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THE IMPACT OF CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING
ON PREFERENCE FOR VISUAL SALIENCE

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The Impact of Cause-Related Marketing on Preference for Visual Salience

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ABSTRACT

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) refers to the marketing practice of donating proceeds from product sales to designated charitable causes. It is prevalent for marketers to choose or design a certain product for CRM. However, little attention in academic is paid to what aesthetic features should be considered for CRM. To fulfill this gap, the current research investigates how CRM impacts consumers' aesthetic preferences for products.

I posit that CRM enhances consumer preference for products' visual salience by increasing feelings of pride. A set of empirical experiments validates the proposition. The study results demonstrate that CRM enhances consumers' preference for visual salience. This effect is based on the affective value of visual salience. Purchasing cause-related products triggers the feeling of pride, a self-conscious emotion. Consequently, consumers choose products with visually salient designs to express such feelings of pride. Moreover, the current research investigates the boundary conditions of the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience in terms of product designs, marketing practices, and consumer features. To be more specific, CRM will not increase consumers' preference for visual salience if there is a visual cue of CRM attached to products. Furthermore, if a price discount on cause-related products is provided, consumers will not prefer visually salient products anymore. At last, the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience will be stronger among consumers who score high on the dimension of moral identity symbolization.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Cause-related marketing (CRM) refers to the marketing practice in that companies donate part of the proceeds from their products to a non-profit organization or a charity cause (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). CRM is prevalent in marketplaces. According to the IEG report (2020), U.S. sponsorship value is \$10 billion (annually) and increased by 38%. An online survey conducted by Nielsen Inc. shows that 56% of global consumers are willing to pay more for products from companies that are committed to social value. In addition, 53% of the consumers have paid more for a product considering a company's commitment to communities (Wozniak, 2017). Evidence from experiments also shows that CRM can increase consumer brand evaluation and increase purchase intention and willingness to pay (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Chang, 2008; Elfenbein & McManus, 2010). Given the benefits of CRM, it is critical for marketers to know how to design a CRM campaign properly.

In marketplaces, it is common for marketers to select a product line or products with distinctive aesthetic features designated for CRM activity. It seems that product aesthetic feature is an imperative consideration for product selection for CRM. For instance, Apple Inc. donates half of the proceeds from products in red to the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response (Wong, 2021). Similarly, Gucci designed an exclusive collection to partner with UNICEF to support life-saving programs. Aerosols, a shoe brand, pledged to donate 10% of proceeds from the "Share the Love" collection to Feeding America. Enso Rings donate 100% of the proceeds from its uniquely

engraved rings to the World Health Organization for the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund (Burkhardt, 2020). Given the critical role of aesthetic features in marketing practice, it is essential to investigate the product design strategy for CRM.

Existing research in marketing has documented that CRM influences consumers in various aspects such as attitude to brands (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006), willingness to pay (Leszczyc & Rothkopf, 2010), and sales (Andrews et al., 2014). A main body of the research investigates how to increase the effectiveness of CRM from various factors such as cause-brand fit, product features, brand awareness, message framing, and consumer beliefs and characteristics (e.g., Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Chang, 2011; Robinson, Irmak, & Jayachandran, 2012; Samu & Wymer, 2014; Zhang et al., 2020). However, little attention is paid to how to design products properly for CRM and whether CRM changes consumers' preference for product aesthetic features.

Motivated by practical needs for product design strategies for CRM and insufficient academic research on the effect of CRM on consumer aesthetic preference, the current research explores how and why CRM influences consumers' preference for product aesthetic attributes. Specifically, I focus on a common and easy to be manipulated feature, visual salience. I proposed and provided experimental evidence that visually salient products are more favored by consumers when products are associated with CRM as compared with no such CRM information (Study 1 and Study 2). I also plan to examine the effect of CRM on visual salience by FACEBOOK A/B testing (Study 3). Furthermore, I make the proposition that visually salient products function to express pride, a self-conscious emotion (Tracy, Robins, & Schriber, 2009). Based on the moral attributes of pride (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007), I predicted and provided experimental support that purchasing products with (vs. without) CRM information

triggers the feeling of pride and thus increased preference for visual salience (study 4). I will further illustrate the boundary conditions of the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience. The effect of CRM on preference for visual salience is likely to be weakened or eliminated by the visual disclosure of CRM (planned study 5) and price discount (planned study 6) and strengthened by the consumers' moral identity symbolization (study 7). In the end, I will conduct an offline real behavior study to test the effect of CRM on consumers' visual preference for salience (study 8).

CHAPTER 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current research is based on the literature on cause-related marketing and visual salience. First, I introduce the research map of cause-related marketing and visual salience. Then, I illustrate the rationale behind the effect of cause-related marketing on the preferencing for visual salience and the mediation role of pride. At last, the moderation of price discount, visual disclosure of CRM, and consumers' moral identity is developed.

2.1. Cause-Related Marketing

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) refers to the marketing practice of donating proceeds from product sales to charitable or non-profit causes (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Existing research has documented that CRM provides many benefits for companies such as increasing

sales (Sodero, 2022), enhancing brand loyalty (Van den Brink, Odekerken-Schröder, & Pauwels, 2006), strengthening staffs' identification with companies (Larson et al., 2008), and increasing consumers' attitude (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006) and willingness to pay (Chang, 2008; Elfenbein & McManus, 2010). Despite many benefits, CRM can also backfire. It leads to hidden costs in the long term (Eikenberry, 2009). Sodero (2022) found that CRM endures negative effects on operations performance. Consumers' charitable giving is reduced by purchasing cause-related products even if there is no additional cost for cause-related products (Krishna, 2011).

Research in marketing has established that CRM impacts brand perceptions and evaluations, willingness to pay, and purchase intention (e.g., Arora & Henderson, 2007; Müller, Fries, & Gedenk, 2014; Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, & Hoyer, 2012; Robinson, Irmak, & Jayachandran, 2012; Tsiros & Irmak, 2020). An expanding body of research investigates factors that impact the effectiveness of CRM in terms of brand-cause fit (Das et al., 2016; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004), cause features (Grau & Folse, 2007; Vanhamme et al., 2012), brand factors (e.g., brand familiarity; Lafferty, 2009), product types (Guerreiro, Rita, & Trigueiros, 2015), donation amount and form (Folse, Niedrich, & Grau, 2010; Folse et al., 2014), advertising messages and description (Chang, 2011; Samu & Wymer, 2014), individual features (Vilela & Nelson, 2016; Youn & Kim, 2018), and social value orientation (Vock, Van Dolen & Kolk, 2013). For instance, a good cause brand-fit increases consumer value-driven attributed motives and thus positive consumer response (Zhang et al., 2020). Allowing consumers to choose the cause that donation goes to increases purchase intention (Robinson, Irmak, & Jayachandran, 2012). Interdependent individuals are more likely to generate positive responses to CRM than independent individuals (Winterich & Barone, 2011).

Although research on CRM has been well-established, little attention is paid to how CRM impacts consumers' preference for product features especially visual attributes. Research on visual marketing shows that visual features play an important role in consumers' perception, judgment, and behaviors (e.g., Chae & Hoegg, 2013; Deng & Kahn, 2009; Hagtvedt, 2020; Jiang et al., 2016; Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Walker, Francis, & Walker, 2010). In the current research, I will focus on visual salience and explore how and why CRM influences consumers' preference for visual salience.

2.2. Visual Salience

Visual salience captures the extent to which an item is noticeable and distinctive from other items (Itti, 2007). It is determined by various features such as color (Milosavljevic et al., 2012; Martin-Consuegra et al., 2010), visual contrast (Gidlöf et al., 2017), size (Pieters, Wedel, & Zhang, 2007; Han et al., 2010), luminance (Foulsham & Underwood, 2009), graphic boldness (Raghubir & Das, 2009), and integration of multiple feature dimensions (Peschel & Orquin, 2013). For example, Milosavljevic et al. (2013) set the brightness of visually salient items at 100% while they decreased the brightness of low visual salience items to 60% in their research.

Visual salience has been demonstrated to influence consumers' judgment, decision making, and choice (e.g., Gidlöf et al., 2017; Clement, Kristensen, & Grønhaug, 2013). In terms of consumer perception and judgments, Folkes and Matte (2003) find that products with visually salient packages are perceived to contain a larger volume as compared with the products with non-salient packages, even though the sizes are the same. Hagtvedt and Brasel (2017) found the convergent evidence that consumers rate products colored with high saturation (highly salient) as

larger than the same-size products with low color saturation. Janiszewski et al. (2013) demonstrated that visual salience influences consumers' preferences and choices. Specifically, they found that visual salience facilitates consumers' preference formation and impacts product choices subsequently. More recently, visual salience is demonstrated to increase food consumption (Knowles, Brown, & Aldrovandi, 2020) and the visual salience of adjacent prices is found to increase decision weights in financial decisions (Bose et al., 2020).

Existing literature also found that visually salient products can provide social influences (e.g., others' recognition and social status). Consumers who seek social attention tend to favor visually salient products (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010; Wang & Griskevicius, 2014). For instance, individuals who are socially excluded due to being ignored prefer products attached with big logos over products with small logos (Lee & Shrum, 2012). Visual salience is also associated with power and social status (Dannenmaier & Thumin, 1964; Schubert, Waldzus, & Giessner, 2009). For instance, product size is viewed as a signal of status (Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2012) and the font size of group labels influences the judgment of the group power (Schubert, Waldzus, & Giessner, 2009).

However, the affective value of visual salience is not well-developed. The existing research mainly focused on the association between visual salience and arousal. Visually salient colors (e.g., bright colors) trigger strong skin conductance responses and high ratings of arousal (Wilms & Oberfeld, 2018). The increased level of arousal generated by visually salient stimuli can distract and relieve individuals from stressful thoughts (Batra & Ghoshal, 2017).

To sum up, visual salience is determined by various visual features. Previous research focuses on the impact of visual salience on an individual's perception, judgment, decision-making, and behaviors. Little attention is paid to the emotional value of visual salience.

2.3. Pride, Cause-Related Marketing, and Visual Salience

Pride is a self-conscious emotion, which depends on self-evaluation and comes from an individual's achievements (McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014; Tracy, Robins, & Schriber, 2009). It is evolved to provide information on social acceptance (Tracy & Robins, 2007). For instance, people feel proud of themselves after completing something socially acceptable to make others like and respect themselves. Researchers argue that pride is a moral emotion (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Pride and self-approval come after doing the right thing. Experiencing pride can in turn increase prosocial behaviors (Cavanaugh, Bettman, & Luce, 2015; Michie, 2009; Septianto et al., 2018; Septianto & Tjiptono, 2019; Paramita, Septianto, & Tjiptono, 2020). Previous research found that the purchase of products with prosocial cues leads to consequences similar to engagement in prosocial behavior (e.g., Andrews et al., 2014; Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2014; White & Peloza, 2009). It is predictable that prosocial behaviors will generate pride. By purchasing cause-related products, consumers contribute to a charity cause and benefit society, and thus feel proud of themselves. In the current research, I further argue that pride triggered by purchasing cause-related products will encourage consumers to choose visually salient products.

The prediction is based on the emotional value of visual salience. Pride can be expressed in various nonverbal ways. The non-verbal expression of pride is usually associated with strong and huge sensory cues. For instance, Nelson and Russell (2011) found that people express pride by varying intonation and pitch. It is common in life that people speak loudly and increase their

pitch after success to express pride. In terms of visual expression, people tend to expand their bodies (Tracy & Robins 2007). Recalling achievements leads to a higher preference for attention-grabbing products (Ahn et al. 2021). Consistent with these findings, this research focuses on visual salience and predicts that high visual-salience products function as an expression of pride. Consumers who purchase products with (vs. without) CRM are likely to experience pride and thus they might have a higher intention to choose visually salient products to express pride. Putting these together, I hypothesize:

H1: CRM will increase consumers' preference for visually salient products.

H2: This effect is mediated by the feeling of pride.

2.4. The Moderating Role of Visual Disclosure of CRM

It is common that marketers put visual cues of CRM on products. For example, the brand JEEP is teaming up with the non-profit organization (RED) to sell (Jeep)^{RED} branded apparel and gear (see Figure 1) and all the profits from these products will go the RED. As shown in Figure 2, all the products are decorated with the (Jeep)^{RED} logo, which can be seen as a cue for the CRM. In the current research, I define the visual disclosure of CRM as a marketing practice of attaching the cause-related cues (e.g., the charity logo) to products.

FIGURE 1

THE (JEEP)^{RED} BRANDED APPAREL AND GEAR



FIGURE 2

THE (JEEP)^{RED} LOGO



Previous literature has documented the effect of visible prosocial behaviors such as disclosure of donators' identity (e.g., Glazer & Konrad, 1996; Savary & Goldsmith, 2020; Soetevent, 2005). When charitable behaviors are visible to others, individuals tend to manage their impressions and thus donate more money (Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013). However, the visibility of charitable giving can contaminate the pure motivation of altruism and decrease the intention to donate (Savary & Goldsmith, 2020). Public recognition can also trigger agentic motives and signal selfishness, which consequently hurt prosocial behaviors (Berman et al., 2015; Simpson, White, & Laran, 2018). In this research, I expect that the visual disclosure of CRM can have a similar effect as the visibility of donating. To be more specific, the visual disclosure of CRM will crowd out the benevolent motives and decrease the feeling of pride. As a result, people will not prefer high visual salience. However, when the CRM is not disclosed by the

visual cue attached to products, CRM can increase preference for visual salience. Putting these together, I hypothesize:

H3: The effect of CRM on preference for visual salience will be eliminated by visual disclosure of CRM.

2.5. The Moderating Role of Price Discount

As stated before, the preference for visual salience is expected to be driven by the feeling of pride from purchasing cause-related products. However, in marketplaces CRM might not always lead to positive responses. Individuals have negative responses to charitable behaviors accompanied by personal gains (Newman & Cain, 2014). Past research documents that sales promotion of products with CRM can hurt positive consumer responses (Arora & Henderson, 2007; Winterich & Barone, 2011). Andrews et al. (2014) found that price discounts of products with CRM hurt warm-glow good feelings and thus decrease consumer purchase. Similarly, Ariely, Bracha, and Meiter (2009) demonstrated that extrinsic rewards (e.g., monetary incentives) have negative impacts on prosocial behaviors. This is because the extrinsic incentives contaminate consumers' pure intrinsic motives (Bénabou & Tirole, 2006).

Given the negative effects of price discount on CRM, I predict that when CRM is accompanied by price discount, consumers are less likely to experience pride and consequently the effect of CRM on consumers' preference for visual salience will be eliminated. Stating the hypothesis formally,

H4: The effect of CRM on preference for visual salience will be weakened or eliminated by price discount.

2.6. The Moderating Role of Moral Identity

Prosocial behaviors including the purchase of cause-related products are viewed as moral practices. As a result, CRM is likely to be influenced by consumers' moral identity. In the current research, I also investigate how moral identity plays a role in the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience.

Moral identity refers to a self-conception organized around a set of moral traits (Aquino & Reed, 2003). In general, moral identity consists of two dimensions: internalized moral identity and symbolized moral identity. Internalized moral identity is determined by the extent to which moral traits play a critical role in self-concept, whereas symbolized moral identity captures the extent to which individuals convey moral traits through identifiable signals. Consistent with symbolized moral identity, signaling good deeds to others is a motivation for prosocial behaviors (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). For instance, Winterich et al. (2013) found that those who score high on symbolized moral identity are motivated to engage in recognized prosocial behavior to transfer their moral traits to others. Consistent with this, it is predictable that individuals with high symbolized moral identity will seek social attention via visual salience when they purchase cause-related products. Specifically, I propose that consumers who feature a high (vs. low) moral identity in the symbolic dimension will be more likely to prefer visually salient cause-related products. Stating the hypothesis formally,

H5: The effect of CRM on preference for visual salience will be stronger among consumers with a high (vs. low) symbolized moral identity.

CHAPTER 3. THE CURRENT RESEARCH

3.1. Overview of Studies

To explore the effect of cause-related marketing (CRM) on the preference for visually salient products, I completed 3 studies and plan to conduct 5 more studies in the future (see Table 1). In study 1, I conducted an online experiment and found initial support that CRM increased participants' preference for the visually salient water bottle. Study 2 replicated this finding with a different subject from study 1 and adopted T-shirts as stimuli. The results showed that participants were more likely to choose the visually salient T-shirt with a large pattern. I plan to conduct a FACEBOOK A/B testing to find more support for the proposed effect in a field setting (study 3). To test the mechanism, I conducted study 4 and demonstrated that the feeling of pride mediated the effect of CRM on the increased preference for visual salience. In the next stage, I am going to conduct 3 more studies to test the moderating role of the visual disclosure of CRM (study 5), price discount (study 6), and moral identity (study 7). All the first 7 studies are conducted online. In the end, I plan to replicate the finding in an offline field setting to increase the external validity (study 8).

TABLE 1**STUDIES FOR THE CURRENT RESEARCH**

Objective	Study	Experiment Design	Sample
To test whether CRM impacts preference for visual salience	Study 1	<i>Online experiment</i> One factor between-subject design (CRM information: present vs. absent) Using water bottles as stimuli	N= 100 Consumers from the USA recruited from <i>MTurk</i>
	Study 2	<i>Online experiment</i> One factor between-subject design (CRM information: present vs. absent) Using T-shirts as stimuli	N=298 Students from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University
	Study 3 (Planned)	<i>FACEBOOK A/B testing</i> Two factors between-subject design 2 (CRM information: present vs. absent) × 2 (visual salience: high vs. low) Using backpacks as stimuli	FACEBOOK A/B testing conducted among users from the US
To test the mediating effect of the feeling of pride	Study 4	<i>Online experiment</i> One factor between-subject design (CRM information: present vs. absent) Using T-shirts as stimuli	N=400 Consumers from the USA recruited from <i>MTurk</i>
To test the moderating effect of the visual disclosure of CRM	Study 5 (Planned)	<i>Online experiment</i> One factor between-subject design (no CRM vs. CRM with a visual disclosure vs. CRM without a visual disclosure) Using T-shirts as stimuli	Expecting N=400 Consumers from the USA recruited from <i>MTurk</i>
To test the moderating effect of the price discount	Study 6 (Planned)	<i>Online experiment</i> Two factors between-subject design 2 (CRM information: present vs. absent) × 2 (price discount: yes vs. no) Using bags as stimuli	Expecting N =400 Consumers from the UK recruited from <i>Prolific</i>

To test the moderating effect of the moral identity	Study 7 (Planned)	<i>Online experiment</i> One factor between-subject design 2 (CRM information: present vs. absent) measuring the moral identity Using notebooks as stimuli	Expecting N =400 Consumers from the UK recruited from <i>Prolific</i>
To replicate the finding in a field setting	Study 8 (Planned)	<i>Offline behavior study</i> One factor between-subject design (CRM information: present vs. absent) Using notebooks, water bottles, and mouse pads as stimuli	Expecting N =400 Students from a Chinese University

3.2. Study 1

Study 1 is to test the impact of cause-related marketing (CRM) on preference for a visually salient product. It is predicted that consumers are more likely to prefer the high visual salience product over a low visual salience product if they were shown the CRM information of the brand as compared to no CRM information.

3.2.1. Method

Participants. A total of 100 participants were recruited from Amazon Mturk (42.6% female, $M_{age} = 41.61$).

Design and procedure. This study followed a one-factor (CRM information: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. At the beginning of this study, participants were shown a brief introduction of a virtual household brand, KONM. Then, they were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions. In the CRM condition, participants were told that KONM pledged to give 100% of the net profits from its water bottles to the NO Kid Hungry charity to help children with food problems. In the no CRM condition, participants presented water bottles

from KONM with no CRM information (see Appendix A). After that, participants indicated their preference for a visually salient water bottle over a less salient water bottle on a slider from 1 to 100 (Milosavljevic et al., 2012; Martin-Consuegea et al., 2010). At last, demographic information (i.e., age and gender) was collected.

3.2.2. Results

A one-way ANOVA with the presence of CRM information as the independent variable and preference for a high visual salience product as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect ($F(1, 99) = 6.941, p = .010; \eta^2 = .07$). To be more specific, participants preferred the high visual salience water bottle ($M=58.98$) over the low visual salience one ($M = 38.24$; see Figure 3).

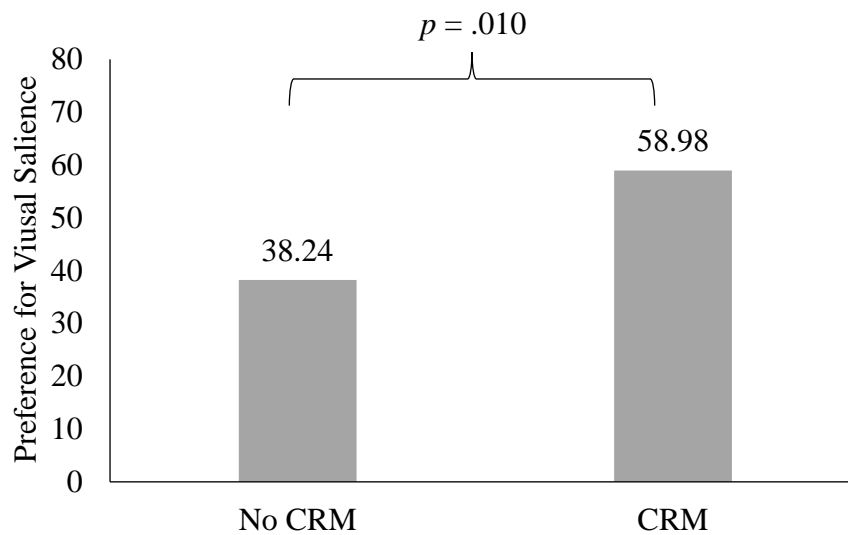
3.2.3. Discussion

The result of study 1 provides initial support for H1. It demonstrated that the CRM increased consumers' preference for the visually salient product. Some might argue that the effect is also likely to be driven by the difference perception of color hues. In this study, the visually salient color, mint green, is related to green marketing. As a result, the matching between the color green and CRM might lead to the observed effect. However, the cause in this study is related to helping children and not environment. Participants might not even think about green products or environment friendliness in this study. Considering the different perceptions of color hues, I manipulated visual salience by the pattern size to test the robustness of this effect in

the next study. I changed the product category and CRM information in study 2. I also recruited participants from another cultural background.

FIGURE 3

THE RESULTS OF STUDY 1



3.3. Study 2

Study 1 provides initial support for the effect of CRM on consumers' preference for visual salience. Study 2 is to replicate the observed effect from study 1. In this study, participants were asked to make a purchase decision for T-shirts either with or without CRM information. It is predicted that consumers are more likely to choose the high visual-salience T-shirt over a low visual-salience one if they were shown the CRM information of the brand as compared to no CRM information.

3.3.1. Method

Participants. In total, 298 students from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University completed this study (67.1% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 19.48$).

Design and procedure. This study employed a one-factor (CRM information: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. In both conditions, participants were shown a virtual fashion brand, KONM, and the same two T-shirts from KONM. The two T-shirts are either with a large or small pattern (see Appendix B; Pieters, Wedel, & Zhang, 2007; Han et al., 2010). Participants were asked to imagine that they would like to purchase a T-shirt from KONM and make a choice from the two T-shirts. Participants in the CRM condition were told that KONM will donate 40% of the sales of its T-shirts to the Save the Children Fund, while participants in the no CRM condition did not see such information.

3.3.2. Results

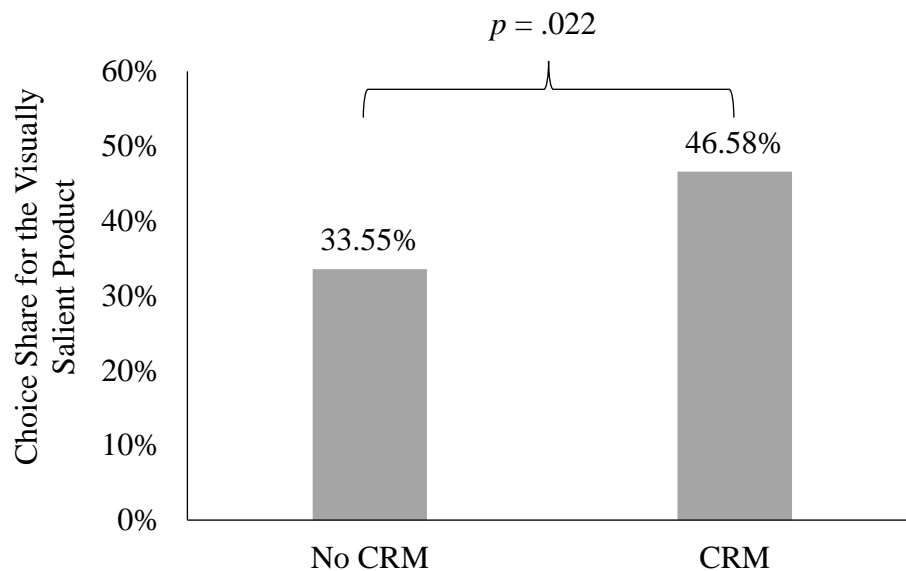
The chi-square test was used to test differences in T-shirt choices across the conditions. The result showed that the choice share of the high visual-salience T-shirt in the CRM conditions (46.58%) is higher than the no CRM condition (33.55%; $\chi^2(1) = 5.27, p = .022$; see Figure 4).

3.3.3. Discussion

Consistent with the result of study 1, this study showed that CRM information increased consumers' choices for high visual-salience products. The effect of CRM information on preference for high visual-salience products is robust in the online experiment setting. In the next study, I plan to conduct a field study on Facebook to find more support for the proposed effect.

FIGURE 4

THE RESULTS OF STUDY 2



3.4. Study 3 (Planned)

Study 3 examines the impact of CRM information on consumers' preferences in a field setting through the Facebook Ads Platform. This study follows a 2 (CRM information: present vs. absent) \times 2 (visual salience: high vs. low) between-subjects design. Four different ads will be posted according to the study design (see Appendix C). The click-through rate of Ads should

reflect the actual purchase interest of products. I will compare the click-through rate across the four ads. It is predicted that the presence of CRM information will increase the click-through rate of the ad for the visually salient product.

3.4.1. Method

Participants. The Facebook ad platforms will distribute the ads in the USA only. There is no limitation on age, gender, or other demographic characteristics. I will set the daily budget based on a 90% test power estimated by the Facebook platform. The final number of reach (i.e., unique people exposed) is determined by the budget and the algorithm of the platform.

Design and procedure. I created 4 ads for 2 backpacks: 1) a low visual-salience backpack with CRM information, 2) a low visual-salience backpack without CRM information, 3) a high visual-salience backpack with CRM information, and 4) a high visual-salience backpack without CRM information (see Appendix C). I will use the Facebook A/B testing service, which will randomly assign audience exposure across the four ads and ultimately ensure the reach across the four conditions is statistically comparable. If the audience is interested in the backpack, they can click the ad and be directed to the homepage of the backpack Brand.

3.4.2. Predicted Results

The Facebook ad platform records the number of reaches, impressions, and clicks for each ad. I will conduct a logistic regression with the presence of CRM information (0 = absent, 1 = present) and visual salience (0 = low, 1 = high) as the independent variable, and click on the ad

(0 = no click, 1= click) as the dependent variable. The result will reveal a significant interaction. The contrast analysis will show that the click-through rate is significantly higher for the high visual-salience backpack versus the low visual-salience one when the CRM information is presented. Conversely, the click-through rates for the two backpacks have no significant difference.

3.4.3. Discussion

This study will provide support for the impact of CRM on consumers' preference for visual salience in a real setting. To sum up, the first 3 studies show that CRM information increases preference for visually salient products. In the next study, I investigated the mechanism underlining this process.

3.5. Study 4

The first 3 studies provide convergent evidence for the main effect of CRM on preference for visual salience. Study 4 is designed to test the mediation of pride. I predict that the CRM will trigger pride and thus lead to a higher preference for visual salience.

3.5.1. Method

Participants. In total, 400 participants were recruited from Amazon Mturk (56.8% female, $M_{age}= 40.31$).

Design and procedure. This study adopted a 2(CRM information: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. In the beginning, participants were shown a virtual fashion brand, KONM. Next, they were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: present vs. absent CRM information. The CRM information is the same as what I used in study 2. After showing all the information, participants were asked to indicate their preference for a high visual-salience T-shirt over a low visual-salience one (see Appendix B). Then, participants reported pride using 4-item measurements on 7-point scales (1= not at all, 7=a lot; Antonetti & Maklan, 2014): “If you were to purchase a T-shirt from KOMN, how intensely would you feel proud of yourself/ fulfilled/ good about yourself/ pleased?”. In the end, the demographic information (i.e., age and gender) was collected.

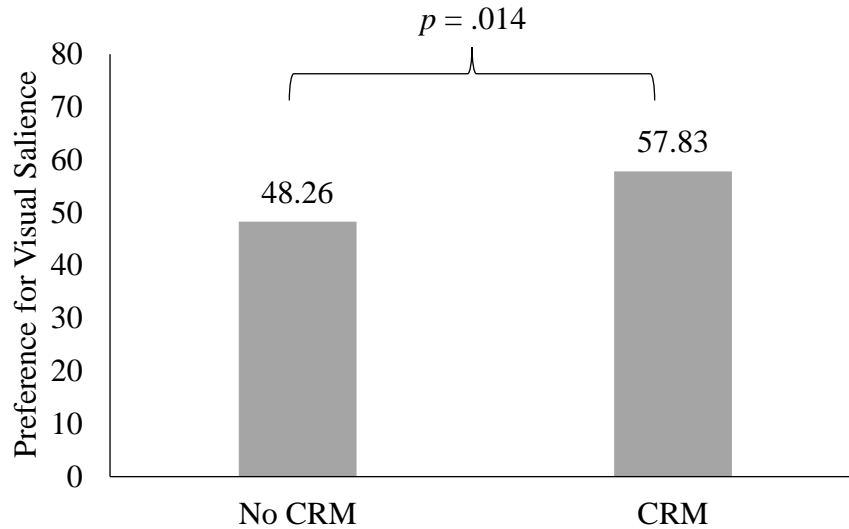
3.5.2. Results

I conducted a one-way ANOVA with the presence of CRM information as the independent variable and preference for the high visual-salience T-shirt as the dependent variable. The result revealed a significant main effect ($F(1, 399) = 6.083, p = .014; \eta^2 = .02$). Specifically, participants who were presented with CRM information showed a higher preference for the high visual-salience T-shirt ($M = 57.83$) than participants who did not see any CRM information ($M = 48.26$; see Figure 5).

Importantly, I tested whether pride mediated the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience. Bootstrapping analyses (PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrapping samples; Hayes, 2013) revealed a significant indirect effect of CRM information on the preference for visual salience through pride (3.9449, 95% CI = [1.7086, 6.7092]).

FIGURE 5

THE RESULTS OF STUDY 4



3.5.3. Discussion

The results from study 4 provide direct support for the proposed underlying mechanism. Consistent with the H2, I found that the effect of CRM information on consumers' preference for visual saliency is indeed driven by a heightened pride. In the following studies, I plan to examine the boundary condition of the CRM effect.

3.6. Study 5 (Planned)

In this study, I plan to examine the role of visual disclosure of CRM. It will be a 3 (no CRM, CRM with a visual disclosure, CRM without a visual disclosure) between-subjects design.

It is predicted that visual disclosure of CRM will attenuate the impact of CRM on reference for visual salience. More specifically, when charity cue is not visually communicated through the product (i.e., visual disclosure of CRM is absent), CRM (vs. no CRM) will increase consumers' preference for a visually salient product. However, when the visual cue of charity is explicitly communicated (i.e., visual disclosure of CRM is present), such an effect of CRM on consumers' preference for a visually salient product will be weakened.

3.6.1. Method

Participants. I will recruit 400 USA participants from the *MTurk* in total.

Design and procedure. This study will be a 3 (no CRM, CRM with a visual disclosure, CRM without a visual disclosure) between-subjects design. Participants will be randomly assigned to the 3 conditions. In the no CRM condition, participants will read a brief introduction of a virtual brand. In the CRM condition, in addition to the brand information, participants will be told that the brand is partnering with a famous charity “Unite Help” to donate 50% of the profits from T-shirts. In reality, the charity is virtual. In the visual disclosure condition, the CRM information will be accompanied by the charity logo and told that the T-shirt will be decorated with the charity logo (see Appendix D). However, participants in no visual disclosure condition will not be shown the charity logo but they will be presented the same T-shirts as the participants in the disclosure condition. Participants in all the conditions will be asked to indicate whether they prefer the high visual salience T-shirt over the low one on a slider (0 = Definitely the T-shirt with a small pattern, 100 = Definitely the T-shirt with a large pattern). At last, the demographic information (i.e., age and gender) will be collected.

3.6.2. Expected Results

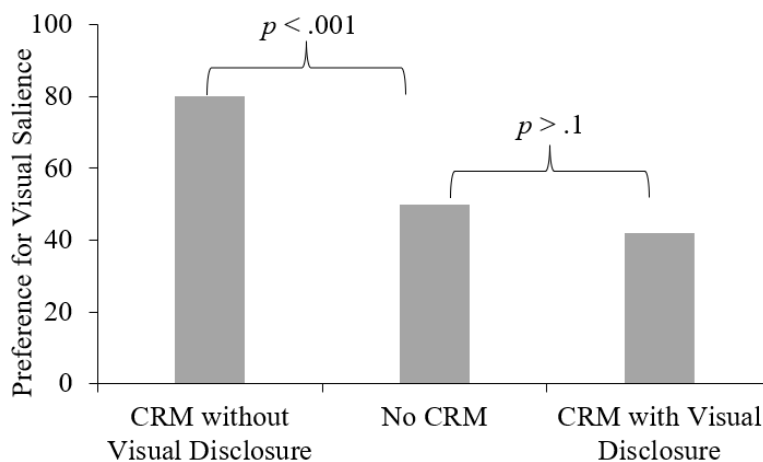
First, I will conduct an ANOVA to test whether the preferences for high visual salience have a significant difference between the no CRM condition and the CRM with no disclosure conditions. I expect that consistent with the previous study, the preference for high visual salience will be significantly higher in the CRM with no disclosure condition as compared with no CRM condition (see Figure 6).

Second, I will compare the preference for visual salience between the two conditions: no CRM vs. CRM with the visual disclosure. The result of ANOVA is expected to show no significant difference in the preference for visual salience (see Figure 6).

To sum up, the results of this study will replicate the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience only when there is no visual disclosure of CRM.

FIGURE 6

THE EXPECTED RESULTS OF STUDY 5



3.7. Study 6 (Planned)

Study 6 is designed to test the moderation of sales promotion. This study is a 2 (CRM information: present vs. absent) \times 2 (discount: yes vs. no) between-subjects design. It is predicted that CRM can increase consumers' preference for visual salience only when there is no discount on cause-related products. When there is a discount on the products, CRM will not change consumers' preference for visual salience.

3.7.1. Method

Participants. I plan to recruit 400 UK participants from the Prolific platform, following a common rule of at least participants per cell.

Design and procedure. This study will be a 2(CRM information: present vs. absent) \times 2 (discount: 50% off vs. no) between-subjects design. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. In all conditions, participants will read the same brief introduction of a fashion brand. In addition, those in the CRM condition will be told that 50% of the proceeds from the bags will be donated to a global charity to help with hygiene poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa. However, participants in the no CRM condition will not read such information. After that, participants will be shown the bags from the brand and asked to indicate whether they prefer a high visual salience bag or a low one (see Appendix D). In the discount condition, the two bags will be shown along with a discount label (see Appendix D). In the no discount condition, there is no such label. Then, participants are asked to indicate their

preference for the two bags via a slider (0 = Definity the bag with a small pattern, 100 = Definity the bag with a large pattern). Then, participants will be asked to indicate the feeling of pride using the same measurement as what we used in study 4 (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014). In the end, the demographic information (i.e., age and gender) will be collected.

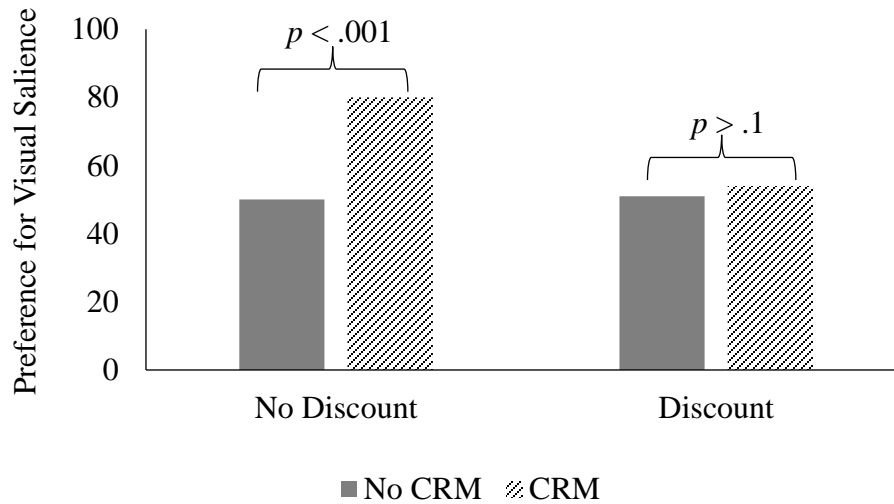
3.7.2. Expected Results

To analyze the moderated effect, I will conduct Bootstrapping analyses (PROCESS Model 1 with 5,000 bootstrapping samples; Hayes, 2013). I predict that there will be a significant interaction between CRM and discount on preference for visual salience (see Figure 7). Specifically, when there is no discount, the preference for visual salience will be higher in the CRM condition as compared with the no CRM condition. However, when there is a 50% discount on the products, the preference for visual salience is not different significantly between the CRM and no CRM conditions.

To test the moderated mediation of the feeling of pride, I will use the PROCESS model 7. I predict that the moderated mediation effect is significant. The interaction of CRM and price discount on the preference for visual salience is mediated by the feeling of pride.

FIGURE 7

THE EXPECTED RESULTS OF STUDY 7



3.8. Study 7 (Planned)

The purpose of this study is to test the moderating role of moral identity. In this study, I will measure moral identity. It is expected that the observed effect of CRM on preference for visual salience in previous studies will be stronger among consumers with a high (vs. low) symbolized moral identity. To be more specific, participants who have a higher level of moral identity symbolization will show a higher preference for visual salience when choosing cause-related products.

3.8.1. Method

Participants. I plan to recruit 400 USA participants from the Prolific platform, following a common rule of at least participants per cell.

Design and procedure. I will adapt a 2(CRM information: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the two conditions. Participants in the CRM condition will be told that the profits from notebooks will go to a fund to contribute to the development of the youth. Then, participants will be asked to indicate whether they prefer a high visual salience notebook or a low visual salience notebook (see Appendix F) on a 7-points scale (1 = definitely the notebook with a small pattern, 9 = definitely the notebook with a small pattern). After that, I will measure the moral identity with a 7-points scale (Aquino & Americus, 2002; see Appendix G).

3.8.2. Expected Results

I will test the moderating effect of moral identity via Bootstrapping analyses (PROCESS Model 1 with 5,000 bootstrapping samples; Hayes, 2013), with CRM as the independent variable (0=no CRM, 1=CRM), and preference for visual salience as the dependent variable. I predict that the results will show a significant interaction between CRM and moral identity on preference for visual salience. As moral identity is a continuous variable, I will use the Johnson-Neyman “floodlight” approach to explore the interaction (Spiller et al., 2013). The positive effect of CRM on preference for visual salience is expected to be increased by the moral identity symbolization. The preference for visual salience will be higher among consumers who have a relatively higher score on moral identity symbolization when the notebooks are cause related.

3.9. Study 8 (Planned)

Study 8 is an offline behavior study. Previous studies are all conducted online, and no real purchase behaviors are observed. Study 8 is designed to test the implication of CRM on product selection in a field setting. I expect this study will replicate the findings in previous studies.

3.9.1. Method

Participants. I plan to conduct this study at a Chinese university for 2 weeks.

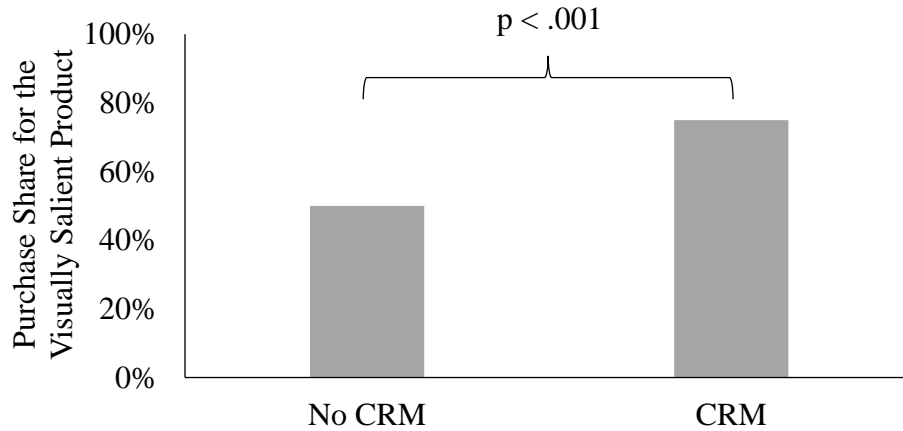
Design and produce. This study follows a 2(CRM information: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. I plan to set up a standing booth with four different products (i.e., notebooks, water bottles, and mouse pads), which students are very familiar with and have a relatively high usage frequency. For each product category, I will create two pairs of either a high or low visually salient design. A separate pre-test of all the products will also be conducted to choose the proper products and check the manipulation. In the CRM condition, students will be told that all the profits will go to the UNICEF to help children. For each purchase, a research assistant who is blind to the research purpose will record the gender.

3.9.2. Expected Results

I expect the results will replicate the effect of the CRM on preference for visual salience. It is predicted that the results of a chi-square will show that students are more likely to purchase the high visual salience products when they are cause-related (see Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

THE EXPECTED RESULT OF STUDY 8



CHAPTER 4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research investigates how CRM change consumers' preference. The results of experiments demonstrate that consumers are more likely to choose products with a relatively high visual salience design, such as the vivid color (study 1) and large patterns (study 2 & study 4). This effect is robust across different product categories and among various consumer groups with different demographic features. This research also reveals that this effect is driven by the feeling of pride (study 4 and study 6). In addition, I plan to have one more online field study (i.e., FACEBOOK A/B testing; study 3) to examine the observed effect of the online experiments. In terms of the boundary conditions, I will investigate moderators from product levels and consumer levels. Specifically, the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience will disappear when there is a visual disclosure of CRM attached to the products such as the charity logo (study

5) or when there is a discount on the products (study 6). In terms of consumers' features, the impact of CRM on preference for visual salience will be strengthened among consumers who tend to symbolize their moral identities (study 7). At last, I will conduct an offline behavior study and expect to replicate the findings in a real field setting (study 8).

4.1. Theoretical Contribution

This research makes theoretical contributions in several ways. First, this research contributes to the impact of CRM on consumer behaviors. Existing literature mainly focuses on how to design CRM to increase consumers' evaluation, purchase intention, and willingness to pay through the description of CRM, the fitness between brand and charities, and donation amount and forms (e.g., Arora & Henderson, 2007; Das et al., 2016; Folse, Niedrich, & Grau, 2010; Samu & Wymer, 2014; Tsiros & Irmak, 2020). Research also documents how product types and brand features influence the effectiveness of CRM (Guerreiro, Rita, & Trigueiros, 2015; Lafferty, 2009). Some researchers also explore the effect of consumer features and beliefs (Youn & Kim, 2018; Vock, Van Dolen & Kolk, 2013). However, little attention is paid to the product design. The current research shed new light on how to design or how choose products for CRM in terms of visual salience. The results show that when products are cause-related, consumers will be more likely to choose products with relatively high visual salience.

Second, this research gives us a better understanding of the emotional value of visual salience. Extant research has documented the influence of visual salience on consumers' judgment and choice (Folkes & Matte, 2003; Gidlöf et al., 2017). In general, visual salience is attention-grabbing and thus biases consumers' preference and judgment of volume and size.

Besides, visual salience has social values such as signaling social status and obtaining public recognition (e.g., Dannenmaier & Thumin, 1964; Lee & Shrum, 2012). However, little attention is paid to the affective value of visual salience. The current research contributes to the existing literature by showing that the purchase of visually salient products is a way to express the self-conscious emotion, pride.

Third, this research introduces CRM to visual marketing via emotional value. Previous research in visual marketing focuses on how specific graphic features (e.g., shape, color, empty space) influence consumers' perception, judgments, and decision-making (Jiang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2014; Gupta & Hagtvedt, 2021). The current research examines how consumers' preferences can be changed by marketing practice (i.e., CRM). When products are cause-related, the purchase of such products activates the feeling of pride and thus increases the preference for visual salience. However, this effect will disappear if consumers can detect the CRM via the product design such as attaching the charity logo. If sellers provide a discount on cause-related products, CRM will not increase preference for visual salient anymore. The observed effect of CRM is strengthened among consumers who score high in moral identity symbolization.

4.2. Practical Contribution

The research is meaningful for marketing practice in various ways. First, it contributes to the selection or design of cause-related products. Marketers usually select a product line for CRM or even design a new product for CRM. It is important for them to know which kinds of product design consumers will prefer. The current research shows that products with visually

salient designs work better for CRM. As a result, marketers can decorate products with eye-catching patterns and colors.

However, marketers should also be careful of the visual design, and they'd better not incorporate the visual cues for the CRM. If consumers can recognize the prosocial cues from the product design, the positive effect of CRM on visually salient products will go. For example, it is better not to print the charity color or any thankful information on products.

Marketers should also be careful about sales promotion for cause-related products. In general, price promotions are a good way to attract consumers. However, such benefits to consumers can crowd out the altruism motivation and thus hurts the positive impact of CRM on visually salient products.

At last, this research shows that consumers' moral identity plays a role in the effect of CRM. When moral identity symbolization is high, the effect of CRM on preference for visual salience is increased. In some circumstances, it is important to signal moral identity to others. For example, when forming a relationship with others, it is important to show nice deeds and thus it benefits individuals to choose visually salient products to symbolize moral identity. This suggests marketers consider more about the consumers' needs and beliefs when they choose products for CRM.

4.3. Limitation and Future Research

There are several limitations of the current research and some related topics that can be explored in the future domain. In this research, I manipulated visual salience via the color and pattern size of the products. Visual salience can also come from shapes and even a combination

of several different graphic features. In future research, I can test the robustness of the effect across different forms of visual salience.

In addition to the visual salience from product design, it is possible that visual salience can be shaped by the contrast between products and background. Even products with low visual salience design can be visually salient via placement. For example, a plain white T-shirt can be salient when it is displayed among several red t-shirts or when the background of the white T-shirt is black. It is prevalent to adopt contrast in advertising and product placements. In future research, I can explore whether the CRM effect on preference for visual salience can be extended to advertising and product placements.

The current research shows that the increased preference for visual salience is driven by the feeling of pride from purchasing cause-related products. In addition to the feeling of pride, it is possible that consumers feel happy when they purchase cause-related products, which in turn increases arousal levels. Past research shows that visual salience can also elicit a high arousal level (Wilms & Oberfeld, 2018). Following this logic, the preference for visual salience can be driven by the matching of arousal levels. In future research, I can explore more on the influence of arousal levels.

At last, future research can investigate more about the effect of brand features. In the current research, I explore the boundary conditions in terms of product design, marketing strategy (i.e., sales promotion), and consumer features. The effect of brand features is unexplored. It is possible that brand types can play a role in the mechanism. For example, luxury brands usually attract social attention. It remains to examine how such “brand salience” interact with “product salience”. I can explore more from brand levels in the future.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Stimuli for Study 1



Low Visual Salience



High Visual Salience

Appendix B: Stimuli for Study 2 and Study 4



Low Visual Saliency



High Visual Saliency

Appendix C: Stimuli for Study 3



Low Visual Saliency



High Visual Saliency

Appendix D: Stimuli for Study 5



Low Visual Salience



High Visual Salience

Appendix E: Stimuli for Study 6



Low Visual Salience, no discount



High Visual Salience, no discount



Low Visual Salience, 50% Off



High Visual Salience, 50% Off

Appendix F: Stimuli for Study 7



Low Visual Saliency



High Visual Saliency

Appendix G: Measurement for Moral Identity

Here are some characteristics that might describe a person:

Caring
Compassionate
Fair
Friendly
Generous
Helpful
Hardworking
Honest
Kind

The person with these characteristics could be you or it could be someone else.

For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer a few questions from the next screen.

<Page Break>

Caring
Compassionate
Fair
Friendly
Generous
Helpful
Hardworking
Honest
Kind

How well the following statement reflects your view about yourself? Please indicate to what extent you agree with each statement below (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree).

1. It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics. (I)
2. Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am. (I)
3. I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics. (S)
4. I would be ashamed to be a person who had these characteristics. (I) (R)

5. The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics. (S)
6. The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics. (S)
7. Having these characteristics is not really important to me. (I) (R)
8. The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations. (S)
9. I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics. (S)
10. I strongly desire to have these characteristics. (I)

*(I): internalized moral identity, (S) symbolized moral identity, (R) reverse coded items