The Influence of Consumer Inference About a Company’s Motive on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Evaluation

Taehoon Park

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THE INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER INFERENCE ABOUT A COMPANY’S MOTIVE ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

The author investigates the roles of consumer inferences and consumer suspicion in responses to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities by companies.

Chapter 1 examines how consumers infer a company’s motive for its prosocial activity when the same company is also involved in a socially harmful accident. When a company is involved in both CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and CSI (Corporate Social Irresponsibility), consumers can infer the motive for the CSR campaign from the temporal order of these two events. The author further proposes that this effect will be moderated by perceived invested effort in CSR campaign. Specifically, high effort invested by the firm in the CSR reduces consumers’ focus on the potential ulterior motive of the company, which, in turn, improves consumer reaction to the campaign, but only when the CSR precedes the CSI. Thus, companies invested effort in CSR has differential payoffs depending on CSR-CSI temporal order.

Chapter 2 examines how the language form of CSR communication messages affects consumers inferences about company’s motive for proposal activity. The author predicts that passive form CSR communication messages lead to more favorable company evaluation when consumers have a high suspicion of the company. Based on linguistics literature, the author argues that passive form CSR messages shift the readers' interpretation focus from the agent (company) to the acted-upon agent (CSR campaign), increasing attitude toward the company.
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CHAPTER 1: INSURANCE AGAINST CORPORATE SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY: BATTLING CONSUMER SUSPICION

An increasing number of companies worldwide have been involved in pro-social behaviors called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) - a company’s activities to advance social values (Kang, Germann, and Grewal 2016). The United Nations’ Global Compact Strategic Policy reports that more than 9,100 companies are running pro-social campaigns in more than 160 countries. Fortune 500 companies spend upwards of $15 billion a year on these efforts (Smith 2014). Prior work documents that running a pro-social campaign not only signals to the stakeholders that the firm is fulfilling its social responsibility (McWilliams and Siegel 2001), but also brings indirect benefits to the company. These benefits include more favorable product performance perceptions, higher purchase likelihood, and increased firm market value (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Luo and Bhattacharya 2006; Chernev and Blair 2015). Extant literature has documented several factors that can influence consumers’ reaction to a CSR campaign, such as the level of personal support of a specific social value (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), company-cause fit (Pracejus and Olsen 2004; Rifon et al. 2004; Barone, Norman, and Miyazaki 2007), type of contribution (Hildebrand et al. 2017), and perceived motive of the campaign (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007).

Whereas CSR refers to a firm’s behavior that supports social values, companies are also often engaged in firm-induced incidents that impair social good, such incidents have been referred to as Corporate Social Irresponsibility (CSI) in the marketing
literature. As categorized in the Kinder, Lydenberg, and Domini (KLD) data source (an index that is commonly used in corporate social performance research; Lenz, Wetzel, and Hammerschmidt 2017), companies can be involved in incidents that harm social values related to different domains, such as tax disputes, political accountability, diversity, or human rights controversies. One prominent example of CSI was the massive British Petroleum oil spill into the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, which was detrimental to the ocean environment. In response to CSI incidents, companies often launch a CSR campaign to make up for any wrongdoing, a temporal sequence of events that I will term ‘the response order.’ For instance, British Petroleum announced that they would invest $1 billion in low-carbon energy market in the year following the oil spill. By contrast, a CSI incident that happens after the initiation of a CSR campaign, a temporal sequence of events that this paper will term ‘the insurance order,’ has also been observed (Klein and Dawar 2004).

Recently, a temporal order effect between a CSR campaign and a CSI incident has been identified as a possible factor that affects how consumers react to the CSR campaign. Wagner and colleagues (2009) demonstrate that when a CSR campaign and a CSI incident are highly congruent (e.g., a company runs its CSR campaign of recycling excess product package material and gets involved in a scandal about dumping excess material in local landfill), the mere temporal order of the two events (a CSI incident happening before or after the initiation of a CSR campaign) leads to different consumer attitudes. They argued that a CSR campaign followed by a CSI incident increases consumer suspicion about CSR campaign motive, negatively affecting consumer attitudes towards the CSR campaign and the company initiating it. Based on this finding, some
might argue that the best solution for companies is not to initiate a CSR campaign until a CSI happens. Yet, we do observe companies engaging in CSR campaigns prior to experiencing any CSI incidents (Klein and Dawar 2004). Expanding Wagner et al.’s (2009) finding, this paper demonstrates conditions when a CSR campaign initiated before a CSI incident would not negatively affect consumer attitudes. I argue that when information about a CSR campaign implies a greater amount of invested effort by the firm, consumers report more favorable attitudes toward the company and its campaign due to lower suspicion of ulterior motive of the company. Importantly, this effect of invested effort into a CSR campaign is asymmetrical and only positively affects attitudes in insurance and not in response order.

Finding managerially relevant moderators of the negative effect of having a CSR campaign initiated before a CSI incident is important, as companies rarely have control over the incidence and the timing of CSI accidents, but have more control over how they execute CSR campaigns. Further, many companies initiate CSR campaigns without anticipating any future CSI incidents, and others are running CSR campaigns because they care for the underlying cause, an understanding of how companies can alleviate consumers’ focus on the potential ulterior motive of the company in the insurance order is important. Thus, the current paper not only extends prior work by providing more theoretical insight into why the temporal order effect exists, but also suggests ways for the companies to remedy potential negative effects of having a CSI incident occurring after the company has invested into a CSR campaign. Finally, the finding of this paper that the effect of firm’s invested effort on CSR campaign perceptions is asymmetric
suggests that companies who engage in CSR campaigns after CSI incidents can save substantial resources by not investing additional effort into their CSR campaigns.

**CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**

When a company is involved in both a CSR campaign and a CSI incident, two different temporal orders of events can be at play: the response order and the insurance order. The response order refers to a CSR campaign initiated after a CSI incident to make amends for the former misdoing. Kotchen and Moon (2012) demonstrated a positive relationship between incidence of CSI and CSR: companies with a higher number of CSI incidents tend to be involved in a higher number of CSR campaigns. Even more telling, the same research found that the pattern of increased number of CSR campaigns after CSI incidents becomes more prominent when the company belongs to an industry where CSI incidents prompt major public scrutiny. Similarly, companies with the reputation for social irresponsibility are more likely to donate more money in response to a disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina (Muller and Kräussl 2011).

By contrast, the insurance order refers to any previous CSR campaigns that could attenuate the negative influence of a future CSI incident. The underlying assumption is that a company’s favorable corporate image of fulfilling its social responsibility would protect the firm from future negative events (Godfrey 2005). Engaging in a CSR campaign exerts positive influence on how consumers respond to a negative event that occurs after the CSR campaign (Klein and Dawar 2004; Bolton and Mattila 2015). For instance, Klein and Dawar (2004) found that consumers blame a company less for
product failure (by attributing the cause of the negative event to external factors), when previous CSR campaign of the firm was judged positively. Another paper (Bolton and Mattila 2015) examined the positive effect of the insurance order in service context. Bolton and Mattila (2015) found that people reported higher intentions to revisit a hotel, even after service failure, when the hotel is involved in a CSR campaign. Both papers examined a CSR campaign (i.e., environment preservation) that had low congruence with a CSI incident (i.e., product failure). In this context, the positive effect of the insurance order is based on the halo effect: the positive moral behavior of the company leads consumers to attribute the negative event to other possible causes (Klein and Dawar 2004).

In contrast to the papers described above, Wagner and colleagues (2009) looked at the consumers’ reaction for a highly congruent CSR campaign and a CSI incident. They found that the insurance order led to lower evaluations than the response order, because consumers are more suspicious of the firm’s true motive for the CSR campaign when it precedes a CSI incident. The paper suggests that perceived ulterior motive of the firm plays an important role in the evaluation of the company and its campaign.

Ulterior Motive in Running CSR Campaigns

It is well documented that perceived motive of an agent impacts agent evaluations (Reeder et al. 2002). Reeder and colleagues found that people assess an aggressive behavior differently depending on the perceived motive: the same aggressive behavior is regarded more negatively when the motive is a personal reward than a situational
provocation. Since positive (vs. negative) behaviors are perceived more ambiguously and are seen as less informative in morality judgment (Skowronski and Carlston 1989), people tend to think about possible ulterior motives when they evaluate the agent based on his/her positive behaviors (Fein, Hilton, and Miller 1990; Fein and Hilton 1994; Fein 1996). Considering that CSR campaigns are assessed similarly to how people evaluate a moral behavior (Xie, Bagozzi, and Grønhaug 2015), perceived motive for a CSR campaign should similarly impact consumers’ reactions to it.

When an ulterior motive is highly accessible from a narrative or an action, consumers tend to have more negative attitudes toward the agent. For example, consumers negatively evaluate a salesperson who uses flattering remarks because the sincerity of the seller is in question (Friestad and Wright 1994; Campbell and Kirmani 2000; DeCarlo 2005). This pattern becomes more prominent when the selling motive of the salesperson is easy to infer (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; DeCarlo 2005).

The importance of understanding agent’s motive is also shown in CSR campaign evaluation context: implying that a company has genuine interest in the cause supported by CSR campaign increases evaluation (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Folse, Niedrich, and Grau 2010). When consumers are suspicious about a firm’s CSR campaign true motive (when the campaign seems to be mainly done for the firm’s self-centered benefit rather than social good), the positive effect of a pro-social campaign is attenuated along with the firm’s evaluation (Drumwright 1996; Webb and Mohr 1998; Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000; Pam Scholder Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000; Forehand and Grier 2003; Ellen et al. 2006; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Schwarz 2006; Vlachos et al. 2009). For instance, Forehand and Grier (2003) found that a computer software company is judged
less favorably when it is engaged in a CSR campaign about fighting computer illiteracy (vs. illiteracy) due to the salience of an ulterior motive.

As discussed earlier, prior research found that consumers negatively evaluate a company whose CSR campaign is initiated before a CSI incident (Wagner et al. 2009), because the insurance order elicits a greater level of suspicion of firm’s true motivator of the CSR campaign. Next section explains how my proposed moderator, the firm’s invested effort in its CSR campaign, can alleviate consumers’ focus on ulterior vs. genuine motive, when a CSR campaign precedes a CSI incident.

The Positive Effect of Invested Effort in CSR Campaigns

When a company initiates a CSR campaign after a CSI incident, consumers will likely infer that the company is making amends for the prior wrongdoing. Since company’s motive is easy to infer from the temporal order of the two events, consumers are less likely to question the company’s actions in the response order. On the other hand, in the reverse temporal order, the inferred motive for the company’s action is not so easily discernible. When a CSI incident is congruent with a preceding CSR campaign, consumer might wonder whether the company was running a CSR campaign to prevent the impact of future harmful events.

I propose that the firm’s invested effort in a CSR campaign will reduce consumers’ focus on the firm’s ulterior motive and increase their perceptions of the firm’s genuine interest in the social cause. Perceived effort has been shown to influence moral judgment of an agent (Heider 1958; Bigman and Tamir 2016). The amount of
invested effort exerted toward a target behavior reflects the motivation of the agent and greater perceived effort is more likely to signal the agent’s goal (Dik and Aarts 2007). Relatedly, in the motivation literature, effort signals how much the agent is committed to the goal, which also implies how important the goal is to the agent (Novacek and Lazarus 1990; Oettingen, Pak, and Schnetter 2001).

Consistent with this view, the CSR literature found that the more effort a firm invests in its CSR campaign, the higher is the evaluation of the campaign by the consumers (Pam Scholder Ellen et al. 2000; Ellen et al. 2006). For example, Webb and Mohr (1998) found that people interpret a longer duration of a campaign as a cue for company’s higher motivation. Further, Ellen and colleagues (2000) found that donating products (vs. money), as a part of a CSR campaign, leads to higher company’s evaluations because of perceptions of higher commitment to the cause.

Whereas prior research has looked at the effort effect on CSR campaign evaluation without presence of a CSI incident, this paper examines the effort effect on how consumers evaluate a CSR campaign in relation to a highly congruent CSI incident. Considering two temporal orders of the events (the insurance order and the response order), I suggest that company’s invested effort has different impact on consumer reaction depending on whether a CSR campaign is initiated before or after a CSI incident.

Specifically, I posit that when a company invests greater effort in its CSR campaign, consumers will infer a greater level of genuine interest in the campaign, which will be reflected in lowered focus of ulterior motive for running CSR campaign. Importantly, since the context of this paper deals with two highly congruent events that occur successively (i.e., a CSR campaign and a CSI incident), I expect the positive effect
of invested effort to be asymmetrical for the insurance and response order. Positive effect will only take place in the insurance order, because only in this context is the interpretation of a CSR campaign ambiguous to consumers and devoid of a clearly accessible motive. In this context, consumers might wonder whether the company ran a CSR campaign prior to CSI incident to offset a future accident or because it genuinely cares for the cause and did not anticipate a CSI incident. In other words, they will attempt to evaluate the firm’s motive. In the response order, however, the motive behind the CSR campaign is transparent. Since the CSR campaign was initiated after a CSI incident and the two actions are highly congruent, it is clear the goal was to offset the accident. Therefore, the amount of invested effort should not impact the sincerity of the company’s motive, and, thus, will not positively impact consumers’ evaluations by decreasing consumers’ suspicion of ulterior motive of the company. Thus, I hypothesize the following:

**H1**: When a company is engaged in highly congruent CSR and CSI, the amount of invested effort in the CSR campaign will enhance consumers’ reaction to it only in the insurance (vs. response) order.

**H2**: The amount of invested effort in CSR campaign will decrease consumers’ perceptions of ulterior motive of the firm only in the insurance (vs. response) order.
**H3**: The positive effect of the amount of invested effort on consumers’ reaction to a CSR campaign will be mediated by perceptions of ulterior motive of the firm.

**OVERVIEW OF STUDIES**

The purpose of the first two studies is to show the asymmetric effect of company’s invested effort in its CSR campaign in the insurance versus response order by using different manipulations of the amount of invested effort. Study 1A demonstrates that involving employees in CSR in addition to donating money improves consumers’ evaluation of the firm in the insurance order but not in the response order. Study 1B replicates this effect with a different manipulation of firm’s invested effort: number of activities the firm supports (single activity vs. multiple activities). Study 2 examines the underlying process by directly manipulating salience of ulterior motive of the firm. By varying the amount of money spent contributing to a social cause vs. advertising for the CSR campaign, I demonstrate that salience of ulterior motive drives consumers’ reaction to the company and the CSR campaign in the insurance order. Finally, study 3 tests a managerially relevant boundary condition of the positive effect of firm’s invested effort in the insurance order: when the invested effort is outsourced to the consumers (vs. company executives), effort harms evaluation of the firm and its campaign in the insurance order.
STUDY 1A: THE LEVEL OF FIRM’S INVESTED EFFORT

The purpose of study 1A is to test hypothesis 1 by demonstrating that high level of effort invested in a CSR campaign improves consumers’ reaction in the insurance, but not in the response CSR-CSI order.

Method

The study employed a 2 (temporal order of CSR-CSI: insurance vs. response) by 2 (invested effort in CSR: high vs. low) between-subject design. Undergraduate participants (N = 208) read a description of a company manufacturing cleaning products and were asked to evaluate the company and its CSR campaign in exchange for partial course credit. Half of the participants read that the company initiated a CSR campaign after a CSI incident happened (response order) and the other half read that the CSI incident occurred after the CSR campaign had started (insurance order). The CSI incident was a lubricating oil spill into an adjacent river due to equipment malfunctioning and a careless mistake. The CSR campaign was either donating money to an organization cleaning local rivers (low effort condition) or employees engaging in local river cleaning activity in addition to the donation (high effort condition). The scenario can be found in Appendix A. After reading the scenario, participants reported how successful the campaign will be in general, and specifically in cleaning local rivers, and in improving the firm’s image (all on 1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much scale). These three measures formed an overall assessment of expected CSR campaign success (α = .77). Participants
also judged company’s product performance. Two pictures of a dish were provided: a before-and-after using the company’s dish soap. Participants were asked to report the extent to which the product removes scuff marks on the dish (1 = Does not remove scuff marks at all, 7 = Removes scuff marks very well).

Results

*Expected success of the campaign.* An ANOVA with expected campaign success as dependent variable showed a significant main effect of invested effort level, such that participants in the high (vs. low) effort condition reported higher expected success of the campaign ($M_{\text{high effort}} = 4.85, M_{\text{low effort}} = 4.52; F(1, 204) = 5.06, p = .026$). More importantly, there was a significant interaction between temporal order of the events and level of invested effort ($F(1, 204) = 3.77, p = .053$). For the insurance condition, participants reported a higher expected campaign success as the invested effort was increased ($M_{\text{high effort}} = 5.03, M_{\text{low effort}} = 4.40; F(1, 204) = 8.63, p = .004$), whereas no such difference emerged for those in the response condition ($M_{\text{high effort}} = 4.68, M_{\text{low effort}} = 4.63, \text{NS}$), supporting hypothesis 1.

*Perceived product performance.* An ANOVA with perceived product performance as dependent variable only showed the expected interaction between temporal order of events and level of invested effort in CSR on perceived product performance ($F(1, 204) = 3.96, p = .048$). Participants in the insurance order condition reported a marginally higher perceived performance of the product as the invested effort
by the firm increased ($M_{\text{high effort}} = 6.02, M_{\text{low effort}} = 5.68; F(1, 204) = 3.03, p = .083$). However, no difference emerged for the response order condition ($M_{\text{high effort}} = 5.78, M_{\text{low effort}} = 5.98, \text{NS}$).

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the amount of company’s invested effort in a CSR campaign improves consumers’ reactions to the campaign and the company’s product performance. Importantly, the positive effect of invested effort depends on whether the CSR campaign is initiated before or after a CSI incident. In the insurance order, a CSR campaign with high invested effort leads to a greater product perceived performance and expected success of the campaign, whereas, in the response order, the invested firm’s effort has no positive impact.

Study 1A showed that high-invested effort increases perceived product performance in the insurance order, however the manipulation of high-invested effort (through the employee task force cleaning rivers) might have elicited a positive emotional reaction. Recent research demonstrates when a CSR campaign involves donating service (vs. donating money), consumers evaluated the campaign as more emotional (i.e., the campaign seems more effortful, kind, humane, and helpful; Hildebrand et al. 2017). Based on this finding, some might argue that the positive effect of invested effort might be limited to the in-kind type, such as physical contributions to remedy a CSI incident. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, in study 1B, I limit the manipulation of invested effort to the use of monetary donation.
STUDY 1B: MEASURING FIRM’S INVESTED EFFORT THROUGH THE NUMBER OF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES

The goal of study 1B is to replicate the study 1A finding with a different manipulation of invested effort. As a proxy for the invested effort level, I manipulated the number of CSR activities supported by a company through monetary donation (single vs. multiple activities). It is expected that donating to multiple (vs. single) activities will be perceived as more effortful. A firm’s increased effort in CSR should positively impact the firm’s evaluation, but only in the insurance condition.

Pretest

To test my assumption that supporting multiple activities (vs. single one) in a CSR campaign appears more effortful, a pretest was conducted. Undergraduate students (N = 138) were randomly assigned to a 2 (temporal order of CSR-CSI: insurance vs. response) by 2 (invested effort in CSR: single activity vs. multiple activities) between-subject design in exchange for partial course credit. The scenario was identical to that of study 1A except for the manipulation of the firm’s invested effort. In the high effort condition, the company donates money to three different activities (two incongruent and one congruent causes with the CSI incident), whereas only one activity (which is congruent with the CSI incident) is supported by the company in the low effort condition. The scenario can be found in Appendix A. After reading the scenario, participants
reported the company’s perceived effort amount to implement the CSR campaign (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much), and to what extent they agreed that the target company invested a lot of effort into its CSR campaign (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The average of the two items was used as a composite index for perceived effort (α = .85). Supporting the proposed manipulation, an ANOVA on perceived effort showed a significant main effect of number of CSR activities, such that an engagement in three activities (vs. single activity) was perceived as more effortful ($M_{multiple} = 5.34, M_{single} = 4.79; F(1, 134) = 8.36, p = .004$).

Method

Undergraduate students (N = 219) were randomly assigned to a 2 (temporal order of CSR-CSI: insurance vs. response) by 2 (invested effort in CSR: single activity vs. multiple activities) between-subject design in exchange for partial course credit. As in study 1A, participants answered questions about a company and its CSR campaign after reading a scenario. The identical scenario in the pretest was used. After reading the scenario, participants evaluated the company by rating how competent, effective, and efficient the company is (all on 1 = Not at all, 7 = Very much scale). The three items were averaged to get a composite index of company evaluation (α = .88).
Results

*Company evaluation.* An ANOVA on company evaluation revealed a main effect of temporal order of events, such that participants in the insurance (vs. response) condition reported lower company evaluation ($M_{\text{insurance}} = 4.20, M_{\text{response}} = 4.56; F(1, 215) = 4.83, p = .029$). More importantly, there was a significant temporal order of events by number of activities interaction on company evaluation ($F(1, 215) = 4.23, p = .041$). Consistent with hypothesis 1, in the insurance condition, company evaluation was marginally higher for the CSR campaign with the multiple (vs. single) activities ($M_{\text{multiple}} = 4.43, M_{\text{single}} = 3.99; F(1, 215) = 3.68, p = .056$), while company evaluation did not differ in the response condition ($M_{\text{multiple}} = 4.45, M_{\text{single}} = 4.67; F(1, 215) = .97, \text{NS}$).

Discussion

The results of this study replicated those of study 1A with a different manipulation of invested effort, such that a higher level of invested effort improves consumers’ reaction to the firm. This provides evidence that people assess a company and its pro-social campaigns based on the amount of invested effort only when the company is involved in a CSI incident after initiating a CSR campaign. By replicating the asymmetric effect of invested effort with the number of supported CSR activities via monetary donations, I demonstrate the effect is not limited to in-kind donations.
Some might argue that the results of the current study confound congruency and effort. A recent paper about congruency between CSR and CSI events (Lenz et al. 2017) found that running a CSR campaign would negatively impact firm value when the campaign is highly congruent with a CSI incident. This finding suggests that the current results may be due to the low level of perceived congruency between the campaign and CSI in the high invested effort condition (as a consequence of supporting two other, less relevant, activities) rather than due to the increase in invested effort. However, in the current study, the results did not show a significant difference within the response order condition depending on whether the company supported multiple or single CSR activity. This, together with the pre-test results, leads us to believe that respondents focused on invested effort rather than on the congruency when evaluating the company engaged in CSR.

Although studies 1A and 1B showed that high-invested effort increases company’s evaluation in insurance order, supporting hypothesis 1, the underlying process as proposed by hypothesis 2 and 3 was not tested. Study 2 tests the proposed mechanism with a manipulation of salience of possible ulterior motive of the company.

**STUDY 2: SALIENCE OF COMPANY’S POSSIBLE ULTERIOR MOTIVE**

The goal of study 2 is twofold: first, to replicate the results of study 1A and 1B by manipulating how salient the possibility of ulterior motive of the firm is to consumers when they evaluate CSR based on temporal order, and second, to measure the mediating impact of potential ulterior motive of the firm. The first two studies found that high-
invested effort improves consumers’ reaction to a CSR campaign only in the insurance order. I argue that this asymmetric effect occurs because a firm’s invested effort changes consumers’ focus away from the company’s potential ulterior motive towards more genuine care for the cause, a pathway only likely to occur in the insurance order. If indeed the positive effect of invested effort in the insurance order is driven by reduced focus on company’s potential ulterior motive, the positive effect of invested effort observed in study 1A and 1B should be replicated by directly manipulating focus on ulterior motive, without manipulating invested effort.

Method

Undergraduate participants (N = 268) were randomly assigned to a 2 (temporal order of CSR-CSI: insurance vs. response) by 2 (salience of ulterior motive: high vs. low) between-subject design study in exchange for partial course credit. Same as study 1A and 1B, participants answered questions about a company and its CSR campaign after reading a scenario. In the scenario, a company selling computer software was involved in both a CSI (a public lawsuit due to unlawfully denying employment to a candidate with disabilities) and in a CSR (donating money to a non-profit organization that supports promoting the rights of persons with disabilities). Half of the participants read that the company initiated a CSR campaign after a CSI incident happened (response order) and the other half read that the CSI incident occurred after the CSR campaign had started (insurance order).
Salience of an ulterior motive was manipulated by manipulating how much money the target company spent on contributing to the cause compared to amount of money spent on advertising the CSR campaign. Previous research found that consumers question company’s genuine support for CSR when the firm’s self-centered benefit is made salient, such as spending more money on advertising its campaign rather than actual contribution (Yoon et al. 2006). Adopting this manipulation, in the low salience scenario, the target company contributed $7 million to a non-profit organization while spending one seventh of this amount to advertise the campaign. On the other hand, the reversed amounts were provided for the high salience condition. The scenario can be found in Appendix A. In addition, a table at the end of the scenario shows two industry rankings of the target company. One was a ranking by contribution for social good and the other one was by advertising expenditure. In the low salience condition, the target company was ranked 4th for contributing to social good and 28th for advertising. On the other hand, in the high salience condition, the target company was ranked 28th for contributing to social good and 4th for advertising expenditure.

After reading the scenario, participants evaluated the company on two items (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive; 1 = Very bad, 7 = Very good). The two items were averaged to get a composite index for company evaluation ($\alpha = .93$). Then they reported the firm’s perceived motive for the campaign on three items (1 = Impure, 7 = Pure; 1 = Self-serving, 7 = Society-serving; 1 = Insincere, 7 = Sincere; Folse et al. 2010). These items were averaged to get a composite index of perceived motive ($\alpha = .87$).
Results

Company evaluation. An ANOVA on company evaluation showed a significant main effect of salience of ulterior motive, such that participants in the low (vs. high) salience condition evaluated the company more favorably ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 4.71$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 4.24$; $F(1, 264) = 10.16, p = .002$). More importantly, the temporal order of events by salience of ulterior motive interaction was significant ($F(1, 264) = 3.87, p = .05$). That is, in the insurance condition, participants evaluated the company more favorably in the low (vs. high) salience scenario ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 4.76$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 4.01$; $F(1, 264) = 13.38, p < .001$), whereas no difference was observed in the response condition ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 4.66$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 4.48$; $F(1, 264) = .74, \text{NS}$).

Perceived motive. An ANOVA on perceived motive showed a significant main effect of salience of ulterior motive, such that participants in the low (vs. high) salience condition reported more sincere motive ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 3.79$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 3.27$; $F(1, 264) = 8.53, p = .004$), as well as a main effect of event order, such that the company in the insurance (vs. response) order was judged as more sincere ($M_{\text{insurance}} = 3.71$, $M_{\text{response}} = 3.35$; $F(1, 264) = 3.89, p = .049$). These effects were qualified by a significant interaction between temporal order of events and salience of ulterior motive ($F(1, 264) = 5.31, p = .022$). Supporting hypothesis 2, in the insurance condition, the company appeared as more sincere in the low (vs. high) salience scenario ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 4.17$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 3.24$; $F(1, 264) = 13.76, p < .001$). However, no difference emerged in the response condition ($M_{\text{low salience}} = 3.41$, $M_{\text{high salience}} = 3.30$; $F(1, 264) = .19, \text{NS}$).
Mediation analysis. To examine the underlying process of the interaction between salience of ulterior motive and temporal order of events on company evaluation, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted, where temporal order of events moderated the effect of salience of ulterior motive on perceived motive, which in turn influenced company evaluation (model 7, 5000 bootstraps; Preacher and Hayes 2008). The indirect effect of salience of ulterior motive on company evaluation via perceived motive is significant in the insurance condition (-.504, 95% CI: -.815, -.216), but non-significant in the response condition (-.059, 95% CI -.314, .199, see table 1.1 for regression coefficients).

Discussion

Consistent with my proposed underlying process, the results of this study demonstrate that reducing salience of an ulterior motive for engaging in CSR improved company’s evaluation for the insurance order, while it did not impact consumers’ reaction in the response order. Furthermore, the results of current study provide support for my suggested process via mediation by perceived motive (hypothesis 2 and 3). The findings suggest that in insurance order, reducing salience of an ulterior motive enhances the company’s evaluation by increasing perceived sincere altruistic motive of the firm. In contrast, in the response order, same manipulation does not alter perceptions of sincere motive.
Results also highlight that although, as one would expect, perception of sincere motive is lower in the response (vs. insurance) condition, this does not impact the company’s evaluation negatively. This is because, in the response condition, participants do not question why the company started the CSR campaign: it was in response to the CSI incident. They, therefore, agree that the goal of the CSR campaign was to offset the accident. However, in the insurance condition, there is some uncertainty as to why the company started a CSR campaign: it could be due to an ulterior motive (offset the accident) or due to a genuine care for the CSR cause. Thus, making ulterior motive less salient removes the ambiguity as to why the company started the CSR campaign, increasing perception of sincere motive in pursuing CSR, which in turn increases company’s evaluation.

Note that the null effect of salience manipulation in the response order is rather ironic, since participants did not seem to differentiate between a company that heavily advertised a CSR campaign after a CSI accident, from one that invested the same amount in the CSR campaign itself. This result suggests that a company could redirect some of its CSR budget to increasing brand awareness via heavy advertising of a CSR campaign after a CSI incident, without fearing a negative impact on its brand image.

While the first two studies highlight the importance of increasing the firm’s invested effort in its CSR campaign to enhance consumers’ focus on genuine motive on CSR campaign and away from suspicion of ulterior motive, next I examine whether investing extra effort always leads to the same positive effect. Study 3 explores whether investing effort by rallying consumers and involving them in the campaign (a common practice as evidence by a recent campaign by Lyft, an on-demand transportation
company) can instead increase consumers’ focus on ulterior motive for CSR. By testing this boundary condition, I demonstrate that not all invested efforts in CSR bring the positive effect for campaign in insurance order.

**STUDY 3: INVESTED EFFORT THROUGH CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT**

Study 3 examined whether the type of invested effort impacts perceived motive in the CSR campaign evaluation process. Prior study found that contribution type (in-kind versus donations) of CSR campaign can affect how people react to the campaign (Hildebrand et al. 2017). The current research expands this new line of research by looking at consumer involvement as a part of CSR campaign. While consumer choice has been documented as an effective way to improve consumers’ reaction to a CSR campaign (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran 2012), those studies looked at consumers who participated in the charity choice process and at CSR campaigns in the absence of CSI, whereas I am interested in how other consumers, not participating in CSR on behalf of the company, would interpret consumer involvement in CSR in the light of temporal order of a CSR campaign and a CSI accident.

Studies 1A and 1B demonstrated that as a company’s invested effort in CSR campaign increases, consumers are less likely to focus on ulterior motive of the firm and have more positive evaluations of the campaign. Consumer involvement in the campaign could be perceived as effort outsourcing, decreasing perceived amount of invested effort by the firm. Further, study 2 showed that increased salience of ulterior motive by
highlighting the amount of publicity a company is getting from the campaign (due to advertising spending) has negative effect on firm’s evaluation. Similarly, consumer involvement in the campaign might be perceived as possibly benefiting the company by increasing campaign’s publicity, which in turn would increase suspicion of its ulterior motives of the firm (Yoon et al. 2006). Consequently, the current research proposes that consumer involvement in CSR campaign, in the insurance order, will exacerbate the negative evaluation of the firm due to increased suspicion of the true motive for running CSR campaign.

Method

This study employed a 2 (temporal order of events: insurance vs. response) by 2 (charity choice: consumers vs. executives) between-subject design. Participants (N = 162) from an online panel read a scenario about a company selling hair care products and answered questions in exchange for monetary compensation. As its CSR campaign, the company donates money to a non-profit organization that helps the development of low-carbon energy. The source of invested effort was manipulated by telling participants the company let their consumers (vs. executives) choose the non-profit organization receiving the donation. The scenario can be found in Appendix A. After reading the scenario, participants evaluated the company on two items (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive; 1 = Very bad, 7 = Very good). The two items were averaged to form a composite index of company evaluation (\(\alpha = .97\)). Participants then indicated the firm’s perceived motive for the campaign through three items (1 = Impure, 7 = Pure; 1 = Self-
serving, 7 = Society-serving; 1 = Uninvolved, 7 = Involved). The three items were averaged to form a composite index of perceived motive ($\alpha = .86$).

Results

*Company evaluation.* An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of temporal order of events, such that respondents evaluated the company more favorably in the response (vs. insurance) condition ($M_{\text{insurance}} = 3.30, M_{\text{response}} = 3.73; F(1, 158) = 3.95, p = .049$). More importantly, there was a significant temporal order of events by charity choice interaction on firm evaluation ($F(1, 158) = 6.49, p = .012$). Participants’ evaluations in the insurance condition were marginally less favorable when the donation target was chosen by consumers than executives ($M_{\text{consumer}} = 3.01, M_{\text{executive}} = 3.57; F(1, 158) = 3.27, p = .072$). Unexpectedly, in the response condition, participants evaluated the company marginally more favorably for consumer (vs. executive) involvement ($M_{\text{consumer}} = 4.00, M_{\text{executive}} = 3.45; F(1, 158) = 3.22, p = .075$).

*Perceived motive.* An ANOVA showed a significant interaction between temporal order of events and charity choice ($F(1, 158) = 8.10, p = .005$). In the insurance condition, participants reported that the firm’s motive appeared as marginally less sincere when consumers were involved rather than executives ($M_{\text{consumer}} = 2.80, M_{\text{executive}} = 3.44; F(1, 158) = 3.67, p = .057$). Unexpectedly, participants in the response condition reported that the firm’s motive appeared as more sincere with consumer (vs. executives) involvement ($M_{\text{consumer}} = 3.74, M_{\text{executive}} = 3.05; F(1, 158) = 4.45, p = .036$).
Mediation analysis. A moderated mediation analysis was conducted to see whether perceived motive mediates the interaction between temporal order of events and charity choice on company evaluation. The bootstrap test (model 7, 5000 bootstraps; Preacher and Hayes 2008) showed a significant indirect effect of the interaction through perceived motive: the indirect effect was positive and significant in the insurance condition (.385, 95% CI: .007, .835), but negative and significant for the response condition (-.419, 95% CI -.849, -.022, see table 1.2). That is, in the insurance condition, the consumer (vs. executive) involvement decreases consumers’ attitude toward the company. The unexpected indirect effect in the response condition shows that consumer involvement increases perceived sincere motive of the company, which in turn improves company evaluation.

Discussion

By manipulating the source of invested effort (firm vs. consumers), I demonstrate a boundary condition to consumers’ reaction to a CSR campaign in insurance order. Specifically, the results of this study revealed that invested effort that highlights a self-centered benefit causes negative consumer reaction to the company through lowered perceived sincere motive, consistent with the findings of Study 2.

An interesting unexpected outcome of the study was the finding that consumer involvement in a CSR campaign led to a greater company evaluation and a decrease in perceived ulterior motive in the response order. Note that higher invested effort
manipulated in studies 1A and 1B did not lead to similar outcome. This might be because consumer involvement in the response condition shifts participants’ perception of the company’s effort from a strategic tactic to a moral behavior. In the first three studies, I argue that invested effort into a response CSR campaign does not improve consumers’ reaction because the information about the invested effort is not necessary to infer the firm’s motive. However, consumer involvement in choosing the charity does not seem directly related to undoing the CSI damage, therefore it could be interpreted as a sign of altruistic motive, which improves consumers’ reaction. This interpretation would also be consistent with Robinson et al. (2012) findings.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Although extant literature has documented two possible orders of a CSR campaign and a CSI incident in marketing strategy, very little research has examined how consumers react to a target company and its campaign as a function of the temporal order of the two events.

The four studies examine the impact of a firm’s invested effort on consumers’ evaluation of the company and its campaign. More importantly, I argue that the influence of the firm’s invested effort is asymmetric such that the effort information improves consumers’ reaction, but only when the campaign is initiated before a CSI incident occurs. The first two studies show that the level of invested effort in a CSR campaign improved the company’s evaluation in the insurance (vs. response) order. Furthermore, in study 2, I demonstrate that salience of ulterior motive drives the suggested effect. Finally,
study 3 shows that not every type of effort leads to the same positive effect and that involving consumers effort can also harm the company’s evaluation because it highlights self-centered benefit.

Theoretical implications

The current work broadens the previous understanding of the temporal order effect between a CSR and a CSI. Wagner et al. (2009) demonstrated that people feel a greater level of suspicion, which lowers the firm’s evaluation, when a CSR campaign precedes a CSI. This research extends their finding, and as a result, the CSR literature in multiple ways. First, the current research highlights the importance of the firm’s invested effort in the CSR campaign and its positive effect on how consumers evaluate the company and its CSR campaign. Extending previous findings about the positive effect of a firm’s invested effort on CSR evaluation (Ellen et al. 2000; Ellen et al. 2006), this research also demonstrates that a high level of invested effort reduces consumer suspicion of the firm’s ulterior motive. Finally, the findings of the current research provides evidence that the source of invested effort matters in CSR campaign evaluation.

Few papers explored the timing effect of CSR campaign initiation relative to an ongoing social issue (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Groza, Pronschinske, and Walker 2011). These papers found that a proactive CSR campaign, which is initiated regardless of any social issue, is favored over a reactive CSR campaign, which is started as a response to a social issue (e.g., homelessness, vehicle safety, and missing children) by arguing greater consumers’ skepticism for the firm’s motive in a reactive (vs.
proactive) CSR campaign. While this paper’s context the CSI incident is a direct consequence of the firm’s action rather than unrelated social issue, it is possible that similar positive effect of effort would also be observed in the contexts examined in Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) and Groza et al. (2011) papers. In other words, greater effort in a CSR campaign can mitigate the negative reaction to a campaign initiated in response to a social issue.

Managerial implications

This paper clarifies an important question for companies: when do they benefit from investing more effort into their CSR campaigns? Investing additional effort in the CSR campaign will pay off when the CSR campaign is initiated before rather than after a CSI incident. In this case, companies can effectively develop a CSR campaign as an insurance against future incidents. This is because investing additional effort in the campaign will reduce consumers’ suspicion of the firm’s ulterior motive, and thus increase the firm’s evaluation. Given that socially harmful events cannot be fully controlled by companies, this research reveals that signaling the invested effort in a CSR campaign is influential for those who initiated their campaigns without external cause.

Interestingly, the results of this research also suggest that increasing firm’s effort may not be effective, and thus might be a waste of resources for the CSR campaigns that are initiated after a CSI incident. When a company runs a CSR campaign after a CSI incident, the invested effort by the firm will not imply sincere motive anymore.
Therefore, this research brings forth an important issue for marketing managers to consider: How to respond to a CSI accident in the most effective way.

Finally, although consumer involvement can improve consumers’ intention to support a company’s CSR campaign, the results of this research show that this strategy can backfire. When a CSI incident follows a CSR campaign, involving consumers in the campaign increases people’s suspicious of the firm’s ulterior motive.

Limitations and future research

This paper sheds some light on how companies should communicate to consumers about CSR efforts. Wagner and colleagues (2009) suggested that providing an abstract description of a target CSR can reduce consumers’ suspicion. That is, when the CSR information is described in an abstract (vs. concrete) way, consumers feel less suspicious when a negative congruent event happens. However, based on this paper’s findings, a more detailed communication about the firm’s effort will reduce suspicion of the firm’s ulterior motive in the insurance order. I argue that the results from Wagner et al. (2009) are due to a specific context where a CSI incident directly implies that the target company broke their own promise. For example, one of the stimuli Wagner and colleagues used was about a target company disclosing dumping excessive packaging materials after they communicated that they would recycle them. In contrast, CSI events in this paper related to accidents (e.g. oil spilling into a river), which are less intentional but still congruent with the target CSR campaign. The two papers together, thus, provide a more nuanced view of the way companies should communicate with their customers.
about CSR campaigns. Future research can examine other possible ways to increase focus on company’s sincere motive when describing CSR campaign to the consumers.

Recent research showed that consumers’ reaction toward a CSR campaign for disaster relief is a function of both the source of disaster and the firm’s contribution type (Hildebrand et al. 2017). The paper showed that when a disaster seems more controllable (i.e. caused by a human agent rather than nature), consumers favor monetary contributions more than in-kind contributions of the same amount, such as the procurement of food and medicines, because the contribution type (i.e., monetary contribution) is congruent with the disaster information in the sense that both events are less emotional. In terms of event controllability, all CSI events I used in this paper were controllable. Future research could examine the role of CSI controllability as a moderator of a firm’s invested effort. Specifically, when a CSI is uncontrollable (i.e. when the company could not have been prevented it), the positive impact of the firm’s invested effort in the insurance order might be attenuated.

Conclusion

When a CSR campaign is followed by a CSI incident, consumers can infer the company’s motive for its campaign from the amount of effort it has invested in it. For companies whose CSR campaign is initiated before a CSI incident, communicating invested effort into its campaign will improve consumers’ reaction by reducing suspicion of an ulterior motive and increasing the salience of genuine motive. However, when the
campaign is initiated after the CSI incident and the motivation behind the campaign is clear, the company’s invested effort does not positively affect firm evaluation.
### Table 1.1 Conditional indirect effects of salience of ulterior motive – Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulterior motive</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
<td>-3.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>-2.82**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulterior motive x Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.31**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Model 2**          |                    |                  |                    |
| Ulterior motive      | B                  | -0.19            | -1.66*             |
| Perceived motive     |                    | 0.54             | 14.32***           |

Conditional indirect effects of suspicion level on company evaluation at different levels of temporal order of events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>Insurance order</td>
<td>-0.504</td>
<td>(-0.815, -0.216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>Response order</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>(-0.314, 0.199)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Regression coefficients unstandardized, Number of bootstrap resamples = 5000.

* $p \leq .1$ significance

** $p \leq .05$ significance

*** $p \leq .01$ significance
Table 1.2 Conditional indirect effects of charity choice – Study 3

<p>| IV: Charity choice; DV: Company evaluation; Mediator: Perceived motive; Moderator: Order of CSR-CSI |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity choice</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>3.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity choice x Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>-2.85***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity choice</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>10.70***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conditional indirect effects of suspicion level on company evaluation at different levels of temporal order of events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>Insurance order</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>(.007, .835)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>Response order</td>
<td>-0.419</td>
<td>(-.849, -.022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Regression coefficients unstandardized, Number of bootstrap resamples = 5000.

* $p \leq .1$ significance

** $p \leq .05$ significance

*** $p \leq .01$ significance
Table 1.3 Summary of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1A</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Perceived product performance</th>
<th>Expected success of the campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6.02&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.68&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>5.78&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.98&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1B</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>Number of charities</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>4.43&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>4.45&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4.67&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>Salience of ulterior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.76&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4.66&lt;sup&gt;ab&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.48&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 3</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of CSR-CSI</td>
<td>Charity decision</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>3.57&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>3.45&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means not sharing a superscript in the same column are significantly different from each other ($p < .1$).
Figure 1.1 Moderated Mediation Model – Study 2
CHAPTER 2: HOW PASSIVE FORM MESSAGES IN A CSR ADVERTISEMENT IMPROVE CONSUMER REACTION TO THE CAMPAIGN

In 2010, a prominent breast cancer advocacy group Susan G. Komen for the Cure has initiated a fund-raising collaboration with KFC, an American fast food restaurant chain specializing in fried chicken. The promotion was to donate $0.50 to the charity per every pink bucket of chicken sold at KFC. Following are the phrases from one of the advertisements for the campaign:

“Save at KFC – help fight breast cancer”

“For every pink bucket, your KFC donates 50 cents to Susan G. Komen for the cures”

Although the endeavor was expected to increase funding for the cure with the increased public attention to the disease, the campaign instead created worries and suspicions about the campaign itself. An executive officer from another relevant organization blamed the campaign by pointing out that it is hypocritical to raise money for women’s health by selling a product that is bad for their health (Hutchison 2010). The example of KFC’s pink bucket promotion implies that not every pro-social campaign guarantees positive public attention to the agents.

Then, how can companies manage an efficient pro-social campaign? One thing is to choose an activity that fits with the company from the beginning. Prior literature has
documented that a pro-social activity can be more successful when the company has a good fit with a cause (Pracejus and Olsen 2004; Rifon et al. 2004; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Another way to manage a campaign well is to effectively communicate the campaign messages with the public. The communication style of CSR campaigns has not been studied as well as the company-cause fit. Going back to the slogans of the KFC above, would it cause less blames and suspicion if the company wrote the messages differently?

The current research investigates that the phrase form of campaign messages influences how consumers react to the company. Specifically, I argue that, compared to an active form message, a passive form message in a pro-social campaign advertisement will lead to a more favorable company evaluation by consumers with high suspicion.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Corporate social responsibility and consumer evaluation

According to the United Nations Global Compact, a United Nations pact to encourage businesses worldwide to support socially responsible policies, more than 13,000 companies over 170 countries are engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaigns. Prior literature on CSR documents that initiating a pro-social campaign provides indirect benefits to the companies (Brown and Dacin 1997; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Chernev and Blair 2015). For example, Brown and Dacin (1997) show that running a CSR campaign improves
consumers’ evaluation of the company as well as its product. In later research, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) document the moderating effect of the CSR domain such that the positive effect of CSR on a company evaluation becomes more salient when consumers can infer more of a company’s ability from the domain. Such as, the authors find that the positive effect of CSR becomes stronger when a company is involved in a domain relevant to the company’s ability rather than a domain that is less relevant.

A seemingly inconsistent pattern was revealed from other research (Ellen et al. 2000). Based on attribution theory, which explains how people make causal inferences about behaviors of others (Folkes 1984), Ellen and her colleagues (2000) find that a company’s charitable offer is evaluated more favorably when the donated items are incongruent with the company’s core business. Although their study did not empirically test the mechanism, the authors argue that a company’s incongruent offer with its core business may seem more intrinsically motivated.

Later research of the same authors extends their previous finding that consumers attribute a CSR campaign to the company’s motive (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006). Consumers infer a more sincere motive of a company when its core business fits well with the charity’s mission, which in turn, increases purchase intention. Similarly, there are other studies that document the importance of perceived motive in different contexts (Forehand and Grier 2003; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Schwarz 2006). Focusing on companies with a negative reputation, Yoon et al. (2006) find that consumers perceive a less sincere motive from a company when its CSR campaign saliently implies self-benefit to the firm. Similarly, Forehand and Grier (2003), show that company evaluation becomes less favorable when the the CSR campaign implies firm-serving benefits, while
the company publicly states a purely public-serving motive. Both pieces documented situational skepticism, which is a transitory state of distrust due to inconsistent information (Forehand and Grier 2003).

This situational skepticism applies to the pink bucket example of KFC above. Since the company’s core product (i.e., fried chicken) is known to harm health and increase the chance of getting cancer, supporting a charity to fight against cancer by selling those products reads inconsistently. In order to overcome this downside of CSR evaluation, it is important to prevent consumer suspicion of an ulterior motive of the company for its campaign. Literature documents how a perceived motive of a company impacts consumer reaction to the campaign (Bolton and Mattila 2015; Chernev and Blair 2015). For example, Bolton and Mattila (2015) find that a priori CSR campaign brings greater consumer loyalty after consumers experience service failure at the store, but only when the CSR campaign is perceived as sincere. Another research study shows that the moral halo effect from a CSR campaign, which increases perceived product performance of the company, is attenuated when consumers feel that the campaign is based on a self-centered motive (Chernev and Blair 2015). The suspicion of an ulterior motive of a company changes how consumers react to the company and its CSR campaign.

Consumer suspicion of an ulterior motive in a CSR campaign

Suspicion has been documented in social psychology to influence how people draw social inferences about others based on the target’s behaviors (Fein and Hilton 1994; Fein 1996). For example, Fein (1996) documents that suspicion elicits attributional
mindset to the perceivers and makes them hesitate to take the face value of the given information.

Similarly, the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) in marketing literature explains how consumers cope with a marketing agent’s persuasion attempt (Friestad and Wright 1994, 1995). When consumers confront a persuasion attempt, their responses to the agent are a function of various contextual factors such as the consumers’ own goals, possible response tactics, and situational information.

The most typical situation where consumers use persuasion knowledge is interacting with a salesperson. When consumers hear flattering remarks from a clerk at a clothing store while they are trying new clothes, they use a loose set of beliefs about persuasion to understand whether the salesperson meant it or used the flattering remarks to increase sales (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). Focusing on a personal selling context, Campbell and Kirmani (2000) show that consumers use their persuasion knowledge to infer the salesperson’s motive and that impacts how consumers evaluate the salesperson. Specifically, the authors argue that persuasion knowledge brings suspicion of the underlying motives, which has been documented to create a less favorable attitude toward the actor (Fein, Hilton, and Miller 1990; Fein 1996; Vonk 1998, 1999).

Beyond a personal selling context, the framework of PKM applies to how consumers react to CSR communication. Companies release their CSR communication messages to inform and persuade their consumers that they care about sustainability and social responsibility. Given that the purpose of outwardly stated messages is to persuade the public, readers attribute a CSR campaign to the company’s motive behind it (Ellen et al. 2000). When CSR communication messages (e.g., the target company sincerely cares
about a social issue) are inconsistent with other contextual information (e.g., the company is responsible for harming the social value), consumers become suspicious about the company’s motive, whether the campaign is based on a sincere motive to support social value or on a self-centered motive to take advantage of it.

Another factor that affects how people understand a given message is the level of elaboration. Research has established that the elaboration level influences how people react to the given message in persuasive communication (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Petty and Cacioppo (1986) find that higher elaboration increases the impact of central cues in a message, whereas peripheral cues are more influential with less elaboration in a persuasion process. Research in the marketing discipline has documented the role of elaboration in consumer behavior (Menon and Kahn 2003; Chan and Sengupta 2010). Regarding the issue of suspicion, Chan and Sengupta (2010) distinguish implicit attitudes from explicit attitudes toward a salesperson’s flattery by showing that the negative effect of consumer suspicion only reveals itself for the explicit attitude condition, when people are able to take enough time before responding to flattering remarks. Related to CSR campaign evaluation, Menon and Kahn (2003) find that when consumers elaborate on a social issue itself rather than its sponsor company, a low congruence between the company and the supported social issue increases consumer evaluation as compared to a high congruence. The authors argue that a low congruence may be deemed more appropriate with a sincere motive when people focus more on a social issue rather than the target company of the CSR campaign.

Whereas prior literature would suggest companies to find a better-fit campaign (e.g., Sen and Bhattacharya 2001) or to spend more money for the actual campaign rather
than advertising (Yoon et al. 2006), I am interested in a situation where the contextual information is fixed as inconsistent so that consumers are easily made suspicious. In this case, can marketing managers minimize the negative influence of consumer suspicion by how the CSR messages are written? In the current research, I suggest a phrase form whether CSR messages are written in active or passive voice language as an influential factor to understand consumer suspicion on CSR reaction, which expends the prior literature about the role of elaboration on persuasion.

The effect of phrase form: active vs. passive

Linguistics literature has shown that semantically similar content can be perceived differently depending on whether the content is written as active or passive form sentences (Johnson-Laird 1968; Tannenbaum and Williams 1968; Turner and Rommetveit 1968). The difference in perception of a written event is attributed to a functional feature of interpretation focus, with an active sentence having a more conceptual focus on the actor agent, whereas passive form places more attention on the acted-upon agent (Tannenbaum and Williams 1968). By measuring the recall of agents from the given contents, Turner and Rommetveit (1968) find supporting evidence for a difference in conceptual focus according to the sentence form. The authors find that people recall actor agents more correctly after reading active form sentences, whereas they recall acted-upon agents better with passive sentences. Besides recalling agents, the difference in conceptual focus also impacts a readers’ attitudes toward the behavioral agent of an event. Recent research by Fausey and Boroditsky (2010) shows that people
tend to blame the behavioral agent of a negative event more when they read about a situation in active sentences compared to passive sentences. Furthermore, another research study argues that the usage of either active or passive form sentences reflects the writer’s stance toward the described topic, because passive form language deemphasizes the subject (Baratta 2009).

Based on the findings in linguistics literature, I focus on CSR communication context and argue that the framing of CSR messages influences the level of consumer suspicion of an ulterior motive. I posit that merely writing CSR messages in passive form sentence will lead to more favorable consumer reactions by shifting the interpretation of the CSR context. When marketing managers create CSR communication messages, there are two ways to write those phrases: active form (e.g., Company A supports charity B) or passive form (Charity B is supported by company A). Active form starts with the company’s name which puts more weight on the actor agent. According to the PKM literature, the influence of suspicion becomes more salient when consumers access an inconsistent context (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). When there is situational inconsistency such as when a tobacco company supports cancer research (Yoon et al. 2006), by focusing on the company, consumers easily access an ulterior motive for the campaign. By contrast, passive form phrases deemphasize the role of the agent (i.e., the company running CSR campaign) and highlight the pro-social activity itself, which should prevent the negative effect of any suspicion of an ulterior motive. Another research study demonstrates that when a suspicion of the salesperson’s ulterior motive is salient, pushy sales messages that strongly emphasize a positive side of a product lead to a less favorable evaluation of the salesperson than weaker messages (DeCarlo 2005).
Therefore, I hypothesize the effect of phrase form as follows:

**H1:** When a CSR campaign is constructed as suspicious, a passive form CSR message will lead to more favorable consumer reactions to the company as compared to an active form message.

**H2:** When a CSR campaign is constructed as suspicious, a passive form CSR message will lead to a more sincere inferred motive by the company for its campaign as compared to an active form message.

**H3:** The inferred company’s motive will mediate the phrase form effect on consumer reaction to the company.

Cognitive busyness as a boundary condition

Research establishes that drawing inferences about individuals based on behaviors starts from drawing correspondent inferences out of a target behavior and then correcting the inferred traits with situational constraints (Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988; Gilbert and Malone 1995). Gilbert and his colleagues (1988) show that correcting process is less automatic and more easily disrupted compared to the earlier stages in social inference making. Later research demonstrates that a suspicious mindset elicits higher-order attributional process that requires greater cognitive resources (Fein 1996). Suspecting others’ ulterior motives makes us cognitively busy.
Along the same line, marketing research shows that cognitively busy consumers are less likely to suspect a salesperson’s ulterior motive from flattering remarks (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). Campbell and Kirmani (2000) show that when a salesperson’s persuasion intent is less clear, people with more cognitive resources evaluate the salesperson as less sincere when compared to those who are cognitively busy. Based on the prior literature, I posit that the positive effect of a passive form phrase will be attenuated when the readers are cognitively busy. I argue that passive form messages, with a focus on the activity rather than on the company, lead the reader to distraction from considering an ulterior motive by the company. If consumers are cognitively busy even before they read the message, they will not evaluate the company any differently no matter how the CSR messages are written.

**H4:** When a CSR campaign is constructed as suspicious, the positive effect of passive form CSR messages will be attenuated for the people who are cognitively busy while reading the given messages.

A company’s prior reputation as a boundary condition

The main argument of the current research is that passive form CSR messages are more effective when the campaign is constructed as suspicious. Research shows that a company’s prior reputation influences the level of consumer suspicion (Yoon et al. 2006). When a company with a bad reputation engages in a CSR campaign, consumers are more likely to be suspicious of an ulterior motive, because the pro-social behavior does not
match consumer expectation of the company (Jones 1979; Gilbert and Jones 1986). I argue that passive form messages will decrease the impact of suspicion by allowing the reader to focus on the pro-social activity itself, whereas active form messages let the reader consider more about an ulterior motive of the company. For the companies with a good reputation, however, the effect of consumer suspicion will not be influential, because engaging in a pro-social activity does not conflict with consumer expectation of the company. Relatedly, Yoon and colleagues (2006) find that information about how much money has been invested in a CSR campaign has less impact on consumer reaction when the company has a good reputation as opposed to a bad reputation.

**H5:** The positive effect of passive form CSR messages will be attenuated for a company with a good reputation as opposed to a company with a bad reputation.

Information source

Prior literature has documented that the source of information influences the perceiver’s attitude toward the message (Eagly and Chaiken 1975; Priester and Petty 2003; Szykman, Bloom, and Blazing 2004; Kirmani and Zhu 2007). For example, Eagly and Chaiken (1975) find that people are more likely to discount given arguments from a low credibility source. Szykman et al. (2004) showed that the participants inferred a greater self-serving motive from anti-drinking messages when the source of the message is a beer company as opposed to a non-profit organization. More relatedly, in another
research study by Kirmani and Zhu (2007), the information source was used to prime
general consumer suspicion. In the study, the authors provided an advertisement with a
supporting argument that the superior quality of the product is tested by either the
company itself or a third-party organization. Not surprisingly, the participants who
learned that the test was done by the company reported a greater manipulative intent as
opposed to the independent third-party condition. Similarly, in the CSR literature, Yoon
and her colleagues (2006) directly manipulated consumer suspicion on a CSR campaign
by an information source. The authors find that people become more suspicious of an
ulterior motive for a CSR when the campaign information is from the company’s
advertisement as opposed to from a newspaper article.

Along with the prior literature, I predict a moderating effect of the information
source on the positive effect of passive form messages. I posit that the positive effect of
passive form CSR messages will be attenuated when the information is from a third-party
organization than the company itself, because consumers will be less affected by
suspicion with information from a third-party source.

**H6:** Even when a CSR campaign is constructed as suspicious, the positive effect
of a passive form CSR message will be attenuated when the information is
from a third-party source as compared to from the company.
OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

I test my propositions in eight studies. Study 1A and 1B are to show the positive effect of passive form CSR messages on consumer reaction when consumers are more likely to be in high suspicion of an ulterior motive by the company. Study 2 shows that consumer perception of a company’s motive mediates the positive effect of passive form messages by using a different suspicion manipulation. In the remaining five studies, I examine various boundary conditions of the effect. Study 3 is to establish the moderating role of cognitive busyness, and study 4 is to test whether a prior good reputation of the company attenuates the effect of CSR message format. Study 5 and 6 are to show whether the positive effect can be turned off if the interpretation focus in passive form messages is shifted from a charity back to the target company. Study 7 examines a moderating role of the information source in the CSR message format effect. Finally, a single paper meta-analysis is conducted with all eight studies.

PILOT TEST

Linguistics literature has documented that people understand written information more easily when the sentences are written in an active form as opposed to a passive form (Slobin 1966). Along the same line, reference books for English writing encourage active voice expressions more than passive voice expressions due to the negative associations with a passive format sentence (e.g., Lester and Beason 2013). For example, a passive sentence can be used for an evasive purpose by omitting the responsible agent for an
adverse action. In addition, a passive form message can obstruct a vivid description of the situation.

Similar to what English textbooks recommend, an active form message could be encouraged among marketers in a CSR communication context. A consumer would show a more favorable attitude toward a company when the CSR message is written in an active form (vs. passive form), because the company’s agency for the pro-social activity may be more salient. In the current project, however, I argue the opposite that a passive form message will be better when consumers are high in suspicion. A marketer’s expectation for an active form CSR message could be incongruent with how a consumer responds to it. Although a marketer can choose an active form message due to the succinctness and the ease of understanding, the vivid description of a CSR campaign by an active form sentence will negatively impact a consumer’s reaction when the consumer is highly suspicious of an ulterior motive of the company.

To see whether marketers prefer an active form message to a passive form one, I conducted a pilot test with MBA students. The MBA students were asked to select either one of two sets of messages that reads more effective to persuade consumers for a company’s CSR advertisement. Sixty-three MBA students in a European University participated in the study. As a part of an in-class activity, I provided two sets of phrases that describe a chocolate company’s pro-social campaign that supports a charity to help people in need. The first option consists of active format sentences (i.e., Mounds supports Habitat for Humanity. The company builds houses for people in need), whereas the same pro-social activity is described in a passive format for the second option (i.e., Habitat for Humanity is supported by Mounds. Houses for people in need are built by the company).
After reading both options, the participants were asked to think of themselves as a marketing manager of the company and select either one of the two options that read better for advertising the campaign. They also wrote the reasons for their choices afterwards.

As I expected, 73.02% of the participants (46 out of 63) chose the active form option over the passive form option (26.98%, 17 out of 63). Following are some of the reasons they provided for choosing the active option over the passive one.

Reasons for choosing the active over the passive option:

“As for the slogan, people usually read just the first words of a sentence. Having the name of the brand as first word will enforce the brand presence in customers’ minds.”

“... Phrasing “Habitat for Humanity is supported” also just sounds weird.”

“Active verbs have a stronger impact.”

“The active verb gives the idea that Mounds is proactively working to support Habitat for Humanity. Active verbs are more effective. They give robustness, vigor, and sparkle to the sentence.”

“The first option is easier to link to the brand and easier to remember.”

“The manufacturer should show itself as an action taker to support a good cause, not the other way around.”

“The slogan is more proactive. Mound is driving the change. Therefore, they must be well-intentioned, and by extension, they should be selling good stuff.”

Interestingly, the participants who chose the passive option commented on the issue of suspicion.

Reasons for choosing the passive over the active option:
“I prefer option two because it places the cause before the brand. Yes, Mounds is doing something good for the community, but it should be about the community, not Mounds. Option 1 shifts the attention too much to the brand and comes across as forceful.”

“Although slightly less usual in its sentence structure, the “beneficial” attributes (i.e., Habitat for Humanity, houses for people) are put more into the center of attention, as they are mentioned earlier, thus presumably leading to a higher degree of persuasion.”

“Putting first what the company helps (i.e., houses for people in need) sounds more selfless and may thus be more impactful.”

“I would choose the second option as the important subject (i.e., Habitat for Humanity, houses for people) is placed first, which will lead the consumer to notice it better as it created a bigger focus.”

The results imply that a marketer could prefer an active form message to a passive form one for a CSR advertisement. According to the written comments for the open-ended question, the active form message can be preferred since the sentence reads clear and emphasizes the company name in the advertisement. On the other hand, those who chose the passive option reported that the passive sentence makes them feel that the activity is more selfless by starting with the charity name. From the following section, I demonstrate how to write a CSR message impacts consumer reaction to the company depending on the level of suspicion.
STUDY 1A: THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF A PASSIVE FORM CSR MESSAGES ON COMPANY EVALUATION

Study 1A is to test the effect of the message format on how a consumer reacts to a company’s CSR advertisement. I predict a significant interaction between the level of consumer suspicion of the company's ulterior motive and the CSR message format (i.e., active vs. passive). When a CSR campaign is constructed as suspicious, a consumer’s reaction to the company will be more positive when the phrase in the CSR advertisement is written in a passive form as opposed to an active form.

Method

The study employed a 2 (suspicion level: low vs. high) by 2 (message form: active vs. passive) between-subjects design. One hundred and seventy-three undergraduate students (71.76 % male) participated in this study in exchange for a partial course credit. The participants read a brief description of a petroleum company. I provided that the company is highly responsible for the aggravated greenhouse effect since the company has made the most prominent gas sales in the country. The description of the greenhouse effect was a part of suspicion manipulation that I adapted from a previous research study. Yoon and colleagues (2006) show that consumers become more suspicious about a company's CSR motive when an advertised pro-social activity is highly related to an adverse influence of the company on the society. Adapting their setting, I provided two types of CSR activities according to the experimental conditions.
For the low suspicion condition, the company supports a charity to help a cancer research, which is relatively less congruent with the greenhouse effect. For the high suspicion condition, however, the advertisement claims that the company supports a charity to preserve the natural environment. In the stimuli, the CSR message is written either in an active or a passive form. For the low suspicion condition, the active form message reads “Exxon supports the National Cancer Institute,” while the passive form message reads “The National Cancer Institute is supported by Exxon.” For the high suspicion condition, active form message reads “Exxon supports the World Wide Fund for Nature,” while the passive form message reads “The World Wild Fund for Nature is supported by Exxon.”

After reading one of the four CSR advertisements depending on the experimental condition, the participants evaluated the company using a single seven-point scale (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive). Then they answered a question asking about the target company as an attention check, which is followed by demographic questions.

Results and discussion

Analysis was done after omitting ten participants who provided an incorrect answer to the question asking about the company’s CSR type in the advertisement. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 163.

Consistent with hypothesis 1, an ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the suspicion level and the message form on the company evaluation ($F(1, 159) = 7.09, p = .009$). As expected, the participants in the high suspicion condition rated the
company more favorably with a passive form message compared to an active form message ($M_{active} = 3.70$, $M_{passive} = 4.31$; $F(1, 159) = 4.82$, $p = .03$). On the other hand, no difference was revealed for the low suspicion condition ($M_{active} = 4.26$, $M_{passive} = 3.82$; $F(1, 159) = 2.47$, NS).

This study shows the positive effect of passive form CSR message on company evaluation. When consumers are highly suspicious about the company’s ulterior motive, a passive form CSR message improves company evaluation as opposed to an active form CSR message.

**STUDY 1B: REPLICATING THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF A PASSIVE FORM CSR MESSAGE**

The purpose of study 1B is to replicate the positive effect of a passive form CSR message with a different scenario and a different dependent variable. For the dependent variable, I measured the intention to participate in the CSR campaign in this study.

**Method**

This study employed a 2 (suspicion level: low vs. high) by 2 (message form: active vs. passive) between-subjects design with two hundred and two online panel participants (54.46% male, $M_{age} = 37.22$). Similar to study 1A, the participants read about a target company followed by its CSR advertisement. The company is a car manufacturer this time. To manipulate the suspicion level, I provided that the company
has recently involved in an environmental pollution scandal. After reading the
description, the participants were exposed to either one of four CSR advertisements
depending on the experimental conditions. For the low suspicion condition, the company
supports a charity to sponsor art and culture education. On the other hand, for the high
suspicion condition, the CSR campaign is more congruent with the negative
consequences of the company's core business, such that the company sponsors for
protecting the natural environment.

The CSR message is written either in an active or a passive form as study 1A. For
the low suspicion condition, the active form message reads “Volkswagen supports art and
culture education,” while the passive form message reads “Art and culture education is
supported by Volkswagen.” For the high suspicion condition, the active form message
reads “Volkswagen supports protection of the natural environment around the world,”
while the passive form message reads “The natural environment protection around the
world is supported by Volkswagen.” After reading the advertisement, the participants
reported their intentions to share the CSR advertisement with their friends on a social
media to make the campaign successful (1 = Definitely not share the ad, 7 = Definitely
share the ad). Then, I asked the type of the CSR activity and the accident of the company
to check the participants' attentions. Lastly, the participants reported demographic
information.
Results and discussion

The data set was analyzed after omitting 23 participants who got the attention questions wrong. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 179.

Replicating the results of study 1A, an ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the suspicion level and the message form on the participation intention ($F(1, 175) = 4.62, p = .033$). In the high suspicion condition, participants reported marginally higher participation intentions with the passive form message compared to the active form message ($M_{active} = 3.13, M_{passive} = 2.37; F(1, 175) = 3.49, p = .064$). No difference was observed for the low suspicion condition ($M_{active} = 2.66, M_{passive} = 2.18; F(1, 175) = 1.37, NS$).

This study shows that the positive effect of a passive CSR message also holds for behavioral intention. Replicating the results of study 1A, for the high suspicion condition, participants reported higher intentions to participate in the given CSR campaign when the CSR message is written in a passive form as opposed to an active form.

In the first two studies, I show that a passive form CSR message leads to a more favorable reaction to the company and its campaign when consumers are high in suspicion. Despite the replicated findings, some might argue that how I manipulated the suspicion level has an issue. That is, different types of CSR activities in the scenarios across conditions might cause the patterns regardless of the level of suspicion. In study 2, I used a different suspicion manipulation to amend for this issue.
STUDY 2: MANIPULATING CONSUMER SUSPICION

The goal of study 2 is threefold. First, I expect to replicate the results of study 1A and study 1B with a different suspicion manipulation. In the first two studies, I used the types of CSR activities to manipulate the suspicion level. Unlike my intention, the participants might respond differently according to how they relate themselves to the different activities across conditions (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). To test the effect of the message format more rigorously, I used the same campaign activity across all conditions in study 2. Another change in study 2 is that the participants did not read a negative description of a target company in the procedure. In the first two studies, the congruence between the company's negative influence on the society and the campaign activity type created the level of suspicion. In this study, I did not provide any negative information of the company in order to verify the role of consumer suspicion in the passive form message effect regardless of the company’s prior reputation.

Second, besides replicating the previous results, this study is to test the process of the positive effect of a passive form message. By measuring the perceived motive of a target company for its CSR campaign, I examined the mediating role of the perceived CSR motive of the company in my model. In the high suspicion condition, I predict that a passive form CSR message will increase the perceived sincere motive of the company as opposed to an active form message. I also expect the increased sincere motive will lead a more favorable attitude toward the company.
Method

The study employed a 2 (suspicion level: low vs. high) by 2 (message form: active vs. passive) between-subjects design. 143 online panels participated in the study in exchange for monetary compensation. Among the participants, one did not report gender and age (70.42% Male, $M_{age} = 34.08$ of 142 participants).

In this study, I asked the participants to evaluate two advertisements that were ostensibly introduced as independent. The first advertisement was to manipulate the suspicion level, and I created my stimuli based on the prior research study. Kirmani and Zhu (2007) find that an induced suspicious mindset carries over to a following task by using a specific advertisement that primes consumer suspicion in their study. Similarly, another research study shows that a deceptive advertisement influences how consumers evaluate subsequent advertisements of other companies (Darke and Ritchie 2007). Adapting the stimuli format by Kirmani and Zhu (2007), the first advertisement presents a pair of earphones with a claim that the product quality is superior to other leading companies. For the low suspicion condition, the target company refers the quality test to a third-party organization. However, for the high suspicion condition, the test was conducted by the target company itself. In addition to the agent of the quality test, the low suspicion advertisement specifies the names of the leading brands that are compared with the target product. On the other hand, the high suspicion advertisement does not notify the names of comparing brands in the test.

After examining the first advertisement, the participants reported the perceived reliability of the quality test on a single seven-point scale (1 = Not reliable, 7 = Very
reliable). Then the participants read the second advertisement, which is the focal stimulus of the study. In the advertisement, a chocolate company runs a CSR campaign to help the homeless. The messages in the advertisement are written either in an active (i.e., Mounds supports Habitat for Humanity. The company builds houses for people in need) or a passive form (i.e., Habitat for Humanity is supported by Mounds. Houses for people in need are built by the company). After reading the advertisement, the participants reported the perceived CSR motive of the company on three seven-point scales (1 = Selfish, 7 = Unselfish; 1 = Uncaring, 7 = Caring; 1 = Self-serving, 7 = Society-serving), and then they evaluated the company (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive). Then, the participants answered an attention question that is about the pro-social activity in the advertisement. Demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey.

Results

Analysis was done after omitting three participants who answered wrong to the attention check question asking about what campaign the target company involves in. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 140.

Suspicion manipulation check. To check the suspicion manipulation, I used the single item about the perceived reliability of the quality test in the first advertisement. As I intended, an ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the low and the high suspicion condition. The participants in the low suspicion condition reported a higher
perceived reliability of the quality test (M = 5.27) as opposed to those in the high suspicion condition (M = 4.83, F (1, 136) = 4.17, p = .043).

Perceived motive. The three items were averaged to get a composite index for perceived motive, in which a higher score denotes a more sincere motive of the company (α = .92). Consistent with hypothesis 2, an ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the suspicion level and the message form on the perceived motive of the company for its campaign (F(1, 136) = 5.02, p = .027). In the high suspicion condition, the participants reported a marginally more sincere perceived motive with the passive form messages compared to the active form messages (M_{active} = 4.04, M_{passive} = 4.73; F(1, 136) = 3.12, p = .079). However, no difference was observed for the low suspicion condition (M_{active} = 4.77, M_{passive} = 4.23; F(1, 136) = 1.96, NS).

Company evaluation. Consistent with my prediction, an ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction between the suspicion level and the message form on the company evaluation (F(1, 136) = 3.67, p = .058). In the high suspicion condition, the participants showed a marginally more favorable company evaluation with the passive form messages compared to the active form messages (M_{active} = 4.28, M_{passive} = 4.94; F(1, 136) = 3.21, p = .075). On the other hand, no difference was observed for the low suspicion condition (M_{active} = 5.12, M_{passive} = 4.79; F(1, 136) = .83, NS).

Mediating role of the perceived motive. To examine the underlying process for the interaction between the suspicion level and the message form on the company evaluation,
I conducted a moderated mediation analysis, where the suspicion level moderated the effect of the message form on the perceived motive, which in turn influenced the company evaluation (model 7, 5000 bootstraps; Preacher and Hayes 2008). The indirect effect of the suspicion level on the company evaluation through the perceived motive is marginally significant in the high suspicion condition (.394, 90% CI: .009, .804), but not significant in the low suspicion condition (-.308, 90% CI: -.645, .048, see table 2.1 for regression coefficients).

Discussion

The results of study 2 extend the findings of the first two studies of this project in the sense that the positive effect of a passive form CSR message also reveals when a consumer’s suspicion is not directly from the target company. By priming suspicion through an irrelevant advertisement, I show that the positive effect of a passive form message also occurs with a general consumer suspicion regardless of any negative information of a target company. Furthermore, this study provides additional supporting evidence of the positive effect of a passive form message by using the same campaign activity across the conditions. More importantly, this study shows the perceived CSR motive as the underlying mechanism. The results of the moderated mediation analysis are consistent with my prediction that a consumer infers a more sincere motive by the company when a CSR message in the company’s advertisement is written in a passive form (vs. an active form), which in turn leads to a more favorable evaluation of the company.
With three studies, I show that a passive form CSR message can be more effective for the consumers with high suspicion. I also show the process of the effect by examining the mediating role of the perceived motive in the model. The rest five studies aim to find boundary conditions of this effect.

**STUDY 3: COGNITIVE BUSYNESS AS A BOUNDARY CONDITION**

Study 3 is to examine the moderating role of the cognitive busyness in the positive effect of a passive form message. Prior research has documented that suspecting others’ intentions requires cognitive resources (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Menon and Kahn 2003). For example, in a prior research study that looks at an interacting with a salesperson, the participants reported a higher perceived sincerity from a flattering remark when they were already cognitively busy (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). Based on the previous research finding, I predict that the positive effect of a passive form message will be attenuated when the reader is distracted by another cognitive task.

**Method**

This study employed a 2 (cognitive busyness: low vs. high) by 2 (message form: active vs. passive) between-subjects design. 197 undergraduate students participated in the study in exchange for a partial course credit (Male = 49.7%, $M_{age} = 20.47$).

The participants were told that there are two independent tasks in the study. The first task was to manipulate the level of cognitive busyness. I asked the participants to
memorize a given number until they are asked to retrieve in the middle of the second task. The number was provided just before the participants read a target CSR advertisement. For the low cognitive busyness condition, a two-digit number was displayed (i.e., 42), whereas a nine-digit number was given for the high cognitive busyness condition (i.e., 427358924). Regarding the CSR advertisement, I used the same advertisement as study 1A, in which an oil company supports the natural environment preservation. The message in the ad was written either in an active form (i.e., Exxon supports the World Wide Fund for Nature) or a passive form (i.e., The World Wide Fund for Nature is supported by Exxon). After examining the advertisement, the participants asked to retrieve the numbers and then evaluate the company (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive). After that, they rated the company's CSR motive with six adjectives (i.e., moral, nice, altruistic, good, sincere, pure) on seven-point scales (1 = Not at all, 7= Very much). Then, I measured the interpretation focus of the message with a single item by asking whether the given message focuses either on the company or the charity (1 = More focus on the company, 7 = More focus on the charity). Then the participants answered an attention question asking about the target company’s CSR activity. Lastly, they reported the perceived difficulty of memorizing the given number (1 = Not difficult at all, 7 = Very difficult) as well as demographic information.
Results

Analysis was done after omitting three participants who got the attention question wrong. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 194.

*Cognitive busyness manipulation check.* An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the cognitive busyness on the perceived difficulty of the memorizing task. The participants in the high cognitive busyness condition reported that memorizing the given number is more difficult as opposed to those in the low cognitive busyness condition ($M_{lowload} = 1.28, M_{highload} = 3.03; F(1, 190) = 86.46, p < .001$). The results show that my manipulation was successful.

*Company evaluation.* Consistent with my prediction, an ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the cognitive busyness and the message form on the company evaluation ($F(1, 190) = 12.10, p = .001$). In the low cognitive busyness condition, the participants evaluated the company more favorably with a passive form message compared to an active form message ($M_{active} = 3.62, M_{passive} = 4.43; F(1, 190) = 9.38, p = .003$). An unexpected pattern was revealed for the high cognitive busyness condition, such that the participants reported a marginally more favorable evaluation with an active form message as opposed to a passive form message ($M_{active} = 4.26, M_{passive} = 3.76; F(1, 190) = 3.49, p = .063$). The unexpected pattern might be due to that the passive form message, which is relatively unclear, might feel less favorable to the participants who were already busy memorizing the given number.
Perceived motive. The six items about the perceived motive were averaged to get a composite index, in which a higher score denotes a more sincere perceived motive of the company (\( \alpha = .95 \)). An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the message form on the perceived motive, such that the participants in the passive form message condition reported a more sincere motive of the company compared to the active form message condition \((M_{\text{active}} = 3.31, M_{\text{passive}} = 3.74; F(1, 190) = 5.93, p = .016)\). More importantly, consistent with hypothesis 4, the ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between the cognitive busyness and the message form on the perceived motive of the company for its campaign \((F(1, 190) = 10.68, p = .001)\). In the low cognitive busyness condition, the participants reported a more sincere motive with a passive form message compared to an active form message \((M_{\text{active}} = 3.07, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.05; F(1, 190) = 16.63, p < .001)\). On the other hands, no difference was observed between the message forms for the low cognitive busyness condition \((M_{\text{active}} = 3.54, M_{\text{passive}} = 3.40; F(1, 190) = .34, \text{ NS})\).

Interpretation focus. Consistent with my prediction, an ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction between the cognitive busyness and the message form on the interpretation focus \((F(1, 190) = 2.82, p = .095)\). In the low cognitive busyness condition, the participants reported that the passive form message put more weight on the charity as opposed to the active form message \((M_{\text{active}} = 3.34, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.16; F(1, 190) = 4.56, p = .034)\), whereas no difference was observed for the high cognitive busyness condition \((M_{\text{active}} = 4.08, M_{\text{passive}} = 3.98; F(1, 190) = .07, \text{ NS})\).
Mediating role of the perceived motive. A moderated sequential mediation analysis was conducted to test the interpretation focus and the perceived motive of the company were the mediating link between the message form and the company evaluation, which is moderated by the cognitive busyness (model 83, 5000 bootstraps; Hayes 2017). As predicted, the bootstrap test revealed that the indirect effect of the message form on the company evaluation through the two mediators in the sequence was significant only when the reader was cognitively less busy (.13, 95% confidence interval [CI] = .001 to .320). The interpretation focus partially mediated the effect of message form on the perceived motive of the company, which then mediated the effect of the message form on the company evaluation (See table 2.2 for regression coefficients).

Discussion

The results of this study show the boundary condition of the positive effect of a passive CSR message. When the reader is cognitively busy, a passive form CSR message neither increases company evaluation nor reduces consumer suspicion. Importantly, by conducting a moderated sequential mediation analysis, this study provides an empirical evidence that the interpretation focus of a CSR message influences how the reader perceives a sincere motive and evaluates the company in a serial order. As mentioned above, the results also show an unexpected pattern in the high cognitive busyness condition that the active form messages led to more favorable company evaluation than the passive form message. I interpret this unexpected pattern as the effect of disfluency.
Regarding persuasive message, Wänke and Bless (2000) suggest a lay belief that easy-to-process messages are more compelling. According to this perspective, a passive form message is relatively less fluent than an active form message. Therefore, for the high cognitive busyness condition, the participants might not show more favorable attitudes with a passive form message since they were already cognitively busy memorizing the given number. Due to the disfluency, some might argue that the results are confounded with the disfluency effect. To deal with the alternative explanation, I conducted study 4 where I highlighted either one of the two agents (i.e., company and charity) in a CSR advertisement message to directly examine the role of the interpretation focus.

**STUDY 4: HIGHLIGHTING THE NAMES IN A CSR MESSAGE**

I argue that the positive effect of a passive form message is due to the interpretation focus. That is, a consumer infers a more sincere company motive by construing the given message focusing on the charity rather than the company. Study 4 is to examine the interpretation focus as the process by highlighting either a target company or the charity in a CSR message. If the interpretation focus is the driver of the positive effect of a passive CSR message by leading the reader to consider the pro-social activity more, I predict that the positive effect will be attenuated even for a passive CSR message when the reader’s interpretation focus is shifted to the company. On the other hand, an active form CSR message for a suspicious campaign could be evaluated more favorably when the charity name in the message is highlighted.
Method

The study employed a 2 (message form: active vs. passive) by 3 (highlighted agent: control vs. company vs. charity) between-subjects design. 353 online panels participated in the study in exchange for monetary compensation (Male = 54.1%, $M_{age} = 38.86$).

The procedure was identical to study 1A. The only difference was the font type of a CSR message in the stimuli. For the control condition, the ad was identical to the high suspicion advertisement of study 1A, such that an oil company supports natural environmental preservation. The message in the ad was written either in an active form (i.e., Exxon supports the World Wild Fund for Nature) or a passive form (i.e., The World Wild Fund for Nature is supported by Exxon). For the highlight conditions, I modified the font type of either the company or the charity name in the message by bolding it and changing its color to red. After examining the advertisement, the participants were asked to evaluate the company on a seven-point scale (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive) as well as the perceived motive of the company with the six items that I used in study 3. Then, the participants reported the interpretation focus of the advertisement (1 = More focus on the company, 7 = More focus on the charity) followed by an attention question that asks about the target company’s CSR activity.
Results

Analysis was done after omitting ten participants who answered the attention question wrong. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 349.

Company evaluation and perceived motive. Inconsistent with my prediction, the interaction between the message form and the highlighted agent did not reveal significant either for the company evaluation ($F(2, 343) = .01, \text{NS}$), nor the perceived motive of the company ($F(2, 343) = .87, \text{NS}$).

Interpretation focus. An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the highlighted agent on the interpretation focus ($F(2, 343) = 4.81, p = .009$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicated that the mean score for the company highlighted condition ($M_{company} = 3.59$) was significantly higher than the both of the control condition ($M_{control} = 4.12; F(1, 343) = 2.85, p = .092$) and the charity condition ($M_{charity} = 4.35; F(1, 343) = 7.36, p = .007$). However, inconsistent with my prediction, the interaction between the message form and the highlighted agent was not statistically significant ($F(2, 343) = .21, \text{NS}$).
Discussion

Inconsistent with my prediction, the results of this study do not show the moderating role of the highlighted names in a CSR message. Surprisingly, the mean values of the charity highlighted condition revealed the opposite direction to what I predict. That is, the participants in the charity highlighted condition reported a less sincere motive as opposed to those in the company highlighted condition. The results imply that merely highlighting the name of an agent in a sentence does not shift the reader’s interpretation focus.

Regarding the inconsistent results with my prediction, highlighting an agent’s name in a CSR message might increase consumer suspicion instead of reducing it. Recent research about social inference making from an ethical behavior finds that an altruistic behavior is devalued when the behavioral agent spreads the information about the ethical anecdote by himself (Berman et al. 2015). That is, the perceiver of the information infers the ulterior motive of bragging about the agent’s desirability. Similar process might happen in the current study. While reading a CSR message that highlights the charity name, the participants might feel that the company puts too much emphasis on the pro-social activity that might reversely induce higher suspicion of an ulterior motive.

A more critical issue is that the control condition in this study failed to replicate the positive effect of a passive form message. Related to the issue of the effect reliability, I conducted a single paper meta-analysis that will be discussed later before the general discussion.
STUDY 5: THINKING OF REASONS FOR A CSR CAMPAIGN

In study 4, I failed to find a supporting evidence about the role of interpretation focus in the positive effect of a passive form CSR message. With the same purpose of study 4, in study 5, I used another way of shifting the interpretation focus: I directly asked the participants to write about why the company runs its CSR campaign. I predict that elaborating more on the target company will attenuate the positive effect of a passive CSR message by shifting the reader’s interpretation focus from the charity to the company.

Method

The study employed one factor three level between-subjects design (message form: active vs. passive vs. passive with the writing task). 196 undergraduate students participated in the study in exchange for a partial course credit (Male = 67.9%, M_{age} = 20.62). The procedure was identical to study 1B. In the scenario, a car company that is responsible for a recent emission scandal supports the natural environment preservation. The only difference from study 1B was at the third condition where the participants were asked to write two to three sentences about why the target company supports the charity. Regarding dependent variables, I measured the company evaluation on a seven-point scale (1 = Very negative, 7 = Very positive) and the perceived motive of the company with the six items that I used in study 3 and study 4. Then, the participants reported the
interpretation focus of the advertisement (1 = More focus on the company, 7 = More focus on the charity). Lastly, I asked an attention check question about the target company’s CSR activity. Since the scenario is based on an actual incident of a company, I also asked about whether the participants had heard about the emission scandal.

Results

There was no participant who answered wrong to a question about the target company’s CSR campaign so that observations from all 196 participants were used for the analysis.

Company Evaluation. Inconsistent with my prediction, an ANOVA did not show a significant difference between the conditions for the company evaluation ($F(2, 193) = .30$, NS).

Perceived motive. Unlike my expectation, an ANOVA did not reveal a significant difference between the conditions for the perceived motive of the company ($F(2, 193) = .47$, NS).

Interpretation focus. An ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the interpretation focus among conditions ($F(2, 193) = 7.23$, $p = .001$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicated that the mean score for the active form condition ($M_{active} = 2.57$) was significantly different than the mean value of the passive form condition
\( (M_{\text{passive}} = 3.66; F(1, 193) = 11.17, p = .001) \). However, no difference was revealed in the comparison with the writing task condition \( (M_{\text{passivewithwriting}} = 3.09; F(1, 193) = 1.99, \text{NS}) \).

Discussion

Inconsistent with my prediction, writing about the reasons for the company's CSR engagement did not show any supporting evidence for a boundary condition of shifting the interpretation focus.

One possible reason for the insignificant results might be that the scenario was not strong enough to elicit suspicious mindset to the participants. Although I used the identical scenario from study 1B, the manipulation might be weaker if the participants are not aware of the actual scandal. To understand more about the data set, I conducted an additional analysis where the awareness of the scandal as another independent variable. Although no interactions were significant, mean values for all three dependent variables (i.e., company evaluation, perceived motive, and interpretation focus) imply that the writing task affected differently depending on the prior awareness of the emission scandal. That is, the writing task mildly worked as I intended for the people who already knew about the scandal. However, still, there was no statistical significance.
STUDY 6: MODERATING ROLE OF A COMPANY REPUTATION

Study 6 is to examine a moderating role of a company reputation. Prior literature shows that a consumer infers a more sincere CSR motive when the company has a good reputation compared to a bad reputation (Yoon et al. 2006). Along the same line, I posit that the positive effect of a passive form sentence will be weaker with a company with a good reputation, because there will be less suspicion from the beginning.

Method

The study employed a 2 (message form: active vs. passive) by 2 (company reputation: bad vs. good) between-subjects design. 232 online panels participated in the study in exchange for monetary compensation (Male = 59.10%, $M_{age} = 37.10$).

Similar to the previous studies, the participants read a brief instruction about a company that sells chocolate products, and then they were exposed to the company’s CSR advertisement. Regarding the company reputation, the participants learned about the company’s pro-social activity score by a third-party organization. For the bad reputation condition, the company gets 3 points out of 10, which is also labeled as “poor,” whereas the company gets 10 out of 10 with a label of “excellent” for the good reputation condition. Then, the participants read a CSR advertisement that the company supports a charity to fight childhood obesity. Depending on the experimental conditions, the messages in the ad is written either in an active form (i.e., Mounds supports the National
Childhood Obesity Foundation) or a passive form (i.e., The National Childhood Obesity is supported by Mounds). The dependent variables were the same as study 5.

Results

The Analysis was done after omitting 17 participants who answered wrong to the attention check question about the target company's CSR activity. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 215.

*Company evaluation.* An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the company reputation on the company evaluation. The participants in the good reputation condition evaluated the company more favorably as opposed to those in the bad reputation condition \( (M_{\text{bad reputation}} = 3.97, M_{\text{good reputation}} = 4.86; F(1, 211) = 19.71, p < .001) \). Although the interaction was not significant, mean values directionally reveal what I predicted. Regarding the bad reputation condition, the mean value of the passive form message condition was higher than the active form message condition \( (M_{\text{active}} = 3.70, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.24; F(1, 211) = 3.91, p = .049) \), whereas no difference was revealed for the good reputation condition \( (M_{\text{active}} = 4.86, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.86; F(1, 211) = 0, \text{n.s.}) \).

*Perceived motive.* The six items were averaged to get a composite index for the perceived motive \( (\alpha = .95) \). An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for the company reputation such that the participants reported a more sincere CSR motive for the good reputation condition as opposed to the bad reputation condition \( (M_{\text{bad reputation}} = \)
3.46, $M_{\text{good reputation}} = 4.48; F(1, 211) = 25.40, p < .001$. Similar to the company evaluation variable, the interaction between the message form and the company reputation did not reveal significant difference ($F(1, 211) = .27, \text{NS}$).

*Interpretation focus.* An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the message form on the interpretation focus. The participants in the passive form condition reported that the CSR message puts more weight on the charity than the company as opposed to those who were in the active form condition ($M_{\text{active}} = 3.19, M_{\text{active}} = 3.68; F(1, 211) = 4.12, p = .042$). Inconsistent with my prediction, the interaction between the message form and the company reputation was not significant ($F(1, 211) = 1.14, \text{NS}$). Although the interaction was not statistically significant, mean values reveal the same direction as company evaluation.

Discussion

Inconsistent with my prediction, the results of this study did not provide any supporting evidence about the company reputation as a boundary condition. My original expectation was that consumers are more affected by the suspicion of an ulterior motive when the company’s reputation is negative. Although the simple contrasts show the patterns as I predicted, the interaction was not statistically significant.
STUDY 7: THE MODERATING ROLE OF THE INFORMATION SOURCE

The purpose of study 7 is to examine a moderating role of the information source. In all the prior studies, I informed the participants that the messages are from the target company’s advertisement, which may cause an easy access to the suspicion of an ulterior motive. I predict that if a CSR message is from a third-party organization rather than the company's advertisement, the positive effect of a passive form message will be attenuated since there will be less room for the suspicion.

Method

The study employed a 2 (message form: active vs. passive) by 2 (source of information: company vs. third-party) between-subjects design. 139 undergraduate students participated in the study in exchange for a partial course credit (Male = 69.1%, \(M_{age} = 20.40\)).

The procedure was identical to study 5, in which a car company supports the natural environment preservation. Before the participants read the main stimuli, I provided the information source to the participants whether the CSR message is from the target company or from a third-party organization. I measured the company evaluation and the interpretation focus.
Results

Analysis was done after omitting 17 participants who gave a wrong answer to the attention check question about the target company's CSR activity. The total number of the observations for the analysis was 122.

*Company evaluation.* An ANOVA did not reveal a significant interaction between the message form and the information source inconsistent with my expectation ($F(1, 118) = .03, \text{NS}$).

*Perceived Phrase Focus.* An ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the message form on the interpretation focus ($M_{\text{active}} = 2.97, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.37; F(1, 118) = 25.55, p < .001$). The difference between the two message forms revealed significant both for the company source condition ($M_{\text{active}} = 3.03, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.28; F(1, 118) = 10.68, p = .001$) and the third-party condition ($M_{\text{active}} = 2.90, M_{\text{passive}} = 4.48; F(1, 118) = 14.93, p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of this study do not provide any supporting evidence about the moderating effect of the CSR message source. Although the interpretation focus was
revealed differently depending on the message form, it did not impact how the reader evaluates the target company.

A critical issue in this study is that the results did not replicate the positive effect of a passive message in the company source condition. For study 5, study 6 and study 7, I failed to replicate the focal pattern in the baseline condition. To test the reliability of the basic effect, I conducted a single paper meta-analysis.

A SINGLE-PAPER META-ANALYSIS

To test the reliability of the positive effect of a passive form message, I conducted a single-paper meta-analysis (SPM). The single-paper meta-analysis is a statistical method for behavioral research that pools results from multiple studies through weighted average. Using this method offers benefits of summarizing studies, examining theory as well as replicability with increased statistical power (Mcshane and Böckenholt 2017).

The authors suggest a user-friendly way to analyze multiple data sets jointly, which only requires basic summary information of each data set (i.e., means, standard deviations, and sample sizes). I provided the basic information from all eight studies for the conditions where the suspicion level is high with a passive CSR message. Conducting the single-paper meta-analysis, I expect to show that a passive form CSR message leads to more favorable evaluations when consumers are high in suspicion.

Although the half of the eight studies did not reveal significant differences in the company evaluations, the single-paper meta-analysis showed the significant positive effect of a passive form CSR message. The single-paper meta-analysis of eight studies
estimated the difference in the company evaluation between the active form and the passive form condition at – .44 (95% CI: -.07, -.02), indicating that the participants with a high suspicion evaluated the company more favorably with a passive CSR message as opposed to an active CSR message.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

In the first four studies, I show the positive effect of passive form CSR messages on consumer reaction. Study 1a establishes the baseline effect. In addition to general evaluation on a target company, study 1b demonstrates that the positive effect of passive form messages improves consumer intention to participate in the given campaign. In study 2, I show the mediating role of perceived motive in the model such that people infer a more sincere motive of the company for its campaign, which in turn improves company evaluation. Study 3 offers additional evidence of my argument by showing the attenuated positive effect of passive form messages when the readers are cognitively busy beforehand. I also show further evidence about the underlying process in study 3. When people read passive form CSR messages, they infer that the communication focuses more on the charity than the company itself, by which the reader infers a more sincere motive of the company leading to a more favorable evaluation by the consumer.

The current research includes limitations. Except for the cognitive busyness in study 3, other possible moderators (e.g., highlighting an agent’s name, writing task to shift interpretation focus, company reputation, and information source) did not show significant differences. The reliability of the baseline effect can be questioned. Although I
conducted a single-paper meta-analysis that shows the significant baseline effect, why the possible boundary conditions did not work needs to be discussed. More will be mentioned later in the limitation subsection. Despite the limitations, this research contributes to both linguistics and marketing prior literature as well as offers implications to practitioners.

Theoretical implication

First of all, my findings contribute to the CSR literature. Prior research of CSR has documented that a perceived motive of a company plays an important role in consumer evaluation (e.g., Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006). However, extant literature has mainly focused on the situational difference of an event which leads to consumers feeling different levels of suspicion. For example, Yoon et al. (2006) find that spending more money on actual prosocial activity than on advertising improves the perceived motive of the company. Another research study argues that the temporal length of a prosocial campaign implies the company’s motive sincerity (Varadarajan and Menon 1988; Drumwright 1996; Van Den Brink, Odekerken-Schröder, and Pauwels 2006). These prior findings focus more on the role of different characteristics of a CSR activity, which is about semantically different information. However, my findings show the role of information order within the same semantic content. Throughout the eight studies, the main comparisons are between phrase formats within the same CSR activity. The only difference in the comparisons is which agent comes first in the information (i.e., either a company or a charity). Focusing on the order of information, the findings of the current
research broaden the prior understanding of how consumers infer a company’s motive for its CSR campaign.

The current research is not the first project that looks into the effect of information order in a CSR context. Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2009) show that consumers perceive a company as more hypocritical when its CSR campaign communication is followed by a socially-harmful event which is caused by the company as compared to the opposite order. Although their research also deals with the order of given information, their work is more focused on the temporal order between the two events. The context of this current project is different from the Wagner et al. (2009) piece in that the pieces of given information in the stimuli are all about the same event of a pro-social campaign.

The current research also extends prior findings about the interaction between the level of elaboration and the CSR campaign type (Menon and Kahn 2003). Menon and Kahn (2003) find that a low congruence between the company and the cause in a CSR campaign leads to a more favorable evaluation when the consumer considers the social issue more. Although the authors argue about the effect of elaboration on CSR evaluation, their work does not empirically cover the underlying process regarding how the elaboration works. In the current article, one of my goals is to examine whether focusing on the target charity while reading a CSR message influences the reader’s inference about the company’s motive. Besides, the main focus of Menon and Khan (2003) is the effect of CSR campaign types (i.e., cause promotion vs. advocacy advertising). For instance, the authors argue that consumers consider the target company more than the social issue for a cause promotion campaign as opposed to an advocacy
advertising. By their definition, a cause promotion is a campaign where the company actively provides their resources to a charity. Menon and Kahn (2003) claim that consumers focus more on the company as a default. Instead of comparing two types of a CSR campaign, in the current research, I focus only on the cause promotion and show that merely changing a phrase format (i.e., from active to passive) shifts the reader’s interpretation focus.

The current research also contributes to the linguistics literature. Specifically, my findings provide additional evidence regarding the effect of phrase format on the reader’s interpretation of a written event. Prior research on the sentence format is mainly focused on negative events (Henley, Miller, and Beazley 1995; Fausey and Boroditsky 2010). For example, literature shows that people are more likely to accept a reported violence in news media when the incident is written in a passive format (Henley et al. 1995). In the current project, I apply the prior research findings to the positive event interpretation. Specifically, I focus on the context of CSR campaign communication, where the company provides a message about its pro-social activity either in an active or a passive format. Not only do I simply extend the prior research context to the positive event, I also demonstrate the interaction between the phrase format and consumer suspicion. Prior literature has shown that a passive form message increases the acceptance of a given negative event (Henley et al. 1995), as well as decreases ascribing blame to the agent (Fausey and Boroditsky 2010). The authors claim that a passive form message reduces the perceived causality between the agent and the event. In contrast to their argument, I explore how a passive form message decreases consumer suspicion by leading the reader to consider the charity more.
Managerial implication

My findings provide implications to marketing managers about how to effectively communicate their pro-social activities to the public. Whereas the language education programs for everyday communication encourage active voice expressions more than passive voice expressions, I suggest that a passive form of a CSR message can be more effective for the consumers with high suspicion. For companies with bad reputations, writing their CSR messages in a passive form can prevent the downside of consumer suspicion caused by a company’s negative prior reputation.

The findings in the current research suggest a cost-efficient way for companies to improve the positive effect of engaging in a CSR activity. Most findings in the prior CSR literature have focused on the campaign characteristics specifically as influential antecedents for success. For example, Varadarajan and Menon (1988) suggest that the temporal duration of a campaign is one of the influential factors, such that running a long-term campaign is more desirable than a short-term one. Other research studies claim the importance of having a high cause-company congruence (Pracejus and Olsen 2004), or the amount of resources spent (Yoon et al. 2006) will play a role in a successful campaign. However, these three examples only pertain to the characteristics of the campaign itself and require a greater amount of resources for companies to implement. My suggestion is relatively easier for companies to achieve: Simply change the written message format to a passive sentence that could prevent the negative influence of consumer suspicion.
Limitations and future research

The main limitation of this research is the reliability of the positive effect of a passive CSR message. In the second half of the studies in the current project, I failed to replicate the positive effect of a passive form CSR message even in the control conditions, where the campaign was constructed as highly suspicious. To accommodate the reliability issue, I conducted a single-paper meta-analysis that replicates the positive effect of a passive form CSR message with the combined data sets of eight studies. However, the unreliable effect still implies the issue of the small effect size. Considering how subtle the manipulations of the current project studies are (i.e., simply rewrite a sentence from one format to another), it is understandable that the effect size could be small. Future research needs to demonstrate a condition where consumers are more affected by the suspicion of an ulterior motive so that a passive form message exerts its effect more saliently.

Second, although I suggest that the interpretation focus is the underlying process, the current results are not sufficient to validate the pure effect of the focus on the interpretation. For example, study 4 and study 5 were designed to shift the reader’s interpretation focus. In study 4, I changed the font style to highlight either one of the two agents in the given CSR message (i.e., the company or the charity) expecting to shift the interpretation focus of the reader. Unlike the prediction, however, highlighting the charity’s name in a CSR message failed to change the reader’s evaluation of the campaign. Rather, the mean values of the study show that the consumer evaluation of the
company in the charity highlight condition appears to be lower than both the control condition and the company highlight condition. This implies that merely highlighting a charity name in a CSR message does not impact the reader’s interpretation focus. Study 5 also failed to provide any empirical evidence about the effect of a shift in interpretation focus. Future research also needs to create a valid way to test the effect of the interpretation focus shift to rigorously verify the underlying process of passive form CSR messages.

Conclusion

When consumers are high in suspicion of a company’s ulterior motive, a passive form CSR message leads to more favorable attitude toward the company as opposed to the same message that is written in an active format. The positive effect of a passive form message is due to the shifted interpretation focus from the company to the activity, which in turn increases the inferred sincere motive of the company. For companies whose prior reputation is not good enough and struggle with consumer suspicion, communicating with a passive form message will be more effective compared to an active form message by reducing the adverse effect of suspicion of an ulterior motive.
### Table 2.1 Conditional Indirect Effects of Phrase Form – Study 2

IV: Message form; DV: Company evaluation; Mediator: Perceived motive; Moderator: Consumer suspicion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message form</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
<td>-2.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer suspicion</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>-2.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrase form x Consumer suspicion</strong></td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.24**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Model 2**          |                  |                    |
| Consumer suspicion   | -0.29            | -1.37              |
| Perceived motive     | 0.57             | 8.88***            |

Conditional indirect effects of message form on the company evaluation at different levels of the suspicion level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>90% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>Low suspicion</td>
<td>-0.308</td>
<td>(-.645, .048)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High suspicion</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>(.009, .804)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Regression coefficients unstandardized, Number of bootstrap resamples = 5000.

* $p \leq .1$ significance

** $p \leq .05$ significance

*** $p \leq .01$ significance
Table 2.2 Conditional Sequential Indirect Effects of Cognitive Busyness – Study 3

IV: Message form; DV: Company evaluation; Mediators: Interpretation focus and Perceived motive; Moderator: Phrase form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message form</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.02**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive busyness</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.93**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form x busyness</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>-1.68*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message form</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>2.13**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation focus</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>4.88***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation focus</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived motive</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>13.82***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conditional indirect effects of message form on the company evaluation at different sequential mediation path

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Moderator</th>
<th>Indirect Effect</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation focus - perceived motive</td>
<td>Low busyness</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>(.009, .318)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation focus - perceived motive</td>
<td>High busyness</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>(-.145, .108)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Regression coefficients unstandardized, Number of bootstrap resamples = 5000.

* p ≤ .1 significance
** p ≤ .05 significance
*** p ≤ .01 significance
Table 2.3 Summary of Means part 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1A</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.26(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.82(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1B</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Participation intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>2.66(^{ab})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>2.18(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>2.37(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.77(^b)</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.22(^{ab})</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.73(^a)</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 3</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspicion</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.54(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.40(^a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means not sharing a superscript in the same column are significantly different from each other (\(p < .1\)).
Table 2.4 Summary of Means part 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 4</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highlight</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.38&lt;sup&gt;dec&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.49&lt;sup&gt;efg&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.53&lt;sup&gt;bdeh&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.71&lt;sup&gt;bhi&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.17&lt;sup&gt;ceh&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.33&lt;sup&gt;cij&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 5</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.14&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>3.62&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.33&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>3.78&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive with shift</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.26&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>3.59&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 6</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Perceived motive</th>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3.38&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>3.53&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.86&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4.30&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.86&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>4.66&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 7</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Company evaluation</th>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information source</td>
<td>Message</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-party</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Means not sharing a superscript in the same column are significantly different from each other (p < .1).
Figure 2.1 Moderated Mediation Model – Study 2
Figure 2.2 Sequential Mediation Model Moderated by Cognitive Busyness – Study 3
Figure 2.3 Single-Paper Meta-Analysis
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APPENDIX A
CHAPTER 1 SCENARIOS

Study 1A Scenarios

The Insurance Order
Pure Care manufactures premium cleaning products with a unique aromatherapy effect. Pure Care aims to improve long-term health of their customers by reducing the toxicity of cleaning products.
Pure Care has been involved in a pro-social campaign. The firm donates money to a local nonprofit organization that supports cleaning local area rivers. [In addition, Pure Care organized a task force team of employees, who regularly join in local river cleaning activity.]
Pure Care is currently dealing with the aftermath of an accident, which happened at one of their factories. During the manufacturing process, lubricating oil spilled into an adjacent river due to equipment malfunctioning through a careless mistake. Even though the failed equipment was stopped right away, the river and the downstream watershed were contaminated by the oil pollution.

The Response Order
Pure Care manufactures premium cleaning products with a unique aromatherapy effect. Pure Care aims to improve long-term health of their customers by reducing the toxicity of cleaning products.
Pure Care is currently dealing with the aftermath of an accident, which happened at one of their factories. During the manufacturing process, lubricating oil spilled into an adjacent river due to equipment malfunctioning through a careless mistake. Even though the failed equipment was stopped right away, the river and the downstream watershed were contaminated by the oil pollution.
After the accident, Pure Care started a new pro-social campaign. The firm is now donating money to a local nonprofit organization that support cleaning local area rivers. [In addition, Pure Care organized a task force team of employees, who will regularly join in local river cleaning activity.

Study 1B Scenarios

The Insurance Order
Pure Care manufactures premium cleaning products with a unique aromatherapy effect. Pure Care aims to improve long-term health problems by reducing the toxicity of cleaning products.
Pure Care has been involved in a pro-social activity. The firm donates money to a local nonprofit organization that support cleaning local area rivers. [Pure Care has been involved in several pro-social activities. The firm donates money to three nonprofit organizations, the first supports cleaning local area rivers, the second helps fight poverty and the third supports veterans.] However, Pure Care is currently dealing with the aftermath of an accident, which happened at one of their factories. During the manufacturing process, lubricating oil spilled into an adjacent river due to equipment malfunctioning through a careless mistake. Even though the failed equipment was stopped right away, the river and the downstream watershed were contaminated by the oil pollution.

The Response Order
Pure Care manufactures premium cleaning products with a unique aromatherapy effect. Pure Care aims to improve long-term health problems by reducing the toxicity of cleaning products. Pure Care is currently dealing with the aftermath of an accident, which happened at one of their factories. During the manufacturing process, lubricating oil spilled into an adjacent river due to equipment malfunctioning through a careless mistake. Even though the failed equipment was stopped right away, the river and the downstream watershed were contaminated by the oil pollution. After the accident, Pure Care started a new pro-social activity. The firm is now donating money to a local nonprofit organization that support cleaning local area rivers. [After the accident, Pure Care started several new pro-social activities. The firm is now donating money to three nonprofit organizations, the first supports cleaning local area rivers, the second helps fight poverty and the third supports veterans]

Study 2 Scenarios

The Insurance Order
SmartScan is a company producing software that helps digitize and preserve print content by improving the resolution of text scanned from books. SmartScan has been involved in a pro-social campaign. The firm is donating money to a local nonprofit organization that supports promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. SmartScan has contributed $7 million to the nonprofit organization while spending 1/7th the amount of money for advertising related to the campaign. [SmartScan has contributed $1 million to the nonprofit organization while spending 7 times the amount of money for advertising related to the campaign.] SmartScan is currently dealing with the aftermath of a public lawsuit regarding its hiring practices. The company has agreed to pay $50,000 and provide other significant relief to settle a discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This is due to unlawfully denying a reasonable accommodation to a candidate with disabilities.
The Response Order
SmartScan is a company producing software that helps digitize and preserve print content by improving the resolution of text scanned from books. SmartScan is currently dealing with the aftermath of a public lawsuit regarding its hiring practices. The company has agreed to pay $50,000 and provide other significant relief to settle a discrimination lawsuit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). This is due to an unlawfully denying a reasonable accommodation to a candidate with disabilities.
After the issue, SmartScan started a new pro-social campaign. The firm is now donating money to a local non-profit organization that supports promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. SmartScan contributes $7 million to the nonprofit organization while spending 1/7th the amount of money for advertising related to the campaign. [SmartScan contributes $1 million to the nonprofit organization while 7 times the amount of money for advertising related to the campaign.]

Study 3 Scenarios

The Insurance Order
Jelrocio manufactures hair care products, especially for hair loss treatment. Jelrocio is also promoting an ongoing pro-social campaign that helps preserve the environment. As part of this campaign, the company asked their consumers [executives] to help them choose a non-profit organization to which the company would donate. Consumers [executives] selected one that helps development of low-carbon energy and other similar technologies through research. Recently, after initiating the campaign, Jelrocio was found in violation of the Clean Air Act due to excessive emission of unwanted chemicals from their factories.

The Response Order
Jelrocio manufactures hair care products, primarily for hair loss treatment. Recently, Jelrocio was found in violation of the Clean Air Act due to excessive emission of unwanted chemicals from their factories. After the issue, Jelrocio started a pro-social campaign that helps preserve the environment. As part of this campaign, the company asked their consumers[executives] to help them choose a non-profit organization to which the company would donate. Consumers [executives] selected one that helps development of low-carbon energy and other similar technologies through research.
APPENDIX B
CHAPTER 2 STIMULI

Pretest
Active form
Mounds supports Habitat for Humanity
The company builds houses for people in need.

Passive form
Habitat for Humanity is supported by Mounds
Houses for people in need are built by the company.

Study 1A, 3, and 4
Low suspicion - Active form
Exxon supports the National Cancer Institute
Exxon helps the National Cancer Institute conduct research about cancer to develop a better understanding about the disease and the cure.

Low suspicion - Passive form
The National Cancer Institute is supported by Exxon
The National Cancer Institute is being helped by Exxon to conduct research about cancer to develop a better understanding about the disease and the cure.

High suspicion - Active form
Exxon supports the World Wide Fund for Nature
Exxon helps the World Wide Fund for Nature to conserve our planet, habitats, and species like panda.

High suspicion - Passive form
The World Wide Fund for Nature is supported by Exxon
The World Wide Fund for Nature is being helped by Exxon to conserve our planet, habitats, and species like panda.

Study 1B, 5, and 7
Low suspicion - Active form
Volkswagen supports art and culture education.
Volkswagen donates to The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to sponsor art exhibitions and educational opportunities.
Low suspicion - Passive form
Art and culture education is supported by Volkswagen.
Art exhibitions and educational opportunities at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) are supported by Volkswagen’s donation.

High suspicion - Active form
Volkswagen supports protection of the natural environment around the world.
Volkswagen donates to the Sierra Club to sponsor sustainable energy programs.

High suspicion - Passive form
The natural environment protection around the world is supported by Volkswagen.
Sustainable energy programs are sponsored by Volkswagen’s donation to the Sierra Club.

Study 2
Active form
Mounds supports Habitat for Humanity
The company builds houses for people in need with proceeds from a certain proportion of sales from its Mounds bars.

Passive form
Habitat for Humanity is supported by Mounds
Houses for people in need are built by the company with proceeds from a certain proportion of sales from its Mounds bars.

Study 6
Active form
Mounds supports the National Childhood Obesity Foundation
Mounds donates to the National Childhood Obesity Foundation to help fight childhood obesity.

Passive form
The National Childhood Obesity Foundation is supported by Mounds
The National Childhood Obesity Foundation receives donation from Mounds to help fight childhood obesity.