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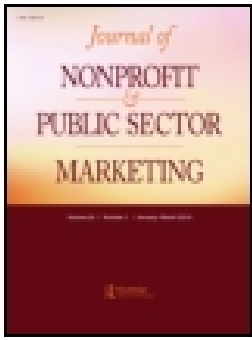
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# Measuring the Impact of Cause-Related Marketing: A Meta-Analysis of Nonprofit and For-profit Alliance Campaigns

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## ABSTRACT

Cause-related marketing (CRM) campaigns are a type of joint venture between a business concern and a nonprofit organization. To determine effect sizes for these campaigns, a series of bivariate meta-analyses were conducted using a random effects assumption. Results included the effect of CRM advertising on brand attitudes,  $r = .248$ , 95% CI(0.189,0.373), and purchase intentions,  $r = .277$ , 95% CI(0.141, 0.404), and the effect of cause-brand fit on brand attitudes,  $r = .239$ , 95% CI(0.167,0.309), and purchase intentions,  $r = .319$ , 95% CI(0.206, .423). Unfortunately for nonprofit organizations, none of the seven meta-analyses conducted found any effect for the study characteristic, *type of cause* (generic or branded company). Thus, the contribution of a specific nonprofit organization's brand did not have a significant impact on consumer attitudes or behavioral intentions to purchase CRM products.

## KEYWORDS

Cause-related marketing; cause-brand fit; cause involvement; meta-analysis

Over 35 years ago, the field of cause-related marketing (CRM) began as a new type of joint venture between a business concern and a nonprofit organization. CRM ventures link such organizations in the sharing of their publics and outcomes, as well as the risks and benefits of the association (Barnes, 1991). Since the marketers at American Express coined the expression in 1983, consumers have generally embraced the idea of cause-related marketing (CRM) and its combination of economic and social objectives (Barnes, 1991; Caesar, 1986; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). According to the 2017 Cone Communications CSR Study, 55 percent of consumers in the United States reported purchasing a product associated with a cause in the past 12 months – an increase of over 170 percent since 1993 (Cone, 2017).

Global consumers are also increasing in their support for cause-related marketing. According to Nielsen (2014) global consumer survey, 55 percent

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of approximately 30,000 participants from 60 countries responded that they are “willing to pay extra for products and services from companies that are committed to positive social and environmental impact” (p. 5). This willingness to pay extra represents a steady trend, from 45 percent in 2011, to 50 percent in 2012 to 55 percent in 2014 (Nielsen, 2014). In addition, cause-related academic research can be found all around the world. A literature review by Natarajan, Balasubramaniam, and Jublee (2016) discovered 300 peer-reviewed articles relating to CRM across 40 countries. The authors identified a range of research themes such as cause-fit, partnership dynamics, and consumer attitudes and behavior, which supported earlier findings (Guerreiro, Rita, & Trigueiros, 2015).

Although several literature reviews have been conducted on the topic (Guerreiro et al., 2015; Lafferty, Lueth, & McCafferty, 2016; Natarajan et al., 2016), no published quantitative summary of empirical research is available for the effect of advertising campaigns that promote causes (vs. non-cause campaigns) on brand attitudes and purchase intentions. A meta-analysis is therefore needed to calculate the weighted mean of advertising effect sizes (ES) in this field, and to explain the variance in ES across a global body of research.

## Rationale for meta-analytic review

The purpose of this meta-analytic review is to identify all available cause-related marketing studies that examine the effects of perceptions, norms and beliefs on global consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, and to analyze differences found across these CRM campaigns. The goal of this analysis is to determine the strength and direction of relationships between CRM campaign variables in order to contribute to future academic research in the field of cause-related marketing, as well as CRM campaign strategies in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors worldwide.

In addition to examining the effects of cause-related advertising vs. non-cause-related advertising on brand attitudes and purchase intentions, variables of particular interest in this analysis include *cause-brand fit*, or the connection between the nonprofit and for-profit brands (; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Lafferty, 2009; Nan & Heo, 2007; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004) and *cause involvement* or the level of importance the consumer has for the cause (; Hajjat, 2003; Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, & Attmann, 2010). In addition, this study is interested in measuring the effect of campaign messages that include a nonprofit brand versus a generic cause.

## The nature of cause-related marketing

A widely used definition of cause marketing by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) that was selected to guide this analysis, states that cause-related marketing is “a process of formulating and implementing marketing activities

that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives,” (p. 60). The success of these marketing activities is typically measured by improvements in brand attitudes and intentions to purchase CRM products.

According to the IEG Sponsorship Report, when marketing executives were asked which performance metrics were most important in evaluating their relationship with a cause (IEG, 2016) the top responses included attitudes toward the brand (86%), brand awareness (81%) and product/brand sales (66%). CRM scholars have demonstrated a parallel approach, measuring both attitudes and purchase intentions as dependent variables (Galan-Ladero, Galera-Casquet, Valero-Amaro, & Barroso-Mendez, 2013; Grau & Folse, 2007; Hajjat, 2003; Lafferty, 2009).

## **Theoretical perspectives**

A literature review by Lafferty et al. (2016) found that the theory of planned behavior (TPB) was used in dozens of studies in the area of cause-related marketing to guide their examination of the influence of culture, social norms, and beliefs on consumer attitudes and intentions to support CRM campaigns. Originally the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory was founded on three central premises: (1) that behavior can be predicted reliably by behavioral intentions, (2) that those intentions can be predicted by attitudes, and (3) that intentions can be predicted by subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). A meta-analysis by Armitage and Conner (2001) of 185 independent empirical tests of TRA found a medium-large effect size (Cohen, 1992) for behavioral intention ( $r = .40$ ). Subjective norms represent the perception that important others think the individual should or should not perform the given behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1973). The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) is an extension of TRA (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1973), adding a third element to the model: perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985). Perceived behavioral control (PBC) was defined by Ajzen (1985) as the extent to which individuals feel that they have are capable of performing a certain behavior. This meta-analysis of global cause-related advertising is primarily concerned with campaign variables associated with social norms, perceptions and beliefs that influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

## **CRM effects: attitudes and behavioral intentions**

### **Attitudes**

Attitudes can be defined as the degree to which an individual has favorable or unfavorable evaluations of an object (Fishbein, 1963). These attitudes are

influenced by a variety of beliefs. According to Fishbein (1963), those beliefs with the highest subjective probability and greatest evaluative consequences should have the greatest influence on attitudes. Studies in cause-related marketing across the globe have found that advertising campaigns that include a CRM offer have a positive effect on consumer attitudes (Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez, Ruiz-Mafé, & Sanz-Blas, 2012; Boenigk & Schuchardt, 2013; Chang & Cheng, 2015; Chang & Liu, 2012; Samu & Wymer, 2009).

### ***Purchase intentions***

Purchase intention was also identified as a dependent variable in a wide range of CRM campaign studies (Aggarwal & Singh, 2017; Arora & Henderson, 2007; Bae, 2016; Berger, Cunningham, & Kozinets, 1999; Chang, 2012b; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014; Kumar & Bansal, 2017; Landreth, 2002; Westberg & Pope, 2014). The following hypotheses reflect the findings expected from a meta-analysis of this literature.

H1: Cause-related advertising campaigns will increase favorable consumer attitudes toward a) sponsoring brands and b) intentions to purchase CRM products.

### ***Consumer perceptions: cause-brand fit***

Cause-brand fit is a term that refers to the consumer's perception of the connection or link (Lafferty, Goldsmith & Hult, 2004; Lafferty & Edmondson, 2009) between the cause and the brand in a specific CRM campaign. A "good fit" is measured by the extent to which consumers perceive the alliance to be logical, complementary and congruent (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2012; Steckstor, 2011). Studies have found that cause-brand fit moderates the effect of CRM advertising on consumer attitudes such that high fit increases favorable attitudes toward brand outcomes (Hou, Du, & Li, 2008; Nan & Heo, 2007).

H2: Cause-brand fit increases a) favorable attitudes toward sponsoring brands and b) purchase intentions.

H3: Cause involvement will increase a) favorable attitudes toward sponsoring brands and b) intentions to purchase CRM products.

### ***Beliefs: cause involvement***

Cause involvement can be defined as the level of personal importance based on individual needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985) or the degree to which consumers find a cause personally relevant to them (Grau & Folse, 2007).

Several researchers have concluded that cause involvement has a positive effect on cause-brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Berger et al., 1999; Patel, Gadhavi, and Shukla, 2016; Steckstor, 2011), and perceptions of cause-brand fit (; Hajjat, 2003; Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, & Attmann, 2010).

### ***Beliefs: skepticism***

An early CRM study by Webb & Mohr, (1998) categorized consumers as skeptics, balancers, attribute oriented, or socially concerned, according to their responses of CRM knowledge level, attitude toward the brand, buying behavior and perception of motives. In the context of cause-related marketing programs, skepticism can be defined as the tendency of a consumer toward disbelief or questioning of a company's motives for entering an alliance with a nonprofit (Mohr, Eroglu, & Ellen, 1998; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007). Skepticism has been found to be negatively associated with attitudes toward CRM campaigns in several countries, including the United States (Webb & Mohr, 1998), China (Chang & Cheng, 2015), Egypt (Hammad, El-Bassiouny, Paul, & Mukhopadhyay, 2014), India (Patel et al., 2016), Malaysia (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012), and The Netherlands (Elving, 2013). However, Youn and Kim (2008) found in a study of American consumers that "individuals high in advertising scepticism" were actually "more likely to trust a company's willingness to engage in philanthropic commitment to social causes" (p. 131). Although more studies have found a negative vs. a positive impact on CRM intentions, these conflicting findings make skepticism an interesting area of investigation for meta-analysis.

H4: Skepticism will reduce consumer intentions to purchase CRM products.

## **Potential moderators of CRM attitudes and purchase intentions**

### ***Campaign characteristics: types of brands and causes***

#### ***Real vs. fictitious brands***

To preserve authenticity, many researchers select actual or *real* cause-related ads to use in their CRM experiments (Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014; Hadley, 2016; Landreth, 2002). These studies often feature brands from companies such as Unilever and Proctor & Gamble which enjoy worldwide brand recognition. However, since experiments tend to measure cause-related advertising effects by comparing CRM vs. no CRM advertising, some researchers choose to create ads using fictitious brands, with the goal of avoiding any confounds to due pre-campaign brand attitudes (Folse, Grau, Moulard, & Pounders, 2014; Hou, Du & Li, 2008; Kim, Cheong, & Lim, 2015).

### ***Branded vs. generic causes***

The charitable causes that are used in cause-related advertising experiments also vary across the literature. Traditionally, cause-related campaigns partner with specific charitable organizations and include those brands in their CRM advertising. Many researchers therefore include branded causes in their experiments (Nawaz et al., 2016; Roy, 2010; Samu & Wymer, 2009). However, this is not true in every case. Other CRM ads may simply mention a generic cause, such as breast cancer research, in their campaign to eliminate pre-campaign attitudes toward actual charitable organizations (Folse et al., 2014; Hou, 2008; Kim et al., 2015; Landreth, 2002).

RQ1: Will the effects of CRM campaigns vary for a) real vs. fictitious brands or b) branded vs. generic causes?

### ***Country of origin, sample type and year of publication***

Three additional moderators that were tested include the country of origin for the study, type of sample for the study (college participants vs non-college participants), and year of publication. Since both age and education have been found to indicate increased support for cause-related marketing campaigns (Nielsen, 2014), college student samples may react differently from non-college participants in the general consumer populations. Further, the global cultural differences in participants may also yield different reactions toward support for CRM campaigns. Lastly, since the included studies in this analysis ranged over a 30 year span, the date of study will also be examined as a potential moderator.

RQ2: Will the effects of CRM advertising campaigns vary globally for a) Western vs. Non-Western countries, b) Western vs. Asian countries?

RQ3: Will the effects of CRM advertising campaigns vary for a) for college vs non-college participants or b) by date of study?

### ***Measurement of cause-brand fit and cause involvement***

#### ***Measurement of cause-brand fit***

Early definitions of brand-alliances (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Simonin & Ruth, 1998) used primarily categorical measures of fit, where pretest respondents are asked to react to manipulated brand alliances and categorize them as high, medium or low fit. Decades later, many researchers continue to use this *manipulated levels of fit* approach for CRM (Elving, 2013; Folse et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015; Landreth, 2002; Roy, 2010; Samu & Wymer, 2009; Sheikh &



Beise-Zee, 2011). More recently, cause-related marketing scholars are adopting continuous measurement techniques for cause-brand fit (Ellen, Web, & Mohr, 2006; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014; Hadley, 2016; Sabir et al., 2014; Steckstor, 2011; Westberg & Pope, 2014; Zdravkovic, Magnusson, & Stanley, 2010)

### ***Measurement of cause involvement***

In cause-related marketing studies, involvement with the cause is also determined using both dichotomized categorical measures (Grau & Folse, 2007; Hou, 2008, Landreth, 2002) and with semantic differential scales (Aggarwal & Singh, 2017; Berger et al., 1999; Chang, 2012b; Hyllegard et al., 2010; Kumar & Bansal, 2017; Patel et al., 2016.)

RQ4: Will the effects of cause-related marketing campaigns vary by type of measurement (scale vs categorical) for a) cause-brand fit or b) cause involvement?

## **Method**

### ***Selection criteria for inclusion of studies***

A search of the available literature was conducted to identify as many relevant CRM studies as possible to contribute to this meta-analysis. Studies were accepted from any country, in any language, as an article published in peer-reviewed journal or as a dissertation or thesis. The goal of the search was to find any mediated CRM study that used consumer attitudes or purchase intentions as the dependent variable. The following is a detailed description of the literature search, in adherence with PRISMA meta-analysis guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009).

### ***Search procedure***

A Boolean search was conducted in September, 2017 in the following databases: Communication & Mass Media Complete, JSTOR, ProQuest ABI/Inform Global, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, PsycINFO, and Scopus. The search engine Google Scholar was also used as a redundant measure and to identify as many global studies as possible. Search results were filtered to eliminate campaigns that did not a) contain a cause-related marketing message, b) contain any type of advertising or marketing message, c) measure any variety of consumer attitudes or purchase intentions as the dependent variable, or d) involve a specific cause-brand purchase. The unit of analysis was the CRM advertising campaign. To be included in the analysis, the CRM needed to include a consumer exchange – campaigns that sponsored events or general philanthropic activities were excluded as they do not meet the definition of CRM by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) presented in the introduction.

In total, 43 studies were selected for the analysis from 15 countries,  $N = 22,436$  (Table 1).

### ***Coding and data extraction***

Articles were coded by the following characteristics: first author, year of publication, type of publication, location of study, and experimental method. CRM advertising campaigns were coded by type of cause, and product or brand. Participants in each experiment and control group were coded by sample size, age, and gender. Independent variables used in each study were coded by measurement type to facilitate a comparison between the effect sizes from categorical measures vs the effect sizes from continuous measures. The effect sizes for dependent variables attitudes and purchase intentions were coded by statistics provided by the authors, including means, standard deviations, betas and/or correlations.

### ***Intercoder reliability***

Two coders extracted effect sizes and used an in-person review process that included consultation to resolve disagreements and assure consensual validation. Studies with missing data that could not be found through correspondence with the authors were eliminated from the analysis. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha to determine percentage of agreement for each category taking into account agreement that happens

**Table 1.** List of included studies by country.

Country	Included Studies
United States (15)	Arora and Henderson (2007), Bae (2016), Folse et al. (2014), Goldsmith and Yimin (2014), Grau and Folse (2007), Hadley (2016), Hyllegard, Ogle, Yan, and Attmann (2010), Hyllegard et al. (2010), Kerr and Das (2013), Kim et al. (2015), Lafferty (2009), Landreth (2002), Manuel, Youn, and Yoon (2014), Nan and Heo (2007), Roy (2010), and Zdravkovic et al. (2010).
Australia (3)	Berger et al. (1999) and Westberg and Pope (2005, 2014).
Canada (1)	Samu and Wymer (2009).
China (2)	Chang (2012b) and Hou et al. (2008)
Egypt (1)	Hammad et al. (2014)
Germany (2)	Boenigk and Schuchardt (2013) and Steckstor (2011).
India (3)	Aggarwal and Singh (2017), Kumar and Bansal (2017) and Patel et al. (2016)
Netherlands (1)	Elving (2013).
New Zealand (1)	Hamiln and Wilson (2004).
Pakistan (4)	Nawaz et al. (2016), Sabir et al. (2014), Shabbir, Kaufmann, Ahmad, and Qureshi (2010) and Sheikh and Beise-Zee (2011).
Singapore (1)	Subrahmanyam (2004).
South Africa (1)	Engelbrecht and Du Plessis (2004).
South Korea (3)	Ham and Choi (2012), Kim (2014) and Seok Sohn, Han, and Lee (2012).
Spain (3)	Bigné-Alcañiz et al. (2012), García-Jiménez, Ruiz-de-Maya, and López-López (2017) and Melero and Montaner (2016).
Taiwan (2)	Chang (2012a) and Chang & Cheng (2015).

merely by chance (Krippendorff, 2004). After the coding of studies was completed, intercoder reliability between the two coders was determined. Reliability for the following meta-analyses ranged from  $\alpha = .770$  to  $.861$ , exceeding the recommendation for sufficiently reliable findings,  $\alpha \leq .70$  (Krippendorff, 2004).

### **Meta-analytic procedure**

Effect sizes were computed using a random-effects model to allow that the true effect size might vary from one study to another, as found in the meta-analyses of communication effects research (Preiss, 2007), and to estimate the parameter mean and identify the presence of outliers (Hayes, Slater, & Snyder, 2008). Using the standardized difference of sample means obtained through coding, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, represented as  $r$ , was calculated to determine the effect sizes for the dependent measures in the analysis (Card, 2010). The analytical software, Comprehensive Meta-Analysis 2014, third edition, was used for effect size calculations. Positive correlations indicated that the CRM campaign variable increased attitudes and/or purchase intentions. Bivariate meta-analyses were conducted for groups of studies with common effect sizes. Effect sizes were weighted by their inverse variance, and combined using random effects meta-analytic procedures (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). Reporting statistics included the test for homogeneity,  $Q$ , the  $I^2$  index, and 95% confidence intervals (Huedo-Medina, Sánchez-Meca, Martín-Martínez, & Botella, 2006) to examine if the proportion of variance between studies is due to more than sampling error.

### **Detection of errors and bias**

Given that virtually no study can be deemed methodologically perfect, it is important to attempt to identify and eliminate biases and other errors in study findings, which are to be considered artifacts. Removing these artifacts, or errors that originate from imperfections in the study, not from the underlying relationships that are of scientific interest (Rubin, 1990), is an essential step in the development of valid accumulated knowledge (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009). Attenuation is of particular interest in meta-analysis as it refers to the “reduction or downward bias in the observed magnitude of an effect size produced by methodological limitations in a study such as measurement error or range restriction” (p. 573). In addition, this meta-analysis seeks to address the problem of inconsistent measurement of the construct *cause-brand fit*. The measurement of cause-brand fit and cause involvement (categorical vs continuous) varies widely across the literature (Guerreiro et al., 2015; Lafferty et al., 2016), perhaps due in part to attenuation from range restriction with some of those categorical measures (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003, p. 56).

### **Publication bias**

Publication bias refers to the assumption that larger studies with significant findings are more likely to be submitted for publication. The presence of publication bias was determined using a Fisher's Z (transformation of  $r$ ) which compares studies of different sample sizes (Card, 2010). No such bias was detected for the meta-analyses conducted.

## **Results**

### **Bivariate meta-analyses**

To determine the effects of cause-related advertising, individual meta-analyses were conducted to calculate the random effect size for exposure to CRM advertising on attitude toward the brand (vs. exposure to a brand-only message), Meta-analysis 1,  $K = 10$ ,  $N = 3,494$  (Table 2), and exposure to advertising on purchase intentions (vs. exposure to a brand-only message), Meta-analysis 2,  $K = 10$ ,  $N = 2,745$  (Table 3). Both used CMA software, 2014, third edition (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2009).

#### **CRM effects on attitudes**

The results of Meta-analysis 1 ( $K = 10$ ,  $N = 3,494$ ) include a high degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 72.57$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 87.60$ ,  $\tau = .146$ . The random effect size  $r = .248$ , 95% CI(.189, .373), confirmed a positive relationship for CRM campaigns on attitudes toward the brand, as the effects are positive and the confidence intervals do not include zero (Table 2).

Hypothesis 1a, which predicted that cause-related advertising campaigns will increase favorable consumer attitudes toward sponsoring brands, is therefore supported.

#### **Moderators of CRM effects on attitudes**

Next, meta-regressions were conducted separately to test for the moderating effect of study characteristics on the ES for CRM campaigns on attitudes toward the brand in Meta-analysis 1, including date of study, effect type (beta versus correlation), sample type (college versus consumers), brand type (fictitious versus real), cause (generic versus branded), age and gender of the participants. No significant moderating effects were found for these study characteristics.

#### **CRM effects on purchase intentions**

The results of Meta-analysis 2 ( $K = 10$ ,  $N = 2,745$ ) also found a high degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 118.47$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 92.40$ ,  $\tau = .219$ . The random effect size  $r = .277$ , 95% CI(.141, .404), confirmed a positive

**Table 2.** Meta-analysis 1: CRM campaigns on attitudes toward the brand\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Effect Size (r)
6	2004	Engelbrecht	South Africa	204	.387
10	2005	Westberg	Australia	97	.501
15	2007	Nan	USA	100	.128
16	2007	Arora	USA	660	.141
17	2007	Arora	USA	660	.110
30	2010a	Hyllegard	USA	562	.200
39	2012	Seok Sohn	South Korea	304	.176
41	2012	Bigné-Alcañiz	Spain	595	.430
45	2012	Ham	South Korea	100	.379
66	2016	Patel	India	212	.397

\*Random effect size  $r = .248$ ,  $Q = 72.57$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 87.60$ ,  $\tau = .146$ ,  $K = 10$ ,  $N = 3,494$ .  
Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .846$ .

**Table 3.** Meta-analysis 2: CRM campaigns on purchase intentions\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Effect Size (r)
7	2004	Hamiln	New Zealand	320	.100
8	2004	Subrahmanyam	Singapore	128	.313
10	2005	Westberg	Australia	97	.054
16	2007	Arora	USA	660	.152
17	2007	Arora	USA	660	.105
27	2010	Shabbir	Pakistan	203	.425
42	2013	Boenigk	Germany	241	.267
45	2012	Ham	South Korea	100	.238
66	2016	Patel	India	212	.699
70	2016	Bae	USA	124	.270

\*Random effect size  $r = .277$ ,  $Q = 118.47$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 92.40$ ,  $\tau = .219$ ,  $K = 10$ ,  $N = 2,745$ .  
Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .795$ .

relationship for CRM campaigns on purchase (Table 3). Hypothesis 1b, which predicted that cause-related advertising campaigns will increase purchase intentions, is therefore supported.

### ***Moderators of CRM effects on purchase intentions***

Meta-regressions were conducted to test for the moderating effect of study characteristics one by one on the ES for CRM campaigns on purchase intentions in Meta-analysis 2. A significant effect was found for date of study ( $\beta = .034$ ,  $p < .006$ ) which explained over 50% of the variance in the analysis,  $R^2 = .51$ , reducing the tau for the meta-analysis ES from  $\tau = .219$  to  $\tau = .048$ , providing a partial answer to research question RQ3b. This small but significant effect indicates that more recent studies have larger effect size than older studies, perhaps due to an increase in familiarity of CRM campaigns by participants.

In addition, a significant effect ( $\beta = -.219$ ,  $p < .008$ ,  $R^2 = .76$ ) was found for the type of participants in the sample, (1 = College, 2 = Consumer), indicating a larger effect for CRM on purchase intentions for college-aged participants than for participants in consumer studies open to all ages over 18, providing a partial answer to research question RQ3a. Note that only two

studies in Meta-analysis 2 ( $K = 10$ ) provided a mean age for study participants, therefore, the study characteristic *age* could not be used as a moderator.

### ***Cause-brand fit effects on attitudes***

Meta-analysis 3 (Table 4) was conducted to examine the effect of cause-brand fit on attitude toward the brand. Meta-analysis 4 (Table 5) was conducted to examine the effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions. The results of Meta-analysis 3 ( $K = 14$ ,  $N = 4,641$ ) found a moderate degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 74.124$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 82.462$ ,  $\tau = .126$  (Table 4). The random effect size  $r = .239$ , 95% CI(0.167, 0.309), confirmed a positive relationship for cause-brand fit on attitude toward sponsoring brands, supporting Hypothesis 2a.

### ***Moderating effect of measurement***

A meta-regression was conducted to test for the moderating effect of cause-brand fit measurement. The results were not significant ( $\beta = .016$ ,  $p < .866$ ,  $R^2 = 0$ ), partially answering the research question RQ4a, measurement type does not moderate the effect of cause-brand fit on brand attitudes for this group of studies. Therefore, it can be concluded that no effect for range restriction occurred in Meta-analysis 3. Note that the study characteristic *cause-brand fit measurement* was also tested as a moderator of the effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions (see Meta-analysis 4, Table 5) with insignificant results, confirming research question RQ4a, measurement type does not moderate the effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions either. No significant moderating effects were found for any other study characteristics.

**Table 4.** Meta-analysis 3: cause-brand fit on attitude toward brand\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Fit**	Effect Size (r)
4	2002	Landreth	USA	474	1	.064
21	2009	Samu	Canada	240	1	.500
22	2009	Samu	Canada	120	1	.309
24	2009	Lafferty	USA	170	1	.031
31	2011	Steckstor	Germany	1463	2	.182
32	2011	Sheikh	Pakistan	203	1	.274
43	2013	Elving	The Netherlands	160	1	.240
52	2014	Folse	USA	205	1	.159
56	2015	Kim	USA	156	1	.259
57	2015	Kim	USA	127	1	.361
62	2014	Westberg	Australia	135	2	.177
73	2010	Roy	USA	176	1	.155
79	2016	Melero	Spain	186	1	.216
72	2010	Zdravkovic	USA	826	2	.371

\*Random effect size  $r = .239$ ,  $Q = 74.124$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 82.462$ ,  $\tau = .126$ ,  $K = 14$ ,  $N = 4,641$ .

\*\*Cause-brand fit coded 1 = dichotomized measure, 2 = scale measure. Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .861$ .

### *Cause-brand fit effects on purchase intentions*

The next bivariate meta-analysis was conducted to calculate the effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions (Table 5). The results of Meta-analysis 4 ( $K = 12$ ,  $N = 3,578$ ) found a high degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 140.542$ ,  $df = 11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 92.173$ ,  $\tau = .203$ . The mean correlation assuming random effects was  $r = .319$ , 95% CI(0.206, 0.423); this confirmed Hypothesis 2b, a positive effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions (Table 5).

### *Moderating effect of measurement*

A meta-regression was again conducted to test for the moderating effect of cause-brand fit measurement. The results were not significant ( $\beta = .126$ ,  $p < .327$ ,  $R^2 = 0$ ), indicating that measurement type does not moderate the effect of cause-brand fit on purchase intentions for this group of studies, further confirming a negative answer for research question RQ4a. Therefore, it can be concluded that no effect for range restriction occurred in Meta-analysis 4. No significant moderating effects were found for these study characteristics.

### *Cause involvement effects on attitudes*

Meta-analyses 5 (Table 6) examined the effects of cause-involvement on attitudes toward the brand. Meta-analysis 5 ( $K = 9$ ,  $N = 4,420$ ) results also found a high degree of heterogeneity,  $Q = 64.728$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 87.641$ ,  $\tau = .126$  (Table 6). The random effect size found in the analysis  $r = .270$ , 95% CI(0.185, 0.352), confirmed a positive relationship for cause involvement on attitude toward the sponsoring brand, thus Hypothesis 3a is supported.

**Table 5.** Meta-analysis 4: cause-brand fit on purchase intentions\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Fit**	Effect Size (r)
4	2002	Landreth	USA	474	1	.207
19	2008	Hou	China	376	2	.691
21	2009	Samu	Canada	240	1	.291
22	2009	Samu	Canada	120	1	.389
48	2013	Kerr	USA	216	1	.309
53	2014	Goldsmith	USA	604	2	.210
54	2014	Sabir	Pakistan	423	2	.341
55	2014	Kim	South Korea	240	1	.176
57	2015	Kim	USA	127	1	.377
67	2016	Hadley	USA	515	2	.177
71	2016	Nawaz	Pakistan	67	2	.408
73	2010	Roy	USA	176	1	.145

\*Random effect size  $r = .319$ ,  $Q = 140.542$ ,  $df = 11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 92.173$ ,  $\tau = .203$ ,  $K = 12$ ,  $N = 3,578$ .

\*\*Cause-brand fit coded 1 = dichotomized measure, 2 = scale measure. Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .783$ .

**Table 6.** Meta-analysis 5: cause involvement on attitude toward brand\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Inv**	Effect Size (r)
1	1999	Berger	Australia	196	2	.340
2	1999	Berger	Australia	210	2	.150
4	2002	Landreth	USA	474	1	.202
30	2010a	Hyllegard	USA	562	2	.120
31	2011	Steckstor	Germany	1463	2	.359
34	2012	Chang, C.	Taiwan	128	2	.550
66	2016	Patel	India	212	2	.183
72	2010	Zdrakovic	USA	826	2	.367
81	2010b	Hyllegard	USA	349	2	.150

\*Random effect size  $r = .270$ ,  $Q = 64.728$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 87.641$ ,  $\tau = .126$ ,  $K = 9$ ,  $N = 4,420$ .

\*\*Cause involvement measures coded 1 = dichotomized, 2 = scale. Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .770$ .

### ***Moderating effect of measurement***

A meta-regression conducted to test for the moderating effect of cause involvement measurement. The results were not significant ( $\beta = .083$ ,  $p < .580$ ,  $R^2 = 0$ ), indicating that measurement type does not moderate the effect of cause involvement on attitude toward the brand for this group of studies, thus, answering research question RQ4b. Therefore, it can be concluded that not unlike the measurement of cause-brand fit on attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions in Meta-analyses 3 and 4 respectively, range restriction does not affect the positive relationship between cause involvement and attitude toward the brand. Other study characteristics tested for Meta-analysis 5 did not have a significant effect on the ES for cause involvement on attitude toward the brand.

### ***Cause involvement effects on purchase intentions***

Meta-analyses 6 (Table 7) examined the effects of cause-involvement on attitudes toward the brand. The results of Meta-analysis 6 ( $K = 10$ ,  $N = 2,645$ ) found a high degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 90.499$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 90.055$ ,  $\tau = .171$ . The random effect size found  $r = .348$ , 95% CI(0.244, 0.444), confirmed a positive relationship for cause involvement on purchase intentions (Table 7), thus supporting Hypothesis 3b.

### ***Moderating effect of measurement***

Next, meta-regressions were conducted to test for the moderating effect of cause involvement measurement in Meta-analysis 6. Insignificant results were found ( $\beta = -.043$ ,  $p = .779$ ,  $R^2 = 0$ ), indicating that measurement type does not moderate the effect of cause involvement on purchase intentions for this group of studies either, confirming a negative answer for research question RQ4b. We can conclude that range restriction does not affect the positive relationship between cause involvement and attitude toward the brand or purchase intentions. No significant moderating effects were found for these study characteristics.



**Table 7.** Meta-analysis 6: cause involvement on purchase intentions\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Inv**	Effect Size (r)
1	1999	Berger	Australia	196	2	.300
2	1999	Berger	Australia	210	2	.340
4	2002	Landreth	USA	474	1	.313
18	2007	Grau	USA	141	1	.450
19	2008	Hou	China	376	2	.388
30	2010a	Hyllegard	USA	562	2	.120
35	2012	Chang, C-T	China	369	2	.240
71	2016	Nawaz	Pakistan	67	2	.473
76	2017	Kumar	India	680	2	.146
77	2017	Aggarwal	India	180	2	.671

\*Random effect size  $r = .348$ ,  $Q = 90.499$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $I^2 = 90.055$ ,  $\tau = .171$ ,  $K = 10$ ,  $N = 4,420$ .

\*\*Cause involvement measures coded 1 = dichotomized, 2 = scale. Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .770$ .

### ***Skepticism effects on purchase intentions***

Finally, Meta-analysis 7 calculated the effect of skepticism on purchase intentions (see Table 8). Although the number of studies able to test the relationship was low, ( $K = 5$ ,  $N = 913$ ) there was a small degree of heterogeneity among studies,  $Q = 7.96$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .093$ ,  $I^2 = 49.746$ ,  $\tau = .076$ . The random effect size  $r = -0.319$ , 95% CI(-0.403, -0.230), confirmed a negative relationship for skepticism on purchase intentions, supporting Hypothesis 4.

### ***Moderating effects of skepticism on purchase intentions***

A meta-regression analysis found a significant effect for the study characteristic sample type (1 = College, 2 = Consumer),  $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p < .027$ . This finding explained virtually all of the variance in the ES for skepticism on purchase intentions,  $R^2 = .99$ , with a reduction in Tau from  $\tau = .076$  to  $\tau = .007$ . Thus, partially answering RQ3a, the effect for college participants is less than the effect of skepticism on purchase intentions for consumer participants. No significant moderating effect was found for country of origin through subgroup analysis – Western vs. non-Western or Western vs Asian or any other study characteristics. This is unsurprising given the relative homogeneity of the studies. Note, however, the results of a meta-regression with a small number of studies ( $K < 10$ ) should be viewed with caution, as the power may be insufficient given the number of predictors (Schmidt & Hunter, 2014). Therefore we cannot conclusively answer the research

**Table 8.** Meta-analysis 7: skepticism on purchase intentions\*.

Study	Date	First Author	Country	Sample Size	Effect Size (r)
43	2013	Elving	The Netherlands	160	– .340
59	2014	Hammad	Egypt	261	– .377
63	2014	Manuel	USA	81	– .300
74	2015	Chang	Taiwan	291	.190
78	2017	García-Jiménez	Spain	120	– .410

\*Random effect size  $r = -.319$ ,  $Q = 7.96$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .093$ ,  $I^2 = 49.746$ ,  $\tau = .076$ , Krippendorff's  $\alpha = .795$   $K = 5$ ,  $N = 913$ .

question RQ2 of whether CRM effects vary for global consumers by region, but the limited evidence from Meta-analysis 7 ( $K = 5$ ,  $N = 913$ ) suggests that skepticism toward cause-related advertising campaigns is similar for global consumers.

### *Moderating effects of brand and cause type*

Lastly, each study was coded by type of CRM experiment brand (fictitious = 1, real = 2) and cause (generic = 1, specific NPO = 2). Again, no significant moderating effect was found for any of the bivariate meta-analyses conducted. The same finding holds for the use of generic causes vs. branded causes in studies, thus providing a negative answer for research question RQ1a and b, respectively.

## **Discussion**

The effect sizes calculated by the seven individual meta-analyses (Table 9) will guide future cause-related advertising campaign and CRM studies, and are consistent with effects found in previous literature reviews (Guerreiro et al., 2015; Lafferty et al., 2016; Natarajan et al., 2016). Further, all of the hypothesized main effects (Table 9) held, as none of the study characteristics examined in the moderator analyses altered the direction of those relationships.

### *Examining for attenuation-induced biases*

*Range restriction.* The issue of range restriction was explored by Meta-analysis 3 and Meta-analysis 4 (cause-brand fit) as well as Meta-analysis 5 and Meta-analysis 6 (cause involvement) through the coding of continuous and dichotomous measurement. When examined as a possible moderating study characteristic, no significant effect was found for measurement type. In addition, all studies were coded for type of effect size coefficient (Beta = 1, correlation = 2). No significant effect was found for type of effect in any of these meta-analyses.

**Table 9.** Summary of findings: effect sizes by meta-analysis.

Meta-analysis	K	N	ES (r) fixed	random*
1.CRM on Attitudes toward Brand	10	3,494	.284 (.217, .279)	.248 (.189, .373)
2.CRM on Purchase Intentions	10	2,745	.232 (.196, .267)	.277 (.141, .404)
3.Cause-Brand Fit on Attitudes toward Brand	14	4,641	.234 (.207, .261)	.239 (.167, .309)
4.Cause-Brand Fit on Purchase Intentions	12	3,578	.305 (.275, .335)	.319 (.206, .423)
5.Cause Involvement on Attitudes toward Brand	9	4,420	.287 (.260, .314)	.270 (.185, .352)
6.Cause Involvement on Purchase Intentions	10	2,645	.286 (.254, .318)	.348 (.244, .444)
7.Skepticism on Purchase Intentions	5	913	-.311 (-.368, -.250)	-.319 (-.403,-230)

\*95% confidence intervals presented below ES. Total N = 22, 436.

## Limitations

Several limitations that occurred over the course of this meta-analysis research may have influenced its results. Several studies were excluded from the analysis due to missing data, particularly in older studies. Authors were emailed but may not have the same contact information given the passage of time. Although the “file drawer problem” has been minimized in the advent of online publishing, there are undoubtedly many unpublished studies that have been omitted. In addition, new studies may have been published in the months since the search concluded and the analysis began.

## Checkout charities

According to a report by Engage for Good, these check-out charity campaigns are on the rise, reaching \$441 million in 2016, up from \$348 million in 2012 (Engage for Good, 2017). These point-of-purchase CRM programs, also known as *checkout charity* programs (Giebelhausen, Lawrence, Chun, and Hsu (2017)), were not included in this analysis as they do not include a mediated message. However, these CRM programs should be examined in future research, as their effect sizes will provide an informative comparison to mediated programs. Check-out programs should yield smaller effect sizes, given the effect of CRM campaign messages on brand attitudes ( $r = .248$ ) found in Meta-analysis 1, and the effect of CRM campaign messages on purchase intentions ( $r = .277$ ) found in Meta-analysis 2.

## Recommendations for future CRM advertising campaigns

Brand marketers should carefully choose their causes, given that consumer cause involvement, had the largest effect ( $r = .348$ ) on CRM purchase intentions in this study. Brand marketers should also embrace a wider range of causes, as consumers are already shifting in this direction, supporting health, hunger and social services, through retail check-out programs (Engage for Good, 2017).

## Choosing alliances

Selecting the right brand to align with their cause is an important and challenging decision for charities, as the impact of *cause-brand fit* on *purchase intentions* was the second-largest ES found in this study ( $r = .319$ ). Unfortunately for these nonprofit organizations, none of the six meta-analyses conducted found any effect for the study characteristic, *type of cause* (generic or branded company). Thus, the contribution of a specific *branded cause* (e.g. heart disease vs American Heart Association) does not appear to have a significant impact on consumers.

### Recommendations for future academic research

Given that the bivariate meta-analyses conducted found no significant difference for the study characteristic *type of brand* (real or fictitious), academic researchers should feel free to use either type of message. This is an interesting finding for CRM studies, as many researchers take extra time and effort to create fictitious brands in their experiments to eliminate any influence of prior brand attitude. Since no evidence was found for this point-of-view in any of the six meta-analyses conducted. Thus, experiments can use either real or fictitious brands and achieve virtually identical results.

Further, when examined as a possible moderating study characteristic, no significant effect was found for measurement type (continuous and dichotomous measurement) for the variables cause-brand fit or cause involvement. In addition, it should be noted that correlations were the dominant effect type (71%) found in the literature search, which were primarily calculated from analysis of variance (ANOVA) results. Future researchers of CRM advertising campaigns should also consider structural equation modeling (SEM) to better understand the relationships between these variables, especially the relationship between skepticism and perceptions of cause-brand fit for global consumers.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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