

Visual Design, Message Content, And Benefit Type: The Case of a Cause-Related Marketing Campaign

ABSTRACT

Engaging consumers in a firm's prosocial initiatives can generate favorable responses. As such, cause-related marketing (CRM) advertisements typically employ various content and design elements to engage consumers. However, the appropriate integration of advertising elements has gained little research attention. To fill this void, this study focuses on the joint effect of benefit type (self-benefits vs. other-benefits), message content (prevention-focused vs. promotion-focused) and visual design (cute vs. aggressive) on customers' CRM engagement. While previous research suggests that emphasizing self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) of giving is more effective, our findings indicate that the effectiveness of self-benefit appeals is contingent on the fit between regulatory focus of the message and visual design. This study contributes to the growing literature on CRM by illuminating the interplay of various advertising elements and providing guidelines for hospitality managers in promoting CRM campaigns. Additional theoretical and managerial implications are discussed.

Keywords: cause-related marketing (CRM), visual design, cuteness, regulatory orientation, hospitality CRM

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, as part of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) drive, an increasing number of hospitality and tourism firms have begun to adopt cause-related marketing (CRM) (Hanks et al., 2016; Kang & Namkung, 2018; Line, Hanks & Zhang, 2016). CRM involves donating a portion of sales proceeds to a designated cause (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Zhang & Hanks, 2017). For instance, for every bag of coffee sold in their participating stores, Starbucks donates a rust-resistant coffee tree to farmers in regions that are most vulnerable to coffee rust. Customer participation in such prosocial initiatives can positively influence the firm's bottom line, enhance customer satisfaction with the service experience (Giebelhausen et al., 2016; Giebelhausen & Chun, 2017), and cultivate repurchase intention (Zhang, Hanks & Line, 2018). The current study aims to extend this academic discussion by providing insight into developing effective CRM advertisements.

In today's digital world, companies need carefully drafted ads to catch customers' limited attention span. Advertising typically features messages and visual information. Similarly, creating a compelling CRM advertisement requires a coherent synthesis of the content and various design elements (Chang & Lee, 2009; Ein-Gar & Levontin, 2013; Lohtia et al., 2003). However, the appropriate integration of multiple elements in a CRM context has gained little attention (for a notable exception, see Hanks et al., 2016). Importantly, little is known about the effective combination of messaging and visual design. The extant body of hospitality and tourism literature is largely limited to examining single cues and their effect on prosocial engagement (e.g. Barber & Deale, 2014; Giebelhausen et al., 2017; Han et al., 2009). Classic advertising research highlights the importance of consistency across content and design variables in driving ad engagement (Lohtia et al., 2003). Yet, how the design-message consistency, or the

fit, shapes consumers' information processing and responses to CRM ads remains unknown. To fill this void, the present study examines the integration of the regulatory focus of the message with various visual design elements.

This study examines the processing fluency theory in the CRM context focusing on self-benefit (vs. other-benefit) appeals. CRM ads can emphasize either benefits for the donor (i.e., self-benefits) or benefits for others in need (i.e., other-benefits; White & Peloza, 2009). Previous research shows that people are prone to act in a self-benefitting (vs. other-benefitting) ways, thus favoring donation appeals that highlight benefits to the self (White & Peloza, 2009). We argue that the effectiveness of self-benefits is contingent on the design-message fit. Relying on the notion that fit induces automatic processing (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), we propose that the design-message fit might enhance the effectiveness of self-benefit (vs. other-benefit) appeals (White & Peloza, 2009).

Specifically, the present study examines if the alignment of visual design elements and message content in terms of regulatory orientation amplifies the relative power of self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) in driving customer engagement, namely, their support for a charitable cause (Kristofferson et al., 2013; Youn & Kim, 2008). Regulatory orientation differentiates messages framed with a promotion-focus (emphasis on achieving positive changes) from those with a prevention-focus (emphasis on avoiding negative outcomes) (Kim et al., 2012; Poels & Dewitte, 2008). For example, a charity appeal soliciting donations for educational enhancements may emphasize either an expected increase in literacy or prevention of increased rates of illiteracy. In this paper, we argue that two different styles of visual designs, namely, cute versus aggressive, may have different connotations depending on the message's regulatory orientation. When the visual design fits the message content in terms of regulatory orientation, a self-benefit (vs. other-

benefit) appeal may lead to a higher level of consumer engagement in CRM initiatives. However, when the fit is absent such a difference in prosocial engagement may diminish.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. The literature review section presents theories that guide our predictions. Following the proposed conceptual model and hypotheses, the methodology and study results are reported. Findings are then discussed in light of theoretical and managerial implications. At the end of the paper, we acknowledge limitations that warrant future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefit type: Self-benefits vs. Other-benefits

CRM ads promote purchases related to fundraising for a cause. Prosocial behaviors, including support for a cause, may not be solely driven by altruistic motives. Rather, self-serving motives may also underlie prosociality (Cialdini et al., 1997; Holmes et al., 2002; Wilson, 2000). Reflecting on these two motives, several donation appeals emphasize benefits to the donor (i.e., self-benefits) whereas others stress benefits to those in need (i.e., other-benefits; Fisher et al., 2008; White and Peloza, 2009). For example, a charity soliciting help can emphasize the potential donor's good feelings (i.e., self-benefits) or the ability to enhance wellbeing of the less fortunate (i.e., other-benefits).

Depending on the context, consumers may react differently to self-benefit vs. other-benefit appeals. For example, in private settings where consumers are comfortable being themselves, self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) tend to trigger higher levels of donation intention (White & Peloza, 2009). Conversely, in public settings where consumers are more mindful about their self-image

and public accountability, they tend to be more responsive to other-benefits (vs. self-benefits) appeals. Moreover, self-benefits (vs, other-benefits) may be more effective in increasing CRM engagement in individualistic cultures, whereas other-benefits (vs. self-benefits) may be more effective in collectivistic cultures (Ye et al., 2015). Taken together these findings indicate that the effectiveness of the benefit type is contingent on consumer characteristics and the specific consumption context.

While, in general, individuals may be more responsive to self-benefits (Cialdini et al., 1997; Holmes et al., 2002; Wilson, 2000), the design-message fit may condition such an inclination. Self-driven behaviors are part of human nature, and therefore, associated with automatic and unconscious processing (Holmes et al., 2002; Wilson, 2000). Accordingly, individuals are more responsive to self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) when the context allows for rapid, automatic reasoning (Holmes et al., 2002; Wilson, 2000). Our proposition of the design-message fit (misfit) evoking automatic (systematic) processing is rooted in the processing fluency theory, which posits that the subjective experience of ease and fluency in information processing can create a pleasant feeling, prompting an automatic style of thinking (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Processing fluency can be created by the fit between certain information cues or between an information presentation and one's phenomenological state (Carrillat et al., 2015; Cesario, et al., 2004; Higgins, 2000). In the context of this study, the fit between visual design and message content is likely to lead consumers to process ads in an automatic and rapid manner.

On the other hand, the lack of design-message fit is likely to trigger a slow, deliberate, and systematic style of thinking. The tendency to prioritize self-benefits over other-benefits can be attenuated or even reversed when the context requires conscious thinking of social goals, purposeful cognitive engagement, and a high level of deliberate and systematic thinking. For

example, in public settings, individuals wish to present an altruistic self-image. Such a deliberate and systematic thought process undermines consumers' natural tendency to engage in self-benefitting appeals (White & Peloza, 2009). Accordingly, the present study proposes that automatic processing evoked by the design-message fit can increase the relative appeal of self-benefits (vs. other-benefits). Conversely, a lack of fit may activate systematic processing, thus diminishing the preference for appeals focusing on self-benefits.

A Regulatory-Orientation Perspective

In this study, the assessment of the design-message fit revolves around the concept of regulatory orientation, given its critical role in CRM message framing (Poels & Dewitte, 2008). The Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; 2002) suggests that advertising messages can have different regulatory orientations. A message can be framed to emphasize either increased gains (i.e., promotion-focused) or decreased losses (i.e., prevention-focused; Lee & Aaker 2001; Zhao & Pechmann, 2007). Applied to the present context, a CRM initiative can be either promotion-focused or prevention-focused; the former may assert its effectiveness in bringing about positive changes for those in need (e.g., increasing access to water), whereas the latter may stress mitigating the adverse effects of the relevant issue (e.g., alleviating water-shortage crisis around the world) (Kim et al., 2012).

We argue that when the visual design fits the message content in terms of regulatory orientation, self-benefit (vs. other-benefit) CRM appeals lead to higher levels of consumer engagement. However, an incongruency between visual design elements and regulatory focus triggers careful and deliberate thinking, and thus other-benefit appeals may be as effective as self-

benefit appeals in driving consumer engagement. Next, we present relevant literature on visual designs and their relationships with regulatory orientations.

Cute versus Aggressive Designs Styles

Similar with the message content, visual designs may also connote regulatory orientations. Our examination of design styles focuses on cuteness versus aggressiveness, driven by their theoretical relevance with the regulatory orientation concept, conceptual contrast from each other, and practical relevance in the CRM context. These two types of designs may connote different types of regulatory orientation. Reflecting a prevention-focus, a cute Kindchenschema design embodies infantile features denoting fragility and the need for protection from harm (Cheek, 2010). Implying promotion-focus, a bold and aggressive design is typified by visual elements urging action for change (Pryke et al., 2002). These two design styles contrast with each other in terms of two basic visual features, shape and color (Kahn, 2017). Round shapes and pale colors characterize cute designs whereas pointed shapes and bold colors are often found in aggressive designs (Kumar & Garg, 2010). Visual elements representative of both design styles are widely applied in prosocial ads (for example, see UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/>). On the one hand, cute visual designs may be employed to portray the fragility of those in need. For example, images of adorable baby animals often appear in ads for the World Wildlife Fund (World Wildlife Fund, n.d.). On the other hand, aggressive, bold designs may be used to convey a sense of urgency. For instance, the British Heart Foundation uses an aggressive red heart to attract attention to its donation appeals (British Heart Foundation, <https://www.bhf.org.uk>). Given the two design styles' strong theoretical and practical relevance with the CRM context, cute versus aggressive designs styles were selected as the focal stimuli.

A cute Kindchenschema design showcases infantile appearances, including large round eyes, pink plump cheeks, short extremities and a round body (Glocker et al, 2009; Granot et al., 2014; Lorenz, 1943). Children tend to lose such characteristics as they grow up, and thus the young are typically perceived as cuter than adults (Li, Haws & Griskevicius, 2018). Babies and other cute objects signal not only adorability but also vulnerability and fragility (Cheok, 2010; Windhager et al., 2008). Thus, cute visual designs can activate the viewer's caretaking tendencies to prevent the occurrence of negative outcomes toward the vulnerable (Lorenz, 1943). Exposure to Kindchenschema images triggers vigilant attention and careful behaviors essential to protecting the young (Nittono et al., 2012; Sherman et al., 2009, Sherman & Haidt, 2011). As such, a cute Kindchenschema design featuring round shapes, pale pink colors, and baby faces should connote a prevention-focused regulatory orientation.

Conversely, designs featuring pointed shapes and red colors can be characterized as bold and aggressive (Pryke et al., 2002). Pointed shapes, such as knives and needles, are indicative of threats and danger (Aronoff, Barclay, & Stevenson, 1988; Jiang et al., 2015). Red colors, particularly those in bold shades, are often used as warnings in daily life (e.g., hazard warnings; Elliot et al., 2007). Red is also associated with anger, an emotion eliciting approach tendencies (Fetterman et al., 2011; Fetterman et al., 2012). According to the general aggression model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), exposure to aggressive visual cues tends to activate action-taking and approach tendencies (Fischer et al., 2011). When pointed shapes and red color are combined, such bold and aggressive designs are likely to create a strong sense of urgency, calling for immediate action for change. Therefore, such bold and aggressive designs should align with message content that emphasizes a promotion-focused regulatory orientation.

Proposing the Hypotheses

Taken together, we propose that the design–message (mis)fit in terms of regulatory attention should augment (impair) the effectiveness of self-benefits (vs. other benefits) in customers' CRM engagement. A CRM ad with a prevention-focused message combined with a Kindchenschema design will lead to higher levels of consumer engagement if the appeal emphasizes self-benefits (vs. other-benefits). Conversely, a prevention-focused message paired with an aggressive design is likely to impede automatic processing, thereby decreasing the appeal of self-benefits. Therefore:

H1: When a CRM message is prevention-focused, the interaction between visual design and benefit type will moderate consumer engagement with the CRM initiative. Specifically,

H1a: When a CRM ad presents prevention-focused message content with a cute visual design, emphasizing self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) will lead to a greater level of consumer engagement.

H1b: When a CRM ad presents prevention-focused message content with an aggressive visual design, emphasizing self-benefits and other-benefits will result in similar levels of consumer engagement.

The corresponding null hypothesis is as follows:

H10: When a CRM ad message is prevention-focused, there will be no interaction between visual design and benefit type on consumer engagement with the CRM initiative.

On the other hand, when a CRM ad presents promotion-focused message content with a bold and aggressive design, emphasizing self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) is likely to induce a greater level of consumer engagement. Conversely, when the promotion-focused message

content is paired with a cute visual design, a self-benefit appeal is likely to be equally effective as an appeal promoting benefits to others. Therefore:

H2: When a CRM ad message is promotion-focused, the interaction between visual design and benefit type will moderate consumer engagement. Specifically,

H2a: When a CRM ad presents promotion-focused message content with an aggressive visual design style, emphasizing self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) will lead to a greater level of consumer engagement.

H2b: When a CRM ad presents promotion-focused message content with a cute visual design style, emphasizing self-benefits and other-benefits will result in similar levels of consumer engagement.

The corresponding null hypothesis is as follows:

H20: When a CRM ad message is promotion-focused, there will be no interaction between visual design and benefit type on consumer engagement.

This conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

<Insert Figure 1. about here>

METHODOLOGY

Pre-test

The main study adapted manipulations for regulatory orientation and benefit type from existing research. Visual design manipulations were original, and were thus validated via pre-test to test their effectiveness. A total of 67 participants were recruited via an online consumer panel, Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), based in the United States. Participants evaluated either a

cute or an aggressive ad promoting the cause “Help children get clean water”. The cute design was characterized by a round shape, pink color, and an image of babies, whereas the aggressive design involved by a pointed shape, red color, and an image of cacti. In the second pre-test, designed to rule out alternative explanations, 60 participants were recruited via MTurk and rated the visual designs on potential confounding attributes.

The cute design was perceived as cuter ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.23$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=2.82$, $F[1, 65]=33.63$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$) and more endearing ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.06$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=2.97$, $F[1, 65]=5.64$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$) than the aggressive design. Conversely, the aggressive design was perceived as more aggressive ($M_{\text{cute}}=2.71$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=3.73$, $F[1, 65]=4.66$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$) and more assertive ($M_{\text{cute}}=3.24$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=4.18$, $F[1, 65]=4.33$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$) than the cute design. These results verify that the visual manipulations were successful.

Results further indicate that participants perceived the two designs as equally interesting ($M_{\text{cute}}=3.37$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=3.69$, $t[1, 57]=0.712$, $p\text{-value}>0.05$), providing equally compelling information ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.70$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=5.17$, $t[1, 57]=1.16$, $p\text{-value}>0.05$), equal in argument strength ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.67$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=4.97$, $t[1,57]=0.72$, $p\text{-value}>0.05$), and equally persuasive ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.73$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=4.55$, $t[1,57]=-0.39$, $p\text{-value}>0.05$). Thus, these factors are unlikely to provide alternative explanations for our results. As such, the pre-tested stimuli were adopted in the main study.

Main Study

The main study employed a 2 (visual design: cute vs. aggressive) X 2 (regulatory orientation: prevention-focused vs. promotion-focused) X 2 (benefit type: self-benefits vs. other-benefits) between-subjects factorial experiment. Participants were recruited from MTurk and

randomly assigned to one of the eight experimental conditions. Out of 289 participants, 230 provided complete responses to the survey and passed the manipulation and attention checks. Among these respondents, 43% were female, 86% had above high school educational level, 95% were aged 21–60, 84% were Caucasian, and 52% had donated to charities in the previous year.

The study adopted regulatory orientation and benefit type manipulations that were validated and used in previous studies. Participants were asked to imagine visiting a local casual dining restaurant named Café XYZ that they frequently patronize. The scenario depicted an employee handing a flyer and asking patrons to buy a “hug” mug to support clean water initiatives (Kim et al., 2012). The flyer portrayed either a cute or an aggressive visual design validated via pre-test. The flyer in the prevention-focused CRM described the severity of water crisis striking the Third World whereas that in the promotion-focused CRM portrayed a positive future of those being helped (Kim et al., 2012). After viewing the flyer, participants in the self-benefits and other-benefits conditions were instructed that their purchase of the mug would either earn them a gift card or enable them help those in need, respectively (Wu, Gao & Mattila, 2016). Participants then reported their CRM engagement by answering the following three questions (White & Peloza, 2009): “How likely are you to purchase the mug?”, “How inclined are you to purchase the mug?”, “How willing are you to purchase the mug?” (1=Not at all, 7=Very likely; Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.97$). Our choice of the dependent variable is consistent with prior CRM studies (Allen et al., 2018; White & Peloza, 2009; White et al., 2011).

The manipulations of visual design were assessed as follows: “To what extent do you think this flyer is cute/aggressive” on a 7-point bipolar scale (1=Not at all; 7=Very Much). The results revealed that the cute design was perceived as cuter ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.63$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=3.35$, $F[1, 228]=40.51$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$) than the aggressive design. Conversely, the aggressive design was

perceived as more aggressive ($M_{\text{cute}}=4.32$, $M_{\text{aggressive}}=3.74$, $F[1, 228]=7.361$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$) than the cute design. The manipulation for benefit type was captured as follows: “The donation request had some explicit benefits to yourself” and “The donation request was purely altruistic” on a binary scale (Disagree/Agree). Among the participants in the self-benefits condition, 76% agreed that the appeal has self-serving benefits. In a similar vein, 92% of the participants in the other-benefits condition agreed that the appeal is purely altruistic. The effectiveness of the regulatory orientation was measured as follows: “To what degree is the message associated with preventing risks/promoting benefits” on a 7-point bipolar scale (1=Not at all; 7=Very Much). Participants in the prevention condition perceived the message as preventing the risks more than promoting the benefits ($M_{\text{preventing risk}}=4.22$, $M_{\text{promoting benefits}}=5.85$, $t(118)$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). Conversely, participants in the promotion condition perceived the message as promoting the benefits more than preventing the risks ($M_{\text{preventing risk}}=3.54$, $M_{\text{promoting benefits}}=6.01$, $t(110)=-12.892$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). Taken together, our manipulations were effective.

RESULTS

A three-way factorial ANOVA on CRM engagement was conducted to test the hypotheses. The results revealed a significant three-way interaction ($F[1, 222]=13.97$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$; see Table 1), which was decomposed via separate two-way ANOVAs for the prevention-focused and promotion-focused conditions. The results indicate that the interaction between regulatory orientation and visual design is significant in the prevention-focused condition ($F[1, 115]=13.97$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$). Specifically, participants in the prevention-focused/cute condition expressed greater CRM engagement in the self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) condition ($M_{\text{self}}=4.95$ vs. $M_{\text{other}}=3.95$, $t[1, 222]=2.23$, $p\text{-value}<0.05$). However, such difference was not significant in the

prevention-focused/aggressive condition ($M_{\text{self}} = 4.74$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 5.13$, $t[1, 222] = -0.81$, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$). These results supported H1, H1a, and H1b, but rejected the null hypothesis H10.

The interaction between regulatory orientation and visual design was also significant in the promotion-focused condition ($F[1, 107] = 8.99$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$). Participants in the promotion-focused/aggressive condition reported greater CRM engagement in the self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) condition ($M_{\text{self}} = 5.44$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 3.47$, $t[1, 222] = 4.06$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$). However, such difference was insignificant in the promotion-focused/cute condition ($M_{\text{self}} = 4.43$ vs. $M_{\text{other}} = 4.64$, $t[1, 222] = -0.41$, $p\text{-value} > 0.05$). These results supported H2, H2a, and H2b but rejected the null hypothesis H20.

<Insert Table 1. about here>

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DISCUSSION

Drawing on the processing fluency theory (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), this study proposes that the effectiveness of CRM ads can be better understood when the effects of visual design and message content are explored in conjunction with benefit type. CRM appeals often stress either self-benefits or other-benefits. Despite the prevalent use of the two benefit types, their interaction with other advertising elements remains unclear. To fill this void, this study examines the joint effect of message content (prevention-focused vs. promotion-focused), visual design (cute vs. aggressive) and benefit type (self-benefits vs. other-benefits) on consumers' intention to engage in the CRM initiative. Our findings suggest that the effectiveness of benefit type depends on the combination of message content and visual design. Specifically, self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals in driving customer engagement when CRM advertising

combines 1) prevention-focused message content and cute visual designs or 2) promotion-focused message content and aggressive visual designs. These findings provide vital theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical implications

Despite the increasing academic interest in CRM initiatives (Kim et al., 2012; White & Peloza, 2009; Zhang et al., 2018), limited research has examined the integration of various design elements in CRM ads. Previous research has focused on single cues in inducing CRM engagement. For example, benefit type (White & Peloza, 2009) and regulatory orientation (Kim et al., 2012) are studied in isolation. The present study fills the void in hospitality management research by illuminating effective applications of visual and messaging elements of CRM initiatives. Building on the processing fluency theory (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), we propose and demonstrate that offering self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) is more effective in engaging customers when a “fitting” visual design and regulatory orientation are employed in CRM ads. The findings further indicate that the advantages of self-benefits disappear when the visual design is incongruent with regulatory orientation. The present study provides a more nuanced understanding of ad effectiveness by showing that the potency of benefit type is affected by other advertising elements.

Previous research also points to the importance of the fit between a cause and various CRM components, including a product related to a cause (Das et al., 2016) and a company implementing the marketing program (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004). Extending the academic discourse, we discover that the fit between advertising elements influences the effectiveness CRM appeals. Specifically, the design–message (mis)fit may augment (diminish) the effectiveness of self-benefit appeals while undermining the influence of other-benefit appeals. Such findings are largely in line with

literature discussing self-serving motives of prosociality (Cialdini et al., 1997; Holmes et al., 2002; Wilson, 2000). On the other hand, our findings imply that a less congruent design may undermine the effectiveness of self-benefit appeals. In fact, our findings suggest that when there is a poor fit between visual design and message content, self-benefit appeals will be only as effective as appeals promoting other-benefits.

Moreover, this research provides insight into the impact of visual cues on consumer behavior in the prosocial domain. Despite the growing interest in marketing aesthetics (Harris, 2001; Jia et al., 2013), literature to date has been rather silent about how visual design elements influence the effectiveness of charitable appeals. To fill this void, this study uses two common designs: a cute Kindchenschema design versus a bold and aggressive design. Visual designs are typically accompanied by verbal messaging, and thus we further examine the joint effect of visual and message elements to reflect real-world advertising practices. Our findings indicate that these two visual designs may have distinct underpinnings in terms of regulatory orientation, and that the effect of visual design on CRM engagement is moderated by factors such as message content and appeal type. Consequently, this research adds to previous literature that demonstrates the interactive effect of visual design and message content on communication effectiveness (Chang & Lee, 2009; Seo, Dillard & Shen, 2013; Gerend & Sias, 2013) by examining their joint effects in the CRM advertising context.

Managerial Implications

Socially responsible practices are vital in today's business environment. Among such practices, CRM has become a popular initiative. In 2017, US companies channeled \$2.05 billion to social causes (IEG, 2018). CRM merits attention because it provides not only funds to charities

and increased brand choice to firms (Barone et al., 2000; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004) but also emotional benefits to participating consumers (Kim & Johnson, 2013). Thus, customer engagement is important for companies implementing CRM (Zhang et al., 2018).

Properly designed CRM ads are critical in increasing customer engagement. The present findings indicate that consumers' participation intention is jointly shaped by visual design, regulatory orientation, and benefit type. Therefore, companies promoting CRM initiatives may benefit from adopting the right combination of cues. Specifically, companies may highlight self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) of giving when CRM ads feature cute visual cues with prevention-focused messages or aggressive visual cues with promotion-focused messages. Such a strategy might be particularly suitable for the design of CRM ads. For example, the online travel website *Kind Traveler* offers a 10% to 25% discount on room rates if a customer makes a minimum of \$10 donation. Notably, *Kind Traveler* combines such self-benefits with images of cute animals and prevention-focused messaging such as "fighting for the prevention and reduction of marine debris" and "boycott circuses". Such a combination of design style and messaging type is likely to amplify the power of self-benefit appeal.

While hospitality managers can develop CRM ads that feature certain combinations of advertising elements, they can also train frontline employees to deliver appropriate messages. For example, when a CRM appeal portrays how purchasing a product related to a cause can decrease children illiteracy (prevention-focused) and features images of adorable children (cute visual design), employees can strategically emphasize personal benefits such the warm glow. The same recommendation holds when a blood drive appeal viewed by diners is characterized by a red color (aggressive visual design) to depict expected increases in blood supply (promotion-focused).

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the insights offered by this research, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the authors developed the ad stimuli for the experiment. Though the stimuli were pre-tested, the realism and appeal fall short of ads that professional designers would have created. We suggest future research to vigorously manipulate the cute versus aggressive images through professional designs. Another limitation is that our study focuses on Kindchenschema cuteness. Future research is needed to examine the role of whimsical cuteness in inducing prosocial behaviors. Nenkov and Scott (2014) and Sherman et al. (2009) pointed out that Kindchenschema cuteness is distinct from whimsical cuteness. Recently, Nenkov and Scott (2014) demonstrated that consumers become more indulgent after being exposed to whimsically cute stimuli. Indulgent tendencies may conflict with risk-averse responses activated by exposure to Kindchenschema cues, which is the focus of our theoretical assessments. As such, determining the different effects of Kindchenschema versus whimsical cuteness on consumers' CRM engagement would be interesting. In addition, this study was conducted in the Western context. Individuals in collectivistic (vs. individualistic) cultures tend to exhibit different responsiveness to donation appeals (Ye et al., 2015). Thus, testing the generalizability of our findings in the Eastern context is essential, given today's international expansion of hospitality companies. Moreover, processing fluency was not empirically tested in this research. Thus, future research is needed to demonstrate the underlying mechanism of processing fluency. Lastly, social desirability bias may arise in research on prosocial behavior (Batson & Powell, 2003). Controlling for social desirability bias (e.g., directly measuring the bias, employing a third-person scenario) would increase the credibility of our findings.

This study offers additional directions for future research, one of which is to investigate the role of emotions in CRM ads and consumer donations. For example, could CRM ads that feature cuteness elicit prosocial emotions, such as empathy (Sherman et al., 2013), and thus, enhance donation intent? In addition, future research can examine individual and cultural differences in consumers' reactions to visual stimuli in CRM appeals. For instance, Zhang et al. (2006) found that individuals with an independent self-construal perceive angular shapes as more attractive, whereas individuals with an interdependent self-construal prefer round shapes. Cultural values might also influence consumer preferences, such that angular shapes are more common in individualistic (vs. collectivistic) cultures. Accordingly, Asian consumers tend to prefer round brand logos, such as Lemontree Hotels' logo in India, whereas US consumers tend to prefer angular logos, such as Holiday Inn's H-logo (Henderson et al., 2003). Another direction is to explore other aesthetic dimensions of charity appeals, such as balance, emphasis, movement, proportion, and variety (Kumar & Garg, 2010). Future research can manipulate these dimensions and investigate their effects on consumer perceptions. Moreover, future research can adopt a multidimensional approach to operationalize customer engagement in the CRM context, amalgamating attitudinal measures (e.g., attitude towards the company or charity), affective measures (e.g., experienced feeling and emotions towards the company or charity) and behavioral measures (e.g., re-participate intention). These suggestions offer fruitful avenues for future hospitality research on CRM programs.

Concluding Summary

With the increasing attention from the society on companies' CSR efforts, building an effective CRM campaigns becomes critical to marketers. Drawing on the processing fluency

theory (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009), this research offers new insights on the joint effect of benefit type (self-benefits vs. other-benefits), message content (prevention-focused vs. promotion-focused) and visual design (cute vs. aggressive) on customers' CRM engagement. Our results demonstrate that the effectiveness of benefit type depends on the combination of message content and visual design. We suggest companies to adopt self-benefits (vs. other-benefits) appeals when cute visual designs are combined with prevention-focused messages or when aggressive visual designs are combined with promotion-focused messages.

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