Cause-related marketing and employee engagement: The roles of admiration, implicit morality beliefs, and moral identity☆

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A B S T R A C T

Cause-related marketing refers to supporting a charitable cause or a non-profit organization to promote sales. Little is known about how cause-related marketing influences a firm's own employees. Two field studies were conducted which confirmed that cause-related marketing enhances employees' admiration for their company, which in turn promotes engagement. Importantly, each employee's implicit morality beliefs and moral identity centrality jointly moderate these relationships. The practical implications of these findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

Companies often adopt cause-related marketing (CRM), a prominent type of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, as a technique to enhance their corporate reputation and to promote sales through supporting charitable causes and/or non-profit organizations (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Research has shown that such initiatives can generate positive outcomes (Andrews, Luo, Fang, & Aspara, 2014; Koschate-Fischer, Huber, & Hoyer, 2016; Kuo & Rice, 2015), but the effect can be the reverse for products with negative externalities (Grolleau, Ibanez, & Lavoie, 2016). Still, CRM has become increasingly popular in practice (Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, & Hoyer, 2012; Winterich & Barone, 2011).

Studies examining the effectiveness of CRM have focused almost exclusively on consumer-related outcomes. Little is known about the effects of CRM on employees (Larson, Flaherty, Zablah, Brown, & Wiener, 2008). Understanding how CRM influences employees is important because employees often have close and long-term exposure to the practices involved, and directly witness the benefits of CRM to various stakeholder groups (Liu, 2013). Although previous research has found that organizations have begun to explore (or indeed exploit) the potential motivating effect of CRM on employees (Liu, Liston-Heyes, & Ko, 2010), little empirical research has examined the actual impact of

CRM on employee. CRM can of course benefit non-profit and charitable organizations that are in need of external funding and support from companies (Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013; Liu & Ko, 2011), but going further to understand the potential positive effects of CRM on corporate employees can help encourage companies to adopt CRM and enhance non-profits' (NPOs') negotiating positions in seeking CRM with corporate partners. This research was designed to contribute to this scholarly understanding of these processes through two field experiments which investigated how CRM influences employee engagement.

The study's conceptualization of employee engagement was guided by Kahn's (1990, 1992) ethnographic theory of engagement (also see Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). In that perspective, engagement is defined as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Employee engagement thus involves the simultaneous investment of physical, cognitive, and emotional energy at work (Kahn, 1990, 1992), which studies have shown tends to be associated with better job performance (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & Derks, 2016; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Ho, Wong, & Lee, 2011; Zhong, Wayne, & Liden, 2016). It can promote positive organizational outcomes in general (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015; Harter, Schmidt, &

Hayes, 2002).

It seems reasonable that employee engagement can be an important outcome of CRM for the following reasons. First, a firm's endorsement of prosocial attitudes through CRM can arouse a positive emotional reaction from its employees, which is conducive to employee engagement. Then, CRM can help employees find meaning in their jobs and in the organization's work (Caligiuri, Mencin, & Jiang, 2013). According to engagement theory, finding meaning in work can help promote employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010). Thus, CRM should have an important impact on employee engagement.

Employee engagement is itself an important organizational outcome that is highly desirable but often hard to develop (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Knight, Patterson, & Dawson, 2017). For instance, fewer than a third of American employees report that they feel 'engaged with their job' (Anonymous, 2015). Employers in different parts of the world also face similar indifference (Macleod & Clarke, 2009). Organizations are constantly searching for new ways and developing new initiatives to enhance employee engagement (Avery et al., 2007; Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O'Boyle, 2012; Knight et al., 2017). CRM may be part of the answer, thus making scholarly understanding of CRM an important research question.

The perspective of other-praising emotions (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt & Morris, 2009; Schindler, Zink, Windrich, & Menninghaus, 2013) suggests that CRM promotes employee engagement through enhancing their admiration for the organization. Admiration arises from experiencing appreciation, awe, esteem, and respect for an appraised target (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). The importance of admiration for organizations has been highlighted by the annual ranking of most admired companies by Forbes. Admiration can be aroused by a target's moral acts (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Once admiration is developed, people are more likely to feel connected to the target and to engage in acts that benefit the target (Schindler et al., 2013). Admiration energizes people to work harder to achieve personal goals (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Thrash & Elliot, 2004). That's how admiration for an employer can promote employee engagement.

Admiration can be elicited through virtuous acts (Immordino-Yang & Sylvan, 2010). CRM initiatives can be seen as a form of virtuous action, and thus can elicit employees' admiration for their company. However, the extent to which admiration can be elicited varies depending on the subject's perceptions about goal consistency and their expectations (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000; Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990). A situation is more likely to arouse positive emotions when it is consistent with a perceiver's goals (Roseman et al., 1990). We should therefore expect any positive relationship between CRM and employee admiration to be moderated by the employees' implicit morality beliefs, which refer to the beliefs about whether moral attributes are fixed or malleable (Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Werth & Forster, 2002; Zhu, He, Treviño, Chao, & Wang, 2015). People with incremental morality beliefs hold strong beliefs about moral development (Chiu, Dweck, et al., 1997), but those beliefs are malleable. Employees who hold such beliefs are more likely to admire their firm for undertaking CRM because it is likely to be consistent with their goals and values, though the extent to which admiration develops would be expected to depend to some extent on which virtuous moral traits are central to each employee's self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984). The cognitive appraisal involved will be influenced, perhaps negatively, by an employee's expectations and internal standards (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, Delongis, & Gruen, 1986). Greater centrality of one's moral identity is positively associated with higher moral standards and expectations (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984). The tendency for incremental morality to generate admiration will thus depend on the centrality of an employee's moral identity. Taken together, implicit morality beliefs and moral identity centrality would be expected to jointly moderate any relationship between CRM and employee admiration, and thus employee engagement. Fig. 1 illustrates these proposed relationships. This study

was designed to examine the relationship between CRM and emotional and behavioral outcomes among a firm's employees.

2. Hypothesis development

2.1. Cause-related marketing and employees

CRM refers to "the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives" (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988, p. 60). It thus involves explicit revenue-producing exchanges with customers. Good CRM generates a sense of involvement and difference-making among customers. It helps the cause, but also the firm's business as well, usually by enhancing sales (Andrews et al., 2014; Barone, Norman, & Miyazaki, 2007; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012), promoting the firm's brands and building brand loyalty (Barone et al., 2000). It can increase customers' willingness to pay (Leszczyc & Rothkopf, 2010; Strahilevitz, 1999) and have positive spillover effects on a firm's other products (Krishna & Rajan, 2009).

In addition to those marketing-related outcomes, CRM can also influence important stakeholders (Drumwright, 1996), specifically employees who have the most proximal exposure to CRM initiatives. Understanding the effect of CRM is particularly important for customer-facing employees, who are often involved in implementing CRM activities. Scholarly work in this area has mostly focused on the impacts of CRM and other CSR initiatives on external stakeholders. Any impact on employees has received relatively little attention. Business scholars have started to examine the micro-processes and psychological foundations of CSR initiatives from the employee perspective (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Mirvis, 2012; Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013). They have generated some insights about how CSR affects such employee outcomes as organizational commitment (Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007; Glavas & Kelley, 2014), job satisfaction (Valentine & Fleischman, 2008), and creativity (Brammer, He, & Mellahi, 2015). Taken together, their results support the significance of CSR-related initiatives for employees. However, research on the impact of CRM, as a specific type of CSR, on employees is rare. One study finds that CRM increases salespersons' cognitive identification with the organization and their confidence in sales, which in turn enhance their sales performance (Larson et al., 2008).

2.2. Employee engagement based on admiration

Admiration involves cognitive evaluation and appraisal of the acts of a target. It is an emotion resulting from the interpretation and evaluation of personally-relevant information (Roseman et al., 1990). That means that the same information can result in different emotional responses depending on the subjective appraisals and interpretations of different individuals (Lazarus, 1991). Strong emotions, once aroused, tend to motivate action (Frijda, Kuipers, & Terschure, 1989; Lazarus, 1991).

Observing a firm's CRM efforts provides its employees with information they will use to appraise it. Whether it generates admiration will depend on their cognitive appraisals of the information. Admiration is often aroused by moral exemplars (Immordino-Yang & Sylvan, 2010), but can arise from achievements of other types. Keltner and Haidt (2003) have demonstrated that people express admiration when they are exposed to virtuous behavior. Observing virtuous acts can lead individuals to feel "uplifted", can motivate them to try to emulate the admired target, and can arouse a desire to be more connected with the target (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012; Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Haidt & Morris, 2009; Schindler, Paech, & Löwenbrück, 2015; Schindler et al., 2013). This is how CRM may increase employees' admiration for a company.
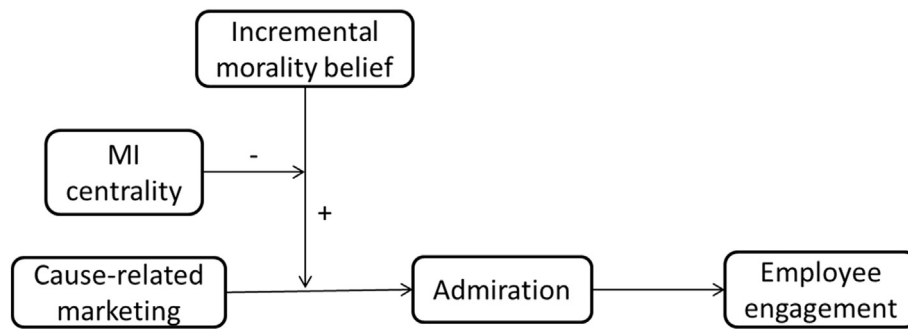
Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

The premises of cognitive appraisal theory suggest, however, that the extent to which employees react to CRM with admiration will depend on how they cognitively appraise the activities involved. An appraisal is a process of evaluation which involves comparing something against expectations and standards (Folkman et al., 1986). Therefore, two personal moral attributes: implicit morality beliefs (Chiu, Dweck, et al., 1997; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Werth & Forster, 2002) and moral identity centrality (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 1984) can be particularly important in shaping employees' reactions.

2.3. Joint moderating effects of moral identity centrality and implicit morality beliefs

People's beliefs about human attributes help them structure their experiences, though their beliefs are usually only implicit (Dweck, 2000). Some beliefs about human attributes tend to be fixed (referred to as entity beliefs), whereas are more malleable (referred to as incremental beliefs). Individuals hold beliefs spread along this continuum. They shape their responses to social situations (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck, 2000; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999). People's implicit beliefs are domain-specific and are associated with unique psychological outcomes. Of particular relevance to the current study are implicit beliefs about morality (Chiu, Dweck, et al., 1997).

Implicit beliefs about morality can also be either fixed or malleable. People with incremental morality beliefs perceive morality as is malleable and evolving whereas those holding entity morality beliefs do not. The idea of incremental morality suggests that individuals are capable of developing and enhancing their moral character (Chiu, Dweck, et al., 1997). Implicit beliefs about morality influence the kind of information that individuals attend to when making moral decisions (Gervey, Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1999). Specifically, those with incremental beliefs are more receptive to change and more likely to view corporate ethical and moral initiatives and developments such as CRM favorably (Werth, Markel, & Forster, 2006; Zhu et al., 2015). Believing that a firm's moral character can change, they pay more attention to information in their environment and adjust their judgments and attitudes according to their observations. CRM initiatives provide important information for such individuals. For individuals with more fixed beliefs, however, they may be less sensitive to information presented in the environment and less willing to use it in adjusting their evaluations. For them, CRM is less likely to be influential in their appraisal of their company.

Moral identity refers to a self-schema—the beliefs and ideas people have about themselves. It is organized around a set of moral trait associations, such as being caring, hard-working, considerate, helpful and much more (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Individuals engage in acts that are consistent with their moral identity (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). The centrality of one's moral identity refers to the degree to which these moral traits are central to the self-concept (Aquino & Reed, 2002). People for whom their moral identity is more central tend to

hold themselves to higher moral standards and expectations that are internally driven (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012; McFerran, Aquino, & Duffy, 2010). A salient identity can activate mindsets that influence people's attitude toward and evaluation of others (Shavitt, Torelli, & Wong, 2009). The mindset filters information and encourages attitudes that are consistent with the expectations arising from their moral self-image (Hardy & Carlo, 2005). A salient identity activates relevant meanings, which in turn "triggers action tendencies and mindsets that facilitate meeting identity goals" (Shavitt et al., 2009, p. 263). People with higher moral identity centrality are more likely to adopt a high moral standard to inform, guide and regulate their moral judgment and behaviors (Aquino et al., 2009; Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011; Hardy & Carlo, 2005). For example, they are more likely to engage in social volunteering (Aquino & Reed, 2002), to show good organizational citizenship behavior (McFerran et al., 2010), to give to charity and to provide public goods (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). They are less likely to cheat or lie (Aquino et al., 2009; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007) or to be morally disengaged (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008; He & Harris, 2014).

Turning to employees, those whose moral identity is more central to their self-mage will tend to make automatic moral choices (Xu & Ma, 2015) and to be less influenced by situational reminders of moral standards (Aquino et al., 2009). In other words, they are more emotionally elevated by "uncommon goodness" (Aquino et al., 2011). Such a common corporate activity as CRM falls short of being "uncommon goodness", so such employees might be expected to be less impressed by CRM initiatives. But employees for whom their moral identity is less central would be expected to evaluate their company more positively if it engages in CRM initiatives. For them, CRM initiatives serve as external cues that remind them of the company's aspiration to promote social good. Recall, however, that this will hold only among those who believe that moral character can be developed and changed. It is the employees endorsing incremental morality beliefs who will be readiest to embrace the possibility of moral progress and development, and it is they who will tend to be more sensitive to actions and gestures that indicate progress and change. Thus, CRM, as a moral act, would be appraised favorably. Since employees whose moral identity is less central tend to have lower moral expectations, and if they also endorse incremental morality, their lower expectations coupled with their sensitivity in detecting moral actions might elevate their admiration of a company that engages in CRM. For such employees, CRM may serve as a strong signal of moral righteousness.

Hypothesis 1. Implicit morality beliefs enhance the effect of CRM on employee admiration, especially when moral identity centrality is weaker. Specifically, CRM has the strongest positive effect on employee admiration among employees with stronger incremental morality beliefs and weaker moral identity centrality.

2.4. Employee admiration and engagement

Employee engagement refers to "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Engaged employees invest their complete selves in their work (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). They are not just physically but also psychologically engaged in the workplace, hence more attentive and focused on their job's tasks. Employee engagement is motivational and involves allocating personal resources to work roles (Rich et al., 2010), so it demands personal sacrifices (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2010; Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2011).

Cognitive appraisal theory suggests that an emotion derived from cognitive appraisal of an event has its own innate action tendency (Frijda et al., 1989; Lazarus, 1991). Admiration is such an emotion. When experiencing admiration, people focus on the thoughts and motivations of others rather than their own. They seek to boost the prestige of the admired target (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Schindler et al., 2015). "Admiration motivates the individual to put himself or herself in the place of the admired other" (Schindler et al., 2015, p. 292). Admiration motivates people to act in ways that are meaningful for themselves as well as beneficial for society (Haidt, 2003) and it leads people to be more energized, self-confident, and engaged (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Thrash & Elliot, 2004). When people admire virtue, their body engages physiological processes that prepare them for action, which can contribute to motivation and engagement (Immordino-Yang & Sylvan, 2010). This is how an employee's admiration for their company would motivate them be more engaged with their work.

Hypothesis 2. An employee's admiration for their company has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

As mentioned, we expect a joint moderating effect of implicit morality beliefs and moral identity centrality on the relationship between CRM and employee admiration for the focal company. In addition, admiration has a positive relationship with employee engagement. We therefore expect that admiration mediates this joint moderating effect on the relationship between CRM and employee engagement.

Hypothesis 3. Implicit morality beliefs enhance the effect of CRM on employee engagement via employee admiration, especially when moral identity centrality is lower. Specifically, CRM has its strongest positive effect on employee engagement via employee admiration among employees with stronger incremental morality beliefs and weaker moral identity centrality.

3. Study 1

3.1. Sample

The first experiment was a field study with employees in the head office of a leading apparel firm in China. Participants were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control condition. The treatment condition presented the participants with information about a sham CRM campaign and told that their company planned to implement it. Participants in the control condition were not presented with such information. The manipulation was embedded in a survey package. The participants answered questions designed to measure their implicit morality beliefs and moral identity centrality before being presented with the experimental manipulation.

Senior managers of the organization helped to distribute the treatment and control questionnaire packages to a total of 248 employees. One hundred and two of them (47% female, 49 treatment, 53 control) completed the survey (a 41% response rate). The mean age and tenure (28.18 years and 35.55 months respectively) were not significantly different between the two groups.

3.2. Experimental manipulations

In the treatment condition the participants were informed that the company planned to support the Pink Ribbon campaign relating to breast cancer. The firm would donate 2% of its sales to the cause over the coming year. This was a women's wear firm, and Pink Ribbon was chosen because there was sufficient fit between the products and the cause to make such a campaign plausible. A dummy variable was defined to represent the treatments with the control group coded as 0 and the treatment group as 1. There was no significant difference between the groups in terms of moral identity centrality ($p = 0.65$), implicit morality beliefs ($p = 0.29$), gender ($p = 0.91$), age ($p = 0.45$), and tenure ($p = 0.31$).

3.3. Measures

The centrality of a respondent's moral identity was measured with a five-item scale developed by Aquino and Reed (2002). We used the Moral Identity Internalization subscale to measure moral identity centrality, because previous studies have consistently shown that MI Internalization represents the importance and centrality of a person's moral identity to themselves, and that it offers stronger explanatory power in predicting morality-associated outcomes; whereas MI Symbolization focuses more on displaying desirable moral attributes (Aquino et al., 2009; Detert et al., 2008; Mayer et al., 2012). Given that our theorizing regarding the moderating effect of MI is based on the idea of high internally held moral standards and expectations, the MI Internalization subscale is more appropriate in assessing MI centrality.

The participants were instructed to imagine how a caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest and kind person would think, feel and act. The items included: "it would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics", and "being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am." The participants rated each item on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). One of the scale's original items was removed (I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics) due to low item-to-total correlation and a factor loading (0.51, which is much lower than those of other four items). Additional analyses showed that the results with or without the item removed were similar. Cronbach's alpha for these items was 0.84.

The respondents' implicit morality beliefs were measured using an established scale developed by Chiu, Dweck, et al. (1997). It consisted of four items. For example, "A person's moral character is something very basic about them and it can't be changed much." Participants again rated each item on the same 5-point scale, but some items were reverse coded such that a higher score reflected stronger endorsement. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.77.

After presenting the manipulation, each employee's admiration for the firm was measured using a four-item scale originally published by Algoe and Haidt (2009). For example: "I admire our company." "I am inspired by our company." Responses were on the same 5-point scale. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.85.

Engagement was quantified using a scale developed by Rich's group (Rich et al., 2010). Based on a prior agreement with the organization, the survey's duration was restricted, so only 11 of the instrument's items were administered: three cognitive, four emotional, and four physical (see also He, Zhu, & Zheng, 2014). The respondents were asked to think about their future intentions to engage with their work when responding to the questions. The participants again rated each item on the same 5-point scale. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.94. We conducted a separate CFA for the shortened scale. The measurement model with the three-dimension model (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) achieved adequate fit: $\chi^2 = 114.32$, $df = 41$, $\chi^2/df = 2.79$, CFI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.06. The factor loadings range from 0.67 to 0.87.

The measures were administered in Chinese after being translated and then back–translated as a check (Brislin, 1986).

3.4. Results

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with all of the scales. Because the sample was relatively small, the employee engagement items were aggregated into three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and physical—the parcel approach recommended by Little (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002).

Two pairs of error terms of items within the same scale were also correlated based on the modification indices (items 3 and 4 for implicit morality beliefs scale; items 3 and 4 for the admiration scale). The CFA achieved adequate fit: ($\chi^2 = 154.86$, $df = 82$, $\chi^2/df = 1.89$, CFI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.07). As Table 1 shows, the highest correlation was 0.47 between employee admiration and engagement. Another competing measurement model was therefore evaluated combining those two variables. That model had much weaker fit indices than the original ($\Delta\chi^2/df = 48.36$, $p \leq 0.01$): $\chi^2 = 299.95$, $df = 85$, $\chi^2/df = 3.53$, CFI = 0.74, SRMR = 0.12. Because the measures were obtained from a single source, the potential for common method bias was tested in two ways. First, a one-factor CFA model fitted significantly less well (($\Delta\chi^2/df = 58.67$, $p \leq 0.001$): $\chi^2 = 506.89$, $df = 88$, $\chi^2/df = 5.76$, CFI = 0.48, SRMR = 0.16) than the original model. In addition, a common latent factor was added to the proposed CFA model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). It proved to account for only 8.4% of the variance in all of the items. Thus, common method variance did not seriously bias the findings.

The hypotheses involve both mediation and moderation effects. Path modeling (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) was therefore applied with help from version 22 of the AMOS software suite. The two moderating variables (i.e., incremental morality beliefs and moral identity centrality) were first standardized and interaction terms were created based on the standardized versions and the main independent variable (the dummy representing the CRM treatment) for the path analyses. Initially there was no direct path from centrality to engagement, but the modification indices showed that this path was significant, so it was added. The final model achieved adequate overall fit ($\chi^2 = 8.47$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2/df = 1.41$, CFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.03). Table 2 presents the path coefficients.[1]

Hypothesis 1 states that incremental morality beliefs moderate the relationship between CRM and an employee's admiration for their company, but only when moral identity is weaker: so that CRM has a more positive effect on employee admiration for employees with stronger incremental morality beliefs, but weaker moral identity centrality. In general, though, CRM is expected to enhance employee admiration. Although the two-way interaction between incremental morality beliefs and CRM does not significantly predict admiration, the three-way interaction of CRM, incremental morality beliefs, and moral identity centrality significantly predicts admiration ($\beta = -0.31$, $p \leq 0.05$). This result suggests that the effect of CRM on admiration is conditional on both incremental morality beliefs and moral identity centrality.

Fig. 2 illustrates this interaction effect (together with a simple slope test of significance) with one standard deviation above and below as the higher or lower value of the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991; Dawson & Richter, 2006). Fig. 2 and the slope significance test show that when moral identity centrality is weaker, incremental morality beliefs significantly moderate the relationship between CRM and admiration

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[1] Any potential mediating effect of organizational identification in the relationship between CRM and engagement was controlled for in a separate analysis, since previous research (Larson et al., 2008) has shown that identification is a mechanism explaining how CRM affects employee outcomes. The results from that separate analysis were similar to those reported. For the sake of parsimony, the analyses and results are presented without treating organizational identification.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for Study 1.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Group	–				
2. Incremental morality beliefs	−0.11	*0.77*			
3. Moral identity centrality	0.05	0.04	*0.84*		
4. Admiration	0.32**	0.06	0.31**	*0.85*	
5. Employee engagement	0.02	−0.06	0.35**	0.47**	*0.94*
Mean	–	2.82	4.14	3.63	4.05
SD	–	0.77	0.69	0.65	0.60

N = 102.
The figures in italics on the diagonal are Cronbach's alphas.
 ** Indicates significance at the $p \leq 0.01$ level of confidence.

Table 2
Path coefficients of Study 1.

Paths	Path coefficients	Critical ratios
CRM → admiration	0.44***	3.83
Incremental morality beliefs → admiration	0.00	0.04
MI centrality → admiration	0.20*	2.53
CRM × incremental morality beliefs → admiration	0.14	1.18
CRM × MI centrality → admiration	−0.08	−0.69
Incremental morality beliefs × MI centrality → admiration	0.10	1.15
CRM × incremental morality beliefs × MI centrality → admiration	−0.31*	−2.26
Admiration → employee engagement	0.37***	4.51
MI centrality → employee engagement	0.13*	2.49

R^2: admiration (0.24); employee engagement (0.27).
MI = moral identity; cause-related marketing was coded 1 for the treatment group and 0 for the control group.
 *** Indicates significance at the $p \leq 0.001$ level of confidence.
 * Indicates significance at the $p \leq 0.05$ level of confidence.

(Slope 2 vs. Slope 4, $p \leq 0.05$). Specifically, Slope 2 (stronger incremental morality beliefs and weaker centrality) is significantly positive ($\beta = 0.97$, $p \leq 0.01$) while Slope 4 (weaker incremental morality beliefs and also weaker moral identity centrality) is not significant. But when moral identity centrality is stronger (Slope 1 vs. Slope 3), the effects of CRM do not differ between strong and weak implicit morality beliefs. Thus Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that admiration has a positive relationship with employee engagement, and that idea was supported by the data ($\beta = 0.37$, $p \leq 0.001$). Hypothesis 3 predicts that admiration mediates the joint moderating effect of implicit morality beliefs and moral identity centrality on the relationship between CRM and employee engagement. That is, CRM has a positive indirect effect, via admiration, on employee engagement for employees with stronger incremental morality beliefs but relatively weak moral identity centrality. To test hypothesis 3, a Sobel test was first applied to ascertain whether the three-way interaction has any indirect relationship with engagement as a result of admiration. The indirect moderated effect proved significant ($\beta = 0.12$, $p \leq 0.05$). A simple slope test shows the same pattern as in Fig. 2. Therefore Hypothesis 3 is supported.

4. Study 2

Study 2 was designed to extend the results of Study 1 to the case of an international luxury brand with a more established reputation and greater prestige.

4.1. Data

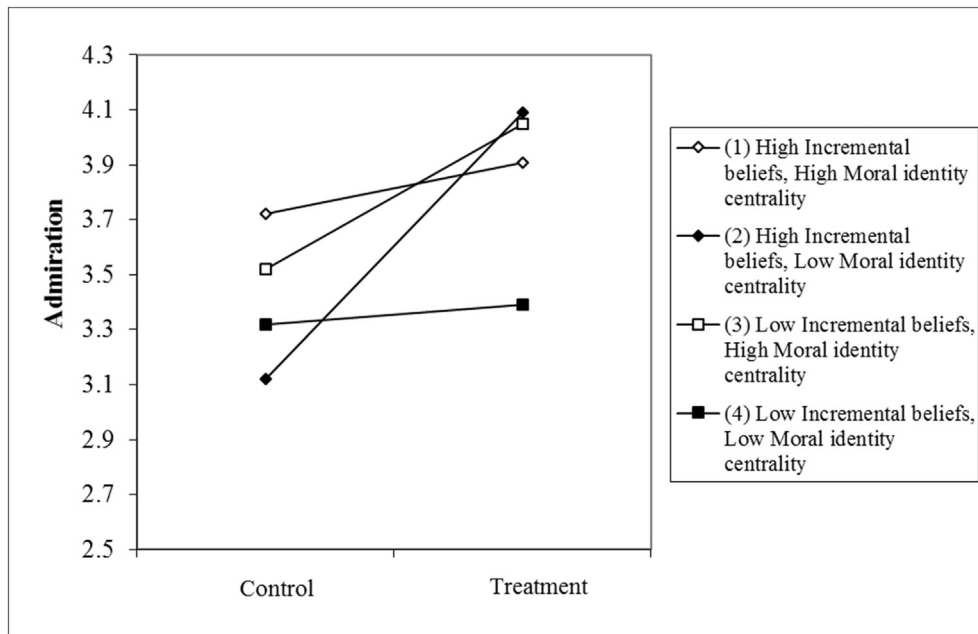Salespersons in department stores in China selling a leading

Fig. 2. Joint moderating effect of incremental morality beliefs and moral identity centrality on the effect of cause-related marketing's impact on admiration in Study 1.

international fashion and cosmetics brand were recruited. The research design followed the same procedure as Study 1. One hundred and eight salespersons (76% female) took part in the study. They were randomly assigned into one of the conditions. 105 valid responses were obtained (an effective response rate of 42%) with 53 from the control group and 52 from the treatment group. The mean age and tenure were 27.67 years and 20.06 months respectively.

4.2. Experimental manipulations

The experimental manipulations were the same as those used in Study 1. The participants in the treatment condition received information about a sham Pink Ribbon CRM campaign that their company was supposedly about to launch. As in Study 1, there was no significant difference between the control and treatment groups in terms of implicit morality beliefs ($p = 0.78$), moral identity centrality ($p = 0.24$), gender ($p = 0.73$), age ($p = 0.66$), and tenure ($p = 0.13$).

4.3. Measures

Study 2 used the same measures as in Study 1 to assess moral identity centrality, implicit morality beliefs, admiration, and engagement. The reliabilities of the scales were 0.85, 0.84, 0.96, and 0.95 respectively. As in Study 1, item #3 of the centrality scale was deleted due to low factor loading (0.48). Subsequent additional analyses demonstrated that results of with or without the item removed item were similar. As in Study 1, a separate CFA was conducted for the condensed employee engagement scale. The three-factor model of employee engagement achieved adequate fit: $\chi^2 = 110.86$, $df = 41$, $\chi^2/df = 2.70$, CFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.05. The factor loadings ranged from 0.75 to 0.95. The AVE for three dimensions ranged from 0.71 to 0.77.

As in Study 1, a parcel approach aggregating the employee engagement items based on the three dimensions was applied. The CFA achieved adequate fit: ($\chi^2 = 139.41$, $df = 84$, $\chi^2/df = 1.66$, CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.05). As Table 3 shows, the highest correlation was 0.57 between admiration and engagement. A competing measurement model was therefore evaluated in which those two variables were combined. That model showed much weaker fit indices than the original ($\Delta\chi^2/df = 43.50$, $p \le 0.001$): $\chi^2 = 269.89$, $df = 87$, $\chi^2/$

Table 3
Descriptive statistics for Study 2.

	1	2	3	4	5
1.Group	–				
2.Incremental morality beliefs	−0.12	*0.84*			
3.MI centrality	0.03	−0.17	*0.84*		
4.Admiration	0.12	−0.10	0.32**	*0.96*	
5. Employee engagement	−0.04	−0.10	0.36**	0.57**	*0.95*
Mean	–	2.39	4.33	4.20	4.35
SD	–	0.81	0.72	0.74	0.59

The figures in italics on the diagonal are Cronbach's alphas.
MI = moral identity.
** Indicates significance at the $p \le 0.01$ level of confidence.

$df = 3.10$, CFI = 0.84, SRMR = 0.10. As in Study 1, a one factor CFA model was fitted to test for common method bias. The model fit was significantly worse (($\Delta\chi^2/df = 79.30$, $p \le 0.001$): $\chi^2 = 615.20$, $df = 90$, $\chi^2/df = 6.84$, CFI = 0.53, SRMR = 0.20), than that of the proposed model. In addition, a common latent factor was added. It accounted for only 14.4% of the variance of all of the items. Thus, common method bias does not seem to have posed a serious problem in this study.

4.4. Hypothesis testing

The analytical methods were the same as those of Study 1. The proposed model achieved adequate overall fit ($\chi^2 = 11.61$, $df = 6$, $\chi^2/df = 1.94$, CFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.03). Table 4 presents the path coefficients.

Although the CRM manipulation did not significantly enhance the employees' admiration, their incremental morality beliefs interacted with the CRM manipulation to significantly predict admiration ($\beta = 0.35$, $p \le 0.05$). The three-way interaction among the expected CRM, incremental morality beliefs, and moral identity centrality also had significant predictive power ($\beta = -0.34$, $p \le 0.05$). Those results suggest that the effect of CRM on admiration is conditional on both incremental morality beliefs and moral identity centrality. Fig. 3 illustrates the interaction and shows that when moral identity centrality is weaker, incremental morality beliefs significantly moderate the

Table 4
Path coefficients of Study 2.

Paths	Path coefficients	Critical ratios
CRM → admiration	0.12	0.95
Incremental morality beliefs → admiration	−0.15*	−2.00
MI centrality → admiration	0.25*	2.58
CRM × incremental morality beliefs → admiration	0.35*	2.51
CRM × MI centrality → admiration	−0.08	−0.61
Incremental morality beliefs × MI centrality → admiration	0.25***	3.37
CRM × incremental morality beliefs × MI centrality → admiration	−0.34*	−2.55
Admiration → employee engagement	0.40***	6.06
MI centrality → employee engagement	0.12*	2.36

R^2: admiration (0.26); employee engagement (0.35).

MI = moral identity; CRM = cause-related marketing, coded 1 for the CRM group, 0 for the control group.

  *** Indicates significance at the $p \le 0.001$ level of confidence.
    * Indicates significance at the $p \le 0.05$ level of confidence.

effectiveness of CRM in generating admiration (Slope 2 vs. Slope 4, $p \le 0.01$). Specifically, Slope 2 (stronger incremental morality beliefs and weaker moral identity centrality) is significantly positive ($\beta = 0.89$, $p \le 0.01$) while Slope 4 (weaker incremental morality beliefs and weaker moral identity centrality) is not significant. On the other hand, when moral identity centrality is stronger (Slope 1 vs. Slope 3), the effect of CRM does not differ between stronger or weaker implicit morality beliefs. Thus Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that admiration has a positive relationship with engagement, and it was again supported by the data ($\beta = 0.40$, $p \le 0.001$). A Sobel test was used to test for any indirect effect of the three-way interaction on engagement via admiration (hypothesis 3) and a significant relationship was found ($\beta = -0.14$, $p \le 0.05$). A slope test shows the same pattern as Fig. 3. Therefore, H3 is also supported.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Theoretical implications

This has been a pioneering study examining when and how a CRM campaign might affect employee engagement. The findings from the two field experiments provide converging support for the impact of CRM on employee engagement, and they have identified some mediating and moderating mechanisms. Admiration plays a part as a mediator between CRM and employee engagement, while the centrality of one's moral identity and implicit morality beliefs jointly exert a mediating effect. Employees whose moral identity is central to their self-image tend to be more intrinsically motivated and engaged with their work, so external motivating factors such as a CRM campaign have little influence on them. CRM is, however, particularly effective in increasing employee engagement among those employees whose moral identity is less central and whose morality beliefs are more incremental than fixed.

In practice, organizations have begun to find ways to capitalize on the potential power of CRM in motivating employees (Liu et al., 2010). This research has demonstrated empirically when, how and with whom CRM can be most effective in fostering employee engagement. The findings highlight the central role of admiration, a morally relevant and other-praising emotion. Admiration itself has received little attention from business scholars and even in the psychology literature (Aaker et al., 2012; Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Understanding employees' admiration for their organization is an important issue because people are increasingly hoping for work in which they can find meaning and inspiration. An organization can act as a role model for its employees in terms of principles and values. These findings demonstrate that admiration can act as a significant emotional mechanism linking an organization's CRM initiatives and employee outcomes such as engagement.

Employee engagement has been the topic of much business scholarship (e.g. Christian et al., 2011; Cole et al., 2012), but scholars have previously focused on personal factors, perceived organizational factors, and some psychological factors and mechanisms influencing employee engagement. Insufficient attention has been paid to how an organization's marketing initiatives might affect employee engagement
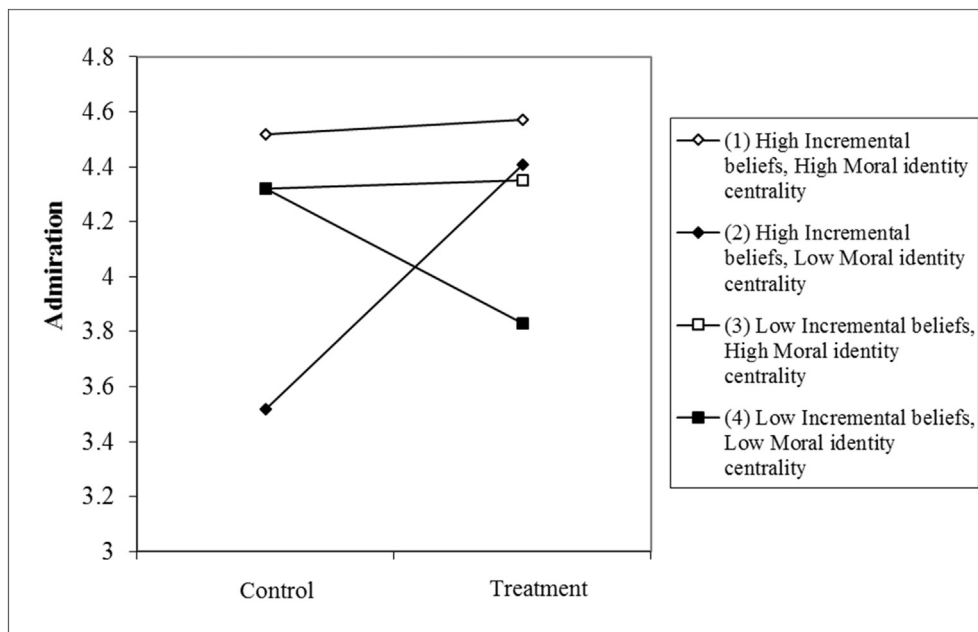

Fig. 3. Joint moderating effect of incremental morality beliefs and moral identity centrality on the effect of cause-related marketing's impact on admiration in Study 2.

(Bakker et al., 2010; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012). Due to the importance of employee engagement, companies might profitably try to manage it more proactively. This research shows that marketing initiatives such as CRM are not simply marketing techniques used to influence consumer choices. They can also have important benefits within the firm, including enhancing employee engagement. An important contribution of this research has been to identify CRM as an effective initiative for promoting employee engagement. Its findings offer a new emotional perspective on the antecedents of employee motivation.

5.2. Managerial implications

CRM is assumed to be a useful tactic for promoting sales and brand loyalty, but this study has shown that it can also promote employee engagement by heightening employees' admiration for a company. Given this added benefit, companies should consider adopting CRM initiatives. The results suggest that besides promoting a CRM campaign externally to potential consumers, it is equally important for managers to highlight the campaign among employees in order to enhance their engagement. This research shows that raising the awareness of CRM initiative is particularly important among employees who have low moral identity and believe in malleable moral character. Research has shown that individuals' beliefs in the malleability of such human attributes as moral character can be developed by providing individuals with information about how such attributes can be changed. Thus, organizations can benefit from raising employees' awareness of their CRM campaigns and coupling with promoting beliefs in malleable moral character.

This research suggests that one way to enhance employee engagement is to build the organization as a target for its employees' admiration. When employees admire their organization, they are more likely to be engaged with their work. This research has shown that one way to build employee admiration is CRM. But there can, of course, be other ways to generate admiration among a firm's employees. Promoting excellence in quality and service will tend to do so, as will other social initiatives, and insisting on ethical principles and conduct. But considering the effectiveness of CRM, beyond quantifying its achievements in terms of marketing outcomes, managers should also consider its impact on employees.

Finally, these findings have practical implications for NPOs as well as companies. There has been little research on NPOs' perspectives on CRM. The extant literature has focused on issues such as the motivations and goals of NPOs in seeking CRM (Runté, Basil, & Deshpande, 2009) and their concerns (Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013). But the findings of this research suggest that NPOs should also be very aware of the additional benefits in their effort and process of partnering with companies in developing CRM initiatives. Indeed, one of the major barriers to NPOs' being able to benefit fully from CRM is their reluctance to support it in negotiations (Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013; Liu & Ko, 2011). One of the key steps in setting up a CRM arrangement must be to identify the benefits for the for-profit organization involved (Gourville & Rangan, 2004). This research suggests that NPOs can take advantage of the additional benefits for corporate employees to strengthen their negotiating position. On the other hand, these additional benefits for corporate employees should encourage companies to more actively seek CRM opportunities.

5.3. Limitations and future research

One limitation of this research methodology is that engagement was measured as an intention, not actual behavior. Engagement is a self-expression of commitment to the organization that predicts actual job performance (Christian et al., 2011; Ho et al., 2011). Although the measure of engagement used has been shown to be a good proxy for behavior, future studies should investigate the impact of CRM on such outcomes as actual work performance and extra-role outcomes such as

organizational citizenship behavior.

Note too that the manipulation in this study was presented as a forthcoming CRM program. Stronger manipulation would involve actual CRM implementation with dependent variables being measured longitudinally. Such a research design would, however, be challenging to implement in practice given potential constraints in real business settings. In addition, this research offers only some initial evidence as to how CRM might affect employee engagement by comparing a sham CRM intervention with a pure no-CRM control group. In order to dissect the detailed impact of CRM as compared with other marketing or employee motivation initiatives, future research should include additional no-CRM control conditions to more clearly delineate CRM's similar or different impacts on employee admiration and engagement.

The field work focused on companies that serve mainly female customers, so future studies might fruitfully examine to what extent product type influences the motivational impact of CRM on employees. In addition, employees can have different levels of participation on CRM. Future research might compare the effects of CRM among employees with different levels of involvement in CRM. When might CRM backfire? Would CRM fail to promote positive outcomes or even lead to negative outcomes if the cause a company has invested in is seen as incompatible or if the firm was viewed as insincere (e.g., companies in gambling industry investing in gambling addiction treatment services)? Involving employees in choosing the cause might help alleviate this problem. CRM initiatives are not, after all, beyond criticism. Some lack transparency (e.g., the case of RED as reported by Dadush, 2009). It is not clear how such weaknesses might affect employees' responses. Future research could also examine how scepticism might cause a CRM initiative to backfire. These are all important questions that merit further research attention. Future research should examine the causal impact of their CRM initiatives by conducting field experiment and/or longitudinal studies.

Note finally that all the respondents were Chinese. Can the theoretical model and the results be generalized beyond China? We do not have the empirical evidence to assert this at this moment. It would be interesting to explore whether employees with the same level of morality beliefs respond differently to cause-related marketing events in Western contexts such as the United States, where the role of implicit theories is found to be also important as in Hong Kong, a Chinese culture (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997). That suggests that this study's findings might be generalizable to Western cultures, but it remains to be demonstrated empirically. The important role of moral identity has been documented in both Western (e.g., Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007; Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013) and Chinese cultures (Xing & Keung, 2014). Therefore, this suggests that the moderating role of moral identity in proposed relationships might also be generalizable across cultures. Given the global nature of business, cross-cultural studies of cause-related marketing would be interesting and could add significant value to both management and marketing scholarship and practice.

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