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Branding Implications of Co-Created Social Responsibility

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Branding Implications of Co-Created Social Responsibility

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

One of the most profound transformations of the marketing discipline in recent history has been driven by the democratization of power relations and value creation between brands and consumers. This dissertation explores the branding implications of this fundamental shift by investigating whether and how the type and degree of control shared by brands affect consumer empowerment perceptions and, in turn, consumer–brand relationships, as well as whether and how these effects might be moderated by the size and diversity of the choice set and by the image valence of the brand that shares control with consumers.

The present research examines such questions in a prosocial context by studying an emerging form of co-created social responsibility, cause-related marketing (CM) with choice, in which the consumer, not the brand, chooses the charitable cause to which the brand will donate in response to the consumer’s purchase. By integrating research on power, choice, and brand relationships, this dissertation proposes a conceptual framework that predicts whether, when, and why giving consumers control over a brand’s meaningful decision (operationalized as CM with choice) strengthens consumer–brand relationships. Six experiments test this framework.

The dissertation shows that letting consumers choose a brand’s donation recipient strengthens consumer–brand relationships by increasing consumer empowerment and engagement. This serial mediation through empowerment and engagement is replicated across all studies. The main effect can be bolstered by providing consumers either unrestricted choice (i.e., choose any cause from memory) rather than restricted choice (i.e., select from a list of
predetermined cause options; Studies 1–4) or a combination of both choice modes (Study 4), but not by expanding the size of the set of cause options (Study 2) or increasing the similarity or dissimilarity of the options (Studies 3a and 3b). Finally, Study 5 reveals that introducing a conventional CM campaign improves brand outcomes (attachment, attitudes, and purchase intentions) regardless of brand image (negative, neutral, or positive) and that adding consumer cause choice to the campaign benefits brands as much as (or more than) introducing the campaign itself does, though only when brand image is neutral or positive. When brand image is negative, adding consumer cause choice fails to improve brand outcomes and can even backfire—a boundary condition similar to the boomerang effect that arises from psychological reactance because consumers prefer to keep their distance.

A central implication of this dissertation is that when a brand allows consumers to co-create its charitable giving campaign, neither the choice set’s size or diversity nor consumers’ involvement or satisfaction with the chosen cause brings consumers closer to the brand; instead, what brings them closer to the brand is their increased sense of empowerment, which in turn enhances their engagement with the brand that shares its control. An equally important implication results from the observed boomerang effect, which should serve as a warning for any managers who risk falling into the trap of adopting a standard, one-size-fits-all view of prosocial co-creation as a tool to repair an otherwise defective brand reputation. A strategy that encourages consumers to serve as brand agents by co-creating the brand’s meaning requires caution on the brand’s part. As in interpersonal relationships, the general desire to spend time together must first be at least somewhat mutual before any shared experience—no matter how positive—can make the bond grow stronger.
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The marketing discipline in general and consumer–brand relationships in particular are undergoing fundamental transformations. For brands, the digitalization and convergence of communication and media technologies have proven to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they increase consumer access to information that stimulates brand and price comparisons while eroding brand loyalty (e.g., Accenture 2012; Kapferer 2005). On the other hand, they offer opportunities for brands by facilitating the initiation and strengthening of brands’ relationships with consumers. Particularly promising, and increasingly expected by consumers, are co-creation initiatives that give consumers control over decisions conventionally made by brands (e.g., Atakan, Bagozzi, and Yoon 2014; Fuchs et al. 2013; Hoyer et al. 2010; Mochon, Norton, and Ariely 2012; O’Hern and Rindfleisch 2010; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Quelch and Jocz 2007; Ramaswamy and Gouillart 2010; Ramaswamy and Ozcan 2014, 2016).

Brands (e.g., Mazda, Starbucks) have recently begun extending co-creation from product design to corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts that include cause-related marketing (CM)\(^2\) campaigns, in which a brand makes a monetary or in-kind contribution to a cause in response to a consumer purchase or other consumer action (Kotler and Lee 2005; Varadarajan

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2 This dissertation stays true to *cause-related marketing*, the arguably original term (see Varadarajan and Menon 1988), but acknowledges that, especially in recent years, *cause marketing* appears to have been increasingly used interchangeably (e.g., Andrews et al. 2014; Jones 2012; Waters 2010).
and Menon 1988). In North America, cause sponsorship spending has increased greatly, from $120 million in 1990 to $1.92 billion in 2015 (Cause Marketing Forum 2016), with 91% of U.S. consumers continuing to want more of the brands they use to support causes (Cone Communications 2013). The co-creative element recently added to CM lets consumers determine the charity or cause to which the CM donation will be sent. Such CM with choice is an emerging form of co-created social responsibility (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012; Sankarnarayanan 2013), whose implementation is increasingly feasible thanks to the proliferation of social media and digital communication channels.

Providers in the growing CM-with-choice segment range from online retail partners (e.g., Shop2Care) and white label platforms (e.g., Kula) to social media apps (e.g., CafeGive) and crowdfunding sites (e.g., DonorsChoose.org) often used as partners in CM-with-choice campaigns (e.g., J.Crew, Loews Hotels, MSNBC). In addition, brands are starting to develop their own platforms to implement their CM-with-choice initiatives. Since late 2013, Amazon has been donating a percentage of the price of most product purchases on its AmazonSmile platform to the cause of the buyer’s choice (Herrell 2014; Velazco 2013). In May 2014, Gucci Parfums launched a U.S. CM-with-choice campaign that had previously run in Italy and the United Kingdom. For a limited time, five designated Gucci fragrances came with a unique code that buyers could redeem on Gucci’s Chime for Change platform to allocate a $5 donation to the cause of their choice (Rudenko 2014).

Although CM with choice has become popular with brands and consumers alike (Do Well Do Good 2012; Haid and Tabvuma 2013), academic research has lagged. Shared consumer control ranges from being restricted (i.e., select a cause from a list whose length may vary) to unrestricted (i.e., choose any cause) to a combination of the two (i.e., select a cause from a list or
choose any cause), so important theoretical and managerial questions remain. To what extent does a consumer’s sense of empowerment depend on the type and degree of control shared by the brand? How do consumer empowerment perceptions affect consumer–brand relationships? Do factors related to the choice set (e.g., size, option differentiability) and the brand (i.e., image valence) moderate the effects, and if so, how? This dissertation addresses these questions first by developing a conceptual framework that identifies relevant constructs and their likely effects to explain whether, when, and why letting consumers make a prosocial decision on a brand’s behalf strengthens consumer–brand relationships. This framework is then subjected to empirical tests across six studies.

As marketing continues to transition from a transaction to a relationship orientation (Palmatier et al. 2006), this dissertation contributes by informing marketing theory and practice in several ways. First, this dissertation bridges the gap between CSR activities and brand relationships by enhancing previous conceptual work in this area (Bhattacharya, Korschun, and Sen 2009; Sen, Du, and Bhattacharya 2009) and supporting the resulting predictions empirically. Despite a growing consensus that CM increases sales (Andrews et al. 2014), research has yet to determine whether and how CM campaigns affect brand attachment (see Peloza and Shang 2011).

Second, this dissertation identifies consumer empowerment and engagement as drivers of brand attachment. By doing so, it responds to calls for more research that explores antecedents of strong consumer–brand relationships (e.g., MacInnis 2012; Park, MacInnis, and Priester 2009), which are increasingly believed to predict brand loyalty (e.g., Ahluwalia and Kaikati 2010).

Third, the present research provides empirical evidence for Wathieu et al.’s (2002) conceptualization of empowerment as determined more by one’s control over a choice set than
by the size of a choice set. Building on initial CM-with-choice findings (Arora and Henderson 2007; Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012), this dissertation reveals that letting consumers choose any cause strengthens brand attachment by elevating empowerment and engagement, but increasing the number of cause options does not.

Fourth, this dissertation uncovers a boundary condition of the option differentiability effect (Botti and McGill 2006) by showing that differences in consumers’ outcome satisfaction after choosing from a more (vs. less) differentiated choice set in a positively valenced context disappear when consumers engage in a prosocial, and thus other-oriented as opposed to self-oriented, choice task. Just as increasing the number of cause options neither strengthens nor weakens brand attachment, increasing their dissimilarity exerts no such effect either.

Fifth, this dissertation also contributes to the power literature. Whereas recent research has found that consumers induced to feel empowered are more likely to switch brands (Jiang, Zhan, and Rucker 2014), the present work shows that when the power-sharing source is the brand itself, the opposite occurs: Consumer–brand ties grow stronger in the process.

Sixth, combining restricted and unrestricted consumer-choice scenarios in prosocial decision making affects consumer–brand relationships in a subadditive, rather than additive or subtractive, manner. The diminishing marginal utility thus informs managers that they should not falsely assume that maximizing cause choice flexibility will maximize their CM campaign effectiveness.

Seventh, this dissertation enriches co-creation research and joins recent efforts to overcome existing biases toward studying only nonnegative brand relationships (e.g., Fournier and Alvarez 2013; Park, Eisingerich, and Park 2013). Specifically, it identifies negative brand image as a boundary condition in which the otherwise positive effects of prosocial co-creation
disappear or, in line with reactance theory (Brehm 1966), even backfire, as consumers prefer to keep their distance.

Uniting these contributions is the notion of the clear managerial and societal importance of studying ways in which CSR initiatives can strengthen consumer–brand relationships. Prosocial co-creation can be conceptualized as a triadic framework, with the brand as the initiator (and indirect beneficiary), the consumer as the supporter (and indirect beneficiary), and the community as the direct beneficiary (Kull 2012). Specifically, exploring the branding implications of co-created social responsibility is of managerial importance because strong consumer–brand relationships are critical drivers of a firm’s cash flow, which largely determines its long-term financial performance and shareholder value (Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey 1998). Maximizing CSR effectiveness is also of societal importance because it (1) facilitates mechanisms that enable consumers to exhibit altruism and contribute to the greater good, thereby eliciting a sense of “warm glow” and moral satisfaction (Andreoni 1989, 1990; Andrews et al. 2014; Isen 1970; Kahneman and Knetsch 1992; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998), and (2) directly benefits the community or society, increasingly regarded as “the ultimate stakeholder” (Sisodia, Wolfe, and Sheth 2007, p. 171).
CHAPTER 2:
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Increasingly sophisticated customer relationship management (CRM) software facilitates the optimization of customer segmentation, database marketing, and loyalty programs. Although aiding in the assessment of at least short-term profitability, such technological advances risk fostering a one-directional, static, and economics-driven approach to CRM rather than a two- or multidirectional, dynamic, and relational approach. The former tends to overlook the complexity and diversity of consumer–brand relationships and, in turn, the significant potential of initiating and nurturing them (Fournier and Avery 2011). Consequently, relationship marketing theory’s original vision appears to have been lost (Boulding et al. 2005; Fournier 2009)—the vision of consumers as people with relational needs who collaborate with brands as partners in the making of meaning and creation of value.

Leveraging recent technological advances, most notably the Internet and social media, brands increasingly treat customers as partners and share power with them, such as by encouraging them to participate in previously internal decision-making processes. Such co-creation initiatives follow decades in which decision-making power remained exclusively in companies’ hands (Pitt et al. 2006). Seeking to revitalize and ultimately contribute to fulfilling the vision underlying relationship marketing, this dissertation explores the role of consumer empowerment in strengthening brand attachment. Brand attachment—defined as “the strength of the bond connecting the consumer with the brand (Park et al. 2010, p. 2)—is a proxy for
consumer–brand relationship strength (Thomson 2006) and a primary path to brand loyalty and long-term profitability (e.g., Ahluwalia and Kaikati 2010; Fournier and Yao 1997; Keller 2013; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005). Considering the managerial importance of brand attachment, it is not surprising that researchers’ and practitioners’ interest in this construct continues to grow (e.g., Dunn and Hoegg 2014; Fedorikhin, Park, and Thomson 2008; Millman 2009; Park et al. 2010; Sutton 2015). Brand attachment is this dissertation’s focal dependent variable across all six studies, though I also supplement it with considerations of more cognitive evaluations (brand attitude; Studies 2 and 5) and downstream consequences for the brand (purchase intention; Study 5).

In this dissertation chapter, I review and integrate several streams of research to develop a conceptual framework that explains whether, when, and why giving consumers control over a brand’s meaningful decision (operationalized here by letting consumers choose a CM campaign’s cause beneficiary) strengthens consumer–brand relationships (see Figure 1). The framework is based on five fundamental features: (1) a conceptual distinction between objective power and a subjective sense of empowerment, (2) the meaning of a brand’s activities to the consumer and consumer control over them as two drivers of consumer empowerment, (3) the differential effects of choice scenarios that vary in consumer decision freedom, (4) the mediating role of empowerment and resulting engagement, and (5) the moderating role of brand image. The remainder of this chapter discusses each of these framework elements and their predicted relationships.
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

*Effects for combined (i.e., restricted and unrestricted) choice = unrestricted choice > restricted choice > no choice.
*bEffects consistent across differences in choice set characteristics (i.e., size, option differentiability).
*cNegative brand image as a boundary condition.
*dBrand attachment (Studies 1–5), brand attitude (Studies 2 and 5), and purchase intention (Study 5).

Power Versus Empowerment

Empowerment’s root construct is power, which is typically used interchangeably with control (Conger and Kanungo 1988; Tannenbaum 1968). As a social construct, power has been defined as “asymmetric control over valued resources in social relations” (Magee and Galinsky 2008, p. 361). As such, power is a central component of both interpersonal and consumer–brand relationships (Fournier 2009). Actual power, however, is distinct from a sense of empowerment, which is conceptualized as a psychological state of feeling in control (Mondros and Wilson 1994; Riger 1993). Thus, one may feel empowered without having control or, conversely, may have control without much sense of empowerment (Mondros and Wilson 1994). In times in which consumer demand for control continues to grow (Accenture 2012; Handelman 2006; see also Broniarczyk and Griffin 2014), the interplay of power shared by the brand and
empowerment felt by the consumer is critical to explore. In fact, since Wathieu et al.’s (2002) seminal conceptual work on consumer empowerment, it has remained unresolved whether and how consumer perceptions of empowerment grow contingent on the type and degree of control shared by the brand.

**Consumer Empowerment Through Meaning and Choice**

Drawing on conceptualizations of empowerment in the management literature (Spreitzer 1995; Thomas and Velthouse 1990), this dissertation proposes that when brands share control with consumers, *meaning* and *choice* are two drivers of consumer empowerment. In keeping with Magee and Galinsky (2008), for consumers to feel empowered, they need to be given control over something they perceive as valuable or meaningful. Given that managing brands corresponds largely to managing brand meanings (Allen, Fournier, and Miller 2008; McCracken 2005), one promising way of increasing consumer empowerment perceptions is by helping consumers contribute to the greater good. While CSR initiatives typically fulfill the relationship dimensions of being cooperative rather than competitive, and altruistic rather than selfish (Fournier 2009), only CM campaigns tie a product purchase to a charitable donation. Therefore, knowing that their purchase decision will trigger something as meaningful as a donation should increase consumers’ sense of empowerment. The shared control in such traditional CM, however, is limited to purchase-dependent donations because the brand alone determines the donation recipient.

Thus, one way for brands to further increase consumers’ sense of empowerment is by letting consumers choose the cause beneficiary and, in turn, co-create the brand’s meaning. As
conventional CM campaigns become ubiquitous (e.g., Edelman 2012), brands seeking to gain a competitive advantage are increasingly launching such CM-with-choice campaigns. Recent research (Inesi et al. 2011) has shown that power and choice (i.e., the ability to select a preferred course of action; Averill 1973) are both sources of personal control and, as such, rooted in the belief that events are solely impacted by and dependent upon one’s own behavior. Therefore, power and choice are likely to work similarly in their effect on consumer empowerment perceptions, such that consumers who can choose the brand’s CM beneficiary should feel more empowered than those who cannot. However, when choice scenarios differ in nature, such as in their degree of restriction, predictions are less obvious. To explore this theoretical account, this dissertation distinguishes between restricted and unrestricted choice, two emerging CM variants.

**Restricted Choice**

The prototypical CM-with-choice scenario involves restricted choice, in which consumers select a brand’s donation recipient from a list. One of the earliest adopters of such CM with restricted choice was Subaru; as part of its annual “Share the Love” holiday sales event launched in late 2008, it donates $250 to the consumer’s choice of five (or, in 2013, six) charities for every vehicle sold. In the years following the campaign’s inception, the automaker’s Net Promoter Score, which is based on a customer’s likelihood of recommending a company to a friend, steadily rose to surpass those of all other car manufacturers (Jones 2012). However, the branding implications of CM with restricted choice and its potential impact on consumer empowerment perceptions remain unclear. This dissertation proposes that CM with restricted (vs. without) choice will increase consumers’ sense of empowerment by elevating perceived control in general (DeCharms 1968; Hui and Bateson 1991; Wortman 1975) and control over
factors traditionally determined by marketers in particular (Wathieu et al. 2002), even more so because this control impacts others (Fiske 1993; Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier 2010; Spreitzer 1995).

**Unrestricted Choice**

Benefiting from the rapid advances in digital and mobile technologies, *CM with unrestricted choice* allows consumers to choose any cause to which the brand should donate. One early example that came close to such unrestricted choice, though without a required transaction (i.e., not a CM campaign per se), was the Pepsi Refresh Project that ran from 2010 to 2012 and featured a crowdsourcing platform on which consumers could post social causes they would like PepsiCo to support. Although the campaign was not a sales-driving program and reached its goal of building consumer awareness of Pepsi as a socially conscious brand (Kotler, Hessekiel, and Lee 2012), its implementation and possibly weak brand fit may have failed to leverage its full potential (Zmuda 2012). Having learned from this first mover, brands starting to offer consumers unrestricted cause choices mostly embed them in transaction-based CM initiatives. On the AmazonSmile platform, for example, customers must make a purchase before they can use a search function to choose from nearly a million causes to which Amazon donates a small percentage of the price of each eligible product purchase—a functionality that comes close to granting unrestricted choice. And the online retail partner iGive even offers truly unrestricted choice by allowing users to nominate any cause of their liking.

Such increases in shared control could affect consumer empowerment perceptions in different ways. Given its novelty, granting consumers complete control over the brand’s donation recipient could fail to increase perceived empowerment. Specifically, consumers exposed to CM
with unrestricted choice could perceive having to generate a charity from memory as overwhelming or even annoying and frustrating, comparable to an overload effect (Haid and Tabvuma 2013; Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Schwartz 2004, 2006). This would likely result in CM with unrestricted choice being less empowering than CM with restricted choice, which arguably simplifies consumer decision making by offering a predefined list from which to choose.

However, the positive prosocial context (e.g., Andreoni 1990) and CM’s ongoing popularity (e.g., Cone Communications 2013) minimize consumers’ likelihood of being unable to generate a cause from memory. Charitable organizations and causes are highly visible and well known, such that generating a cause from memory may not be taxing. Moreover, unrestricted choice enables consumers to adjust the choice set composition, an increase in flexibility that might drive empowerment perceptions (Wathieu et al. 2002). I therefore predict that CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice will further increase consumer empowerment.

**The Empowerment–Engagement Effect on Brand Attachment**

By fostering intrinsic motivation, empowerment should strengthen consumer–brand relationships through an increase in consumer engagement (Deci 1975; Iyengar 2010; Thomas and Velthouse 1990). Specifically, increased empowerment is expected to enhance engagement in the process and, in turn, engagement with the brand by eliciting cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investments that include consumer interactions with the brand and its campaign (Brodie et al. 2011; Hollebeek 2011a, b; Van Doorn 2011). This is consistent with research on power that suggests that a psychological state of high power increases people’s tendency to take action (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003).
The relational consequences of consumer engagement are believed to include brand attachment and similar forms of self–brand connection (Brodie et al. 2011). Just as sharing experiences or working through situations with others tends to bring people closer emotionally, a consumer partnering with a brand that shares its control over a CM campaign is likely to feel closer or more attached to that brand (Park et al. 2010). I therefore predict that CM-with-choice effects, including differences between restricted and unrestricted choices, will be mediated by increases in consumer empowerment and engagement.

\[ H_1: \] The type of consumer cause choice in CM affects brand attachment, such that the level of consumer attachment to brands offering unrestricted choice > with restricted choice > no choice > no CM.

\[ H_2: \] The type-of-cause-choice effects (\( H_1 \)) are serially mediated by consumer empowerment and engagement, such that type of cause choice \( \rightarrow \) empowerment \( \rightarrow \) engagement \( \rightarrow \) brand attachment.

**The Role of the Choice Set**

**Choice Set Size**

While the predicted increase in consumer empowerment when given unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice is driven by consumer control over the choice set, a possible alternative method for increasing the consumer’s sense of empowerment is to expand the restricted choice set (Wathieu et al. 2002). Exploring choice-set-size effects on empowerment is important for both marketing practice and theory. For practice, whereas unrestricted choice might be especially
appealing to consumers, its implementation might be encumbered by consumers listing bogus, disreputable, and/or obscure causes or engaging in other forms of deviant or destructive co-creation behavior (Verhoef, Beckers, and Van Doorn 2013). Although technological innovation can help address some of these challenges, their partial remedies may require investments of time and money that some businesses may be unable or unwilling to incur. It is thus important to determine whether brands can duplicate unrestricted choice’s relationship-strengthening effects by continuing to preselect cause options but increasing their number. The simplicity of such an approach may explain why a growing number of brands (e.g., Amazon, Crate & Barrel, Starbucks) let consumers select a cause from long lists of charities.

For theory, exploring the effectiveness of expanding cause options within restricted choice will help determine to what degree two potential theoretical effects are involved. On the one hand, increasing cause options may produce positive effects by enhancing consumer feelings of decision freedom (Reibstein, Youngblood, and Fromkin 1975) and satisfaction after selecting from many options when making choices for others (Polman 2012). On the other hand, increasing cause options may lead to negative effects from trade-off aversion and regret (Chatterjee and Heath 1996; Hedgcock and Rao 2009), greater task complexity (Bettman, Johnson, and Payne 1991; Broniarczyk and Griffin 2014) and preference uncertainty (Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998; Slovic 1995), increased responsibility for poor outcomes (Botti and McGill 2006), and choice overload (Iyengar and Lepper 2000; Schwartz 2004).

Given the general positivity of the prosocial context, I predict the following: Although selecting a cause should become more difficult as the number of cause options exceeds the conventional choice overload threshold of 24 (Iyengar and Lepper 2000), the warm glow of charitable giving (Andreoni 1990; Kahneman and Knetsch 1992), in which every choice is likely
to be perceived as inherently good, should prevent such increased decision difficulty from weakening consumer attachment to the brand. Any such null effect would be consistent with the scope neglect commonly found in charitable contexts, where, for example, people donate as much money to save five whales as they do to save five hundred (Desvousges et al. 1993; Hsee and Rottenstreich 2004; see also Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2009).

H₃: Increasing consumers’ charitable cause options (a) increases decision difficulty but (b) does not affect brand attachment.

**Choice Set Composition**

In addition to the quantitative dimension of choice set size, a more qualitative dimension may be equally important for exploring consumers’ subjective experience of empowerment: the composition of the choice set (Wathieu et al. 2002). This dissertation conceptualizes choice set composition in two ways: (1) option differentiability (i.e., the degree to which the options within a restricted choice set are distinguishable) and (2) choice mode flexibility (i.e., the degree to which the manner in which the choice is made is adjustable). Both conceptualizations and their potential influences on consumer–brand relationships are discussed next.

**Option Differentiability**

An aspect of the composition of a choice set is the degree of option differentiability within a restricted choice set. Prior research suggests that choice is perceived as more valuable when the choice set is more, as opposed to less, differentiated. Specifically, satisfaction with positive outcomes and dissatisfaction with negative outcomes tend to be greater among choosers
(vs. nonchoosers) when the options within a choice set are dissimilar and thus easily
distinguishable, but outcome satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not increase when the options
within the choice set are similar and thus difficult to tease apart (Botti and McGill 2006).

This dissertation explores a potential boundary condition of this finding according to the
orientation of the choice task (other- vs. self-oriented) and the degree of positive option valence.
A small yet growing stream of research indicates the importance of self–other differences in
decision making (e.g., Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, and Frey 2005; Kray 2000; Polman and Emich 2011;
Wray and Stone 2005). A fundamental difference is that choices for others (the self) tend to be
approached with greater sensitivity to positive (negative) outcome possibilities (e.g.,
Beisswanger et al. 2003; Polman 2012). Botti and McGill (2006) examine the role of option
differentiability in a product-related context, in which consumers choose for themselves among
favorable (coffee blends, chocolates) or unfavorable (foul odors) options. No prior research
addresses whether the role of option differentiability changes in a cause-related context, in which
consumers choose among inherently positive options that benefit others.

Although making a choice on behalf of others is conceptually distinct from making a
choice that benefits others, the altruistic deed of selecting a charitable cause to support
financially likely involves a more other-oriented than self-oriented decision process. Such
altruistic decision making tends to prompt a promotion rather than prevention focus (Higgins
1997; Polman 2012), and the charitable context sparks particularly strong positivity (e.g.,
Andreoni 1990). Because of these differences, the effect of option differentiability on consumer
satisfaction with positive outcomes might be limited to satisfaction with outcomes that affect the
self (i.e., consumer feelings toward the chosen product; Botti and McGill 2006), without
extending to satisfaction with outcomes that affect others (i.e., consumer feelings toward the
chosen donation recipient and the brand granting the choice). Consumers should then be equally satisfied with the cause choice and—which is arguably more important managerially—feel equally attached to the brand that lets them select a cause, irrespective of the similarity or dissimilarity of the cause options in the choice set predetermined by the brand.³

H₄: Letting consumers (vs. the brand) select the cause from a restricted choice set strengthens brand attachment, regardless of whether the set consists of differentiated or undifferentiated cause options.

**Choice Mode Flexibility**

Another aspect of the composition of a choice set is the degree of flexibility it provides in how choices can be made. The more adjustable the choice set, the more flexibility consumers exposed to this choice set have to define their choices (Wathieu et al. 2002). As predicted, greater flexibility provided by unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice should strengthen consumer–brand relationships (H₁) by increasing consumer empowerment and engagement (H₂). Supplementing a free-choice option (unrestricted choice) with a set of options preselected by the brand (restricted choice) should increase choice mode flexibility further by offering two choice modes (i.e., alternative ways to make the choice). The effect on consumer–brand relationships, however, is less intuitive. Whether increases in choice mode flexibility respond linearly to increases in brand attachment is of not only theoretical interest but also managerial relevance, especially considering that AmazonSmile has implemented such a hybrid approach (hereafter, *CM with combined choice*) and that competing platforms are likely to follow.

³ Examining outcome satisfaction should also help rule it out as an alternative explanation for choice-of-cause effects on brand attachment.
Three possible explanations detail how combining restricted and unrestricted choices may affect consumer–brand relationships. First, the result of this combination may be *additive* in nature, such that the effect of the combined-choice scenario equals the sum of the effects of restricted choice and unrestricted choice. Given people’s general desire for flexibility (Kreps 1979), combining the scenarios might maximize the effects on consumer empowerment, engagement, and attachment to a brand that offers, in addition to a free-choice option, a list of charities that provide potential backup options if consumers cannot easily generate a cause from memory.

Second, combining restricted and unrestricted choices may elicit a *subtractive* effect, such that the combined scenario’s effect is weaker than the individual effect(s) of one or both of the components. Compared with restricted choice, the combined-choice scenario features an additional free-choice option (i.e., unrestricted choice) and therefore might reflect theorizing that indicates unrestricted choice’s benefits over restricted choice. Compared with unrestricted choice, the combined-choice scenario features a list of preselected causes (i.e., restricted choice), at least some of which consumers will be required to exclude. This implicit rejection of what is inherently positive may decrease consumers’ sense of empowerment and engagement, which would weaken their attachment to the brand that offers them to not only choose a cause from memory but also consider a set of specified cause options.

Third, the most likely prediction is that the effect of the combined-choice scenario will be *subadditive*: less than the sum of the effects of restricted choice and unrestricted choice but not less than the individual effect of either component. In line with the principle of diminishing marginal utility, the incremental benefit of adding restricted choice to unrestricted choice is likely to decrease as the magnitude of the choice scenario’s overall utility increases (for the
phenomenon in other contexts, see Nowlis and Simonson 1996; Stevens 1986). This prediction is also broadly supported by the anchoring or focusing effect (Chapman and Johnson 2002; Tversky and Kahneman 1974), according to which people tend to make judgments on the basis of a single, particular aspect, usually the most prevalent one. In a combined set of restricted- and unrestricted-choice scenarios, the unrestricted-choice scenario, which does not provide a specific option, likely serves as the anchor or focal point. Accordingly, the affective and cognitive reactions of consumers exposed to a combined set of predetermined options and a free-choice option may be driven primarily by consumers’ focus on the most prevalent component of the choice set (i.e., unrestricted choice) and less by their perceptions of the other components (i.e., restricted choice). This perspective should make consumers perceive the combined-choice scenario similarly to the way they perceive the anchor or unrestricted choice, which in turn should result in a subadditive effect.

At the same time, the warm-glow feelings associated with the charitable domain (e.g., Andreoni 1990) should reduce the likelihood that consumers blame the brand for possibly increasing the complexity of the choice scenario, which would avoid the potential negative utility of adding restricted choice to unrestricted choice. Therefore, compared with conventional CM without choice (i.e., the brand chooses the cause), both CM with combined choice and CM with unrestricted choice should strengthen consumers’ brand attachment to comparable degrees, and both of these scenarios should strengthen this attachment more than CM with restricted choice does.

\[ H_5: \text{Combining restricted and unrestricted consumer-cause-choice scenarios in CM strengthens brand attachment as much as (more than) does CM with unrestricted (restricted) choice only.} \]
The Role of Brand Image

Although power typically involves dyadic relations and interactions between two or more parties (French and Raven 1959; Magee and Galinsky 2008), the proposed framework thus far focuses exclusively on the effects of whether and how power is shared with consumers but not who is sharing it. In their classic work on power, French and Raven (1959) identify referent power as one of the fundamental bases of power. Referent power is based on the ability to command the admiration or respect of others (French and Raven 1959; Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois 2012). Thus, the impact of sharing power on the recipient’s (i.e., consumer’s) perceived empowerment is likely to be influenced by the consumer’s perception or image of the power-sharing agent (i.e., the brand).

According to Fournier’s (1998) groundbreaking work on brand relationships and the rich stream of ensuing research (e.g., Fournier 2009; Keller 2012; Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone 2012), people relate to brands similarly to how they relate to people. Hence, just as negative emotions tend to evoke prevention goals (Frijda, Kuipers, and Ter Schure 1989), negative emotions toward a brand should stimulate brand avoidance or rejection (Fournier and Alvarez 2013; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006; White, Breazeale, and Webster 2012). The attempt of a brand with a negative image to turn consumers into relationship partners by letting them make decisions on its behalf (as in CM with choice) may therefore elicit cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) and increase consumer desires to disassociate from that brand. Such consumer resistance is likely to be evoked by a brand with low referent power setting up a force in the direction opposite its attempt to turn consumers into brand agents (French and Raven 1959). Consequently, the otherwise positive effect of giving consumers control over the brand’s donation recipient should
be reduced or even reversed, similar to the boomerang effect (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953) that arises from psychological reactance to an unwanted partnership offer (Clee and Wicklund 1980).

However, contrary to CM with choice, conventional CM-without-choice campaigns involve a donation component but no co-creation or choice-of-cause component. Their use by brands with a negative image therefore should not threaten consumers’ desire to keep their distance and should in turn elicit less or no consumer resistance. Consequently, the mere act of making a charitable donation for each sale should not produce a reactance effect but instead a standard positive CM effect, despite a brand’s negative image.

H6: (a) Brands making a charitable donation for each sale strengthen consumer attachment to the brands regardless of their image, whereas (b) sharing control with consumers by letting them choose the donation recipient strengthens consumer attachment to brands with a neutral or positive image but not to brands with a negative image.
CHAPTER 3:
EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Six studies test the conceptual framework and predicted relationships. Study 1 examines the effect of the type of cause choice (no, restricted, or unrestricted choice) on brand attachment (H₁) and the hypothesized empowerment-to-engagement pathway mediating this effect (H₂).

Study 2 not only seeks to replicate Study 1’s effects on a different product class but also examines the role of choice set size, thereby exploring whether managers can enhance restricted-choice effects by increasing the number of causes in the preselected list. Thus, Study 2 tests the potential effects of scope neglect and choice overload on brand outcomes in a prosocial context (H₃).

Studies 3a, 3b, and 4 assess the role of choice set composition. Specifically, Studies 3a and 3b test the prediction that the option differentiability effect (Botti and McGill 2006) does not extend to brand attachment in prosocial, as opposed to self-oriented, decision making. Letting consumers choose the brand’s donation recipient should strengthen their brand attachment regardless of how distinguishable the cause options are within the choice set (H₄). Studies 3a and 3b differ in the way they operationalize option differentiability; the manipulation of how similar or dissimilar the charity options are relies on either their performance on a diagnostic attribute (i.e., overhead costs; Study 3a) or the categories to which they belong (i.e., animals, education, environment, and health; Study 3b). Study 4 examines the predicted subadditive effect of combining restricted- and unrestricted-choice scenarios, namely, that the combined-choice
scenario strengthens brand attachment as much as (more than) unrestricted (restricted) choice does (H₅).

Study 5 assesses the universality of the empowerment–engagement model of prosocial co-creation by varying brand image at three valence levels (negative, neutral, and positive), where a brand’s negative image is predicted to constitute a boundary condition for positive choice-of-cause effects (H₆). Put differently, Study 5 explores whether the favorable shared-control effect on consumer–brand relationships for brands with a neutral or positive image reverses for brands with a negative image.

This dissertation also accounts for possible alternative explanations. Due to psychological ownership effects (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001, 2003; Thaler 1980) and greater potential consumer involvement with the chosen option (Carmon, Wertenbroch, and Zeelenberg 2003), consumers may care more about the cause they select from a list or generate from memory than about the cause the brand selects. Such cause-specific preferences could make campaigns that allow consumers to select or specify their favorite charity appear more valuable. For example, Arora and Henderson’s (2007) exploratory work using a within-subjects scenario of what resembles CM with restricted choice has shown that consumers’ cause affinity (measured as perceived usefulness and societal necessity) influences product choices. It is therefore important to account for such possible effects. To capture the personal dimension of (1) an unrestricted cause choice and (2) felt attachment to a brand sharing such power, I statistically control for cause involvement, which is conceptually similar to cause affinity but is a more personal measure of perceived cause importance or relevance (Grau and Folse 2007). Furthermore, I statistically control for the perceived fit between causes and the brand, another frequently examined moderator of CM effectiveness (e.g., Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012;
Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Zdravkovic, Magnusson, and Stanley 2010). In addition to cause involvement and perceived fit (Studies 1–4), other possible alternative explanations that this dissertation examines include consumers’ satisfaction with the chosen cause (Studies 3a and 3b) and their perceived value of the brand’s campaign (Study 4).

Appendix A provides the correlation matrices for all relevant dependent variables in each of the six studies by reporting Pearson’s correlation coefficients, the results of two-tailed significance tests, and the number of respondents. While the correlations between brand attachment, empowerment, and engagement are strong, Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) particularly conservative and stringent test (e.g., Giebelhausen et al. 2014; Kim and Lakshmanan 2015) confirms discriminant validity between these constructs. The square root of average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (brand attachment > .925, empowerment > .943, and engagement > .915) exceeds the correlations, meeting the test for discriminant validity.4

**Study 1**

Study 1 examines whether CM with choice enhances brand attachment and whether unrestricted (vs. restricted) consumer cause choice in CM bolsters any such effect (H1). Study 1 also tests for serial mediation through empowerment and engagement (H2).

**Method**

I created six backpack advertisements for a fictitious brand (RuckSack) allegedly donating $5 for each consumer purchase. The ads outlined a few of the backpack’s features and

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4 These results are consistent across Studies 1–4. Because Study 5 employs single-item change measures, the AVEs cannot be calculated.
differed in the degree to which consumers could choose the brand’s donation recipient: no choice (i.e., three causes counterbalanced as single causes or listed as a set of three causes), restricted choice (i.e., select one of the three causes), and unrestricted choice (i.e., choose any cause from memory). One hundred sixteen University of South Florida students (M_{age} = 21 years, range = 18–32 years; 55% female), who participated for course credit, were randomly assigned to one of these four experimental conditions. The three-cause no-choice condition was included to equate the number of causes across the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions, thereby controlling for potential differences in social responsibility perceptions (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012).

Because the ability to choose from a differentiated set in a positive context (such as the prosocial domain examined here) might increase outcome satisfaction (Botti and McGill 2006), I limited differentiation by selecting three causes that a pretest (N = 44) revealed to be moderately important and to fit with backpacks moderately: American Forest Foundation, American Museum of Natural History, and American Youth Foundation. These causes were counterbalanced within the single-cause no-choice condition but presented as a set within (1) the three-cause no-choice condition and (2) the restricted-choice condition, which had participants select one of the three causes to receive the donation. The unrestricted-choice condition asked participants to choose from memory any charitable cause they wanted to receive the donation. For all stimuli used in Study 1, see Appendix B.

After randomly assigning respondents to one of these advertisements, I measured empowerment by asking them how much power, control, and influence they felt they had over the donation initiative (1 = “none at all,” and 7 = “full/complete/total”; $\alpha = .95$). I measured engagement by asking how engaged they felt with the brand (1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “very”)
and, to also capture the behavioral dimension of engagement (Brodie et al. 2011, 2013; Van Doorn et al. 2010), to what extent they felt motivated to take part in the brand’s donation initiative (1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “to a very large extent”; r = .78). Three items measured brand attachment: “personally connected” and “emotionally bonded” (1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “very”), as well as “reflects who I am” (1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “to a great extent”; α = .93; Park et al. 2010). To account for potential differences in cause perceptions influencing the results, I controlled for cause involvement (personal importance of the cause; 1 = “not at all important,” and 7 = “very important”) and perceived cause fit with backpacks (make sense together; 1 = “a very bad fit,” and 7 = “a very good fit”). To compare no-choice and restricted-choice conditions, I averaged the cause involvement and fit ratings of the three causes to create composite measures. To compare restricted- and unrestricted-choice conditions, only the involvement and fit ratings of the participant’s selected cause in restricted choice were used (because this was the cause on which the participant was focused). To ensure that participants had no preexisting brand associations, I also measured how familiar they were with the RuckSack brand (1 = “not at all familiar,” and 7 = “very familiar”). The study concluded by collecting participants’ general demographic information (i.e., age and gender).

**Results**

**Preliminary Analyses**

As intended, participants were unfamiliar with the RuckSack brand; the mean was significantly below the scale midpoint (M = 1.60; t(115) = −19.78, p < .001). Neither the three causes counterbalanced in the single-cause no-choice condition (all ps > .20) nor the two no-choice conditions (M_{one cause} = 2.73 vs. M_{three causes} = 2.67; F(1, 54) = .03, p > .80) produced
significant differences in brand attachment, so I collapsed across them as a basic no-choice condition. Controlling for cause involvement and perceived fit by including them as covariates altered none of the preceding or subsequent results (for the means and standard deviations of cause involvement and perceived fit across conditions, see Table 1).

*Main Effects of Type of Cause Choice*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the type of consumer cause choice in CM campaigns significantly increased brand attachment across the no-choice, restricted-choice, and unrestricted-choice conditions (Ms = 2.70, 3.40, and 4.54; F(2, 113) = 17.85, \( p < .001 \)). Two contrast tests then confirmed that both restricted (vs. no) choice (\( t(113) = 2.27, p < .05 \)) and unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (\( t(113) = 3.24, p < .01 \)) strengthened brand attachment significantly. Interestingly, although one might expect the introduction of consumer choice to have greater impact than changing the nature of that choice, the opposite occurred: Giving consumers restricted (vs. no) choice strengthened brand attachment less (\( M_{\Delta} = .70 \)) than did increasing the freedom of that choice by making it unrestricted (\( M_{\Delta} = 1.14 \); see Figure 2).
Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Cause Involvement and Perceived Fit (Study 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cause Choice</th>
<th>Cause Involvement</th>
<th>Perceived Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFF</td>
<td>AMNH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single cause</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three causes</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted choice</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted choice</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)The average rating of the three causes provides the comparison for the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions.
\(^b\)The rating of the selected cause provides the comparison for the restricted-choice and unrestricted-choice conditions.

Notes: AFF = American Forest Foundation; AMNH = American Museum of Natural History; AYF = American Youth Foundation. Shaded cells indicate ratings that do not apply to the respective conditions.
Increasing decision freedom across the no-choice, restricted-choice, and unrestricted-choice conditions also significantly enhanced consumer empowerment (Ms = 2.30, 4.30, and 6.04; F(2, 113) = 78.81, p < .001) and engagement (Ms = 3.17, 3.77, and 4.85; F(2, 113) = 16.40, p < .001). Planned contrasts revealed that participants reported a greater sense of empowerment when given restricted (vs. no) choice (t(113) = 6.54, p < .001) or unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (t(113) = 5.07, p < .001). They also indicated higher levels of engagement with the campaign and the brand when provided with restricted (vs. no) choice (t(113) = 2.04, p < .05) or unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (t(113) = 3.24, p < .01). Table 2 provides an overview of the cell sizes per condition, as well as the means and standard deviations of the brand attachment, empowerment, and engagement measures.
### Table 2. Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cause Choice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Brand Attachment</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single cause</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three causes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted choice</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted choice</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Process Evidence**

To test the proposed serial multiple mediator model (H₂), I followed the recommended procedure for testing mediation with a multicategorical independent variable by creating two dummy variables at a time, making the third condition the reference group, and adding the dummy variable that is the nonfocal predictor as a covariate to retain both dummy variables in the model (see Hayes and Preacher 2014). I then performed a series of mediation tests using Model 6 from the PROCESS macro (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples. As hypothesized, the indirect effect of restricted (vs. no) choice on brand attachment through empowerment and engagement was significant (point estimate [PE] = .50, 95% confidence interval [CI]⁵ = [.29, .85]). A parallel procedure testing unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice showed that unrestricted choice’s indirect effect on brand attachment through empowerment and engagement was also significant (PE = .44, 95% CI = [.23, .79]).

The empowerment–engagement order is retained in this and all subsequent analyses on the grounds of both theory and empirics because reversing the order always substantially

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⁵ All six studies report bias-corrected bootstrap CIs.
weakened or completely eliminated the path. Moreover, when testing the serial multiple mediator model with empowerment and engagement, none of the indirect effects of restricted (vs. no) choice and unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice on brand attachment were significant when they passed through empowerment only or engagement only (even when 90% CIs were used). I also ruled out greater cause involvement and better perceived fit as alternative or additional pathways because they neither separately nor jointly mediated any of the type-of-cause-choice effects on brand attachment, with all of the CIs (even at 90%) including zero.

Discussion

Study 1 shows that restricted cause choices (from a list) strengthen consumer–brand relationships and that the effect is significantly larger when consumers are allowed to choose any cause they wish (H₁). It also shows that the stronger relationships arise from increasing the consumer’s sense of empowerment, which in turn enhances the consumer’s engagement with the brand and its campaign (H₂). Consumers thus end up sharing more deeply in the process, which bonds them to the brand more strongly.

Consistent with parallels between interpersonal and brand relationships (e.g., Fournier 1998; Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone 2012), Study 1 shows that sharing an activity and its control with a prospective partner strengthens the relationship with that partner. Although activities shared by brands and consumers could involve many things, including the co-creation of physical products, relational bonds might be especially strengthened when brands and consumers come together to share in the more emotional experience of helping others. Study 1 supports such effects by showing that consumer attachment, even to a brand being seen for the first time, can be increased by letting consumers determine a CM campaign’s donation recipient.
Study 2

Although unrestricted choice strengthened brand attachment more than did restricted choice in Study 1, one might ask the following: Would restricted choice have done better, and perhaps even as well as unrestricted choice, if it had offered more than three cause options?

Study 2 addresses this issue (H₃) by testing choice sets of 4, 12, or 48 causes. Further, it (1) seeks to replicate Study 1 on a different product class (computer printers) with a general population sample to enhance generalizability, (2) includes a no-CM control condition to reaffirm the positive effects of CM without choice and to test the prediction that CM campaigns increase consumers’ sense of empowerment even when consumers are not allowed to choose the cause, (3) adds brand attitude as a more cognitive brand outcome than brand attachment (Dunn and Hoegg 2014; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Park et al. 2010), and (4) adds perceived personal role as a potential alternative mediator. The latter two variables are important to include because Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran (2012) have found that consumers’ perceived personal role in contributing to the cause mediates the effect of CM with restricted (vs. without) choice on attitude toward the company. Study 2 seeks to replicate this indirect effect on brand attitude, to extend it to CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice, and to examine whether perceived personal role will also mediate CM-with-choice effects on the more affective brand attachment outcome (e.g., Park et al. 2010).

Method

Two hundred forty-three consumers (M_age = 31 years, range = 18–81 years; 65% male), based in the United States and recruited from a U.S. online panel in exchange for modest
monetary compensation, were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions: single-cause CM without choice (with the causes from the 4-cause restricted-choice condition being counterbalanced); 4-cause, 12-cause, and 48-cause CM with restricted choice (well below and above the conventional choice overload threshold of 24; Iyengar and Lepper 2000); CM with unrestricted choice; and a no-CM control group that was shown the same online advertisement (describing the features of a new printer) without the CM campaign element. Study 2 tested CM without choice as traditional single-cause CM because Study 1’s single-cause and multiple-cause CM-without-choice conditions produced comparable results and because listing several causes without letting consumers choose is managerially less common.

To examine whether Study 1’s effect of unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice on brand attachment extends to restricted choices with larger and more differentiated choice sets, I selected 48 charities that (1) represent a variety of cause categories and charitable domains (see http://www.charitynavigator.org) and (2) elicit different levels of importance and fit perceptions with computer printers based on a pretest (N = 32) of over 60 charitable causes (different from Study 1’s causes). The 12-cause condition used 12 causes from the 48-cause condition, and the 4-cause condition used four causes from the 12-cause condition. I also kept the levels of cause differentiation consistent across the three nested restricted-choice conditions. The ads listed the causes in alphabetical order and, to control for any preexisting brand associations, did not disclose the brand name. For all stimuli used in Study 2, see Appendix C.

The procedure largely mirrored that of Study 1, with four exceptions. First, after ad exposure, half of the respondents within the restricted-choice conditions had to click on a radio button next to their chosen cause, and the other half had to type their chosen cause in a text box to make their selection. I counterbalanced this aspect to ensure that the entry method of the
restricted-choice task did not influence the results, given that all participants in the unrestricted-choice condition were asked to enter their cause in a text box.

Second, brand attachment, along with brand attitude, was measured before empowerment and engagement (i.e., primary dependent variables measured first) and on slightly adjusted nine-point scales that included measures of brand attachment (personally connected, emotionally attached; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “completely”; r = .91; Park et al. 2010); brand attitude (1 = “dislike greatly/very negative,” and 9 = “like greatly/very positive”; r = .85); empowerment, for which the first item went beyond Study 1’s measures, which were specific to perceived empowerment over the donation process, to include the impact on a general sense of empowerment (empowered in general, empowered over the donation process; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “very”; r = .82 indicating highly correlated effects); and engagement (engaged with the brand, motivated to take part in the charitable giving campaign; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “very”; r = .88).

Third, respondents in the no-CM control condition were given only the first of the two empowerment and engagement scale items because this condition included no donation process over which to exert power and no charitable giving campaign in which to participate. To measure both constructs consistently across all conditions, the second items were dropped before the analysis (keeping them did not alter any effects or causal patterns).

Fourth, to test for potential number-of-cause effects in the restricted-choice conditions on decision difficulty, I used Goodman et al.’s (2013) four seven-point scales (e.g., “To what extent did you find the decision difficult?” 1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “extremely”; α = .86). To build on Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran’s (2012) study of CM with restricted choice, I also included their three seven-point scales measuring perceived personal role (e.g., “If you purchase the
printer, to what extent would you feel that you added value to the cause?” 1 = “not at all,” and 7 = “very much”; α = .96).

**Results**

**Preliminary Analyses**

Twelve participants (4.9%) failed an attention check that asked them to select a specific scale item for one of the questions (similar to Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009), leaving a final sample of 231. As in Study 1, controlling for cause involvement and perceived fit did not alter any of the effects. Also, neither the four causes counterbalanced in the CM-without-choice condition (all ps > .90) nor the entry method (i.e., clicking on versus typing the cause of choice) counterbalanced in each of the three CM-with-restricted-choice conditions (all ps > .30) had effects. Thus, I collapsed across each set of counterbalanced conditions.

**Expanding the Choice Set**

In support of H₃ₐ, increasing the number of cause options in the restricted-choice scenario steadily increased decision difficulty across the 4-, 12-, and 48-cause conditions (Ms = 2.12, 2.33, and 2.91; F(2,116) = 3.59, p < .05).⁶ Although it was hoped, for managers’ sakes, that offering numerous cause options would overcome the negative decision difficulty effect by significantly increasing empowerment and in turn strengthening brand relationships, this was not the case. Increasing the number of causes failed to strengthen brand attachment (supporting H₃ᵇ; Ms = 4.69, 4.50, and 4.60; F(2,116) = .10, p > .90) or improve brand attitudes (Ms = 6.68, 6.69, 6.69).

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⁶ The results of planned contrast tests affirm the notion that choice overload does not set in until choices exceed far more than 12 options (Iyengar and Lepper 2000): CM with restricted choice of 12 (vs. 4) cause options (t(116) = .70, p > .40), 48 (vs. 4) cause options (t(116) = 2.58, p = .01), and 48 (vs. 12) cause options (t(116) = 1.90, p = .06).
and 6.74; F(2, 116) = .02, \( p > .90 \). Providing more cause options also failed to significantly increase empowerment, engagement, or perceived personal role (all \( ps > .20 \)). And although decision difficulty rose across the three choice set sizes, it did not impact brand outcomes negatively, because it was not significantly correlated with brand attachment (\( r = .13, p > .10 \)) or brand attitude (\( r = -.08, p > .30 \)). As predicted, increasing cause options failed to produce significant positive effects, and its lone negative effect on decision difficulty produced no negative brand outcomes.\(^7\)

**Main Effects of Type of Cause Choice**

Because the 4-, 12-, and 48-cause restricted-choice conditions produced similar means, I collapsed across them (but keeping them separate did not alter any effects or causal patterns). An ANOVA of the four resulting conditions (no CM, CM without choice, CM with restricted choice, and CM with unrestricted choice) revealed that type of cause choice steadily increased brand attachment (Ms = 2.41, 3.35, 4.60, and 6.18; F(3, 227) = 33.56, \( p < .001 \)), with significant differences between all ascending pairs. Specifically, compared with no CM, CM without choice strengthened brand attachment (t(227) = 2.29, \( p < .05 \)), though to a smaller extent than did CM with restricted choice (t(227) = 6.65, \( p < .001 \)) or CM with unrestricted choice (t(227) = 9.32, \( p < .001 \)). Study 2’s results corroborated those of Study 1: Consumers’ brand attachment increased significantly when they had restricted (vs. no) cause choice (t(227) = 3.72, \( p < .001 \)) and when the restricted cause choice transformed into an unrestricted one (t(227) = 4.82, \( p < .001 \)). Thus,

\(^7\) As expected, generating a cause from memory is not taxing; the decision difficulty was significantly lower in the unrestricted-choice condition (M = 1.60) than in any of the restricted-choice conditions, regardless of choice set size (all \( ps < .05 \)). In addition, when including the unrestricted-choice condition, the positive (negative) correlation of decision difficulty with brand attachment (brand attitude) decreased (increased) further (see Appendix A). Thus, it is not surprising that decision difficulty neither moderated nor mediated the effects of unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice on any of the mediating and outcome variables reported in the following sections.
as in Study 1, unrestricted choice outperformed all other conditions in terms of its favorable effect on brand attachment.

Parallel effects on brand attitude arose (Ms = 5.62, 6.07, 6.70, and 7.74; F(3, 227) = 26.83, $p < .001$), with the exception that the first pair’s difference only approached significance ($t(227) = 1.77, p = .08$). All other effects were statistically significant, such that the findings extended from brand attachment to brand attitude. Compared with CM, brand attachment was significantly strengthened by CM with restricted choice ($t(227) = 5.29, p < .001$) and CM with unrestricted choice ($t(227) = 8.41, p < .001$). As expected, Study 2’s results also replicated those of Study 1 for CM with restricted (vs. without) choice ($t(227) = 3.03, p < .01$) and CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice ($t(227) = 5.06, p < .001$). Table 3 provides an overview of the cell sizes, means, and standard deviations across all the conditions in Study 2.

*Process Evidence*

Relative to the no-CM control condition, CM without choice increased empowerment significantly ($M_{\text{without}} = 3.97$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 3.08$; $t(227) = 2.07, p < .05$) and engagement marginally ($M_{\text{without}} = 3.78$ vs. $M_{\text{control}} = 3.05$; $t(227) = 1.69, p = .09$). This result supports the theorizing that the mere ability to make a charitable contribution through a purchase decision leads to increases in the consumer’s sense of empowerment and level of engagement with the brand. Mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples confirmed that empowerment and engagement serially mediated the effects of CM without choice (vs. no CM) on brand attachment (PE = .35, 95% CI = [.04, .71]) and brand attitude (PE = .24, 95% CI = [.02, .51]).
Table 3. Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cause Choice</th>
<th>Brand Attachment</th>
<th>Brand Attitude</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Perceived Personal Role</th>
<th>Decision Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No CM</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted choice</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 causes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 causes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 causes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted choice</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>6.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The campaign-related empowerment and engagement scale items are not applicable to the no-CM control condition. To make the reporting consistent across conditions, this table lists the results for consumers’ general sense of empowerment and felt engagement with the brand. For consumers’ felt empowerment over the campaign, the means (standard deviations) for no choice; collapsed, 4-cause, 12-cause, and 48-cause restricted choice; and unrestricted choice were the following, respectively: 4.22 (1.94); 5.96 (2.09), 5.87 (2.09), 5.98 (2.02), 6.03 (2.20); and 7.45 (1.27). The combined two-item empowerment scale produced the following means (standard deviations): 4.10 (1.78); 5.55 (1.96), 5.28 (2.02), 5.64 (1.82), 5.74 (2.04); and 7.13 (1.13). For consumers’ motivation to participate in the campaign, the means (standard deviations) were the following, respectively: 4.28 (1.99); 5.87 (2.14), 5.77 (2.39), 5.80 (2.02), 6.05 (2.05); and 7.37 (1.36). The combined two-item engagement scale yielded the following means (standard deviations): 4.03 (1.79); 5.59 (2.00), 5.37 (2.13), 5.65 (1.93), 5.75 (1.96); and 7.14 (1.25). Shaded cells indicate ratings that do not apply to the respective conditions.
For the remaining process analyses, I had to drop the no-CM control condition to include perceived personal role, a measure not applicable to the control group. I first found that, as in Study 1, restricted choice again outperformed no choice on empowerment ($M_{\text{restricted}} = 5.15$; $t(190) = 3.32, p = .001$) and engagement ($M_{\text{restricted}} = 5.31$; $t(190) = 4.40, p < .001$) and that unrestricted choice again outperformed restricted choice on empowerment ($M_{\text{unrestricted}} = 6.82$; $t(190) = 4.79, p < .001$) and engagement ($M_{\text{unrestricted}} = 6.92$; $t(190) = 4.71, p < .001$). Parallel results arose for no, restricted, and unrestricted choice on perceived personal role ($Ms = 3.95, 4.50, and 5.39$; $F(2, 190) = 10.70, p < .001$), with restricted choice outperforming no choice ($t(190) = 2.12, p < .05$) and unrestricted choice outperforming restricted choice ($t(190) = 3.49, p = .001$).

Next, I conducted pairwise bootstrap tests using PROCESS (Hayes 2013). In support of $H_2$, the empowerment-to-engagement pathway mediated the type-of-cause-choice effects on brand attachment (replicating Study 1) and brand attitude, even when I controlled for perceived personal role by adding it as a covariate. In contrast, type of cause choice’s indirect effects on both brand outcomes through perceived personal role were more limited, all of which turned nonsignificant when I controlled for the empowerment-to-engagement pathway by adding engagement (i.e., the distal mediator) as a covariate (adding empowerment only or empowerment and engagement jointly did not alter any of the results). When the empowerment-to-engagement pathway was not controlled for, perceived personal role mediated the type-of-cause-choice effects on brand attitude, whereas the indirect effect of CM with restricted (vs. without) choice on brand attachment through perceived personal role only approached significance. For detailed results of the pairwise causal paths comparing (1) CM without choice (vs. no CM), (2) CM with restricted (vs. without) choice, and (3) CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice, see Table 4.
**Table 4.** Indirect Effects on Brand Attachment and Brand Attitude (Study 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation Path</th>
<th>Controlling for the Other Path⁴⁺⁺</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CM Without Choice (vs. No CM)⁴⁺⁺⁺</strong></td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To brand attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment → engagement</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To brand attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment → engagement</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CM with Restricted (vs. Without) Choice</strong></td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To brand attachment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment → engagement</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Perceived personal role | .37 | [.01, .76] | −.001 | [−.06, .03] ³⁰⁻
| To brand attitude |  |  |
| Empowerment → engagement | .33 | [.14, .59] | .13 | [.02, .27] |
| Perceived personal role | .25 | [.01, .54] | −.04 | [−.16, .03] ³⁰⁻
| **CM with Unrestricted (vs. Restricted) Choice** | PE  | CI   | PE  | CI   |
| To brand attachment |  |  |
| Empowerment → engagement | .66 | [.41, 1.01] | .29 | [.13, .52] |
| Perceived personal role | .60 | [.32, .95] | .001 | [−.02, .03] ³⁰⁻
| To brand attitude |  |  |
| Empowerment → engagement | .46 | [.27, .74] | .16 | [.07, .30] |
| Perceived personal role | .41 | [.22, .67] | .02 | [−.04, .09] ³⁰⁻

⁴⁺⁺Perceived personal role or engagement (i.e., the distal mediator) was added as a covariate, respectively.

⁺⁺⁺Perceived personal role is not applicable to the no-CM control condition.

Notes: All indirect effects are significant using 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CIs except those labeled with superscript m (significant using a 93% CI) or n.s. (nonsignificant using 90% CIs).

**Discussion**

Study 2 replicates Study 1’s results in a different product domain, with other charitable causes, and with a general population sample, thereby adding to the generalizability and robustness of CM-with-choice effects on consumer–brand relationships. Study 2 also confirms
the underlying process, with the effects of increased decision freedom on both brand attachment and brand attitude being mediated by empowerment and resulting engagement. When empowerment and engagement are excluded from the model, perceived personal role mediates the choice effects on brand attitude, thereby replicating Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran’s (2012) finding and extending it to include unrestricted choice. However, the indirect effects on brand attachment through perceived personal role are weaker than those on brand attitude, and restricted choice’s indirect effect through perceived personal role is only marginally significant.

One possible explanation is that, compared with the more evaluative measure of brand attitude, brand attachment is more related to consumers establishing a connection to the brand (Park et al. 2010; see also Cohen and Areni 1991; Mikulincer and Shaver 2007; Pham et al. 2001), one likely to derive more from feelings of empowerment (that result from the brand sharing control) and engagement with the brand than from perceived personal role. Because the latter represents the degree to which consumers think they have helped a cause, it may facilitate establishing a self-cause connection more so than a self-brand connection. Consistent with this explanation is the finding that brand attachment’s bivariate correlations with empowerment (r = .81) and engagement (r = .84) are considerably higher than its correlation with perceived personal role (r = .57). In contrast, for brand attitude, the corresponding correlations are more comparable (rs = .63, .71, and .62, respectively). However, the indirect effects of restricted (vs. no) choice and unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice on both brand outcomes through perceived personal role turn nonsignificant once the model includes empowerment and/or engagement, which confirms the strength of the empowerment-to-engagement pathway as the underlying mechanism.

Furthermore, Study 2 corroborates the prediction that even conventional CM without
choice increases consumer empowerment, though to a lesser degree than CM with choice does. Given that CM is a transaction-based CSR strategy, it appears that consumer empowerment can arise from the purchase decision alone if this decision determines whether a donation will be made (i.e., even when the consumer is not allowed to determine the donation recipient).

Lastly, Study 2 shows that expanding the set of cause options does not suffice to significantly increase empowerment and engagement and, in turn, brand attachment or brand attitude. For practice, the implication is that managers hoping to maximize CM’s impact may have to enlist unrestricted cause choices. For theory, Study 2 provides empirical support for prior conceptual work that suggests that the impact of choice set expansions on empowerment perceptions is “ambiguous at best” (Wathieu et al. 2002, p. 299). Study 2’s results also implicate cause-number scope neglect. Consistent with scope neglect’s steep-then-rapidly-flattening value function (e.g., Hsee and Rottenstreich 2004), it appears that CM’s positive prosocial context (e.g., Andreoni 1990) is enough to (1) quickly achieve asymptotic responses to more and more cause options and (2) foil choice overload effects on brand outcomes, even though increasing the number of cause options makes decisions more difficult.

Study 3a

Study 2 revealed that the number of cause options (i.e., the quantitative dimension of a choice set) does not influence brand outcomes. The qualitative dimension of a choice set is equally important to consider. A central aspect of this dimension is the degree to which the options within a restricted set are distinguishable. Such option differentiability has been found to influence responses, in that consumer satisfaction with positive outcomes is higher when the
choice set is more, as opposed to less, differentiated (Botti and McGill 2006). Study 3a tests the prediction that the option differentiability effect on outcome satisfaction disappears and does not extend to brand attachment when consumer decisions are not self-oriented in nature but rather are prosocial and therefore other-oriented. Accordingly, letting consumers choose the brand’s donation recipient from a set of charities should strengthen consumer–brand relationships, irrespective of the similarity or dissimilarity of the cause options (H₄).

Studies 1 and 2 used different sets of charitable causes. Whereas Study 1 included causes that a pretest identified as moderate in perceived importance and fit (i.e., two cause-related criteria that are particularly likely to influence CM effectiveness; e.g., Grau and Folse 2007; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), Study 2 used causes that a pretest showed were different in their perceived importance and fit. Conclusions, however, are difficult to draw because the two studies did not directly manipulate option differentiability and did not compare the respective effects of more and less differentiated choice sets on consumer responses. Neither study measured outcome satisfaction either. Study 2’s replication of Study 1’s results thus provides only preliminary evidence of the predicted boundary condition for option differentiability in a prosocial context.

Method

Pretests

Two pretests were conducted to help develop the stimuli for Study 3a. In keeping with Botti and McGill’s (2006) manipulation of option differentiability, attributes perceived as more or less diagnostic of the quality of a charity had to be identified first. For that purpose, Pretest 1 asked 33 University of South Florida students (\(M_{\text{age}} = 21 \text{ years}, \text{ range} = 19–32 \text{ years}; 47\%\))
female), who participated in exchange for course credit, to imagine that they would like to make a donation to a charity. Thereafter, they were exposed to the following attributes of a charity: country of origin, geographic scope, number of chapters, number of employees, number of trustees, overhead costs (i.e., administrative, fundraising, and other expenses that do not benefit the cause directly), popularity, and years in operation. Participants then reviewed each attribute separately and indicated how useful each attribute would be if they had to determine the quality of a charity (1 = “not at all useful,” and 9 = “extremely useful”; Botti 2004). Table 5 shows the ranking of the cause attributes. These results led to the selection of four attributes, one of which was perceived as highly diagnostic (overhead costs: M = 8.12) and three of which were perceived as somewhat diagnostic of the quality of a charity (number of chapters: M = 4.97; number of trustees: M = 5.45; and years in operation: M = 5.67).

Table 5. Diagnosticity Ranking of Cause Attributes (Study 3a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause Attribute</th>
<th>Diagnosticity Ratinga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead costs</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic scope</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in operation</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of trustees</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popularity</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of chapters</td>
<td>4.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ªPerceived usefulness of the attribute in selecting a charity to support (i.e., in determining the quality of a charity) measured on a nine-point scale (1 = “not at all useful,” and 9 = “extremely useful”; adapted from Botti 2004).

8 To arrive at these attributes, I consulted Charity Navigator, a large U.S. charity evaluation platform currently featuring over 5,000 causes (see http://www.charitynavigator.org).
On the basis of Pretest 1, I created stimuli to describe a sales promotion campaign by Sarotti, a German chocolate brand unavailable in the United States, which allegedly donated 10% of the sales price of each consumer purchase to one of four charities: Children’s Dreams Charity, Happy Kids Foundation, Joy for Children Association, or Kids’ Wishes Fund. Unlike in previous studies, I used fictitious charities to rule out the possibility that cause familiarity or preexisting cause associations might affect similarity perceptions. To rule out cause category preferences, all four causes also represented the same charitable category.

In Pretest 2, 40 University of South Florida students (M_{age} = 21 years, range = 18–29 years; 30% male), who participated in exchange for course credit, were randomly assigned to one of two advertisements that listed the same four charities but differed in the evaluations of the four cause attributes (overhead costs, number of chapters, number of trustees, and years in operation). In the advertisement representing the high-differentiability condition, only one charity (Children’s Dreams Charity) kept its overhead costs low (7%), whereas the overhead costs for the other three charities were high (between 38% and 44%). Conversely, in the advertisement representing the low-differentiability condition, all charities yielded medium, similar overhead costs (between 13% and 16%). For the less diagnostic attributes, the ratings were in a trade-off, such that each favorable score alternated with a less favorable score. These ratings for the less diagnostic attributes remained consistent across both differentiability conditions (for a similar manipulation in a product-related context, see Botti and McGill 2006).

Participants first selected the charity they would want Sarotti to support if they purchased the chocolate bar; thereafter, they responded to three nine-point scales that measured their decisional responsibility, level of outcome uncertainty, and perceived option similarity. As expected, participants in the high-differentiability (vs. low-differentiability) condition were able
to form a clearer sense of the quality of the charity they chose than of the quality of the other charities (M_{high\ diff.} = 5.25 vs. M_{low\ diff.} = 3.95; F(1, 38) = 7.41, p = .01; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “extremely”; adapted from Botti 2004), were less uncertain about the outcome of their charity choice (M_{high\ diff.} = 4.25 vs. M_{low\ diff.} = 5.80; F(1, 38) = 6.87, p = .01; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “extremely”; adapted from Botti 2004), and perceived the four charity options as less similar (M_{high\ diff.} = 5.00 vs. M_{low\ diff.} = 6.00; F(1, 38) = 4.32, p < .05; 1 = “very dissimilar,” and 9 = “very similar”). As intended, participants were unfamiliar with the Sarotti brand (1 = “not at all familiar,” and 9 = “very familiar”; M = 1.38; t(39) = −21.74, p < .001).

**Main Study**

Study 3a employed a 2 (cause choice: none vs. restricted) × 2 (option differentiability: low vs. high) between-subjects design. A fifth condition external to the factorial gave consumers unrestricted cause choice and did therefore not feature cause options. One hundred seventy-two University of South Florida students (M_{age} = 22 years, range = 18–66 years; 42% female), who participated for course credit, were randomly assigned to one of five chocolate advertisements for the Sarotti brand, which described how it allegedly donated 10% of the sales price of each consumer purchase to charity. The five ads showed a picture of the chocolate, briefly described its taste and a few of its ingredients, and then let the consumer choose any cause from memory (unrestricted choice) or from a featured list of four charitable causes (1) that incurred either comparable (low differentiability) or different (high differentiability) overhead costs (i.e., the diagnostic attribute determined in the two pretests) and (2) from which one cause would be supported for each consumer purchase either by chance (i.e., no choice) or by the consumer (i.e., restricted choice). Study 3a used Pretest 2’s stimuli for the two restricted-choice conditions and
added stimuli for the two no-choice conditions and the unrestricted-choice condition (for all stimuli used in Study 3a, see Appendix D).

Unlike Studies 1 and 2, Study 3a informed participants in the no-choice conditions which cause had been randomly selected and would receive support following the next consumer purchase. This information was important for the measure of outcome satisfaction (level of satisfaction and happiness with the selected cause; 1 = “not at all,” and 9 = “extremely”; \( r = .96 \); adapted from Botti and McGill 2006). Prior to outcome satisfaction, this dissertation’s focal dependent variable, brand attachment \( (r = .83) \), was measured on the same nine-point scale used in Study 2. After outcome satisfaction, Study 3a measured empowerment \( (r = .88) \) and engagement \( (r = .81) \) on the nine-point scales from Study 2, followed by the control variables, cause involvement \( (1 = “not at all important,” and 9 = “very important”) \) and perceived fit \( (1 = “a very bad fit,” and 9 = “a very good fit”) \). Because Study 3a used fictitious charities, it also measured cause familiarity by asking participants in the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions how familiar they were with each charity \( (1 = “not at all familiar,” and 9 = “very familiar”) \). The study concluded with questions that recorded each participant’s age and gender.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Parallel to when participants in the restricted- and unrestricted-choice conditions chose the charity that they wanted Sarotti to support, participants in the two no-choice conditions were informed about the charity that Sarotti would support in case of their chocolate purchase; this charity selection was counterbalanced across each of the two no-choice conditions. As expected, the counterbalanced charity selection in the two no-choice conditions produced no significant
differences in brand attachment (low differentiability: all \( ps \geq .70 \); high differentiability: all \( ps \geq .90 \)) or outcome satisfaction (low differentiability: all \( ps > .70 \); high differentiability: all \( ps > .60 \)). Furthermore, participants in the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions were, as intended, unfamiliar with the four charities; all means of cause familiarity were significantly below the scale midpoint (all \( ps < .001 \)). As in the preceding studies, controlling for cause involvement and perceived fit by including them as covariates altered none of the results.

To ensure that the pretested manipulation of option differentiability through cause attributes was successful in the main study as well, I conducted a chi-square test on the participants’ charity selection in the two restricted-choice conditions. In the low-differentiability condition, 23% of participants chose Children’s Dreams Charity, 23% Happy Kids Foundation, 26% Joy for Children Association, and 29% Kids’ Wishes Fund; that is, participants’ charity preferences did not vary significantly (\( \chi^2(3) = .31, p > .90 \)). In contrast, in the high-differentiability condition, participants’ charity choices varied significantly across the options (\( \chi^2(3) = 8.12, p < .05 \)). Specifically, almost half of the participants (44%) chose the charity with the lowest overhead costs (i.e., Children’s Dreams Charity), whereas 26% selected Happy Kids Foundation, 18% Joy for Children Association, and 12% Kids’ Wishes Fund. The results of this chi-square test confirm that differences in the more diagnostic attribute make the options easier to tease apart, which simplifies the selection of the charity of higher perceived quality.

**Main and Interaction Tests**

A two-way ANOVA testing the effects of cause choice and option differentiability on brand attachment revealed, in support of \( H_4 \), neither an interaction effect of cause choice and option differentiability (\( F(1, 134) = .68, p > .40 \)) nor a main effect of option differentiability (\( F(1, 134) = .04, p > .80 \)) but a main effect of cause choice (\( F(1, 134) = 54.63, p < .001 \); see
Figure 3). The effects on outcome satisfaction revealed the same pattern, with a significant main effect of cause choice \( (F(1, 134) = 22.43, p < .001) \) but no interaction effect of cause choice and option differentiability \( (F(1, 134) = .24, p > .60) \) and no main effect of option differentiability \( (F(1, 134) = .01, p > .90) \).

![Figure 3. Effects of Cause Choice and Option Differentiability on Brand Attachment (Study 3a).](image)

In further support of H₄, contrast tests confirmed that high (vs. low) option differentiability yielded no significant differences in brand attachment or outcome satisfaction—neither between the two no-choice conditions (brand attachment: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 3.24 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 3.47; t(134) = -.72, p > .40 \); outcome satisfaction: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 5.12 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 5.27; t(134) = -.43, p > .60 \)) nor between the two restricted-choice conditions (brand attachment: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 5.15 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 5.00; t(134) = .45, p > .60 \); outcome satisfaction: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 6.46 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 6.36; t(134) = .27, p > .70 \)).
Therefore, I collapsed the two no-choice conditions and the two-restricted choice conditions, resulting in three main conditions: no choice, restricted choice, and unrestricted choice. As in Studies 1 and 2, granting consumers no, restricted, and unrestricted cause choice steadily increased their felt attachment to the brand (Ms = 3.36, 5.07, and 6.03; F(2, 169) = 57.51, p < .001; all pairwise contrasts significant at p < .001). Similar results were observed for outcome satisfaction (Ms = 5.20, 6.41, and 7.84; F(2, 169) = 38.92, p < .001), with significant differences across all ascending pairs (all ps < .001). For cell sizes, means, and standard deviations, see Table 6.

Table 6. Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 3a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cause Choice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brand Attachment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low differentiability</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>High differentiability</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted choice</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low differentiability</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.69</td>
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**Process Evidence**

The effects of providing no, restricted, and unrestricted cause choice on empowerment (Ms = 3.75, 5.70, and 6.82; F(2, 169) = 54.73, p < .001) and engagement (Ms = 3.82, 5.83, and 6.84; F(2, 169) = 65.61, p < .001) were also significant and in the same direction, with significant differences across all ascending pairs (all ps ≤ .001). Another objective of Study 3a was to further substantiate the serial mediation through empowerment and engagement as the
underlying process, while ruling out outcome satisfaction as an alternative explanation of the CM-with-choice effects on brand attachment. The results of mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples replicated those of Studies 1 and 2; the empowerment-to-engagement pathway mediated the effects of CM with restricted (vs. without) choice (PE = .43, 95% CI = [.25, .69]) and of CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = .25, 95% CI = [.10, .48]) on brand attachment. Both mediation paths also remained significant when outcome satisfaction was added as a covariate to the model, in that both 95% CIs continued to exclude zero.

In contrast, mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples revealed that when I controlled for the empowerment-to-engagement pathway by adding engagement (i.e., the distal mediator) as a covariate, outcome satisfaction mediated neither the effect of CM with restricted (vs. without) choice (PE = .01, 90% CI = [–.01, .12]) nor the effect of unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = .03, 90% CI = [–.08, .16]) on brand attachment, even when 90% CIs were used.

Discussion

Study 3a builds on the prior two studies in three main ways. First, it addresses the primary goal of testing the prediction that the option differentiability effect (i.e., greater consumer satisfaction with the decision outcome when the options of a choice set in a positively valenced context are more, as opposed to less, differentiated; Botti and McGill 2006) does not extend from self-oriented, product-related decision making to other-oriented, cause-related decision making. In support of H4, Study 3a shows that consumers feel more attached to a brand that does (vs. does not) let them choose a cause from a set of charities, regardless of whether or
not the charities that make up the choice set perform comparably on a diagnostic or useful attribute. Similarly, consumers who are (vs. are not) allowed to choose the cause are more satisfied with the outcome (i.e., the chosen cause), irrespective of the cause options’ degree of differentiation. By providing initial evidence that can rule out option differentiability as another choice-related factor, this finding adds to the robustness of positive choice-of-cause effects on consumer–brand relationships. Likewise, the finding enriches the growing stream of research that points to the importance of distinguishing between decision making that benefits oneself versus others (e.g., Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, and Frey 2005; Polman and Emich 2011)—differences that are believed to be at least partly driven by consumers’ greater promotion (prevention) focus and greater sensitivity toward positive (negative) possible outcome scenarios in other-oriented (self-oriented) decision making (e.g., Beisswanger et al. 2003; Higgins 1997; Polman 2012).

Second, Study 3a rules out outcome satisfaction (i.e., consumer satisfaction with the supported cause) as another potential alternative explanation for the CM-with-choice effects on consumer–brand relationships. Specifically, Study 3a shows that when the empowerment–engagement pathway is controlled for, outcome satisfaction does not mediate any of the CM-with-choice effects on brand attachment—neither the effect of restricted (vs. no) consumer cause choice nor the effect of unrestricted (vs. restricted) consumer cause choice. In contrast, Study 3a substantiates the empowerment–engagement pathway as the mechanism underlying both effects by showing that the pathway remains significant when outcome satisfaction is controlled for.

Third, Study 3a further increases the generalizability of the reported type-of-cause-choice effects by (1) specifying the donation amount as a percentage of the sales price rather than a fixed dollar amount (see Pracejus, Olsen, and Brown 2003) and (2) using a real yet unknown brand from a different product category (chocolate) that, unlike backpacks and printers used in
Studies 1 and 2, is a low-priced convenience item and primarily hedonic in nature (Khan and Dhar 2010). By replicating the main and mediation effects, Study 3a thus provides additional evidence for the effects’ robustness across specific aspects that can be readily controlled by managers in charge of designing and implementing CM campaigns.

**Study 3b**

Although it is widely considered empirically sound to mimic the original manipulation when seeking to identify a boundary condition of an effect established in prior literature, doing so imposes some limits on the managerial implications of Study 3a. Few brands would risk partnering with charities that do not perform well on important attributes, and those brands that do likely avoid communicating such deficiencies openly. To establish more managerially relevant contributions, Study 3b conceptualizes option differentiability in a manner that is more representative of a real-world charitable context. Specifically, Study 3b manipulates the categories of the cause options. Such cause categories can range from animals and education to environment and health, among others (see http://www.charitynavigator.org). Accordingly, a low-differentiability condition should feature charities from the same category, whereas a high-differentiability condition should include charities from different categories.

**Method**

**Pretest**

A pretest was conducted to confirm the validity of the experimental manipulation. To increase the generalizability of Study 3a’s findings, Study 3b used nonstudent participants by
recruiting 50 U.S. residents from an online consumer panel in exchange for a small monetary compensation ($M_{age} = 35$ years, range = 21–62 years; 64% male). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two advertisements that described the same campaign for the chocolate brand Sarotti as in Study 3a and differed only in the manner in which the charities were presented. The low-differentiability condition featured the same four fictitious charities from Study 3a (Children’s Dreams Charity, Happy Kids Foundation, Joy for Children Association, and Kids’ Wishes Fund), all of which represent the same cause category (health). However, the advertisements did not describe any attributes that would make the charities more distinguishable; instead, one-line slogans briefly introduced each charity. The high-differentiability condition consisted of one of the charities from the low-differentiability condition (Children’s Dreams Charity) and three other fictitious charities that signaled different cause categories: Healthy Nature Foundation (environment), Pet Healing Association (animals), and Student Future Fund (education).

Similar to Pretest 2 for Study 3a, participants were asked to (1) select the charity to which they would want Sarotti to donate if they purchased the chocolate bar and (2) answer the three nine-point scales measuring their decisional responsibility, level of outcome uncertainty, and perceived option similarity. The results confirmed the validity of the experimental manipulation. As expected, respondents in the high-differentiability (vs. low-differentiability) condition were able to form a clearer sense of the purpose of the charity they chose than of the purpose of the other charities ($M_{high\ diff.} = 7.58$ vs. $M_{low\ diff.} = 4.58$; $F(1, 48) = 26.04, p < .001$), were less uncertain about the outcome of their charity choice ($M_{high\ diff.} = 3.00$ vs. $M_{low\ diff.} = 5.13$; $F(1, 48) = 9.85, p < .01$), and found the four charity options less similar ($M_{high\ diff.} = 3.12$ vs. $M_{low\ diff.} = $
8.04; F(1, 48) = 115.73, p < .001). Also, as in Study 3a, a t-test confirmed that the Sarotti chocolate brand was unknown to participants (M = 1.80; t(49) = –12.22, p < .001).

Main Study

The method used for Study 3b’s main study mirrored that of Study 3a’s. That is, Study 3b employed a 2 (cause choice: none vs. restricted) × 2 (option differentiability: low vs. high) between-subjects design with a fifth condition external to the factorial. One hundred ninety-two online panelists (M<sub>age</sub> = 35 years, range = 18–72 years; 40% female), who resided in the United States and received a small monetary incentive for their participation, were randomly assigned to one of five chocolate advertisements for the Sarotti brand, which allegedly donated 10% of the sales price of each consumer purchase. Study 3b manipulated option differentiability through the cause category, as determined in the pretest, used the pretest’s stimuli for the two restricted-choice conditions, and added stimuli for the two no-choice conditions and the unrestricted-choice condition (for all stimuli used in Study 3b, see Appendix E).

As in Study 3a, participants in the choice conditions determined the donation recipient, whereas participants in the no-choice conditions were informed about which cause had been randomly selected. Brand attachment (r = .94), outcome satisfaction (r = .95), empowerment (r = .95), engagement (r = .92), cause involvement, perceived fit, and cause familiarity were measured as in Study 3a. The study concluded with a check of the option differentiability manipulations by using the pretest’s three scales to measure perceived option similarity (no-choice and restricted-choice conditions) as well as decisional responsibility and level of outcome uncertainty (restricted-choice conditions only), followed by demographic items.
Results

Preliminary Analyses

As in Study 3a, the counterbalanced charity selection in the two no-choice conditions yielded no significant differences in brand attachment (low differentiability: all ps > .80; high differentiability: all ps > .90) and outcome satisfaction (low differentiability: all ps > .80; high differentiability: all ps > .70). As intended, the seven fictitious charities were unknown to participants in the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions; all means of cause familiarity were significantly below the scale midpoint (all ps < .001). Controlling for cause involvement and perceived fit by adding them as covariates did not alter any of Study 3b’s results.

The manipulation checks confirmed the validity of the option differentiability manipulation. Participants in the low-differentiability conditions with no cause choice or restricted cause choice (Mwithout = 8.11 vs. Mrestricted = 7.80; t(150) = −.74, p > .40) found the cause options to be more similar (F(3, 150) = 67.09, p < .001) than participants in the respective high-differentiability conditions (Mwithout = 3.87 vs. Mrestricted = 3.68; t(150) = −.45, p > .60). In addition, compared with restricted-choice participants exposed to four causes from the same category (i.e., low option differentiability), restricted-choice participants exposed to four causes from different categories (i.e., high option differentiability) could form a clearer sense of the purpose of the charity they chose than of the purpose of the other charities (Mhigh diff. = 6.97 vs. Mlow diff. = 4.93; F(1, 76) = 20.60, p < .001), and they felt less uncertain about the outcome of their charity choice (Mhigh diff. = 3.21 vs. Mlow diff. = 4.45; F(1, 76) = 5.95, p < .05).
Main and Interaction Tests

Study 3b’s results replicated those of Study 3a. Specifically, a two-way ANOVA with cause choice and option differentiability as the independent variables and brand attachment as the dependent variable indicated, in support of H₄, neither an interaction effect of cause choice and option differentiability (F(1, 151) = .06, p = .80) nor a main effect of option differentiability (F(1, 151) = .003, p > .90) but a main effect of cause choice (F(1, 151) = 6.44, p = .01; see Figure 4). Similarly, a two-way ANOVA with the same independent variables and outcome satisfaction as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of cause choice (F(1, 151) = 14.45, p < .001) but no interaction effect of cause choice and option differentiability (F(1, 151) = 1.39, p > .20) and no main effect of option differentiability (F(1, 151) = .13, p > .70).

In further support of H₄, whether participants were exposed to causes from different categories or from the same category produced no significant differences in brand attachment or outcome satisfaction—neither between the two no-choice conditions (brand attachment: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 4.19 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 4.30; t(151) = –.21, p > .80 \); outcome satisfaction: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 6.06 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 6.47; t(151) = –1.08, p > .20 \)) nor between the two restricted-choice conditions (brand attachment: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 5.20 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 5.13; t(151) = .14, p > .80 \); outcome satisfaction: \( M_{\text{high diff.}} = 7.39 \) vs. \( M_{\text{low diff.}} = 7.18; t(151) = .58, p > .50 \)).
Given these results, I collapsed the two no-choice conditions and the two-restricted choice conditions, which left me with three main conditions: no choice, restricted choice, and unrestricted choice. As in all previous studies, increasing consumer decision freedom steadily strengthened brand attachment across the three conditions (Ms = 4.24, 5.16, and 6.58; F(2, 189) = 15.23, *p* < .001), with significant differences across all pairs (all *ps* ≤ .01). Replicating Study 3a’s findings, the results of Study 3b also revealed the same pattern for outcome satisfaction (Ms = 6.26, 7.28, and 7.99; F(2, 189) = 16.92, *p* < .001; all pairwise contrasts significant at *p* < .01). For cell sizes, means, and standard deviations, refer to Table 7.
Table 7. Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 3b).

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**Process Evidence**

Study 3b’s results also corroborated the findings from all preceding studies regarding the process underlying the CM-with-choice effects. Granting consumers no, restricted, and unrestricted cause choice steadily increased their sense of empowerment (Ms = 3.52, 6.12, and 7.68; F(2, 189) = 67.35, p < .001) and level of engagement (Ms = 4.21, 6.26, and 7.31; F(2, 189) = 34.67, p < .001), with significant differences across all ascending pairs (all ps ≤ .001).

Moreover, serial mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples confirmed that the empowerment-to-engagement pathway mediated the effects of both CM with restricted (vs. without) choice (PE = .99, 95% CI = [.54, 1.59]) and CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = .60, 95% CI = [.30, 1.04]) on brand attachment. As in Study 3a, when I added outcome satisfaction as a covariate, the empowerment-to-engagement pathway continued to mediate both effects, with both 95% CIs continuing to exclude zero.

As Study 3a, Study 3b ruled out outcome satisfaction as an alternative explanation. When engagement (i.e., the distal mediator) was added as a covariate to PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes...
2013; 5,000 bootstrap samples) to control for the empowerment-to-engagement pathway, outcome satisfaction mediated neither the effect of CM with restricted (vs. without) choice (PE = .01, 90% CI = [−.04, .12]) nor the effect of unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = .03, 90% CI = [−.01, .14]) on brand attachment, even when 90% CIs were used.

**Discussion**

Study 3b’s main objective was to address Study 3a’s limitations by manipulating option differentiability in a managerially more relevant manner (i.e., the category of the cause options rather than their attributes) and seeking to replicate the effects from Study 3a. The results of Study 3b add to the robustness of the findings about the boundary condition for option differentiability in prosocial decision making by showing that consumers not only feel more attached to a brand that allows (vs. does not allow) them to choose the donation recipient on its behalf but are also more satisfied with the outcome, regardless of whether the cause options are from the same or different cause categories.

Furthermore, Study 3b confirms the serial multiple mediator model with empowerment and engagement while rejecting the alternative mediation through outcome satisfaction. As in Study 3a, neither the main effects of restricted (vs. no) cause choice and unrestricted (vs. restricted) cause choice nor their respective mediation effects differed according to the similarity or dissimilarity of the cause options. These results further increase the generalizability of the central finding that letting consumers make prosocial decisions on a brand’s behalf increases their sense of empowerment and level of engagement with the brand, which in turn strengthens consumer–brand ties.
Taken together, the results from Studies 3a and 3b have notable and specific theoretical and managerial implications. For theory, these results indicate that Botti and McGill’s (2006) finding that the dissimilarity (similarity) of the choice options in a positively valenced context increases (decreases) consumers’ satisfaction with the decision outcome does not extend to choice scenarios that are prosocial and thus more other-oriented than self-oriented in nature.

Similar to the boundary condition for choice overload documented in Study 2 and recent research (Polman 2012), the boundary condition for option differentiability observed in Studies 3a and 3b suggests that established phenomena from the choice literature might be more beneficiary- and context-dependent than previously assumed. Moreover, they highlight the need for caution before generalizing findings from self-oriented decision making to other-oriented or prosocial decision making.

For practice, the results rule out cause diversity as another choice set criterion (other than choice set size). Managers who are responsible for designing CM campaigns can leverage this information in their efforts to strengthen their consumer–brand relationships. Specifically, Studies 3a and 3b show that consumers feel equally attached to the brand, regardless of whether it allows them to choose among similar or dissimilar charities. They do not appear to credit (blame) the brand for increasing (decreasing) their sense of responsibility for the decision outcome by providing them with more (less) differentiated cause options. Therefore, managers would be well advised to reconsider investing valuable time and resources in forming alliances with especially consistent or particularly diverse sets of charities. To foster consumer–brand relationships, such resources might be better spent on partnering with providers that can facilitate the technical implementation of removing any consumer-choice-of-cause restriction from CM campaigns.
Study 4

In addition to the option differentiability tested in Studies 3a and 3b, another qualitative dimension of a choice set is the choice mode flexibility it provides through its adjustability (Wathieu et al. 2002). Specifically, a key differentiator of a choice scenario is whether it consists of a predetermined set of options (i.e., is restricted) or whether it allows decision makers to generate their own option from memory (i.e., is unrestricted). The preceding studies show that letting consumers choose any cause beneficiary strengthens consumer–brand relationships, through increases in consumer empowerment and engagement, significantly more than does letting them select a cause from a predetermined choice set (Studies 1–3), irrespective of the choice set’s number of options (Study 2) or similarity of options (Studies 3a and 3b). What is yet to be determined, however, is whether exposing consumers to a combination of restricted and unrestricted choices alters how empowered and engaged they feel and, ultimately, their level of attachment to the brand.

For the prosocial context studied in this dissertation, this question is of particular relevance because several charitable giving platforms, such as AmazonSmile, iGive, and Kula, have started testing and implementing different choice-of-cause scenarios. As previously noted, AmazonSmile has adopted CM with combined choice by adding five so-called “spotlight charities” (restricted choice) to a search function that allows consumers to enter in a blank text box any charity’s name as their preferred donation recipient (unrestricted choice). By examining the branding implications of CM with combined choice, Study 4 tests the prediction that, in line with the principle of diminishing marginal utility, the effect of adding restricted choice to unrestricted choice is subadditive, such that CM with combined (vs. without) choice strengthens
brand attachment as much as (more than) CM with unrestricted (restricted) choice does (H5).

**Method**

One hundred thirty-six consumers (M<sub>age</sub> = 35 years, range = 19–75 years; 58% male), residing in the United States and recruited from a U.S. online panel in exchange for a small monetary incentive, were exposed to an online landing page of the British home improvement store Homebase. Unlike the previous studies, which focused on a particular product by a brand, Study 4 tests the potential effects on a store brand that offers a variety of products. After viewing the brand’s landing page, which showed pictures representing different product categories (e.g., decorating, gardening, furniture, homeware; see Appendix F), participants were randomly assigned to one of four charitable giving scenarios. Similar to AmazonSmile, a new page announced that for each purchase consumers made, Homebase would donate 5% of the purchase price to a charitable cause.\(^9\) The announcements differed in the extent to which consumers could choose the brand’s donation recipient: no choice (i.e., the five preselected causes from the restricted- and combined-choice conditions were counterbalanced), restricted choice (i.e., select one of the five causes), unrestricted choice (i.e., choose any cause from memory), and combined choice (i.e., select one of the five causes or choose any cause from memory; the order of the restricted- and unrestricted-choice scenarios was counterbalanced). For the stimuli used in Study 4, see Appendix G.

The results of Studies 3a and 3b, which showed that the option differentiability effect did not extend to prosocial decision making, suggested no need to control for cause differentiability, \(^9\)To enhance external validity, given the significantly higher average customer spending on home improvement products (i.e., $67.26 in 2015 at Lowe’s, a comparable U.S. chain; Statista 2016) as opposed to chocolate products (i.e., average chocolate retail price of $1.30 for a 3.5 oz bar; CBS News 2014), the donation percentage in Study 4 (5%) is significantly lower than that in Studies 3a and 3b (10%).
which increases the external validity of Study 4 by allowing me to use—across all conditions except unrestricted choice—five causes previously featured on AmazonSmile. After being exposed to one of the scenarios, participants in the choice conditions had to choose a cause. Thereafter, all participants (including those in the no-choice condition) responded to the nine-point scales from Studies 2, 3a, and 3b to measure brand attachment ($r = .93$), empowerment ($r = .88$), and engagement ($r = .88$).

Because Study 4 specifically examined the effects of separating or combining different choice-of-cause scenarios on consumer–brand relationships, the study also accounted for consumer perceptions of the value of each of the four CM scenarios (no, restricted, unrestricted, and combined choice) as another possible alternative explanation that has not been ruled out directly yet (i.e., only indirectly through cause involvement). Another nine-point scale thus asked participants how valuable they found Homebase’s charitable giving campaign (1 = “not at all valuable,” and 9 = “extremely valuable”). After measuring cause involvement, perceived fit, and brand familiarity on the nine-point scales from Studies 3a and 3b, the study concluded by asking participants to indicate their age and gender.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As expected, participants did not know the Homebase brand ($M = 1.99; t(135) = −19.39, p < .001$). Furthermore, neither the counterbalanced charities in the no-choice condition (all $p s > .90$) nor the counterbalanced order of the restricted- and unrestricted-choice scenarios in the combined-choice condition ($M_{\text{restricted-unrestricted}} = 6.68$ vs. $M_{\text{unrestricted-restricted}} = 6.53; F(1, 32) = .16, p > .60$) produced significant differences in brand attachment. Thus, I collapsed the pertinent
conditions. Controlling for cause involvement and perceived fit by including them as covariates did not alter any of Study 4’s results.10

Main Effects of Type of Cause Choice

An ANOVA of the four conditions (no choice, restricted choice, unrestricted choice, and combined choice) revealed a main effect of type of cause choice on brand attachment (F(3, 132) = 41.68, p < .001). Specifically, Study 4’s results corroborated the findings from all previous studies. Consumers exposed to a brand that provided a set of cause options from which they could choose felt more attached to the brand than consumers who were not allowed to choose the donation recipient on the brand’s behalf (M_{restricted} = 4.63 vs. M_{without} = 3.40; t(132) = 3.60, p < .001). Unrestricted choice (M_{unrestricted} = 6.56) again outperformed both no choice (t(132) = 9.22, p < .001) and restricted choice (t(132) = 5.62, p < .001). In support of H5, combined choice (M_{combined} = 6.60), which provided consumers with both a predetermined set of options (i.e., restricted choice) and a free-choice option (i.e., unrestricted choice), outperformed both no choice (t(132) = 9.35, p < .001) and restricted choice (t(132) = 5.75, p < .001), yet its effect on brand attachment was comparable to that of the unrestricted-choice condition (t(132) = .13, p = .90; see Figure 5).

10 As in all previous studies, to compare the no-choice and restricted-choice conditions, I averaged the cause involvement and fit ratings of the five causes to create composite measures; to compare the restricted- and unrestricted-choice conditions, I used only the involvement and fit ratings of the participant’s selected cause in restricted choice. To compare the restricted-choice condition to the combined-choice condition added in Study 4, I conducted both analyses separately by (1) averaging the involvement and fit ratings and (2) using the involvement and fit ratings of the participant’s selected cause only. Both analyses led to the same results, so neither variable altered any of the main or mediation effects when added as a covariate to the model.
Process Evidence

Analyses of variance of the four conditions revealed that effects of the type of cause choice effects on the mediating variables, empowerment ($F(3, 132) = 35.74, p < .001$) and engagement ($F(3, 132) = 41.79, p < .001$), mirrored the effects on brand attachment. Consumers who were granted restricted (vs. no) cause choice felt more empowered ($M_{\text{restricted}} = 5.53$ vs. $M_{\text{without}} = 3.76$; $t(132) = 4.78, p < .001$) and engaged ($M_{\text{restricted}} = 6.10$ vs. $M_{\text{without}} = 4.13$; $t(132) = 5.90, p < .001$) but less empowered than those who were given unrestricted choice ($M_{\text{unrestricted}} = 7.04$; $t(132) = −4.09, p < .001$) or combined choice ($M_{\text{combined}} = 7.06$; $t(132) = −4.13, p < .001$), and less engaged as well ($M_{\text{unrestricted}} = 7.28$; $t(132) = −3.53, p = .001$; $M_{\text{combined}} = 7.44$; $t(132) = −4.01, p < .001$). Across those granted combined (vs. unrestricted) choice, the sense of empowerment ($t(132) = .04, p > .90$) and levels of engagement ($t(132) = .49, p > .60$) did not
differ, which likely explains the subadditive effect of combined choice on brand attachment (H$_5$).

To test the proposed serial multiple mediator model with empowerment and engagement, I followed the same procedure as in the four preceding studies. However, Study 4 includes four (rather than three) type-of-cause-choice scenarios. Therefore, I created three (rather than two) dummy variables at a time, made the fourth (rather than third) condition the reference group, and added the two dummy variables that are the nonfocal predictors as covariates to retain all three dummy variables in the model (see Hayes and Preacher 2014). Using PROCESS Model 6 (Hayes 2013) and 5,000 bootstrap samples then revealed that the empowerment-to-engagement pathway mediated not only the effects of CM with restricted (vs. no) choice (PE = .35, 95% CI = [.11, .78]) and of CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = .30, 95% CI = [.11, .60]) on brand attachment, as in the previous studies, but also the effect of CM with combined (vs. restricted) choice on brand attachment (PE = .30, 95% CI = [.10, .60]).

Another objective of Study 4 was to rule out consumer perceptions of the campaign’s value as an alternative explanation. The effects of granting consumers no, restricted, unrestricted, and combined cause choice showed the same pattern for consumers’ campaign value perceptions (Ms = 5.68, 6.68, 7.53, and 7.62; F(3, 132) = 14.97, $p < .001$) as they did for consumers’ brand attachment, sense of empowerment, or levels of engagement, again with significant differences for each ascending pair (all $ps \leq .01$) with the exception of combined (vs. unrestricted) choice ($t(132) = .27, p > .70$). All indirect effects on brand attachment through the empowerment-to-engagement pathway remained significant when perceived campaign value entered the model as a covariate, in that all of the 95% CIs continued to exclude zero.

In contrast, with engagement (i.e., the distal mediator) included in the model to control for the empowerment-to-engagement pathway, perceived campaign value did not mediate any
effects on brand attachment, whether of CM with restricted (vs. no) choice (PE = .001, 90% CI = [−.04, .07]), CM with unrestricted (vs. restricted) choice (PE = −.001, 90% CI = [−.06, .03]), or CM with combined (vs. restricted) choice (PE = −.001, 90% CI = [−.06, .04]), even when 90% CIs were used. Table 8 provides an overview of the cell sizes, means, and standard deviations across the Study 4 conditions.

**Table 8.** Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cause Choice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Brand Attachment M</th>
<th>Brand Attachment SD</th>
<th>Empowerment M</th>
<th>Empowerment SD</th>
<th>Engagement M</th>
<th>Engagement SD</th>
<th>Perceived Campaign Value M</th>
<th>Perceived Campaign Value SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No choice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted choice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted choice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined choice</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted–unrestricted</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted–restricted</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a*Counterbalanced order: restricted choice first, unrestricted choice second.  
*b*Counterbalanced order: unrestricted choice first, restricted choice second.

**Discussion**

Study 4 provides empirical support for the predicted subadditivity of enhancing a free-choice option (i.e., unrestricted choice) with a choice set of predetermined options (i.e., restricted choice) in a prosocial context (H₅). Compared with brands that provide unrestricted (restricted) choice only, brands that provide consumers with both choice scenarios simultaneously make those consumers feel just as (more) attached to them by making them feel just as (more)
empowered and engaged. As such, it appears that unrestricted choice serves as an anchor or focal point, and restricted choice’s utility diminishes accordingly (see Chapman and Johnson 2002; Nowlis and Simonson 1996).

Interestingly, however, post-hoc analyses revealed that the vast majority of participants in the combined-choice condition (85.3%) treated combined choice as restricted choice by selecting one of the five predetermined charities, without taking advantage of the opportunity to choose their favorite cause from memory. Nonetheless, on average, participants still felt significantly more connected to the brand that offered such combined choice than participants did when the brand offered restricted choice only. Thus, it appears that consumers’ mere exposure to a free-choice option—without necessarily deriving any utility from it—suffices to increase their empowerment and engagement perceptions and, in turn, their sense of connection to the brand offering the unrestricted option.

Managerially, this finding informs brands and emerging charitable giving platforms that, from a branding perspective, enhancing a free-choice option with predetermined spotlight charities might generate little added value. Specifically, consumers likely feel just as empowered, engaged, and attached to a brand that provides a free-choice option only, with no preselected spotlight charities, as they do to a brand that combines both scenarios. Yet offering both scenarios is unlikely to hurt consumer–brand relationships, so the question becomes a topic for a cost–benefit analysis any time a manager faces such a decision.

Finally, Study 4 corroborates the findings from the preceding studies by replicating all of the main effects of the type of cause choice on brand attachment and further substantiating the robustness of the empowerment–engagement process underlying the consumer–brand relationship effect of prosocial co-creation. This serial multiple mediator model with
empowerment and engagement is further validated by the evidence that rules out consumer perceptions of the campaign’s value as yet another alternative explanation—in addition to cause involvement (Studies 1–4), perceived fit (Studies 1–4), and outcome satisfaction (Studies 3a and 3b).

Study 5

Study 5 assesses the universality of (1) positive CM-with-choice effects on consumer–brand relationships and (2) the empowerment–engagement theory underlying the prosocial co-creation phenomenon by exploring whether and why sharing control with consumers may not always lead to beneficial brand outcomes. Specifically, Study 5 tests the hypotheses that conventional CM-without-choice campaigns benefit all brands regardless of brand image (H_{6a}), whereas adding consumer cause choice benefits only brands with a neutral or positive image (H_{6b}).

Study 5 enhances the prior studies in three ways. First, it enlists change scenarios and change measures that isolate the effects of donating to a charity from those of allowing consumers to choose the charity. Participants in one condition indicate how much their evaluations change if a given brand introduces a CM-without-choice campaign (hereafter, CM), whereas those in the other condition indicate how much their evaluations change if a given brand that has been planning to introduce a conventional CM-without-choice campaign now decides to let consumers choose any cause they wish (hereafter, choice). Instead of inferring changes from between-group differences (Studies 1–4), Study 5 solicits individual-level change measures. Such individual-level measures disentangle a CM-with-choice campaign’s CM component from
its choice component more directly.

Second, Study 5 seeks to bolster the generalizability of the previous findings by extending the tests from the goods to the service domain (lodging), from unknown to known brands, and from campaign participants to potential campaign nonparticipants. Respondents exposed to CM-with-choice conditions in all preceding studies were asked to make an actual cause choice (similar to Arora and Henderson 2007). Although this procedure was needed to test the respective effects of various choice scenarios and extend external validity to campaign participants, it may inflate choice-of-cause effects on brand outcomes relative to situations in which consumers see a brand’s CM-with-choice campaign but make no choice. To rule out this possibility, Study 5 does not specifically ask respondents to choose a cause (similar to Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran [2012] in most of their studies). Such consumers, who see but may not necessarily participate in the campaign, are an important segment to assess because they may be future customers and, in most cases, they outnumber current customers (Fuchs and Schreier 2011; Schreier, Fuchs, and Dahl 2012). Like most advertising and promotional strategies, CM is often used to create top-of-mind awareness and shape brand perceptions among prospects, thereby increasing the likelihood of future customers including the brand in their consideration sets.

Third, Study 5 seeks to determine if the proposed boundary condition of negative brand image extends from brand attachment and brand attitude to downstream consequences for the brand. Specifically, Study 5 assesses the consumer’s likelihood of staying at the lodging properties tested.
Method

Brands with a negative, neutral, or positive image were selected based on a pretest with 37 University of South Florida students (M\text{age} = 25 years, range = 19–40 years; 57% female) participating for course credit. I measured brand image (Tsiros and Hardesty 2010) by asking participants how positive or negative they perceived 15 different brands to be (−4 = “very negative,” 0 = “neutral,” and +4 = “very positive”). To ensure that any subsequent effects could not be attributed to differences in evaluation strength (Krosnick et al. 1993), I also asked participants how confident they were in each evaluation (1 = “not at all confident,” and 9 = “very confident”). The Motel 6 (M = −2.16), Hampton Inn (M = .22), and Sheraton (M = 1.70) brands were perceived as negative, neutral, and positive, respectively. Follow-up t-tests confirmed that Motel 6 was rated significantly lower than neutral (t(36) = −8.01, p < .001), Hampton Inn was rated neutral (t(36) = .88, p > .30), and Sheraton was rated significantly higher than neutral (t(36) = 7.55, p < .001). Evaluation strength, however, was moderate (M\text{Motel 6} = 6.22, M\text{Hampton Inn} = 6.19, and M\text{Sheraton} = 6.70), not significantly different across brands (all ps > .10), and therefore incapable of accounting for any subsequent effects of brand image.

Study 5 employed a 2 (CM-with-choice component: CM [introducing a CM-without-choice campaign] vs. choice [adding consumer cause choice to a CM-without-choice campaign]) × 3 (brand image: negative vs. neutral vs. positive) between-subjects design. I randomly assigned 208 University of South Florida students (M\text{age} = 22 years, range = 19–59 years; 54% female), who received course credit for their participation, to see the logo of Motel 6, Hampton Inn, or Sheraton. After having seen the logo, participants were randomly exposed to one of two scenarios describing the CM-with-choice component implemented: CM (“Imagine that [brand] launches a charitable giving campaign in which a small percentage of each sale is donated to a...
charity that [brand] has preselected”) or choice (“Imagine that [brand] had been planning a charitable giving campaign in which a small percentage of each sale would be donated to a charity that [brand] preselected. However, [brand] ultimately decided to change the campaign and is now allowing each customer to indicate any charity that they would like to receive the donation”). Thus, to isolate the co-creative choice-of-cause component, the latter scenario described the incremental move from CM without choice to CM with choice.

Individual-level change measures were used across all variables to help separate the two effects. I adapted Park, Eisingerich, and Park’s (2013) brand attachment–aversion measure by asking participants exposed to the CM conditions the following question: “How does [brand]’s charitable giving campaign (in which a donation to a charity is made for each sale) affect how attached or averse you feel to [brand]?” (–4 = “far more averse to [brand],” and +4 = “far more attached to [brand]”). I used the same item to measure the change in brand attachment of participants randomly assigned to the choice conditions but reframed it as follows: “Compared to the original charitable giving plan, how does [brand]’s new campaign plan (in which each customer can choose any charity as the donation recipient) affect how attached or averse you feel to [brand]?”. The other two outcome variables and the two mediators were measured as follows: change in brand attitude (−4 = “dislike [brand] far more,” and +4 = “like [brand] far more”) and change in purchase intention (−4 = “far less likely to stay at [brand],” and +4 = “far more likely to stay at [brand]”), as well as change in empowerment (−4 = “far less empowered,” and +4 = “far more empowered”) and change in engagement (−4 = “far less engaged with [brand],” and +4 = “far more engaged with [brand]”).
Results

Main and Interaction Tests

A two-way ANOVA testing the effects of CM-with-choice component and brand image found a significant interaction for the change in brand attachment (F(2, 202) = 3.02, p = .05; see Figure 6). As hypothesized (H_{6a}), introducing a CM campaign strengthened attachment to all brands significantly (M_{Motel6} = .82; t(33) = 5.76, p < .001; M_{Hampton Inn} = .92; t(35) = 4.18, p < .001; and M_{Sheraton} = 1.03; t(34) = 3.68, p = .001) and comparably (all ps > .70). Adding consumer cause choice to the CM campaign increased attachment to the brands with a neutral image (M_{Hampton Inn} = 1.31; t(34) = 5.36, p < .001) and a positive image (M_{Sheraton} = 1.56; t(33) = 6.41, p < .001) significantly, comparably (p > .70), and even roughly 50% more than introducing a CM campaign did, though these differences were not statistically significant (M_{Hampton Inn} = 1.31 vs. .92; t(69) = 1.21, p > .20; M_{Sheraton} = 1.56 vs. 1.03; t(67) = 1.43, p > .10).

For the brand with a negative image, however, the pattern was reversed. The effect of the brand’s choice-of-cause offer was significantly weaker relative to those of the other two brands (ps < .01) and, as predicted (H_{6b}), not significantly different from zero (M_{Motel6} = .26; t(33) = .93, p > .30). The brand’s choice-component effect was also marginally weaker than its CM-component effect (M_{Motel6} = .26 vs. .82; t(66) = –1.76, p = .08). Thus, on average, adding consumer cause choice to an existing CM campaign strengthened consumer attachment to the brands with a neutral and positive image but not to the brand with a negative image. The interaction between CM-with-choice component and brand image was also significant for changes in brand attitude (F(2, 202) = 5.29, p < .01) and purchase intention (F(2, 202) = 3.18, p < .05), with both measures evidencing similar patterns. For the cell sizes across conditions and the means including significance levels and standard deviations, see Table 9.
Figure 6. Effects of CM-with-Choice Component and Brand Image on Change in Brand Attachment (Study 5).

Notes: CM stands for introducing a conventional CM campaign (in which the brand has chosen the cause). Choice stands for adding unrestricted consumer cause choice to this CM campaign. A change scale (−4 = “far more averse to [brand],” and +4 = “far more attached to [brand]”) was used. All means differ significantly from zero (all ps ≤ .001) except the one labeled with superscript n.s. (p > .30).

Process Evidence

In line with the conceptual framework (Figure 1), a two-way ANOVA testing the effects of CM-with-choice component and brand image revealed a significant interaction for the change in empowerment (F(2, 202) = 5.53, p < .01). Adding consumer cause choice to an existing CM campaign increased empowerment perceptions more than did introducing this campaign when the brand had a neutral or positive image (ps < .001), but not when it had a negative image (p > .90; see Table 9).
Table 9. Cell Sizes, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CM-with-Choice Component</th>
<th>Brand Image</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes in

- **p < .001.
- *p < .01.
- n.s.

Notes: CM stands for introducing a conventional CM campaign (in which the brand has chosen the cause). Choice stands for adding unrestricted consumer cause choice to this CM campaign. All means (on scales that measure changes ranging from -4 to +4) differ significantly from zero except those labeled with superscript m (p = .07) or n.s. (all ps > .10).

Follow-up analyses using PROCESS (Hayes 2013) examined the process underlying all instances in which one CM-with-choice component outperformed the other, contingent on brand image. Adding consumer cause choice to an existing CM campaign (vs. introducing a CM campaign) had a stronger effect not only on brand attachment (for brands with a neutral or positive image) but also on brand attitude and purchase intention (for the neutral brand only; for the positive brand, both components produced equally strong benefits). While these direct effects only approached statistical significance, the indirect effects through the empowerment-to-engagement pathway were significant, with all of the 95% CIs excluding zero.

In contrast, for the brand with a negative image, introducing a CM campaign (vs. adding consumer cause choice to an existing CM campaign) yielded stronger effects on brand attachment (M_CM = .82 vs. M_choice = .26; t(66) = 1.76, p = .08), brand attitude (M_CM = 1.21 vs.
M_{\text{choice}} = .35; t(66) = 3.17, p < .01), and purchase intention (M_{\text{CM}} = .59 vs. M_{\text{choice}} = .03; t(66) = 2.25, p < .05). None of these effects, however, were separately or jointly mediated by consumer empowerment and/or engagement. Compared with the choice component, the CM component produced far stronger brand outcomes but the same consumer empowerment (M_{\text{CM}} = .71 vs. M_{\text{choice}} = .74; t(66) = –.09, p > .90) and only slightly more consumer engagement (M_{\text{CM}} = .50 vs. M_{\text{choice}} = .35; t(66) = .64, p > .50). The CM-component effects on outcomes for the negatively valenced brand therefore cannot be attributed to empowerment and/or engagement. Instead, these results further support my theorizing that the effects of letting consumers co-create prosocial initiatives depend on how consumers feel not only about being in control but also about the brand sharing that control. Additional analyses, discussed next, further explore this important boundary condition.

**Boomerang Effect**

Beyond the group averages lie the individual-level responses that are even more revealing, particularly when reviewing negative responses (< 0) that indicate harmful effects. When the negative brand introduced a CM-without-choice campaign, it commonly improved brand attachment, brand attitude, and purchase intention, while failing to damage brand outcomes, except for one participant whose purchase intention dropped. In contrast, and as expected, when the negative brand allowed consumers to choose the cause in its CM campaign, nearly one quarter of the respondents were even more averse to the brand than before (23.5%), disliked it even more (14.7%), or were even less likely to do business with it (20.6%)—results that reflect a boomerang effect. For comparison, participants exposed to a neutral or positive brand responded almost exclusively favorably to the choice-of-cause offer, with the following
percentages of negative responses: brand attachment (neutral brand: 11.1%; positive brand: 5.9%), brand attitude (0%; 2.9%), and purchase intention (0%; 0%).

Discussion

Study 5 extends the prior studies in three ways: It (1) adds to the robustness and generalizability of the demonstrated CM-with-choice effect on brand outcomes by testing the effect using known brands from the service domain on potential campaign nonparticipants, (2) decomposes the CM-with-choice effect into its constituent dynamics and compares their relative impact, and (3) identifies an important boundary condition in which co-creation within prosocial contexts can backfire. First, Study 5 replicates the beneficial impact of sharing control with consumers in CM to include known service brands with a neutral or positive image. It also extends previous findings for observers of product co-creation campaigns (e.g., Fuchs and Schreier 2011) to observers of prosocial co-creation campaigns. Specifically, Study 5 shows that the benefits of providing an unrestricted cause choice are not limited to consumers who participate in the charitable giving campaign and thus experience choice. Instead, such prosocial co-creation offers positively affect brand attachment, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions even among the larger set of consumers who do not necessarily participate in the campaign.

Second, Study 5 shows that a CM-with-choice campaign’s choice component (i.e., the brand’s decision to let consumers choose any donation recipient) benefits brands with a neutral or positive image as much as (or more than) its CM component does (i.e., the brand’s decision to donate). Study 5’s more direct decompositions of CM-with-choice elements generally replicate previous tests of unfamiliar brands. In Study 2, for instance, moving from CM without choice to CM with unrestricted choice strengthened brand attachment and improved brand attitudes by

78
2.83 and 1.67 scale points, respectively, whereas moving from no CM to CM without choice produced smaller corresponding improvements of .94 and .45 scale points. The underlying empowerment–engagement effect reflects consumer preferences for experiencing control, preferences that in turn increase consumer motivation to participate actively. This strong association between a high state of power and a readiness to act supports previous research findings (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003). It also refutes assumptions recently raised in the popular press about the potential negative consequences of CM with choice (e.g., choice paralysis, choice regret) generally overshadowing its benefits (Haid and Tabvuma 2013). The positive impact of shared consumer cause control further substantiates the value of including consumers in brand-related decisions, as long as the brand can build on an image that is at least neutral and therefore unlikely to threaten consumer preferences for emotional distance.

Third, Study 5 documents potentially detrimental effects of co-creative, relationship-building strategies, thereby extending reactance theory’s boomerang effect (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953) to brand relationships. Whereas co-creation effects are typically positive (e.g., Nishikawa, Schreier, and Ogawa 2013; Schreier, Fuchs, and Dahl 2012), Study 5 finds that exceptions exist when consumers do not want a relationship with the brand. In such cases, co-creation initiatives can perform poorly and even backfire, with negative effects among consumers hoping to keep their distance. The degree of referent power (French and Raven 1959) therefore seems critical for prosocial co-creation strategies to affect brand outcomes favorably. Unpopular brands that ignore negative consumer perceptions before jumping on the co-creation bandwagon risk doing more harm than good to their often already dubious brand reputations.
CHAPTER 4:
GENERAL DISCUSSION

Brands increasingly implement their CSR activities using digital platforms (e.g., crowdfunding, white label) and social media apps—tools that enable them to extend their consumer co-creation initiatives toward the prosocial domain. Six studies exploring the branding implications of this trend toward co-created CSR converge on the conclusion that letting consumers determine a brand’s donation recipient in CM strengthens consumer–brand relationships by enhancing such critical marketing outcomes as brand attachment (Studies 1–5), brand attitude (Studies 2 and 5), and purchase intention (Study 5), especially when consumers can choose any charity. These effects are mediated by an empowerment-to-engagement pathway and are consistent across goods and service categories, fictitious and real brands, campaign participants and nonparticipants, various charitable causes, as well as small and large choice sets of similar and dissimilar causes. However, this dissertation also shows that these effects are not universal. Specifically, it detects an important boundary condition for brands with a negative image, for which co-creating CM campaigns with consumers can backfire. These findings give rise to various implications for theory and practice.
Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

Examining the relationship between CSR and brand attachment reflects growing managerial interest in moving beyond persuasion metrics to study brand relationships (Swaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia 2009). This dissertation not only responds to the need for more research on how to create brand attachment (e.g., MacInnis 2012; Park, MacInnis, and Priester 2009) but also speaks to the development of this construct (Park et al. 2010) and to the limited knowledge about antecedents of strong consumer–brand ties (Yim, Tse, and Chan 2008). Although brand attachment may require time to develop (Baldwin et al. 1996; Park et al. 2010), the findings of this dissertation echo recent research (Dunn and Hoegg 2014) indicating that brand attachment can also arise quickly, even when brands are unknown. This is relevant to (1) newer (e.g., startup) brands, which typically face the daunting challenge of connecting with consumers who are often already attached to other brands, and (2) well-established brands, which increasingly suffer from eroding brand loyalty (e.g., Kapferer 2005) but who might repair it quickly through CM-with-choice campaigns.

This dissertation goes beyond prior research that has (1) found that letting consumers select a cause from a list (i.e., restricted choice) increases purchase likelihood and product choice probabilities (Arora and Henderson 2007; Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012) and (2) pointed to the benefits of giving consumers power (e.g., Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier 2010). The present research shows that combining these two effects can strengthen brand relationships, especially when granting consumers unrestricted cause choices beyond “empowerment-to-select” strategies (Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier 2010). Increasing the number of cause options to as many as 48, however, neither strengthens nor weakens the effects (Study 2), a finding that, in
line with recent research (Polman 2012; Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2009, 2010), indicates that choice overload (Iyengar and Lepper 2000) is less robust and more context-dependent than previously assumed. It also provides empirical evidence for the conceptualization of empowerment being affected less by the number of choice options provided than by the flexibility to define one’s choices (Wathieu et al. 2002). Thus, managers may not need to spend resources on long lists of charities—lists that likely neither help nor hurt.

Choice research in marketing tends to focus on consumers’ purchase-related (i.e., primarily self-oriented) decisions. A central contribution of the present research is to offer one of the first investigations of the marketing implications of different choice scenarios in a prosocial (i.e., primarily other-oriented) context. In so doing, this dissertation addresses the roles of both the quantitative dimension of a choice set (i.e., number of cause options) and the qualitative dimensions, including questions of whether the similarity of cause options within a set (i.e., option differentiability) and the flexibility the brand offers consumers when it comes to selecting a cause (i.e., choice mode flexibility) affect consumer–brand relationships.

With regard to the option differentiability effect (i.e., greater consumer satisfaction with positive outcomes after choosing from dissimilar rather than similar options; Botti and McGill 2006), this dissertation identifies an important boundary condition. The cause options’ degree of similarity does not moderate the effects of restricted (vs. no) consumer cause choice on consumer satisfaction with the chosen cause or on consumer attachment to the brand. This finding enriches the choice literature by providing further empirical support that established phenomena in the self-oriented decision-making literature may differ or even reverse when the decision primarily affects others instead of the self (e.g., Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, and Frey 2005; Polman and Emich 2011). Neither the (different or equal) ratings on a useful attribute, used to
determine the quality of a cause option within a choice set (Study 3a), nor the diversity of the cause categories covered by the set (Study 3b) influences the choice-of-cause effect on consumer–brand relationships; instead, increased control shared by the brand and experienced by the consumer appears to trigger positive brand outcomes. Managers responsible for designing prosocial co-creation campaigns thus could save valuable resources by refraining from developing long lists of causes or from working to create especially compatible or diverse choice sets for consumers.

The findings regarding choice mode flexibility also offer theoretical and managerial implications. For theory, this dissertation provides empirical evidence of the proposed theoretical account. That is, a free-choice option, when combined with a set of predetermined options, can serve as an anchor, focal point, or reference state (see Chapman and Johnson 2002; Kahneman and Tversky 1979), which makes the additional utility of the set of preselected options disappear. This finding extends the principle of diminishing marginal utility to a different context (see Nowlis and Simonson 1996). For practice, what first appeared as a side note turned out to provide a managerially important insight. Study 4 revealed that more than 8 of 10 participants exposed to the combined-choice scenario (i.e., a list of five preselected cause options combined with a free-choice option) selected one of the five predetermined options but felt just as attached to the brand as those who chose a cause from memory, in both the combined-choice condition and the unrestricted-choice-only condition. Giving consumers the mere opportunity to make an unrestricted choice, along with several predetermined options, thus appears to suffice for reaping the benefits attained from an unrestricted-choice-only scenario. As such, the combined-choice scenario seems to offer the best of both worlds: favorable brand outcomes equivalent to those of unrestricted choice but with greater cost efficiency because it is typically less time-consuming
and thus less expensive to donate to a specified list of cause partners than to review and qualify any causes consumers may choose from memory.

By investigating the consequences of increasing consumers’ sense of empowerment, this dissertation contributes to the growing interest in uncovering the impact of perceived power on affective and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Rucker, Galinsky, and Dubois 2012). While Jiang, Zhan, and Rucker (2014) find that consumers primed to experience an elevated sense of power are more likely to switch brands, the present research shows that when the source that enhances consumer empowerment perceptions is the brand itself, the opposite obtains: The consumer–brand ties grow stronger in the process. An exception, however, exists when the power-sharing source is perceived as negative. As Study 5 reveals, the effects’ direction then equals the direction of consumers’ brand switching tendency, as consumers seek to maintain their distance.

This dissertation also enriches the co-creation literature in various ways. A series of six experiments tested co-created social responsibility campaigns and replicated prior findings of positive effects in more traditional co-creation settings (e.g., Schreier, Fuchs, and Dahl 2012). Moreover, just as Fuchs et al. (2013) recently found that luxury fashion brands are more likely to suffer rather than benefit from designs co-created by consumers, Study 5 finds that brands perceived as negative are unlikely to benefit, and may even suffer, from CSR initiatives co-created by consumers. Specifically, for such a brand with a negative image, letting consumers choose the cause in a CM campaign not only failed to improve brand outcomes but, in some instances, even damaged them. This counterintuitive effect contributes to the growing stream of research that examines consumer reactance to marketing tactics such as personalized advertising (Baek and Morimoto 2012; White et al. 2008), online pop-up ads (Edwards, Li, and Lee 2002), and contractual bonding in loyalty programs (Wendlandt and Schrader 2007). This dissertation
adds to these findings by showing that, when initiated by a disliked or disreputable brand, bonding efforts can provoke psychological reactance among consumers and backfire, even if the initiative does not threaten consumer privacy, force information onto consumers, or demand any contractual compliance. Particularly revealing is the fact that reactance to a brand’s co-creation offer arose despite a warm, altruistic context that might be expected to mitigate such a boomerang effect.

By studying the repercussions of negative brand associations, this dissertation answers recent calls to investigate brand attitudes and relationships with negative valence (e.g., Fournier and Alvarez 2013; Park, Eisingerich, and Park 2013). The findings of the present research broadly mirror negativity biases, in which negatives exert more influence than positives (see Ahluwalia 2002), and the general “bad is stronger than good” principle, which suggests that negative impressions are quicker to form and more resistant to disconfirmation than positive ones (see Baumeister et al. 2001). Managerially, a brand with a negative or troubled reputation may be better served by first trying to improve its image through other routes (e.g., CM without choice) before turning to strategies that involve partnering with consumers in shared activities that, for a such brand, risk being more harmful than helpful.

This research also contributes to the CM literature (e.g., Andrews et al. 2014; Müller, Fries, and Gedenk 2014; Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012) and the CSR literature (e.g., Ailawadi et al. 2014; Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001) in three ways. First, it assesses the previously unexplored roles of consumer empowerment and consumer engagement in the CSR realm. It thereby addresses the need to understand the consumer engagement concept better (Marketing Science Institute 2010) and the effects of consumer empowerment on factors other than product demand and in contexts beyond product selection.
(Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier 2010). Second, it reveals another important boundary condition in which CSR initiatives can backfire. Prior research reports that CSR activities can hurt luxury brands, whose self-enhancement concept is perceived as incompatible with CSR’s self-transcendence concept (Torelli, Monga, and Kaikati 2012). This dissertation shows that brands at the opposite end of the luxury spectrum can suffer from CSR activities as well, yet only if the CSR initiative is co-created by consumers and initiated by brands to which consumers prefer not to become closer. Third, with traditional CM-without-choice campaigns becoming common practice across industries (e.g., Edelman 2012), the findings of the present research implicate the benefits of implementing new CM variants with different consumer-choice-of-cause scenarios. This ubiquity of CM without choice may blunt the positive responses, which may have contributed to the finding that for unknown brands and brands with a neutral or positive image, the decision to add consumer cause choice to a CM-without-choice campaign (i.e., let consumers choose the donation recipient) benefited them as much as (or, in some instances, even more than) did the decision to launch a CM-without-choice campaign (i.e., make a donation for each consumer purchase).

**Limitations and Further Research**

As with any work, this dissertation has some limitations that provide opportunities for further research. For example, I explored the branding implications of increasing consumer control quantitatively by testing a maximum of 48 cause options, whereas programs offering hundreds of thousands options (e.g., AmazonSmile, Kula) may find more positive results as their restricted choices begin to approach the decision freedom offered by unrestricted choices. Such
results could improve even further if the provider categorizes the charities, depicts the causes visually, or provides additional charity-related information, all of which may serve as decision aids. Research into the effects of such aids would add valuable insights to the growing literature stream related to how information organization and visual information processing affect consumer decision making (e.g., Johnson et al. 2012; Morales et al. 2005; Townsend and Kahn 2014). It may also shed new light on the extent to which research findings in an assortment or product-choice context translate to the prosocial domain. However, despite the potential benefits of increasing the number of cause options further, such an approach might be difficult to implement; not all brands likely have access to such a plethora of causes, at least in the near term. Even for those brands that do, depending on the simplicity and effectiveness of the cause search engine in combination with the consumer’s technological skills, large repositories of causes may increase consumer aggravation enough to produce negative choice overload effects, despite the positive context.

In keeping with its emphasis on exploring questions whose answers might benefit marketers in general and brand managers in particular, this dissertation has focused on aspects that practitioners can influence directly. The exploration of theoretically and managerially relevant moderators thus focuses on choice (i.e., choice set size, option differentiability, and choice mode flexibility) and on brands that grant such choice (i.e., brand image). Further research might explore consumer-level factors and other brand-level aspects to expand the conceptual co-created social responsibility framework. Individual difference variables that are likely to have relevance in this control- and choice-related domain include a consumer’s locus of control (i.e., the generalized expectancy that life outcomes are contingent on either one’s own actions or external, uncontrollable forces; Lefcourt 1966; Levenson 1981; Rotter 1954, 1966).
maximization tendency (i.e., the strong desire to optimize decision outcomes through increased information seeking and social comparison; Schwartz et al. 2002; Simon 1956), need for power (i.e., the concern with establishing or maintaining control over others to achieve personal or common goals; Cottam et al. 2016; McClelland 1961), and power distance (i.e., the culturally influenced degree to which an unequal distribution of power is accepted and expected; Hofstede 1984, 1994). Equally interesting would be to investigate whether placing consumers in high or low power states, using episodic or role-playing manipulations (see Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee 2003; Jiang, Zhan, and Rucker 2014), accentuates or attenuates the effect of a brand’s co-creation offer on consumers’ empowerment perceptions and downstream consequences. On the brand level, it would also be intriguing to determine whether brands with certain personality attributes (e.g., sincerity, sophistication, ruggedness; Aaker 1997) are particularly well suited to share control with their consumers in prosocial decision making. Worth exploring would also be the extent to which a brand’s perceived intentions or warmth and its ability or competence (Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone 2012) might help further explain the branding implications of co-created social responsibility.

Another opportunity for research is to investigate the process underlying the boundary condition in which the otherwise positive effects of granting consumers control over prosocial decision making disappear or backfire for brands with a negative image. Theory points to a reactance effect (Brehm 1966); consumers wish to keep their distance. However, additional empirical evidence might reveal other consumer motivations or reasons to respond neutrally or negatively to a brand that lets consumers choose the cause in a charitable giving campaign but positively to the same brand when it implements an identical campaign on its own. This continued investigation would shed important light on the dark side of prosocial co-creation.
Moreover, prior research has specifically investigated the impact of products designed by users on the perceptions of nonparticipating or observing consumers who, though not co-creating themselves, often represent the mass of potential customers (Fuchs and Schreier 2011; Schreier, Fuchs, and Dahl 2012). In Studies 1–4, I asked respondents exposed to a CM-with-choice condition to read an ad and then participate in the campaign by selecting or indicating a cause. In Study 5, I asked all respondents to read a CM scenario but did not ask them to choose a cause. Study 5’s results confirmed the beneficial impact of co-created CM campaigns on consumer–brand relationships. Two reasons, however, make definitive conclusions difficult to draw. First, Study 5’s incremental manipulation approach (through the decomposition of CM with choice and the use of change measures) differed from the approach used in the preceding studies. Second, unlike Studies 1–4, Study 5 did not distinguish between different cause-choice scenarios but tested only the CM-with-unrestricted-choice strategy. Directly manipulating campaign participation to examine potential differences between various choice scenarios and their underlying causal processes is therefore another promising avenue for research.

Finally, further research may want to replicate these findings in other contexts in which they may not hold. For example, are the findings regarding CM with choice generalizable to other forms of corporate philanthropy that are not tied to a product purchase or other consumer-generated, revenue-providing transactions? And do the effects hold beyond prosocial domains? Future studies could examine, for example, whether the effects of unrestricted (vs. restricted) choices on empowerment perceptions and brand relationships extend to product or advertising co-creation that is meaningful to consumers and whether other relationship-building strategies are comparably detrimental when initiated by brands with a negative image.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Correlation Matrices for Studies 1–5

**Study 1**

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<td>5. Perceived fit</td>
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Notes: N = 116. All correlations are significant at p < .001.

**Study 2**

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<td>3. Empowerment</td>
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<td>5. Perceived personal role&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>6. Cause involvement&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>7. Perceived fit&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.506</td>
<td>.483</td>
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<td>8. Decision difficulty&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.019&lt;sup&gt;n.s.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>−.186&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.012&lt;sup&gt;n.s.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.046&lt;sup&gt;n.s.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>−.148&lt;sup&gt;m&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>−.188&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>−.101&lt;sup&gt;n.s.&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<sup>a</sup>n = 193. These constructs do not apply to the no-CM control condition (n = 38).

<sup>b</sup>n = 157. This construct applies to neither the no-CM control condition (n = 38) nor the no-choice condition (n = 36).

Notes: N = 231 unless otherwise indicated. All correlations are significant at p < .001 except those labeled with an asterisk (ps < .05) or with superscript m (p = .06) or n.s. (all ps > .20).
### Appendix A: Correlation Matrices for Studies 1–5 (Continued)

#### Study 3a

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<td>2. Outcome satisfaction</td>
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<td>3. Empowerment</td>
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<td>4. Engagement</td>
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<td>.802</td>
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<td>5. Cause involvement</td>
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<td>6. Perceived fit</td>
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<td>.205**</td>
<td>.225**</td>
<td>.303</td>
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Notes: N = 172. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$ except those labeled with two asterisks ($ps < .01$) or one asterisk ($p < .05$).

#### Study 3b

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<td>4. Engagement</td>
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<td>5. Cause involvement</td>
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<td>6. Perceived fit</td>
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Notes: N = 192. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$. 

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Appendix A: Correlation Matrices for Studies 1–5 (Continued)

**Study 4**

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<td>3. Engagement</td>
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<td>4. Perceived campaign value</td>
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<td>5. Cause involvement</td>
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<td>6. Perceived fit</td>
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Notes: N = 136. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

**Study 5**

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<td>3. Change in purchase intention</td>
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<td>4. Change in empowerment</td>
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<td>.573</td>
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Notes: N = 208. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$. 
Appendix B: Stimuli for Study 1

Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and
handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care, we will donate $5 to the
American Forest Foundation for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

Go places with your new backpack and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

Single-Cause CM Without Choice
(American Forest Foundation)

Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and
handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care, we will donate $5 to the
American Museum of Natural History for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

Go places with your new backpack and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

Single-Cause CM Without Choice
(American Museum of Natural History)

Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and
handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care, we will donate $5 to the
American Youth Foundation for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

Go places with your new backpack and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

Single-Cause CM Without Choice
(American Youth Foundation)

Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and
handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care, we will donate $5 to a cause for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

We at RuckSack will decide if this cause will be the American Forest Foundation, the American Museum of Natural History, or the American Youth Foundation.

Go places with your new backpack and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

Three-Cause CM Without Choice
Appendix B: Stimuli for Study 1 (Continued)

**Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!**

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care,
we will donate $5 to a cause of your choice
for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

So, if you decide to buy a RuckSack backpack,
you can select one of the following causes
that you want us to support on your behalf:

- American Forest Foundation
- American Museum of Natural History
- American Youth Foundation

Go places with your new backpack
and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

CM with Restricted Choice

**Buy a Backpack and Support a Cause!**

RuckSack® is proud to introduce its new backpack:
It is ultra-light, water-resistant, and handy with six storage compartments.

And since we at RuckSack care,
we will donate $5 to any cause of your choice
for every RuckSack backpack you buy.

So, if you decide to buy a RuckSack backpack,
you can suggest any cause of your choice that
you wish RuckSack to support on your behalf.

Go places with your new backpack
and support a cause along the way.
Buy RuckSack.

CM with Unrestricted Choice
Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 2

Buy a New Printer and Save Time!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).
Get any job done with your new printer and save time along the way.

No CM (Control Condition)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).
And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5
to the cause below:

Arthritis Foundation: Preventing, controlling, and curing arthritis and related diseases.
Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

CM Without Choice (Arthritis Foundation)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).
And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5
to the cause below:

Clean Water Fund: Developing strong grassroots environmental leadership.
Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

CM Without Choice (Clean Water Fund)
Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 2 (Continued)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5
to the cause below:

Global Heritage Fund: Protecting and preserving heritage sites in developing countries.

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

CM Without Choice (Global Heritage Fund)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5
to the cause below:

National Arts Club: Stimulating, fostering, and promoting public interest in the arts.

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

CM Without Choice (National Arts Club)
Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 2 (Continued)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer: Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen, it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5 to any cause you choose. You may select one of the causes below:

- **Arthritis Foundation**: Preventing, controlling, and curing arthritis and related diseases.
- **Clean Water Fund**: Developing strong grassroots environmental leadership.
- **Global Heritage Fund**: Protecting and preserving heritage sites in developing countries.
- **National Arts Club**: Stimulating, fostering, and promoting public interest in the arts.

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

4-Cause CM with Restricted Choice

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer: Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen, it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5 to any cause you choose. You may select one of the causes below:

- **Arthritis Foundation**: Preventing, controlling, and curing arthritis and related diseases.
- **Beyond Shelter**: Combating chronic poverty, welfare dependency, and homelessness.
- **Clean Water Fund**: Developing strong grassroots environmental leadership.
- **Concert Artists Guild**: Discovering, nurturing, and promoting young musicians.
- **Global Heritage Fund**: Protecting and preserving heritage sites in developing countries.
- **Metropolitan Museum of Art**: Encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts.
- **The Mountain Institute**: Protecting mountain people, places, and cultures in a rapidly changing world.
- **National Arts Club**: Stimulating, fostering, and promoting public interest in the arts.
- **Organic Farming Research Foundation**: Fostering the widespread adoption of organic farming systems.
- **Rheumatology Research Foundation**: Advancing treatment and finding cures.
- **Right to Play**: Using sport and play to educate children and youth from disadvantaged communities.
- **Wilderness Inquiry**: Making adventure travel accessible to everyone.

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

12-Cause CM with Restricted Choice
Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 2 (Continued)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer. Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen, it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5 to any cause you choose. You may select one of the causes below:

- American Bird Conservancy: Conserving native wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas.
- American Documentary: Exploring the potential of independent media in public life.
- Animal Welfare Institute: Alleviating suffering inflicted on animals by humans.
- Arthritis Foundation: Preventing, controlling, and curing arthritis and related diseases.
- Beyond Shelter: Combating chronic poverty, welfare dependency, and homelessness.
- Blue Ocean Institute: Inspiring ocean conservation.
- Carnegie Hall: Presenting extraordinary music and musicians on the three stages of this legendary hall.
- Center for Third World Organizing: Building a social justice movement led by people of color.
- Clean Water Fund: Developing strong grassroots environmental leadership.
- Concert Artists Guild: Discovering, nurturing, and promoting young musicians.
- Diabetes Action Research and Education Foundation: Finding a cure for diabetes.
- Drug Policy Alliance: Advancing policies that reduce the harms of drug misuse and drug prohibition.
- Entertainment Industry Foundation: Raising awareness for health, educational, and social issues.
- Epilepsy Foundation: Helping individuals and families affected by epilepsy.
- Food Allergy Initiative: Finding a cure for life-threatening food allergies.
- Friends of Animals: Working to free animals from cruelty and institutionalized exploitation.
- Global Green USA: Fostering a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future.
- Global Heritage Fund: Protecting and preserving heritage sites in developing countries.
- Independent Media Institute: Strengthening and supporting independent journalism.
- Kidney Cancer Association: Eradicating death and suffering from renal cancers.
- Literacy Partners: Providing free community-based adult and family literacy programs.
- Lung Cancer Alliance: Providing support and advocacy for people living with lung cancer.
- Lupus Research Institute: Letting science lead the way to a cure.
- Metropolitan Museum of Art: Encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts.
- The Mountain Institute: Protecting mountain people, places, and cultures in a rapidly changing world.
- Multiple Sclerosis Foundation: Benefiting people with multiple sclerosis and their families.
- MustCars: Providing a safety net of critical assistance for music people in times of need.
- National Academy Foundation: Preparing young people for college and career success.
- National Arts Club: Stimulating, fostering, and promoting public interest in the arts.
- National Council for the Traditional Arts: Presenting and documenting folk and traditional arts in the U.S.
- National Immigration Law Center: Protecting and promoting the rights of low income immigrants.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation: Protecting and enhancing the places that matter to people.
- The Ocean Foundation: Protecting and restoring oceans around the world.
- Organic Farming Research Foundation: Fostering the widespread adoption of organic farming systems.
- Parkinson’s Disease Foundation: Funding Parkinson’s research, education, and advocacy.
- Patient Advocate Foundation: Solving insurance and healthcare access problems.
- Petfinder.com Foundation: Helping homeless pets.
- Reinforest Alliance: Developing innovative solutions for global conservation.
- Rheumatology Research Foundation: Advancing treatment and finding cures.
- Right to Play: Using sport and play to educate children and youth from disadvantaged communities.
- Thomas Jefferson Foundation: Preserving Monticello and sharing Jefferson’s ideas with the public.
- Trees Forever: Planting and caring for trees and the environment by promoting stewardship.
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund: Preserving the legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- Wilderness Inquiry: Making adventure travel accessible to everyone.

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

48-Cause CM with Restricted Choice
Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 2 (Continued)

Buy a New Printer and Make a Difference!

Brand J is proud to introduce its new all-in-one wireless printer:
Offering a space-saving footprint plus a 3.5" LCD touch screen,
it rapidly produces printouts up to 12 ppm (black) and 8 ppm (color).

And because we at Brand J care, for every printer you buy, we will donate $5
to any cause you choose. You may write-in a cause of your choice below:

Any cause of your choice: _________________________

Get any job done with your new printer and support a cause along the way.

CM with Unrestricted Choice
Appendix D: Stimuli for Study 3a

CM Without Choice, Low Differentiability (Cause Attributes)

<table>
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<th>Charity</th>
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<th>Number of Chapters</th>
<th>Number of Trustees</th>
<th>Years in Operation</th>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Happy Kids Foundation</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy for Children Association</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids' Wishes Fund</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Administrative, fundraising, and other expenses that do not benefit the cause directly.

CM Without Choice, High Differentiability (Cause Attributes)

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Children's Dreams Charity</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>38%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy for Children Association</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40%</td>
<td>38</td>
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*Administrative, fundraising, and other expenses that do not benefit the cause directly.*
Appendix D: Stimuli for Study 3a (Continued)

**CM with Restricted Choice, Low Differentiability (Cause Attributes)**

![Image of a chocolate bar ad]

We at Sarotti® care, so for each Pure Milk chocolate bar you buy, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to one of the following charities of your choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charity</th>
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</table>

*Administrative, fundraising, and other expenses that do not benefit the cause directly.
Appendix D: Stimuli for Study 3a (Continued)

We at Sarotti® care, so for each Pure Milk chocolate bar you buy, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to the charity of your choice.

CM with Unrestricted Choice
Appendix E: Stimuli for Study 3b

CM Without Choice, Low Differentiability (Cause Categories)

We at Sarotti® care, so for each Pure Milk chocolate bar you buy, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to one of the following charities.

- **Children's Dreams Charity**: Fulfilling dreams of suffering kids.
- **Happy Kids Foundation**: Putting smiles on the faces of sick children.
- **Joy for Children Association**: Bringing joy into the lives of ill kids.
- **Kids' Wishes Fund**: Granting wishes to children in serious conditions.

CM Without Choice, High Differentiability (Cause Categories)

We at Sarotti® care, so for each Pure Milk chocolate bar you buy, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to one of the following charities.

- **Children's Dreams Charity**: Fulfilling dreams of suffering kids.
- **Healthy Nature Foundation**: Protecting the world's natural resources.
- **Pet Healing Association**: Alleviating the pain of mistreated pets.
- **Student Future Fund**: Giving low-income students educational options.
Appendix E: Stimuli for Study 3b (Continued)

CM with Restricted Choice, Low Differentiability (Cause Categories)

☐ **Children’s Dreams Charity**: Fulfilling dreams of suffering kids.
☐ **Happy Kids Foundation**: Putting smiles on the faces of sick children.
☐ **Joy for Children Association**: Bringing joy into the lives of ill kids.
☐ **Kids’ Wishes Fund**: Granting wishes to children in serious conditions.

CM with Restricted Choice, High Differentiability (Cause Categories)

☐ **Children’s Dreams Charity**: Fulfilling dreams of suffering kids.
☐ **Healthy Nature Foundation**: Protecting the world’s natural resources.
☐ **Pet Healing Association**: Alleviating the pain of mistreated pets.
☐ **Student Future Fund**: Giving low-income students educational options.
Appendix E: Stimuli for Study 3b (Continued)

We at Sarotti® care, so for each Pure Milk chocolate bar you buy, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to the charity of your choice: ________________

CM with Unrestricted Choice
Appendix F: Landing Page for Study 4
Appendix G: Stimuli for Study 4

CM Without Choice (The Nature Conservancy)

CM Without Choice (American Red Cross)

CM Without Choice (JDRF International)

CM Without Choice (ASPCA)
Appendix G: Stimuli for Study 4 (Continued)

CM Without Choice (Worldreader)

CM with Restricted Choice

CM with Unrestricted Choice
Appendix G: Stimuli for Study 4 (Continued)

### CM with Combined Choice (Restricted–Unrestricted)

#### Choose one of the following charities:

<table>
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<th>Charity Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Nature Conservancy</td>
<td>The Nature Conservancy is a global organization dedicated to conserving the land and waters on which all life depends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JDRF International</td>
<td>JDRF’s mission is to accelerate life-changing breakthroughs to cure, prevent, and treat type 1 diabetes (T1D) and its complications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASPCA</td>
<td>Founded in 1866, the ASPCA’s mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldreader</td>
<td>Worldreader helps children and families become readers using digital technology, so that they can improve their lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Or pick any charity of your choice:

- Select

### CM with Combined Choice (Unrestricted–Restricted)

#### Pick any charity of your choice:

- Select

#### Or choose one of the following charities:

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Select
Appendix H: IRB Approval Letter

July 6, 2016

This letter supersedes the letter dated February 21, 2013

Alexander Kull, MBA
Marketing
4202 East Fowler Avenue, BSN 3403
Tampa, FL 33620-5500

RE: Exempt Certification
IRB#: Pro00011972
Title: Branding Implications of Co-Created Social Responsibility

Study Approval Period: 2/21/2013 to 2/21/2018

Dear Mr. Kull:

On 2/21/2013, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets USF requirements and Federal Exemption criteria as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF IRB policies and procedures. Please note that changes to this protocol may disqualify it from exempt status. Please note that you are responsible for notifying the IRB prior to implementing any changes to the currently approved protocol.

The Institutional Review Board will maintain your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter or for three years after a Final Progress Report is received, whichever is longer. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond five years, you will need to submit a new application at least 60 days prior to the end of your exemption approval period. Should you complete this study prior to the end of the five-year period, you must submit a request to close the study.
Appendix H: IRB Approval Letter (Continued)

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chair
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix I: Copyright Approval Letter

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Jun 12, 2016

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Appendix I: Copyright Approval Letter (Continued)

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Appendix I: Copyright Approval Letter (Continued)

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