BRAND ACTIVISM INDUCED CONSUMER ALIENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Brand activism, or purpose-driven branding, is a special application of cause-related marketing (C-RM) which has become an increasingly important response to consumers who demand brands speak out on important social issues. Although brand managers aim to support consumer segment interests with appropriate strategies, they risk alienating some consumers. In this research, consumer alienation induced by brand positioning toward socially divisive causes, is investigated and reported in two studies. The results suggest that brands can experience significantly reduced purchase intention and brand attraction due to socially alienated consumers. This effect also emerges among consumers that are neutral toward the cause or causes chosen by the brand, suggesting that neutral customers often turn away from brands that take strong positions on polarizing social issues.

Keywords: Cause-Related Marketing, Brand Activism, Alienation, Segmentation, Social Cause Marketing, Consumer Activism

INTRODUCTION

Digital media and social networks have facilitated self-expression through brand adoption, enhancing brand awareness when brands support shared social, political, and environmental causes. Recently, consumer activism through branding has surged, with a focus on whether brands support socially and politically sensitive issues. Consumers now expect companies to showcase their values alongside their products and services (Guzman and Davis 2017; Becker-Olsen et al 2006; Muniz et al 2019; Nan and Heo 2007; Torelli et al 2012). Thus, in an increasingly polarized world, personal consumption decisions are often seen as a way to support or oppose evolving public opinions on social, political, and environmental issues (Chan and Ilicic, 2019).

In response, brands have voluntarily or involuntarily been induced to participate in framing socially desirable issues. Over the past decade, data suggests that 68% of consumers expect brands to be transparent about their values, while 63% want companies to take a stand on the social, cultural, environmental, and political issues that they care about the most (Christie 2021; Accenture 2018). Similarly, 64% of consumers would either buy or boycott a brand due to their position on a social issue (Edelman 2018). This leading to a rise in politically conscious brands demonstrating that brands can stand for a purpose beyond the product or service they offer (Hsu 2017). However, brands that publicly advocate for or against specific activist causes risk alienating segments of even their previously loyal consumers, who might resent the chosen social agenda or the idea that the brand is taking sides at all (Bhagwat et al, 2020). Consequently, consumers may view a firm as disingenuous if it appears to be taking an opportunistic social position for financial gain. The more partisan or controversial the cause, the more amplified the effects of the firm's positioning strategy. For example, Anheuser-Busch InBev's beer brand Bud Light saw a 28% decrease in U.S. sales-related revenue over a three-month period (April-June 2023) due to their digital marketing promotion featuring a transgender social celebrity (Market Watch 2023; Newsweek 2023). While some outlets view their loss of sales and market share as a partisan (conservative) boycott of the brand, others suggest that it is a more subtle reaction to brand image inconsistency. Ultimately, the rapid reaction from core customers underscores the fragility of performance metrics in a hyper-political social environment.

Whether in response to consumers who want their brands to "stand for something," and partly because of deep commitment to the causes themselves, many firms have become purpose-driven in their own right. Purpose-driven activism involves the purposeful adoption of a socially relevant position by a brand or firm on a particular social, economic, environmental, or political issue (Butler-Madden 2017). This activism might be due to an alignment with the firm's core values and vision, for good publicity, to help the business's bottom line, or for any number of other reasons (Hodge 2020). Recent research indicates that brands which are seen as "purpose-driven" have experienced a

brand valuation increase of 175 percent over the past 12 years compared to the median growth rate of 86 percent (Christie 2020).

The effectiveness of a cause-related marketing strategy is driven by the idea that consumers seek self-affirmation from the social constructs around them. They find comfort in engaging with brands that support and do not contradict their own belief systems. Thus, consumers, as stakeholders, have a vested interest in a brand narrative that aligns with their own worldview.

This research is motivated by the alienation consumers feel when a brand fails to support social issues they follow or migrates away from a formally established point of view. In two studies, alienation is measured as a result of a perceived incongruence in social positioning between a brand and the respondent. The effects of brand alienation in turn impacts brand attraction, avoidance, positive word-of-mouth, likelihood to buy, and price sensitivity. The remainder of this article builds upon social identity, consumer alienation, and brand activism literature to support each research study. Study results and ensuing discussion suggest consumer alienation is significantly impacted by positioning brand toward social cause, which results which impacts brand performance measures.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Brands Role in a Social Context

Brands provide value through functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996), extending beyond product or service attributes into a broader context (Holt, 2004; Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2007), where culture is partly defined by the brands within it (Banet-Weiser, 2012). As people seek to find their identity within the context of their social experiences, brands help create associations with meaningful features of their world. In short, brands help provide consumers with a sense of *groundedness* which is defined as a connection to place, people, and their past (Eichinger et al 2022).

Being 'grounded' to one's place, people, and past is reflected in a community with which one identifies. *Social Identity* theory provides a valid framework to explain the formation of an individual's self-concept (or identity) through membership in relevant social groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). By belonging to and identifying with larger self-affirming social groups people achieve social and emotional goals including a need for positive (affective) distinctiveness (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Moreover, social classification within a group or community allows one to locate themselves in a social environment and, in doing so, it simplifies sophisticated and complex social networks and groupings. Identification within a social group includes experiencing group successes and failures, which serve to enhance the degree of identification (Foote 1951, Tolman 1943, Brown 1986). Social identity theory has been used to explain ingroup and outgroup attitudes and behaviors predicting that an individual acts on their cognitive inclination toward group membership while harboring suspicion toward outgroups (Tajfel 1974, Tajfel and Turner 1979). As a result, group members feel personally attacked when they perceive their ingroup to be attacked, criticized, or disparaged which creates a desire to defend their group while attacking the offending source.

While external (outgroup) pressure exists so also does ingroup friction. Consider if key referent group members were to signal an identity that doesn't align with or support the group's ethos at large. In application intragroup conflict occurs to the extent that group members disagree, ultimately leading to misunderstanding and disenfranchisement as established group beliefs evolve (Chizhik et al 2009). In the case of a brand community value is co-created by the consumer given they find usefulness in being a community member (Gambetti and Graffigna 2015). Following Levy (1959) and later Iglesias and Ind (2020) brands promise symbolic benefit which connect to consumers 'ego, self-enhancement and position within a community" (Iglesias and Ind, pg. 710). As such, if the brand (as a community referent) delivers messages that are inconsistent with community norms, community members might feel rejected or alienated. Driven by a desire to belong, individuals may experience community alienation when they no longer identify with a community from which they once drew social acceptance.

Social and Consumer Alienation

Building on the concept of social isolation, Fromm (1955) defined alienation as a social experience where individuals feel like strangers or aliens. Moreover, alienation in the social sciences is examined as a psychological state of mind which is reflected by individual's attitudes and feelings (Clark 1959) and includes a sense of disavowment or estrangement from the culture in which one belongs (Nettler 1957). It is also studied in behavioral modeling as an intermediate psychological state between social or cultural conditions with behavior that includes social withdrawal and self-isolation (Shuptrine, Pruden and Longman 1977). Finally, Lambert (1981) contends that alienation helps explain disaffection, disgruntlement, deviance, and other feelings of isolation. Relatedly, social exclusion and the related construct of social isolation consists of being alone, isolated, or ostracized by other individual or social group. Being deprived of social acceptance can have a significant impact on one's psychological well-being.

Social exclusion can also lead to aggression, decreased helping behavior, and a desire not to conform (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarooco, and Twenge 2005). As a coping mechanism in reaction to social exclusion Wan Xu and Ding (2013) suggest that people who possess a strong self-image or feel personally unique seek products that strengthen their self-image or personal view of themselves to reflect their unique self.

Meanwhile, consumer alienation suggests that people feel unable to influence or participate in the community of a brand will feel like an outsider leading to negative and cynical opinions (Durand and Lambert 1985). It is magnified when the consumer realizes that a firm's product offering is not intended for them, which they interpret to mean that they are to be excluded from the brand community fostered by the firm. Such feelings encourage the consumer toward the rejection of brands, as one feeling of alienation affects their participation (Johnson 1995). Allison (1978) provides a working understanding of consumer alienation focused on powerlessness as defined by consumers that are unable to influence the market, help a firm make market decisions, or control market circumstances for a brand. Normlessness further magnifies consumer disenfranchisement suggesting that the firm is failing to behave in fair or customary behavior relative to the customer expectations.

In sum, we propose that consumer's social schema and understanding of the world around them include brands (and brand communities) with which they identify. As social actors brands serve to support and reinforce social norms the consumer expects as they actively seek self-image - brand image congruencies (Amed et al 2019). Indeed, brands that participate as social actors generate both positive and negative reactions as their stakeholders assess the consistency of self-brand similarity (Mukherjee and Althuizen 2020). The conclusion one can draw is that when a brand takes an active social position which deviates from their community's expectations, community members may feel a sense of alienation resulting in negative brand behaviors.

The Social Paradigm of Brand Activism

As an outcome of various stakeholder demands, business executives are increasingly integrating political effects into their decision-making processes. Moorman (2020) reports that 47% of marketing leaders consider political issues as they make product alterations. Be this pressure from employees, investors or consumers the reality is that a firm's ability to participate in a community's economy requires participation on sociopolitical dimension as well.

Defined as a "firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support or opposition to one side of a partisan issue," Bhagwat et al (pg. 2, 2020) suggests political activism is a function of active political participation. That is, as firms support (or oppose) an issue, they 1) choose a specific position on a political spectrum given the issue has partisan anchors; and 2) they take a significant (versus a passive) stance on the issue. As a result, they impact stakeholders through such virtue signaling to achieve some outcome. Organizational perspectives that motivate the firm include: a goal to remain authentic and true; be a good corporate citizen; establish themselves as a social authority or leader; secure a financial position through increased sales or market share; as an educator or instructor given their expertise; as following their mission given it's a political one; and finally, as a reflection of employee activist sentiment (Moorman 2020).

Brand activism is unique given it may yield a negative or even contentious reaction from stakeholders. This is, in contrast to traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) and cause-related marketing (C-RM) efforts, that generally produce net positive effects based on participation in non-controversial social issues (Mukherjee and Althuizen 2020). Yet, today's consumer increasingly expects that brands will be proactive in flexing their social influence, advancing agendas that fall under *woke activism*. Such tactics emphasize issues that nudge people toward pro-social outcomes and eschew traditional social norms. Such an expectation by consumers works when firms are authentic, deliver on their promises, and are transparent in separating their profit motives from their social motives (Mirzaei et al 2022). Beyond the motive of anticipated profit, increased sales, market share, and public relations motives held by the firm, there are altruistic reasons for firms to engage in such partnerships and may be thought of as a *social-alliance* motive. Underpinning the firm's relationship to society is a social alliance which is formed to alleviate some social problem which is mutually agreed to be in both the firm and the charity's interest to solve. Therefore, social activism as a form of cause-related marketing is a strategic tool that may be used to perform social responsibility acts on behalf of the firm subsequently supporting their CSR agenda (Liu and Ko 2011).

As noted, the consequences of implementing C-RM programs are generally positive especially when the cause is universally supported, however in the recent socio-political environment it is becoming more likely to see firms engage in socially provocative causes. Activist-like behavior is likely to aid in brand positioning toward cause supporting market segments, yet simultaneously drawing the brand away from non-supportive segments of the same market. Such consumers are likely to disengage from the brand as they feel abandoned and can no longer identify with the brand. As Bhagwat et al (2020) conclude, the reward for activism when it aligns with core firm values is affirmation by targeted market segments.

This research follows (Flight and Severing 2017) who investigate the role self-concept plays in drawing individuals toward or pushing individuals away from brands that use activist-related marketing. As they suggest, consumers compare their self-image with the image of an activist brand projects in turn preferring brands that are consistent with the consumer's self-concept (Parker 2009; Sirgy 1982). It follows that if a consumer and firm support the same social causes then they will share self-concept ideals. Flight and Severing (2017) further contend that if both a consumer and firm concern themselves with the same social cause they will share self-concept ideals, supporting the consumer-brand congruence effect. Furthermore, the bond consumers form with brands because of shared social interests will extend positively to attraction, promotion and ultimately purchase intention. They find that incongruency created between a social cause supported by a firm and the self-concept of the consumer is positively associated with consumer alienation which is both negatively associated with attraction toward a firm, brand, or product, and positively associated with avoidance of the firm, brand, or product.

Moving forward, two studies are conducted. The first study measures alienation resulting from an incongruent state between the consumer and brand due to a cause-related marketing campaign. It further measures the effect alienation has on brand promotion. The second study measures the effect of consumer alienation has on marketing-related outcomes including brand attachment, purchase intention, and price sensitivity.

HYPOTHESES

Self-Brand Incongruence on Consumer Alienation, Brand Attraction, and Brand Promotion

Self-congruency theory suggests that consumers compare their self-concept with the image that a brand projects and, in turn, preferred brands are those that are consistent with the consumer's self-concept (Parker 2009; Sirgy 1982). It follows that if a consumer and firm support the same social causes then they will share self-concept ideals.

Brand-cause congruence is established by the relationship formed between the firm, cause, and customer. Such a unique pairing or fit among the three creates an enduring point of differentiation leading to a competitive advantage for the firm (Grau and Folsi 2007; Demetriou et al. 2010). Such compatibility between the firm and cause has been shown to moderate the relationship between cause-related activity and positive consumer feelings toward the firm. In an effort to strengthen stakeholder relationships Adkins (2005) suggests that cause-related marketing provides a viable method to demonstrate a firm's commitment to the evolving social needs of its constituents while such activities also create positive association linkages between the firm and the cause(s) it supports (Pringle and Thompson 1999). We suggest that consumers make comparative evaluations between their personal *social* self-image and the *social* image a brand projects. If supported, preferred brands will be those that are consistently aligned with the consumer's self-concept (Parker 2009; Sirgy 1982). See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Congruence-Alienation Model
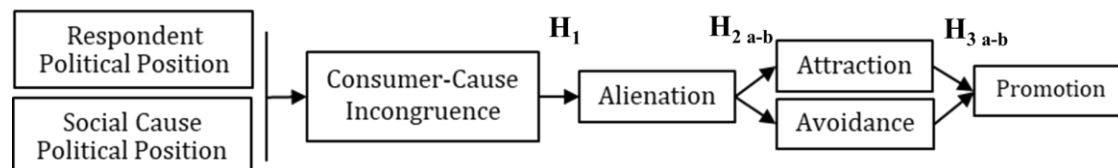
Thus, we contend that if both a consumer and firm concern themselves with the same social causes, they will share self-concept ideals supporting the consumer-brand congruence effect. Furthermore, the bond consumer's form with brands, as a result of shared social interests, will extend positively to attraction, promotion and ultimately purchase intention. The theoretical model conceived in this study illustrates a direct positive relationship between self and social cause congruency and alienation followed by a direct path to feelings of attraction and avoidance that result in a behavioral outcome such as product promotion. Based on the theoretical development of the model appropriate hypotheses are proposed and tested in Study I:

Study I H_1: Incongruency created between a social cause supported by a firm and the self-concept of the consumer is positively associated with consumer alienation toward a firm, brand, or product.

Study I H_{2a-b}: Consumer alienation is (a) negatively associated with attraction toward a firm, brand, or product, and (b) positively associated with avoidance of the firm, brand, or product.

Study I H_{3a-b}: Attraction is (a) positively associated with promotion of a firm, brand, or product, while avoidance is (b) negatively associated with promotion of a firm, brand, or product.

Alienation on Brand Attraction, Purchase Intention, and Price Sensitivity

Drumwright (1996) notes that the choice of cause a firm supports should align with both product and market categories sought after by the firm. It should also align with the firm's mission while at the same time elicit a positive response from market segments that are also profitable, loyal and committed. Therefore, the objective of Study II is to measure the net-effect cause adoption has on consumer perceptions of brand attachment and behavioral marketing objectives (price premium sensitivity and likelihood to buy) given that some market segments are attracted to a brand that supports a cause and others are not. The impact on the firm from polarizing social causes is unclear since the positive outcomes brought by supporters will likely be countered by equally strong negative outcomes brought by the cause's detractors. Finally, while these two groups' net effect has the potential to cancel out, the effect of the uncommitted consumers, who are neither strongly for nor against the cause, is truly unknown. Thus, in Study II we propose.

Study II H$_{1a, b}$: (a) Consumer alienation as a result of C-RM is negatively associated with brand attraction and product purchase intention. Simultaneously, (b) consumer attraction as a result of C-RM is positively associated with brand attraction and product purchase intention.

In most cases, following the law of supply and demand, the slope of the demand curve (elasticity) is negative, however there are very unique situations when the curve slopes upwards. If a product is perceived to have a very strong price-quality relationship, for instance, demand will decline if price declines because consumers feel like the price signal suggests unacceptably low quality. Another unusual case happens when the market demand is so high, as in an extreme luxury, fad, or speculative bubble that the higher price brings even greater demand. In this research, we see a similar event where the introduction of the cause motivates some respondents to be more likely to buy as the price increases because they believe that by doing so they are helping the cause. Focusing on price sensitivity we propose that alienated consumers will be less likely to accept price increases if the increase is attributed to a cause they do not support. Yet, the non-alienated consumer will be more willing to accept price increases, thus willing to pay a price premium so long as the cause benefits. Finally, we propose:

Study II H$_2$: Alienated consumers are (a) more sensitive to price changes than non-alienated consumers.

STUDY I

Method

The study design requires measuring the consumer's sociopolitical self-concept to compare it with a sociopolitical position adopted by a firm. Once this comparison is formed the degree of consumer-cause (in)congruence may be estimated which then is used to explain feelings of (alienation)attraction which in-turn leads to (negative)positive firm relationship consequences. In a two-step procedure, we first measure consumer's sociopolitical dimensions and compare them to several common social causes that have sociopolitical connotations. Then, we measure their reaction to fictitious products, which we associate with specific partisan social causes (see the Appendix I for example scenarios). In doing so we call on an associative linkage to be created between the social cause and the product such that the product's image is reflected by the cause it supports.

To execute the study we adopt a sociopolitical lens similar to Bhagwat et al (2020) who refer to sociopolitical activism as "a firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support for or opposition to one side of a partisan sociopolitical issue" (pg. 1). Importantly, this research focuses on social issues that are polarizing which lies in stark contrast to traditional corporate social responsibility initiatives that are typically centered around non-controversial issues. Therefore, politically charged issues that are (1) publicly promoted and (2) politically partisan meet the criteria for this research domain (Bhagwat et al. 2020). Given this sociopolitical context a consumer's sociopolitical identity is appropriately measured to assess their *sociopolitical* self-concept.

The sample for this study consists mostly of young adults from the Midwest region of the United State. Participants were recruited from two large public universities. In total, the survey was sent by e-mail to 3,670 people. Approximately 20 surveys were incomplete or otherwise unusable due to significant break-offs providing a final sample of 331 completed responses (9.02% effective response rate). Of the responses, 31.4% identify as male, 67.5% female, and 1.1 as something other. They are an average age of 28.4 years old (range: 18...66) and many of the respondents (49.7%) had at least some university education. 47.4 % reported family household incomes greater than $60,000 per year with 52.6% earning less. 30.4% identified as republican, 40.7% identified as democrat, while 28.9% identified as neither.

The data collection is performed through an online survey. Subjects first responded to scales measuring their liberal and conservative political position then they read four scenarios involving products that were actively supporting partisan social causes. The causes were very carefully selected so that they varied by type of cause (Animal, Health, Environment, Human Services) and sociopolitical position (Liberal, Conservative). Therefore, a 4 x 2 design was created using eight different scenarios. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of four groups and then read four scenarios that were balanced to have two liberal and two conservative positions while also representing each of the social cause types. After reading each scenario the respondents then answered a short series of questions that measured their degree alienation, the degree to which they were drawn to (attracted) the product, pushed away from (avoidance), and likelihood of product promotion.

As noted earlier, the cause a firm selects to endorse has significant implications. Lafferty and Edmonson (2013) find that four types of causes are most likely to be the focus of cause related marketing campaigns: personal health, human services, animal rights, and environmental activism. The personal health category includes health-related issues such as disease control, birth defects, and personal health ailments. Human service causes include issues that involve how people live and crises that must be managed such as disaster assistance, reducing crime and homelessness. Animal causes are those associated with the protection and preservation of animal interests and rights. Finally, Environmental causes include issues with preserving and protecting the natural state of environmental concern (aside from animals) such as ocean protection, saving rainforests, preventing forest fires, and reducing negative atmosphere chemicals.

Given that each scenario incorporates a different social cause and is viewed as a treatment or condition of the study we initially conducted a pilot test to measure the location of 19 different statements associated with social causes on a sociopolitical orientation (liberal...conservative) continuum (See Table 1). Our first goal in doing so was to be able to select causes for the study that differed significantly across a sociopolitical spectrum and our second goal was to ascertain a measure for each cause that could then be used to form the consumer-cause congruence measure. In all each cause was evaluated by 151 respondents. The respondents were undergraduate seniors and master's level students (49% female, 22.54 years old, 37% Republican, 25% Democrat, 38% no party affiliation). The respondents were simply asked to identify on a 7-point staple scale using bi-polar anchors if they viewed the cause to be more liberal or conservative. The scores that resulted from this test produced a wide range from -1.72 to 1.76 which represents the most liberal position to the most conservative (resp.). In choosing the causes to study we sought ones that possessed strong counter-balanced positions including marriage rights, abortion, animal preservation, and energy exploitation.

Table 1: Social Cause Item Bank with Liberal-Conservative Score*

Score	Cause
-1.72	**Equal marriage rights for the LGBTQ community.**
-1.37	**Women's reproductive choices during an unexpected pregnancy.**
-0.93	**Ethical treatment and rights of animals.**
-0.75	Solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources.
-0.70	An 'open-boarder' immigration policy.
-0.54	**Hybrid and electric vehicles.**
-0.50	Restrictions on oil fracking and the use of fossil fuels.
-0.47	Increased taxes on the 1%.
-0.31	The equal re-distribution of money through taxes and social services.
-0.13	A vegan lifestyle.
0.76	Veteran's health needs.
0.88	A free-market economy where people are free to earn as much money as they can.
0.93	**Cattle ranchers and cattle production for beef, pork and chicken.**
1.17	Expanded oil drilling and the use of fossil fuels.
1.25	**Oil production and increased drilling and pipeline construction in the U.S.**
1.33	**The promotion of full-term pregnancy and adoption during an unexpected pregnancy.**
1.50	The enforcement strong illegal immigration laws.
1.54	Gun possession and the right to bear arms.
1.76	**Traditionally defined marriage as that of one man and one women.**

* Note: Liberal was the left anchor (-3) and Conservative was the right anchor (3) with a neutral midpoint (0). Study causes are **bolded**.

Measures

To capture the respondent's sociopolitical self-concept we use political orientation scale that similarly captures their sociopolitical identity. Following Mehrabian (1996) the liberal-conservative spectrum is measured using a liberal four item subscale as well as conservative four item subscale. By design the consumer's liberal and conservative composite scores are scaled to correspond with each cause-based scenario (Political Position Score$_{individual}$ = [(Σ Lib$_{1-4}$/4) + (Σ Con$_{1-4}$/4)]/2). As an illustration, consider a respondent that has a liberal composite score of -6.25 and a conservative composite score of 2.75 their Political Position Score would be -1.75 ([-6.25 + 2.75]/2), thus fairly liberal. If this person viewed an appeal that supported non-traditional marriage, which has a score of -1.72, then they would likely find support for the cause because of the close alignment between their person social philosophy position and that of the cause. More specifically the absolute difference between the two is just .03 suggesting a high degree of congruency. Compare this outcome to a conservative-leaning respondent with a score of +.83. The absolute difference between this respondent and the same cause would be 2.55 ($|$.83-(-1.72)$|$), which suggests high incongruence.

Thus, when respondents are exposed to a scenario position that is closely aligned with their own personal views then a great amount of congruence is observed. Conversely, if their political position is in opposition to the cause position described, then incongruity is produced to the extent that they disagree. (Incongruity = $|$Political Position Score$_{individual}$ - Political Position Score$_{cause}|$) By measuring the gap between the political position score of both individual and cause we can assess the incongruence between an individual's self-concept and that of the sociopolitical cause.

Other measures in this study include a single item for alienation measured after the respondent is given a definition for both attraction and alienation then asked to rate their feelings given the product described from zero to one hundred. (See Table 2 for items) *Alienation* is defined as "the state or experience of being isolated from a group or an activity to which one should belong or in which one should be involved" and respondents are instructed that "if you do not support the cause or organization that the company or brand is supporting you would be alienated from them." *Promotion* was measured using the 11-point scale (0-10) single item net-promotor question (Reichheld 2003). *Attraction* was measured using a three-item scale (α = .933) *I would be attracted to this product*; *This product would be appealing to me*; and *I would try this product*. *Avoidance* was also measured by a three-item scale (α = .944) *I feel like this product would not be for me*; *I would not support this product*; and *This product does not support my ideas*. To operationalize the scale data, composite scores were created by averaging construct scale items together with construct correlations reported in Table 3.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to assess and modify as needed the components of each latent construct (Liberal, Conservative, Attraction, Avoidance). Convergent validity was established, as all items for each construct loaded significantly (t-values, 1.96, p (0.05)) with large pattern coefficients (Anderson, and Gerbing, 1988). Factor loadings of .50 were accepted while no cross loading greater than .40 were allowed. In addition, EFA reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha. In each case, this measure of internal consistency was above the benchmark of .70 for developmental research (Cronbach 1951; Churchill, 1979). Once satisfied with an acceptable EFA the measurement model was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Lisrel 8.8 (Jöreskog, and Sörbom, 2006). The measurement model provided strong fit with the Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .96, the Comparative Fit index (CFI) = .97, and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = .97. In addition, the measurement model's RMSEA is .072 with a χ^2 value of 553.16 (71 *df*, p < .001). Convergent validity is evident, as each item loads on its intended construct with sufficiently large path coefficients as reported in Table 3 with no modifications to the model made. Average variance explained (AVE) for each construct is very close to, or over, the .50 benchmark as is the Composite Reliabilities (CR) to the .70 benchmark.

Table 2: Study I Items and Constructs

Item	Exploratory Factor Analysis	Confirmatory Factor Analysis	Sample Mean (Std. Dev.)
Liberal (α=.85, AVE = .53, CR=.77)			
1. I am politically more liberal than conservative.	.86	.86	3.81 (2.35)
2. I cannot see myself ever voting to elect conservative candidates.	.78	.70	4.00 (2.26)
3. Socialism has many advantages over capitalism	.54	.69	4.74 (2.54)
4. On balance, I lean politically more to the left than to the right.	.80	.83	4.74 (2.54)
Conservative (α=.78, AVE = 47, CR = .77)			
1. In any election, given a choice between a Republican and a Democrat, I will select the Republican over the Democrat.	.86	.79	6.74 (2.31)
2. Socialism has been proven to be a failed political ideology.	.66	.69	6.74 (2.31)
3. The major national media are too left-wing for my taste.	.73	.68	6.74 (2.31)
4. I am entitled only to the fruits of my own labor; not to that of others passed on to me through government handouts.	.68	.57	4.51 (2.27)
Attraction (α=.97, AVE = .93. CR = .97)			
1. I would be attracted to this product.	.91	.97	4.36 (1.83)
2. This product would be appealing to me.	.96	.98	4.34 (1.81)
3. I would try this product.	.90	.94	4.43 (1.79)
Avoidance (α=.94, AVE = .85, CR = 95)			
1. I feel like this product would not be for me.	.91	.90	3.59 (1.78)
2. I would not support this product.	.90	.95	3.46 (1.82)
3. This product does not support my ideas.	.88	.92	3.52 (1.89)

	Average (St. Dev.)
Promotion	
On a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to recommend this product to a friend or colleague?	4.87 (3.14)

	Average (St. Dev.)
Alienation	
To this product I feel… *Alienated < ---- > Welcomed and a part of*	54.22 (32.31)

Table 3: Study I Construct Correlations

	Incongruence	Alienation	Attraction	Avoidance	Promotion
Incongruence	1.00				
Alienation	.395	1.00			
Attraction	-.363	-.841	1.00		
Avoidance	.356	.770	-.822	1.00	
Promotion	-.319	-.827	.793	-.698	1.00

*p < .001

Results and Findings

Upon specifying the proposed structural equation model the results indicate significant relationships between the proposed constructs and an acceptable overall model fit. To test the proposed relationships between each latent construct structural equation modeling was performed using LISREL 8.8. The specified structural model demonstrates acceptable fit as evidenced by traditional indices. The model's RMSEA is .075 with a χ^2 value of 189.93 (23 df, p < .001), Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .99, the Comparative Fit index (CFI) = .99, Goodness of Fit (GI) = .97, and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = .99. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Specified Congruence-Alienation Model
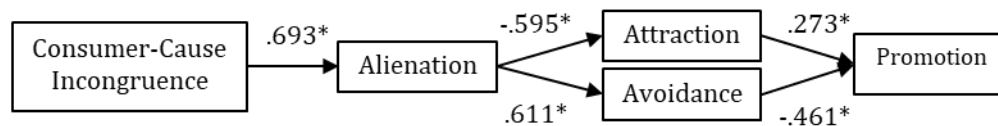
*p <.05

This study measures the impact of incongruence between self-image and brand-image has on brand, product or firm alienation in the context of polarizing social causes. The motivation for this quasi-experiment study is two-fold. First, is to find support for the contention that image-brand incongruity leads to brand alienation. Self-image and brand-image theory stresses that customers seek brands that support their self-image goals. Given that consumer's brand choice reflects aspects of their self-image it serves to extend their sense of being as a conspicuous external signal. As an important extension, misaligned perceptions of self with a brand can lead to consumer disenfranchisement and feelings of estrangement, alienation, and desertion. If true then not only will consumers remove themselves from the brand in question, but they may also isolate, shun, and disparage the brand to justify their image position. Hypothesis One (H_1) states that incongruence between a cause supported by a firm and the self-concept of the consumer is positively associated with consumer alienation toward a firm, brand, or product. This is supported with a significant path coefficient of .693 (p =.024).

Second, we contend that alienation, which is derived from image-brand incongruity, contributes to positive and negative brand related behavior. The data gathered in this study confirms that if the consumer perceives a brand to be aligned with a cause that they support, then the effect is generally positive as it contributes to brand attraction and positive brand promotion. Equally supported is the idea that brand-image misalignment, or incongruity, leads to negative brand behavior outcomes. Both hypotheses 2_a and 2_b are supported given alienation is negatively associated with attraction (-.595, p = .012) and positively associated with avoidance (.611, p = .012). Finally, hypotheses 3_a and 3_b are also supported since attraction is positively associated with promotion (.273, p = .016) and its converse, avoidance, is negatively associated with promotion (-.461, p = .027).

STUDY II

Method

In this study a quasi-experiment is designed where each respondent is assigned to review two advertisements that contained a cause-related element answering a series of questions after each. In all, there are six advertisements each of which explicitly expressed either the pro or con side of a current social issue that holds meaning to the sample; Immigration policy, rights and border security; freedom of speech through passive protest and support of police/authority; and gender identity rights and awareness. (See Appendix II for treatments) The study procedure called for each respondent to review one pro and one con treatment but not concerning the same cause. To accomplish this, respondents were assigned to one of six groups and each group was assigned two specific treatments. In addition, the treatment order was reversed for half the sample so any potential order effect could be negated. After seeing each ad, the respondent completed a series of survey questions that measure cause campaign support, purchase intention, brand attraction, and price sensitivity.

Data were collected from a broad sample of consumers via an online instrument in an effort to minimize geographic and logistical participation barriers. Using the snowball sampling method (Zinkhan, Burton, Wallendorf 1983), participants were recruited through contact information provided by upper-division university students at a

large university in the Midwestern US. The sample includes respondents from an expansive geographic region representing both urban and rural settings. A noted deficiency of the snowball sampling method is potential selection bias that is introduced when recruiters ask people with similar personalities to participate. As a precaution to dampen this bias potential, subjects were carefully sought from a diverse age range. Approximately 5% of survey participants were randomly selected and contacted by the researchers as a validity check to confirm the respondent was properly recruited.

In total, the survey was responded to by 3,743 people after accounting for incomplete or otherwise unusable due to significant break-offs. As a validation check roughly 5% of the respondents were contacted to confirm their participation. Of the responses, 30.6% were male and 67.7% were female at an average age of 34.1 years old (range: 18...95). The sample is well educated with 45.7% having at least some university education. 51.3 % reported household incomes greater than $60,000 per year. 37.7% identified as Republican and 31.0% identified as Democrat, 24.6% described themselves as Independent, while 6.7% identified as something other or not listed (4.4% Libertarian, 1.8% other, .5% Green).

Measures

In this study we continue to define *Alienation* as "the state or experience of being isolated from a group or an activity to which one should belong or in which one should be involved." Respondents are instructed to use a new scale ranging from alienation (-50) to inclusion (50). The average response from subjects and treatments is -2.78 which is reasonably close to the midpoint (zero) suggesting a balance of respondents and causes. (See Table 4 for study items). *Inclusion*, as an anchor is used to reflect a close opposite to alienation, such as the sense of being included or accommodated by others.

Brand Attraction is measured using a three-item scale ($\alpha = .94$) and its intent is to measure the attraction the respondent would have to the brand including other products carried by the brand. The brand names used in the study are fictitious and generic in nature therefore, the respondent would have no pre-condition toward the brand. While we are using this scale to represent attraction to the brand, it also begins to allude to the respondent's degree of loyalty toward the brand. *Purchase Intention* is measured using a three-item scale ($\alpha=.95$) following Lepkowska-White, Brashear, and Weinberger (2005). Each item relates the respondent's likelihood to purchase the product demonstrated in the advertisement. *Purchase sensitivity* is a measure of how change in financial cost impacts the likelihood to purchase. If a respondent is attracted to the cause they are more likely to buy the product and they we would expect them to be price insensitive in regard to purchasing the product so long as the added cost is benefiting the cause they support. Conversely, if the respondent feels alienated by the cause they would not only be less likely to buy the product, but their unwillingness will increase as their financial cost (which they know will benefit the cause) increases.

Purchase sensitivity is measured in this study by taking the percent change in purchase intention divided by the percent change in price. After each advertisement the respondent initially asked to rate their intention to buy, then after completing other survey questions they were asked again their intention to buy if the price was increased:

> MP3 Ads: How likely would you be to buy the MP3 player in the ad if the price increased to $35.99 (instead of $29.99) with the extra amount going directly to the cause described?
> Camera Ads: How likely would you be to buy the video camera in the ad if the price increased to $59.99 (instead of $49.99) with the extra amount going directly to the cause described?

While it is noted that there is a noticeable price difference for each product each price was increased by a uniform 20%. Therefore, the percent change in purchase intention is a proxy metric for demand at a specific percentage price increase measuring elasticity of purchase intention in relation to a desire to help the cause. Note also, that this measure is static and provides a single elasticity at only one point along the demand curve.

Table 4: Study II Items and Constructs

Item	Exploratory Factor Analysis	Confirmatory Factor Analysis	Sample Mean (Std. Dev.)
Purchase Intention (α=.95, AVE = .87, CR=.96)			
1. If I <u>were looking</u> for this type of product my likelihood of purchasing the product in the ad would be high.	.93	.93	3.44 (1.85)
2. If I <u>were to buy</u> this type of product, the probability that I would consider buying the product in the ad would be high.	.92	.96	3.45 (1.47)
3. If I <u>had to buy</u> this type of product, my willingness to buy the product in the ad would be high.	.88	.92	3.57 (1.89)
Brand Attraction (α=.94, AVE = .87, CR=.95)			
1. How likely are you to buy other products by COMPANY?	.91	.91	3.46 (1.74)
2. How likely are you to choose a COMPANY/ PRODUCT over other brands that offer the same product?	.91	.91	3.37 (1.79)
3. If COMPANY were to offer other similar products how likely would you be to consider them?	.86	.93	3.58 (1.79)

Purchase intention after price change*
How likely would you be to buy the PRODUCT in the ad if the price increased to $XX (instead of $XX) with the extra amount going directly to the cause described?

Average (St. Dev.)
3.10 (1.93)

Alienation
Alienation is defined as the state or experience of being isolated from a group or an activity to which one should belong or in which one should be involved.

Average (St. Dev.)

Use the scale *(-50 <- -> +50)* below to identify how you feel toward COMPANY.   -2.78 (29.58)
(Note: alienation is -50 / inclusion is 50)

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* Note: In each product the price change represented a 20% increase.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to assess and modify as needed the components of each multi-item latent construct (Purchase Intention, and Brand Attractiveness). Convergent validity was established, as all items for each construct loaded significantly (t-values, 1.96, p (0.05)) with large pattern coefficients (Anderson, and Gerbing, 1988). Factor loadings of .50 were accepted while no cross loading greater than .40 were allowed. In addition, EFA reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha. In each case, this measure of internal consistency was above the benchmark of .70 for developmental research (Cronbach 1951; Churchill, 1979). Once satisfied with an acceptable EFA the measurement model was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Lisrel 8.8 (Jöreskog, and Sörbom, 2006). The measurement model provided strong fit with the Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .99, the Comparative Fit index (CFI) = .99, and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = .97. In addition the measurement model's RMSEA is .042 with a χ^2 value of 44.65 (8 *df*, p < .001). Convergent validity is evident, as each item loads on its intended construct with sufficiently large path coefficients as reported in Table 4 with no modifications.

Results and Findings

The findings of this study aim to demonstrate the direct impact social cause support has on the firm. Non-altruistic firm motivation for social cause engagement includes increased sales, market share, and profit. Similar to the first study and Flight and Severing (2017) we predict that alienation has a negative impact on product attraction and subsequent behavior toward the product. In this application, we specifically measure the impact the cause has on the

consumer's perception of the brand, not just a single product ($H_{1a, b}$). The idea is that a carry-over or halo effect will serve to transmit feelings from one product incident to the broader brand concept. In essence, the consumer's exposure to the single advertisement will contribute in a meaningful way toward forming brand sentiment extending to other products (or even future products). The data is clear in support of this hypothesis. The correlation between alienation and purchase intention is -.798 ($p < .001$) and between alienation and brand attachment is -.801 ($p < .001$). To demonstrate additional support of this hypothesis the sample split into three groups across all advertisement responses by using the low, mid, and high scores on the alienation variable. Specifically, all responses that had a score of -50 to -18 were categorized as '*alienation*' (n = 1307) those between -17 and +17 were '*neutral*' (n = 1303) and those from +18 to +50 '*inclusion*' (n = 1133). Therefore, with the sample split into three groups across all advertisement responses the average response to purchase intent and brand attractiveness is reported. (See Table 5) Purchase intention and brand attractiveness for those experiencing alienation is 1.81 and 1.83 respectively, while those expressing inclusion is 5.19 and 5.05 (resp.). Upon observing ANOVA results, these group averages are statistically different (purchase intention $F = 2364.66$, <.001; brand attraction $F = 2493.90$, <.001).

Table 5: Study II Purchase Intention and Brand Attraction by Alienation

	Average Purchase Intention	Average Brand Attraction
Alienation	1.81	1.83
Neutral	3.66	3.66
Inclusion	5.19	5.05
F	2364.66 (<.001)	2493.90 (<.001)

Hypothesis two (H_2) associates price sensitivity to alienated consumers to the extent that alienated consumers are more sensitive to price changes than non-alienated consumers. To test this hypothesis we measured purchase intention initially then we asked the respondent their likelihood to buy if the price were increased. In every treatment the price increased 20%. To compare groups, we use the previous alienation dummy variable, categorizing all responses with an alienation score of -18 to -50 as '*alienated*,' those between -17 and +17 as 'neutral,' and those from +18 to +50 as '*included*.' (See Table 6) To support the hypothesis we find that respondents purchase intention is significantly different across the alienation, inclusion, and neutral groups ($F = 1548.53$, sig. < .001). Specifically, among alienated consumers purchase intention is 1.81, while among neutral consumers it's 3.66 and finally those experiencing inclusion were 5.19. Also, we find that purchase intention from the initial price to the increased price also significantly changes in all three groups. We calculate price sensitivity by calculating percent change purchase intention ($PI_{new} - PI_{initial} / PI_{initial}$) dividing by 20% which is the percent change in price. The results indicate that the alienation group is more than twice as price sensitive (-.773) than the inclusion group (-.376). This suggests that the proposed 20% increase in price produces a disproportionately rapid decline in demand among alienated consumers when compared to those who feel drawn to the cause under the same conditions.

Table 6: Study II Price Sensitivity and Post Price Change Between Group Difference

	Initial Purchase Intention	Purchase Intention After Price Increase	Paired t (sig.)	Price Sensitivity
Alienation	1.81	1.53	6.57 (<.001)	((1.53-1.81)/1.81) / .2 = -.773
Neutral	3.66	3.18	9.67 (<.001)	((3.18-3.66)/3.66) / .2 = -.656
Inclusion	5.19	4.80	8.70 (<.001)	((4.80-5.19)/5.19) / .2 = -.376
F	2364.66 (<.001)	1548.53 (<.001)		

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Recently, numerous studies have explored the role of cause-related marketing and its extended application through social activism. As an extension to this literature, this current research provides greater nuance to the consumer's feeling of betrayal, which results when social activism re-shapes the self-image – brand image paradigm. As brands reach pop culture status, they help provide support and confirm the social identity of their users, and as such, come to hold a place of meaning within the market they serve. Meanwhile, consumers expect that businesses today contribute toward solving the social problems of their time (Demetriou et al 2010) and to this extent cause-related marketing expresses the social conscience of an organization in that it aligns social problems and organizational goals especially with a focus towards forming alliances with stakeholder groups. To this end, firms are motivated to be proactive social actors and in doing so are increasingly open to scrutiny. While it may be tempting, brand managers may choose not to draw attention by engaging in social engineering, as their role isn't to direct public policy. Yet simultaneously the urge for firms to be relevant in a media cluttered environment exists.

Cause Segment Profiling

From a strategic marketing perspective consider the role that brand activism has on market segmentation. While not a common approach to segmentation, attitude toward a social cause may be used as a segmentation criterion. An important concept is the group *prototype* which is used to describe a typical group member (either factually or symbolically) and upon which members are compared to and to whom they emulate as a social referent. Conveniently, the description of the group prototype can serve as a customer profile template similarly used to describe a market segment. From this perspective a 'social group' and 'market segment' have common elements of behavior and motivation toward fulfilling shared goals while being identifiable and reachable. Given the market segment analogy marketers can analyze a social group prototype relative to their brand and use the prototype as a market segment exemplar to which they can position their brand.

Competitive Opportunities

Brand activism on polarizing issues amidst amplified rhetoric creates opportunity for other firms to re-position themselves as an alternative for disenfranchised consumers. While this current research has depicted a single play game, competing firms may choose to follow-up by taking their own position in contrast to that of the first. In a sequential two-player game the second player (firm) in this case is able to see the market's reaction to the activist position the first player (firm) takes. As such, they can then position themselves accordingly to achieve at least three goals. First, they may re-capture the first firm's alienated customers. Second, they may offer neutral customers a viable second choice. Third, by virtue of their new position they can portray the first firm as a social extremist pinning them into an intractable corner position. The aforementioned Bud-light case offered such an opportunity to Modelo which has since launched an overtly masculine (implied non-transgender) campaign that seemingly captures disenfranchised Bud Light customers. As such, competitive brands can double down on entrenched positions where they compete for share. In other examples, Jeremy's Razors was created as a direct activist brand to counter Harry's Razors as an anti-woke alternative in the male shaver category and also Hershey chocolate in the candy snack category (Jeremy Razor, n.d.). Meanwhile, Black Rifle Coffee Company, vowed to hire 10,000 U.S. veterans seemingly as a direct response to Starbuck's pledge to hire 10,000 immigrants (Klee 2023).

CONCLUSION

Brands deliver value through functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996) that extend beyond the attributes of the product or service into a broader context to the extent that culture and brand culture become indistinguishable (Banet-Weiser, 2012). In such an environment, brands help consumers construct their identities through consumption that embraces broader meaning (Guzmán *et al*., 2017; Morhart *et al*., 2015). To this end, consumers use brands that relate or contribute directly to their identity by providing relevant cultural elements that reinforce their sense of self (Guzmán and Paswan, 2009; Holt, 2002).

Corporate philanthropy and civic involvement by 'public-spirited' corporations (Varadarajan and Menon 1988, p. 58) provide motivation for cause-related marketing as we know it today. Now the justifiable participation in civic causes is encouraged as firms have begun to shift focus from a pure profit motivation, where success is measured by its return to shareholders, to that where social participation is viewed as a civic duty or responsibility to multiple stakeholders. Thus, cause-related marketing activities are now becoming the norm as firms are viewed as social assets that contribute to the lives, community, and culture of the markets they serve. As the marketing concept evolves into deeper consumer relationships we might expect consumers to leverage brand identity as they interact both socially

and economically to solve individual and societal problems important to them. Firm's promotion and the market's adoption of social ideas as reflections of image (and extensions of personality) offers new challenges and opportunities for marketers as a relationship-forming tool.

While this research answers clear gaps in current literature, limitations due to research design exist. Developed as a quasi-experiment the use of fictitious scenarios simulate but fail to fully capture realistic purchase environments. Moreover, respondents are asked to project their behavior which is less reliable than actual behavior revealed by true field experiments. Finally, our subject pool originated from the Midwest of the United States limiting the applicability of findings to broader, generic audiences. Though this region is known for political diversity, a greater geographic pool of respondents could better validate the findings. Future research may extend this work by examining the long-term effects of the identity-seeking alienated consumer, especially in regard to issues that have unclear moral implications. While, many social issues are universally agreed upon, the most controversial garner the most attention and spotlight. As Bhagwat et al. (2020) illustrate (Figure 1, pg. 3) social issues may be measured on a partisan dimension (low to high) and when firms support an issue they do so with varying degrees of publicity. Will alienated consumers forgive a firm that publicly supports a highly partisan issue they oppose? Can these consumers be swayed to re-evaluate their view on the issue? Should competitors adopt a neutral or opposing position to capture the alienated portion of the market? Does taking an opposing position effectively form a differentiation strategy? Potential research may also investigate alienation among suppliers, distributors, retail partners, and other B2B or external stakeholder relationships including effects on political regulations or retaliatory efforts.

40 years ago Lusch, Laczniak, and Murphy (1980) point out that marketers have an ethical responsibility to use the power of marketing for socially acceptable causes. However, as these authors ask, which ideas should a brand support? "If we say no to promoting pornography or abortion why not regulate the promotion of nuclear energy, auto safety or preventive health?" (pg. 163) Today firms are expected to engage in a social agenda (through corporate social responsibility) which has potentially significant social influence yet in doing so under the microscope of social media the inevitable effect will be to simultaneously attract and alienate influential consumer segments.

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Health (Liberal)

While shopping for shampoo one day, you look around and notice a bottle that catches your eye. Upon reading the bottle, you notice a sticker that states that a portion of the sales from this shampoo go toward a local clinic that supports women with **pro-choice pregnancy options including abortion options if it was an unplanned pregnancy**. To raise awareness of this organization, the bottle has the logo of the organization next to its own logo.

Health (Conservative)

While shopping for shampoo one day, you look around and notice a bottle that catches your eye. Upon reading the bottle, you notice a sticker that states that a portion of the sales from this shampoo go toward a local clinic that supports women with **pro-life pregnancy options including full-term delivery if it was an unplanned pregnancy**. To raise awareness of this organization, the bottle has the logo of the organization next to its own logo.

Animal (Liberal)

While you are on the internet one day, you notice an article that talks about a clothing retailer that you shop at. In the article, it is mentioned that the retailer is going to run a promotion in which they will donate a percentage of their sales to an organization that **protects the rights of animals**. In support of this organization, they are going to discontinue any use of real leather or any other animal products in their clothing lines and incorporate the organization's logo with the retailer's logo on the clothing to raise awareness.

Animal (Conservative)

While you are on the internet one day, you notice an article that talks about a popular restaurant chain you like that specializes in cooking steaks. In the article, they mention that the restaurant chain is going to run a promotion that supports an organization that **supports cattle ranchers** in the United States. To support this organization the restaurant is going to place the organization's logo on their plates in order to raise awareness of the organization and donate a percentage of their sales to the organization at the end of the promotion.

Human Services (Liberal)

One day while you are watching television, you notice an advertisement for a local sandwich shop. They say that they are running a promotion that gives a portion of their sales to a local organization that actively supports and lobbies for **equal marriage rights for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning)** people. To promote this organization, any type of wrapping or containers that the restaurant uses will be rainbow colored with the logo of the company next to the name of the sandwich shop.

Human Services (Conservative)

One day while you are watching television, you notice an advertisement for a local sandwich shop. They say that they are running a promotion that gives a portion of their sales to a local organization that actively supports and lobbies **for traditionally defined marriage between one man and one woman.** To promote this organization, any type of wrapping or containers that the restaurant uses will use the organization's logo of the company next to the name of the sandwich shop.

Environment (Liberal)

Suppose that you are shopping around for a new car. You come across a site that gives reports about makes and models and tells you about the brands. One brand catches your eye because it states that the brand of vehicle is doing a special promotion on **hybrid and all electric vehicles**. The promotion states that portions of the sales of those vehicles goes to an organization that is actively trying to push for legislation that **restricts oil fracking and the use of fossil fuels**. To promote the organization and push for its cause, each hybrid or all electric vehicle sold will come with a green bumper magnet with the organization's name and logo on it.

Environment (Conservative)

Suppose that you are shopping around for a new car. You come across a site that gives reports about vehicle brands and models. One brand catches your eye because it states that the brand of vehicle is doing a special promotion on their trucks and sport utility vehicles. The promotion states that portions of the sales of those vehicles goes to an organization that **supports oil pipeline and drillers in the United States and is active in promoting legislation to pass expanded oil drilling in the United States.** To promote the organization and their cause, each of the promoted vehicles sold comes with a bumper magnet that displays the name of the organization.