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Does the global vs. local scope matter? Contingencies of cause-related marketing in a developed market

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ABSTRACT

Many multinational corporations (MNCs) have adopted cause-related marketing (CRM) to improve their market positions, but CRM effectiveness in the international business context is less understood. Particularly, the findings on how the cause scope (global vs. local) impacts consumer responses to CRM have been mixed. Informed by social impact theory, this research examines how the cause scope interacts with the MNC's origin (emerging vs. developed markets) and the host market consumers' cultural orientation (individualism vs. collectivism) to influence perceived consumer effectiveness (consumers' perceptions of their purchase impact), and consequentially purchase intention. Across two studies using U.S. consumers, this research found that a local-scoped CRM strategy works more favorably than does a global-scoped CRM strategy for MNCs originated from emerging economies. Further, collectivistic consumers tend to favor a local-scoped cause than a global-scoped cause, suggesting that a nuanced understanding of subgroup cultural differences is needed in devising an effective international CRM strategy.

1. Introduction

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has become a popular strategic positioning and marketing tool to fulfill firms' corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in today's global market. CRM refers to a corporate social initiative in which firms donate a specified amount to a chosen cause in response to every purchase the consumers made (Vanhamme, Lindgreen, Reast, & Van Popering, 2012; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). American Express serves as a prime example when the company launched a famous campaign to raise funds for restoring the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in 1983. American Express raised a total of $1.7 million by donating one cent for every transaction and one dollar for a new issue of the credit card.

Since then, the use of CRM has been on the rise (Mendini, Peter, & Gibbert, 2018). The analysis of top 100 brands in the U.S. revealed that the percentage of CRM advertisements on YouTube has seen a steady increase in various causes, such as healthy living, equality, sustainability, women empowerment, and community aid (Pixability, 2017). Moreover, worldwide sponsorship on CRM has reached $62.7 billion (IEG, 2018). According to NP Source (2018), 78% of U.S. consumers want global companies to do more than making a profit by addressing social and environmental issues; 85% of U.S. companies have a domestic corporate giving program addressing local issues; 45% of U.S.

companies have an international giving program addressing worldwide problems. Many multinational corporations (MNCs) that opt for competing in the developed markets, such as in the U.S., also quickly learn to take on CSR initiatives as an important strategy to improve their competitive advantages (Tashman, Marano, & Kostova, 2019).

Not all CRM campaigns are created equal, and consumers' responses to various CRM campaigns likely vary. For example, the perceived fit between a cause and a firm's image improves consumers' attitudes toward the CRM campaigns and increases consumers' intention to purchase (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Mendini et al., 2018); consumers' perceptions of the corporate motivation for engaging in the cause influence their brand choice (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000); consumers' perceived novelty of the cause affects their evaluation of the CRM campaigns and the firm (La Ferle, Kuber, & Edwards, 2013). The aforementioned studies have established that the consumers' evaluation of the cause in relation to the company's motivation and personal beliefs can influence the success of CRM. However, the various attributes of the causes, such as cause scope, cause type, and cause acuteness, and the effectiveness of CRM, are often understudied and remain an intriguing topic of research interest (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2014; Vanhamme et al., 2012), particularly in the international business context. Out of the cause attributes, the cause scope is particularly salient for the cause selection in the global business environment. In the

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CRM literature, the scope of the cause in an MNC's promotion strategy can be identified as either related to global CSR issues (e.g., climate change) that impact most nations or local community CSR affairs with country-specific considerations (e.g., community school fundraising).

Empirical findings on the cause scope have not been conclusive. While some researchers found that consumers show more positive attitudes and purchase intention toward CRM campaigns that adopt a local (as opposed to global) scope (Grau & Folse, 2007; Hou, Du, & Li, 2008), other researchers have found no such difference (Cui, Trent, Sullivan, & Matiru, 2003; La Ferle et al., 2013; Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). Additionally, Vanhamme et al. (2012) found that consumers tend to identify more with CRM campaigns adopting a local scope but evaluate the corporate image of CRM campaigns adopting a global scope more positively. The mixed findings provide a fertile ground to study the contingencies of the effect of cause scope (operationalized as proximity of cause) (Hou et al., 2008). Built on recent findings, this research studies an important mediating mechanism via perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), the extent to which purchasers of CRM believe that their individual actions (e.g., purchases) can have an impact on a societal issue (Wiebe, Basil, & Runté, 2017). The social impact theory suggests that the inferred degree of impact is driven by various cues, such as the proximity, strength/status, and the number of sources exerting the impact (Latané, 1981). Drawing on social impact theory, this research investigates (1) the main effect of proximity of cause (global vs. local) on PCE, which in turn influences consumers' purchase intention; and (2) the moderating effects of the MNC's origin (emerging vs. developed markets) as a proxy for strength as well as host market consumers' cultural orientation as a proxy for the number of sources on the relationship between the proximity of cause, PCE, and purchase intention.

The findings of this study will help researchers and practitioners develop a deeper understanding of consumers' differential responses toward global-scoped vs. local-scoped CRM strategies, particularly in the context of international marketing strategy. First, recent studies on emerging market multinational corporations (EMNCs) have shown that lacking market-supporting institutions back home, EMNCs often choose to internationalize into a developed market at an early stage of the company's development to escape the institutional constraints in their home, emerging markets (Mathews, 2017). Specifically, to catch up with developed market MNCs, EMNCs need to successfully navigate an additional layer of liability of foreignness derived from consumers' negative stereotypes of their home market economic status (Liou, Lee, & Miller, 2017; Magnusson, Westjohn, & Sirianni, 2019). The findings of the current study suggest that EMNCs' CRM in a developed market serves as an important catch-up strategy to mitigate the liability of origin and improve consumers' purchase intention. Second, by studying the host market consumers' individualism vs. collectivism, we establish a nuanced understanding about the heterogeneity of the developed market consumers' cultural orientations, and shed light on future research in the effectiveness of CRM particularly in the context of perceived consumer effectiveness.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. CRM & consumer impact

Firms utilizing CRM enable consumers to engage in prosocial behaviors and improve consumer well-being by supporting various important social causes and issues. In return, successful CRM campaigns are shown to provide economic benefits to firms. For example, successful CRM campaigns improve consumer attitudes and increase purchase intention (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006); enhance corporate prestige, credibility, and image (Vanhamme et al., 2012); gain a competitive advantage and market differentiation (Adkins, 1999); and improve financial performance (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

Many firms use CRM initiatives as part of their CSR efforts to promote social values that the company is identified with. When consumers evaluate CRM campaigns and decide whether to purchase the product, they often rely on cues rather than effortful product evaluation (Minton & Cornwell, 2016). This is not surprising as consumers constantly make a sheer quantity of purchase decisions in daily activities. Consumers would purchase the product indicated in the CRM campaign when they believe that their purchase will impact other individuals (recipients of donations) within certain social space (globally vs. locally) (Wiebe et al., 2017). Conceivably, the more the consumers believe that their purchase will have an impact on the cause, the more likely they are to purchase the product. Hence, this research assumes that (1) prosocial buying behavior is intent-oriented based on the perceived purchase impact, and (2) consumers rely on various cues to evaluate the impact of their purchase (i.e., PCE).

Social impact theory (Latané, 1981) offers a useful foundation for this research because it explains how people assess the amount of impact they have on others within certain social space. According to the theory, the degree of social influence is guided by a set of cues, such as proximity, strength/status, and the number of sources exerting the influence. In the context of the current study, social impact theory is applied to describe how inputs (cues inherent in the international CRM buying context) affect consumers' perceptions of purchase impact (PCE), and consequentially behavioral outputs (purchase intention). Specifically, a conceptual framework is proposed to evaluate how
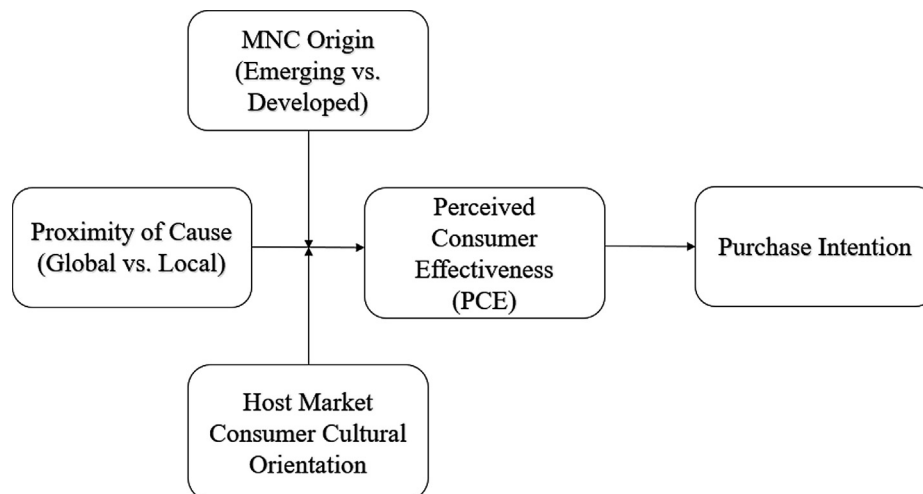

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

proximity of cause interacts with the MNC's origin (emerging vs. developed markets) and target consumers' cultural orientation to jointly influence PCE, which in turn influences purchase intention (see Fig. 1).

2.2. Effect of proximity of cause on PCE and purchase intention

When the focal consumers evaluate a CRM campaign, proximity of cause is a prominent cue showing how much impact their purchase may have on individuals in need. In a CRM campaign, proximity refers to the physical distance between the focal consumers (donors) and other individuals (recipients) impacted by the cause and donations (Ross et al., 1992). In a global-scoped (local-scoped) CRM strategy, the focal consumers are physically distant (proximal) to individuals impacted by the cause.

Social impact theory suggests that individuals are more affected by immediate rather than distant sources (Latané & Bourgeois, 2001). Hence, PCE will likely be higher in the presence of local-scoped CRM strategy than in the presence of global-scoped CRM strategy. Unlike an attitudinal construct that involves an evaluation of the issue at hand, PCE involves consumers' judgment and confidence in their own ability to help other individuals in need (Roberts, 1996). Past research has suggested that PCE triggers prosocial behavior including ethical consumption (Trudel & Cotte, 2009). Further, PCE is positively related to purchase intention in the context of CRM (Wiebe et al., 2017). Given the positive effect of proximity of cause on PCE, it is conceivable that PCE mediates the relationship between proximity of cause and purchase intention. That is, purchase intention will be higher in the presence of a local-scoped CRM strategy than in the presence of a global-scoped CRM strategy, due to a higher level of PCE in the presence of a local-scoped CRM strategy (H1).

H1. The positive relationship between proximity of cause and purchase intention is mediated by increasing PCE.

2.3. Moderating effect of MNC origin (emerging vs. developed markets)

The international business literature has well established that consumers' evaluation about a product may be biased based on their perceptions associated with the MNC's origin, such as the country image of emerging vs. developed markets (Demirbag, Sahadev, & Mellahi, 2010; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Cognitive marketing research suggests that products may be construed as a cluster of informational cues, both extrinsic (e.g., MNC's origin, brand name, price, reputation) and intrinsic (e.g., taste, design, material) (Insch & McBride, 2004). Each cue provides a basis for consumers to evaluate a product. Although the magnitude of the effect varies with environmental and individual factors (e.g., product type, product knowledge), the MNC's origin in emerging vs. developed markets has been found as an important extrinsic cue in consumer choice and behavior (Demirbag et al., 2010; Guo, 2013; Insch & McBride, 2004).

Undoubtedly, the effect of the MNC's origin is severely limited if consumers are not aware of whether the MNC originated from an emerging or a developed market. However, several environmental factors have contributed to consumers' greater exposure to such cues. First, due to the continued growth of Internet commerce, the importance of extrinsic cues (e.g., MNC's origin) will rise because the majority of Internet messages are extrinsic (Insch & McBride, 2004). Second, consumers are increasingly more cognizant of differences among foreign products due to their increased exposure to global media (Ozretic-Dosen, Skare, & Krupka, 2007). Third, the rapid process of globalization, the growing complexity of products, and the difficulty of establishing unique selling propositions have resulted in marketers' greater use of the MNC's origin as a promotional tool (Ozretic-Dosen et al., 2007). Finally, the country image associated with the MNC's origin in emerging vs. developed economies is particularly important when consumers are less familiar with foreign products, which is

frequently the case (Guo, 2013; Insch & McBride, 2004).

Due to the potential differences between emerging-market and developed-market countries, the MNC's origin (emerging or developed) offers significant threat and opportunities for the formulation of MNCs' international marketing strategies (Sharma, 2011). Product performance perceptions may decline (improve) when consumers' perceptions of the product are negatively (positively) impacted by the country image associated with emerging vs. developed markets (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). For example, based on recent studies on emerging market multinationals, neo-institutional theorists suggest that EMNCs are plagued by an additional liability of foreignness, which stems from the less developed economy in their home markets (Liou, Rose, & Ellstrand, 2012). Hence, "liability of origin" is attributed by global stakeholders who have negative stereotypes about EMNCs' home markets with less developed economies, lower technology levels, and weaker regulatory institutions for supporting effective markets (Cuervo-Cazurra, Newburry, & Park, 2016; Pant & Ramachandran, 2012; Tashman et al., 2019). Such stereotyping results in a general perception that purchasing products from EMNCs is less desirable (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). In contrast, consumers generally perceive products from developed market multinationals to be of higher quality and more desirable (Sharma, 2011).

As postulated by social impact theory, the influence of individuals on other individuals is multi-sourced (Latané, 1981). While proximity of the source exerting influence is the main cue, other factors (e.g., the strength of the source) interact with proximity to jointly determine the extent of social impact (Latané, 1981). Strength refers to the salience, power, or importance of the source exerting influence, and is usually determined by the source's *status* (Latané, 1981). Previous research has suggested that the MNC's origin signals the status of the product and offers symbolic and emotional meanings for consumers (Sharma, 2011). For example, researchers have found that consumers in emerging markets generally perceive imported products from developed markets to be of superior quality, which enhances status (Wang & Yang, 2008). On the contrary, consumers in developed markets generally view products imported from emerging markets to be of inferior quality and, as a result, lower status (Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Bamossy, 1990). By the same logic, consumers in developed markets tend to perceive products imported from other developed markets to be of similar quality and status (Sharma, 2011). Extending this line of logic to the context of CRM, consumers in a developed market are likely to view EMNCs to be less competent in pursuing a global (vs. local) cause, which involves greater expertise and resources in remedying worldwide problems (H2). However, given that developed-market consumers view products imported from other developed markets to be of similar quality and status, no difference between a local-scoped CRM strategy and a global-scoped CRM strategy is expected for developed market MNCs.

H2. The MNC's origin (emerging vs. developed markets) moderates the relationship between proximity of cause and PCE, such that a local-scoped CRM elicits higher PCE for EMNCs than does a global-scoped CRM.

2.4. Moderating effect of consumers' cultural orientation in individualism/collectivism

The national culture as a basis for market segmentation is increasingly ill-advised, given that within one national culture, individuals vary substantially in the extent to which they identify with, adhere to, and practice cultural norms (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Individualism/collectivism, one of the most important cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1997), has been viewed as a basis for contrasting individual-level differences. More importantly, recent international marketing researchers have found that individualism/collectivism is particularly influential in consumer ethical beliefs and decision-making such as prosocial buying behavior (Chiou & Pan, 2008; Lu, Chang, &

Chang, 2015). Hence, we propose that consumers' cultural orientation (individualism vs. collectivism) is a determinant characteristic of whether the global- or local-scoped CRM strategy can be more effective in a developed market.

Individualism- and collectivism-oriented consumers differ in their view toward how the self relates to the group. Individualists tend to place more emphasis on the individual as separate from others and place individual interest above those of the group (Hofstede, 1997). By contrast, collectivists assess themselves in relation with others and tend to prioritize group interests over personal interests (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012).

In the context of CRM, the focal consumers are usually given a cue indicating the group that will be impacted by the cause. For example, in a CRM advertisement, the focal consumers may be shown a group of children in India that would be helped by the donations (La Ferle et al., 2013). However, how such a cue is perceived depends on the focal consumers' own cultural orientation and their view toward the notion of a group. The application of social impact theory suggests that the number of people impacted by the purchase decision significantly affects how consumers act on the informational cues embedded in the social cause promoted in the CRM. Hence, it is plausible that a cause involving local impact (impact on a larger number of individuals similar to the focal consumers in the proximal local community) or a cause involving global impact (impact on a group of individuals unlike the focal consumers worldwide) has varying efficacy for focal consumers with different cultural orientations.

Collectivists tend to discriminate out-group members (individuals dissimilar to them) while embracing in-group members (individuals similar to them) (Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006). Recent research shows that collectivistic individuals have more favorable attitudes toward advertisements showing in-group (vs. out-group) members (Kim, 2016). In contrast, individualists focus on their own personal needs (instead of group needs) and do not normally discriminate between in-group and out-group members (Kim, 2016). Due to the geographic proximity, a local-scoped CRM tends to involve in-group members, whereas a global-scoped CRM tends to involve out-group members. Based on this logic, it can be argued that collectivistic consumers may show a more favorable evaluation toward a local-scoped CRM strategy than a global-scoped CRM strategy, given their affinity toward in-group members. Accompanied by a more favorable evaluation of the CRM strategy is a greater sense of feeling capable of helping a local-scoped CRM strategy (i.e., higher PCE) than a global-scoped CRM strategy. That is, the positive effect of cause proximity (local scope of the CRM strategy) on PCE is strengthened for collectivists (H3). However, since individualists do not discriminate between in- and out-group members, no difference between a local-scoped CRM strategy and a global-scoped CRM strategy is expected for individualistic consumers.

H3. Cultural orientation moderates the relationship between proximity of cause and PCE, such that a local-scoped CRM strategy elicits higher PCE for collectivistic consumers than does a global-scoped CRM strategy.

3. Study 1: children's clothing companies from China vs. Netherlands

The first study utilizes a 2 (CRM cause scope: global vs. local) × 2 (MNC origin: emerging market/China vs. developed market/Netherlands) × 2 (host market cultural orientation: collectivism vs. individualism) between-subjects experimental design. Three hundred participants currently living in the U.S. were recruited online (see Table 1 for demographic information). The choice of the U.S. as the host country is strategic: (1) the term cause-related marketing was coined in the U.S. and U.S. consumers have a long history of being exposed to CRM (Mendini et al., 2018) and (2) the U.S. is by far the most frequent

Table 1
Respondents demographic profile.

	Study 1	Study 2
Demographic Variable	Percentage	Percentage
Gender		
Male	57%	49.8%
Female	43%	50.2%
Age (in years)		
18–30	33.0%	23.2%
31–40	36.7%	38.9%
41–50	15.3%	19.4%
51 or above	15.0%	18.5%
Ethnicity		
African American	11.0%	8.5%
Asian	6.3%	8.5%
Hispanic	7.0%	5.7%
White	72.0%	74.4%
Others	3.7%	2.8%
Education		
Less than High School	0.3%	0.2%
High School Graduate	10.3%	10.4%
Some College	20.0%	19.9%
Associate Degree	9.7%	17.5%
Bachelor's Degree	45.7%	42.7%
Master's Degree	11.7%	7.1%
Doctoral Degree	0.7%	1.4%
Professional Degree	1.7%	0.7%

destination of EMNCs' foreign direct investment of all the developed markets (Economist, 2011).

3.1. Stimuli

Stimuli were designed by considering important factors, including the selection of the product type, cause, MNC, and non-profit organization. First, products investigated in prior country image literature can be categorized into personal (cosmetics, clothes, etc.) vs. performance (cars, electronic products, technology-oriented products, etc.) products (Suh, Hur, & Davies, 2016). Study 1 utilized a personal product, children's clothing, while Study 2 utilized a performance product, solar panels, to improve the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cause selected was children's health well-being, an appropriate context to investigate consumers' charity-related purchase (e.g., Wiebe et al., 2017). Relatedly, the global (vs. local) cause scope was represented by building children's hospitals around the globe (vs. in the local community). Further, the countries chosen were China, an emerging economy, and the Netherlands, a developed market. According to a social responsibility country ranking report, the Netherlands is ranked the 7th, whereas China is ranked the 60th (RIAM, 2018). The contrast should induce varying country image effects in terms of the MNC's CSR performance as well as the home market's economic status. China had a GDP per capita of $9771 while the Netherlands had a GDP per capita of $52,978 for 2018 (World Bank, 2018). To reduce potential confounding effects, the cause and the company's images are aligned by choosing the children clothing industry for both China- and the Netherlands-based MNCs (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Additionally, to eliminate participants' bias toward existing companies (La Ferle et al., 2013), fictitious names, Yuantin vs. Exor, were created to reflect China- vs. Netherlands-based MNC, respectively. Finally, a fictitious non-profit organization aligned with the cause (named the Kids Health Foundation) was created to receive the MNC's donation.

3.2. Procedure

Four conditions involving China- vs. Netherlands-based MNC and global vs. local cause scope were created. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions and presented a description for Yuantin or Exor, which reads "Yuantin (vs. Exor) Clothing Corporation

is a China-based (vs. Netherlands-based) Multinational Corporation with offices throughout the world. It is one of the fastest-growing manufacturing companies of children clothing products. The company has enjoyed a reputation for delivering high quality, value-added products to meet the needs of consumers around the globe." Then, the participants were provided a description of the non-profit organization, the Kids Health Foundation, and its mission to improve healthcare for children around the globe or in the local community. Next, the participants learned about the CRM in which the MNC (Yuantin or Exor) will donate 2% of its sales to the Kids Health Foundation for purchases made between August–December 2018.

Participants then examined an advertisement that reinforced the information given (see Appendix A.1 for sample advertisement). Four different advertisements shared a uniform design. The MNC's logo was designed to reinforce the MNC's origin. The kids' photos were carefully chosen to strengthen the global vs. local cause. After viewing the advertisement, the participants filled out a questionnaire assessing PCE and purchase intention. Finally, the participants provided ratings for their cultural orientation (individualism), control variables (ethnocentrism and personal importance of the cause or cause involvement), as well as demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, ethnicity, and other countries in which the respondent lived for more than six months) and manipulation checks.

Since the data distribution of the individualism scale is slightly skewed toward higher (more positive) responses, a median split on the individualism scale was performed. This is reasonable, given that the U.S. respondents have consistently been shown as more individualistic (Triandis & Gelfand, 2012). The individualism scale is categorized as low (coded as 0, collectivistic orientation) vs. high (coded as 1, individualistic orientation) (Lu et al., 2015). To make sure that conducting a median split is appropriate, we performed additional analysis to show that no multicollinearity exists between our independent variables (and moderating variables). Moreover, the effect size of the variables remains moderately strong, supporting that a median split is appropriate in our case (Iacobucci, Posavac, Kardes, Schneider, & Popovich, 2015).

All the scales used in this study were based on established measurement tools (see the full scales in Appendix B). For example, the study utilized four items to measure perceived consumer effectiveness (e.g., "I feel capable of helping solve health care challenges our society faces by buying products from this company"). Moreover, three items were used to measure purchase intention (e.g., "I will likely purchase products from this company to support the cause of health care for children"). Individualism was measured using four items (e.g., "I usually work independently from others"). Finally, the Cronbach (reliability) value across all constructs are between 0.71 and 0.94, which surpass the reliability threshold recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010).

Manipulation check for cause scope (proximity of cause) was measured by "The cause in the scenario is related to a problem/challenge that has happened geographically _____." (1 = close to me and 5 = far away from me) (Vanhamme et al., 2012). According to the results, the participants who were exposed to the local cause (global cause) scenario felt that the cause is closer to (far away from) them ($M_{local} = 2.25$; SD = 1.51; $M_{global} = 4.35$; SD = 0.920; t = 14.54, p < .001), indicating a successful manipulation of cause scope. In addition, participants were asked the MNC origin to verify that they were aware if the company is originated from either China or Netherlands.

3.3. Results

The hypotheses were tested using a regression-based path modeling tool, Process Macro 3.1 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95% CI) (Hayes, 2018). The Netherlands is coded as 0, whereas China is coded as 1. Table 2 summarized the hypothesis testing results.

Contrary to H1, proximity of cause or POC, global (coded as 0) vs. local (coded as 1) cause, does not increase PCE (b = 0.058, p > .05; LLCI = −0.155, ULCI = 0.271), and PCE is not a significant mediator between POC and purchase intention or PI (0.182; LLCI = −0.094, ULCI = 0.271) (Table 2, Model 1). Model 2 in Table 2 is to assess the moderating effect specified in H2, which suggests that the MNC's origin moderates the relationship between POC and PCE (specifically, POC × MNC origin → PCE). H2 is supported by the significant moderating effect of the MNC's origin (b = 0.466, p < .05; LLCI = 0.038, ULCI = 0.928). As shown in Fig. 2a, for the China-based MNC, a local-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting PCE than a global-scoped CRM strategy does (b = 0.402; LLCI = 0.081, ULCI = 0.724). As expected, for the Netherlands-based MNC, no difference is found toward global-scoped vs. local-scoped CRM strategies (b = −0.064; LLCI = −0.394, ULCI = 0.267).

In H3, host market cultural orientation or CO was hypothesized to moderate the relationship between POC and PCE (specifically, POC × CO → PCE) and found significant (b = −0.461, p < .05; LLCI = −0.928, ULCI = −0.056) (Table 2, Model 3). As shown in Fig. 2a, for collectivistic consumers, a local-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting PCE than a global-scoped CRM strategy does (b = 0.388; LLCI = 0.075, ULCI = 0.701), supporting H3. As expected, for individualistic consumers, no difference is found toward global-scoped vs. local-scoped CRM strategies (b = −0.073; LLCI = −0.420, ULCI = 0.273).

3.4. Additional analysis: Moderated mediation

To improve the model specification, we ran a moderated mediation analysis of MNC origin and CO (simultaneously) on the indirect relationship between POC and PI, mediated by PCE (MNC origin & CO × POC → PCE → PI). The result indicates a significant moderating effect of the MNC's origin (b = 0.484, p < .05; LLCI = 0.023, ULCI = 0.945) and CO (b = −0.487, p < .05; LLCI = −0.948, ULCI = −0.026) on the mediational relationship described. As demonstrated in Table 3, for China-based MNC and collectivistic consumers (b = 0.435; LLCI = 0.176, ULCI = 0.725), a local-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting purchase intention via PCE than a global-scoped CRM strategy does. On the other hand, for Netherlands-based MNC and individualistic consumers (b = −0.235; LLCI = −0.532; ULCI = 0.049), the two CRM strategies do not differ in their efficacy to elicit purchase intention via PCE.

4. Study 2: Solar panel companies from South Africa vs. The UK

To increase the generalizability of the results, Study 2 was conducted using the same design as in Study 1, but with South Africa representing emerging economies and the United Kingdom (UK) representing developed economies. A new sample of two hundred and eleven U.S. participants were recruited online (Table 1 shows demographic information). Keeping the U.S. as the host country in Study 2 allows for a valid comparison of the results by eliminating the potential confounding effects of using different populations.

4.1. Stimuli

First, a performance (rather than personal) product, solar energy, was chosen to enhance generalizability. Second, the cause involves supporting higher education in clean energy. The global (local) cause scope was to support college students around the globe (in the local community). Further, the countries selected were South Africa vs. the UK. According to an environmental performance country report, the UK is ranked the 6th, whereas South Africa is ranked 142nd (EPI, 2018). South Africa has a GDP per capita of $6339 while the U.K. has a GDP per capita of $42,491 (World Bank, 2018). Finally, real (rather than fictitious) brands, ARTSolar Corporation (South-Africa based) vs.

Table 2
Hypotheses results.

Predictor	Study 1				Study 2				Supported? (Yes/No)
	b	Indirect Effect	t-value	(LLCI, ULCI)	b	Indirect Effect	t-value	(LLCI, ULCI)	
Model 1: DV–PI									
POC	0.058		0.539	(−0.155, 0.271)	0.032		0.233	(−0.237, 0.301)	
POC → PCE (H1)		0.182		(−0.094, 0.271)		0.092		(−0.311, 0.112)	No
Cause Involvement	0.425		8.892***	(0.331, 0.518)	0.151		2.615**	(0.037, 0.266)	
Ethnocentrism	0.612		7.401***	(0.449, 0.774)	0.207		1.725	(−0.029, 0.444)	
Model 2: DV–PCE (Moderator: MNC Origin)									
POC	−0.064		−0.379	(−0.394, 0.267)	−0.327		−0.1635	(−0.720, 0.067)	
MNC Origin	−0.507		−3.028**	(−0.836, −0.178)	−0.419		−2.199*	(−0.797, −0.043)	
POC × MNC Origin (H2)	0.466		1.984*	(0.038, 0.928)	0.504		2.098*	(0.031, 0.977)	Yes
Cause Involvement	0.427		9.01***	(0.334, 0.521)	0.149		2.580*	(0.035, 0.263)	
Ethnocentrism	0.595		7.28***	(0.435, 0.757)	0.184		1.540	(−0.052, 0.420)	
Model 3: DV–PCE (Moderator: CO)									
POC	0.388		2.442*	(0.075, 0.701)	0.209		1.107	(−0.163, 0.582)	
CO	0.275		1.589	(−0.066, 0.616)	0.188		0.974	(−193, 0.569)	
POC × CO (H3)	−0.461		−2.442*	(−0.928, −0.056)	−0.507		−2.086*	(−0.986, −0.027)	Yes
Cause Involvement	0.429		8.947***	(0.335, 0.523)	0.156		2.706*	(0.043, 0.271)	
Ethnocentrism	0.604		6.979***	(0.434, 0.774)	0.213		1.758	(−0.026, 0.453)	

POC = Proximity of Cause; PCE = Perceived Consumer Effectiveness; PI = Purchase Intention; CO = Cultural Orientation.

*** $p < .001$.
** $p < .01$.
* $p < .05$.
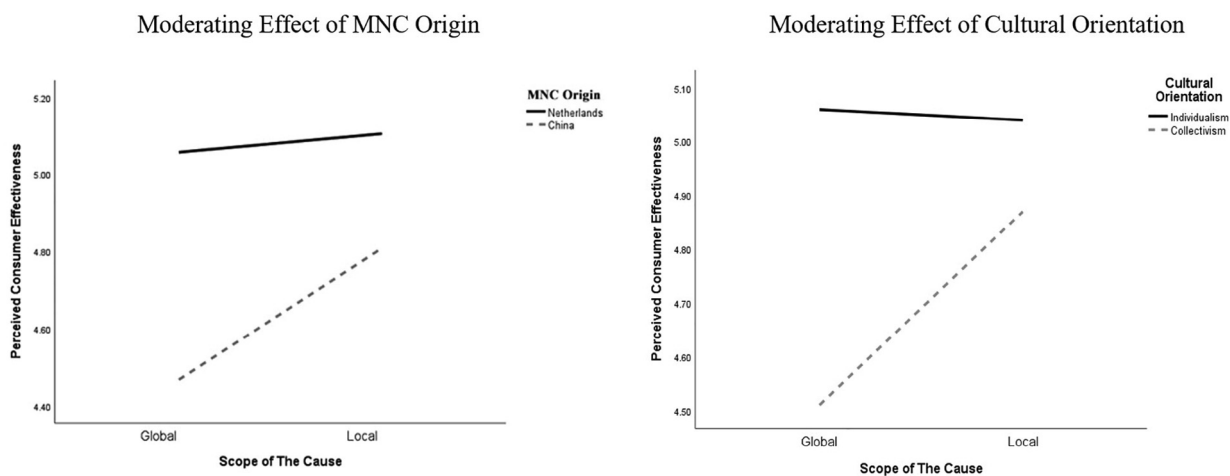
Moderator (MNC Origin)	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Moderator (CO)	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
China	.402*	.081	.724	Collectivism	.388*	.075	.701
Netherlands	-.064	-.394	.267	Individualism	-.073	-.420	.273

Note: * = Statistically Significant at .05 or below

Fig. 2a. Study 1 simple slope analysis.

Table 3
The conditional effects of POC → PCE → PI.

Study #	Moderator (MNC Origin)	Moderator (CO)	Indirect Effect	LLCI	ULCI
Study 1	China	Collectivism	0.435	0.176	0.725
	Netherlands	Individualism	−0.235	−0.532	0.049
	Netherlands	Collectivism	0.101	−0.164	0.362
	China	Individualism	0.099	−0.181	0.372
Study 2	South Africa	Collectivism	0.148	0.009	0.328
	United Kingdom	Individualism	−0.168	−0.329	−0.024
	United Kingdom	Collectivism	−0.007	−0.127	0.142
	South Africa	Individualism	−0.012	−0.149	0.122

POC = Proximity of Cause; PCE = Perceived Consumer Effectiveness; PI = Purchase Intention; CO = Cultural Orientation.

Cambridge Solar Corporation (UK-based), were used to further improve generalizability. Since real brands were used, brand-related variables (brand familiarity, brand attitude, and brand perceived quality) were measured as well.

4.2. Procedure

The procedure in Study 2 is the same as in Study 1. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions (South Africa- vs. UK-based MNC × global vs. local cause). The participants were first presented a description for ARTSolar Corporation or Cambridge Solar Corporation, and then provided a description of the non-profit organization (College Fund Foundation) and its mission to support college students pursuing a clean energy degree around the globe or in the local

community. Next, the participants learned about the CRM strategy in which the MNC (ARTSolar or Cambridge) would donate 2% of its sales to the College Fund Foundation for purchases made between May–September 2019. Participants then examined a corresponding advertisement (see Appendix A.2). Finally, participants provided ratings for dependent variables, control variables, manipulation checks, brand-related variables, and demographic variables (see Appendix B). Like Study 1, collectivists and individualists were coded as 0 and 1, respectively. The UK is coded as 0, whereas South Africa is coded as 1.

As for the manipulation checks, the participants who were exposed to the local cause (global cause) scenario felt that the cause is closer to (far away from) them (M_{local} = 1.86; SD = 0.822; M_{global} = 4.36; SD = 1.161; t = 17.91, p < .001), indicating a successful manipulation of cause scope. In addition, participants were asked the MNC origin to verify that they were aware if the company is originated from either South Africa or the U.K.

4.3. Results

Similar with Study 1, the result shows that proximity of cause (POC) does not increase PCE (b = 0.032, p > .05; LLCI = −0.237, ULCI = 0.301). Per Model 1 in Table 2, PCE is not a significant mediator between POC and purchase intention (0.092; LLCI = −0.311, ULCI = 0.112).

Next, both moderating variables, the MNC's origin (b = 0.504, p < .05; LLCI = 0.031, ULCI = 0.977) and cultural orientation (b = −0.507, p < .05; LLCI = −0.986, ULCI = −0.027) significantly moderate the relationship between POC and PCE (Table 2, Model 2&3). Specifically, for South Africa–based MNC, the local-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting PCE than the global-scoped CRM strategy (b = 0.339; LLCI = 0.082, ULCI = 0.562) (Fig. 2b). Moreover, for collectivistic consumers, the local-scoped CRM strategy is also shown to be more effective in eliciting PCE than the global-scoped CRM strategy (b = 0.344; LLCI = 0.095, ULCI = 0.582) (Fig. 2b). These results support H2 and H3 and display a similar pattern of moderating effects as in Study 1 (see Figs. 2a and 2b). In addition, consistent with Study 1, no difference is found toward global-scoped vs. local-scoped CRM strategies for the UK-based MNC (b = −0.264; LLCI = −0.619, ULCI = 0.091) and for individualistic consumers (b = −0.263; LLCI = −0.606, ULCI = 0.082) (Fig. 2b).

4.4. Additional analysis: Moderated mediation

The finding indicates a significant moderating effect of COO (b = 0.482, p < .05; LLCI = 0.013, ULCI = 0.952) and CO (b = −0.495, p < .05; LLCI = −0.971, ULCI = −0.019) on the indirect relationship between POC and PI, mediated by PCE. Specifically, as seen in Table 3 and consistent with Study 1, for South Africa–based MNC and collectivistic consumers (b = 0.148; LLCI = 0.009, ULCI = 0.328), a local-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting purchase intention than a global-scoped CRM strategy does. Interestingly, contrary to Study 1, for UK-based MNC and individualistic consumers (b = −0.168; LLCI = −0.329; ULCI = −0.024), a global-scoped CRM strategy is more effective in eliciting purchase intention via PCE than a local-scoped CRM strategy does.

5. General discussion and implications

5.1. General discussions

Across two U.S. consumer samples, the findings of this research suggest that, contrary to H1, the CRM cause scope does not directly affect consumers' beliefs that their purchases have an impact on the cause (PCE). A local cause alone is not more effective than a global cause in enhancing consumer perceptions of their own effectiveness. Despite lacking support for H1, this result is in line with the null finding of the cause scope in some past studies (Cui et al., 2003; La Ferle et al., 2013; Ross et al., 1992). The null results can be explained below about the two moderating effects we found.

As expected, when the MNC (a for-profit company) originated from an emerging market (China and South Africa), a local-scoped CRM strategy will enhance consumers' beliefs about their own impact to a greater extent than a global-scoped CRM strategy. However, interestingly, the cause scope does not matter in eliciting a sense of impactful purchase for consumers when the MNC originated from a developed market (the Netherlands and the UK). This study also uncovers the moderating effect of host market consumers' cultural orientation. As expected, collectivistic consumers believe their impact toward a local (as opposed to global) cause is larger. By contrast, as seen in Table 3, individualistic consumers do not differ in their purchase impact toward a local-scoped CRM strategy vs. global-scoped CRM strategy when

Moderating Effect of MNC Origin

Moderating Effect of Cultural Orientation
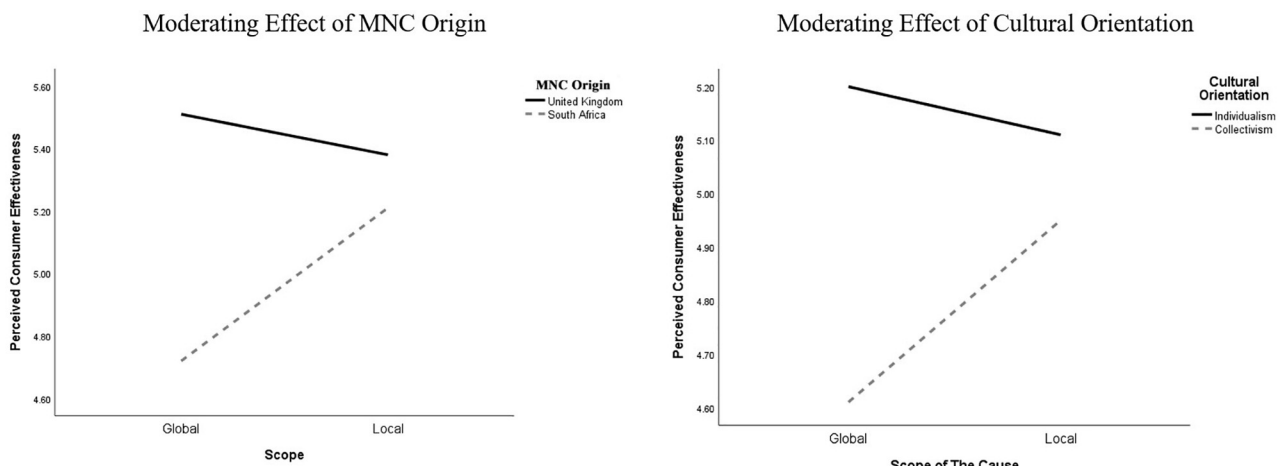
Moderator (MNC Origin)	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Moderator (CO)	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
South Africa	.339*	.082	.562	Collectivism	.344*	.095	.582
United Kingdom	-.264	-.619	.091	Individualism	-.263	-.606	.082

Note: * = Statistically Significant at .05 or below

Fig. 2b. Study 2 simple slope analysis.

considering the clothing purchase (a personal product) in Study 1, but favor a global-scoped CRM strategy when considering the purchase of solar panel products (a performance product) in Study 2. In Study 2, when we use the solar panel companies, the UK companies are shown to be able to accrue the benefit of employing a global-scoped CRM strategy. Hence, the MNC's origin effect varies with product type; the effect is stronger for performance products than for personal products, which is consistent with the finding of Suh et al. (2016). Taken together, the cause scope of the CRM strategy only matters when the MNC originated from emerging economies as well as when the CRM campaign targeted consumers who are more collectivistic. These two moderating effects appear to be in opposite directions in our studies. Hence, it is reasonable to arrive at a null mediation effect given the positive moderated mediation effect of the MNC's origin and the negative moderated mediation effect of host market consumers' cultural orientations.

5.2. Theoretical implications

First, this research sheds light on the inconclusive findings in the CRM literature regarding the main effect of cause scope on consumers' perceptual and behavioral responses to CRM. Past findings that consumers responding more favorably toward a local-scoped (vs. global-scoped) CRM strategy (e.g., Grau & Folse, 2007; Hou et al., 2008) are not always present. The contingencies identified in this research, the MNCs' origin (emerging vs. developed markets) and host market consumers' cultural orientation, help explain the null effect of cause scope on consumers' responses to CRM documented in some past studies (e.g., Cui et al., 2003; La Ferle et al., 2013; Ross et al., 1992). Specifically, our results show the critical nuanced understanding of CRM in that a local-scoped CRM strategy works more favorably than a global-scoped CRM strategy only when the MNC originated from emerging economies and when the CRM campaign was targeted at consumers who are more collectivistic. These findings help us understand the complex manner in which cues inherent in the international CRM buying context (e.g., proximity of cause, MNC origin, and host market consumers' culture orientation) influence consumer outcomes. As such, our findings help advance social impact theory (Latané, 1981) by showing how sources of impact may interact. The proximity of the source (i.e., cause scope) interacts with the strength of the source (i.e., the MNC's origin) and the number of the source (i.e., host market consumers' cultural orientation) to induce a varying degree of perceived impact (i.e., PCE). Consumers who believe their purchases make an impact are more likely to purchase the products based on the CRM strategy. Also, these findings are important indicators that host market consumers are not homogeneous in their cultural orientations, which then shape their perceptions on different MNCs' CRM strategies.

Second, the findings advance theoretical understanding in international marketing strategy, particularly in the CRM area. The globalization has contributed to the heightened awareness of both global- and local-scoped social issues and resulted in a generation of consumers who are socially responsible, and value the ethical perspectives in their buying decisions (Bonetto, 2015). Recent research suggested that CSR effort can be considered as an effective strategy to mitigate considerable political risks in a developed market where voters increasingly display anti-globalization sentiments against EMNCs (Tashman et al., 2019; Witt, 2016). However, not all CRM efforts will benefit all MNCs in the same way. A local-scoped cause (e.g., donating to a local-scale non-profit organization) may result in better consumer outcomes for EMNCs. This finding sheds light on EMNCs' catch-up strategy in implementing CRM strategies. When doing business in developed markets, EMNCs are advised to utilize a local-scoped rather than a global-scoped CRM strategy to gain legitimacy and enhance their market share.

Third, this paper advances the extant CRM research, particularly in the context of perceived consumer effectiveness. Prior CRM research has largely overlooked the important mediating role of PCE except for a

limited number of studies (e.g., the dispositional PCE studied in Wiebe et al., 2017). Although dispositional PCE was shown to increase charitable behavior, the possibility of changing consumers' dispositional factors or traits is small. Responding to the call for research on situational PCE (Wiebe et al., 2017), the current study shows that PCE can be induced through situational factors (e.g., the CRM cause scope) depending on contextual factors (e.g., the MNC's origin and target consumers' cultural orientation).

5.3. Managerial implications

The findings of impacts related to local-scoped vs. global-scoped CRM strategies advance the practical discussion on international marketing strategy and reveal critical factors for situation-fit consideration. The contextual factors such as the MNC's origin and host market consumers' cultural orientation serve as important boundary conditions for practitioners to consider when developing CRM strategies in the international business environment. Practitioners need not assume a direct positive relationship between proximity of cause and consumers' responses to CRM; rather, they need to be aware of the complex nature of local-scoped vs. global-scoped CRM strategies when competing in a developed market.

Second, the success of CSR initiatives largely depends on consumer perceptions, because consumers are the "final judges" of corporate behaviors including corporate socially responsible behaviors (Choi, Chang, Li, & Jang, 2016). Thus, it is not surprising that the prior CRM research has advised MNCs that how consumers view the foreign firm's CSR efforts is an underlying reason for their responses to the CSR efforts (e.g., Choi et al., 2016). However, departing from the prior CRM research that focuses on consumers' perceptions of the firm, the current research focuses on consumers' perceptions of the impact or effectiveness of their own purchase. Our research suggests that MNCs can trigger a higher level of consumer perceptions of their purchase impact through aligning the CRM cause scope (global vs. local) with the MNC's origin and the target consumers' cultural orientation. Hence, MNCs that seek to utilize CSR-led marketing tools (e.g., CRM) in a foreign market are encouraged to conduct marketing research and gain a clear understanding of how the host country consumers will view the impact of their purchase on the cause. For example, in addition to choosing CSR cause impacting the local community, EMNCs can develop localized CRM campaign names to help reduce intergroup bias.

5.4. Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations, which serve fertile grounds for future research. First, structural elements of CRM campaigns (the messages, how the donation amount is quantified, the size of the donation relative to the price of the product, the presence of donation deadlines, etc.) were not explored in this study, but nevertheless may affect consumer perceptions of the purchase impact (Grau & Folse, 2007). Similarly, while we focused on the MNC's origin, other firm characteristics (e.g., firm size, development stage of the firm) were not considered. Future research is encouraged to explore if the MNC's size and the development stage influence how consumers view their purchase impact (PCE). It is plausible that the MNC, with a bigger size and more advanced development, induces a higher level of PCE. In addition, future research is encouraged to use a more nuanced measure of proximity of the cause, given the nonsignificant main effect of cause proximity found in our studies.

Second, we have studied one important consumer characteristic, cultural orientation, but this study did not examine morality-based individual differences such as consumer ethical beliefs, moral attentiveness, empathic concern, and perspective-taking. These consumer traits are not easily altered and have a less significant managerial application but may influence how the target-market consumers react to foreign company's CSR efforts. The nuanced understanding of how consumers'

characteristics influence their responses to CRM is equally valuable for domestic firms.

Third, beyond the recent study (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2019) on the comparison between domestic and foreign firms' CRM strategy, our results show the differences in the economic development of the foreign firms' home market. Despite the recent finding that foreign firms' global cause mitigates nationalistic consumers' skepticism (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2019), EMNCs are less likely to benefit from a global-scoped CRM strategy. EMNCs will be better off using a proximal cause but need to still compete with domestic firms on promoting local causes. In the future studies, the historical context of the host market, as well as the bilateral political relations between the MNC's home and host market, can be further taken into account studying the influence of cause scope

on the effectiveness of CRM strategies.

Fourth, the focal dependent variable of this study is purchase intention, but some CRM campaigns require customer participation beyond a simple purchase. For example, the soft drinks company, The Innocent, launched a "Big Knit" CRM campaign by partnering up with Age UK to help vulnerable older people. In this campaign, consumers knit a tiny, woolen hat that will be placed on an Innocent smoothie bottle and then sold in stores. If a CRM campaign requires more time, work, and effort from the consumers, will the results of this study still be observed? Future research is encouraged to explore CRM campaigns that vary in terms of the extent of customer participation required. It is possible that extra time, work, and effort increase perceived consumer impact and a sense of responsibility.

Appendix A

A.1. Study 1 sample stimuli

A.2. Study 2 sample stimuli

South Africa-based MNC & local-scoped CRM

United Kingdom-based MNC & global-scoped CRM

Appendix B. Measures in study 1 and 2

Variable	Measurement	Statistical Results		Reference
		Study 1	Study 2	
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	"I feel capable of helping solve health care/educational challenges our society faces by buying products from this company." "Each person's behavior can have a positive effect on solving health care/educational challenges by buying from this company." "What I purchase as a consumer has an effect on solving society's health care/educational problems." "Any individual person can make a difference in improving the quality of health care for children/college education."	$\bar{x} = 4.767$ SD = 1.557 α = 0.914	$\bar{x} = 4.751$ SD = 1.514 α = 0.925	Wei, Ang, and Jancenelle (2018)
Purchase Intention	"I will likely purchase products from this company to support the cause of health care for children/college education." "I will make a special effort to buy products from this company to support the cause of health care for children/college education." "When I had a choice between two equal products, I will likely purchase the one made by this company to support the cause of health care for children/college education."	$\bar{x} = 4.759$ SD = 1.691 α = 0.905	$\bar{x} = 4.624$ SD = 1.628 α = 0.897	Kim and Choi (2005)
Cause Involvement	The cause of health care for children/college education mentioned in the scenario is ___ Unimportant(1)/Important(7) Means nothing to me(1)/Means a lot to me(7) Personally irrelevant(1)/Relevant(7) Doesn't matter a great deal to me(1)/Matters a great deal to me(7) No concern to me(1)/A great concern to me(7)	$\bar{x} = 5.242$ SD = 1.371 α = 0.928	$\bar{x} = 5.091$ SD = 1.702 α = 0.941	Patel, Gadhavi, and Shukla (2017)
Cultural Orientation (Individualism)	"I consider myself to be unique, different from others in many respects." "I usually work independently from others." "I depend on my own opinions rather than on those of other people." "I depend on my own judgment when deciding what I am going to do."	$\bar{x} = 5.576$ SD = 1.555 α = 0.788	$\bar{x} = 5.398$ SD = 1.470 α = 0.706	Chang and Cheng (2015)
Ethnocentrism	"I feel that much could be learned from individuals from other countries." "I like to work with individuals from other countries." "I accept cultural differences which arise in cross-cultural exchanges at work." "It is better for a country when citizens hold diverse religious beliefs."	$\bar{x} = 5.524$ SD = 1.288 α = 0.814	$\bar{x} = 5.578$ SD = 1.256 α = 0.843	Meeusen, de Vroome, and Hooghe (2013)
Brand Familiarity	How familiar do you feel with this brand? Not familiar at all(1)/Highly familiar(7)			Halkias, Davvetas, and Diamantopoulos (2016)

Brand Attitude	Bad(1)/Good(7)	$\bar{x}$ = 5.488	Halkias et al. (2016)
	Unfavorable(1)/Favorable(7)	SD = 1.349	
	Negative(1)/Positive(7)	α = 0.961	
Perceived Brand Quality	Trustworthy	$\bar{x}$ = 5.251	Hamzaoui-Essoussi,
	Sophisticated	SD = 1.258	Merunka, and Bartikowski
	Efficient	α = 0.936	(2011)
	Valuable		
	High quality		

α = Cronbach's Alpha; SD = Standard Deviation; $\bar{x}$ = Mean.

The median values for all constructs (across two samples) are between 4.5 and 6.0.

Unless otherwise stated in the table, all the items were measured using a seven-point scale anchored by 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree."

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