EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF A BRAND'S PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOR ON CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SIMILAR BEHAVIORS

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ABSTRACT

Although research supports the notion that a firm's socially responsible behavior benefits its welfare, little is known about the impact of firms' socially responsible behavior on consumers' own attitudes toward similar behaviors. In the present research, the author explores this under-researched area in the context of environmentalism and examines the moderating effect of consumers' pro-environmental attitudes on the relationship between consumers' exposure to a brand's energy conservation efforts and consumers' own attitudes toward energy conservation. Implications for future marketing research and practice are provided regarding the understanding and development of more effective yet socially responsible marketing programs.

As many as 90% of Fortune 500 companies have integrated explicit corporate societal marketing (CSM) strategies into their marketing actions, taking visible steps to communicate their socially responsible actions to consumers (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig 2004). One of the most dominant recent CSM platforms is adopting environmentally friendly practices or "going green." This increasingly popular societal initiative has been adopted as a marketing and advertising platform by major companies such as Honda, Toyota, GE, Bank of America, Starbucks, Apple, Whole Foods, Walmart, and Home Depot (Frazier 2007; Makower 2008). An obvious motivation underlying a firm's decision to go green is to increase patronage of consumer segments that appreciate a firm's green behaviors. Prior CSM research supports this idea and has shown that creating positive associations between the firm and a socially desirable cause can improve brand image (Brown and Dacin 1997), positively affect product responses (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), increase brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006), influence overall customer satisfaction (Luo and Bhattacharya 2006), increase liking of sponsorships (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), and even develop a sense of connection between a customer and a company (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen 2003).

Although this research supports the notion that consumers should reward environmentally responsible firms, little is known about the impact of firms' environmental efforts on consumers' own environmentally responsible attitudes. While some believe that the greening of business prompts consumers to become more green (Gunther 2007), others are skeptical. For example, some have suggested that a firm's environmental efforts may be taken by consumers of these brands as a reason to

act less environmentally responsible regarding other choices (Frazier 2007). Indeed, as more companies attempt to create an environmental halo over their products, both the Federal Trade Commission and various environmental groups are concerned that some green marketing assertions are not substantiated and misleading, resulting in greenwashing of consumers (Daley 2010; Story 2008).

Given that corporate social responsibility is not only about improving and protecting the welfare of the company, but also about improving and protecting welfare of a society as a whole (Brown and Dacin 1997), and that environmentally oriented marketing efforts are ever-present in the marketplace, it is rather surprising that marketing researchers have not examined whether environmental marketing practices affect consumers' own environmentally responsible attitudes. Indeed, we are yet to understand whether "the greening of corporate America" also helps greening of consumers. As noted by Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius (2008), this important topic is a severely understudied area of marketing research that has primarily focused on exploring the factors that incline consumers toward consumption rather than toward pro-environmentally oriented behaviors. In this paper, I contribute to this important topic and explore how the current CSM standard tactics that focus on the importance of a firm's environmentally responsible behavior for the protection of the environment (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008) influences consumers' own environmentally responsible attitudes. By using social influence research as a lens through which such effects can be explored, I examine the moderating effect of consumers' prior pro-environmental attitudes on the relationship between a brand's pro-environmental behaviors (energy conservation) and consumers' own attitudes towards similar behaviors. The overall conceptual framework tested in the present research is summarized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL
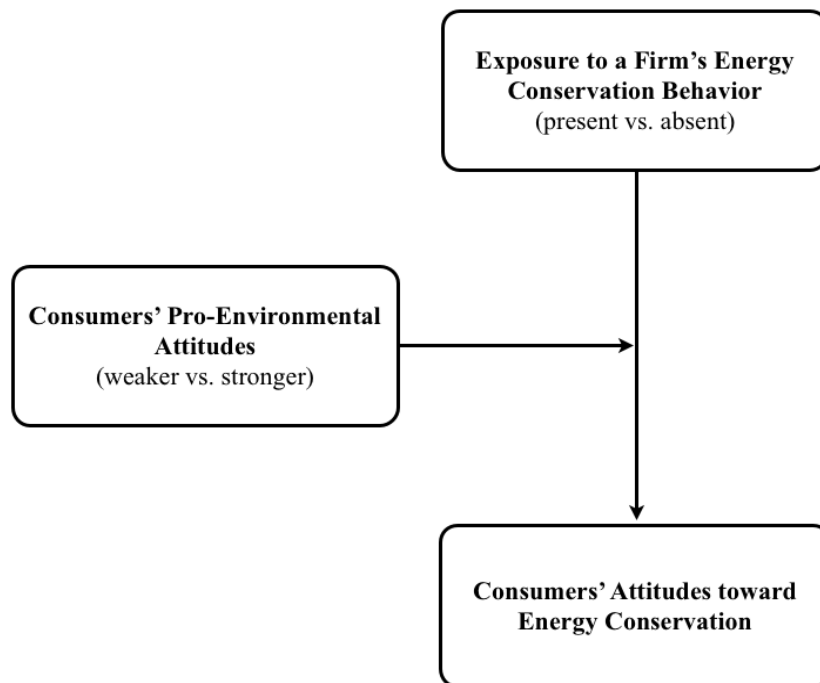
BRANDS AS POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE SOCIAL INFLUENCE AGENTS?

Social influence is a process through which people generate and manage change in the social world. One of the most dominating processes of social influence is conformity–that is, changing one's own attitudes or behavior in order to match it with those of familiar or important others (Cialdini and Trost 1998). In a context of normative behaviors such as environmental responsibility, conformity can be used to move people away from negative habits and foster positive changes (recycling, towel re-usage, and energy conservation) or it can also evoke socially undesirable and negative changes such as littering, waste, alcohol consumption, or smoking (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004; Cialdini 2005; Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008; Kallgren, Reno, and Cialdini 2000). In terms of conformity, others serve people as a reference point for determining what is right or wrong in their social world (i.e., social approval) and determine how they need to behave. Conformity occurs primarily through identification with expectations of others, particularly in unclear and ambiguous situations (Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Kelman 1961) or domains in which one's pre-existing attitudes are relatively weak (see Cialdini and Goldstein 2004 for recent review on this topic). Furthermore, conformity is most likely when the influence agent is familiar and perceived as a credible source of an endorsed position (Latané 1981). For example, when people learn about what familiar others such as neighbors are doing, they are more likely to conserve energy (Schultz et al. 2007) and avoid littering (Kallgren, Reno, and Cialdini 2000), particularly because of people's general need for social approval (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004).

What's noteworthy about conformity is that the source of influence does not have to be necessarily physically present. Indeed, it can take various forms and occur as a result of real, implied, or imagined presences or actions of others (Latané 1981). Is it then possible that a brand might be a legitimate source of social influence? A source that can foster both positive and negative changes in consumers' normative behavior? It has long been known that consumers approach brands much the same way as they do human characters (Fournier 1998) and use them as a means of construing one's identity, characterizing what is important to one's self-concept (Aaker 1997; Belk 1988; Fournier 1998). Brands with distinct and desirable images can become a means of social approval, personal expression, or outer-directed self-esteem (Keller 1993) through which people communicate their identities to other constituents of their social world, learn about other people, or construe a sense of reality of what is right and wrong (Aaker 1991; Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005). As people conform to familiar others in their social world, they may also conform to familiar brands present in their social world. In other words, some consumers may actually model their attitudes after those of a brand, using the brand as a reference point for determining how they need to behave. The question is, what type of consumers might be susceptible to such an influence in today's overly "green" marketplace.

As noted earlier, conformity is particularly likely in situations that people perceive as ambiguous or create sense of uncertainty as of how to behave (Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Kelman 1961). In such situations, people rely on their pre-existing attitudes and behaviors in an area in which a social influence agent wishes to encourage behavioral change. For example, people who hold moderate or weak prior attitudes toward a position endorsed by a social influence agent tend to be more receptive of such position. In contrast, people with stronger attitudes tend to be less receptive as their positions are already internalized into their self-concepts and thus less likely to be affected by the influence agent (Erb et al. 2002; Mackie 1987). In a context of pro-environmental behaviors, people use their existing pro-environmental attitudes as a lens through which they interpret environmental problems and determine whether or not environmental issues evoke a response or not (Schultz et al. 2007). Consistent with this logic, consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes should be then more receptive of such positions and thus more likely to conform than consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes. Therefore, if consumers use brands as a source of positive social influence, their pro-environmental attitudes will moderate their attitudinal responses. That is, consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes who were exposed to

information about a familiar brand's energy conservation behavior will respond with more positive attitudes towards energy conservation than those who were not exposed to such information (control). In contrast, consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes will be unaffected by exposure to information about a familiar brand's energy conservation behavior (positive brand influence hypothesis, H1).

The first hypothesis is based on the assumption that "greening of businesses" prompts consumers to become more green (Gunther 2007). As discussed earlier, however, others are more skeptical and suggest that a firm's environmental efforts may be taken by consumers of these brands as a reason to act less environmentally responsible (Frazier 2007). Indeed, recent research on corporate societal marketing shows that consumers can be rather skeptical about a firm's true intent for its socially responsible initiatives. Of a particular importance to the present research are findings reported by Forehand and Grier (2003). These authors demonstrated that promoting a firm's socially responsible behavior in ways that focus on emphasizing public-serving benefits (e.g., environmental protection) have a positive impact on firm's evaluations only when consumer skepticism is not activated. When participants were asked to reason about a firm's motive for its socially responsible initiative prior to their evaluations, professing public-serving motives only resulted in more negative firm evaluations than when participants were asked to reason about a firm's motives after their evaluations. As demonstrated by these authors, this negative effect was accompanied by activated consumer skepticism about a firm's true intent, making consumers perceive a firm's intentions as deceptive. As consumers are not very likely to be positively influenced by deceptive or otherwise manipulative behavior, it is then possible that consumers may use their prior pro-environmental attitudes as a lens through which they interpret a firm's underlying motives (firm-serving motives) and thus detect deception. Under such condition, I would not expect positive social influence. Instead, consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes may remain unaffected by a firm's potentially deceptive behavior. Whereas consumers with stronger attitudes, for whom endorsed issue might be an important part of their identity, may respond with less positive attitudes toward brand-endorsed behavior to signal their disapproval with such potentially deceptive behavior (Berger and Rand 2008). Under such conditions, consumers' pro-environmental attitudes will moderate consumers' attitudinal responses in a rather different direction. That is, consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes who were exposed to information about a familiar brand's energy conservation behavior will respond with more negative attitudes towards energy conservation than those who were not exposed to such information (control). Whereas consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes will be unaffected by exposure to information about a familiar brand's energy conservation behavior (negative brand influence hypothesis, H2).

In the following section, I test these competing hypotheses in an experiment using a real brand, Starbucks, and explore how consumers' exposure to information about a brand's environmentally responsible behavior (energy conservation) that is promoted in a today's industry standard format in which the firm professes public-serving motives (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008) affects consumers own attitudes toward such behaviors.

PRETESTS

A series of pretests were conducted to (1) identify a real brand that would be both familiar and credible endorser of environmentalism and (2) develop realistic and appropriate experimental stimuli. The first pretest (N = 450) identified Starbucks as an appropriate brand. Undergraduate students in an introductory marketing class were asked to list brands known for their environmentalism, as well as their environmentally responsible products. Starbucks was listed most frequently (64% of all participants listed this brand). Other frequently listed brands were Toyota (34%) and REI (27%). Following procedures used

in prior CSM research (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Forehand and Grier 2003), I developed a newspaper article describing Starbucks' environmental actions with a special focus on energy conservation based on various published news articles regarding business and the environment from *Fortune Magazine*, *Business Week*, and firm websites. For the control group, I developed an article of an equal length for the control condition that described a topic unrelated to environmentalism. Both of these articles were then pretested in the second pretest.

In this pretest (N = 28), participants form the same population, but a different sample, evaluated the stimuli with regards to its realism and credibility (in terms of brand-cause fit). In this pretest, participants were randomly assigned one of the two articles (Starbucks versus control). In the experimental condition, the article described Starbucks' environmentally responsible behaviors with special emphasis on energy conservation and framed in terms of a firm's interest in environmental protection–framing that is viewed as today's marketing standard (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008). In the control group, participants read an article of an equal length but on a topic unrelated to environmentalism (I used an article describing Skype's new video service because the earlier pretests, related to different research projects, showed that this article did not activate environmentally responsible thoughts.) Participants completed the pretest as a paper and pencil survey and at the beginning of their class meeting. After they read the article, participants were instructed to answer a series of questions without looking back to the article. First, they were asked to recall the name of the brand and then circle whether or not they knew the brand. On the next page, they were asked to respond to three questions assessing the fit between the firm and its actions (not credible/credible; not believable/believable; not realistic/realistic; α = .83) and three questions assessing realism of the article (uninteresting/interesting; not believable/believable; unrealistic/realistic; α = .86). All questions were asked on a seven-point scale and items for each scale were averaged to create overall scale indexes. I adopted these measures from prior research on similar topics (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Forehand and Grier 2003). The results showed that all participants were able to recall the name of the brand correctly and knew the brand before they read the article. More importantly, there were no differences in fit (Starbucks as an experimental condition, M_{EC} = 5.83; Skype as a control condition, M_{CC} = 5.33, *n.s.*) and realism (M_{EC} = 5.60, M_{CC} = 5.41, *n.s.*). Therefore, the pretests confirmed that Starbucks and Skype were familiar to the target population and both were perceived as a credible and believable supporters of their activities (energy conservation and video services, respectively). In addition, both articles were evaluated as realistic.

MAIN STUDY
The present study intended to provide evidence for one of the competing hypothesis and thus the direction of the moderating effect of prior pro-environmental attitudes on the relationship between exposure to information about a brand's energy conservation behavior and consumers' own attitudes toward such behavior. To test this moderating effect, I conducted an experiment in which I used the stimulus developed in the pretests–that is, one group of participants read the article about Starbucks' energy conservation efforts motivated by its interest in environmental protection and the other group read an article unrelated to the environment about Skype's video service (control group).

METHOD
Participants and Design. The sample used in this experiment was similar to that used in the pretests and included U.S. business undergraduate students (N = 93; 50.4% female; M_{AGE} = 22) who received course credit for their participation. The design of the study was a 2 (exposure to information: present x absent) x 2 (pro-environmental attitudes: weaker x stronger) between subject design. Participants completed the main experiment in a computer lab in groups of up to 12 and were randomly assigned by the computer program (MediaLab) to experimental or control condition. Pro-environmental attitudes were a measured

variable and consisted of a validated scale measuring prior environmental concerns (Schultz 2000), collected two weeks prior to the main experiment.

Procedure. Prior research shows that asking participants about their attitudinal positions may strengthen attitude-behavior consistency (Morwitz and Fitzsimons 2004). As such, I conducted the experiment in two phases in order to prevent carry-over effects or increasing salience of socially desirable responses. The phase one consisted of a short online survey in which participants completed pro-environmental concerns scale and basic demographic questions. The survey was a part of a large data collection that consisted of other unrelated surveys. Two weeks after the online survey, participants were invited to the main experiment, conducted in a computer lab and using MediaLab software. In this study, participants were explained that they were about to complete a short survey interested in students' evaluations of a randomly selected newspaper article. Participants were then asked to proceed and read the article. Participants in the experimental condition read an article that described Starbucks' environmental efforts that focused predominantly on energy conservation. Participants in the control group read an article about a topic unrelated to environmental behavior (Skype's new video service). After having read the article, participants proceeded to the next screen and were asked to complete a series of unrelated questions about the article itself (filler task). Upon completion, participants were instructed to complete another ostensibly unrelated marketing survey. In this survey, participants rated their attitudes towards conserving energy in their every day lives. At the end, participants were debriefed, thanked for their participation, and dismissed from the study.

STIMULI AND MEASURES
Independent Variables. The exposure to a firm's environmental efforts was manipulated by the article participants were asked to read. Participants in the experimental condition read the article about Starbucks' environmental efforts to help the environment, with a primary focus on energy conservation. Framing environmental messages in terms of a firm's interest in environmental protection is not only a common marketing practice (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008), but it is also a tactic that prior research in social marketing identified as effective. That is, consumers tend to reward firms that support socially responsible causes for public-serving interests with favorable brand evaluations (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). As such, the article described Starbucks' energy conservation efforts as motivated by its desire to help the environment (public-serving motives). Participants in the control group read an article about a topic unrelated to the environment–Skype's new video service. Pro-environmental attitudes were measured by a eight-item Environmental Concern Scale adopted from prior research (Schultz 2000, 2001; Schultz and Tabanico 2007). This scale is a validated measure of prior environmental attitudes and its three underlying dimensions: altruistic, egoistic, and biospheric. In the present study, I followed procedures used by Schultz and Tabanico (2007) who demonstrated that environmentally responsible behavior and implicit environmental attitudes are most correlated with biospheric dimension (i.e., attitudes based on one's concerns for all living things). Following their procedures, I used a shorter version of the scale that measures biospheric and egoistic dimensions only. Participants rated importance of eight items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a lot). Egoistic items were me, my future, my prosperity, and my health; and biospheric items were plants, animals, marine life, and birds. As expected, a factor analysis revealed two factors, one measuring biospheric concerns ($\alpha = 0.87$) and one capturing egoistic concerns ($\alpha = 0.91$). For analysis purposes, I created an index for each of the two sub-scales and used median splits to classify participants into weaker versus stronger biospheric (M = 4.58, SD = 1.19, Median = 4.75) and egoistic (M = 4.94, SD = 1.24, Median = 4.80) pro-environmental attitudes.

Dependent Measure. The dependent variable was attitudes toward energy conservation in every day life

(α = 0.74) and was measured by four items on a nine-point scale (not enjoyable/enjoyable; worthless/worthwhile; useless/useful; not important/important). Items on this scale were averaged to create overall attitudes toward energy conservation index (M = 6.56, SD = .96).

Manipulation Check. The present study examined consumers' attitudes toward energy conservation after exposure to information about Starbucks' energy conservation versus information about unrelated topic. Participants were asked to recall and then list the name of the brand. Responses were then coded by the researcher as either correct or incorrect recall–whenever a participant listed Starbucks or Skype after having read an article about Starbucks or Skype respectively, the response was coded as correct recall; otherwise, it was recorded as an incorrect recall.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check. All 93 participants have correctly recalled the name of the brand that the article was about. Thus, all responses were included in the analysis.

Attitudes toward Energy Conservation. In order to explore how attitudes toward energy conservation of consumers with either weaker or stronger egoistic or biospheric pro-environmental attitudes were affected by Starbucks' energy conservation efforts, I conducted two separate two-way ANOVAs (experimental condition x pro-environmental attitudes), each with different dimension of pro-environmental attitudes: attitudes based on biospheric concerns for nature and attitudes based on egoistic concerns oneself. The first analysis revealed a main effect of pro-environmental attitudes on energy conservation attitudes, $F (1, 92) = 6.36$, $p < .05$, suggesting that consumers with weaker pro-environmental biospheric attitudes reported less favorable attitudes toward energy conservation than consumers with stronger attitudes (weaker pro-environmental biospheric attitudes, $M_{WPB} = 6.30$, SD = .85; stronger pro-environmental biospheric attitudes, $M_{SPB} = 6.81$, SD = 1.01). The only other significant effect was a two-way interaction, $F (1, 92) = 4.08$, $p < .05$. Consistent with hypothesis 2 (figure 2), planned contrasts revealed that this interaction was driven by a negative effect of a brand's energy conservation behaviors on energy conservation attitudes of consumers with stronger pro-environmental biospheric attitudes (brand condition, $M_{BC} = 6.43$, control condition, $M_{CC} = 7.12$), $F (1, 89) = 6.78$, $p < .01$, with no effect on consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes ($M_{BC} = 6.33$, $M_{CC} = 6.26$, *n.s.*). Consistent with Schultz and Tabanico (2007), the second analysis using the measure of pro-environmental egoistic attitudes did not reveal any significant main or interaction effect. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

FIGURE 2: CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENERGY CONSERVATION AFTER
EXPOSURE TO A BRAND'S ENERGY CONSERVATION EFFORTS

**Exposure to information about a firm's energy
conservation behaviors**

- Consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes
- Consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes
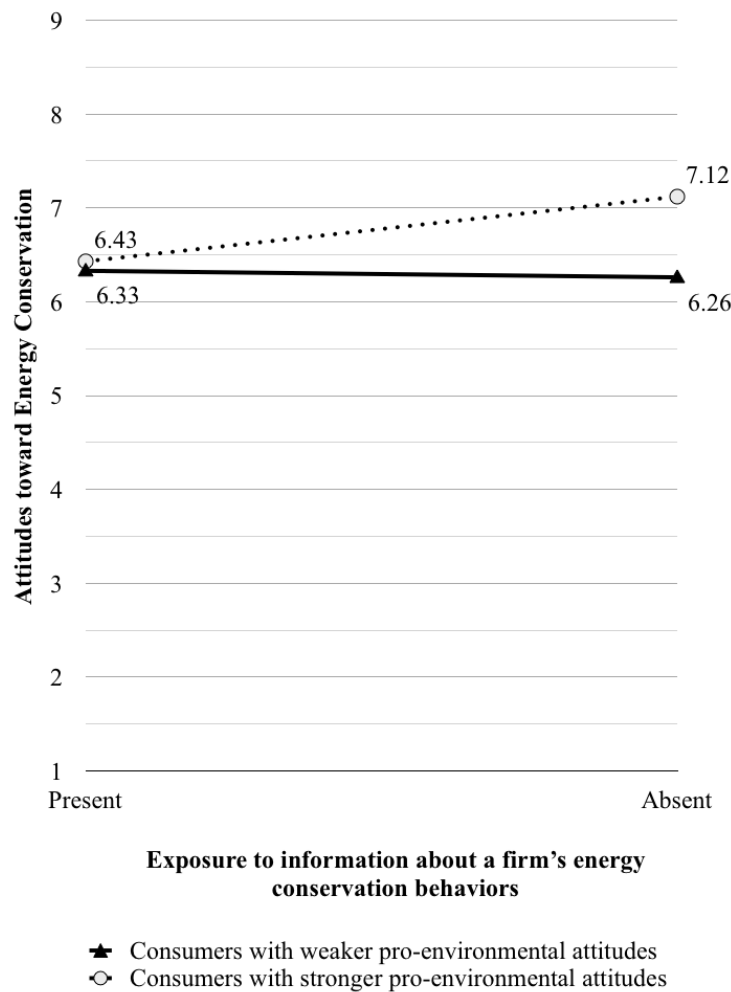
GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present study revealed that environmentally responsible behavior of a familiar (and credible) brand such as Starbucks that is framed as being motivated by a firm's concerns for environmental protection, failed to have a positive impact on consumers with weaker pro-environmental attitudes (Hypothesis 1). Instead, the brand's environmental behavior has a negative impact on consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes (Hypothesis 2). Indeed, consumers with stronger pro-environmental attitudes who were exposed to information about a brand's energy conservation behavior reported less positive attitudes towards energy conservation behaviors than those in the control condition. As such, the present study provides initial evidence for the more skeptical view of how "greening" of businesses affects consumers own "greening" attitudes, suggesting that a firm's environmental efforts may be taken by consumers of these brands as a reason to act less environmentally responsible (Frazier 2007). Considering that over three-quarters of Americans think of themselves as environmentalists (Mackoy, Calantone, and Droge 1995), it is not surprising that societal marketing tactics overwhelmingly have tended to focus on the importance of environmental programs for the protection of the environment. However, the present study

suggests that this industry standard may be doing more harm than good. While it may leave less environmentally concerned consumers intact, the more environmentally concerned consumers may eventually become less concerned if firms continue promoting their environmentally responsible efforts as being driven by their concerns for environmental protection.

As such, the present study makes several noteworthy contributions. Prior research on corporate social responsibility has shown that creating positive associations between the firm and a socially desirable cause can improve brand image (Brown and Dacin 1997), positively affect product responses (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001), increase brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006), influence overall customer satisfaction (Luo and Bhattacharya 2006), increase liking of sponsorships (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006), and even develop a sense of connection between a customer and a company (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). More recently, researchers started to explore the conditions under which these positive effects emerge. Of a particular relevance to this research was the finding that consumer responses are contingent on a firm's stated motive (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr 2006; Forehand and Grier 2003). For example, Forehand and Grier (2003) showed that consumers activate persuasion knowledge and evaluate a firm less favorably when the firm professes purely public-serving motives, particularly when they are instructed to question firm's motives. The present study extends these findings by showing that consumers prior environmental attitudes may be used as a lens through which consumers interpret a firm's environmentally responsible actions and thus influence interpretation of a firm's true motives and consumers' subsequent environmentally-driven attitudes. As such, identifying the conditions under which herein observed effects turn into positive effects is of a particular relevance to both marketing theory and practice, if a firm's environmentally responsible actions are supposed to help consumers in their greening efforts.

Furthermore, the present research also contributes to a research on the decision making processes of ecologically conscious consumers. Research in this domain has shown that environmental knowledge can predict conservation behavior (Ellen 2000), awareness of consequences encourages consumers to act in environmentally responsible ways (Stern et al.1995), and, more importantly, the various dimensions of one's environmental concerns have different implications for environmentally conscious consumer behavior (Roberts and Bacon 1997). In the present research, I contend with Roberts and Bacon (1997) and show that it was only when consumers were classified on the basis of their environmental concerns for nature when I was able to detect the effect of a brand's environmental behavior on consumers' own attitudes toward similar behavior. If we are to understand the complexity of environmentally conscious consumption, we, as researchers, need to be more cautious about how we measure our constructs and what we use for our analyses. Given the present results, for example, future research may test how consumers respond to a brand's claims that match their environmental concerns (helping the nature versus boosting one' ego) or their motives for pursuing environmental goals (internal versus external). These, as well as many other issues, are certainly fruitful directions for future research.

Despite these contributions, however, present research has also several important limitations that bear important implications for future marketing research. First, the results are not generalizable to less familiar or credible brands. In the present study, I used Starbucks–a brand that was very familiar to the target participants and, at the same time, viewed as a credible endorser of environmentally responsible behaviors. Future research may then examine how consumers respond to environmentally responsible behaviors of less familiar or credible brands. Second, Starbucks is not only a brand in its traditional meaning but also a retail brand. This might be another factor that I did not account for. For example, prior research in corporate social responsibility suggests that consumers respond more positively to actions that are perceived as proactive rather than responsive (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill 2006). As such, we

may ask whether consumers would respond differently if Starbucks was perceived as a "green innovator" (e.g,. Patagonia) versus a "green follower" (e.g., Wal-mart). Future research exploring these variables would certainly contribute to a better understanding of brand influence on consumers' own environmentally responsible behaviors. Next, the results are limited to a domain of environmentalism–a context which is currently widely debated and gets a lot of public attention in both popular media and press. Though speculative, this domain might be particularly sensitive to consumer skepticism. Exploring consumer responses in domains that are less debated and known may be another interesting venue for future research. Yet another noteworthy limitation is the fact that the environmental concern scores reported in the present study were significantly higher than scale's mid-point ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.19$, $t(92) = 4.73$, $p < .001$). As such, it is still unclear whether consumers who are not concerned about environment at all would respond in the same fashion. Exploring herein observed effects across demographic groups that are known to be less concerned may provide further important insights into consumer responses to a firm's environmentally responsible behavior.

CONCLUSION

By definition, corporate social responsibility is about improving and protecting the welfare of the company as well as that of a society as a whole. Unfortunately, majority of prior research in this domain has primarily focused on exploring the factors that incline consumers toward consumption rather than toward pro-environmentally oriented behaviors (Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius 2008). The topics, such as the impact of a firms' socially responsible behaviors on consumers' own attitudes toward similar behaviors, remain severely understudied area of marketing research. In the present paper, I attempted to contribute to this important topic and explored how the current practice that focuses on the importance of a firm's environmentally responsible behavior for the protection of the environment influences consumers' own environmentally responsible attitudes. The results provide initial evidence that marketers who are interested in making sure that consumers are not discouraged from "going green" might be best served if they craft their environmental messages according to the environmental concerns of their target audience. Even though we are yet to identify the conditions under which the brand may actually have positive impact on consumers' own environmentally responsible attitudes and thus take them on the greening journey, I believe that the present results provide the first steps towards development of more accurate and socially conscious models of consumer responses to societal marketing persuasion attempts.

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