Applying a causal ambush marketing framework to social media: The 'Pleasure is Diverse' campaign and the Australian marriage amendment

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ABSTRACT

The present study applies Pope and Wæraas' (2016) CSR-washing conceptual framework in a social media context using the recent case involving Streets 'Pleasure is Diverse' campaign and the Australian marriage amendment. Sentiment analysis examined the posts to Unilever's Magnum ice-cream campaign. We applied the framework's five conditions, and the findings indicated support for the operationalisation of Pope and Wæraas' (2016) washing framework. The findings suggest that consumer sentiments in this case of causal ambush marketing had four general themes: (1) Supportive Advocates; (2) Anti-Advocates; (3) Moral Detractors; (4) Sceptics.

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CHINESE ABSTRACT

本研究将 Pope 和 Wæraa (2016) 的企业社会责任洗脑概念框架 (CSR-washing conceptual framework) 应用于社交媒体环境中的一个近期案例: "快乐是多样化的" 运动和澳大利亚婚姻修正案; 利用情感分析方法 (sentiment analysis) 研究了联合利华旗下梦龙冰淇淋公司 (Magnum ice-cream) 广告活动的帖子. 我们应用了该框架的五个条件, 结果表明支持 Pope 和 Wæraa (2016) 洗脑框架. 研究结果表明, 在因果偷袭营销的案例中, 消费者情绪有四个普遍的主题: (1) 支持倡导者; (2) 反倡导者; (3) 道德诋毁者; (4) 怀疑论者.

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"A cause-related marketing campaign can be seen as a way for consumers to conduct a purchase for a reason other than their personal benefits such as helping society (Kim and Johnson, 2013), which reflects the relevance of a moral issue in a cause-related marketing campaign" (Vyravene and Rabbanee, 2016, p. 324).

1. Introduction

Brands pursuing positional advantage sometimes employ social, cause-related, ethical, or environmental promotional appeals (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). In the early 1990s marketers often used environmentally-based corporate social responsibility messages to highlight an organisation's "green" credentials and demonstrate that the firm was a responsible corporate citizen. Unfortunately, some unscrupulous marketers engaged in "green-washing" campaigns where they strategically misled consumers

through deceptive promotional campaigns and product positioning to believe that the firm engaged in virtuous environmental practices (De Jong et al., 2018; Polonsky et al., 2010). As social issues have become more diverse, so have the deceptive tactics of marketers including "black cladding" where a business deceptively "appears" to be minority-owned (Burrell, 2015; Hudson, 2016) and disingenuous appeals that focus on gay rights (Stark, 2015).

This more generalised deceptive marketing tactic, corporate social responsibility (CSR)-washing, is "the successful use of a false CSR claim to improve a company's competitive position" (Pope and Wæraas, 2016: 175); often implemented by marketers deceptively linking a social cause to their brand (Boiral et al., 2017). These increasingly common attempts to perform organisational value deception may cause consumers to question the authenticity of any value-based message (Seele and Gatti, 2017); and in the age of social media, any consumer doubt can be rapidly amplified (Dahl, 2014).

Cause-related marketing is a promotional tactic where a brand exchanges financial support of a social cause to obtain the right to use the cause's name, logo, and trademark on the marketer's

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brand (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Ambush marketing is a promotional tactic implemented by a marketer not financially supporting an event and involves appropriating the benefits of the brand through a "variety of wholly legitimate and morally correct methods of intruding upon the public consciousness surrounding event" designed to appropriate the benefits of linking the marketer's brand to the event without paying sponsorship fees (Meenaghan, 1994, p. 79).

Since the 1990s, ambush marketing has evolved and been applied by organisations to link their brand to virtuous public causes without any financial benefit directly accruing to the cause (Mizerski et al., 2002), that we term causal ambush marketing. Causal ambush marketing offers many of the promotional benefits of cause-related marketing without the financial obligations incurred in a formal sponsorship (Mizerski et al., 2002). Causal ambush marketing, like other ambush marketing tactics (Meenaghan, 1994), is not an exchange, but an appropriation by a brand's marketer that employs marketing tactics to create the deception that the brand is linked to a specific social cause (Mizerski et al., 2002). Causal ambush marketing among other forms of ambush marketing has become such a widely adopted marketing tactic that Chadwick and Burton (2011, p. 716) developed a typology of ambush marketing tactics including categories indicative of causal ambush marketing that include "Values Ambushing" and "Associative Ambushing" tactics. However, in the era of social media, there is a gap in our understanding of how causal ambush marketing is operationalised.

In 2017 an opportunity to address this gap emerged when Unilever launched its *'Pleasure is Diverse'* digital marketing campaign using a range of social media including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This social media Magnum - "The Ceremony" is shown as aired on YouTube in Video 1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCqxwThvVKU&start_radio=1&list=RDKCqxwThvVKU).

Their campaign ran concurrently with a social and political debate that was occurring in Australia to determine if the Marriage Act should be amended to allow same-sex couples to be legally married. Unilever's promotional campaign for its premium Magnum ice-cream brand was linked to the concept of marriage equality, as the storyline consisted of a same-sex marriage ceremony as the creative foundation for its television and web advertisement. It is clear that Unilever intentionally used a very topical value-based issue as the underlying message in Magnum's *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign. However, it was not clear how consumers perceived Unilever's intentions; that is was it authentic support of Marriage equity or simply a deceptive marketing tactic to gain market advantage. The present study applies Pope and Wæraas' (2016) model of CSR-washing by exploring consumers' responses to Magnum's *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign through social media to more clearly understand consumers' perception of Unilever's intention. Qualitative sentiment analysis was used to examine the posts for the ice-cream campaign to explore if causal ambush marketing can be classified as value-washing based on Pope and Wæraas' (2016) criteria.

This paper is structured as follows. First, cause-related marketing's interrelationship with consumer values is introduced using Pope and Wæraas (2016) framework. Second, sentiment analysis and the coding protocol are discussed. Third, the case of Magnum ice-cream's '*Pleasure is Diverse*' campaign is explored using Pope and Wæraas (2016) framework adapted for a social media context. Conclusions are then offered.

2. Causes and organisational value congruence

Marketers often employ cause-related marketing appeals to target specific customer value-based segments that tend to respond positively to marketing appeals that link their values with a specific brand's values (Kotler and Keller, 2006; McEachern, 2015; Müller et al., 2016). Srivoravilai et al. (2011) argued that a positive corporate reputation helps to legitimatise an organisation and build customer support. Moreover, organisations that are motivated to be good corporate citizens for social and moral reasons are perceived to create a win-win situation with consumers and the broader community. However, Georgallis (2017) argued that some organisations might be espousing populist values out of a sense of urgency and market responsiveness. While the marketer may be attempting to appeal to new market segments, these highly promoted links between their brand and a cause may not be representative of an authentic value congruence, making the message deceptive.

Social media has rapidly evolved to allow consumers to directly engage with each other and with marketers in the co-creation of brand communities (Dahl, 2014; Harrigan et al., 2015). Marketers' use of social media has become increasingly important for consumer engagement (Harrigan et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017). The interactive nature of conversations on social media, when a causal ambush marketing campaign is initiated, may enable a single consumer's comment to stimulate either a positive, neutral or negative reaction. This reaction can then form the foundational thinking and shape the tone of the remainder of the dialogue. For example, a negative comment may encourage a snowball effect of subsequent sceptical sentiments thereby increasing the likelihood of the appeal being perceived as "value-washing".

The power and influence of social media in informing, shaping, and directing social sentiments is illustrated by the recent "*#MeToo*" cause-related social media campaign. It has had a far-reaching impact and resulted in encouraging people to have more open and authentic conversations about sexual harassment throughout many layers of society (Zillman, 2017; Jagsi, 2018). Social media transforms how marketers keep brands relevant by allowing consumer sentiments to shape behaviour (Brodie et al., 2013), but it can be a two-edged sword (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016) by enabling a brand community to destroy a brand's reputation.

Interestingly, a study on leveraging a corporate social responsible communication strategy for reputation-building found that CSR appeals have a positive effect on organisations with a negative corporate image, but not for brands with an existing positive reputation (Ulke and Schons, 2016). Likewise, another study reported a "halo effect" for espoused socially responsible marketers where consumers perceive the products to be a better value and higher quality than it is (Chernev and Blair, 2015). However, having a CSR message that is seen as "greenwashing" by consumers creates confusion and scepticism towards both the marketer and the brand (Aji and Sutikno, 2015; Seele and Gatti, 2017).

The public sharing of opinions on brands on social media has become common (Kollat and Farache, 2017; Lee et al., 2013). These exchanges provide detailed insights into consumers' values, and their likely response to specific brand messaging (Macnamara, 2013), deinstitutionalising conversations and allowing consumers to directly comment on a brand's values or marketing actions in the public forum of social media (Colleoni, 2013; Kollat and Farache, 2017). As identified by Valos et al. (2017), strategically managing and harvesting data from marketer-brand community and brand community conversations allow marketers to agilely adapt their marketing mix to be the most salient to a particular market segment brand community and design effective campaigns to elicit positive responses.

Pope and Wæraas (2016, p. 177) proposed a conceptual model of CSR-washing based on a systematic review of the CSR literature which focused on consumers, in the global context and the whether or not the CSR advertising lead to a profitable outcome for the organisation. They also focused on traditional advertising media messages. Their original conceptualised pathway model

based on their literature review included 5 conditions including: (1a) consumers desire CSR; (1b) consumers will support CSR; (2a) marketers advertise their CSR practices; (2b) most consumers are aware of a marketer's CSR statements; (3) marketers espouse, but do not practice CSR; (4) consumers can and do observe the market's CSR performance; and (5) CSR signals alone are accepted as indicators of CSR performance.

We operationalised Pope and Waeraas' (2016) model by using a specific case study and social media to explore the impact of the message on the reputation of the brand. The current study did not focus on the profitability of the message but explored the design, timing and impact of the message on the reputation of the brand. To do so, we focused on the interactive communication dimension of social media and the natural dialogue that develops where consumers are engaged with the brand and respond to the message. We adapted Pope and Wæraas' (2016) conditions to be relevant for social media.

Other marketing scholars have begun to use Pope and Waeraas' (2016) model to explore: (1) the relevance of CSR messages across media forms (Kollat and Farache, 2017); (2) trust and loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2018), "sharewashing" (Hawlitschek et al., 2018); and (3) a taxonomy of deceptive CSR practices (Siano et al., 2017). Research suggests that long-term authentic CSR marketing can give organisations both social and pragmatic legitimacy and immunise their reputation from scepticism to some extent (Vanhamme and Grobben, 2009). In these instances, cause-related marketing campaigns based on contemporary causes or value-based marketing statements have been beneficial to the organisation. Maak (2008) argued that traditional CSR is seen as an apparent attempt to make profits by gaining the goodwill of the market. Gürlek and Tuna (2018) found that having marketers who are committed environmentalists leads to greener business practices and gives credence to the marketer's green appeals (Sharp and Zaidman, 2010). However, Nyilasy et al. (2014) found that putting out a message that is perceived as disingenuous or "washed" can cause significant harm to an organisation's reputation. Overall, Pope and Wæraas (2016)'s paper provides a theoretically justified model and outlines a way to measure consumers' reactions to organisations' CSR marketing communications. Thus, we adopted this framework to underpin our examination of consumer responses to CSR practices in a social media context.

3. Method

This study applied Pope and Wæraas' (2016) model in a social media context, using a case study of the Magnum ice-cream brand's *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign. The justification for using a case study is threefold. First, in relation to scope and analysis, case studies permit the exploration of a potential new dimension to marketing (Belk, 2006; Daymon and Holloway, 2011; Easton, 2010; Eisenhardt, 1989). Second, the environment, in this case, social media, can be described, critiqued and analysed with an important dimension of context considered (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). Finally, the recommendation by Easton (2010) for epistemological fit is achieved by the critical nature of the study.

The justification for using the *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign is based on two factors. The first relates to the popularity of the case; the campaign received almost 200,000 views, over 2500 reactions (likes) and approximately 2200 consumer comments, comprising over 4000 specific messages throughout the campaign. Secondly, after applying Kozinets' (2015) Netnography techniques, the data comprised a variety of positions and reasoning in reaction to the campaign and the cause. During the immersion stage, the researchers explored social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook was identified as holding a considerably larger number of comments that communicated

attitudes, positions and preferences about the *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign. The brand's site was chosen as it had received the highest concentration of comments, which included interactive narrative sequences that consisted of comments and replies. Other data such as individual posts were omitted, as little interaction with the community was recorded, and such data were often not open to download due to the privacy settings established by the comment's author. The process used in the method involved three stages: data collection, data coding and data analysis.

3.1. Data collection and assessing appropriateness

The first stage of data collection focused on Facebook comments and replies. These were retrieved in November 2017 from the company's official Facebook page using Facepager. Facepager is a post and comment extraction tool designed to allow de-identified data to be downloaded for analysis (Keyling and Jünger, 2013). Data included links to comments containing visual data, which came in the form of images, gifs and memes—these were also analysed. The second stage of data collection involved the screening of data in accordance with the cause of marriage equality and Pope and Wæraas' (2016) model as operationalised in a social media context: (1a) consumers demand CSR activities; (1b) consumers will support CSR activities; (2a) firms advertise their CSR practices to consumers; (2b) consumers are aware of firm-level CSR advertisements; (3) firms do not put into practice the advertised CSR activities; (4a) consumers can observe firm-level CSR performance; (4b) consumers do observe firm-level CSR performance; and (5) consumers award reputation and patronage for CSR statements alone; they are not profoundly sceptical and dismissive of CSR statements activity. Finally, all identifying markers (e.g., usernames, photos) were removed in accordance with ethical processes.

There are an array of semantic approaches that can be used to glean an understanding of the message (Belk, 2006; McQuarrie and Mick, 2003; Mick et al., 2004; Minowa and Belk, 2017). However, due to the multimodal nature of the dataset that included both written comments and images, Mehmet and Clarke's (2016) social semiotic multimodal method (SSMM) was selected to interpret marketing messages within a specific social context. This method combined systemic functional linguistics and social semiotics methods (image, intersemiotic relations). Analysis using systemic functional linguistics and semiotics was vital in the present study to develop a comprehensive evaluation of consumers' attitudes (Grant et al., 2013).

As argued by Belk (2014), meanings in online environments are often multimodal constructions and naturally develop through social and narrative interactions. Social media represents a good source of natural language consumer data that expresses pertinent attitudes relevant to brands (Croft, 2013; Wolny and Mueller 2013). Thus, the advantage of applying a multimodal framework for analysis stems from considering comments and replies as products of dialogic action. This stance focused the analysis on messages/comments within the context of other messages/comments. As the meanings are socially constructed "… the right of marriage equity in society" in a message draws on past dialogues to compose new messages. In understanding what came before, and how social interaction reshapes the use of language, and other modes, a more accurate interpretation was formed.

To further enhance accuracy, an SSMM approach considers how a message is composed based on the availability of specific modes of communication. It is argued those arranging messages select the modes of communication based on the "best fit" for the specific target audience (Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). This improves the chance of the audience interpreting the message as intended (Kress and Selander, 2012).

3.2. Coding and analysis

The coding process used clause level coding (Martin, 2014) and incorporated four stages. Each stage is outlined below.

Stage 1. The first component involved segmenting each comment into clauses to identify data for analysis. For example, the following quotation had three clauses that conveyed three types of sentiment:

> "*This ad is a PR stunt!* [1] *Marriage should only be between a man and woman* [2]. *I'll never buy a magnum again.* 😡 [3]"

Stage 2. Each clause was then thematically coded, for example, clause three from the above example would be thematically coded as "purchase intention". It is noted that the "angry" emoji at the end of clause three is thematically coded as part of the clause. It is important to note that the context of a post was incorporated at this stage to ensure accuracy and consistency (Saldaña, 2015).

Stage 3. Sentiment coding for each clause was then applied using Saldaña's (2015) *effective coding scheme*, which identified *emotions* (joy, hope, sadness, anger, disgust, security/insecurity, etc.), *judgements* (levels of normality, capacity, dependability, truthfulness, adherence to a moral or ethical code), and *positions* (favourable/unfavourable, valued/unvalued) expressed in each clause. For example, the third clause from the example above suggests a "negative" or "unfavourable" purchase intention towards the brand post campaign. This understanding was enhanced by insights gained from the previous clause, which states that marriage should be only viewed between a "man and a woman". This position was interpreted to be incongruent with Unilever's implied position on marriage equity. The emoji that is placed at the end of clause three does not convey a judgement just the emotion of anger. While it shares the same theme (purchase intention), it expresses an additional sentiment item and is thus coded separately to the clause.

Stage 4. Once coding of all sentiment items was conducted, the final stage of assigning a classification was undertaken. This stage involved each sentiment item being assessed for patterns and consistencies based on how the text positioned the author in relation to the Australian Marriage Equality cause. In total, five classifications were noted, and each classification, sample comment and explanation of classification is documented in Table 1.

In accordance with Saldaña (2015), all members of the team coded the dataset together and used negotiation when a disagreement arose. This process, according to Saldaña (2015), ensures consistency and reliability of thematic and interpretive coding.

4. Magnum's *'Pleasure is Diverse'* 2017 advertising campaign

The Magnum ice-cream *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign centres on a wedding between two women as depicted in Video 1. The imagery of the advertisement begins with scenes showing traditional components of a "white westernised" ceremony, triggering a social understanding of the intended narrative (Bambacas, 2002; Carter and Duncan, 2017). It begins with shots of a confident, beautiful bride, a luxury car, an expensive bouquet, and a proud father-of-the-bride escorting his daughter down the aisle. The storyline continues with shots of well-dressed and emotional guests waiting in a luxury venue. Next, waiting at the wedding altar, there is a second woman. While the range of traditional

imagery is likely to have created an expectation of heterosexual marriage (Arend, 2016; Bambacas, 2002), this shot disrupts assumptions and suggests a twist in the storyline. Interestingly, the remainder of the advertisement reverts to largely traditional elements: the ceremony is completed, and the newlyweds exit the hall, throwing their bouquets and leaving in the luxury car. The final scene depicts the newlyweds sharing, not the traditional cake, but instead, a white Magnum ice-cream and then the brand logo is superimposed with the tag *'Pleasure is Diverse'*.

The storyline communicates clearly to audiences, both the commonly understood elements of a wedding ceremony, as well as the topical social cause—marriage equality (Arend, 2016; Edwards, 1987; Khan, 2011). The campaign suggests that the Magnum brand is positively connected to the social issue of marriage equality in general and implicitly links the Magnum brand to supporting the 2017 Australian marriage amendment.

5. Results

5.1. Application of the CSR-washing framework to the Magnum case study

This section will apply the marriage equality Magnum *'Pleasure is Diverse'* dataset to Pope and Wæraas' (2016) CSR-washing path. The findings are represented in Table 2.

Condition 1a: Consumers demand CSR activities

According to Pope and Wæraas (2016, p. 178), for this condition to be met "CSR must be in demand throughout society". The findings of this study suggest that consumers want marketers to be responsible for their actions and to behave ethically in relation to social issues. In the case of marriage equality, there were numerous Newspoll surveys published in Australia leading up to the official postal vote on same-sex marriage (Anonymous, 2017a). In each instance, a representative sample of the population ($n = 2000$) was surveyed. Each survey undertaken resulted in approximately 65% of voters indicating that they would support a change to the Marriage Act to include same-sex couples (Anonymous, 2018a). Chambers (2017) reported that less than 40% of the Australian public sample was opposed to a change in the marriage legislation. When asked, those who indicated a no vote often gave reasons based on religion, while others stated they preferred the traditional definition of marriage (between a man and woman). Given the importance of community engagement with social issues, it is logical to see how consumers would have expectations for corporations to help support social issues through corporate social responsibility policies and practices. This suggests that consumers would demand that organisations engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives, thus satisfying Pope and Wæraas' (2016) first condition.

Condition 1b. Consumers will support CSR-practising companies

Consumers show support for organisations that engage in CSR practices, through purchase and positive of word of mouth (Pope and Wæraas, 2016). In addition, some consumers will pay a premium price for products sold by organisations that are perceived to, or are known to, have sound policies of corporate social responsibility (Miles and Covin, 2000). The finding revealed conflicting sentiment based evidence in consumer support for CSR activities. The percentage in favour of Magnum's alignment with the marriage equality movement made up the majority of the comments, with 53% of respondents indicating a continued or increased support for the brand and its commercial activities. Consumers with sentiment against the initiative made up 17% of respondents, and 20% of respondents did not comment on marriage equality or Magnum. All social media channels

Table 1
Consumer response typology.

Classification	%	Aggregated comment exemplar	Parameters of classification
Supportive Advocate	53	"Thank you, Magnum, for lending your voice to a worthwhile movement. I will definitely be buying extra ice-creams this month."	Believes the message to be authentic and was supportive of the value position the brand has taken.
Anti-Advocate	20	"Great. You have shown your true selves. Nothing against gay marriage but what does ice-cream have to do with marriage? I won't support an ice-cream that enters political debates."	Believes the message to be authentic but did not support the value position of the brand. This group can still feel positively about the position of the value referred to by the brand.
Moral Detractor	17	"Marriage should be between a man and a women. That's it!!!" This ad goes against GOD."	Believes the message to be authentic but does not support the value position of the brand based on religious or ideological reasons. This group is firmly against the original value being mentioned.
Sceptic A	4	"As if this ad is anything more than a PR stunt to bump sales. You aren't fooling anyone."	Does not believe the brand is being authentic and is only using the value for commercial benefit. This position is based on the consumer's previous experience of 'washing,' marketing and/or public relations.
Sceptic B	6	"Why should we believe you support equality when you don't give workers a fair go with pay and conditions?"	Does not believe the brand is being authentic and is only using the value for commercial benefit. This position is drawn from external values/unrelated values to the ones referred to in the campaign (in this instance fair pay).

Table 2
Adapted Pope and Wæraas (2016) conditions for social media.

Condition	General findings	Evidence in favour of CSR-washing				
		Weak	Weak evidence, with critical moderating conditions	Conflicting evidence	Strong evidence, with critical moderating conditions	Strong
1a	Consumer demand for CSR activities				x	
1b	Consumers will support CSR activities			x		
2a	Companies level of advertisement for CSR practices					x
2b	Consumers level of awareness of CSR announcement					X
3	The degree of decoupling of CSR statements from CSR practices varies widely by initiative			No evidence		
4a	Consumers can observe CSR performance					x
4b	Consumers do observe CSR performance					x
5	CSR advertisements are valued in themselves, apart from CSR performance			x		
Implications	CSR leaders and laggards receive the same rewards					

can enable different interactions and responses, both with and from consumers; this phenomenon is part of the vehicle effect (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016; Meenaghan and Shipley, 1999). Thus, it is important to consider the influence of the vehicle effect of different social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram and their ability to distinctly shape the public's conversation. Platform features such as text, images, or sound facilitate consumers' awareness and perceptions of varying positions. Thus, the social media channel (vehicle) may stimulate further dialogue and potentially shape consumer perspectives and their positions in a social media based brand community.

Condition 2a: Companies advertise their CSR activities

While Pope and Wæraas (2016) argued that most organisations do not advertise their actual CSR behaviour, they often attempt to make the campaign appear to be "authentic" rather than seen as disingenuous. Unilever implemented a paid, owned and earned strategy in its marketing practices (Heinze et al., 2017), using paid traditional media channels such as television, print, and billboard, as well as social media, including Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. We argue for an additional element to this condition. Social media provides the ability to determine if others are sharing the brand's CSR activities. The brand can benefit from earned exposure through media impression and social media shares (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Heinze et al., 2017; Mehmet and Clarke, 2016). In the case of the *'Pleasure is Diverse'* campaign, it was observed that

both individuals and organisations reposted and shared Magnum's campaign message. Unfortunately, Australian human research ethics regulations (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018: 21) restrict the publication of information that makes re-identification of participants possible, and therefore more specific information about the individuals and organisations who engaged in the sharing of Magnum's "#pleasure is diverse" campaign cannot be included in the present study. Online data analytics conducted on May 22, 2019 indicated that Magnum's "#pleasure is diverse" campaign remained active with over 600,000 Twitter posts found through the One MillionTweetmap tool (One MillionTweets, 2019).

Conditional 2b: Consumers are aware of CSR advertisement

Given the demand for marketers to engage in CSR behaviours, it is likely that consumers are aware of their CSR initiatives through their advertisements (Pope and Wæraas, 2016). For Magnum, the campaign received almost 200,000 views, over 2500 reactions (likes) and approximately 2200 consumer comments, comprising over 4000 specific messages on Facebook. On Instagram, a total of 20,000 indications of support were recognised in the form of love hearts, with YouTube recording over one million views (this figure includes views from reposted videos of the advertisement). This condition was therefore supported.

Awareness, while important, does not always allow for the determination of consumer investment into messaging or the brand

(Hallahan, 2000). Considering the capabilities of social media to produce metrics such as shares and comment frequencies (Heinze et al., 2017), it is argued that these insights allow the marketer to determine the level of active awareness. By making a distinction between passive audiences (consumer advertising) and active publics (participate in the discussion), it can be determined in a more nuanced manner the level of consumer awareness and investment (Grunig, 2009; Hallahan, 2000).

Condition 3: Firms separate public CSR statements from practices

Condition 3 focuses on the relationship between what marketers say and do regarding corporate social responsibility practices. The evidence of this relationship can be seen in a marketer's public statements compared to their subsequent actions. For Unilever, there are no direct public statements related to same-sex marriage. However, Unilever does publicly support diversity in general (Mitchell, 2017). In addition, in June 2017, Unilever supported a proposal by the United Nations to remove gender stereotyping in advertising (Anonymous, 2017b). Likewise, in both the 2017 and 2018 editions of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's ratings of workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Equality, Unilever Corporation was rated as an employer with the highest level of equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer employees (Anonymous, 2018b).

Based on the findings of this study, it does not appear that there is any evidence of relationships between Unilever and marriage equity organisations or groups. While grassroots, not-for-profit organisations such as *Australian Marriage Equality* (Australian Marriage Equality Ltd, 2016) actively led a community voice lobbying for legislative change, there did not appear to be a single organisation in Australia that served to represent the marriage equality cause. This suggests that there may not have been the opportunity for Unilever to engage in cause-related marketing. However, as stated above, Unilever has been awarded a perfect score for 2017 and 2018 in LBGQ employment equality (Anonymous, 2018b), suggesting that Unilever has aligned its processes and culture to be consistent with marriage equity.

Condition 4ab: Consumers (a) can and (b) do evaluate actual CSR performance

There is substantial evidence to suggest that consumers can, and do, evaluate actual company CSR performance and compare it to the brand's promotional campaigns. Pope and Wæraas (2016) noted four types of evidence: (1) watchdog groups; (2) consumers; (3) industry professionals; and (4) competitors. In this case study, we found that watchdog groups, industry professionals and consumers all made comments on social media that were directly related. The consumer advertising watchdog regulatory body in Australia, known as the Advertising Standards Bureau (2017), absolved Magnum of inappropriate messaging (Samios, 2017). However, criticisms of the campaign continued to appear in the media such as in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's popular television program 'Gruen' (Series 9 Ep 3, Gruen, 2017). The show's panel, which includes executives from the advertising, public relations, and digital communication industries, accused the Magnum campaign of "hijack marketing" (Gruen, 2017). They asserted that Magnum used the popularity of the movement for its commercial advantage as indicative of a causal ambush marketing campaign (Gruen, 2017).

The findings suggest that there was a wide range of consumer opinions, from those fully supportive of the causal ambush marketing campaign to those highly sceptical. The five categories observed are illustrated in Table 1. This section will discuss those who opposed the stance based on values and those insinuating the brand engaged in washing practices. The consumer advocate will be discussed in Condition 5.

5.2. Anti-Advocate

The label of anti-advocate is applied here to those who believed Magnum was authentic and genuine but did not agree with the brand's stance on marriage equality. However, they did not necessarily agree or disagree with the core value (in this instance marriage equality). This group repeatedly mentioned that Magnum (and Unilever more broadly) should stick to selling ice-cream. Likewise, others made specific statements about influencing people or adopting a particular political stance, inferring that a brand should not engage in social or political debates. Interestingly, some in this category self-identified as gay or lesbian. Typically, these attitudes and values seemed to be founded on the belief that business should stick to business and social and political debates should be handled by politicians and the public more broadly.

5.3. Moral detractor

Like the anti-advocate, the moral detractor also believed Magnum's '*Pleasure is Diverse*' campaign was authentic but did not agree with the brand's stance on same-sex marriage. However, the important difference between the anti-advocates and moral detractors was that *Moral Detractors* opposed Magnum's stance for ideological reasons. Some members of this group were outraged that two female actors in the advertisements were displaying affection and that they would no longer purchase Magnums. Other individuals made references to specific beliefs that viewed homosexuality as unnatural or sinful. There were also those who see public displays of homosexuality as a crime against children, positioning children as innocent, passive receivers of messages and Magnum as the perpetrator of abuse.

The attitudes expressed and the underlying values referred to in this group were grounded on religious, moral, and subcultural social conventions. Members of the group were emphatic that marriage is only between one man and one woman, and they were offended that Magnum's '*Pleasure is Diverse*' campaign intentionally violated their cultural norms.

5.4. Sceptics

The sceptics believed that Magnum's '*Pleasure is Diverse*' campaign was intentionally disingenuous for commercial benefit. This group represented those who did not trust the brand's authenticity. Sceptics comprised two groups: the first, "washing sceptics", referred to the campaign as being a marketing or public relations ploy. They were vocal about their stance, with some overtly accusing the brand outright of having no moral allegiance, only a commercial one. Sceptics received "likes" at a 7 to 1 ratio, meaning for each seven "likes" supporting a position believing the advertising campaign to be authentic, regardless of the position (for or against) one "like" indicated support for a sceptical stance. This figure is approximately 14% of total likes, or 635 comments likes out of just over 3500 total comment likes.

The second, "values sceptics", identified Unilever's actual CSR performance and the industrial pay dispute that was occurring at the time of the campaign. This group saw a contradiction in Unilever' values, where they were willing to support marriage equality but not the rights of their workers.

Sceptics were very vocal, often using caps to demonstrate the strength of their conviction. They drew on the reputation of past marketing practices to accuse the brand of misappropriating and leveraging same-sex marriage for its own commercial and marketing benefits. While sceptical comments did not reach the same frequency as the supporting advocate, they gained a considerable number of "likes", potentially indicating a semi-silent group that

did not trust and were cynical of the authenticity of Magnum communications. Importantly, these comments did not stand against same-sex marriage, rather Magnum's perceived opportunism.

Social media enables marketers to observe if consumers can and do inspect actual CSR performance. This can be social media metrics such as "likes" and triangulated through the analysis of natural language commentary posted on the brand's web site. In this instance, by using a sentiment appraisal approach, we noted that consumers of Magnum did observe criticisms of the brand and used the same justification for washing when articulating their opinions and attitudes.

Condition 5: CSR advertisements are valued in themselves, apart from CSR performance

The point of the importance of this condition is that the consumer accepts the CSR statement as a signal that the marketer is adopting CSR. Moreover, the CSR appeal is often evaluated by consumers on its merit and consumers do not check the validity of the claims against other corporate messages (Pope and Wæraas, 2016). Unlike the above four groups, which were sceptical based on the message or alignment of values, there was also evidence of an advocate group. Members of this group expressed a variety of attitudes and values that openly supported Magnum's pro-stance on marriage equality, even if a minority acknowledged a level of washing. The supporters' group tended to believe Magnum was being authentic and genuine in its communication and felt positive about the brand's link to marriage equality. Some made direct mention of values and morals. Other commentators insinuated that Magnum deserved to be rewarded financially for its stance on the issue, in this case by buying Magnums. Others were happy that a brand was taking a stand and attempted to extend the conversation by introducing a hashtag (#lovemagnum) and linking an already popular hashtag in the marriage equality conversation (#loveislove).

Importantly, some in this category identified as religious and indicated they believed equality and love were critical to their religious beliefs. Overall this group was passionate about the cause and the brand, with firmly entrenched values of fairness, equality and social cohesion. They did not see a problem with a brand using social advocacy for commercial benefit. Hence this condition was met with critical moderating conditions.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This short research note has numerous limitations, such as a self-selected sampling frame and potential ingenuous comments being made by the participants. It is an exploratory study on how social media might be used to operationalise Pope and Wæraas' (2016) CSR washing conceptual framework as a credence assessment tool. With a large number of promotional campaigns being targeted to consumers, it is increasingly important to be able to determine the credence of the marketer's claims. While employing causal ambush marketing tactics may not be a violation of regulations or laws, it is considered disingenuous by sceptical consumers, and a brand that resorts to causal ambush marketing may suffer reputational damage in some market segments. This is a topic that requires future investigation as social media gains an increasing role in both commerce and society.

The findings illustrate how social media data can be used to operationalise Pope and Wæraas' (2016) model. Critical semantic analysis was conducted on a social media campaign communicating a value-based message, that of supporting same-sex marriage. In the current study, consumer sentiments to the 'Pleasure is Diverse' campaign were evaluated by analysing the public dialogue drawn from social media posts. The nature of the campaign's storyline, in which a product is associated with a prevalent social

issue, but where there is no public evidence of an exchange between Unilever and organisations supporting Australian marriage equity, makes it a causal ambush marketing campaign.

In operationalising Pope and Wæraas' (2016) framework, this study found that: (1) consumers in social media brand communities reward brands that engage in CSR; (2) brand communities are aware of a brand's CSR claims; (3) there is a deviation between the brand's claims and actions (Wagner et al., 2009); (4) consumers are aware of these deviations; but (5) the brand's consumer community largely remains brand loyal. In summary, the findings of the current study largely suggest support for the operationalisation of Pope and Wæraas' (2016) washing framework; with the exception of Condition 3, the degree of separating the CSR statement from practice.

The data collected in our research provides support for research by Kollat and Farache (2017) and Lee et al. (2013) who argued that consumers were happy to share personal and intimate ideas and attitudes publicly through social media posts. This also suggests the importance of marketers to evaluate data drawn from social media to be able to rapidly implement market-based authentic customer-driven marketing strategies (Valos et al., 2017).

In addition, this study supported findings by Chernev and Blair (2015), who proposed that products are perceived to be a better value if the organisation is believed to be socially responsible. On the other hand, the typology of consumer responses found in this study's data also provides support for the confusion and scepticism consumers may feel when they perceive a campaign to be "greenwashing" (Aji and Sutikno, 2015). This suggests that consumers respond differently to causal ambush marketing tactics if they perceive the company to be insincere in its message.

From a managerial perspective, the findings of this study support the premise that causal ambush marketing can be cost-effective. In the past, marketing promotion was primarily a one-way communication process that relied heavily on investment in advertising (White and Miles, 1996), with the feedback channel to the organisation potentially hidden from public scrutiny. However, given that social media platforms provide an opportunity for conversations between marketers and consumers to occur publicly and in real time, it is essential to consider the different social media platforms that may require a modification to the Pope and Wæraas (2016) framework. Further research is needed to more fully articulate the use of communication vehicles like social media platforms in causal ambush marketing and how disingenuous marketing campaigns can damage the marketer's overall reputation (Seele and Gatti, 2017). Finally, more research is needed to continue to explore how, as Colleoni (2013) argued, marketers can leverage the capabilities of social media in their promotional campaigns to create meaningful conversations.

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Ethical considerations

This work contains only secondary data.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.ausmj.2019.06.001.

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