Original Article

Creating successful cause–brand alliances: The role of cause involvement, perceived brand motivations and cause–brand alliance attitude

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ABSTRACT Under increasing pressure from consumers to be socially responsible, more brands than ever are engaging in cause–brand alliances. Two challenges facing brands are how to choose a nonprofit partner for the alliance and the impact of the brand's perceived motivations for engaging in the alliance on consumers' responses to the alliance. Using a theoretical framework based on the congruity theory and the theory of reasoned action, this study examines the influence of consumer cause involvement, perceived brand motivations and cause–brand alliance attitude on consumers' intentions to purchase the product associated with a cause–brand alliance. Hypotheses were tested in the context of mock cause–brand alliance press releases in an online survey administered to 742 US college students. Findings indicate that perceived brand motivations partially mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude, and that cause–brand alliance attitude positively influences purchase intentions. Managerial implications are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

More than ever before, consumers today expect firms to consider not only their financial bottom line, but also the well-being of society and the environment when making corporate decisions. One way that firms can show their support for the community is by offering to donate money to a cause when a consumer purchases their product, a phenomenon known as cause-related marketing (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). For a company's cause-related marketing campaign to be successful over the long term, it must create an emotional bond with consumers by supporting a cause that is important to them (Davidson, 1997). Such partnerships that link the brand with the cause in the consumer's mind are referred to as cause–brand alliances (Lafferty et al, 2004).

Participating in a cause–brand alliance potentially benefits a brand by fostering more favorable attitudes toward the brand and increasing brand equity (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). However, consumers' reactions to cause–brand alliance campaigns are difficult to predict, warranting further research investigating factors that increase the success of these campaigns. Previous literature has found that factors such as cause–brand fit (Gupta and Pirsch, 2006), message source (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006) and donation size (Moosmayer and Fuljahn, 2010) influence consumer responses to cause–brand alliance campaigns. Another factor influencing cause–brand alliance evaluations is consumer's perceptions of why the brand is engaging in the alliance, or perceived brand motivations (Barone et al, 2000). However, one factor that has not been extensively investigated in the extant literature, yet may influence consumers' evaluations of cause–brand alliances, is the degree to which consumers feel that the cause is personally relevant to their lives (referred to hereafter as cause involvement).

Furthermore, although previous literature has found that purchase intentions are influenced by factors such as cause–brand fit and perceived brand motivations (Becker-Olsen et al, 2006) and attitude toward the cause (Berger et al, 1999), the relationship between cause–brand alliance attitude and purchase intentions has rarely been studied. Drawing on the theory of reasoned action, the proposed model suggests that cause–brand alliance factors such as cause involvement and perceived brand motivations may influence consumers' attitude toward the cause–brand alliance, which positively influences their purchase intentions.

Brands participate in marketing campaigns such as cause–brand alliances to achieve a variety of marketing objectives, such as enhancing brand image and broadening customer base. Ultimately, the underlying goal is to increase sales (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Therefore, understanding how these factors influence consumers' intentions to purchase the product associated with the cause–brand alliance will have important implications for marketers who wish to create conditions that increase consumer's perceived altruistic brand motivations, develop a more favorable cause–brand alliance attitude and ultimately increase purchase intentions.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between cause involvement, perceived brand motivations and the direct and indirect effects that these factors have on cause–brand alliance attitude and purchase intentions. The present study uses a theoretical framework based on cognitive psychology theories, including the congruity theory and the theory of reasoned action, combined with findings from the previous studies to build the proposed conceptual model.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude

Extant research examining the influence of cause involvement on consumers' responses

to cause–brand alliances is limited. Previous studies have found that more involved consumers perceive a greater cause–brand fit (Trimble and Rifon, 2006), and that cause involvement moderates the influence of fit (Gupta and Pirsch, 2006) and message cues (Hajjat, 2003) on purchase intentions. Other research has examined ways that consumers' involvement with the cause influences their responses to cause–brand alliances through varying the type of cause that a brand supports. For example, consumers were found to respond more favorably to a cause–brand alliance that supports disaster-relief, a situation that prompts a greater, more immediate feeling of involvement, than to a cause–brand alliance that supports an ongoing cause, such as The Coca-Cola Company's partnership with The World Wildlife Fund to protect the polar bear habitat (Ellen *et al*, 2000). In addition, consumers have been shown to feel more highly involved with local or regional causes, and therefore are more likely to support these causes than national or international causes (Ross *et al*, 1991; Grau and Folse, 2007).

The present investigation builds on these previous studies by hypothesizing that a consumers' level of involvement with a cause may affect their attitude toward the cause–brand alliance. According to the congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955), consumers look for congruity when forming attitudes toward new stimuli that they encounter (objects, experiences and so on). Consumers who are highly involved with a cause believe that the cause is relevant to their lives (Zaichkowsky, 1994) and in turn have positive associations for the cause (Sherif *et al*, 1965). When these consumers encounter a cause–brand alliance it is likely that, in an effort to maintain congruity, the favorable associations that they have for the cause will influence their evaluation of marketing activities the cause engages in, including partnering with a brand to form

a cause–brand alliance. Therefore, based on the congruity theory, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Cause involvement positively influences cause–brand alliance attitude.

Cause involvement and perceived motivations

A number of studies investigating consumers' thoughts upon exposure to a cause–brand alliance have shown that consumers often wonder why the brand chose to partner with the cause and engage in the alliance (Becker-Olsen *et al*, 2006; Ellen *et al*, 2006; Trimble and Rifon, 2006). Attribution theory refers to a series of theories that attempt to explain how people interpret reasons for the events that they encounter (Kelley and Michela, 1980) and, in the case of a cause–brand alliance, suggests that a consumer will attribute a reason to explain why the brand partnered with the cause. According to Kelley's (1973) discounting principle, intrinsic motivation is when an actor behaves in a certain way because he is motivated by the inherent satisfaction it will yield, such as feeling good when helping a person in need (often referred to as altruistic motivations). External motivation is when an actor behaves in a certain way because of the external goals that it will achieve, including a firm creating a marketing campaign to increase its image and profits (referred to as profit-based motivations). When encountering cause–brand alliances, research shows that consumers often attribute either the brand's desire to help the cause (that is, altruistic motivations) or to increase their profits (that is, profit-based motivations) as their motivation to join with the cause in a cause–brand alliance (Mohr *et al*, 2001).

Previous findings have indicated that factors such as cause–brand fit (Bigné-Alcañiz

et al, 2009), consumers' gender (Ross et al, 1991; Trimble and Rifon, 2006) and type of donation (Dean, 2003) influence consumers' perceptions of brand motivations. Consumers' level of involvement may also influence whether individuals attribute the brand joining with the cause in the cause–brand alliance to altruistic motivations or to profit-based motivations. According to the congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955), consumers who are more involved with the cause will try to maintain a sense of congruity by perceiving that the brand's motivations for partnering in the alliance were in line with the cause's mission of alleviating social ills (that is, altruistic motivations) rather than enhancing their image to increase profits (that is, profit-based motivations). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Cause involvement (a) positively influences perceived altruistic brand motivations and (b) negatively influences perceived profit-based motivations.

Furthermore, previous literature and congruity theory suggest that cause–brand alliance attitude may be influenced by cause involvement through consumers' perceived brand motivations. The congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955) proposed that more involved consumers will try to maintain congruity by perceiving that the brand's motivations for participating in the alliance were aligned with the cause's purpose of helping others (that is, altruistic motivations) rather than increasing their profits (that is, profit-based motivations). Previous findings support the notion that consumers who perceive that the brand partnered with the cause for altruistic reasons rather than profit-based motivations are more likely to respond favorably to the alliance (Barone et al, 2000; Simmons

and Becker-Olsen, 2006), leading to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The influence of cause involvement on cause–brand alliance attitude is mediated by (a) perceived altruistic brand motivations and (b) perceived profit-based brand motivations.

Cause–brand alliance attitude and purchase intentions for cause–brand alliance products

A brand's corporate social responsibility has potential to influence consumers' purchases. Consumers indicate greater brand choice and purchase intentions for brands with higher levels of corporate social responsibility (Mohr and Webb, 2005; Demetriou et al, 2010). In some cases, consumers indicate a willingness to pay more for products that are made by socially responsible brands (Hustvedt and Bernard, 2010). Furthermore, in a recent study, 94 per cent of consumers were likely to switch to a brand that supports a cause if both brands were similar in price and quality (Cone Communications, 2011).

The relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions is supported by previous literature (Bagozzi, 1981; Mitchell and Olsen, 1981) and Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), an individual's attitude toward an object is related to his or her intentions to engage in a behavior related to that object. The more favorably an individual views an object, the greater the likelihood that he or she will intend to perform behaviors that are positively related to that object. In the case of cause–brand alliances, the more favorably a consumer views the alliance, the more likely he or she is to participate in the alliance by purchasing goods that are associated with it. Both previous empirical findings and the theory of reasoned
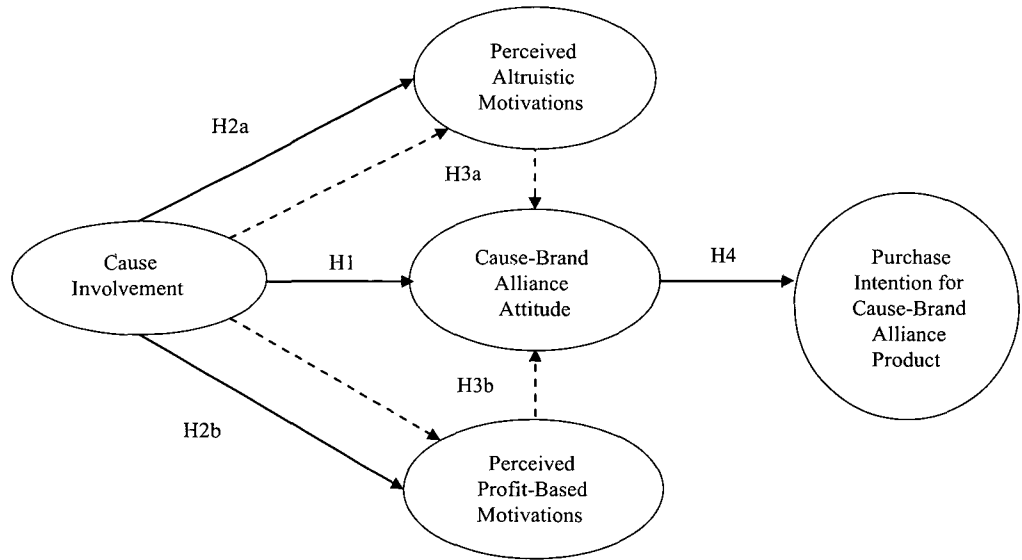
Figure I: Proposed SEM model.
Note: Dashed lines represent H3, stating that perceived brand motivations mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude.

action provided the basis for the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): When cause–brand alliance attitude is more favorable, consumers will be more likely to purchase the product affiliated with the cause–brand alliance.

A conceptual model was developed based on the four hypotheses proposed above (see Figure 1).

METHODS

Research design

The hypothesized relationships were tested by administering a survey online. A sample of 742 US college students was recruited by a market research company to collect the data. Before the main study was conducted, a pretest was administered with a random sample of 156 students to select two brands that had similar levels of familiarity and brand attitude for the survey.

Pretest

A pretest was conducted to select two brands that were familiar and favorably viewed by college students. Participants were shown 15 brands that were well-liked by college students (Bulik, 2007). Participants rated their familiarity with each of the brands on a 7-point scale (1 = Not Familiar, 7 = Very Familiar). Next, using a brand attitude measure adapted from Spears and Singh (2004), participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with five terms (appealing, good, pleasant, unfavorable and likeable) describing each brand on a 7-point (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) Likert scale. The brand attitude items for each of the 15 brands had Cronbach's α greater than 0.87, demonstrating a high reliability of the scale (Robinson et al, 1991).

To collect data for the pretest, an online questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 2500 students at a university in the southeastern United States. A total of 156 students completed

the online questionnaire, yielding 119 usable surveys. The North Face and Old Navy were selected to be used in the main survey because they had similar levels of familiarity ($M_{The\ North\ Face}$ = 6.2, SD = 1.3; $M_{Old\ Navy}$ = 6.4, SD = 1.2) and brand attitude ($M_{The\ North\ Face}$ = 5.7, SD = 1.4; $M_{Old\ Navy}$ = 5.3, SD = 1.3).

Main study

For the main survey, four versions of a mock press release were created, each describing a brand, either Old Navy or The North Face, partnering with the cause, The Nature Conservancy, in a cause–brand alliance for one of two reasons (that is, to help preserve the water supply in South Africa or the United States). The use of two brands and two reasons for the creation of the cause–brand alliance was expected to enhance the generalizability of the findings about the hypothesized relationships. The mock press release informed the reader that the brand would donate 10 per cent of the purchase price of each jacket sold to The Nature Conservancy's Freshwater Campaign.

Sampling and data collection

The survey was administered to a sample of college students in the United States aged 19–25. The millennial generation has attracted the attention of marketers in recent years because they have a greater population than any previous generation and stronger influence on family purchases, giving them a considerable degree of buying power (O' Donnell, 2006). As a result, numerous studies have investigated millennial generation consumers' attitudes and behaviors in a wide variety of areas, including wine (Nowak *et al*, 2006), mobile communications (Jurisic and Azevedo, 2011) media usage (Kilian *et al*, 2012) and cause-related marketing (Hyllegard *et al*, 2011).

A market research company assisted in the data collection, which lasted 13 days. The market research company sent an invitational email to its consumer panel, of which 5731 panel members clicked on the link in the message to participate in the study. After answering a series of questions ensuring that they actually met the qualifications for taking part in the study (that is, 19–25 years of age, attending a 2-year or 4-year school full-time), 1359 panel members continued to the survey website. Participants were shown a randomly assigned mock press release, and completed the measures and demographic items. As an incentive for participation in this study, the market research company offered participants virtual currency that they could use on various social networking sites to participate in games or enhance their profile.

After the unusable cases were removed from the data set (that is, surveys with incomplete responses, those with the same number on scale items), a final sample size of 742 was obtained. The sample was nearly evenly divided between men (49 per cent) and women (51 per cent). Each state in the United States was represented by at least one participant. The majority of respondents were Caucasian/White (57 per cent), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (23 per cent), African American/Black (7 per cent) and Hispanic (6 per cent). Most participants were in their sophomore year (38 per cent) followed by their junior year (25 per cent), freshman year (22 per cent) and senior year (15 per cent) with a wide variety of majors across campus represented.

Measures

Cause involvement was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale adapted from Zaichkowsky's (1994) Personal Involvement Inventory (important/unimportant, boring/interesting, relevant/irrelevant, means nothing/means a lot, significant/insignificant, beneficial/not beneficial and needed/not needed). An eight-item 7-point (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) Likert scale adapted from Rifon *et al* (2004) measured perceived brand motivations. Four items

were meant to measure perceived altruistic brand motivations (for example, this brand sponsored this cause because ultimately they care about their customers). Four items were used for perceived profit-based motivations (for example, this brand sponsored this cause to persuade me to buy their products). Cause–brand alliance attitude was measured by a five-item 7-point semantic differential (appealing/unappealing, good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, favorable/unfavorable, likeable/unlikeable) brand attitude scale from Spears and Singh (2004). Participants' intentions to purchase the product associated with the cause–brand alliance described in the mock press release were measured by three items (the likelihood of purchasing *this product* is, the probability that I would consider buying *this product* is, my willingness to buy *this product* is) on a 7-point rating scale (1 = Very Low, 7 = Very High), which was adapted from an instrument developed to measure purchase intention by Dodds *et al* (1991).

RESULTS

Measurement validity and reliability

Before conducting hypothesis testing, principal components analysis with varimax rotation confirmed the unidimensionality of the cause involvement construct (factor loadings all above 0.80) and the convergent and discriminant validity of the perceived brand motivations scale were measured. Although Rifon *et al*'s (2004) perceived brand motivation scale resulted in four factors, a later study indicated that the scale comprised two factors, altruistic and profit-based brand motivations (Myers and Kwon, 2012). After conducting maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), two items with a factor loading smaller than 0.65 were eliminated (Comrey and Lee, 1992). Another CFA demonstrated that the χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 44.2$, DF = 8, $P < 0.001$) indicated an imperfect model fit, yet incremental

fit indices were all above 0.95 (CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.97) and the RMSEA was 0.078, verifying an acceptable model fit. Discriminant validity of the instruments was confirmed by the correlation between the altruistic and profit-based brand motivations factors ($r = 0.63$) of less than 0.8 (John and Benet-Martínez, 2000). Cronbach's α for item loading indicated an acceptable reliability for altruistic motivation items ($\alpha = 0.79$) and profit-based motivation items ($\alpha = 0.79$). Cronbach's α ($\alpha = 0.91$) confirmed the reliability of the cause–brand alliance attitude items.

Maximum likelihood CFA was conducted for the measurement model containing indicators for cause–brand alliance attitude and purchase intentions to confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of the instruments for these two constructs. The χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 64.3$, DF = 19, $P < 0.001$) did not indicate a good fit of the model, yet the incremental fit indices (CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, NFI = 0.99) and the RMSEA (0.057) indicated an acceptable model fit. The structure coefficients for the indicator variables of each factor were significant (all $\beta^* > 0.77$, $P < 0.001$), confirming convergent validity for each instrument. Correlation between cause–brand alliance attitude and purchase intention ($r = 0.37$) was less than 0.8, confirming discriminant validity of the instruments. Cronbach's αs for items loading on each factor revealed acceptable reliability of all instruments including cause involvement ($\alpha = 0.94$), perceived altruistic motivations ($\alpha = 0.79$), perceived profit-based motivations ($\alpha = 0.79$), cause–brand alliance attitude ($\alpha = 0.91$) and product purchase intention ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Hypothesis testing results

Before conducting structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to test invariance of cause involvement, cause–brand alliance attitude, perceived
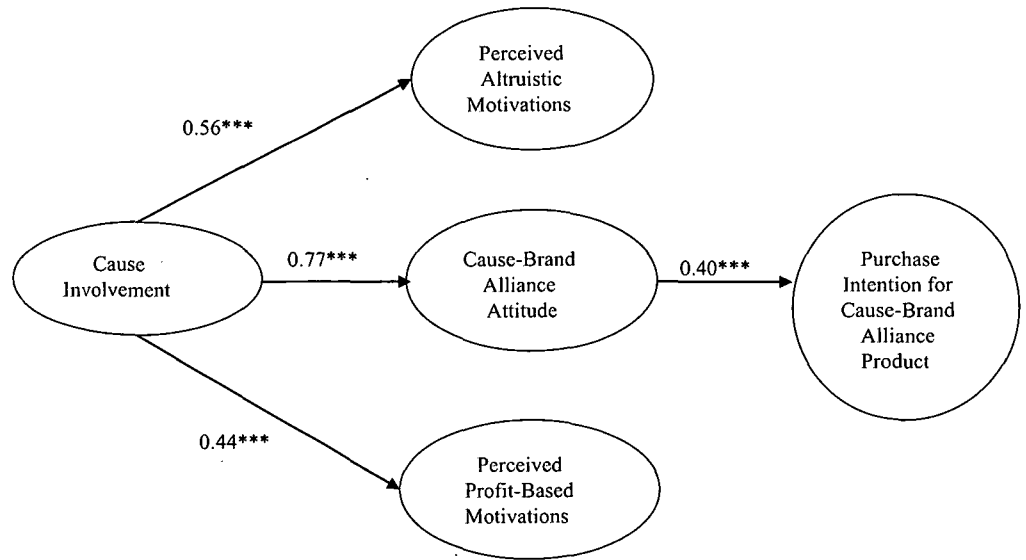
Figure 2: SEM model (Model 1) with standardized coefficients.
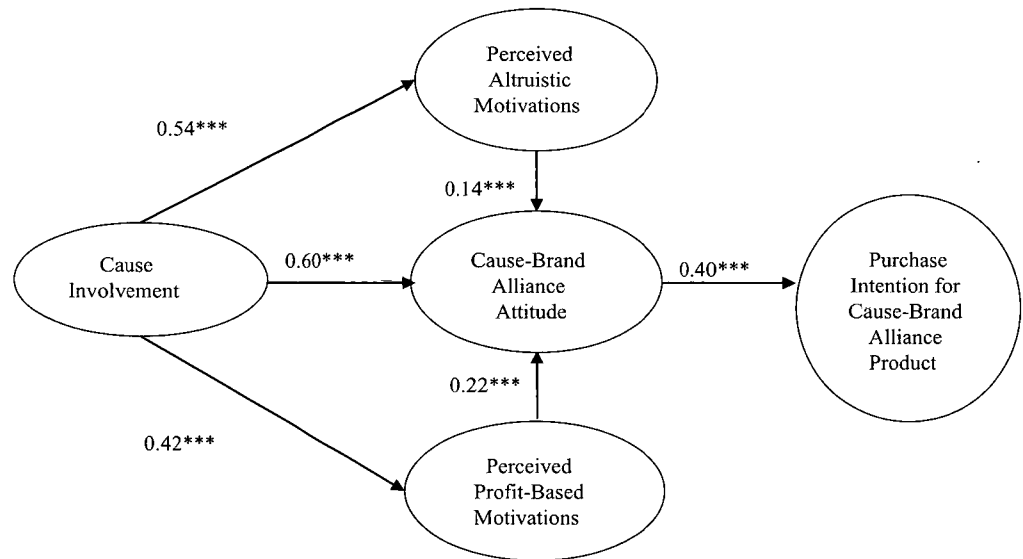*Note:* ***$P < 0.001$.

motivations and purchase intentions across the four versions of the questionnaire. No significant difference was detected among the four versions (Wilks's λ, F[4, 646] = 0.973, $P = 0.505$). As the invariance of all the variable scores was evident, data from the four versions of the questionnaire were combined to conduct SEM analyses for testing the hypotheses and the fit of the conceptual model.

SEM with maximum likelihood estimation was first conducted to test H1, H2 and H4 (see Figure 2). H3, which predicted a mediating relationship between the variables, was tested in the next step. The χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 844.7$, DF = 184, $P < 0.001$) did not support a good fit of the model. However, this test result is sensitive to sample size (Bentler, 1990). The incremental fit indices (CFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.94) and the RMSEA (0.07) suggested an acceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Regression coefficients indicated that cause involvement had a positive influence on cause–brand alliance attitude ($\beta^* = 0.77$, $P < 0.001$), providing support for H1.

Cause involvement also had a positive impact on perceived altruistic motivations ($\beta^* = 0.55$, $P < 0.001$), supporting H2a, and perceived profit-based motivations ($\beta^* = 0.44$, $P < 0.001$), rejecting H2b. Intentions to purchase the product associated with the alliance were predicted by cause–brand alliance attitude ($\beta^* = 0.40$, $P < 0.001$), showing support for H4.

To test whether perceived brand motivations mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude (H3), SEM was conducted again with a new model (Model 2) that included paths from perceived altruistic and perceived profit-based motivations to cause–brand alliance attitude (see Figure 3). Although the χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 768.1$, DF = 182, $P < 0.001$) did not support a good model fit, the incremental fit indices (CFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.95) and the RMSEA (0.066) suggested a slightly better model fit than the previous model. Regression coefficients indicated that both perceived altruistic ($\beta^* = 0.14$, $P < 0.001$) and profit-based ($\beta^* = 0.22$, $P < 0.001$) brand motivations positively

Figure 3: SEM model (Model 2) with standardized coefficients.
Note: ***$P < 0.001$.

influence cause–brand alliance attitude. Furthermore, the path between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude was slightly weaker ($\beta^* = 0.60$, $P < 0.001$) than that of Model 1. This finding, along with the positive impact that cause involvement has on perceived altruistic ($\beta^* = 0.54$, $P < 0.001$) and profit-based motivations ($\beta^* = 0.42$, $P < 0.001$), demonstrates that perceived brand motivations mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude, and provides support for H3.

To determine whether perceived motivations directly or partially mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude, a final model (Model 3) was created by removing the path from cause involvement to cause–brand alliance attitude (see Figure 4). Model 3 had the weakest fit measures of the three models. The χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 768.1$, DF = 182, $P < 0.001$) did not support a model fit, and the incremental fit indices (CFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.91, IFI = 0.92) and the RMSEA (0.078) did not indicate a

good fit of the model. Based on these results, it was determined that perceived altruistic and profit-based motivations partially mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the role of cause involvement, perceived motivations and cause–brand alliance attitude in predicting consumers' responses to cause–brand alliance campaigns. Results indicated that consumers who feel that the cause is relevant to their lives are more likely to favorably view the alliance and thus more likely to purchase the product associated with the alliance. One of the most interesting findings from this study, however, is that the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude is not direct — perceived brand motivations partially mediate the influence of cause involvement on consumers' attitudes toward the alliance.

Results revealed that cause involvement has a positive effect on both altruistic and
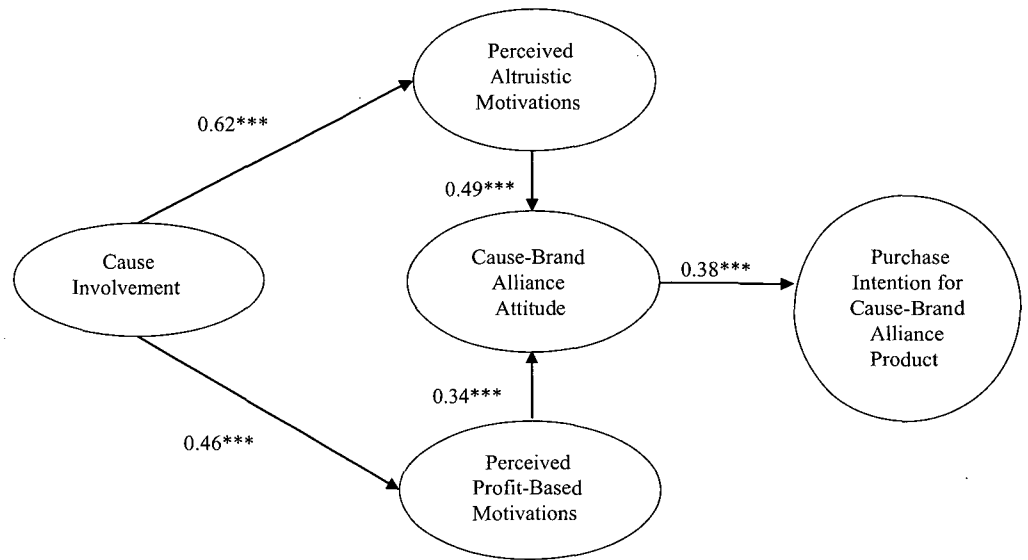
Figure 4: SEM model (Model 3) with standardized coefficients.
Note: ***P<0.001.

profit-based motivations. This finding that consumers who are more involved with the cause are more likely to perceive that the brand had altruistic motivations for engaging in the alliance are in line with the notion that consumers, in an effort to maintain congruity (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955), are likely to perceive that the brand's purpose of forming the alliance is aligned with cause's mission of helping others. However, the finding that consumers who are more involved with the cause also are more likely to perceive that the brand had profit-based motivations for engaging in the alliance suggests that consumers may not see altruistic and profit-based motivations as opposite viewpoints. They willingly acknowledge that the brand may engage in marketing activities such as cause–brand alliances to make a profit while helping people at the same time. Furthermore, these results are consistent with Hajjat's (2003) previous findings that consumers who are more involved with a cause have more thoughts in general about the alliance, potentially including profit-based as well as altruistic brand motivations.

The finding that perceived brand motivations partially mediate the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude is not surprising and is in line with attribution theory, which suggests that upon exposure to an alliance, consumers will question the motivations for the brand partnering with the cause (Kelley and Michela, 1980). However, the finding that perceived profit-based motivations positively influence cause–brand alliance attitude contradicts previous findings (Barone *et al*, 2000; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006). Once again, these findings may suggest that consumers realize that brands may join with causes as a way to both sell products and help a cause, and that this realization does not negatively impact their attitude toward the cause–brand alliance.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS
Choosing a cause to partner with may be one of the greatest challenges that brands face today in creating cause–brand alliances. At times, firms may be tempted to partner their brand with a cause that is popular with the media. Some firms have even partnered with

a cause because of an executive's personal commitment to the cause, such as an apparel brand supporting cancer prevention because the CEO is a cancer survivor (Menon and Kahn, 2003). The results of this study indicate that to create a cause–brand alliance that consumers favorably view and that ultimately persuades the consumer to make a purchase, brand marketers may partner with a popular cause or one that an executive has close personal ties to, but they will also want to be sure that the cause is also personally relevant to their target consumers.

Consumers who are more involved with the cause are more likely to perceive that the brand had more altruistic motivations for participating in the alliance, leading to a more favorable cause–brand alliance attitude and a greater intention to purchase the product associated with the alliance. One important managerial implication of these results is that by partnering with a cause close to consumers' hearts, brands can gain short-term sales. Future research should investigate whether this would also lead to brands gaining a long-term advantage through enhanced brand image.

Furthermore, the present study offers brand managers greater insight into the role that perceived brand motivations play in consumer's responses to cause–brand alliances. Results from this study indicate that the relationship between cause involvement and cause–brand alliance attitude is not direct, but that perceived brand motivations influence the effect of cause involvement on consumers' evaluations of the campaign. Therefore, marketers will want to create cause–brand alliances in which consumers perceive altruistic motivations, such as by partnering the brand with a cause that consumers find relevant, while realizing that consumers understand that the brand must make a profit. Given the importance of perceived motivations in consumers' evaluations of the alliance, future research should investigate other types of motivations that consumers may perceive the brand has for engaging in the alliance, and the effect that cause involvement has on these perceived motivations.

Finally, the present study aids marketers by showing that to achieve their ultimate goal of increasing sales they will need to create cause–brand alliances that consumers favorably view. One way to do this is to partner the brand with a cause that consumers find relevant to their lives. Future research should investigate other factors of cause–brand alliances that may influence consumers' evaluations of the alliance, including cause and brand familiarity, and the amount of information provided to the consumer about the cause–brand alliance campaign.

LIMITATIONS

Every effort was made to ensure the validity of the results from this study; yet, several limitations should be accounted for when interpreting these findings. First, the generalizability of the findings to other populations is limited because the sample for this study was college students. In addition, although two brands (Old Navy or The North Face) and two locations (South Africa or the United States) were used in the mock press releases, the second limitation for this study is the use of a one type of cause (water conservation) and one kind of brand (apparel), compromising the applicability of the findings to other cause–brand alliances. Future research should use other kinds of causes (for example, health-related, education) and a variety of types of brands (for example, hard goods, food and beverage) to alleviate pre-existing bias that participants may have toward the cause and brand used for the study.

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