

OVERCOMING SKEPTICISM TOWARD CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING CLAIMS: THE
ROLE OF CONSUMERS' ATTRIBUTIONS OF COMPANY MOTIVES AND CONSUMERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY CREDIBILITY

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Media and Information Studies – Doctor of Philosophy

2016

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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The present study is designed to understand the circumstances under which a cause-related marketing (CRM) ad would be most effective for skeptical consumers and how advertisers can avoid unnecessarily undermining the credibility of their CRM claims. To answer these questions, this study looks at two situational factors that might affect the outcome of a CRM ad: statements about a sponsoring company's reason for supporting a social cause and types of appeals (emotional or informational). Moreover, this study explores how consumers with high and low levels of skepticism differ in their responses to CRM ads. While existing CRM research has been conducted in traditional media settings, the present study examines whether certain contextual factors or type of communication strategy of CRM on social network sites (SNSs) such as Facebook increase consumer perceptions of sponsoring company's credibility, thus encouraging consumers to become members of brand pages on SNSs. The present study, 409 college students were assigned to one of four experimental conditions: (1) an emotional appeal CRM with statements of firm and public-serving benefit motivation; (2) an emotional appeal CRM with statements of public-serving benefit motivation; (3) an informational appeal CRM with statements of firm- and public-serving benefit motivation; and (4) an informational appeal CRM with statements of public-serving benefit motivation. Participants were then asked why they believed the company chose to sponsor such a social

cause and the extent to which they perceived the company as credible. This study also measured consumers' intentions to join a brand page on Facebook.

The results show that an acknowledgement of the presence of firm-serving motivation can be an effective societal marketing strategy to reduce consumer skepticism of firm's motives. The procedure by which a consumer evaluates the motives of a company, together with the consumer's perceptions of those motives, determines the effectiveness of the company's CRM ads. A highly skeptical consumer is less doubting of a company's intention behind its support of social causes when the company honestly states firm-serving benefit as well as public-serving benefits in its CRM ads. Finally, a consumer's perception of a company's credibility has a great impact on the consumer's intention to join that company's brand page.

The findings from this study are meaningful, as they show situational skepticism produced by message features such as acknowledgement of firm-serving benefits in CRM significantly influence whether a consumer's interpretation of a company's motive is positive or skeptical. In addition to the situational skepticism, whether the consumers personally tends to be highly skeptical in general predicts the degree to which the consumer is likely to generate positive versus negative attributions of the company's support of a social cause. The study provides insight on how selecting better contextual factors such as acknowledgement of firm-serving benefits can be an effective strategy to capture consumer's trust and to build a strong and positive CRM ad that holds the consumer's attention.

ABSTRACT

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The present study investigates the circumstances under which a cause-related marketing (CRM) ad would be most effective for skeptical consumers and how advertisers can avoid unnecessarily undermining the credibility of their CRM claims. To answer these questions, this study looks at two situational factors that might interfere with the intended outcome of a CRM ad on social network sites (SNSs): statements about the motivation of the sponsoring company for supporting a social cause and types of appeals (emotional or informational). Moreover, this study explores how highly skeptical consumers and consumers with lower levels of skepticism differ in their responses to CRM ads. While existing CRM research has been conducted in traditional media settings, the present study examines whether certain contextual factors of CRM on SNSs increase consumer perceptions of a sponsoring company's credibility, thus encouraging consumers to become members of brand pages on SNSs.

The present study employed a two (statements of motivations: both of firm- and public-serving benefits vs. public-serving benefit only) by two (type of appeal: emotional vs. informational) by two (skepticism: high vs. low) between-subjects design. An online experiment with 409 college student participants shows that acknowledgements of the presence of firm serving benefit motivation as well as public serving benefit motivation can be an effective societal marketing strategy to reduce consumer skepticism of a firm's motives. The procedure by which a consumer perceives and evaluates the motives of a company determines the

effectiveness of the company's CRM ads. Highly skeptical consumers are less doubting about a company's intention behind its support of social causes when the company honestly states firm-serving benefits as well as public-serving benefits in its CRM ads. Finally, a consumer's perception of company's credibility has a great impact on the consumer's intention to join that company's brand page.

The findings from this study could help advertisers build strong and positive CRM campaigns that hold consumers' attention. Along with the practical implications, this study extends previous literature by directing academic attention to consumers' perceived attribution of sponsoring company's motives behind its support of a social cause as a psychological mechanism that can help predict their favorable responses to the brand pages featuring CRM on SNSs. This study also advances theories about consumers' defensive mechanism in coping with marketers' persuasion strategies by showing that consumer skepticism can be both an enduring trait and a temporary state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of many experiences I have encountered at Michigan State University from dozens of remarkable individuals whom I wish to acknowledge.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Stephen Lacy, for his excellent guidance, sincere mentorship, scholarly input, constant support, and patience. He has been supportive since the days I began working on the theory building study. I remember he used to say something like “why the study matters for communication science and why the study matters for the wider world” to spur me build the foundation needed not only in the doctoral program but also in careers beyond the program. Ever since, Dr. Lacy has supported me academically and emotionally through the rough road to finish this dissertation. With his great wisdom and knowledge, Dr. Lacy helped me come up with the dissertation topic and guided me over almost a year of development. And during the most difficult times when I was writing this dissertation, he gave me the moral support and encouragement that made me remain confident and overcome the difficulties I encountered.

I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Daniel E. Bergan, Dr. Jingbo Meng, and Dr. Ashley Sanders-Jackson. I felt truly privileged to be guided by these greatest scholars in this communication field. With a gentle smile and a sober assessment of the situation, Dr. Bergan provided many insightful suggestions and comments on the statistical analysis of this research. Dr. Meng’s kind advice enlightened my way of critical thinking about communication research. Finally, Dr. Sanders-Jackson consistently shared her expertise in experimental research to enhance my work and provided invaluable comments on my writing.

Special thanks also go to Dr. Geri Alumit Zeldes, my first mentor. During the last five years, Dr. Zeldes has been an inspiration on how to make things “harmonious.” Her adorable children—Jordyn, Gabriel, Tommy, and Eli— have been sources of love and energy during my doctoral life.

Further, my deepest thanks are to my mother and father who have always heartened and encouraged me. They celebrated the completion of this research as if it were their own. I especially thank my mother for her love and unconditioned support.

Finally, I would like to express my love and gratitude to Vincent—the love of my life—for his love, encouragement, willingness, and even great enthusiasm to support me personally and professionally. He is a constant source of my strength and happiness so that I could stay healthy mentally and physically throughout this process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many agreed that consumers have favorable attitudes toward companies that support a cause and that these attitudes have the potential to positively impact purchase decisions (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000). Accordingly, companies have paid attention to their reputations with the public and have spent considerable effort in trying to improve their images, using societal marketing approaches such as cause-related marketing (CRM) that ties a brand or a company to a social cause via consumers purchase (Varadarajan and Menon 1988).

Recently, companies are using social network sites (SNSs) to promote CRM. Unlike traditional CRM, CRM on SNSs does not require consumers to purchase products. Instead, marketers attempt to encourage consumers to become members of the company's brand pages (Morrissey 2009). On SNSs, particularly on Facebook, consumers can become members of brand pages by clicking "Like" button, thereby becoming fans. The Syncapse report (2013) found that compared to nonmembers, members on Facebook brand pages spent \$116 more per year on the brands for which they were members. Furthermore, members were more likely to continue using the fanned brands, recommend these pages to their friends, and engage in brand activities. Accordingly, CRM can be strategically promoted to maximize membership of marketers' brand pages on SNSs.

However, even though CRM has become an increasingly popular marketing tool, consumers have become more suspicious of the motives of the company's supporting of a cause and discredit both the message and the company (Anuar and Mohamad 2012; Campbell and

Kirmanani 2000; Kim and Lee 2009; Szykman 2004; Szykman, Bloom, and Blazing 2004; Webb and Mohr 1998). Recent research by Insights in Marketing (2014) also demonstrated prevalent skepticism among consumers where it found that 69% of consumers surveyed disbelieved advertising claims.

It is noted that consumers use skepticism as a defensive mechanism to protect themselves from misleading and deceptive marketing practice (Darke and Ritchie 2007; Friestad and Wright 1994). Accordingly, skepticism has been considered as a powerful force that is capable of producing stubborn biases in judgment (Kramer 1998). For example, skepticism may lead consumers to make a simplistic attribution in their judgments about CRM plans, questioning whether a company's support of a social cause is designed to benefit the social cause itself with sincere social concerns or to serve the firm's benefit (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Webb and Mohr 1998). Thus, beyond simply whether a company supports social causes, consumer perceptions of why the company provides this support may be a key determinant of responsiveness to CRM (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Forehand and Grier 2003; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig 2004).

Given that most CRM has been promoted in terms of their benefits to society, highly skeptical consumers may be more doubtful about the company's ulterior motivations behind its societal marketing due to the contextual factor such as statement of society-serving motivation (Drumwright and Murphy 2001). On the other hand, skeptical consumers may be less questioning about the company's motivations when the company confesses self-serving motivation in CRM.

In addition, previous research suggests that skeptical consumers differ in their response to emotional versus informational appeals (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005). Since

consumers develop skepticism as they store knowledge about marketing tactics, certain factors of a message, such as society-serving motivations vs. self-serving motivations and emotional versus informational appeals can also heighten or reduce the level of skepticism (Forehand and Grier 2003). Thus, understanding what those factors are and how advertisers can avoid unnecessarily undermining the credibility of their CRM claims and their company is critical. Despite widespread occurrence and importance of consumer skepticism toward firm actions, studies on the determinants and consequences of consumer skepticism toward CRM are lacking.

This study explores two situational factors that might affect the intended outcome of a CRM ad: statements about a sponsoring company's reason for supporting a social cause and types of appeals (emotional or informational). In addition, consistent with research on the specific cognitive mechanisms consumers use to deal with persuasion, the current study experimentally examined the mediating role of consumer attribution of a sponsoring company's motivations in an attempt to explain whether motive attribution can provide the foundation for company credibility. While existing CRM research has been conducted in traditional media settings, the current study examines whether certain factors of CRM on SNSs increase consumer perceptions of a sponsoring company's credibility, thus encouraging consumers to become members of brand pages on SNSs.

The study's findings highlight the importance of the types of appeal and the presence of an advertiser's motivations through the creation of consumer perceptions of altruistic motives, which then result in consumers' perceptions of great company credibility and increased intention to become members of that company's brand page. Since capturing consumer trust is at the top of many company communication lists of objectives, this study will help advertisers build strong and positive CRM campaigns that make consumers stay engaged and pay attention. Along with

the practical implications, this study will extend previous literature by directing academic attention to consumers' perceived attribution as a psychological mechanism that can help predict their favorable responses to the brand pages featuring CRM on SNSs. Moreover, this study will contribute to advance theories about consumers' defensive mechanism by showing that consumer skepticism can be both an enduring trait and a temporary state.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM)

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has become the most practiced form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. CSR is the idea that a business has a duty to serve not only the financial interests of its stockholders but also society in general (Pearce and Robinson 2014). CSR embraces various activities by the firms, such as cause promotion, cause-related marketing, corporate social marketing, corporate philanthropy, and community volunteering (Lee et al. 2005; Seitanidi and Ryan 2007). Among the categories, CRM is the most commonly employed CSR (Kotler and Lee 2005), and the contributions by the marketers to the causes are tied to the actions of consumers, such as purchase (Seitanidi and Ryan 2007).

Varadarajan and Menon (1988) were one of the first to define CRM and suggested that it “is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a special amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives” (p. 60). Carringer (1994) defines CRM as “the joining together of a not-for-profit charity and a commercial company in an effort to raise funds and awareness of the for-profit partner” (p. 16). There is not a vast difference between two definitions, but the latter definition does more clearly identify that CRM involves complex benefits for causes beyond the generating of additional revenues (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000).

CRM comprises a specific type of corporate social initiative characterized by firm involvement in prosocial behavior through distinct programs designed to enhance the

sustainability and responsibility of its product (Winterich and Barone 2011). The distinctive characteristic of CRM is the firm's contribution to a selected cause being linked to consumers' engaging in revenue-producing trades with the firm. In CRM programs, firms focus on targeting causes that match their existing or potential consumer base and use these charities as the incentive or hook for consumers to buy the firm's product (Osterhus 1997).

CRM appears to benefit all three parties involved: the corporation, the nonprofit organization, and the consumer (Andreasen 1996). For the corporation, CRM can help differentiate a brand in the competition where products are largely similar in terms of quality and price (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Nelson, Kanso, and Levitt 2007). Since its introduction in 1981 by American Express, CRM steadily has increased as a strategic marketing tool for improving corporate performance while helping worthy causes (Webb and Mohr 1998). For nonprofit partners, CRM provides an opportunity for them to reach their target audience through the allied corporation's marketing communications, thereby enhancing awareness of the cause and related social issues among the target audience (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000). Moreover, CRM programs give consumers additional information and, in some cases, depending on the consumer, additional perceived values (Webb and Mohr 1998). If consumers wish to purchase from socially responsible company, then CRM may allow them to differentiate between a company supporting a social cause and a company without helping any causes.

In line with benefits of using CRM for consumers, previous research indicated that when consumers are asked to evaluate CRM programs in general, they express mostly positive attitudes and purchase intentions (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright 2007; Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000). Consumers may find it easier to make their purchase decision if a brand under consideration is linked to a social

issue they care about (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000). Additionally, consumers presumably, at least in part, like the idea of contributing to making a better society, satisfying their individual needs (Polonsky 2001). Andrews et al. (2014) found that the good feelings consumers derive from helping charitable causes motivated their favorable response to CRM.

Previous studies provide evidence that individuals' moral emotions such as guilt and pride influence their judgment and their behaviors in the context of giving behaviors (Arnett, German, and Hunt 2003; Hoffman 1981). For example, Hoffman (1981) found that some people donated their time to alleviate feelings of guilt for not contributing their money. Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) demonstrated that supporting social causes reduces the sense of guilt associated with the purchase of luxury products. On the other hand, Arnett, German, and Hunt (2003) showed that people donate time to feel proud as a result of supporting a worthy cause. Kim and Johnson (2013) illustrated that guilt influenced people's intention to purchase a product that utilized a CRM campaign in eastern culture and pride facilitated intention to purchase products supporting a social cause in western culture. Prior study relying on fMRIs also demonstrated that reward centers in the brain were activated when people help a charity- even when they do it through paying taxes (Harbaugh, Mayr, and Burghart 2007). Furthermore, consumers can participate into socially responsible behavior, such as donation to a charity by switching brands since they usually do not pay extra to support a social cause in CRM (Polonsky 2001). Recent CONE study (2014) examined American consumers' attitudes, perceptions, and behavior around CSR conducting an online survey of 1,270 adults. It showed the evidence that almost all consumers (89%) were likely to switch brands to one that was associated with a social cause.

While this possibly win-win-win nature has made CRM a popular marketing tactic, others have reported that CRM fostered negative perceptions about a company's motivation for

engaging in such activities; accordingly, there are consumers who over time seem to have become increasingly skeptical (Anuar and Mohamad 2012; Forehand and Grier 2003; O'Sullivan 1997; Singh, Kristensen, and Villasenor 2009; Webb and Mohr 1998). For example Webb and Mohr (1998) found that majority of respondents showed a favorable attitude toward a non-profit organization supporting a social cause while half showed a high skepticism toward a company's motives behind its action.

According to the persuasion knowledge model, consumers generally develop coping skills to deal with marketing communications (Friestad and Wright 1994). Although consumers have a tendency to show a favorable attitude toward a CRM, they are likely to formulate a defensive mechanism as soon as they recognize the marketing intention behind a socially responsible behavior (Forehand and Grier 2003). As one of the critical coping strategies that consumers use, skepticism appears to be a major hurdle for the success of CRM (Bronn and Vrioni 2001; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Polonsky 2001; Szykman 2004).

Consumer Skepticism

Calfee and Ford (1988) proposed that the effects of advertising can best be understood if we assume that consumers do not trust ad claims unless they have specific reasons to trust them. Calfee and Ringold (1994) found that a wide majority of consumers tend to disbelieve advertising claims. Consumer skepticism toward advertising is of great importance because it can undermine marketing efficiency as well as advertising credibility (Pollay and Mittal 1993).

Skepticism, in general, refers to a person's tendency to doubt, disbelieve, and question (Forehand and Grier 2003). The word "skepticism" originates the Greek word "skeptomai," which means to think, to consider, to examine (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013).

Skepticism toward advertising is defined as the tendency to disbelieve the informational claims in advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). A distinctive feature of skeptical people is that they can change their minds when presented with sufficient proof (Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen 1998).

Forehand and Grier (2003) proposed that consumer skepticism consists of two components: predispositional skepticism that is a general tendency to suspect marketer's motives and situational skepticism that is a temporary state to doubt a certain marketer's motive. Predispositional skepticism develops as knowledge about marketing tactics increases. At a very young age, consumers already recognize the fact that advertisers typically try to persuade them, and that advertisers' message can be biased and possibly false (Derbaix and Pecheux 2003).

Moreover, prior research support that consumers are socialized to be skeptical toward advertising by interacting with parents, peers, media, and purchasing experience, and the extent of their skepticism is a determinant of their response to advertising (Boush, Friestad, and Rose 1994; Mangleburg and Bristol 1998; Obermiller and Spangenberg 2000). Consumers with high predispositional skepticism tend to pay less attention to advertising in general and discount the information value of advertising (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005).

On the other hand, situational skepticism is considered as being induced independent of consumers' trait, that varies depending on the context and situation such as source of the message, quality and quantity of messages (Petty and Wegener 1999), CSR history of the sponsoring company (Vanhamme and Grobben 2009), how to express the amount being donated (e.g., percentage-of-profit format vs. percentage-of-price format) (Olsen, Pracejus, and Brown 2003), and type of appeal (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005).

Moreover, situational skepticism tends to direct consumer attention to the motives of marketers and thereby induce a state of skepticism (Forehand and Grier 2003). Skepticism as a state has significant implications for advertisers because marketers can somewhat control situational skepticism, whereas predispositional skepticism is generally beyond marketers' reach. Thus, in order to better understand how marketers may overcome consumer skepticism, the situational aspect of skepticism needs more search attention.

Forehand and Grier (2003) also showed that situational skepticism affected consumer causal attribution and overall skepticism toward the firm. Since firms exist to make a profit, consumers may spend considerable energy in an attempt to infer motives related to the profit-oriented goal when the benefits to the corporation are not apparent. Consumers may believe that CRM effort would hurt a company's profit if it were successful. In this situation, consumers may become skeptical of the underlying motives of the corporation. This skepticism would trigger an attribution process where the consumer attempts to uncover the underlying ulterior motive of the firm that would make sense to them (Szykman 2004).

In addition to this situational skepticism, it was found that the consumers' enduring level of predispositional skepticism predicted the degree to which consumers were likely to generate firm-serving attributions of firm behavior. These findings indicated that their effects may be interacted: all consumers are influenced by situational manipulations of skepticism, but those consumers who possess high levels of trait-based skepticism may be particularly sensitive to situational manipulations. A deeper understanding of the independent and interactive effects of situational and dispositional skepticism should lead to a broader understanding of consumer response to marketing actions. They showed the situational effects of skepticism and tested the

effectiveness of an inhibition procedure to lessen the negative effects of skepticism on firm evaluation.

Ulterior Motives and Causal Attribution

Persuasion knowledge model and attribution theory provide an appropriate framework for a situation-based analysis of consumer skepticism. Persuasion knowledge model posits that consumers learn to interpret and evaluate the persuasion agent's goals and tactics and use this knowledge to help them cope with persuasion attempts (Friestad and Wright 1994). According to the persuasion knowledge model, the effectiveness of influence tactics is affected by consumers' persuasion knowledge; that is knowledge regarding "how, when, and why marketers try to influence them." The level of persuasion knowledge possessed by consumers is presumed to affect their thoughts about the underlying intent of marketers; these thoughts, in turn, are posited to affect the effectiveness of various marketing strategies and tactics (Friestad and Wright 1994). Consumer perceptions about a company's motivation to support a social cause may influence the degree to which CRM strategies affect consumer choice. In other words, one way consumers develop persuasion knowledge to help themselves understand and deal with certain events is through attributional inferences (Kelley and Michela 1980).

Attribution theory addresses the processes by which individuals evaluate the motives of others and explains how these perceived motives influence subsequent attitudes and behavior (Kelley 1972). Attribution is defined as individuals' explanations for the cause of a certain event (Heider 1958; Kelley 1972; Weiner 1985). The theory maintains that causal analysis is inherent in people's need to understand events and divides the way people attribute causes to events into two main types: internal and external (Heider 1958). An internal attribution assigns the cause of the given event to the individual, while an external attribution attributes the cause of the given

event to the surrounding environment (Kelley 1972). Applied to marketing communications, prior research has found that consumers draw inferences about marketer motives and that attributions of marketer motives impact subsequent evaluations of the firm (Boush, Friestad, and Rose 1994; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000).

As discussed above, consumer skepticism can result from effort to understand and cope with advertisers' actions to form valid attitudes about the advertiser (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Friestad and Wright 1994). Thinking about ulterior motives may be particularly interesting to those who are motivated to avoid being deceived by others. Thus, a skeptical consumer may hesitate to take firm's behavior at face value and further engage in a relatively sophisticated attributional thought process, making inferences about the motives of marketers' behavior (Fein 1996). The careful consideration of the potential motives may influence consumers' attitude and choice.

Consumers have been found to attribute two primary types of motives to firms: motives that focus on the potential benefit to individuals external to the firm (public-serving) and motives that focus on the potential benefit to the firm itself (firm-serving) (Forehand and Grier 2003). These two basic motives have received various labels in research including positive versus negative, altruistic versus egoistic, exogenous versus endogenous, and other- versus self-centered (Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000). Following Forehand and Grier (2003), this study uses the term public-serving to refer to any motive that includes attention to the well-being of individuals outside of the firm, and firm-serving to refer to any motive that focuses solely on the needs of the firm itself.

When consumers attribute marketing actions to firm-serving motivation, negative reactions to the sponsoring firms ensue (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Campbell and

Kirmanani 2000; Drumwright 1996; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000). For example, Barone et al. (2000) and Rifon et al. (2004) found that the choice of sponsoring brand were higher when consumers perceived that the primary motivation for marketers' use of CRM was to provide support for the social cause rather than to manipulate the cause as a means of generating sales of the sponsor brand.

However, other researchers challenged the typical view that negative reaction of consumers to the use of CRM was driven by beliefs that the firm might benefit. For example, Ellen, Webb, and Mohr (2006) proposed that consumer attitudes towards the company may be more positive if profit motives were more obvious. Thus, it may not be necessary for companies to be perceived as purely altruistic in their CRM efforts. They further found that the attributions made by consumers about the motives underlying CRM offers were more dimensional rather than simple unidimensional attribution (e.g., self-vs. other centered). It was found that consumers dealt with the duality of other- and self-centered motives and responded more positively when both existed. Furthermore, they distinguished between positive and negative self- and other-centered motives. Consumers were able to reconcile the self- and other-centered motives of strategic and values-driven motives, with both having a positive influence on purchase intent. Moreover, they found the self- and other-centered motives of egoistic and stakeholder-driven motives, with a negative attitude.

The negative relation between perceived firm-serving (e.g., egoistic) motives and firm evaluation is that consumers respond negatively to strategies that seem deceptive or manipulative (Campbell 1995; Forehand 2000). That is, it is not so important whether the consumers perceive firm-serving motives, but rather whether the perceived motives are discrepant with the firm's stated motives.

For example, Forehand and Grier (2003) demonstrated that causal attribution played a significant role in the development of consumer skepticism. They found that skepticism developed when a marketer stated only public-serving motives. That is, the potential negative reaction of consumers to the use of CRM was driven not simply by beliefs that the firm might benefit, but rather by the perception that the firm was being deceptive about the benefits it receives. Therefore, when corporate profit opportunities were obvious, consumers had more positive evaluations of the CRM offer. Explicitness or clarity of the company's profit objectives in the CRM campaign may lead to a positive effect in a subsequent evaluation. Following previous studies discussed above, the current study hypothesized that advertisers or marketers could inhibit the development of situational skepticism by being open about the benefits that could add to the firm as a result of its engagement in CRM. Therefore it may be expected that the statements of motivations in a CRM claim would play an important role in the consumers' receptivity to the CRM ads.

The following hypotheses were therefore proposed:

H1a: The statements of firm-serving benefits as well as the public-serving benefits will generate positive attribution about a sponsoring company.

H1b: The statements of only public-serving benefits will generate skeptical attribution about a sponsoring company.

Interaction between Skepticism and Statements of Motivation

As previously pointed out, consumers' trait-based skepticism could trigger an attribution process where the consumers attempt to uncover the underlying motive of the firm in order to avoid being deceived by marketers (Szykman 2004). This skeptical attribution process implies that the consumer recognizes that the marketer is attempting to hide something that, if it were known, would discredit the meaning of the company behavior (Cho 2006, Fein, Hilton, and

Miller 1990). Thus, those with greater skepticism may be particularly sensitive to situational aspects that activate causal attribution. For example, skeptics may become suspicious of the underlying ulterior motive of the firm when only public-serving motive is presented in a CRM campaign because such public-serving motive conflicts with what consumers already believe about the firm.

Moreover, other evidence suggests that trait-based skepticism can also lead to a sinister attribution error, where individual attributes harmful intentions to others despite the fact that such inferences are not warranted by the objective circumstances (Kramer 1998). For instance, Darke and Ritchie (2007) explain that judgments are based on simple associations made between trustworthiness of the group to which the source belongs, such judgments are schema-based, and occur automatically with little information processing (Schul, Mayo, and Burnstein 2004). The similar forms of irrational suspicion can be suggested in the context of CRM communications since skeptical consumers often associate sales contexts with relatively high levels of disbelief (Darke and Ritchie 2007; Forehand and Grier 2003; Obermiller and Spangenberg 2000).

Furthermore, in line with persuasion knowledge model, a dual process framework also provides a theoretical ground in understanding such sinister attribution errors (Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken 1997; Kramer 1998; Spencer et al. 1998). This model suggests that defense goals are most likely to be evoked when persuasive messages are personally threatening and tend to bias information processing in a direction that reduces such threats (Darke and Chaiken 2005). This is known as defensive stereotyping, and it tends to occur automatically in response to personal threats and produces a negative bias in their evaluations and elaborative thoughts (Giner-Sorolla and Chaiken 1997).

Consistent with the notion of defensive stereotyping, ad skepticism is a general tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims (Obermiller and Spangenberg 2000). Therefore, it is expected that consumers with higher ad skepticism may come to become more skeptical about the sponsoring company's motivation in response to the statement of firm-serving motives in a CRM claim by engaging in defensive stereotyping (Darke and Ritchie 2007).

The hypothesis that emerges from this discussion is that ad skepticism may influence situational skepticism depending on the stated firm's intention (Forehand and Grier 2003; Szykman 2004).

H2a: Consumers with higher ad skepticism will show skeptical attribution about the company's motive when only public-benefit is presented in a CRM ad compared to those with lower ad skepticism.

H2b: Consumers with higher ad skepticism will show positive attribution about the company's motive when both firm- and public-benefits are presented in a CRM ad compared to those with lower ad skepticism.

Emotional versus Informational CRM Appeal

While CRM offer may risk-triggering skepticism among consumers, selecting a better type of appeal may be an important tool to inhibit development of situational skepticism.

The message appeal is the general overall approach that the advertisement adopts (Mortimer 2008). Advertising is often considered within a framework that identifies advertising tactics as essentially either rational or emotional (Solomon 1996). While rational appeals are those that appear to generate either positive or negative feelings to create a positive emotional association with a product (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999; Edell and Burke 1987; Leonidou and Leonidou 2009; Taylor 1999).

An informational CRM appeal communicates detailed information of sponsoring company's socially responsible behavior and information about the outcomes or consequences of

a social cause (Hartmann et al. 2005; Sciulli and Bebko 2005). An emotional CRM appeal, in contrast, communicates emotionally appealing content such as picture of needy children or victims sad faces (Sciulli and Bebko 2005). Small and Verrochi (2009) showed that a single dominant visual image related to a social cause might be sufficient to engender significant positive affective response.

Consumers with high ad skepticism would show different responses to emotional versus informational appeals (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005). Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan (2005) demonstrated that highly skeptical consumers were more positive in response to emotional appeals as compared with informational appeals, and were more negative in response to informational ads compared with less skeptical consumers. This finding is consistent with the proposition of Kanter and Wortzel (1985). They suggested that because skepticism was turning into mistrust of sincerity, humor or light touch rather than intense information might be better ways to reach skeptical consumers. In a similar vein, Holbrook and Batra (1987) also found that emotional appeal were positively related to the consumers' subjective ad effectiveness judgments. Thus, high ad skeptics may reject informational claims, leaving the informational appeals with little persuasive power because ad skepticism reflects a disbelief in information content of ads.

Consumers perceived a persuasion attempt on them to be effective when it was especially emotion evoking or interest-stirring (Friestad and Wright 1994). Campbell (1995) also provided evidence that the interest stirring appeal (e.g., the use of baby, horse, or a father/daughter relationship in an ad) did not create skepticism. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, a growing literature concerns how the persuasion knowledge can enable consumers to employ coping strategies that shape the manner in which they think about and respond to an offer (Duhachek

and Oakley 2007; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Friestad and Wright 1994; Tuk et al. 2009).

Moreover, prior research demonstrates that the persuasion knowledge is particularly likely to be activated in response to certain types of marketing appeals.

For example, Friestad and Wright (1994) proposed that emotional appeals are developed by marketers specifically to avoid consumers' skeptical resistance to informational arguments. The idea that the goal of the advertisement is to persuade consumers to buy the advertised product should be quite salient to consumers during information processing. Accordingly, in a CRM context, information of positive features of the company's socially responsible behavior may confirm consumer's perceptions of the company's ulterior motives, leading to skeptical attributions that undermine the company's persuasiveness (DeCarlo and Barone 2009). That is, detailed information about a CRM campaign may trigger consumers' skepticism that the sponsoring company is attempt to persuade consumers for more product sales. Conversely, consumers' skepticism could be surmounted with an emotional appeal, resulting in a discounting of the sponsoring company's ulterior motives (DeCarlo 2005; Eagly, Wood, and Chaiken 1978). Especially, when the company out speaks its self-centered motivation in CRMA, higher skeptics would be more positive in response to emotional appeals. As the previous discussion suggested, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H3a: Consumers with high skepticism will show positive attribution about company's ulterior motives underlying the CRM offer when only public-serving motivation is presented in an emotional appeal as compared to an informational appeal.

H3b: Consumers with low skepticism will show skeptical attribution about ulterior motives underlying the CRM offer when only public-serving motivation is presented both in informational and emotional appeals.

Sponsoring Company's Credibility

Credibility has been shown as one of the most important factors determining the effects of a persuasive message (Petty and Cacioppo 1981). In particular, MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) found that attitude toward an advertiser or corporation played an important role in determining attitude toward the ad. Moreover, prior studies indicated that if a company induced more favorable perceptions toward itself, positive attitudes toward their ad and brand would increase (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000; Lafferty 2007; Lafferty and Edmondson 2009; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; Woodside and Wilson 1985). In addition to consumer attribution of sponsor motives, development of sponsor credibility may prove to be an important part of CRM attitude development.

The concept of credibility in communication theory is related to the source of information that leads an individual to assess both believability and trustworthiness (Lafferty 2007). The related construct, corporate credibility, where the company that produces the product or services is seen as a source of the communication (Newell and Goldsmith 2001).

Keller (1998) defined corporate credibility as “The extent to which consumers believe that a firm can design and deliver product and services that satisfy customer needs and wants” (p. 426). Keller also mentioned “expertise” and “trustworthiness” as important elements of corporate credibility. Newell and Goldsmith (2001) defined corporate credibility as “ the extent to which consumers feel that the firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claims and whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth or not” (p. 235). In essence, corporate credibility has two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Therefore, in this study, corporate credibility is defined as the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of a firm.

Research has generally indicated that a company's focus on cause-related marketing influenced whether the sponsor was seen as credible (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Lafferty 2007; Rifon et al. 2004; Trudel 2011; Walker and Kent 2013). However, as previously pointed out, as the CRM has become popular, consumers have become more skeptical about company's ulterior motivation. They then may engage in meticulous information processing to assess whether the sponsoring company's motivation is truly altruistic or more profit-oriented. If they disbelieve the company truly cares about particular social cause, they may perceive the sponsor as being less credible (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; O'Sullivan 1997; Rifon et al. 2004; Webb and Mohr 1998). Rifon et al. (2004) also found that when consumers inferred the company sponsored the cause because the company ultimately cared about its profits, the customers perceived the sponsoring company less credible. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4a: Skeptical attributions will decrease consumer perceptions of sponsoring company credibility.

H4b: Positive attributions will increase consumer perceptions of sponsoring company credibility.

It is noticed that presence of causal attribution regarding firm motives determines the effectiveness of CRM campaign (Campbell 1995; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; DeCarlo 2005; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Forehand and Grier 2003). In particular, Forehand and Grier (2003) found a strong relationship between consumers' causal attribution about company's motivation and their firm evaluation. They found that participants who were instructed to engage in causal attribution responded more positively to the firm when the firm's underlying motives were directly stated. Ellen et al (2006) also found the mediating effect of the causal attribution

between CRM ads and consumers' purchase intent. Klein and Dawar (2004) demonstrated that consumers' attributions regarding firm motivation influenced the effect of crisis-focused appeal on consumers' brand evaluations. The hypothesis that emerges from the literature review is that the effect of a CRM campaign on consumer receptivity may flow through the consumer attribution of sponsoring company's ulterior motives. Thus the following hypotheses was proposed:

H5: Perceived attributions will mediate the relationship between CRM appeals and consumer perceptions of sponsoring company credibility.

It has been suggested that attitudes are multidimensional, including cognitive, affective, and conative components, so that single attitude scores cannot adequately represent all of these attitudinal components and thus cannot predict intention and behavior accurately (Rosenberg and Hovland 1980). On the other hand, with intentions defined as the subjective probability that one will perform a given behavior, Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) and Triandis (1977) both support that intention mediates between attitude and behavior. The rationale of their argument is that intentions guide behavior and are at an intermediate level of concept between concrete actions and abstract attitudes (Ajzen and Fishbein 2008). Bagozzi (1981) provides more explicit evidence of this perspective. He demonstrated that attitudes toward blood donation influenced respondents' actual behavior (i.e., blood donation) only through its impact on intentions. In his study, considerable portion of the variance in behavior was accounted for by intention (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Youjae 1989). These previous studies provide a basic framework of causal sequence of attitude-intention-behavior.

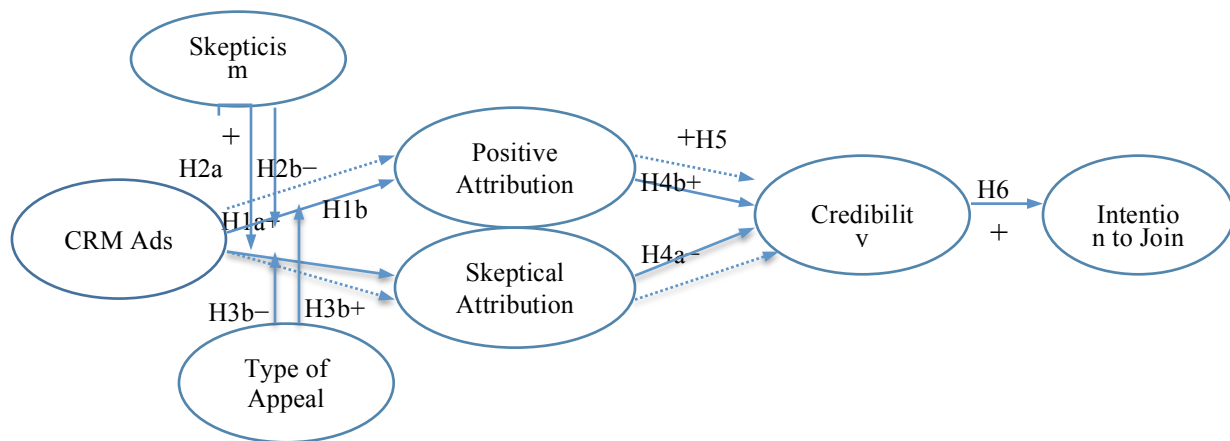
Attitudinal research in consumer behavior field unanimously suggests that attitude is a strong, direct, and positive predictor of intention (Aaker and Biel 2013; Batra and Ray 1986;

Lafferty 2007; Okazaki, Mueller, and Taylor 2010; Ruiz and Sicilia 2004). For example, Okazaki, Mueller, and Taylor (2010) demonstrated that positive attitude toward a soft-sell appeals had a strong impact on purchase intention. Chang (2011) observed that products linked to the cause marketing were more likely to be preferred when they were hedonic, and that attitude influenced purchase intention. Lafferty (2007) found that attitude toward a company such as company credibility had a significant influence on purchase intention. Organization's credibility was also found a significant determinant of consumers' spending and advocacy behavior toward PGA tour (Walker and Kent 2013). On the basis of the strong relationship between attitude and intention discussed above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H6: Greater credibility perception will generate a stronger intention to join in the brand page.

The proposed hypotheses are summarized in the following model:

Figure 1. Proposed Model



Note: ---> refers to the proposed mediating effect of attribution on the effect of type of appeal on credibility perception (H5).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Study Design

This online experiment followed a 2 (statements of motivations: both of firm and public benefits vs. public benefit only) by 2 (type of appeal: informational vs. emotional) by 2 (Skepticism: high vs. low) between-subjects factorial design. The independent variables were the emotional/informational appeal, the statement of company's motivation, and high/low skepticism. Skepticism was a between-subject factor that was not manipulated but determined post hoc as a two-category variable to analyze its effect on the relationship between type of appeal and attribution. The dependent variables (positive/skeptical attribution, perceived sponsoring company credibility, and intention to join a brand page) were measured after exposure to the stimulus.

Sampling

Four hundred and seventeen Undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university were recruited through an online SONA system to participate in an online experiment through Qualtrics Panels. Participants received course extra course credit in exchange for their participation.

The student group was chosen as a study sample because this demographic is considered one of the groups most amenable to cause marketing (CONE 2014), and they use SNSs the most frequently out of all demographic groups (Pew 2015). Moreover, according to the Nielsen data (2014), three-quarters of them have shared information on events-related social cause on Facebook and 69% have shared stats of their favorite causes.

The sample size ($N = 417$) was keeping with the recommended minimum cell size of 20 observations (Hair et al. 2009). Moreover, in conducting a structural equation modeling (Polegato and Bjerke), researchers have suggested that at least 5 observations per estimated parameter or 10 cases per variable are needed under normal distribution, especially when there are many indicators of latent variables and the associated factor loadings are large (Bentler and Chou 1987; Russell et al. 1998; Wolf et al. 2013). In the case of the proposed model shown in Figure 1(which includes measurement error), approximately 50 parameters were estimated. In case a ratio of 5 cases per parameter was used, then a minimum of 250 participants was required for the current study. Therefore, the sample size seemed to be sufficient enough to test hypotheses in this study.

Of 417 participants, 5 participants were excluded, as they did not complete the questionnaire, and 3 indicated higher familiarity with the experimental brand and social cause, resulting in a total sample size of 409. Among 409 participants, 153 (37.4%) were male and 256 (62.6%) were female. Their age ranged from 18 to 29 with a mean age of 21.01 ($SD = 1.85$). The majority of the participants were White/Caucasian (75.3%) followed by Asian (13.9%) and African American (5.9%). No significant difference was observed among participants across the four conditions (Gender: $\chi^2(3) = 4.46, p = .58$; Age: $F(3, 405) = 1.62, p = .18$; Ethnicity: $\chi^2(15) = 20.04, p = .17$). Table 1 summarizes the key demographic characteristics of the participants across the experimental conditions.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Characteristics Across Conditions

		Emotional		Informational		Total
		Firm & Public Serving Motivation	Public Serving Motivation	Firm & Public Serving Motivation	Public Serving Motivation	
Total		103 (25.2%)	101 (24.7%)	102 (24.9%)	103 (25.2%)	409 (100%)
Gender ^a	Male	41 (39.90%)	33 (32.7%)	36 (35.3%)	33 (32.0%)	153 (37.4%)
	Female	62 (60.10%)	68 (67.3%)	66 (64.7%)	70 (68.0%)	256 (62.6%)
Age ^b		21.25 (1.97)	20.69 (1.65)	21.04 (1.86)	21.07 (1.90)	21.01 (1.85)
Ethnicity ^a	White/Caucasian	78 (75.7%)	75 (74.3%)	81 (79.4%)	74 (71.8%)	308 (75.3%)
	Asian	13 (12.6%)	17 (16.8%)	14 (13.7%)	13 (12.6%)	57 (13.9%)
	African American	9 (8.7%)	2 (2.0%)	7 (6.9%)	6 (5.8%)	24 (5.9%)
	Hispanic/Mexican	2 (1.9%)	4 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (3.2%)
	Pacific Islander	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)
	Biracial	1 (1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.9%)	6 (1.5%)

Notes: a. Number of cases with percentages in the parentheses. b. Mean values with standard deviations in the parentheses.

Stimuli Development

Selection of Brand and a Charitable Cause

For a pre-test, 96 subjects (not part of the main experiment) were recruited to select brand and a charitable cause for the main study.

For a charitable social cause, a fictitious charity organization “Work Against Hunger (WAH)” and “Work Against Drunk & Drowsy Driving (WADDD)” were selected as it met

several criteria. First, previous study found that young generation (age18-24) ranked poverty and hunger as the most concerned social cause (CONE 2014). In addition, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014), car accident is the leading cause of death for young generation (age18-24). Therefore, these two causes seem to be relevant for the current study sample. To select appropriate cause, 46 participants were asked to rate each cause on three questions: “How relevant is the sponsored cause to you?,” “How congruent is the cause to your personal values?,” “How important is the social cause to you?” on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely) (see Appendix A). Paired sample t-test revealed that participants rated hunger cause as the most congruent to them compared to the drunk and drowsy driving cause ($t(45) = 6.56, p < .001$).

In the second phase of the pretest, an additional 50 participants (not part of the first pretest and main study) were assessed with respect to the perceived congruence of the social cause with three products (e.g., bottled water (ICIS), retailer with school supplies (GRAFO), and running shoes (LeCaf) on a seven-point scale. Fit is defined in a social marketing context as the perceived link between a cause and the firm’s product line, and target market (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). A good fit between actions of a firm and a given social cause can be more easily integrated into the consumers’ existing cognitive structure (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006). Subjects were exposed to the hunger cause information in the form of print ad (see Appendix B), and then they rated how compatible, fit, and congruent they feel each was if that cause would form a partnership with a brand of LeCaf, GRAFO, and ICIS based on 7-point scale anchored at not at all (1) and extremely (7). The results of the repeated measures showed that participants rated the bottled water brand ICIS was the most compatible with the hunger cause ($F(2, 48) = 56.56, p < .0001$).

In the third phase of the pretest, an additional 130 participants (not part of main study) were asked to view the CRM claim and rate the extent to which they seemed to characterize an emotional vs. informational CRM claim execution format in the form of Facebook brand page (see Appendix C). Two 7-point Likert scaled items were used to measure emotional format (“this ad claim appeals to my emotion” and “this ad claim creates a mood), and two-Likert scaled items measured informational appeal (“this ad appeals to my rationality” and “this ad provides a lot of information”) ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (Yoo and MacInnis 2005). Independent sample t-test revealed that participants ($N = 67$) exposed to the emotional appeal rated the CRM claim as containing more emotional ($t(128) = 7.29, p < .0001$), and that participants ($N = 63$) exposed to the informational appeal rated the campaign as containing more information and rationality ($t(128) = 4.01, p < .001$). The results indicated that the manipulation was successful.

Manipulations of CRM

4 Facebook brand pages (2 types of appeal \times 2 statements of motivation conditions) for the manipulation of CRM, by modifying existing CRM campaigns on Facebook brand pages. First, for the manipulation of CRM, the brand page presented a cover page with slogan and brief information of the social cause. On the cover page, the company name, logo, and the category of the product produced by the company were presented on the left side. Then, the brand page included one written statement highlighting the fact that the brand’s support for the cause was tied to consumers joining the page (see Appendix C).

Manipulations of Type of Appeal

The manipulation of informational appeal contained detailed information of the social cause and company's social performance-e.g., how important the social cause is to the U.S., the size of the donation, characteristics of cause supported, how to join to the activity (Chowdhury, Olsen, and Pracejus 2008). As an alternative strategy, socially responsible brand positioning based on an emotional appeal aimed to transfer affective responses to the brand (Edell and Burke 1987). Keeping the visual aspects of both cover pages constant across informational and emotional conditions may allow the researcher to control for potentially confounding factors. The difference between informational and emotional on the cover page was shown through the presence or absence of the image and slogan. In an emotional appeal, headline "I Don't Want to Go to Bed, Hungry." was shown with the image of a child's face. In an informational appeal, the image and the headline were replaced with the slogan "Work Together to Race Against Hunger!" Messages on the posting page in both conditions began with the same headline "Be a Hunger Fighting Hero," followed by the body text. The rest of the details such as message sequence and claim length were identical for the two conditions (see Appendix C).

Manipulations of Stated Motives

The manipulation of the stated motives behind the company's support of the cause was conducted by using two different explanations of the firm's motives behind its actions. Prior study addressed that consumers respond negatively to strategies that seem deceptive or manipulative (Campbell 1995). Consumers who are focusing on causal attribution of the company's motives are more likely to perceive deception when the firm presents only public serving benefits. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of firm-serving benefits would inhibit the development of skepticism and negative reactions (Forehand and Grier 2003)

Accordingly, for the public-serving benefits condition, the statement “Our Action will Help End Hunger in America” was presented, and for the firm-serving benefits condition, the statement, “Our Action will Help End Hunger in America and Expand the Market for the Company’s product” was presented, both on the left side of the screen (see Appendix G, H, I, and J).

Procedure

The participants took part in the online experiment. The present study employed a randomized block design embedded in the Qualtrics survey software¹. The participants were first asked to fill out a questionnaire that measured the level of ad skepticism before they were exposed to the stimuli. And then they were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (emotional appeal with statement of public-serving motivation, emotional appeal with both firm- and public-serving motivation, informational appeal with public-serving motivation only, and informational appeal with both firm- and public-serving motivation), and then they responded to the questions concerning the firm’s motivation in a CRM campaign, its perceived corporate credibility, and their intention to join the brand membership. Participants then provided their demographic information, answered questions developed for manipulation checking, and provided their familiarity with the sponsored brand (ICIS) and social cause (Work Against Hunger) (see Appendix 1).

¹ <http://www.qualtrics.com/>

Measures

Attribution of Company Motives

Attribution was defined as individuals' explanations for the cause of a certain outcome. In the consumer behavior context, Ellen, Webb, and Mohr (2006) found 4 categories of consumer perceptions of company motive: self-centered motives, value driven, strategic driven, and stakeholder driven. On the basis of these categories, Rifon et al. (2004) developed a 8-item-perceived company motive measurement that consists of 4 subscales profit-orientation, public image, altruistic, and ethics.

In this study, profit-orientation and public image were combined as a firm- serving motivation and altruistic and ethics were combined as a public-serving motivation. Participants were asked why the company would make such an offer and indicate how they agreed with each statement on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) (“The company sponsors the cause because ultimately it cares about their customers,” “The company has a long-term interest in the community,” “The company wants to make it easier for consumers who care about the cause to support it,” “The company is trying to give something back to the community,” “The company sponsors the cause to persuade consumer to buy their products,” “The company ultimately cares about its profits,” “Sponsorship creates a positive corporate image,” “The company will taking advantage of the nonprofit organization to help their own business”).

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with AMOS 22 (Corp. 2013) to validate the structure of the two multi-item variables. After fitting a CFA model, 1 item was deleted from the model due to its low factor loading score (“The company sponsors the cause because sponsorship creates a positive corporate image.”). After deleting this item from the model, the CFA model

showed a good fit ($\chi^2 (13) = 15.03, p = .31, GFI = .99, AGFI = .98, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, NFI = .99, RMSEA = .02$)². The factors were subsequently labeled positive attribution and skeptical attribution. The items were averaged to form a composite index respectively. Normality of the distribution was checked, and the result showed a normal distribution of the skeptical attribution (*Skewness* = -.49, *Kurtosis* = .23). But the skewness value of the positive attribution suggested a slight deviation of the data from the normal distribution (*Skewness* = -1.12, *Kurtosis* = 1.32). The mean value of the positive attribution was 5.07 with the standard deviation of 1.20. The mean value of the skeptical attribution was 3.22, and its standard deviation was 1.17. The reliability score was .91 for the positive attribution and .77 for the skeptical attribution. Factor loadings ranged from .76 to .89 for the positive attribution, and from .62 to .91 for the skeptical attribution. Table 2 shows descriptive, reliabilities, and factor loading scores of the two multi-item variables.

² GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; NFI = normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Table 2. Descriptive, Reliability, and Validity of Positive and Skeptical Attributions

	<i>Mean(SD)</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
<i>Positive Attribution</i>	5.07(1.20)		.91
The company sponsors the cause because ultimately it cares about its customers.	4.81(1.29)	.76	
The company has a long-term interest in the community.	5.00(1.37)	.85	
The company wants to make it easier for consumers who care about the social cause to support it.	5.22(1.35)	.87	
The company is trying to give something back to the community.	5.23(1.41)	.89	
<i>Skeptical Attribution</i>	3.22(1.17)		.77
The company sponsors the cause to persuade consumers to buy its product.	3.14(1.37)	.72	
The company sponsors the cause because ultimately it cares about its profits.	3.19(1.43)	.91	
The company will take advantage of the nonprofit organization to help its own business.	3.33(1.48)	.62	

Perceived Corporate Credibility

In this study, corporate credibility was conceptualized as perceived expertise- can the company in making and delivering the products or services they advertised (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000), trustworthiness-can the company be relied upon, truthfulness/honesty- is the company honest or does it lie and misleading consumers? (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

The perceived corporate credibility measurement scale was adopted from Newell and Goldsmith (2001). Newell and Goldsmith developed the scale on the basis of the definition of the construct: expertise, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. An initial pool of 66 items were collected by marketing experts based on the definition, followed by exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to select appropriate items. Finally, they proposed that the corporate credibility scale be made up of eight items representing two dimensions with four items for each dimension: expertise and trustworthiness/truthfulness ($\alpha = .86$ in there study).

The credibility perception was measured on a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The items consisted of the following five statements: the company has a great amount of experience, the corporate is skilled in what they do, the corporate has great expertise, I trust the corporation, and the corporation is honest.

Confirmatory factor analysis³ was conducted to validate the structure of the unidimensional variable. Since the two reversed items (i.e., the company does not have much experience, I do not believe what the corporation tells me) and one subscale of the trustworthiness (i.e., the company makes truthful claims) significantly decreased the reliability of the scale, so they were excluded from the scale. The final 5-item CFA model showed a good fit ($\chi^2 (3) = 1.38, p = .71, GFI = .99, AGFI = .99, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, NFI = .99, RMSEA = .00$). Factor loadings ranged from .71 to .89. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .90. These items were averaged to form a credibility perception index. The mean value of the perceived corporate credibility was 4.25 with the standard deviation of .97. The composite score was normally distributed (*Skewness* = -.37, *Kurtosis* = .56).

Intention to Join a Brand Page

According to Bagozzi (1983), “intentions constitute a willful state of choice where one makes a self-implicated statement as to a future course of action” (p. 145). Warshaw (1980) also noted that intentions worked very well compared to beliefs or other cognitive measures as behavioral correlates.

While several researchers in the field of consumer behavior demonstrate that there exists a gap between what consumers say they are going to do and what they actually do at the point of

³ It is noteworthy that confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) explicitly accounts for measurement errors, while principle component analysis (PCA) does not care about that. Although PCA gives higher loadings than CFA regardless of the type of rotation used because it includes both common and unique variance (Snook and Gorsch 1989), this study employed CFA in order to take the measurement errors into account.

purchase (Auger and Devinney 2007; Carrigan and Attalla 2001), some argue that the relationship between respondents' stated intentions and their actual behavior varies with the way that data were collected (Gollwitzer and Sheeran 2006; Morwitz, Steckel, and Gupta 2007). Hoch (1984) found the strength of relationships between intention and action depended on the issue the subjects concerned.

Prior study found that impression management ranked as one of the top two reasons why consumers become members of specific brands on Facebook brand pages ExactTarget (2010). Supporting causes may provide individuals an opportunity of demonstrating a good citizenship behavior. Moreover, publicizing memberships of Facebook brand pages supporting social cause would offer consumers a social incentive of leaving favorable impressions on others (Boyd and Ellison 2007). Therefore, intention to join a brand page can be a good proxy measures for behavior for the current study. Intentions regarding the likelihood of join a brand page was measured using three items on a seven-point scale developed by Bearden, Lichtenstein, and Teel (1984) ($\alpha = .90$ in Bearden et al.' study). Participants were asked "How likely is it for you to join the brand page?," "How possible is it for you to join the brand page?," and "How probable is it for you to join the brand page?" Reliability analysis showed high levels of internal consistency, with coefficient alpha .91. These items were averaged to form an intention index. The mean value of the composite score was 4.39, and its standard deviation was 1.80. It's normal distribution was found (*Skewness* = -.29, *Kurtosis* = -1.00).

Skepticism

Skepticism toward advertisement was defined as the tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims. In this study, ad skepticism was considered as a predispositional skepticism as opposed to a situational skepticism. Ad skepticism was measured by 9 items that were

developed by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998). Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) produced initial Likert-type 124 statements, and then marketing professors and advertising executives selected 31 items on the basis of the definition: general disbelief tendency toward advertisements. Through exploratory factor analysis and the subsequent factor analysis, final 9 items in a single factor solution that explained 46 percent of total variance ($\alpha = .85$ in their study). In this study, ad skepticism as a personality trait should be implemented in order to isolate its effect on situational skepticism toward the sponsoring company's motive behind CRM offer. Therefore, Obermiller and Spangenberg's measurement seems to be relevant to the purpose of study. A nine-item scale was measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). These items included questions about whether they believed that advertising was informative, whether they felt they've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisement, whether they believed most advertisement provided consumers with essential information, and whether they believed advertising presented a true picture of the product being advertised in general. Coefficient alpha was .92, indicating these items were internally consistent. Thus, these items were averaged to form a skepticism index. The mean value of the ad skepticism was 3.77 with standard deviation of 1.12. Its normal distribution was checked (*Skewness* = .51, *Kurtosis* = -.23). Table 3 shows the actual items for all the variables with their descriptive information and reliabilities score.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Measures of the Distribution of the Key Variables

Name of Scale/ Items	Mean (SD)	Cronbach's α	Skewness ^a	Kurtosis ^a
<i>Perceived Corporate Credibility</i>	4.25 (.97)	.90	-.37 (.12)	.56 (.24)
The company has a great amount of experience.	4.15 (1.09)			
The company is skilled in what they do.	4.35 (1.13)			
The company has great expertise.	4.21 (1.16)			
I trust the company.	4.21 (1.26)			
The company is honest.	4.34 (1.17)			
<i>Intention to Join a Brand Page</i>	4.39 (1.80)	.91	-.29 (.12)	-1.00 (.24)
How likely is it for you to join the brand page?	4.29 (1.94)			
How possible is it for you to join the brand page?	4.67 (1.97)			
How probable is it for you to join the brand page?	4.23 (1.96)			
<i>Ad Skepticism as a personality trait</i>	3.77 (1.12)	.92	.51 (.12)	-.23 (.24)
We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.	4.11 (1.42)			
Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.	3.17 (1.55)			
I believe advertising is informative.	2.94 (1.31)			
Advertising is generally truthful.	3.80 (1.37)			
Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.	3.99 (1.44)			
Advertising is truth well told.	4.27 (1.37)			
In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.	4.14 (1.51)			
I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisement.	3.95 (1.40)			
Most advertisement provides consumers with essential information.	3.56 (1.46)			

Note: a. Values with standard errors in the parentheses.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Firm-Serving Benefits Appeal vs. Public-Serving Benefits Appeal

A manipulation check for the statements of motivation (firm- and -public serving benefits vs. public-serving benefits) was assessed on participants' responses to a two-item question about the statements of firm- and public-serving benefit appeal and only public serving benefits appeal. The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they would agree with the following statements: the ad demonstrated that the company provided this charity program because it focused on the benefits to the firm as well as the society; the ad demonstrated that the company provided this charity program because it focused on the benefits to the society ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Independent samples t-test revealed that participants exposed to the statements of firm-and public-serving benefits appeal condition showed the CRM ad demonstrated that the company focused on firm-and public-serving benefits motivation ($M_{firm-and\ public} = 5.43, SD = .74; M_{public} = 3.32, SD = .73, t(407) = 20.04, p < .0001$). The participants exposed to the statements of public serving benefits condition rated the CRM ad demonstrated the company's public-serving motivation ($M_{public} = 5.60, SD = .77; M_{firm-and\ public} = 3.41, SD = .72, t(407) = 29.66, p < .0001$). The results demonstrated a successful manipulation of the statements of motivation.

Emotional Appeal vs. Information Appeal

A four-item seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) measured the type of appeals (emotional vs. informational) ("This ad appeals to my emotion," "This ad

creates a mood,” “This ad appeals to my rationality,” “This ad provides a lot of information”). An independent samples t-test revealed that participants rated the CRM ad as containing more emotional appeal after exposed to the emotional appeal ad ($M_{emotional} = 5.26, SD = 1.16$; $M_{informational} = 4.51, SD = 1.46, t(407) = 5.76, p = .000$), while the participants in the informational condition rated the CRM ad more informational ($M_{informational} = 4.59, SD = 1.10$; $M_{emotional} = 4.24, SD = 1.21, t(407) = 3.02, p = .003$). The results indicated that the manipulation of the type of appeals was successful. Appendix K provides the results of the manipulation check.

Effects of Statement of Sponsoring Company’s Motivation on Attribution

It was predicted that the statements of motivations in a CRM claim would play an important role in determining the effect of the CRM on consumers’ persuasion motive attribution about a sponsoring company, such that the statements of firm-serving and public-serving motivations would generate positive attribution about the sponsoring company (H1a) and the statements of public-serving motivation would generate skeptical attribution about the company (H1b). To test this prediction, SPSS 22 (IBM Corp. 2013) was utilized for data analysis. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with statement of motivation (public- and firm-serving/ public-serving) as an independent variable and attribution perceptions (positive/ skeptical) as dependent variables. A MANOVA allows the researcher to explore how the statement of motivation has an impact upon the combination of positive and skeptical attribution variables, accounting for the correlation between the two variables (Hair et al. 2009).

Multicollinearity test revealed relatively low correlations between dependent variables (positive attribution and skeptical attribution; $r = .25, p < .001$). It is suggested that correlation between the dependent variables should be low to moderate because one dependent variable

becomes a near-linear combination when there is high correlation between dependent variables. Under such circumstances, it would become statistically redundant and suspect to include both combinations (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). This moderate correlation between two dependent variables is very important to measure subsequent univariate outcomes (Rencher and Christensen 2012). Box's M-statistics was 12.82 ($p < .01$), suggesting that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables were not equal across conditions. Levene's F -test indicated that the error variance of the skeptical attribution was equal across groups ($F(1,407) = .05, p = .83$), but the error variance of the positive attribution was different ($F(1,407) = 9.11, p < .01$). Generally, if group sizes are equal, the tests are sufficiently robust with respect to heterogeneity of covariance matrices so that Wilks' Lambda test was employed (Rencher and Christensen 2012). With a possibility of unequal variances of the two groups for the positive attribution, Forsythe F and Welch's F test were additionally employed (Miller and Haden 1988).

Multivariate results indicated a significant main effect of statements of motivation (Wilks' $\lambda = .98, F(2, 406) = 5.28, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$). Further examination of univariate results showed that when firm-serving and public-serving motivations were stated at the same time in a CRM claim, participants attributed the motivation about the sponsoring company to public-oriented positive motives ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.03$) than statement of public serving motivation ($M = 4.89, SD = 1.32$) ($F(1, 407) = 8.63, p = .003, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$). Although the results showed a statistically significant effect of the statement, only 2% of between subjects variance was accounted for by statement of firm- and public-serving motivation (see Table 4). When only public serving motivation was presented, the participants showed more skeptical attribution ($M = 5.09, SD = 1.02$) than when both public and firm serving motivations were stated ($M = 4.89, SD = 1.09$), but the group difference was marginally significant ($F(1, 407) =$

3.57, $p = .060$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$). Therefore, H1a was supported, but H1b was not. As discussed earlier, the homogeneity of variance for positive attribution was violated. The effect of statement of motivation on positive attribution was examined again, using an independent one-way ANOVA with Brown-Forsythe F and Welch's F adjustments. Revised outcome adjusted by Brown-Forsythe F and Welch's F statistics showed that there was still a significant difference in positive attribution across statement of motivation conditions (Welch; Brown-Forsythe: $F(1, 383.54) = 8.62, p = .004$) (see Table 5). The violation of homogeneity of variance posed no threat to the validity of the results.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Consumers' Perceived Attribution Facing Statement of Firm- and Public- Serving vs. Public- Serving Motivation

Dependent Variables	Statements of Motivation		F	df	Partial η^2
	Firm & Public Serving	Public Serving			
	($N = 205$) <i>Mean (SD)</i>	($N = 204$) <i>Mean (SD)</i>			
Positive Attribution	5.24 (1.03)	4.89 (1.32)	8.63**	407	.02
Skeptical Attribution	5.09 (1.02)	4.89 (1.09)	3.57	407	.01

Note: ** $p < .01$.

Table 5. Robust Tests of Equality of Means

	F	df	p
Welch	8.62	383.54	.004
Brown-Forsythe	8.62	383.54	.004

Note: dependent variable = positive attribution.

Effects of Skepticism and Statement of Company's Motivation on Attribution

It was proposed that the effect of statements of motivation on consumers' perceived attribution about a sponsoring company would depend on their level of ad skepticism. Thus, hypothesis 2a predicted that higher ad skeptics would show skeptical attribution about the company's motivation when only public serving motivation was presented compared to those with lower ad skepticism. Conversely, hypothesis 2b proposed that higher ad skeptics would show positive attribution about the company's motivation when both firm- and public- serving motivations were presented in the CRM claim compared to those with lower ad skepticism.

Before testing the hypotheses, high vs. low skepticism was distinguished on the resultant measure from the top and bottom thirds of the distribution of scores. Identifying and comparing the top and bottom groups while eliminating those individuals positioned near the median value more clearly identifies the differences between the more- and less skeptical groups (Gangestad and Snyder 1985, 1991; Grau and Folse 2007) and thus increasing the likelihood of obtaining effects if they are present. After dividing the sample using skepticism scores, mean value for the high skepticism was 4.98 ($SD = .74$) and mean value for the low skepticism was 2.67 ($SD = .43$). A two-way MANOVA was conducted with skepticism (high/low) and statement of motivation (public- and firm-serving/ public-serving) as independent variables and positive and skeptical attribution perceptions as dependent variables. Box's M-statistics was 50.92 ($p < .01$), suggesting that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables were not equal across conditions. Since the group sizes were not equal in this case, Roy's test was employed.⁴ Multivariate results indicated significant main effects of skepticism (*Roy's largest root* = .25, F

⁴ According to Rencher and Christensen (2012), if the Box's M test is statistically significant and equality of between-group variance is violated, Roy's test is recommended for analyzing the multivariate effect of independent variables(s).

(2, 292) = 36.93, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .20$) and motivation statements (*Roy's largest root* = .02, $F(2, 292) = 3.58$, $p < .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$). An interaction effect between skepticism and motivation statements was not found (*Roy's largest root* = .01, $F(2, 292) = 1.47$, $p = .23$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$). Table 5 summarizes descriptive values, and the univariate results are summarized in the Table 6.

As shown in Table 7, consumers' level of skepticism had great impacts on both positive attribution and skeptical attribution ($F(1, 293) = 53.10$, $p = .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$, ($F(1, 293) = 5.92$, $p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$ respectively). Both positive and skeptical attributions differed significantly in respect of the presence vs. absence of the firm serving statement ($F(1, 293) = 4.68$, $p = .031$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, ($F(1, 293) = 4.44$, $p = .036$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$ respectively). Since Levene's test showed an inequality of error variance for the positive attribution ($F(3, 293) = 14.44$, $p = .000$), additional independent one-way ANOVA with Brown-Forsythe F and Welch's F adjustments was employed to test the validity of the effect of skepticism on positive attribution. The outcome adjusted by Brown-Forsythe F and Welch's F statistics showed that there was still a significant difference in positive attribution across levels of skepticism conditions (Welch; Brown-Forsythe: $F(1, 250.72) = 55.94$, $p = .000$). The violation of homogeneity of variance posed no threat to the validity of the results.

Although the interaction effect between skepticism and motive statements was not statistically significant, it is noteworthy that consumers with lower skepticism showed more positive attribution ($M = 5.55$, $SD = .75$) than those with higher skepticism ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.19$) when both firm and public motivation were presented simultaneously. They also showed more skeptical attribution ($M = 5.26$, $SD = .92$) than those with higher skepticism ($M = 5.00$, $SD =$

1.16) when only public motivation was stated. This result showed the opposite direction of the prediction. H2a and H2b were not supported.

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations of Higher vs. Lower Skeptics' Perceived Attribution Facing Statement of Firm- and Public- Serving vs. Public- Serving Motivation

Dependent Variables	Statement of Firm & Public Motivation		Statement of Public Motivation	
	High Skeptics	Low Skeptics	High Skeptics	Low Skeptics
	<i>N</i> = 67 <i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>N</i> = 89 <i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>N</i> = 80 <i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>N</i> = 61 <i>Mean (SD)</i>
Positive Attribution	4.78 (1.19)	5.55 (.75)	4.25 (1.53)	5.49 (1.12)
Skeptical Attribution	4.67 (1.29)	5.04 (.99)	5.00 (1.16)	5.26 (.92)

Table 7. Univariate Results for Consumers' Perceived Attributions

	Positive Attribution			Skeptical Attribution		
	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Partial η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Partial η^2
Skepticism (S)	53.10***	(1, 293)	.15	5.92*	(1, 293)	.02
Motivation	4.68*	(1, 293)	.02	4.44*	(1, 293)	.02
Statements (MS)						
S × MS	2.95	(1, 293)	.01	.19	(1, 293)	.00

Notes: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

Effects of the Type of CRM Appeal, Statement of Company's Motivation, and Skepticism on Attribution

It was hypothesized that CRM ad appeals might magnify the interaction effect between statements of motivation and consumers' levels of skepticism on their attribution about the sponsoring company's motives. Specifically, H3a proposed that consumers with high skepticism would show positive attribution about the company's motivation underlying the CRM when only public serving motivation was presented in an emotional appeal as compared to an informational appeal. H3b proposed that consumers with low skepticism would show skeptical attribution about the ulterior motivation underlying the CRM offer when only public serving motivation was presented in both informational and emotional appeals. A three-way MANOVA was employed with type of appeal (emotional vs. informational), statement of motivation (public- and firm-serving vs. public-serving), and skepticism (high vs. low) as independent variables and positive and skeptical attribution perceptions as dependent variables. An equality of the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables was checked (Box's M statistics = 15.99, $p = .07$). Multivariate results showed the main effect of the motive statement (Wilks' $\lambda = .98$, $F(2, 288) = 3.61$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$) and skepticism (Wilks' $\lambda = .79$, $F(2, 288) = 34.50$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$), but the main effect of the CRM ad appeal and interaction between motive statements, CRM appeal, and skepticism were not found (Wilks' $\lambda = .98$, $F(2, 288) = 2.32$, $p = .10$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, Wilks' $\lambda = .99$, $F(2, 288) = .55$, $p = .57$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$, respectively) (see Table 9). Further univariate analysis was not necessary because main effect of the CRM ad appeal and three way interaction effect between motive statement, CRM appeal, and skepticism were not significant (Hair et al. 2009). Although the interaction effect among type of appeal, benefit appeal, and skepticism was not statistically significant, it is notable that higher skeptics were more positive in response to the public-serving benefits statement in an emotional appeal

($M = 4.59$ $SD = 1.49$) compared to an informational appeal ($M = 3.90$ $SD = 1.51$) and mean difference was significant ($p < .05$). On the other hand, low skeptics responded in a similar pattern to the emotional and informational appeals when only public-serving benefit was stated ($M_{emotional} = 5.66$, $SD = .86$; $M_{informational} = 5.34$, $SD = 1.31$), but the difference was not significant. Because the response pattern was not conclusive when all three variables were considered together, H3a and H3b were not confirmed.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of High/Low Skeptics Perceived Attribution in Different Type of Appeals with Statements of Motivation

	Statements of Firm & Public Benefits				Statements of Public Benefits			
	Emotional		Informational		Emotional		Informational	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
	n = 32	n = 47	n = 35	n = 42	n = 40	n = 29	n = 40	n = 32
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)
Positive Attribution	4.76 (1.29)	5.61 (.76)	4.80 (1.11)	5.49 (.75)	4.59 (1.49)	5.66 (.86)	3.90 (1.51)	5.34 (1.31)
Skeptical Attribution	4.45 (1.27)	5.06 (.91)	4.87 (1.29)	5.02 (1.08)	4.82 (1.17)	5.28 (.91)	5.18 (1.13)	5.23 (.95)

Table 9. Multivariate Results for Consumers' Perceived Attributions

	Wilks' λ	F	df	Partial η^2
Type of Appeal (TA)	.98	2.32	(2, 288)	.02
Statements of Motivation (SM)	.98	3.61*	(2, 288)	.02
Skepticism (S)	.79	37.50***	(2, 288)	.21
TA \times S	.99	1.36	(2, 288)	.01
TA \times SM	.99	1.69	(2, 288)	.01
S \times SM	.99	1.56	(2, 288)	.01
TA \times S \times SM	.99	.55	(2, 288)	.00

Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

Effect of Attribution on Company Credibility

It was hypothesized that positive attribution would increase consumer perceptions of sponsoring company credibility (H4a) and skeptical attributions would decrease perceived company credibility (H4b). Table 10 shows correlation coefficients among key variables including positive attribution, skeptical attribution, and perception of company credibility. A general linear regression was employed to test hypotheses with positive attribution and skeptical attribution as predictors and credibility perceptions as a dependent variable. As shown in Table 11, positive attribution had a significant positive impact on consumer perceptions of company credibility ($\beta = .49$, $t(294) = 9.47$, $p = .000$, $R^2 = .21$). On the other hand, skeptical attribution did not show a significant impact on credibility perception ($\beta = .03$, $t(294) = .50$, $p = .617$, $R^2 = .004$). These findings supported H4a, but did not support H4b.

Table 10. Correlations among Key Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pearson Correlations								
1. State Motivation	1.00							
2. Emotional	.03	1.00						
3. Informational	.06	.19**	1.00					
4. Ad Skepticism	-.07	-.22**	-.21**	1.00				
5. Positive Attribution	.13*	.44**	.26**	-.47**	1.00			
6. Skeptical Attribution	-.11*	.07	.09	-.06	-.18**	1.00		
7. Company Credibility	.10*	.40**	.38**	-.31**	.46**	-.06	1.00	
8. Intention	.09	.28**	.17**	-.14**	.28**	-.14**	.37**	1.00

Notes: 1. Statements of Firm & Public Serving Motivation; 2. Emotional Appeal; 3. Informational Appeal; 4. Ad Skepticism; 5. Positive Attribution; 6. Skeptical Attribution; 7. Company Credibility; 8. Intention to Join a Brand Page
 * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Table 11. The Results of Regression for Attribution Predicting Perceived Credibility

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>p</i>
	B	Standard Error	Beta	<i>t</i>	
Positive attribution	.39	.04	.49	9.47	.000
Skeptical attribution	.02	.04	.03	.50	.617

Notes: Dependent variable = consumer perceptions of sponsoring company credibility, $R^2 = .24$.

Mediating Role of Attribution

H5 proposed that consumers' perceived attributions would mediate the relationship between CRM ad and consumers perceptions of company credibility. To test the mediating role of perceived attributions, multiple regression analyses were conducted as Williams, Edwards, and Vandenberg (2003) suggested. A single variable measuring firm benefit appeal was computed by averaging the firm and reversed public items (manipulation check). As shown in table 12, the first equation demonstrated a significant positive effect of firm-benefit CRM appeal on company credibility perceptions ($\beta = .20, t(406) = 2.07, p = .038$). The second regression equation indicated that firm-benefit CRM ad positively influenced positive attribution ($\beta = .35, t(406) = 2.94, p = .003$). The third equation showed that positive attribution significantly affected company credibility ($\beta = .36, t(406) = 10.10, p = .000$). The final equation demonstrated that the effect of firm-benefit CRM appeal on company credibility became insignificant ($\beta = .07, t(406) = .83, p = .403$) when regressed along with positive attribution. To test the statistical significance of observed mediating effects, a bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates was employed (MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams 2004). The 95% confidence interval (CI) of the indirect effects was obtained with 5000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of perceived attribution in the relations between a CRM ad and perceived company credibility (CI = $-.2325$ to $-.0422$) as zero was not between the lower and upper bound. Accordingly, the results lend support to the mediating role of consumers' perceived attribution. However, skeptical attribution did not show a mediating effect. The findings indicated that the effect of a CRM ad flowed through positive attribution.

Table 12. The Results of Multiple Regressions and Bootstrapping for Attribution

Predictor	Dependent variable	Positive Attribution		Skeptical Attribution	
		β	t	β	t
CRM ad (1)	Credibility	.20	2.07*	.20	2.07*
CRM ad	Attribution	.34	2.94**	-.20	-1.89
Attribution (2)	Credibility	.36	10.10***	-.05	-1.12
1 and 2	Credibility	.07	.84	.19	1.96
R^2			.21		.01
Indirect effects			.1263		-.0108
Bias corrected			-.2325 to		-.0515 to
CI			-.0422		.0070

Note: Level of confidence for confidence intervals: 95; Number of bootstrap resamples: 5000
CI refers to confidence interval.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Effect of Credibility Perception on Intention

Hypothesis 6 proposed that consumers' perceptions of company credibility would generate stronger intention to join in the brand page. To test the hypothesis, general liner regression was conducted with company credibility as an independent variable and intention to join in the brand page as a dependent variable. The regression results showed a significant positive effect of credibility perception on intention ($\beta = .37, t(407) = 7.96, p = .000, R^2 = .14$). This finding supported Hypothesis 6. Table 13 summarizes the hypotheses results.

It is noteworthy that since statistical significance means that the likelihood that the difference between the two groups or relationships between two variables could just to be an accident of sampling (Cohen 1988), statistical power has to be taken into account to make sure the likelihood of deciding there is an effect, when one actually exist (Kline 2004). As table 13 shows, the levels of statistical power of the supported hypotheses range from low to moderate

values (i.e., 0.2 - .21), with most in the low range. That is, only small portion of the between subjects variance is accounted for by the treatments in this study.

Table 13. Summary of the Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Mean (SD)	Test	Support	Effect Size
H1a Statement of firm-and public-serving motivation will generate positive attribution	$M_{Firm \& public} = 5.24, SD = 1.03$ $M_{public} = 4.89, SD = 1.32$	$F(1, 407) = 8.63^{**}$	Supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .02$
H1b Statement of public-serving motivation will generate skeptical attribution	$M_{public} = 5.09, SD = 1.02$ $M_{Firm \& public} = 4.89, SD = 1.09$	$F(1, 407) = 3.57$	Not supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .01$
H2a Higher skepticism will show skeptical attribution when only public-serving motivation is presented	$M_{high\ skepticism} = 5.00, SD = 1.16$ $M_{low\ skepticism} = 5.26, SD = .92$	$F(1, 293) = .19$	Not supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .00$
H2b Higher skepticism will show positive attribution when both firm- and public-serving motivation	$M_{high\ skepticism} = 4.78, SD = 1.19$ $M_{low\ skepticism} = 5.55, SD = .75$	$F(1, 293) = 2.95$	Not supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .01$
H3a High skepticism will show positive attribution when only public-serving motivation is stated in an emotional appeal	$M_{emotional} = 4.59, SD = 1.49$ $M_{informational} = 3.90, SD = 1.51$	$F(2, 288) = .55$	Not supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .00$
H3b Low skepticism will show skeptical attribution when only public-serving motivation is stated in both informational and emotional appeals	$M_{emotional} = 5.66, SD = .86$ $M_{informational} = 5.34, SD = 1.31$	$F(2, 288) = .55$	Not supported	Partial $\eta^2 = .00$

Table 13. (cont'd)

Hypotheses	Mean (SD)	Test	Support	Effect Size
H4a Positive attribution will increase perceived company credibility	$\beta = .49$	$t(294) = 9.47^{***}$	Supported	$R^2 = .21$
H4b Skeptical attribution will decrease perceived company credibility	$\beta = .03$	$t(294) = .50$	Not supported	$R^2 = .00$
H5 Attribution will mediate the relationship between CRM ad and perceived company credibility	$\beta_{positive\ attribution} = .45$	$t(406) = 10.14^{***}$	Supported	$R^2 = .12$
H6 Perceived company credibility will generate greater intention to join in the brand page	$\beta = .37$	$t(407) = 7.96^{***}$	Supported	$R^2 = .14$

Note: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

A Test of the Proposed Model

To further examine the proposed mediation relationship between a CRM ad appeal and credibility perceptions, and to gain understanding of the full picture of the process, a path analysis was performed using AMOS 22. A single variable measuring firm-benefit appeal, positive attribution, skeptical attribution, and credibility perception, and intention to join in a brand page were computed by averaging their respective subscales.

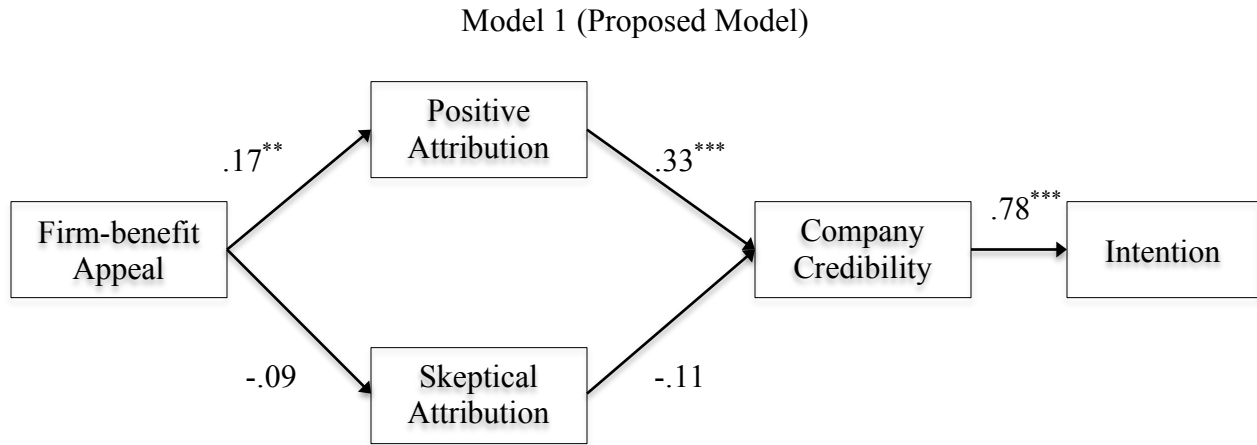
Since one of the objectives for this research was to examine the moderating effect of skepticism in the relation path between CRM appeal and perceived attribution, the multi-group comparison was employed for assessing the effect of moderator in the model (Little et al. 2007).

As a first step, the proposed model (Model 1) was compared to a baseline model (Model 2) in which firm and public serving benefits CRM influences all of the endogenous variables that were correlated in a causal sequence using the entire sample (Sorbom 1974). Fit indices of Model 1, which was more parsimonious, showed a slightly better fit (see Figure 2). To determine model fit, several different goodness-of-fit indices were used. The ratio of chi-square (χ^2) to its degree of freedom ($\chi^2/df = 1.262$) was below 2.0, the comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) values were .98 and .96, respectively, which exceeded the .90 standard for model fit (McDonald and Marsh 1990). Other goodness of fit indices (goodness-of-fit (GFI) = .99, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .95, normed fit index (NFI) = .95) were sufficient, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was .03, which was less than .06, showing a good fit (Brown and Cudeck 1993;Hu and Bentler 1999).⁵ On the basis of the proposed model, in the next step, the data was split into two separate groups (high vs. low skepticism group) and two path models were created. The models were then examined the change in a χ^2 value ($\Delta\chi^2$) between constrained and unconstrained models to determine whether the model and the individual parameter estimate are invariant across the groups. In addition to the $\Delta\chi^2$ the difference in CFI value was also considered in determining whether the proposed model fit the data equally well in high and low skeptics groups. The use of the $\Delta\chi^2$ has been criticized because of its sensitivity to sample size (Brannick 1995;Cheung and Rensvold 2002), and Cheung and Rensvold (2002) provided evidence that Δ CFI was not prone to the sample size sensitivity. Δ CFI value higher than .01 was indicative of a significant drop in fit (Cheung and Rensvold 2002). The unconstrained and the fully constrained models were compared, revealing a significant difference between the high skepticism and low skepticism

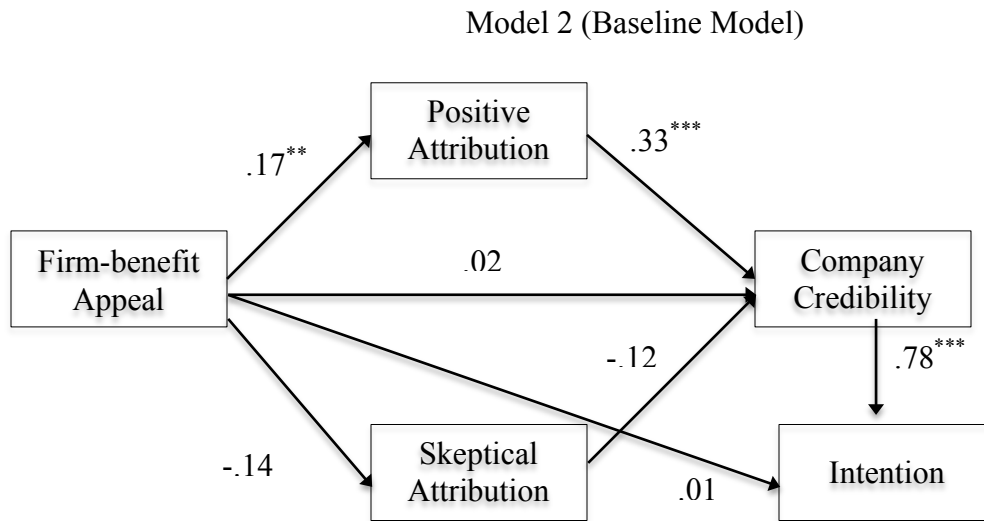
⁵ Simulation research shows that all these indices depend somewhat on sample size, while TLI/NFI shows the best overall performance (Brown and Cudeck 1993;Hu and Bentler 1999)

models ($\Delta\chi^2 = 10.839, p = .05, \Delta CFI = .05$). This result indicated that the value of the path coefficients differed for high and low groups in the model. This justifies the subsequent cross-group comparison. The results detecting the group difference as well as the path coefficients are listed in Table 12. The path models with the path coefficients and fit indices are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Comparison between Proposed Model and Baseline Model



$\chi^2 = 10.10$ ($df = 8$), $p = .258$, $\chi^2/df = 1.26$, GFI = .987, AGFI = .953, NFI = .935, TLI = .959, CFI = .984, RMSEA = .030.

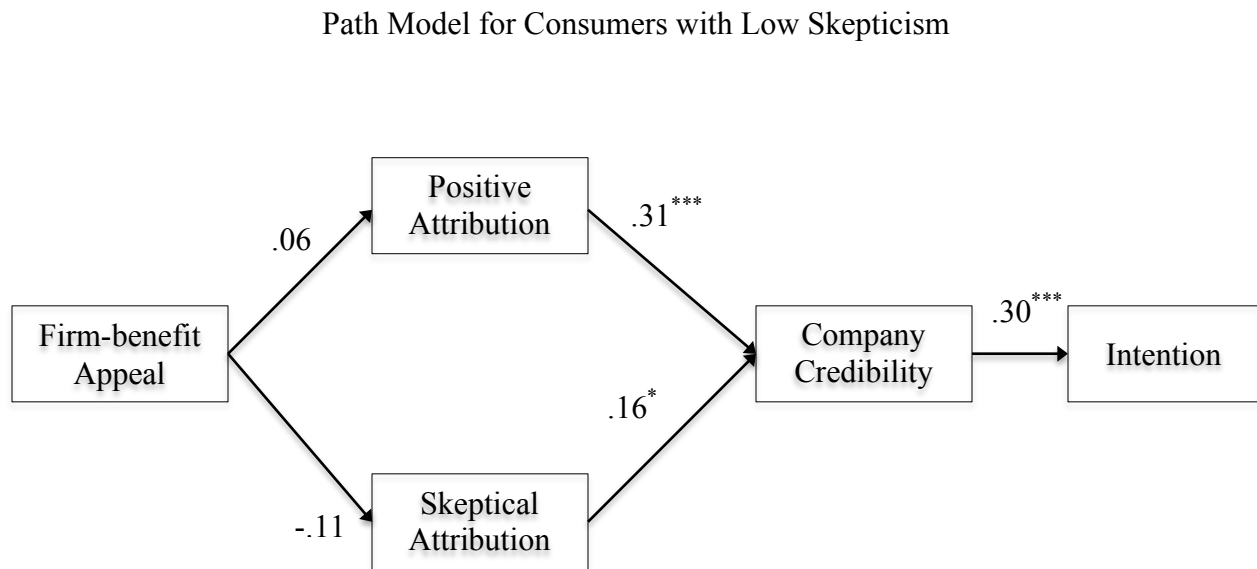
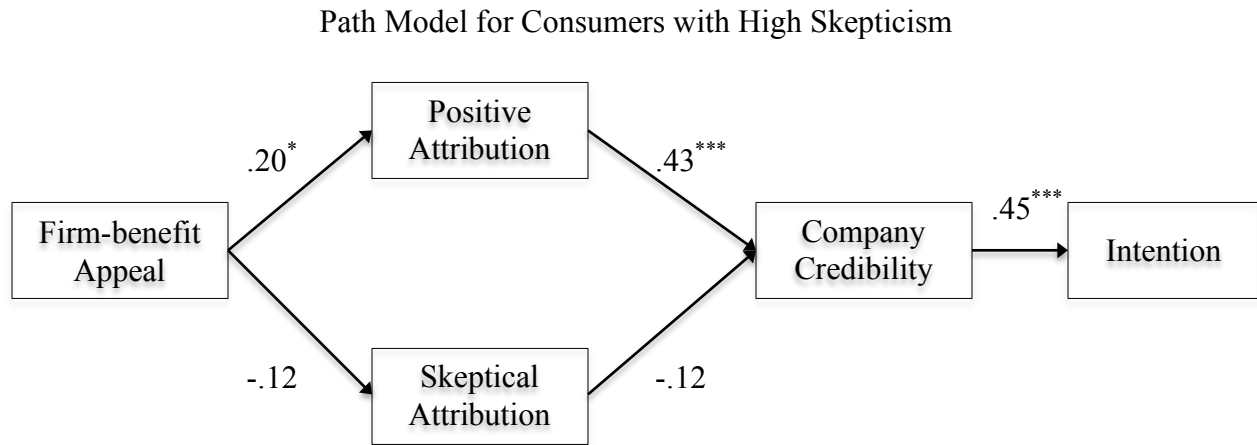


$\chi^2 = 8.58$ ($df = 4$), $p = .072$, $\chi^2/df = 2.15$, GFI = .987, AGFI = .923, NFI = .935, TLI = .820, CFI = .972, RMSEA = .062.

Notes: GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 3. Relationships between Firm-benefit CRM appeals, Positive vs. Negative Attribution, Company Credibility, and Intention



$\chi^2 = 9.552$ ($df = 8$), $p = .298$, $\chi^2/df = 1.19$, GFI = .987, AGFI = .953, NFI = .935, TLI = .970, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .026.

Notes: GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean squared error of approximation.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 14. High/Low Skepticism Between-Group Comparison on the Effectiveness of CRM Path Model

				Unconstrained $\chi^2 = 9.552 (8)$		
				Fully constrained $\chi^2 = 20.391 (13)$		
Relationship	Full Data	High	Low	Constrained	$\Delta\chi^2$	ΔCFI
F1 ÷ F2	.10**	.20*	.06	$\chi^2 = 12.264 (9)$	2.712	.014
F1 ÷ F3	-.06*	-.12	-.11	$\chi^2 = 9.619 (9)$.067	.007
F2 ÷ F4	.37***	.43***	.31***	$\chi^2 = 9.736 (9)$.184	.006
F3 ÷ F4	.02	-.12	.16*	$\chi^2 = 16.178 (9)$	6.626	.044
F4 ÷ F5	.58***	.45***	.30***	$\chi^2 = 10.180 (9)$.628	.003

Note: F1 = Firm-benefit CRM appeal; F2 = Positive attribution; F3 = Skeptical attribution; F4 = Company credibility; F5 = Intention. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Among higher skeptics group, firm-benefit appeal had a significant positive effect on positive attribution with a path coefficient of .20 ($p = .015$). The positive attribution also had a significant positive effect on company credibility (path coefficient = .43, $p < .001$). That is, the firm-benefit appeal effects flowed through positive attribution in the high skeptics group, indicating the significant mediating role of the positive attribution. On the other hand, in the low skeptics group, attribution did not play a mediating role between firm-benefit appeal and company credibility. Notably, skeptical attribution had a significant positive effect on company credibility (path coefficient = .16, $p = .038$) as well as positive attribution (path coefficient = .31, $p < .001$). Although low skeptics negatively inferred the company's underlying motives about providing a social cause, they perceived the company more credible as opposed to the high skeptics. In the group comparison, the relationship between negative attribution and company credibility was significantly different across two groups ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.63$, $\Delta CFI = .04$, $p < .01$). The relationship between firm-benefit CRM appeal and positive attribution also significantly differ across high and low skeptics groups ($\Delta\chi^2 = 2.71$, $\Delta CFI = .04$, $p < .05$). As predicted, perceived

company credibility had a significant impact on intention to join a brand page across groups (path coefficient = .45, $p < .001$ for high skeptics; path coefficient = .30, $p < .001$ for low skeptics).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Effects of Statement of Sponsoring Company's Motivation on Perceived Attribution

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the circumstances under which a CRM ad would be most effective. The message strategy, also referred to as the appeal, is general overall approach that the advertisement adopts (Mortimer 2008). This study explored whether honest appeal would be more effective strategy in promoting a CRM ad. In particular, the study examined whether consumers would attribute the firm's supporting to a social cause to more self-serving motivation when the firm publicly stated potential self-serving benefits of its action.

The first main finding was that consumers attributed the motivation behind the company's charity to positive motivation that serve the public good when firm-serving benefits as well as public-serving benefits were presented in CRM compared to when only public-serving benefit was presented. This finding was consistent with prior research in that firms might be able to shield themselves from the negative effects by being outspoken about their motives underlying charitable program (Forehand and Grier 2003).

In the condition in which only public-serving benefit was presented in a CRM ad, consumers showed more skeptical attribution than when firm- and public- serving benefits were presented. Given that most firms promote the societal marketing campaign (i.e., cause-related marketing ads) solely in terms of their benefits to society, this prevalent societal marketing tactic may provoke consumers' skepticism of the firms' ulterior motives underlying their supporting a social cause (Drumwright and Murphy 2009). Acknowledgement of the presence of self-serving

motives can be a better societal marketing strategy to reduce consumer skepticism of firms or advertisers' motives.

Effects of Skepticism and Statement of Company's Motivation on Perceived Attribution

This study predicted that consumers' levels of ad skepticism would lead to wide variation in the way they interpreted CRM ad campaigns. In this study, ad skepticism was conceptualized as consumers' trait that predisposed them to doubt the authenticity of marketing communications such as CRM ads (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005; Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). In addition, this study predicted certain characteristics of a message could also temporarily heighten the level of skepticism (Forehand and Grier 2003). Thus, higher ad skeptics were expected to show a skeptical attribution about the company's motivation when only public-serving benefit was presented in a CRM ad, while they were expected to show a positive attribution about the company's motives when firm- and public- serving benefits were presented compared to those with lower skeptics. Contrary to the predictions, this study found evidence of opposite outcomes. The findings indicated that consumers with lower skepticism inferred that the company had ulterior persuasion motives when only public-serving benefit was presented in the CRM ad compared to those with higher skepticism. When firm- and public-serving benefits were stated, consumers with lower skepticism inferred that the company had a positive altruistic motive compared to those with higher skepticism.

Even though the effect of the levels of skepticism on perceived attribution did not discussed in detail in the previous section, it is noteworthy that lower skeptics showed not only more positive attribution compared to the higher skeptics ($p = .03$) but also more negative attribution than those with higher skeptics ($p = .000$). In general, consumers with lower skepticism had been considered to be less likely to infer that the company's supporting a social

cause is motivated by persuasion or potential benefits to the firm itself (Webb and Mohr 1998; Polonsky and Wood 2001). On the other hand, higher skeptics have been considered to be more likely to be sensitive to CRM claims and generated greater skeptical attribution as a coping strategy because they have been socialized to believe that campaigns can be a part of marketers' strategies to persuade consumers to buy their products (Darke and Ritchie 2007; Friestad and Wright 1994). However, the findings were not consistent with the general belief in that lower skepticism generated more negative impact on consumers' attribution.

One possible explanation for this inconsistency is that the college student sample in this study might differ in their level of skepticism compare to the adult sample in the prior research. Advertising skepticism has been considered as the tendency towards disbelief of advertising claims, which is related to the quality of accumulated consumers experiences (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). Because of the positive linkage between advertising exposure and advertising skepticism (Mangleburg and Bristol 1998), advertising skepticism may differ between young and older population. As Boush, Friestad, and Rose (1994) demonstrated, as individuals grow older and more experienced, knowledge of advertising tactics is enhanced through experience with advertising. Accordingly, older consumers compared to young consumers may be more familiar with advertising tactics and opportunities to test ad truthfulness through their purchase experiences (Darke and Ritchie 2007).

In this study, skepticism was considered as skepticism towards advertising in general rather than examining it from the perspective of specific CRM claims. More precisely measured CRM skepticism might yield different results.

Effects of Type of Appeal, Statement of Company Motivation, and Skepticism on Perceived Attribution

Advertising is often considered within a framework that identifies advertising appeals as essentially either rational or emotional (Solomon 1996). Many agree that rational conscious thinking should lead to resist to the message advertised, while emotive content inhibit counter-arguments (Campbell 1995; DeCarlo and Barone 2009; Kanter and Wortzel 1985; Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005). In particular, previous research suggested that higher ad skepticism generated different response to emotional versus informational appeals (Obermiller, Spangenberg, and MacLachlan 2005). In line with previous research, the study predicted that higher skeptics would show positive attribution about the company's motive supporting a social cause when only public-serving benefit was presented in an emotional appeal compared with an informational appeal, whereas lower skeptics would show skeptical attribution when only public-serving benefit was presented in both emotional and informational appeals. Although the mean difference was in line with the predicted direction, the results did not show any statistically confirmed evidence that high skeptics responded differently to the emotional versus informational appeal, whereas low skeptics responded similarly to the two types of appeals.

Effects of Perceived Attribution on Company Credibility

Many have argued that consumer attribution of marketer intent guides consumer perceptions and behavior (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Rifon et al. 2004; Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Tuk et al. 2009). The study's finding was consistent with the previous studies in that consumers' positive attribution led to greater perceptions of company credibility. The finding indicates that when consumers refer that the company supports a social cause because it focuses to the potential benefits to the society, they perceive the sponsoring company more credible. The

skeptical attribution had a negative influence on company credibility, but it was not statistically significant.

Moreover, this study provided an additional evidence of crucial role of perceived attribution in CRM. The finding suggested that consumers' positive assessments of company motive play an important role in consumers' attitudinal response to the CRM ads. In particular, the positive attribution mediated the effect of firm- and public-serving benefits appeal on consumers' perceptions of company credibility. The finding indicated that the procedure by which consumers evaluated the motives of the company and that perceived motives determine the effectiveness of CRM ads (Kelley 1972). That is, consumers who are focused on causal attribution of the company's motives about its supporting a social cause are more likely to be influenced by their attribution in their subsequent evaluation of the company compared with those who did not engage in the causal attribution (Forehand and Grier 2003). A clear acknowledgement of profit-oriented company motives may enhance consumer perceptions of company credibility by increasing the likelihood of consumer inference that the company has philanthropic motives for sponsoring a social cause (Rifon et al. 2004).

Path Model for the Firm-Serving Benefit Appeal

The path analysis illuminated the mediating role of consumers' perceived positive attribution between firm- and public-serving benefits appeal and consumer perceptions of the company credibility. This finding indicates that consumers' positive perceptions about a company's motivation to support a social cause influences the degree to which CRM strategies affect consumer perceptions of company credibility. Credibility perception had a strong and direct influence on intention to join a brand page. Previous research suggests that attitudes predict behavioral intentions best when intentions are specific with respect to action (Bagozzi

1981). In line with this previous research, the finding supports the strong relationship between attitude toward a company and intention to join in the company's brand page on SNS setting. This finding also confirms that attitude toward a company plays a crucial role in determining greater CRM effectiveness (Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell 2000; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; Rifon et al. 2004).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether consumers with high ad skepticism and those with low as skepticism were differ in their response to CRM. The path model showed a full picture of process as well as a clear map how high versus low skeptics responded differently to the CRM ads. The subsequent cross-group comparison detected the group difference in relationships among constructs. For example, higher skeptics showed a similar process pattern with those in the baseline model. In the high skeptics group, the effect of the firm-and public-serving benefits appeal flowed though positive attribution, indicating the substantial mediating role of the positive attribution. This finding was consistent with the prediction on the basis of the attribution theory in that highly skeptical consumers were less doubting about the company's intention behind its supporting to the social cause when the company honestly stated firm-serving benefit as well as public-serving benefit in CRM (Drumwright and Murphy 2001).

However, in the low skeptics group, attribution did not play a mediating role between firm- and public serving benefits appeal and perceived company credibility. Surprisingly, in the path model for the low skeptics group, skeptical attribution had a significant positive effect on company credibility. This finding is apparently in the opposite direction to the prediction and general belief. Previous studies have found that when consumers infer the company's motivation is less altruistic or more profit-oriented, they were more likely to perceive the company as being

less credible (Drumwright 1996; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000; Rifon et al. 2004; Webb and Mohr 1998). Contrary to the previous findings, the current study's finding indicated that low skeptics perceived the company more credible although they inferred the company's ulterior motives was profit-oriented. Although low skeptics group inferred that the primary motivation for the company's use of CRM is to exploit the cause as a means of generating sales of the sponsored product, they regarded it as a form of corporate social responsibility. They might value more on supporting social causes than the motives attributed to the firm. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of variation in consumer perceptions of a company's motivation to support social causes should be considered with consumers' trait based skepticism.

Finally, the current study's finding confirms the positive relationship between attitudes and intention. The finding indicates that consumers' perceptions of company credibility had a great impact on their intention to join a brand page. Thus, the findings suggest that featuring CRM on SNS brand pages may help marketers increase a membership of their SNS brand page.

Implications and Limitations

This study extends previous literature by directing academic attention to consumer perceived attribution as theoretical mechanism that can help predict their favorable responses to the brand pages featuring CRM on SNSs. Attribution theory posits that positive motive attribution provides the foundation for company credibility and subsequent evaluation of the company and consumer behavior, while negative motive attribution decrease consumer receptivity to the company promotions and actions. This general approach can be problematic because the theory cannot explain the substantial variations among consumers. More specialized theoretical approach may lead consumers in their positions to perceive a company's socially responsible performance as being more credible, promoting greater intention to join the brand page.

Moreover, this study also extends previous research on skepticism by showing that consumer skepticism can be both an enduring trait and a temporary state. Results demonstrate that situational manipulations of skepticism such as acknowledgement of firm-serving benefits in CRM significantly influence positive versus skeptical attribution of motive. In addition to this situational skepticism, it was found that the consumers' enduring level of predispositional skepticism predicted the degree to which consumers were likely to generate positive attributions of the company's supporting a social cause. In particular, those consumers who possess high levels of skepticism may be particularly sensitive to situational manipulations.

Along with the theoretical implications, this study provides several practical implications. Most CRM has been promoted in terms of their potential benefits to public and society. However, the current study finding indicates that the prevalent public benefits appeal may lead consumers to perceive the company is being deceptive about its true motives about supporting

social causes. The results suggest that acknowledgement of firm-serving benefits in CRM is one of the best strategies to lessen consumers skepticism because consumers have already known that marketers often use public-serving benefits appeal as a general persuasion tactic. Therefore, company may be able to inhibit the development of consumer skepticism by publicly stating the potential firm-serving benefits of their actions. Furthermore, although the current study did not support the effectiveness of emotional versus informational appeals in CRM, whether CRM ads should focus on rational or emotive contents should be taken into consideration in employing CRM. Selecting better contextual situational factors such as acknowledgement of firm-serving benefits appeal can be most effective strategy to capture consumers trust and to build a strong and positive CRM campaign ad that make consumers stay engaged and pay attention.

This study found a crucial role of the consumers' perception of attribution as a mediator of CRM effect on their perceptions of company credibility. The finding implicates that simple support of charitable causes is not sufficient to elicit positive responses from consumers. Instead, when considering the potential effect of CRM campaign on consumer choice, marketers should concern with how consumers perceive the company motivation behind CRM activities.

While this research has theoretical and practical implications, a few important limitations of this investigation must be addressed. First, the use of college students as a sample is limitation. Even though college students are one of the most responsive groups of cause marketing (CONE 2014) and they use SNSs most frequently out of all demographics groups and share information on events related social cause (Pew 2015), they are only part of general population. Moreover, college students and older population can be expected to differ in their ad skepticism. For the reason, findings should be interpreted with caution.

Second, this study tests one single product, bottle of water, which is not representative of all products featuring CRM on SNSs. The consideration of symbolic and functional brands under multiple product categories would increase the generalizability of the findings. In addition to the product category, the price of a product would be an important factor in determining the effectiveness of CRM. Future studies should take into account how the levels of price of the product affect consumer receptivity of CRM.

Third, even though this study uses the fictitious cause campaign, it is impossible to rule out all other confounding factors, such as participants' attitudes toward the supported cause, preference for certain image (i.e., girl's image). Future study should increase precision in estimating effectively by controlling for other confounding factors.

Finally, this study measures behavior intentions, rather than actual behavior, owing to the difficulties in measuring the actual behaviors of consumers with non-working Facebook brand pages. The consumer responses to the brand pages on SNSs might be different when they were asked to demonstrate their actual joining in the brand pages featuring CRM on SNSs.

Despite these limitations, this study advances the CRM literature by broadening its study context to SNSs, and expanding its empirical tests beyond perceived attribution of motives. Understanding what type of contextual appeal to use under what conditions on SNSs will help marketers enhance consumer engagement with their brand page and build consumer relationships with their brands.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

Questionnaire Used in First Pretest

Work Together to Race Against Hunger!

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture,
one in every five children in our region goes to bed hungry each night.

In addition, 1 in 7 people- nearly 47 million American depend on local aid programs for food.

A non-profit organization “**Work Against Hunger (WAH)**” has been carrying out comprehensive research by collecting and analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end hunger and poverty.

Join together to ensure exemplary activity by reaching our goal of \$50,000.

It is hoped that our performance will help alleviate a major problem in our society.

Please respond to the following statement by checking on the scale that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

1. I think the “Hunger” cause in the campaign is important to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

2. I think the “Hunger” cause in the campaign is of concern to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

3. I think the “Hunger” cause in the campaign is relevant to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

Questionnaire Used in First Pretest (Cont'd)

Work Together to Race Against Drunk and Drowsy Driving!

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, car accident is the leading cause of death for 15 – 24 year olds. In addition, each year, nearly 40,000 people under 25 die on the world's roads, on average over 1,000 a day.

A non-profit organization “**Work Against Drunk & Drowsy Driving (WADDD)**” has been carrying out comprehensive research by collecting and analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end drunk and drowsy driving.

Join together to ensure exemplary activity by reaching our goal of \$50,000.

It is hoped that our performance will help alleviate a major problem in our society.

Please respond to the following statement by checking on the scale that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

1. I think the “Drunk & Drowsy Driving” cause in the campaign is important to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

2. I think the “Drunk & Drowsy Driving” cause in the campaign is of concern to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

3. I think the “Drunk & Drowsy Driving” cause in the campaign is relevant to me.

Strongly disagree _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Strongly agree
(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

APPENDIX B.

Questionnaire Used in Second Pretest

Work Together to Race Against Hunger!

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one in every five children in our region go to bed hungry each night.

In addition, 1 in 7 people- nearly 47 million American depend on local aid programs for food.

A non-profit organization “Work Against Hunger (WAH)” has been carrying out comprehensive research by collecting and analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end hunger and poverty.

It is hoped that our performance will help alleviate a major problem in our society.

Please indicate how compatible you feel each is if the cause (WAH) forms a partnership with a brand of sporting goods (LeCaf), bottled water (ICIS), or school supplies retail store (GRAFO).

1. I feel the partnership between the cause and **the brand of sporting goods “LeCaf”** is...

- a. Not compatible at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely compatible
- b. Does not make sense (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely makes sense
- c. Not congruent at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely congruent

2. I feel the partnership between the cause and **the brand of bottled water “ICIS”** is...

- a. Not compatible at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely compatible
- b. Does not make sense (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely makes sense
- c. Not congruent at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely congruent

3. I feel the partnership between the cause and **the brand of school supplies retailer “GRAFO”** is...

- a. Not compatible at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely compatible
- b. Does not make sense (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely makes sense
- c. Not congruent at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely congruent

APPENDIX C.

Stimuli Used in Third Pretest

Figure 4. Emotional Appeal Condition

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook page for a company named ICIS. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with the Facebook logo, a search bar, and user options like 'Home 20+', 'Find Friends', and notification icons. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'Page', 'Messages', 'Notifications', 'Publishing Tools', 'Settings', and 'Help'. The main content area features a large banner image of a young child's face with the text 'I Don't Want to Go to Bed. Hungry...'. The ICIS logo is overlaid on the left side of the banner, with the tagline 'Solving Problem & Preserving Value' and buttons for 'Sign Up', 'Like', and 'Message'. Below the banner are tabs for 'Timeline', 'About', 'Photos', 'Reviews', and 'More'. On the right side, there are promotional options like 'Promote', 'THIS WEEK' (0 Sign Up), 'Recent 2015', and 'See Your Ad Here'. The main post area contains the following text: 'Our Action will Help End Hunger in America and Expand the Market for the Company.' followed by 'ABOUT' and a photo of a water bottle with the caption 'Food & Beverage Services & Distribution'. The main text of the post reads: 'Be a Hunger Fighting Hero! 1 in 6 people, 1 in 5 children, 50 million Americans go to bed hungry each night. We support Work Against Hunger (WAH), which carries out research by analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end hunger an poverty. Join together, to ensure exemplary activity by reaching our goal of \$50,000. It's simple- get involved. If you click "Like," \$1 will be donated to WAH, and you will be a member of brand page.' Below the text are 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share' buttons, and a 'Boost Post' button. At the bottom, there are links for 'EARLIER IN 2015' and 'HIGHLIGHTS'. The right sidebar also shows 'Like Page' and 'Promote Page' buttons.

Figure 5. Informational Appeal Condition

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook page for a company named ICIS. The page header includes the Facebook logo, the name 'ICIS', and navigation options like 'Home 20+', 'Find Friends', and 'Settings'. Below the header, there are tabs for 'Page', 'Messages', 'Notifications', and 'Publishing Tools'. The main content area features a large black banner with the text 'Work Together to Race Against Hunger!' and 'In the U.S. today, 16 million children face hunger.' To the left of the banner is the ICIS logo, which consists of a blue water drop icon above the letters 'ICIS'. Below the banner, there are buttons for 'Sign Up', 'Like', and 'Message'. The page layout includes a left sidebar with an 'ABOUT' section containing the text 'Our Action will Help End Hunger in America and Expand the Market for the Company.' and an image of a water bottle with the caption 'Food & Beverage Services & Distribution'. The main content area displays a post from ICIS with the text: 'Be a Hunger Fighting Hero! 1 in 6 people, 1 in 5 children, 50 million Americans go to bed hungry each night. We support Work Against Hunger (WAH), which carries out research by analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end hunger an poverty. Join together, to ensure exemplary activity by reaching our goal of \$50,000. It's simple- get involved. If you click "Like," \$1 will be donated to WAH, and you will be a member of brand page.' The post has 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share' buttons. On the right side of the page, there are options to 'Promote', 'Like Page', and 'Boost Post'. The bottom of the page shows 'EARLIER IN 2015' and 'HIGHLIGHTS'.

APPENDIX D.

Results of First Pretest

Table 15. First Pretest of Importance of Social Cause

	Hunger	Drunk Drowsy Driving	
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>
Cause Importance	5.00 (1.67)	3.67 (1.58)	6.56***

Notes: $N = 46$. Paired Sample t-test was conducted.

 $p < .001$.

APPENDIX E.

Results of Second Pretest

Table 16. Second Pretest of Cause-Brand Congruency

	LeCaf	ICIS	GRAFO		
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>
Cause Fit	3.21 (1.13)	5.88 (1.12)	3.21 (1.12)	(2, 48)	56.56 ^{***}

Notes: $N = 50$. Paired Sample t-test was conducted.

^{***} $p < .001$.

APPENDIX F.

Results of Third Pretest

Table 17. Third Pretest of Manipulation Check for Emotional vs. Informational Condition

	Emotional	Informational		
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Emotional (n = 67)	5.48 (1.29)	2.69 (1.47)	128	7.29***
Informational (n = 63)	3.79 (1.08)	5.68 (1.40)	128	4.01***

Notes: $N = 130$. Independent Sample t-test was conducted.

*** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX G.

Stimuli Used in Main Study: Emotional Appeal with Statements with Firm and Public Serving Benefits Condition

Figure 6. Emotional Appeal with Statements with Firm and Public Benefits Condition



APPENDIX H.

Emotional Appeal with Statement of Public Serving Benefit Condition

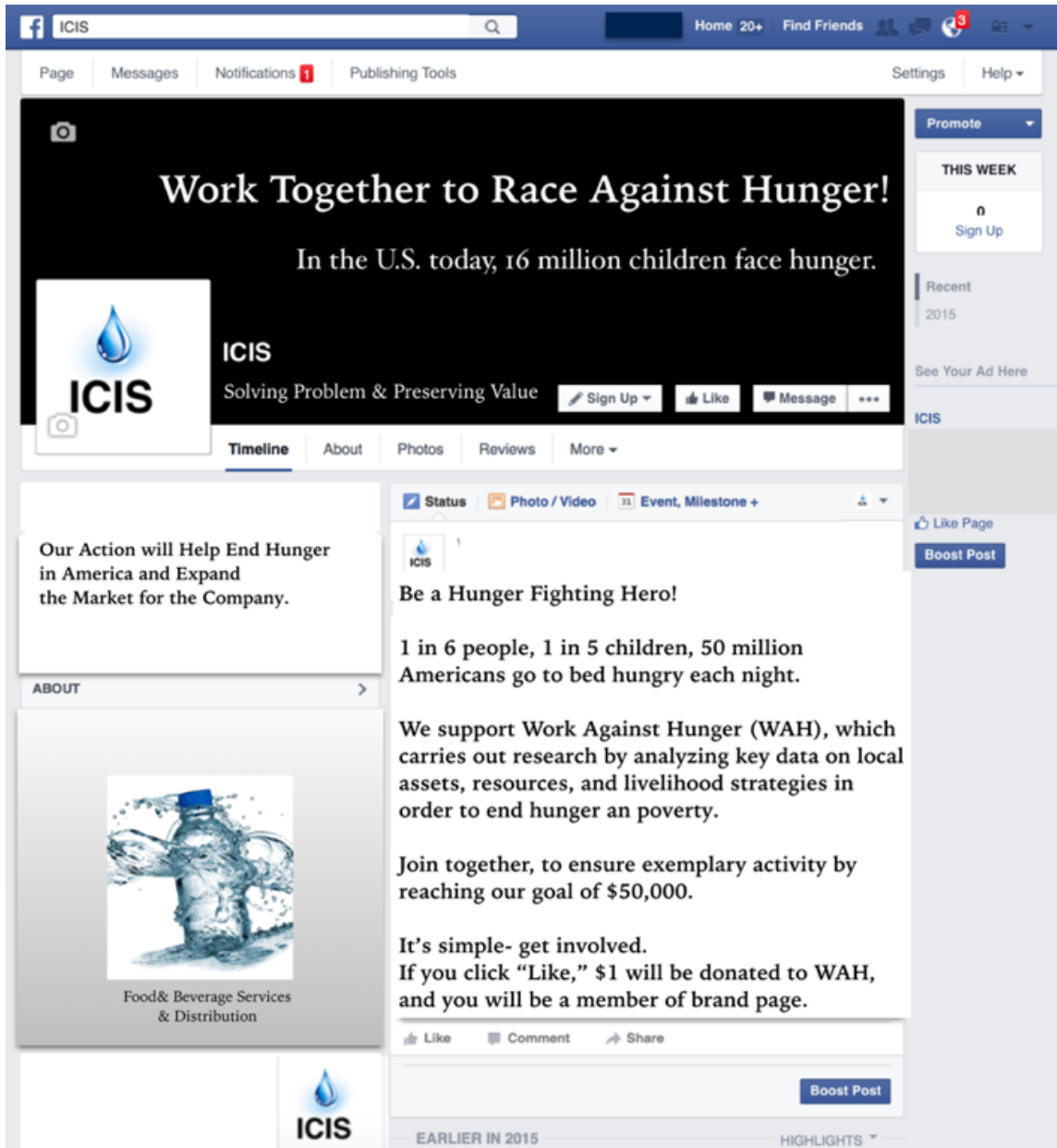
Figure 7. Emotional Appeal with Statement of Public Serving Benefit Condition



APPENDIX I.

Informational Appeal with Statement of Firm and Public Serving Benefits Condition

Figure 8. Informational Appeal with Statement of Firm and Public Serving Benefits Condition



APPENDIX J.

Informational Appeal with Statement of Public Serving Benefit Condition

Figure 9. Informational Appeal with Statement of Public Serving Benefit Condition

The image is a screenshot of a Facebook page for a company named ICIS. The page header includes the Facebook logo, the name 'ICIS', and navigation options like 'Home 20+', 'Find Friends', 'Settings', and 'Help'. Below the header, there are tabs for 'Page', 'Messages', 'Notifications', and 'Publishing Tools'. The main content area features a large black banner with the text 'Work Together to Race Against Hunger!' and 'In the U.S. today, 16 million children face hunger.' To the left of the banner is the ICIS logo, which consists of a blue water drop icon above the letters 'ICIS'. Below the banner, there are buttons for 'Sign Up', 'Like', and 'Message'. The page is divided into sections: 'About' (with the text 'Our Action will Help End Hunger in America.'), 'Timeline' (with a post), and 'More' (with options for 'Status', 'Photo / Video', and 'Event, Milestone +'). The post in the timeline is titled 'Be a Hunger Fighting Hero!' and contains the following text: '1 in 6 people, 1 in 5 children, 50 million Americans go to bed hungry each night. We support Work Against Hunger (WAH), which carries out research by analyzing key data on local assets, resources, and livelihood strategies in order to end hunger an poverty. Join together, to ensure exemplary activity by reaching our goal of \$50,000. It's simple- get involved. If you click "Like," \$1 will be donated to WAH, and you will be a member of brand page.' Below the post are buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share', and a 'Boost Post' button. On the right side of the page, there are additional options like 'Promote', 'THIS WEEK', 'Recent', and 'See Your Ad Here'. At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'EARLIER IN 2015' and 'HIGHLIGHTS'.

APPENDIX K.

Results of Manipulation Check

Table 18. The Results of the Independent Samples t-test for Statements of Motivation

	Firm & Public Benefits Mean (SD)	Public Benefits Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>
Firm & Public Benefits Condition (n = 205)	5.43 (.74)	3.32 (.72)	20.04 ^{***}
Public Benefits Condition (n = 204)	5.60 (.77)	3.41 (.77)	29.66 ^{***}

Note: ^{***} $p < .001$.

Table 19. The Results of the Independent Samples t-test for Type of Appeal

	Emotional Mean (SD)	Informational Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>
Emotional Condition (n = 204)	5.26 (1.16)	4.51 (1.46)	5.76 ^{***}
Informational Condition (n = 205)	4.24 (1.21)	4.59 (1.10)	3.02 ^{**}

Note: ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

APPENDIX 1.

Consent Form, Survey, and Debriefing Form

CONSENT FORM

The goal of this study is to increase knowledge of consumer psychology in decision-making. You are being asked to participate in a research study of your tendency to regard a cause-related marketing claims and a sponsoring company as more or less believable when you are exposed to a Facebook brand page. You will also be asked some additional survey questions about your general tendency toward belief of advertising claims and basic demographic information.

Your participation in this study will take approximately 20 minutes, including the time you spend reading this document.

You will be compensated .50 SONA credit for your participation in the study.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The data for this project are being collected anonymously. Neither the researchers nor anyone else will be able to link the information you provide (data) to us as an individual.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher (Mikyeung Bae, 404 Wilson Rd., Room 367, Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, baemikye@msu.edu, 517-898-1267)

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Drive #207, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

By clicking "Confirm" below, you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study, and will be led to the beginning of the experiment.

Consent

Confirm

Decline

Part 1. Advertising Skepticism

Please respond to the following statements by clicking on the scale that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

1. We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
2. Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
3. I believe advertising is informative.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
4. Advertising is generally truthful.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
5. Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
6. Advertising is truth well told.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
7. In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
8. I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisement.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
9. Most advertisement provides consumers with essential information.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Part 2. Manipulation

You will be presented a recently created Facebook brand page. Please surf the Facebook as you may do in real life and then answer each of the questions by choosing one answer on the scale that best describes your feeling or thoughts.

[NOTE: Participants will read one of the following conditions depending on the condition assigned.]

[Emotional Appeal with Statements of Firm and Public Serving Benefit Condition][See Appendix D).

[Emotional Appeal with Statements of Public Serving Benefit Condition][See Appendix E]

[Informational Appeal with Statements of Firm and Public Serving Benefit Condition][See Appendix F]

[Informational Appeal with Statements of Public Serving Benefit Condition][See Appendix G]

Part 3. Perceived Attribution

Now we are interested in how you think about the reason why the company would make such an offer. Please indicate the degree to which you would agree with the following statements.

10. The company sponsors the cause because ultimately they care about their customers.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
11. The company has a long-term interest in the community.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
12. The company wants to make it easier for consumers who care about the cause to support it.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
13. The company is trying to give something back to the community.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
14. The company sponsors the cause to persuade consumers to buy its product.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
15. The company sponsors the cause because ultimately it cares about its profits.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
16. The company sponsors the cause because sponsorship creates a positive corporate image.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
17. The company will take advantage of the nonprofit organization to help its own business.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Part 3. Perceptions of Company Credibility

Please respond to the following statements by clicking on the scale that indicates your level of agreement with each statement by ticking the appropriate box.

18. The company has a great amount of experience.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
19. The company is skilled in what they do.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
20. The company has great expertise.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
21. The company does not have much experience.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
22. I trust the company.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree
23. The company makes truthful claims.
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

24. The company is honest.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
25. I do not believe what the corporation tells me.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Part 4. Intention to Join a Brand Page

Please answer each of the questions in regard to your intention by choosing one answer on the scale that best describes your thought.

26. How likely is it for you to join the brand page?
 Not at all Extremely
27. How possible is it for you to join the brand page?
 Not at all Extremely
28. How probable is it for you to join the brand page?
 Not at all Extremely

Part 5. Familiarity

Please indicate the degree to which you would agree with following statements.

29. How familiar are you with the brand ICIS?
 Not at all Very
30. How familiar are you with the cause “Work Against Hunger (WAH)?
 Not at all Very

Part 6. Manipulation Check

Please respond to the following statement by checking on the scale that indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

31. This CRM ad appeals to my emotion.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
32. This CRM ad creates a mood.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
33. This CRM ad appeals to my rationality.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree
34. This CRM ad provides me a lot of information.
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for taking part in the study. The purpose of this form is to give you more information about the study and its goal.

The goal of this study is to increase knowledge of consumer psychology in decision-making. From this study, we hope to learn specific cognitive mechanisms consumers use to deal with advertisers' persuasion. In particular, we are interested in how people evaluate a cause-related marketing claim and a sponsoring company's motivation about supporting social causes.

Please do not share any information about this study with anyone who could potentially participate in the study. Sharing even the slightest detail could have negative impacts on the accuracy of the research findings.

If you have any questions about the study and its results, we encourage you to ask. Also since you are now given additional information about the study that you were unaware during the initial consent process, you now have the option to withdraw consent to use your data. Please let us know, if you wish to withdraw your consent. You may contact the investigators, Mikyeung Bae (baemikye@msu.edu) and Stephen Lacy (slacy@msu.edu).

Thank you very much for your participation.

Best wishes.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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