantifier Scenario: During May, [COMPANY/BRAND NAME] donated sports equipment for every [FMCG BRAND/PRODUCT] sold during the opening ceremony of Special Olympics, in support of athletes participating in Special Olympics.

Vague Monetary Quantifier Scenario: During May, [COMPANY/BRAND NAME] donated a portion of the sales of every [FMCG BRAND/PRODUCT] sold, in support of athletes participating in Special Olympics.

Corporate Philanthropy Scenario: During May, [COMPANY/BRAND NAME] donated X Euros in support of athletes participating in Special Olympics.

Appendix B. Scales

Values-Driven Motives (a=.92\(^1\), .91\(^2\), .95\(^3\), .90\(^4\))
- They feel morally obligated to help
- They have a long-term interest in the community
- They are trying to give something back to the community
- Their owners believe in this cause

Stakeholder-Driven Motives (a=.86, .87, .93, .80)
- They feel society in general wants and expects it
- They feel their employees want and expect it
- They feel their customers want and expect it

Strategic-Driven Motives (a=.87, .80, .85, .86)
- They will keep more customers by engaging in this activity
- They will get more customers by engaging in this activity
- They hope to increase profits by engaging in this activity
- They feel their customers want and expect it

Egoistic-Driven Motives (a=.88, .86, .45\(^5\), .86)
- They are taking advantage of the Special Olympics non-profit organisation to help their own business
- They are taking advantage of a philanthropic cause to help their own business
- They want to gain publicity

\(^1\) Currency-Specific Monetary Quantifier Scenario, \(^2\) In-Kind Quantifier Scenario, \(^3\) Vague Monetary Quantifier Scenario, \(^4\) Corporate Philanthropy Scenario, \(^5\) Composite Reliability (Joreskog Rho) = .63, AVE = .39