How Do Generational Differences Drive Response to Social-Issue Ads?

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Study Goal

Do consumers’ self-value orientations influence responses to CSR advertising differently across different generation?
Corporate Social Responsibility Advertising

Defined as corporate advertising of companies’ prosocial initiatives in supporting social causes.
Generational Cohort

• A convenient and effective way for segmentation (Schewe and Meredith, 2004). A certain demographic group is uniquely coherent on the basis of birth years.

• The same ‘moment defining’ events - values, preferences, attitudes and behaviors (Meredith and Schewe, 1994; Ryder, 1965).
Self-Concept Theory

- A system of thoughts and feelings about the self.
- The theory posits that individuals try to maintain consistency between self-value and perceiving stimuli (Prince, 1993).
- A driver in consumer attitudes and behaviors.
# Values and CSR Initiatives - *motives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other-Focused</th>
<th>Self-Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prosocial values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Status-Seeking</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Socially conscious behaviors (e.g., citizenship behavior (Rioux and Penner 2001) or supporting companies that help social causes (Youn and Kim 2008).)</td>
<td>- Strong <em>altruistic value</em> orientation did <em>not</em> influence positive evaluation of corporate social initiatives (e.g., Zasuwa, 2016).</td>
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<td>- Enhanced social standing via altruism.</td>
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**Consumer Value Orientations (Self-Construal):** perception of self in relation to others.

- **Collectivistic**
  - Other-Focused
  - Vertical (Hierarchy)

- **Individualistic**
  - Self-Focused
  - Horizontal (Equality)
Moderator: Generational Cohort

Examples:

- **Millennials**: Millennials are likely to support companies that engage with social initiatives (Polizzotto, 2015).

- **Baby boomers**: Prosocial behaviors recently dropped faster than the national average (Haberman, 2013).
Method

- Quasi-Experiment Design (Cancer Research, Energy Conservation)

- Among 196 participants:
  - 18% of participants ranged in age from 21 to 30 years.
  - 25% were from 31 to 40.
  - 19% were from 51-59.
  - 20% from over 60.
  - White (76.4%), Hispanic American (4.1%), Black (10.8%), Asian American (3.4%) and other (5.4%).
  - 49% Female
# Results

## Interactions Effects on Consumer Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>Aad</th>
<th>Ab</th>
<th>Alt</th>
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<td>.22**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
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<td>HC</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC $\times$ Age</td>
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<td>.50*</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.60*</td>
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<td>-.04</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>HC $\times$ Age</td>
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<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.47**</td>
<td>.18</td>
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</tbody>
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*Note: PI = purchase intention; Aad = attitude toward the advertisement; Ab = attitude toward the brand; Alt = altruism; VI = vertical individualism; VC = vertical collectivism; HI = horizontal individualism; HC = horizontal collectivism. *$p < .01$.

**$p < .05$.**
Results

The Johnson-Neyman technique (the floodlight analysis).

Figure 1.

Interactions between VC and Age on Purchase Intention
Results

The Johnson-Neyman technique (the floodlight analysis).

Figure 2. VC and HI in Interacting with Age on Perceived Advertisers’ Motive as Altruistic
Takeaways

- **Younger** consumers (Millennials) were more likely to have **favorable responses** to CSR advertising
  - A strong sense of community and civic-minded (Strauss and Howe, 2000), or they are “Generation We” (Craig and Kieburger, 2014).

- Different age segments have **different motives** to support CSR initiatives
  - Each age segment may respond to message strategy emphasizing uniqueness, status, duty, or benevolence differently.
Consider different motivational factors

- Millennials, (< 30-year-olds) were unlikely to be motivated by the VC value, such as fulfilling social duties or responsibilities, in supporting CSR initiatives in evaluating CSR ads (Gillenwater, 2015).

- Millennials and Gen X, (<54-year-olds), were likely to be motivated by the HI value, such as uniqueness and independent freedom in evaluating advertiser’s motive as altruistic.
Managerial Implications

• In reaching out to younger consumers, advertisers may want to use advertising appeals emphasizing values of **uniqueness or equality**.

  o The CSR initiatives could create programs whereby millennials can contribute to social issues by using their **unique talents and skills or by sharing their own ideas in the form of cloud sourcing**.
Summary and Future Study

A General Explanatory Model of Age Effects In Response to Advertising
Thank You!

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