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## Consumers' Perceptions of and Responses to Green Cause-Related Marketing

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Betsy Suzanne Saylor entitled "Consumers' Perceptions of and Responses to Green Cause-Related Marketing." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication.

Candace White, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Sarah Gardial, Bonnie Riechert

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Sarah Gardial

Bonnie Riechert

Accepted for the Council:

Anne Mayhew  
Vice Chancellor and  
Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO GREEN  
CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING**

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Betsy Suzanne Saylor

December 2005

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this project to my family, whose passion for learning has always enriched my life. I could not ask for better support, collection of perspectives, or friends. Also, I would like to thank Brooke the Snook for continually bringing new meaning to educational adventure.

## **Abstract**

In the last few decades, cause-related marketing has been increasingly refined as a method for companies to go beyond meeting the material needs of consumers (Marconi, p. xi). As cause-related marketing has developed, the variety of tactics, causes, and ethical issues has become more prevalent. The nature of cause-related marketing is conducive to a growing number of approaches, further narrowing and defining target markets through the selection of more specific causes. Competing alongside the marketing campaigns supporting cancer research is cause-related marketing geared toward restoring native species in the county of a company's headquarters. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of consumer perceptions of and responses to cause-related marketing when the cause is an environmental issue (green cause-related marketing). Long interviews were conducted to obtain feedback about consumers' perceptions of and responses to such marketing. Results included that green cause-related marketing is effective with high and low cause-involved consumers; green cause-related marketing is persuasive with high and low levels of purchase involvement; and socially concerned consumers' skepticism does not necessarily preclude their interest in green cause-related marketed products.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

According to Marconi (2002), marketing reflects and responds to “what the public says it needs and wants.” Marketing is sensitive to the “changing tastes and moods of the public.” In the last few decades, cause-related marketing (CRM) has been increasingly refined as a method for companies to go beyond meeting the material needs of consumers (p. xi).

Many researchers have accepted and built upon Varadarajan and Menon’s (1988) definition of CRM: “Cause-related marketing is 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” (p.60). Cause-related marketing’s origins in the United States can be traced back to the late 1800s to the first glimmerings of overt corporate philanthropy. Researchers cite William Hesketh Lever’s “gifts schemes” during the 1890s as one of the earliest forms of mutually beneficial linking of business with charity (Adkins, 1999; Broderick, Jogi, and Garry, 2003). Lever’s promotion for Sunlight soap involved consumers sending in tokens from soap cartons to vote for selected charities. Based on the votes, money was distributed to the charities, and Lever’s company experienced a “halo effect” from the activity (Adkins, p. 9).

Until the mid 1950s, “corporate giving was limited by law to donations that could be justified directly as being in the stockholders’ interests,” resulting in the recipient of the donation being “limited legally to one that furthered corporate interests.” After a 1954

New Jersey Supreme Court decision, publicly held companies were allowed to provide funds to nonprofits that “do not directly produce profit to the company’s stockholders” (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988, p. 58-59).

The 1983 American Express campaign to restore the Statue of Liberty is often identified as the pioneering cause-related marketing campaign (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Kelly 1998; Adkins, 1999; Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor, 2000). American Express is credited with creating the phrase “cause-related marketing.” Every time a consumer used an American Express credit card, two cents were donated to the project. Every new credit card application triggered a larger donation by the company (Adkins, p. 14). The company experienced a 28% increase in use of its credit cards, resulting in a “\$6 million national promotional campaign” including \$1.7 million contributed to the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988, p. 59). The success of the American Express campaign encouraged other companies to follow suit.

As cause-related marketing has developed, the variety of tactics, causes, and ethical issues has become more prevalent. The nature of cause-related marketing is conducive to a growing number of approaches, further narrowing and defining target markets through the selection of more specific causes. Competing alongside marketing campaigns supporting cancer research is cause-related marketing geared toward restoring native species in the county of a company’s headquarters (Aveda, 2005).

Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) accept Varadarajan and Menon’s “seminal” definition of cause-related marketing, additionally describing it as a “subset” of corporate social responsibility (p. 48). The occasional evolution catalyzed by cause-related

marketing (from marketing activities to other strategies involving a cause to build an image of corporate social responsibility) has led to variations of what cause-related marketing entails (Broderick, Jogi, and Garry, 2003, p. 587-588). The use of the word “green” has also been criticized for ambiguity and imprecision (Kilbourne, 1995; Shrum and McCarty, 1995). Though “green” can be defined and used in several ways, in this study “green” describes cause-related marketing associated with environmental and ecological causes. Therefore, green cause-related marketing consists of marketing activities communicating a company’s promise to contribute to a designated environmental cause when consumers engage in profit-yielding exchanges with that company.

### **Green Cause-related Marketing**

Environmental causes were among the first to be picked up by the cause-related marketing phenomenon. Interest in advertising environmental messages on product packaging was evident in the 1880s on cards printed and placed in boxes of Arm and Hammer baking soda. The cards read, “For the good of all, do not destroy the birds” (Zbar, 1993). Depending on one’s definition of CRM, examples of the first companies employing actual marketing tactics to link their businesses to environmental causes came later, around the same time as the American Express Statue of Liberty restoration campaign. In fact, in 1984 American Express also took the initiative with environmental causes, advertising its support of preservation of Norway’s national bird and protection of the Italian coastline (Alsop, 1985).

General Foods connected with nature-loving Grape Nuts cereal consumers in 1985, donating \$10,000 to the Marine Mammal Center through box top redemptions, and by starting a campaign benefiting California state parks (Wiegner, 1985). Patagonia, manufacturer of outdoor gear and clothing, describes its first campaign to support “grassroots organizations” concerned with the environment as taking place in 1986. Since that year, Patagonia has donated 1% of sales or 10% of annual profits (“whichever was greater”) to such groups every year (Patagonia, 2005). Companies adopted a proliferation of environmental causes in the early 1990s, including MCI’s 1991 CRM with four environmental nonprofits (Cramer, 1991), Mott’s USA’s National Park Foundation campaign, and Miller Brewing Company’s heavily advertised \$1 million contribution to The Nature Conservancy, both in 1992 (Zbar, 1993). In April 2005, Wal-Mart announced it will partner with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to donate \$35 million over the next decade to land conservation as compensation for the amount of land it develops for its buildings (Chittum, 2005). Small companies that cannot finance large environmental campaigns can generate CRM by contributing what they can to the Outdoor Industry Conservation Alliance, founded in 1989 (Cramer, p. 48).

The rapid growth of cause-related marketing has consumers increasingly familiar with the once-distinguishing marketing tactic. The success of CRM depends on the believable connections that marketers generate among causes, consumers, companies, nonprofits, and products. The approaches to forging those connections are being constantly revamped and contextualized. A special 1995 issue of the *Journal of Advertising* featured the emerging phenomena of green advertising. Researchers called for increased study of green advertising, stating that the strategy was “in the introductory

phase of its life cycle” (Zinkhan and Carlson). Banerjee and Gulas (1995) advocated further green advertisement analysis. Kilbourne described the need to examine more than just the green advertisements and consumer response, but also the extensive factors determining the success of the “greening of marketing.” Despite these calls for specificity in CRM research, studies examining any aspect of green cause-related marketing are scarce. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of consumer perceptions of and responses to cause-related marketing when the cause is an environmental issue. Long interviews were conducted to explore feedback about consumers’ perceptions of and responses to green cause-related marketing.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The crucial role of consumer perception of green cause-related marketing can be falsely assumed, preempted, or underestimated so that it falls through the cracks of both planning and analysis. A qualitative paradigm allows for in-depth evaluation of reasons why people do or do not respond positively to green cause-related marketing. Review of past studies and literature shows consumer perception of and response to CRM activity is difficult to generalize. Researchers have suggested that the variety of causes, campaign styles, companies, nonprofits, and products creates a need for less general evaluation of consumer perception of CRM. Broderick, Jogi, and Garry (2003) reported that cause-related marketing activities are often treated as a “homogeneous category” though studies have shown that different causes create variation in consumer attitudes toward CRM (p. 603).

Aided by past studies' analysis of the broad and varied facets of cause-related marketing, this study examines the influential factors in individual consumers' perceptions of and responses to green CRM. The characteristics of Webb and Mohr's (1998) four consumer groups as well as Mohr, Webb, and Harris' (2001) four consumer categories (precontemplators, contemplators, the action group, and maintainers, p. 60-65) help shape the inquiry. Influential factors include consumers' skepticism toward advertising in general, tendency to seek balance or make attributions when evaluating motives for CRM, and desire for social benefits regardless of motives.

The overall goal is to gain understanding of how consumers perceive green cause-related marketing and if and why they purchase in relation to those perceptions. Though the findings cannot be generalized to a population, they offer consumers' detailed descriptions of the perceived value of green CRM to companies, nonprofits, and consumers. This exploratory study will provide analytic generalization to cultural categories and assumptions of environmentally concerned consumers.



## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Cause-related Marketing Defined**

As cause-related marketing has developed, so have the various definitions of what it entails. Webb and Mohr (1998) used Varadarajan and Menon's definition of cause-related marketing in their quantitative study of consumer perception of CRM. They found consumers' perceptions of companies and nonprofits that use cause-related marketing vary greatly. Berger, Cunningham, and Kozinets (1999) also used Varadarajan and Menon's definition along with Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and pro-social behavior theory in their qualitative study investigating effects of gender and heuristics in evaluating CRM.

Broderick, Jogi, and Garry (2003) addressed difference among Varadarajan and Menon's cause-related marketing definition and others, stating that some researchers emphasize the "marketing pursuits through public association of a profit-making organization with a non-profit cause" while others emphasize the "mutual benefit" goal of CRM (p. 584). The authors suggested that definitions can depend on goals of CRM, whether they are more short-term plans to increase company involvement in socially responsible activities, or long-term aims at influencing "overall consumer perception of an organization, and their evaluation of its products" (p. 588). Broderick et al. also discussed the question of indecision about the "definitive definition of what exactly is the social responsibility of marketing" (p. 586).

Mohr, Webb, and Harris described two basic definition types of corporate social responsibility. The first type are multidimensional definitions that "delineate the major

responsibilities of companies,” including “economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic” activities. The second, “definitions based on the concept of social marketing,” are more abstract, stating corporate social responsibility is “both avoiding harm and doing good” (p. 46-47). Others have summarized that corporate social responsibility involves the economic, ethical, and social performance companies beyond involvement with charitable organizations (Broderick et al., 2003). Cause-related marketing often seems to fall under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility.

Attempts to differentiate cause-related marketing from other do-good actions in the marketplace tend to draw attention to the advertising involved. Adkins (1999) argued, “Whatever Cause Related Marketing is, it is certainly not philanthropy nor altruism: it’s good business, and it’s good business for charities and businesses . . . There should be no question that in the end, the Cause Related Marketing relationship is entered into because both parties have something to gain” (p. 12). Citing Varadarajan and Menon’s cause-related marketing definition, Dean (2002) distinguished CRM from sponsorship, stressing that though both activities link corporations to causes and organizations, sponsorship’s economic objectives are “not as apparent as they are in CRM.” A sponsor’s donation is usually agreed upon beforehand, lessening the presence of the required exchange (p. 77-78).

Marconi (2002) emphasized an essential point, “the expression that has been used most often to define cause marketing—*to do well by doing good*—implies that a company must actually *be good*” (his emphasis, p. 6).

### **Cause-Related Marketing as a Business Strategy**

“Concern for the environment is (or should be) universal,” Marconi wrote in 2002 (p. 19). Zinkhan and Carlson (1995) suggested three reasons for companies to consider green marketing: “the emergence of the green consumer segment,” “the greening of other stakeholder groups, notably owners,” and “the increase in responsible business development” (p. 1).

A growing number of companies continue to tap into green marketing. “The environment” as an overarching cause holds a lucrative diversity of unique causes to advocate through cause-related marketing. Marconi advocated specificity in selecting an environmental cause for CRM. He cited a few companies’ successful practice of green cause-related marketing. Grabber Performance Group became involved with other outdoor industry leaders REI and The North Face in developing the Conservation Alliance, which now shares its logo in many companies’ green CRM campaigns. Marconi also praised the effective green cause-related marketing of Tom’s of Maine, The Body Shop, and Ben & Jerry’s.

Numerous studies have considered individual companies’ successful use of green cause-related marketing, but rarely went into detail about consumer response to and perception of these campaigns. Consumers’ general attitudes toward corporate social responsibility and CRM are frequently surveyed, showing that more and more consumers are aware of the phenomena—a recent survey found “98 per cent of U.K. and U.S. consumers [are] aware of at least one CRM programme,” up from 88% in 2000 (Bashford, 2005). Studies have shown that more consumers are seeking information about companies’ activities through the Internet (Green acres..., 2005), and that through

cause-related marketing companies might begin emphasizing individual consumer responsibility to “effect environmental change” (Bashford).

Practicing corporate social responsibility, and cause-related marketing, can demonstrate a company has “core values and core purposes” that can result in long-term success. So-called “visionary companies” have values “concentrated on the intangibles of business” that payoff in the long run by addressing consumer wants and needs beyond competitive pricing and technical innovations (Adkins, 1999, p. 21).

Varadarajan and Menon suggested several benefits of cause-related marketing to companies, including enhanced corporate image; increased sales, visibility, and repeat purchases; increased brand awareness, recognition, and image; greater market segment reach; and ability to recover from “negative publicity” (1988, p. 60).

Smaller, more immediate positive effects of cause-related marketing include lowered consumer defense mechanisms to advertising using CRM, as opposed to traditional advertising, brought on by the “halo of goodwill” (Meenaghan, 2001, p. 101). Studies have found many consumers will switch brands and try new brands because of cause-related marketing (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Ross, Patterson, and Stutts, 1992). CRM has also been found to have a “placebo effect” with low involvement purchases of products that consumers would have found disappointing, but do not, simply because of the cause association (Yechiam, Barron, Erev, and Erez, 2002).

The longer a company links itself to a cause, the more effective the cause-related marketing appears to be with consumers (Webb and Mohr, 1998; Dean, 2002). The earlier a company takes up a cause, the more likely the image transfer will be effective (Meenaghan, 2001).

Cause-related marketing has obvious benefits for charitable organizations, including increased visibility of both the organization and the cause, and financial support. They also can increase their image as partners in the marketplace, lessening negative perceptions such as being beggars for support. These organizations can gain broader volunteer support and improved managerial skills. CRM also provides a different fund-raising technique, relieving some pressure from the crowded arena of direct requests (Polonsky and Wood, 2001).

Cause-related marketing also has pitfalls that charitable organizations must anticipate. In a study of the legal issues involved in regulation of environmental claims of for-profit organizations, Scammon and Mayer (1995) found “false statement” and “crucial omissions” two of the greatest concerns. Exaggerations of corporate generosity, shifting priorities to meet corporate demands, tarnished image, short relationships, reduced overall giving, and poor consumer reaction to the partnership can harm a charitable organization (Polonsky and Wood, p. 15).

From the early years of cause-related marketing analysis researchers have been warning of the fine line between CRM and exploitation. Emphasizing that primarily cause-related marketing “is a strategy for selling, not making charitable contributions,” Varadarajan and Menon (1988) articulated two salient points: companies occasionally spend more money on advertising their contributions and alliances than on donations, and second, that “contribution and promotional expenditures are tax deductible.” Varadarajan and Menon advised that managers “create and encourage a corporate culture that will internalize the true philosophy of CRM” (p. 69).

Similarly, Smith and Higgins (2000) argued that purchases resulting from cause-related marketing are “unrelated to any act of duty because through CRM we automatically give to charity; we do not have to actually act at all.” The consumers’ proximity to the subjects of charity is lessened; distance intercedes and “surplus” giving is precluded. Individuals define themselves through the market as consumers, quieting whatever guilt is involved in purchasing by choosing a cause-related marketed product. They experience compassion and emotion from buying new things, “detached from the virtuous act” of giving without reciprocity (p. 314-317).

### **Green Cause-related Marketing and Consistency**

Kilbourne expressed the necessity for businesses to explore the ecological position, considering items “truly Green” in that they are “produced from renewable resources at rates lower than the resource’s replacement rate for non-frivolous human needs” (p. 18). Kilbourne called for marketers and businesses to focus on the “‘root causes’ of the crisis,” not just the symptoms such as pollution. For Kilbourne, steps in the right direction for truly green marketing include “profound change in the dominant social paradigm”—an incremental process at best. However, he suggested that the green (or Green) consistency among companies’ practices, products, and partnerships is a critical first step (p. 19).

Banerjee and Gulas (1995) also addressed the concept of degrees of greenness and a green consistency among companies’ practices, products, and partnerships. The authors discussed the levels of involvement available to consumers, from “shallow ecology” to “deep ecology,” arranging these as the extremes the “continuous variable” of being green.

In their content analysis of green advertising, they mentioned two appeals particularly salient to green CRM: the “goodness of ‘natural’ products and ingredients” as well as emphasis on companies’ social responsibility and green actions. The most common theme of the ads was “promotion of a green corporate image,” usually highlighting a companies’ general commitment to environmental protection. Though the appeals are not described as being combined, the prominence of these appeals suggests marketers’ realization of the importance green consumers place on consistency among companies’ practices, products, and partnerships.

### **The Consumers**

As Adkins (1999) stated, cause-related marketing can be considered good business for both companies and charitable organizations. Consumers and employees of companies are increasingly expecting social responsibility from companies. For several years, more than 80% of consumers have regularly reported that they have a more positive image of companies using CRM (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Marconi, 2002). Studies show that corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing strengthen employee motivation and morale in the workplace (Adkins; Smith and Alcorn, 1991). A 1997 survey revealed more than 50% of 2,100 MBA students reported “they would accept a lower salary to work for a socially responsible company” (Marconi, p.11).

The study of socially responsible consumer behavior corresponds to past social movements. Consumers’ concern for the environment is evident in research contemporary with the environmental movement of the 1970s. Webster (1975), building on the “socially conscious consumer” studies that were surfacing in the early 1970s,

stated that the socially conscious consumer was “a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change” (p. 188). Webster’s study found such a consumer at the time was likely to be female with “higher household income than her less socially conscious counterpart,” a “member of the upper middle class ‘counterculture’” who thinks “business has too much power” (196). Decades later Berger, Cunningham, and Kozinets (1999) also noted effects of gender and heuristics in evaluating corporate social responsibility. They found women were more responsive to CRM as heuristic cues, resulting in perception of increased brand superiority.

Webb and Mohr (1998) defined socially responsible consumer behavior (SRCB) as “a person basing his or her acquisition, usage, and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society,” and that SRCB “requires the inclusion of CSR as one of the criteria influencing a person’s consumption patterns” (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001, p. 47). Consumers in their “socially concerned” group were so distressed about social causes that they were willing to overlook the compromises that sometimes occur between companies and charitable organizations as long as the cause received support from the relationship. Mohr, Webb, and Harris’ 2001 study determined four categories of consumers based on their levels of socially responsible consumer behavior. Precontemplators have not yet used SRCB as a determinant in their shopping. Contemplators occasionally consider socially responsible choices with purchasing. The action group often considers buying responsibly. The maintainers consistently chose to shop with a socially responsible



agenda. Of these four consumer categories, environmental issues were of highest importance to the “maintainers” in the study (p. 64).

Previous studies have also evaluated consumer response to “ecolabeling” of products with environmental claims (Hume, 1991; Teisl, Roe, and Levy, 1999; Maronick and Andrews, 1999). Other studies have explored consumer response to “greenwashing,” the “token efforts” (Laufer, 2003, p. 253) and “counterstrategies” (Bruno, 1998) of insincere companies trying to tap into that universal appeal of environmental stewardship (“Greenwashing...”, 2002). Shrum and McCarty (1995) defined “green consumers” as “anyone whose purchase behavior is influenced by environmental concerns” (p. 72). They added that green consumers consider themselves to be opinion leaders, are interested in new products, actively exchange product information, are “careful in their shopping habits,” and are price sensitive. Green consumers were also found to be generally more skeptical of advertising (women more so than men), with television being the most mistrusted media. The authors suggested that being the first to adequately meet their “environmental needs” could build brand loyalty with these consumers (p. 76).

#### *Consumers’ Involvement with the Issue or Cause*

A consumer’s level of involvement with a cause often affects perception of and reaction to CRM featuring that cause. Studies have shown the higher the consumer’s prior involvement with the cause, the more likely a consumer will process CRM messages and purchase (Broderick et al., 2003). More involved consumers have also been found to be more critical of businesses linking to causes (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Meenaghan, 2001). These “skeptical experts” look for signs of exploitation and can be

critical of organizations for pairing with for-profit organizations (Roy and Cornwell, 2004). However, if the CRM clearly expresses a company's genuine interest in the cause, the critical cause experts are likely to be supportive of the linkage (Meenaghan). Mohr, Webb, and Harris' (2001) "maintainers" consumer category showed that consumers' dedication to their high involvement with environmental causes influenced them to base a majority of their purchases on information about companies and products—including information from cause-related marketing. However, if product pricing is competitive, even for consumers with low environmental cause involvement, green marketing has been found to be "significantly more persuasive than non-green appeal" (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995, p. 45).

#### *Consumers' Involvement with the Purchase*

Low involvement purchases have been found to benefit from cause-related marketing. Particularly when brands appear similar, consumers have been found to choose the brand featuring CRM (Meenaghan, 2001; Berger et al., 1999). Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor (2000) found that if brands appear homogeneous, as long as consumers perceived no tradeoffs, they tended to choose the brand marketed in relation to a cause. Additionally, if brands appeared heterogeneous, choice of the cause-related marketed brand depended on consumers' perception of both the size of the contribution to the cause and the company's motivation for support.

The issue of consumers' perception of "fit" between company, cause, and organization has been found to influence the level at which CRM acts as a purchasing heuristic for consumers. Although no new heuristics resulted from CRM, the "cause

cues” disrupted existing purchasing heuristics, sometimes resulting in increased purchasing decisions if an appropriate fit was perceived (Hamlin and Wilson, 2004, p. 677-678).

“Luxury” and “frivolous” purchases have also been found to have a unique place in CRM. Studies have shown that cause-related marketing combined with luxury purchases from ice cream sundaes to expensive vehicles can be successful. The charity involved has been found to soothe consumers’ guilt about the indulgence (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Strahilevitz, 1999).

#### *Ethics and Action: The Search for Meaning*

Cause-related marketing has been found to satisfy consumers’ need for meaning in their purchasing. For example, consumers’ participation in special events such as benefit races supporting conservation may likely increase consumers’ later acceptance of that sponsor’s green cause-related marketing. Consumers make their own meanings at these events, and transfer that meaningful experience onto the sponsor and/or cause-related marketed brand (Cornwell and Smith, 2001). The feelings of advocacy and action associated with buying products promoted by cause-related marketing can result in consumers feeling personally involved in a cause campaign, as well as feeling a part of a collective (Cornwell and Smith; Broderick et al., 2003). Consumers have been found to take pride in buying the products of a company involved in cause-related marketing (Meenaghan, 2001).

Consumers’ desire for altruism through purchasing has been found to affect consumer response to and perception of CRM in other contexts. Even if it meant forgoing

the use of a coupon, roughly one third of the study's participants were both willing to make purchases and switch brands in response to a company's cause-related marketing—especially in the case of local cause support (Smith and Alcorn, 1991).

Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) suggested that their findings of socially responsible consumers implies that there could be more consumers who want to learn about corporate social responsibility in order to buy according to their own social concerns, a promising aspect for cause-related marketing. However, other studies have shown that even when consumers have information about companies' ethics and social actions does not mean those consumers buy responsibly. Time and economic constraints are only two main obstacles to socially responsible consumer behavior (Titus and Bradford, 1996). Other critics have suggested that CRM can be viewed as having negative consequences for society by consumers mistaking cause-related marketed purchases as the end-all-be-all of pro-social action, replacing more independent social commitment (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; Smith and Higgins, 2000).

Additional obstacles to cause-related marketing include consumer wariness of big business (Marconi, 2002, p. 90; Iyer and Banerjee, 1992) or “anti-corporate biases” (Zinkhan and Carlson, 1995), cynicism about for-profit companies' motives (Dean, 2002), general skepticism of advertising, perception of causes being over-commercialized (Shrum and McCarty, 1995; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Polonsky and Wood, 2001), and “donor fatigue”—consumers feeling overwhelmed by charitable solicitation (Marconi, p. 126).

Both the green consumer segment and green marketing are difficult to characterize. The complexity of this consumer group calls for the terms and categories

developed thus far to be reevaluated for over-simplification and generalization. Kilbourne addressed perhaps marketers' and for-profits' greatest challenge with skeptical green consumers: the negative effects of consumption on the environment. In his analysis of green marketing, Kilbourne described the paradox of green consumption. By defining "green" into five levels, he presented a framework with which to evaluate the degrees of green marketing and views of being green. Of the five types of green, Kilbourne defines "environmentalism" and "ecologism" as being "virtually political antitheses." The opposition is rooted in "anthropocentric green" versus "ecocentric green," similar to what Dobson (1990) distinguished as "green" versus "Green." "Environmentalism" demands change within the dominant anthropocentric paradigm, and "ecologism" demands a new ecocentric paradigm.

Kilbourne applies these degrees of green to green marketing, stating a crucial point for the future of green marketing:

If individuals' ecophilosophies place them in the upper left quadrant, an anthropocentric reformist, then green advertising will be seen as an ecologically useful addition to the advertiser's arsenal, providing benefits to the individual consumer and the ecology. If individuals' philosophies position them in the lower right quadrant, then what others consider to be a Green ad would be considered an oxymoron. Advocating green consumption is advocating more consumption, more technology, and more economic growth all considered anathema to the ecological position. To ecologists, the only Green advertising would be promoting their socio-political agenda; and the only Green product is the one not produced. (p. 17-18)

Though a number of studies have emerged in recent years evaluating the types and degrees of green marketing, studies devoted to consumer response to and perception of green CRM are scarce. The division of green marketing into distinct categories

(Kilbourne, 1995; Banerjee and Gulas, 1995) as well as the segmentation of green consumers into more precise groups (Shrum and McCarty, 1995; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001) calls attention to the complexity of consumer response to and perception of green marketing. More specific study of consumers and forms of green marketing could present additional frameworks with which to address the intricacies of green marketing phenomena.

Review of the literature leads to the following areas of study: how consumers perceive green cause-related marketing; how consumers' perceptions affect their *responses* to green cause-related marketing; how consumers' levels of involvement with environmental causes influence the process; how the level of purchase involvement affects consumers' perceptions of/responses to green CRM; whether consumers view green cause-related marketed purchases as pro-social acts; and how consumers react to examples of green CRM from companies involved in environmental cause support.

### **Chapter 3: Method**

Because this study used a constructivist paradigm with the goal of gaining understanding, qualitative research was the most appropriate method. The use of long interviews allowed consumers to express the meaning of green CRM and shopping experiences in their own words, providing context and specific reasons for perceptions and behavior.

The disadvantages of long interviews were considered. McCracken (1988) described eight interviews as a sufficient number towards achieving understanding. Redundancy in responses is another useful guide to sample size. Regardless, the small sample of 10 participants in this study precludes statistical generalizability to a larger population. However, this is not an issue in constructivist methodology, which aims more for analytic generalizability—that is, findings generalizable in regard to theoretical constructs and/or specific contexts. Constructivism does not support the belief that data can be context-free. Instead, “particularizing” or “extrapolation” can be carefully applied to situations beyond the ones currently studied (Patton, 1990, p. 486-489).

Additionally, McCracken suggested that the issue is not one of generalizability but “that of access.” The goal is to gain access to “the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world.” Answering how many people hold those assumptions is not the concern, but categories and assumptions that matter. The research is therefore “intensive” rather than “extensive” (p. 17).

Constructivist epistemology expects the interviewee and the interviewer to combine meanings into one or more strong amalgams of understanding (Guba, 1990, p.

27). No “true” independence is possible for participants, or for consumers in their experiences. Three additional concerns with qualitative research should be addressed: credibility of respondents in the “‘live’ and immediate nature of the interaction,” difficult interpretation, and moderator bias (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990, p. 17). The respondents’ credibility can be questioned in any form of research. The moderator must carefully observe for questionable or socially desirable responses. As Zinkhan and Carlson (1995) warned about self-reporting with green marketing research, “Consumers eagerly adopt green attitudes and beliefs because it is socially acceptable and chic to be green”; however, “[t]here are many reasons to suspect that green attitudes will not be strongly linked to green behaviors” (p. 5). By using “emphatic neutrality” toward participants’ comments (Patton, 1990, p. 475), openness is established with respondents, encouraging expression of the conflicts between attitudes and action. Even if knowing the “truth” of respondents’ comments is impossible, most comments reveal insights to experiences.

Difficulty interpreting open-ended responses was aided by the descriptive analysis technique chosen, including confidential individual member checking of each completed transcript. Last, moderator bias was not likely to be eliminated. For this study, it was fitting that the supportive leadership style be used, treating respondents as equals (p. 73), and using emphatic neutrality towards responses and findings (Patton). In the constructivist paradigm, the researcher as instrument must be honest about biases from the start, and anticipate how those potentially affect the study. The memo technique (Maxwell, 1996, p. 29), offers explanation of the researcher’s role in the final interpretation of the primary data. McCracken also described the memo technique as a



“review of cultural categories” that allows the researcher a “more detailed and systematic appreciation of his or her personal experience with the topic of interest.” In doing so, the researcher conducted an “inventory” of the “associations, incidents, and assumptions that surround the topic in his or her mind” (p. 32). This evaluation better prepared the researcher to distance herself from the biases held while increasing awareness of cultural categories concerning the topic, or, as McCracken stated, the two processes of “familiarization and defamiliarization” (p. 33). (See appendix A for this study’s memos.)

### **Participants**

After receiving approval from the Internal Review Board (see appendix B), the researcher recruited participants from Knoxville area stores carrying green cause-related marketed products, including Aveda health and beauty products, Patagonia outdoor gear and clothing products, Kalahari Tea, Stonyfield Farms dairy products, Endangered Species Chocolate, Barbara’s Bakery food products, and Ben & Jerry’s food products (See appendix C for details about companies). Gift certificates of \$10.00 for “green” products were offered as incentives. Participants did not have to purchase products featuring green CRM to be approached for the study. However, in an attempt to include consumers familiar with cause-related marketing in the study, a short close-ended questionnaire screened for individuals’ awareness of green CRM (see appendix D). The sample included six females and four males. Five participants were between the ages of 21 and 30, four participants were between the ages of 31 and 40, and one participant was between the ages of 51 and 60. Four participants reported having graduate degrees, three reported having bachelor’s degrees, one reported having an associate’s degree, and one

was completing a bachelor's. Four participants estimated their annual incomes to be less than \$20,000; four estimated between \$20,000 and \$39,000; one estimated between \$40,000 and \$59,000; and one estimated between \$60,000 and \$79,000. Participants' reported occupations included nutrition professor, art teacher, private school teacher, social worker, contractor, biologist, sales associate, GIS technician, and student.

Consent forms were provided at the start of the interviews, along with a sign-up sheet for follow-up contact. A discussion guide, formatted according to McCracken's grant-tour suggestions, was used to focus participants' attention on potential influential factors, and each interview closed with a written biographical questionnaire in order to create reference to what shapes the individual's experience (see appendix E). McCracken suggested principles that should guide interviews, including allowing the respondents to "tell their own story in their own words." Questions were phrased in a "general and nondirective manner," and never supplied the "terms of the answer" (p. 34). Interviews can facilitate emic language (the words of those inside the culture) and reveal how consumers make decisions concerning green CRM in an interactive context, as many likely do within purchasing situations. This "testimony" of the respondent was sustained through "floating prompts"—use everyday speech and repeating respondents' key terms to prompt further. "Planned prompts" were also used to ensure the research objectives were addressed. Planned prompts included:

- **contrast prompts**, asking what is the difference between x and y;
- **category prompts**, asking how the respondent defines actors, social significance, good and bad behavior, etc.;

- **recall questions**, asking respondents to recall a relevant experience in order to reveal assumptions and relationships;
- **auto-driving**, using stimulus to ask for commentary, account of what is seen (p. 34-37).

Completed verbatim transcripts were provided to participants, each confidentially to the appropriate individual for their review and evaluation, known as “member checking” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Member checking not only provided additional feedback from participants, but also reaffirmed the equality between the researcher’s and participants’ understanding, crucial to the constructivist paradigm of this study. All participants responded that their transcripts appeared accurate, with one male participant suggesting a grammatical revision of one of his comments. Two participants requested the results of the study.

### **Research Objectives and Interview Questions**

Though the design is emergent, and certain questions were slightly reworded for successive interviews, the general outline remained consistent to “preserve the conversational context” of each interview (McCracken, 1988, p. 24). Question areas corresponded with the research objectives. In line with the constructivist paradigm, which is organized by the goal for increased understanding of how individuals construct their individual realities, the overall research objective for this study was **to explore how consumers perceive green CRM**. Qualitative research, with its focus on “*how x plays a role in causing y, what the process is that connects x and y,*” is particularly helpful in evaluating causal processes while gaining understanding about the meaning of

experiences (Maxwell, 1996, p. 20). Not only did this study aim to explore perceptions, **but to explore how consumers' perceptions affect their *responses* to green CRM.**

Mohr, Webb and Harris' consumer categories include consumers who have "put some thought into CSR" (p. 62) but do not base purchases on those thoughts (precontemplators), consumers who "have stronger beliefs about CSR, they have more knowledge about the issues, and most are actively boycotting and recycling," yet "CSR is still not a determinant of most of their purchasing behavior" (contemplators) (p. 63), and consumers who actively base most of their purchases according to CSR (the action group); and consumers who are committed to SRCB and see socially responsible consumer behavior as a way for consumers to "gain some control over businesses" (maintainers) (p. 64). How do consumers decide to make purchases in relation to those perceptions (or not)? What are some of the influential factors in consumers' responses to green CRM? Skepticism and/or cynicism have been suggested to play a part (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Kilbourne, 1995; Shrum and McCarty, 1995; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Meenaghan and O'Sullivan, 2001; Dean, 2002; Marconi, 2002; Roy and Cornwell, 2004). Andreason's 1995 model of stages of behavior change has been applied to socially responsible consumer behavior to explore influential factors in consumers becoming socially responsible purchasers (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001). Consumers' perceptions of "fit" between company and cause have also been found to influence perceptions and/or behavior. Researchers have applied attribution theory and balance and congruity theories to examine how consumers' attributions and attempts to find balance influence perceptions and responses to CRM (Webb and Mohr, 1998; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb, 2000; Meenaghan, 2001; Dean, 2002).

Other research objectives aided in the discovery of the processes by which consumers experience green CRM: **To explore how consumers' levels of involvement with environmental causes influence the process.** Past research suggested cause involvement facilitates consumer reception of cause-related marketing (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995; Meenaghan, 2001; Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Broderick et al., 2003; Roy and Cornwell, 2004).

Another objective of this study was **to explore how the level of purchase involvement affects consumers' perceptions of green CRM.** Levels of involvement and types of purchase have been reported as influential to perceptions of CRM (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Berger et al., 1999; Strahilevitz, 1999; Meenaghan, 2001). Purchase involvement was also noted as a factor in response to cause-related marketing when selecting from homogeneous products (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor, 2000).

This study also sought insight to how consumers' views of green CRM might have implications for nonprofits' other efforts for environmental causes. Smith and Higgins (2000) applied theories of utilitarianism, pro-social behavior, and concepts of distance to argue that CRM is not a real social commitment. This research objective was **to explore whether consumers view green cause-related marketed purchases as pro-social acts.** If so, does this view preclude consumers giving to environmental causes outside of shopping decisions, what Smith and Higgins call "surplus activity" (p. 314)?

This study's final research objective was **to explore how consumers react to examples of green CRM from companies involved in environmental cause support.** This section of the research was designed to discover how consumers evaluated actual

claims and information provided in a variety of green CRM examples. (See appendices F-G for concept maps of the research objectives.)

Participants' perceptions of and responses to green CRM allowed the researcher "hear the participants' perspectives on [her] goals" (Morgan, 1998, p. 14). A brief verbal question at the close of the interview probed for additional reactions to green CRM. Feedback was reviewed throughout the study to improve the emergent discussion guide while maintaining the questionnaire format.

### **Analysis**

Analysis of interview data was based on the transcripts typed verbatim from the tape recordings of sessions. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed, identifying influential factors that could establish such consumer categories, themes, and key terms participants use when discussing green cause-related marketing. McCracken's (1988) five stages of the analysis process were used to conclude why respondents react to and perceive green CRM the way they do. The units of analysis were the words and phrases of respondents. McCracken's five stages inscribe a "movement from the particular to the general," beginning with the "finest details of the interview transcript and, with each successive stage, move upward to more general observations." This method provided "a record of the process of reflection and analysis," which served as a reliability check (p. 42-43).

Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Once observations, relationships, contradictions, patterns, and themes were developed per transcript in each of the first four stages (see appendices H-K for examples), the fifth and final stage unites the transcripts'

data. This last stage transformed the cultural categories depicted by respondents into analytic categories “fully possessed of general and abstract properties.” The presentation of analytic categories shifted the focus from the interviewees to the implications of the assumptions and categories themselves (McCracken, p. 46). Summations of the thought processes at work in consumers with an awareness of socially responsible consumer behavior in respect to the environment were made available through the abstraction in stage five (see appendix L). As McCracken indicated, reliability was supported through the detailed records of analysis produced by the five-stage process (p. 42-43), as well as the member checking process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and researcher’s memos (appendix A).

### *Stage One*

In the first stage of analysis, each individual transcript was approached with “a certain disingenuous wonder,” without “the assumptions and understandings with which we are normally so quickly and unconsciously forthcoming.” Evaluating phrases and utterances for “entranceway,” the researcher used “the self as an instrument” to discover “associational activity” of individuals (McCracken, p. 44). Specific observations were noted for each transcript, and possible connections to previous literature were recorded (see appendix H for example). Generalizations were avoided in order to prevent “premature closure” of the data’s holdings (p. 45).

*Stage Two*

McCracken's second stage continues to confine analysis to each individual transcript (p. 45). Observations noted in stage one were further developed, creating lenses through which to view each transcript, finding relationships, similarities, and contradictions (see appendix I for example). Through this development, ties to previous literature continued to be made.

*Stage Three*

Continuing analysis restricted to each transcript, stage three involved development of observations in relation to other observations within each transcript, resulting in additional notes per transcript (see appendix J for example). Themes and patterns emerged, and organized speculation began. General outlines of each transcript became clear.

*Stage Four*

The fourth stage is the last stage in which the analysis of each transcript is restricted to that transcript only. Specific clusters were evaluated within each transcript, laying bare the general themes implied per cluster. Next, the information in those clusters was "harvested and winnowed," (McCracken, p. 46). Speculations of interrelationships aided in development of a hierarchy of themes. Two chief themes were established under which the others fall (see appendix K for example). All categorized themes and residual themes were judged for contradiction and relevance.



*Stage Five*

The concepts, patterns, themes, and relationships established in stage four for all ten transcripts were united in stage five (see appendix L). In this stage, “a process of transformation takes place in which the cultural categories that have been unearthed in the previous interview become analytic categories.” At this point, “one is no longer talking about the particulars of individual lives but about the general properties of thought and action within the community or group under study” (McCracken, p. 46). Stage five presented conclusions with general and abstract qualities, beyond the confines of individual participants’ experiences. The analytic generalizations revealed by this final stage offered possibilities not from the individual respondents’ perspectives, but from the analytic perspective. These “analytic categories” offer insight to the assumptions and categories of such consumers’ perceptions of and responses to green cause-related marketing. The careful construction of the interview guide in relation to the research questions and McCracken’s process of taking specific observations to general abstractions revealed overarching beliefs as well as supporting details of socially concerned consumers’ experiences with green CRM.

## **Chapter 4: Discussion of the Findings**

Findings are described below each corresponding research objective. Sections include discussion of the discovery process and implications involved with consumers' experiences with green cause-related marketing.

### **Exploring How Consumers Perceive Green Cause-related Marketing**

All participants in the study were screened for their awareness of green cause-related marketing. Each participant was asked to provide examples of green CRM, and if they remembered the causes supported. All participants were able to offer examples of companies, products and/or brands promoted through green cause-related marketing. Six of the ten participants recalled specific causes supported, and none recalled specific nonprofit partners.

All ten participants said they make a point of buying brands that support environmental causes, but that price was a concern. Most respondents claimed that green cause-related marketed products are more expensive than competing brands. Several participants offered primary heuristics in addition to price, in particular looking for brands that are "natural" and/or "organic." The majority of participants said their desire for natural and organic products guided their purchase selection. The few who did not include natural or organic as priorities named quality after price as the most influential factor.

Most of the participants expressed some skepticism of advertising, including muting commercials or avoiding advertisements and suspicion of the claims made in ads.

Distrust of information in ads was often linked to car companies. One respondent recalled an example: “I don’t really hear many ads that say stuff like that except for car companies, and I don’t really believe them. I can’t think of a specific one, but they usually say stuff about how they’re trying to help the environment but they’re still making cars that run on gas, so I don’t know how that works.” This perception of inconsistency in company practices and products was shared by other respondents, correlating to skepticism of advertising about environmental good deeds. Other respondents were skeptical of the environmental information presented in ads, wanting more details or source information to help them evaluate the accuracy of the claims. Some participants tentatively explained they trusted advertising because of vague notions about false advertising regulations as well as reliance on other more savvy consumers to research claims.

The participants who had children showed mixed feelings about advertising directed toward children. One female participant’s skepticism of advertising stemmed from her desire to reduce her consumption in general. She reported that marketing directed at her children created pressure to buy more. In respect to green cause-related marketing, she said she would support any interests that her daughter developed in response to advertising of environmental cause support, but that she viewed it as her daughter being “completely sold” on the marketing, showing her distaste for the consumer exchange inherent in the experience. Another mother accepted the green CRM as “cute” and entertaining for her child. Many other respondents accepted of green cause-related marketing appealing to children, explaining that they advocated informing and involving children in environmental cause support.

Information on packaging was highly influential on participants' perception of a brand and product. Respondents suggested that they rely heavily on packaging for information about nutritional information for food products; natural and/or organic processing; recycled/recyclable packaging; cause support; and animal testing. Concerns about food products' nutritional properties were common, including fat content; whole grains; hydrogenated oils and trans fat; use of animal product; artificial sweeteners; and monosodium glutamate. Often in conjunction with these factors was interest in the naturalness of the product, and if it was organic. Four participants mentioned their frustration with ecolabeling, "organic" and USDA regulations in particular. Some skepticism surfaced, with participants explaining that they had to learn to navigate these confusing claims, which led to distrust of information on packaging:

I try to rely more on other sources of information because there's a lot of misinformation out there. I know one of the products in particular that I have seen—the food phenomenon is kind of iffy. Just knowing that there's no real standard of what organic is, there's a lot of people who will have a label that says organic, because they can, because there's no regulation that says you're allowed to call it that or not. So to some degree, you have to be careful.

Closely tied to desire for organic products was the desire for "locally grown" or regionally produced items. Respondents reasoned that buying local or regional products not only contributed to their regional economy, but also that less transportation resulted in less vehicle emissions. A few participants also said locally grown food products were fresher. This concept was one of many that figured into participants' buying heuristics as part of their "big picture philosophy," as one respondent labeled it. Many described their consciousness of the "big picture" as concern for consumer and corporate social

responsibility, including responsible or organic farming and harvesting practices; reduced production emissions/pollutants; resource use and replacement; and minimal and recycled/recyclable packaging. Companies' support of more than one cause and nonprofit, including humanitarian cause support, was perceived as also being part of the "big picture" of protecting the environment. All participants said they were eager to see consistent responsible behavior that extends through the companies' practices to its production, products, packaging, cause support, and treatment of employees. All participants' evaluation of the study's examples revealed awareness of potential company inconsistencies, described in more detail below in relation to "fit."

### **Exploring Consumers' Responses to Green Cause-related Marketing**

Skepticism of advertising and big business influenced many participants' responses. Perceptions of consistency in packaging, companies' practices, and products also were critical in these participants' reported responses to green cause-related marketing. When asked to suggest companies that matched well or poorly with environmental cause support, participants considered multiple factors in relation to the concept of "fit." When describing how they responded to degrees of congruency in these partnerships, participants did seek balance between companies, practices, products, and causes as suggested by past research (Webb and Mohr, 1998; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb, 2000; Meenaghan, 2001; Dean, 2002) alluding again to concepts of consistency. In contrast to studies by Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) and Dean (2002), participants did not make many attributions about why companies partner with environmental nonprofits. As mentioned above, levels of purchase involvement with routine and luxury purchases

affected participants' responses to green cause-related marketing, as well as participants' level of cause involvement.

Several participants mentioned being skeptical of advertising when asked how it affected their purchasing. From avoiding exposure to resenting being targeted, participants showed dislike for some advertising. However, many respondents mentioned that they have been affected by print ads, relying on ad information in later purchase decisions. Even those participants reporting high skepticism responded positively to most of the green cause-related marketing examples, saying they would like to see more advertisement of these partnerships. According to one skeptical participant who disliked being target-marketed to because of his age demographic, green CRM is "different," and was more like being targeted for having "taste," which he preferred. Another participant said she disliked TV commercials because they target "the public in general, which just isn't very smart." She later provided a print ad example of a tennis shoe company's humanitarian partnership. She also responded positively to green cause-related marketing ads and packaging. Several other participants responded similarly, describing themselves as different from "the average consumer," aligning themselves with "elite customers," and implying that they were sharper than "the general public," careful not to be "duped" or "fooled" by vague advertising claims.

Skepticism also influenced how the amount of green cause-related marketing was evaluated. The Kalahari Tea example provided a small textbox of green CRM on the lower back end of the package. All but one participant responded skeptically to the amount of cause information. One respondent commented that the small space allotted suggested that the company did not take "pride" in its cause support, resulting in her

conclusion that it must not be providing much. Other participants reacted skeptically as well—did the company just “pat the foundations on the back?” or “give them a few dollars?” They wanted more details on the packaging, and did not want to visit the website to find out more. The one participant who responded positively said that he perceived the smaller message as “more honest” by being “understated.”

The majority of respondents said that they rely on both packaging and advertising for information about green cause-related marketing and corporate social responsibility. They said that by trusting the regulation against false claims (though none specifically mentioned the Federal Trade Commission), and carefully attending to details, they could prevent the possibility of being misguided by advertising. All participants said that they felt more trust in advertising with many details such as lists of partnered organizations and specifics of all causes involved. Participants also liked reading about amounts donated, but often found figures and percentages difficult to evaluate due to a lack of information about the context. Consumers’ need for further information about donations was also found in Olsen, Pracejus, and Brown’s 2003 study.

Consumer attribution-making about companies’ motives for cause support has been linked to skepticism in previous studies (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Kilbourne, 1995; Shrum and McCarty, 1995; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Marconi, 2002). Participants in this study showed some skepticism of companies, but most evaluated company motives for partnering with nonprofits as two-fold: financial, and genuine concern for the environment, similar to Webb and Mohr’s “socially concerned” consumer characteristics. Companies’ concerns for the bottom line were described as “just part of life.” One respondent went further in addressing the perceived higher pricing of green cause-related

marketed products, skeptical that companies were raising the prices of products forcing the consumer to compensate more for the cause support. However, most respondents commented that they had “realistic” expectations of amounts companies could donate, and that the cost of a product was “relative” to perceived importance of the cause. Many respondents said any little contribution helps, and several cited “raising awareness” of environmental issues as an important contribution of green CRM. Unlike consumers in previous studies (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Dean, 2002), skeptical participants did not make in-depth attributions about company motives beyond this two-fold perception, content to “hope for the best,” as one respondent said. The little time spent making attributions about companies’ motives possibly corresponds to green CRM’s growing presence in the marketplace. Their trust in these ads could also correlate to the ads’ contexts—a valued magazine or news source, or trusted radio program, especially those with a political bent.

A majority of participants, those with both low and high cause-involvement, mentioned boycotting or avoiding certain brands because of beliefs about corporate irresponsibility. Several participants stated that they spend more time avoiding these irresponsible brands than actively supporting responsible companies. However, their skepticism of business did not preclude their consideration of green cause-related marketing. All participants explained that green cause-related marketing showed, as one participant said, “good environmental stewardship,” and that “all companies have environmental issues that they need to be addressing.” Even when skepticism of business was high because of perceived inconsistencies in environmental practices, most participants said green CRM was a step in the right direction.



These socially responsible consumers expressed attitudes similar to those described by Webb and Mohr's "socially concerned" individuals, willing to suspend their skepticism of advertising and businesses if they perceived significant environmental cause support. Only half of Webb and Mohr's 1998 sample "recognized mixed motives on the part of the company"—CRM with only part of the motivation as "altruistic," an attempt at a "win-win situation." The participants in this study expected and accepted companies' mixed motives. The challenge to companies is to present the partnerships as sincerely win-win, and overcome skepticism of consumers. To do so, companies' environmental practices and products should be perceived as consistent.

Fit, or the congruency between a cause and a company, brand, and/or product (Ellen, Mohr, and Webb, 2000) has been found relevant to perception of and response to CRM. Previous studies found that through balance-seeking behavior, consumers judge the claims made in CRM (Webb and Mohr, 1998; Ellen, Mohr, and Webb, 2000; Meenaghan, 2001; Dean, 2002). Inconsistency and/or incompatibility perceived between a product or company and the cause supported can cause consumers to seek balance, searching for congruency in order to formulate responses. Participants in this study did seek balance among companies' practices, products, and cause support. For many respondents, the issue of congruency arose with questions of "fit" between a company and/or product, and a cause.

Most participants evaluated the fit, or match, between a cause and a company by looking at the product—its origins, resources used, naturalness, and packaging—checking for environmentally responsible consistency. Products' characteristics were also appreciated as fitting, such as Ben & Jerry's ice cream figuratively "cooling" global

warming, Puffins cereal as puffs of corn, and Aveda's hairspray as part of "air control" for air quality initiatives. In addition, they considered any information available about the resource gathering process and company practices, citing consistent qualities such as "shade grown," "organically grown," "locally grown," and "reduced emissions" as Ben & Jerry's claimed. Two participants also considered the treatment of employees, questioning products from outside of the United States and suspecting sweatshop conditions. Many participants evaluated fit based on the price of the product; the higher the price, the more money they expected to go toward the cause. The "audience" of the product was also considered, if consumers of the product would respond to green CRM.

When participants did sense inconsistencies in fit, they sometimes sought balance between a company and cause support. For many respondents, incongruence was experienced with the concept of companies perceived as contributing to environmental problems, such as car and power companies for their emissions, and dairy companies for their use of resources and waste produced. While many participants elaborated why they found these companies "poor matches" to environmental nonprofits and causes, most also showed signs of being socially concerned, stating that the companies should be partnering, but also should be improving questionable practices and/or products in order to be consistent with cause support. One participant showed frustration at the likelihood of consistent change in practices for such companies, and proposed an exchange system involving credits for cause support. The few participants who stated that such companies should not partner with environmental nonprofits said that they would rather these companies focus on changing practices first. If such companies partner with environmental nonprofits, participants said they would not think poorly of the nonprofit

for taking the opportunity to raise money for a cause. However, they would be more skeptical of the partnership and less likely to think better of the company until practices were more consistent.

The poor match perceived of Stonyfield Farm dairy company and environmental causes provided an example of incongruence:

They're reducing tons of global warming emissions, but I have to question how much they're generating by using such a small package, and the distribution, and the product itself—the manufacturing, and the product packaging. So, like with Ben & Jerry's, I'm very skeptical with a dairy product that's trying to be environmentally friendly, because there is no good way to make them and not do damage. I think it's a contradiction with a dairy company.

The participant said he perceived the dairy companies as the primary beneficiaries from the partnerships because of the “inconsistency.” Two other participants also said the energy and resources used by dairy companies presented inconsistency. Many participants suggested car manufacturers and power companies were potentially inconsistent as well. However, most participants said they would prefer that companies improve their practices and products while also beginning green CRM partnerships.

### **Exploring Effects of Consumers' Levels of Cause Involvement**

The literature suggests consumers' high levels of involvement with environmental causes are correlated to socially responsible consumer behavior (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Meenaghan, 2001; Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Broderick et al., 2003; Roy and Cornwell, 2004). However, if product pricing is competitive, even for consumers with low environmental cause involvement, green marketing has been found to be more

persuasive than non-green appeal (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995). In this study, the intensity of participants' attitudes toward environmental issues was not always consistent with their reported behavior. All participants expressed strong interests in protecting the environment and promoting proactive social responsibility for companies and consumers. However, six of the participants also reported low to moderate environmental cause involvement, citing limited incomes as preventing direct donations to nonprofits. Most stated that they recycle, try to buy responsibly, and stay informed about environmental issues. Three of these respondents were working or had worked with educating children about the environment. One respondent stated that she never felt she was doing enough. These low cause-involved respondents showed some guilt, fatigue, and frustration at the "extra" time and effort socially responsible consumer behavior requires.

However, the six low cause-involved participants reported that they choose products with green CRM when they are already buying such a product, and it meets their other criteria including affordable pricing and natural and/or organic qualities. Similar to Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius' findings (1995), low to moderate cause-involved participants responded positively overall to green CRM, giving those brands the competitive edge over other brands lacking cause support. Yet these participants were also critical of claims. They expressed strong attitudes about being social responsible, but less proactive behaviors than the high cause-involved participants. Four of these six low cause-involved participants said they were suspicious of large corporations and mentioned several corporations they wished to boycott, but that determining which brands were owned by the "bad" corporations "nearly impossible" or "too difficult."

These individuals expressed corporate-tracking fatigue, and raised the question of who has the responsibility of making corporate activities known. Similar to the high cause-involved participants, they felt more dedicated to avoiding brands perceived as irresponsible than supporting socially responsible brands. In contrast to high cause-involved participants, these individuals were not as likely to *maintain* a boycott of a disliked brand (because of price and/or corporate-tracking fatigue), or pay much more for a brand from a socially responsible company.

The remaining four respondents did report high cause involvement. Their reported behaviors were more closely matched to their strong attitudes toward environmental advocacy. These respondents stated they had participated in co-founding environmentally concerned community groups and/or organizing local environmental efforts. High cause-involved participants often reported feeling more skepticism toward advertising and businesses, similar to past studies' findings (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Shrum and McCarty, 1995; Roy and Cornwell, 2004). Yet they also showed more enthusiasm about the opportunities for sincere companies to engage in corporate social responsibility and green cause-related marketing, also found in past research (Meenaghan, 2001; Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001). These participants reported more willingness to compromise (i.e., buy less overall) in order to afford the expense of products perceived as socially and environmentally responsible. The four high cause-involved participants responded positively overall to green cause-related marketing, viewing it as an additional marker for their preferred brands from socially responsible companies. All four reported buying green cause-related marketed products if the product met their priority standards such as originating from a responsible small company or a parent company, natural/organic

qualities, and other environmentally consistent factors. As with the low cause-involved participants, these individuals described green CRM as more of an “extra” and not so much of a criterion for purchasing. The difference of the high cause-involved participants was evident in their familiarity and strong brand loyalty to companies perceived as being more consistently responsible (those with organic products, recycled/minimal packaging, responsible practices, and cause support).

High cause-involved consumers described negatively responding to big business; three of the four reported boycotting of large corporations including Con Agra and Coca-Cola. Many respondents said they disliked buying brands of large parent companies like Con Agra, Monsanto, Proctor & Gamble, Unilever, and Johnson & Johnson because even if a subsidiary is socially responsible, the corporation’s other less responsible companies and practices were perceived as an inconsistency:

I think they’re sell-outs. It’s kind of weird, like, Neutrogena products, they don’t test on animals—they don’t by any means claim to be all-natural, but they don’t test on animals. Their parent company is Johnson and Johnson, they like—whatever, you know? So it’s like speaking with a forked tongue, like, Yeah we do this, but the people who own us who are a lot bigger than us kind of counteract this. So, whatever [sighs].

But their loyalty to brands such as Horizon Organic and Seventh Generation is maintained by their sense of these companies as being environmentally consistent in practices and products. These consumers mentioned boycotting companies perceived as irresponsible (e.g., heavy polluters), while showing strong brand loyalty to companies perceived as being more consistently responsible.

Reducing consumption was a concern for the high cause-involved consumers. These consumers showed traits of Webb and Mohr's (1998) "socially concerned consumers," a desire to see causes supported regardless of businesses' motives. Some elements of Mohr, Webb, and Harris' (2001) "maintainers," who were more dedicated to the environment, were also evident in this group. This was shown through their emphasis on reduced consumption and desire for companies to focus on changing all practices to be consistent with environmental cause support. The issue of all-around consistency surfaced with all respondents, but this group in particular. These higher cause-involved participants also freely offered suggestions of how companies could increase consistency such as adopting the alternative energy that they support through partnerships, reducing emissions, and investing in organic farming and organic resources.

Even though participants with high levels of cause involvement—those actively supporting environmental causes—did show more skepticism of advertising and businesses, and were more critical of green cause-related marketing claims, as suggested by previous studies (Iyer and Banerjee, 1992; Meenaghan, 2001; Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001; Broderick et al., 2003; Roy and Cornwell, 2004), these tendencies did not prevent acceptance of green CRM as a valuable tool for supporting environmental causes. High cause-involved participants showed more desire for details and had more suggestions for green cause-related marketing improvements than low cause-involved participants. When asked about Stonyfield Farm's fit with wind energy, a high cause-involved participant responded:

Yeah, I think it goes. Farms are great places—cattle farms, dairy farms, whatever—great places for windmills. Pick a little spot and farm all around it. The windmills way up in the air, and the cows

don't care. I seriously doubt that they have windmills on their farms, but they could. And it would make even more of an impact if I knew that they did. I know these dairy companies, they just buy milk, but if they had their own. Then there's all of the cattle waste that you can make methane from.

Other high cause-involved participants offered various suggestions for power companies, car companies, and food companies to make their green CRM more effective. Even though these participants reported focusing more on avoiding and boycotting disliked brands, these participants also showed strong brand loyalty to companies making socially responsible consumer behavior an easier choice, evident in their high familiarity with the brands, and enthusiastic reports of word-of-mouth recommendations to other individuals.

### **Exploring Effects of Consumers' Levels of Purchase Involvement**

Participants' responses in this study supported concepts from past research about levels of purchase involvement, including CRM's effectiveness in low purchase involvement situations (Meenaghan, 2001; Berger et al., 1999) as well as in selection from homogeneous products (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor, 2000). Participants also reported feeling a lessening of guilt associated with indulgent or luxury purchases when environmental cause support was involved in the purchase, as in other studies (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Strahilevitz, 1999). Smaller indulgent purchases such as ice cream were perceived as unnecessary, and when spending more on these items, cause support would be an influential competitive edge for a brand because of the easing of guilt. Respondents also reported looking for other cues, such as "organic" and locally produced, when making luxury purchase decisions. One respondent said he would like to see cause support with "big-ticket items" such as hybrid vehicles and houses.



All participants perceived knowledge of the environmental issues surrounding routine purchases as important. As one participant stated:

I think this kind of stuff, for me personally, because I may not eat a lot of ice cream, but everybody—including myself—we always use, like, products, like hairspray or whatever, and there's a lot of packaging that goes into that, too. I tend to be more concerned with a lot of this stuff, a lot of the things that we use on a daily basis. It's important for us to take into consideration where it comes from and hope that these companies will take care—you'd think they would because their products depend on it!

The more often a product was purchased, the more concerned individuals were about its ingredients, origins, and the company's practices. Many respondents perceived price as a factor for routine purchases, but also wanted natural, organic, and/or responsibly produced products. Except for a few highly skeptical individuals, much of the information to make these judgments was gathered from packaging. Several respondents showed willingness to research routine purchases further, "I guess if it was something I was putting, like, \$20 a week into, I'd definitely want to make sure—I wouldn't want to buy something from like some crap company, even if I did buy it like once a year."

According to past research, socially responsible consumers concerned with the environment, or "green consumers," are "price sensitive" (Shrum and McCarty, 1995). In this study, regardless of how price-conscious they were—and all but one participant expressed concern over the expense of green cause-related marketed purchases—the respondents reported continual search for socially responsible cues including green cause-related marketing during routine shopping. Green cause-related marketed products were repeatedly given the competitive edge over products with no green CRM. One participant explained that even small amounts of cause support would provide

competitive edge for a more competitively priced product, what he called the “cheaper feel-good option.” Other participants shared similar sentiments, saying they desired more socially responsible choices with lower-priced products, even if that meant lower support for causes. The reasoning was that they were buying these products so regularly that the contribution would come in the cumulative effect, instead of occasionally choosing the higher-end brand with greater cause support. In relation to the perception of brands, all participants said the larger the company and the pricier the product, the greater the commitment they expected from the company.

Participants explained that they would choose competitively-priced routine purchases showing green cause-related marketing because they would offer an affordable responsible choice. Many participants perceived green CRM as being limited to more expensive products. This caused some skeptical responses to green cause-related marketing, causing some participants to question the amounts donated. The Patagonia ad example featuring the 1% for the Planet partnership received multiple skeptical responses from participants because of the “higher-end” pricing of Patagonia products. Without prompting, several of the participants compared Patagonia’s 1% donation to Endangered Species Chocolate’s 10% of profits donated. All perceived 10% as better, or “fair,” as two respondents said. Patagonia’s 1% was perceived as “chintzy.” After evaluating the claims, participants responded that Patagonia should be donating more, but that the lack of information about actual figures donated made judgment difficult. As one respondent said, “The actual amount Patagonia donates may be greater than the chocolate company, but 1% compared 10% just sounds worse—it’s a psychological number I guess.”

Regardless, all participants gave Patagonia the competitive edge over competing companies that showed no cause support.

The same held true for luxury or indulgent purchases perceived as higher-involved purchases. Any brand featuring green CRM would be gladly given the competitive edge over companies lacking cause support as long as the green cause-related marketed product was perceived as environmentally consistent in other ways (packaging, company practices, organic, etc.). Most participants reported feeling better about the indulgent purchases if they knew part of their payment went to support a cause, the easing of guilt suggested by past studies (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Strahilevitz, 1999; Smith and Higgins, 2000). For the participants more dedicated to buying responsibly, cause support offered even greater comfort with luxury/indulgent purchases because of their discomfort with “unnecessary” indulgent consumption.

All participants responded positively to green CRM with routine and luxury/indulgent purchases. They showed a desire for more affordable products offering green cause support, even if less support per purchase. For these consumers, luxury/indulgent purchases were perceived as important for green CRM because of the guilt and cost involved. Routine purchases featuring of green cause-related marketing was described as just as important for the cumulative nature of donations associated with such frequent purchasing.

## **Exploring Consumers' Perceptions of Green Cause-related Marketed Purchases as Pro-social Acts**

In this study, most participants responded that green cause-related marketing had many benefits for environmental causes, including raising awareness and financial support. Participants pointed out that they perceived companies as having more sincere concern for causes when green CRM mentioned companies donating “time and energy” to causes, and not “just throwing money” at problems. Participants also said that purchasing green cause-related products made them feel as if they were living “consistently” with their “values.” Even so, the majority of participants responded that green cause-related purchases were not enough to fulfill one’s obligation toward environmental responsibility. All participants said that they often could not judge the significance of donations from these partnerships between companies and nonprofits because of the lack of information. Yet every respondent said they believed that consumers drive change, and believed that consumer pressure had created more options for consumer social responsibility in the current market. One participant said he thought consumer pressure on companies to be more proactive about the environment was a “natural progression.”

Only one respondent (a low cause-involved individual) said that she felt if she were making several routine green cause-related marketed purchases that she would feel she had done “enough” to support environmental causes, and would not donate directly. All other participants said they felt a combination of green cause-related marketed purchases with occasional direct donations were ideal in fulfilling environmental responsibility. They commented that direct donations to environmental nonprofits were

best, though one participant described some skepticism with nonprofits, citing misuse of funds by a nonprofit to which he had donated in the past. For him, direct donation to a “well researched nonprofit” was the best option.

However, all respondents described green cause-related marketed purchases as “easier” or more convenient donations and did perceive the purchases in a pro-social light. They responded that they were giving *and* shopping simultaneously, not strictly one or the other. Most participants perceived the percentages of their purchases that went to cause support as “bonuses” or “extras.” The attitudes of respondents toward environmental cause support were somewhat at odds with their reported behaviors, as suggested by Zinkhan and Carlson (1995). In contrast to the participants’ positive attitudes towards donating directly, only four participants reported donating directly to environmental nonprofits. They said they donated directly because they believed in “doing more,” agreed with the missions and efforts of these organizations, and also liked being members because of the newsletters and discounts received. Three of these participants thought highly of green CRM purchases as well, and enjoyed learning about new partnerships and causes.

One participant said her skepticism of corporations also encouraged her to donate directly although she does appreciate the opportunity to give to multiple organizations through green cause-related marketed purchases. When asked about direct donation of money to nonprofits, the remainder of the sample either cited green cause-related marketed purchases as their financial contribution, or explained that their income restricted or prevented giving money. In addition to calling green cause-related purchases “easier,” one participant suggested green cause-related marketing was

proactive for individuals on a tight budget. A few participants explained that they felt green CRM facilitated giving and involvement from consumers who would never consider donating directly. One respondent said she liked the idea that even consumers oblivious to the cause support were contributing.

Similar to literature on consumer reaction to sponsorship events, two low cause-involved participants reported feeling part of a cause when purchasing items associated with green cause-related marketing. By feeling “part of a collective” (Cornwell and Smith, 2001; Broderick et al., 2003), purchasing green cause-related marketed products was described as “an easy way to get involved.” Several participants emphasized the awareness that green CRM can generate by encouraging consumer word-of-mouth advocacy of the green cause-related marketed brands, causes, and nonprofits. One participant pointed out that by buying the additional products advertised on packaging in support of causes, consumers could be even more involved, displaying these additional special-ordered products to other consumers and “showing off” cause involvement.

Participants’ evaluations of the pro-social aspects of green cause-related marketed purchases also triggered responses about the perceived difference of individuals actively choosing to buy responsibly. Many participants alluded that their social responsibility separated them from other consumers, whether by aligning them with “elite customers,” “socially responsible consumers,” or distinguishing them from the less sharp “general public” or “average person” who is not proactive with their dollar. The old axiom “every dollar is a vote,” and similar sentiments, were shared by participants in explaining why they chose to buy responsibly. One high cause-involved participant said she felt “opposite” of “irresponsible consumers”:

It makes you so much more aware, and that has a lot of other ramifications—like, I love wild open spaces. That has a lot to do with the way I consume products, and I love clean air, and that has to do with the way I consume products. It has a lot to do with doing things automatically, and doing things deliberately. I try to do things deliberately, I think, whereas some people have a routine. They get in their minivan, go to the store, buy a bunch of crap, and it's just so bland! That lifestyle is just so bland! I like to think of myself as more interesting.

Participants reported their responsible purchase activity, direct donations, and other socially responsible activities with enthusiasm. Although many of the participants also reported feeling frustrated by time and monetary constraints on their purchasing, as well as fatigue with the amount of companies to evaluate for social responsibility, they also showed dedication to their “duty” to be responsible consumers. They expressed an understanding of their reliance upon a healthy environment, and expect the same from companies.

There have been concerns about the preclusion or reduction of direct donations to nonprofits and other organizations because of potential consumer perception of purchases made because of cause-related marketing as sufficient giving. Green cause-related marketed products offer different levels of cause involvement for different consumers. For some low cause-involved individuals, supporting green CRM is an “easy” way to feel a part of a cause. For most high cause-involved individuals, choosing green cause-related marketed products is an additional, consistent choice in their lifestyle. Every respondent expressed positive attitudes toward consumers driving change and believed consumers perpetuated corporate social responsibility. They also approved the increase in options for socially responsible consumer behavior in the current market.

The one respondent who stated that frequent purchase of green cause-related marketed products was “enough” support of environmental causes was a low cause-involved individual who had not and did not plan to donate directly. While the fear of green cause-related marketing precluding direct donations may be warranted, it is also complicated by the unpredictable effect of feeling a part of a cause. Though purchases based on green CRM could preclude direct donations, initiating more such purchases could make this individual feel increasingly a part of a cause, as she suggested during the interview. This involvement could lead to her directly donating if the opportunity was presented in the right light, perhaps nonprofit membership emphasized through green CRM. All other participants found a combination of green cause-related marketed purchases and direct donations ideal. Even if green CRM could threaten direct donations on some level, it can also raise awareness and facilitate giving and involvement from consumers who would never consider donating directly. As was evident in a few of these participants’ experiences, the attitudes and behaviors of consumers do not always correspond. Green CRM can reinforce socially responsible attitudes and perhaps offer consumers a convenient gateway to socially responsible action.

### **Exploring Consumers’ Reactions to Green Cause-related Marketing Examples**

All participants were asked to evaluate examples of green CRM: Ben & Jerry’s web pages describing the Lick Global Warming Campaign and a Ben & Jerry’s Thoughts on Global Warming pamphlet from its store; Aveda two-page magazine ads about conservation efforts; Endangered Species Chocolate Company packaging; a Patagonia 1% for the Planet print ad; Kalahari Tea packaging describing its support of the African



Wildlife Foundation and the Kalahari People's Fund; Barbara's Bakery Puffins cereal packaging describing its support of Project Puffin; and Stonyfield Farm yogurt packaging describing its support of alternative energy. After gathering initial impressions, the participants were prompted for impressions about the cause support, each prompt relating to research questions of the study—influence on purchase decision; the company's "fit" with the cause; the primary beneficiary from the partnership; and if they would go online for further information.

#### *Initial Impressions of Green Cause-related Marketing Examples*

When asked for initial impressions of the examples of green cause-related marketing, participants responded to a variety of elements. The amount of information provided was key to their positive reception of the claims about cause support. All but one participant responded with suspicion to the least detailed, small amount of green CRM on the Kalahari Tea packaging because of the lack of information. Ads and packaging listing the nonprofit organization partners, the amounts given, details of the cause support, and specific information about the cause(s) received positive responses from all respondents. Two of the most skeptical participants liked the citation of sources for claims made about the environment included in Aveda's and Ben & Jerry's advertising.

Patagonia's 1% for the Planet ad received the most consternation, with participants stating they liked the mention of "To date, Patagonia has donated more than \$18 million to grassroots organizations," but the actual date was not given, prohibiting evaluation of that claim. Participants also said 1% was difficult to judge as a donation

amount, considering the ad did not explain the total figure from which the 1% was taken. This lack of information resulted in many participants going with their initial impression that 1% was a “bare minimum.”

The 10% donation advertised by Stonyfield Farm and Endangered Species Chocolate Company received high approval from respondents despite the absence of figures, with several commenting that 10% seemed “fair.” A few respondents mentioned they would like to see even more, but were being “realistic” about their expectations. The details about the species on the packaging of the chocolate bars led several participants to feel confident that the company was created mostly for cause support, which encouraged a positive response. The extent of Ben & Jerry’s website and links caused positive response in many participants, even those who had begun to doubt Ben & Jerry’s environmentalism since they had heard the company had been sold to Unilever.

Other factors participants responded to initially included the clarity of the green CRM, and if it was easy to understand and read quickly. About half of the participants liked causes featuring wildlife conservation with aesthetically appealing images of animals. The remainder of participants saw the use of attractive animals as distracting from the “big picture” of ecological preservation:

People give a lot of money for elephants and lions and tigers. I don’t consider them as important—they’re important, but a lot of money gets wasted on things that are fuzzy, interesting animals. I’m an aquatic biologist—I like the little guys. The big picture, Ben & Jerry’s is the big picture with global warming. But it’s also the little stuff. Aveda seems to go big and little. Big picture stuff is more appealing to me because throwing million and millions and millions of dollars at one species is not going to do a lot for that species.

Regardless, the more details about the cause or the wildlife provided, the more convinced participants were of the company's good intent of and support provided.

### *Green Cause-related Marketing Examples and Purchase Behavior*

The majority of the participants gave green cause-related marketed products the competitive edge over non-green brands, even without prompting. When asked how the green CRM examples would affect their purchase behavior, most participants volunteered, despite whatever doubts they may have had about the claims, that they would rather put their dollar into a company "doing something" for the environment than one making no such promise. If they liked the green cause-related marketing enough, even those who said they did not buy that type of product said they would consider it for a gift, or recommend the brand to others. Many respondents were familiar with and already buying the brands included in the examples. Most said they would feel even better about buying the brands now that they had learned more about the cause support. About half said the new information would cause them to choose those brands more often. One participant boycotting Patagonia because of suspicions of sweatshop use said she respected the company's cause support, even though it did not end her boycott, because others continuing to buy Patagonia products would be contributing to the cause support.

Only two factors were shown to threaten green cause-related marketing's enhancement of participants' purchasing. When participants perceived the information provided as inaccurate, they were reluctant to accept the green CRM positively. Ben & Jerry's claims about global warming conflicted with two respondents' educational

experiences; therefore they did not respond positively to the advertising. However, they did not respond negatively either, both stating that Ben & Jerry's had taken a questionable position on the main causes of global warming, which was the company's choice. Neither respondent seemed ready to blame the company or nonprofits involved.

The other factor reducing the positive influence of green cause-related marketing was perceived inconsistency between the cause, and the company's practices, product, and/or packaging. Participants pointed out waste and pollution involved in products and packaging such as the "Mylar" plastic one respondent had found in Cliffbar wrappers, and also inefficient company practices such as high waste produced by Stonyfield's and Ben & Jerry's dairy businesses. Once these inconsistencies were evaluated, green CRM showed less or no positive influence on participants' purchase intentions.

#### *Evaluating the Examples for Company Fit*

The inconsistency found to disrupt positive influence of green cause-related marketing correlated to the perceptions of good matches between companies and causes. The three participants who were critical of Stonyfield and Ben & Jerry's for the energy used and waste produced by dairy farms said that these companies would be better matches to environmental cause support if they changed their practices to be more consistent. Both Ben & Jerry's and Stonyfield have details of changes and plans for improving their practices on their websites, but even when that info was made available to participants, there was skepticism.

However, most of the participants said they would like to see all companies supporting environmental causes. The majority of participants also found a number of

ways to seek balance between a company and environmental causes. They evaluated the product, the brand, the companies, and the resources used to make the product.

Connections between the region of the resource and cause, as well as clever links between the product and the cause received positive reactions. Participants repeatedly approved matches such as Ben & Jerry's ice cream cooling global warming, Barbara's Bakery Puffins made from puffed corn, and Kalahari tea (harvested in South Africa) and the African Wildlife Foundation.

#### *Evaluating the Examples for the Primary Beneficiary of the Partnerships*

When asked to judge the primary beneficiary of the partnerships expressed in the green CRM examples—the cause, the nonprofit, the company, or the consumer, participants cited the company most often. Two participants showed some cynicism when answering this question, stating that the companies would not partner unless it was proving profitable. Other respondents said they understood that companies stood to profit from green CRM, and that it was better than not partnering. However, with a few of the examples a majority of participants said they perceived a win-win situation for all involved. Barbara's Bakery's support of Project Puffin received win-win responses for its details about the cause, clearly outlined goals, and mention of “time and energy” donated. The Endangered Species Chocolate Company also received many win-win responses because of the details included on the packaging, and the 10% promised to conservation organizations. These products were also perceived as “good” or “quality” products, sold by responsible companies, produced through socially responsible practices, and packaged in recycled paper.

A few participants cited nonprofits as the primary beneficiaries, but only with a few examples. One participant perceived Stonyfield Farm's 10% donation claim and feature of nonprofit *NativeEnergy* as a substantial boost to that nonprofit. Another participant found Barbara's Bakery's support of Project Puffin as a significant contribution to the Audubon Society, and the Endangered Species Chocolate Company's 10% donation as significant to its nonprofit partners because of the higher-end price of the candy bars.

Only one respondent said that the consumer is the primary beneficiary. For this participant, every partnership promoted the environment, which in her eyes ultimately benefited consumers the most. Repeatedly she said that the government was not doing enough for the environment, and that the private sector was stepping in, giving consumers a chance to protect the environment, therefore protecting themselves. No other participants showed this perspective. A few participants said that the cause alone was the biggest beneficiary of the green CRM partnerships, pointing to detailed information about the causes as convincingly persuasive.

Many participants had difficulty judging the beneficiary based on the information available in the ads and packaging. However, the all-around win-win situation could be argued to be the most ideal response for those using green cause-related marketing. When convincing details are provided, consumers accept the company has to profit financially, but also may perceive the company's social responsibility; the nonprofit serves an appreciated role; the cause is supported; and the consumer enjoys contributing to the cause while receiving an immediate return in product.

*Going Online for More Information*

Only two respondents consistently said they would not go online at all to learn more about the cause support advertised by the green CRM. One said the fact that he would not was “more of a personality trait” than anything. The other participant said she did not have the time to go online, but once she saw the Endangered Species Chocolate Company wrappers, she said she would go online to learn more about the conservation efforts if she did have time. The other participants said they would likely go online to learn more about the amounts donated, the nonprofits to which companies donated, the environmental causes, and/or the practices of the company. Several participants expressed an interest in the nonprofits mentioned in the green CRM. Stonyfield’s description of *NativeEnergy* and its windmills caught the attention of many participants who said they planned to find out about the nonprofit online—though not necessarily through Stonyfield’s website. A few participants said they would go online because they were skeptical of some of the claims made by the companies, such as Ben & Jerry’s claims about its CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.

Several of those participants who said they would go online to find out more about the details of the cause support had bought the example brands before. When asked if they had gone online previously, only one participant responded that he had looked online at a company’s website (Ben & Jerry’s website). The other participants said they had not had time or reason enough to look online before. Companies that want to be successful with green CRM could follow in the footsteps of Ben & Jerry’s and Stonyfield Farm, using their websites as a space in which consumers can find extensive information about the efforts to overcome the many inconsistencies faced by companies. Stonyfield

Farm and Ben & Jerry's have anticipated the criticism from consumers about the energy used and waste produced by dairy farms as well as consumers' desire for the humane treatment of cows. Stonyfield has thoroughly detailed information available about its plan to reduce and improve its packaging contents, and its careful consideration of the health of its cows. However, the consumer has to get to the website first—and has to know that type of information is posted, tips many consumers will need to see more clearly printed on packaging.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

As described by Kilbourne (1995), truly green marketing is somewhat of a paradox. Most companies and individuals are aware of the detrimental impact of over-consumption on the environment. Choosing to be genuinely socially responsible requires careful consideration of the current consumer culture. Challenges to the dominant paradigm could help provide more sustainable approaches to consumer culture, but proposing a new paradigm may be the ultimate solution for many ecologically-centered individuals. That said, green marketing, including green CRM, is a step in the direction that many consumers prefer. Participants in this study described themselves as being socially responsible, and they expect companies to be so as well. They said they want to see more corporate social responsibility and green CRM; they like supporting these partnerships among nonprofits and for-profits for the environment. Most appreciated the instant return of a cause-related marketed purchase, but also recognized the importance of direct donations to nonprofits. In a consumer culture, individuals search for meaning in their consumption. Companies and nonprofits have the opportunity to reap the many benefits of sincerely fulfilling that search.

Companies can convince consumers of genuine interest in cause support by giving careful attention to detail, and being honest about company practices and products. Despite their skepticism, participants in this study showed appreciation of companies for simply getting involved in green cause-related marketing. Many participants' responses showed that they viewed green CRM as a more acceptable form of advertising. This desire for more info about partnerships through green cause-related marketing offers a

counterpoint to Varadarajan and Menon's (1988) warning about spending more money on advertising than the cause. Many participants in this study realized the expense of advertising; but none suggested that they were upset about the cost of promoting the partnerships. Participants admitted their reliance on advertising and packaging for information about the partnerships. Details and specificity about causes, partnering nonprofits, and donation amounts as well as companies' environmental consistencies are crucial for companies to become the obvious choice for responsible purchasing. While many companies can gain the competitive edge by using the different levels of green marketing available, those that resolve the inconsistencies early on and carefully select fitting partners could earn consumers' valued, long-term associations with social responsibility. By voluntarily adopting consistent practices and partnering with efficient environmental nonprofits, companies show a genuine concern respected by many consumers.

Participants in this study repeatedly searched for companies' environmental consistency when evaluating a brand featuring green cause-related marketing. They preferred products that were USDA certified organic and/or natural; locally or regionally produced; contained in minimal, recycled/recyclable packaging; animal-friendly; and responsibly produced. Companies that meet as many of these expectations as possible may have greater success with green cause-related marketing. For many participants, the specifics of corporate social responsibility were not readily recalled, but the combination of cues—those same elements mentioned above—signaled a socially responsible company. The more socially responsible cues and consistency companies provide, the stronger the lasting impression, potentially leading to consumers' brand loyalty.

Companies should consider that socially responsible consumers regard themselves as opinion leaders, a trait evident in the participants of this study. A few participants described themselves as being influential on other individuals' purchase decisions, stating that they shared their experiences of socially responsible brands with other consumers, who followed suit. Two participants gave detailed descriptions of explaining to other consumers why they should buy socially responsible products, even if they were more expensive. Socially responsible consumers are proud of this influence, and enthusiastic about their use of word-of-mouth advertising. Companies can benefit from consumers' support of green marketing, but companies must focus on providing accurate information and consistent practices as these consumers are just as likely to vocalize negative perceptions of "irresponsible" companies.

Consumers who think of themselves as more socially conscious could be ideal targets for "self-esteem" appeals. Combined with green cause-related marketing, self-esteem appeals could emphasize the difference that many of these consumers report feeling just in their routine socially responsible lifestyles and purchasing behaviors. However, with the staunchest environmentalists in this group marketers and companies can cultivate positive responses by addressing the paradoxical relationships among advertising, consumption, and ecological stewardship, as suggested by Kilbourne (1995).

Those consumers boycotting brands because of perceptions of companies as irresponsible can be reached by socially responsible companies' green marketing addressing that behavior. These boycotting consumers spend more time deciding what companies *not* to buy from than those they feel comfortable supporting. If companies emerge with openness, consistency, and details about corporate social responsibility such

as green cause-related marketing, the purchase decision could become clearer, easing the corporate-tracking fatigue that many of these consumers feel. Socially responsible companies can continue overcoming consumer skepticism, but it will take stamina. By thoughtfully advertising responsible practices surpassing those boycotted “irresponsible” competitors, and providing environmentally consistent products, as suggested by Shrum and McCarty (1995) green companies can earn the loyalty of a growing segment of consumers. Careful consideration of fit should be taken, as many of these consumers emphasize reducing consumption. Companies benefiting most from such strategies could include those selling “necessary” or “essential” products, such as recycled paper products and organic food staples. This strategy requires honest self-reflection on the part of companies, but if fit exists, it could be a responsible and profitable commitment.

Other ideal candidates include companies offering routinely purchased products at more competitive or inexpensive prices. Participants in this study showed socially concerned traits, but they also described income limitations. They expressed a desire for more lower-priced socially responsible products. Participants said they would be less critical of the amount donated to the cause, as long as it was clearly explained. In the long run, they said they would loyally purchase that brand routinely enough to feel they were making a contribution to the cause. A degree of environmental consistency in packaging, practices, and product is ideal, but the mere lower pricing of products featuring green CRM—despite the amount of contribution to the cause—will appeal to many of these socially responsible, price sensitive consumers.

As shown in past research (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius, 1995), participants of high and low levels of environmental cause involvement found green CRM to be

persuasive. The repeated awarding of competitive edge to green cause-related marketed brands, despite doubts and lack of information, suggests the potential of this type of marketing. However, with the growing use of green cause-related marketing comes a mixture of acceptance and skepticism. In consumers' busy lives, they want the socially responsible purchase choice to be clear and consistent. Once they—as one participant said—“get a bad taste” in their mouths from a company's “empty promise,” that damage can be nearly impossible to repair.

These attitudes related to the idea of the dollar as a vote, with participants stating they avoided supporting companies perceived as irresponsible. By being consistently environmentally responsible in practices, products, and packaging, companies can be the clear and easy choice for socially concerned consumers. They are label readers, looking for details so that they can feel comfortable—even proud—of what they choose to buy. Responsible purchases are an investment in the consciences of these consumers.

### **Implications for Nonprofits**

Environmental nonprofits concerned with green cause-related marketing's effect on direct donations should examine the possibilities available in green CRM partnerships, whether considering it as a forum for recruiting members, raising awareness, or ensuring donations. The participants' reports of feeling part of a collective and perceiving green purchases as an “easy” way to become involved with a cause has potential for environmental nonprofits. Consumers in this study appreciated a variety of environmental causes. Green cause-related marketing appeals to individuals who have never considered donating. However, many consumers with limited incomes could consider calls for direct

donations in green cause-related marketing as asking for “extra money,” as one low cause-involved participant explained; therefore the call for action should include small steps. Such gradual involvement could come through more clearly advertising the nonprofits’ websites in addition to the companies’ websites, or local chapters of the nonprofit if possible.

Participants actively involved in direct donations to environmental nonprofits also showed an interest in visiting websites featured in green cause-related marketing, though mostly to check their skepticism about donation amounts. Nonprofits should ensure that green cause-related marketing has overt reference to donation specifics posted on websites. Nonprofits should note that consumer skepticism was more of companies; no negativity toward the partnering nonprofits was evident in any of the participants. Future research could further study consumer perceptions of and responses to partnerships between companies and environmental nonprofits, and the current state of donation amounts generated through green CRM partnerships in relation to direct donation behavior.

For nonprofits, the partnerships from green cause-related marketing can present a broad range of exposure, and an opportunity to reach less informed consumers. Through green cause-related marketing nonprofits have a way to encourage individuals’ involvement with a cause gradually. By repeatedly seeing images with favored brands and products, awareness of causes and nonprofits can be increased and causes legitimized, leading to membership opportunities and direct donations. Though associations could also be harmful to nonprofits partnering with disliked companies or brands, all participants in this study said they would not think less of nonprofits for

partnering with poorly matched companies and/or products. Participants' awareness of the financial challenges to many environmental nonprofits justified any partnerships, as long as the cause received support.

### **Implications for Green Advertisers**

Most participants readily accepted green cause-related marketing, and said they would like to see more advertisement of those kinds of environmental partnerships. The few who reacted negatively to green CRM examples did so as a result of sensing inconsistency in fit, misinformation, or omission in the advertising. Kalahari's sparse mention of green CRM and Patagonia's vague 1% for the Planet were not fully convincing to the participants. Consistent environmental responsibility is also crucial to the success of using green cause-related marketing. Green CRM can provide brands the competitive edge if portrayed clearly with details about cause support, organizational partners, and the cause itself. If green CRM features details about "time and energy" the company and its employees donate to an environmental cause, it may go even further in attracting consumers. Local cause support may also prove effective, as suggested by this and other studies (Smith and Alcorn, 1991). Companies should consider clever fits between their product, region and resources, and company image. Ben & Jerry's was perceived as a good fit with its environmental campaign against global warming for multiple reasons including the "old hippies" who started the company, and the long term commitment to the environment it has advertised.

### **Implications for Websites**

Companies and nonprofits should clearly emphasize reference to websites. Most participants were open to the suggestion to visit websites, though high levels of skepticism affected their interest. If they were highly skeptical of company practices or cause support, they said visiting the website was not worth their time. However, for many participants, visiting the website was described as a way for them to feel even better about purchasing. As some companies have already discovered, it may be effective to refer consumers to online information about environmental consistency in packaging and company practices, two predominant concerns of the participants. Consumers could also be referred to websites to join nonprofits, learn more about aiding a cause on their own, or participate in local cause efforts. Even if packaging constrains detail, just the hint that there is more to a company's environmental efforts can make a difference.

Green CRM and green marketing, when conducted with genuine interest in win-win partnerships, can make socially responsible companies ambassadors between the needs of the environment and the needs of consumers. Many consumers are aware of the threat over-consumption presents to the ecological health of the planet. The flood of information available about the magnitude of change needed can overwhelm individuals. A cooperative effort among companies, consumers, and nonprofits to be environmentally responsible is a viable stride toward a sustainable future.

### **Future Research**

This study's findings could be expanded through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Defining characteristics of socially responsible consumers will



likely evolve along with causes, green marketing, and consumers themselves. The pride of knowledge that socially responsible consumers showed in this study could be more closely examined in future research. As Kilbourne (1995) and Smith and Higgins (2000) suggested, the phenomena of green marketing and paradoxes of consumption involved are worthy of further study. Consumer perception of government's involvement in green marketing and environmental regulations may also provide further insight to roles of consumers, business, and organizations.

All participants were recruited from stores selling products featuring green cause-related marketing. Participants were also screened for awareness of green cause-related marketing. In the context of the constructivist paradigm, the small sample size is useful for analytic generalization, but obviously not statistical generalization. Future studies could use additional methods to further assess consumers' reactions to green cause-related marketing. Samples of other consumers—those not socially concerned or aware of green CRM—could further explore green cause-related marketing and other forms of green marketing phenomena.

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## **APPENDIX**

## **APPENDIX A: Researcher's Memos**

**May 05, 2005:**

McCracken instructed the researcher evaluate the phenomenon's place in daily life. Green CRM is a relatively new marketing approach. It is an additional signal of companies' corporate social responsibility. Many consumers take some time to examine packaging, looking for quality products and ingredients. I am almost always thinking of my perceptions of companies' reputations as I evaluate packaging and advertisements. Price is a dominant factor for me, but I try to select brands from companies' that I have heard or read good things about, while avoiding companies I perceive as less socially responsible.

Who does the phenomenon involve? Green CRM involves consumers, companies, employees of those companies, shareholders, the environment and the species dependent on a healthy environment, and nonprofits. Consumers may be looking for more environmentally responsible products, and pressuring companies to produce more "green" products though "green" practices. Global warming is a hot topic and despite the controversy over its causes, I believe most consumers are aware of the correlations among consumption, pollution, and the damage to air, water, and other resources.

What are the purposes of green CRM? I find the purposes of green CRM for companies include improving companies' images as socially responsible, satisfying companies' employees' needs for social responsibility, and attracting socially concerned consumers to their brands. For nonprofits, green CRM's purposes may include raising public awareness of their cause(s) and support, recruiting members, increasing donations,

and maintaining financial stability. For consumers, green CRM's purposes include fulfilling the need for meaning and environmental stewardship in their experience within a consumer culture.

What are the consequences of green CRM? It can raise awareness among consumers about causes, nonprofits, support opportunities, and corporate social responsibility. Green CRM contributes financial and other support for environmental causes and nonprofits. Companies practicing CSR and green CRM increase the standards, or consumer expectations, of other companies' socially responsible activities. If perceived as genuine and convincing, green CRM can improve companies' images. Negative consequences may include consumer skepticism of companies as insincere, and trying to schmooze consumers. Nonprofits may be negatively associated with companies perceived as insincere. The more often consumers perceive a green CRM partnership as bogus, the more difficult green CRM will become for other companies.

What assumptions about the world does the phenomenon indicate? Green CRM suggests that the environment is in need of corporate support. It assumes that consumers will want to support the environment through shopping exchanges. Green CRM also assumes that environmental nonprofits and causes will benefit from these partnerships along with the companies. It assumes that improvements and conservation of the natural environment can be made from consumption-oriented exchanges.

How does the phenomenon play out received understandings about how the world is constituted? Green CRM does seem to propose a relationship between consumers, companies, nonprofits, and environmental problems. This could be a beneficial connection for people to make. But it could also backfire, as over-consumption and many

current consumption practices are linked to threats to the environment. Companies could be perceived as the most powerful players in this picture by voluntarily setting the standard for responsible practices and products, using green CRM to show consumers the importance of environmental stewardship.

McCracken suggested the researcher recall a recent incident in which the phenomenon was at variance with previous experience and social convention. This brought to mind Wal-Mart's 2005 announcement that it will partner with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to conserve an acre for every acre it develops for its stores (Chittum, 2005). I believe this is a step in the right direction for Wal-Mart, but I am not sure if it is smart growth. The bottom line is how much obligation one believes companies have to the environment. Legally it seems companies have little encouragement to go beyond basic regulations. I do believe companies should consider the damage their practices and products do to the environment, and wonder who can most effectively apply pressure to companies to comply. I believe consumers can be effective in persuading companies to be more socially responsible, but costs are an issue. When a company like Wal-Mart makes any level of commitment to improve its relationship with the environment, I think it eases the minds of socially concerned consumers. They recognize the effort, and it may humanize the "facelessness" of corporations.

#### **August 31, 2005:**

While analyzing the transcripts, I find it intriguing that so many of the participants have firm notions and impressions of companies, but do not recall specific reasons why they believe as they do. When asked where they receive most of their information, they do

not seem to remember. They are skeptical of advertising and some packaging claims, yet it appears this is the source of their convictions they hold so firmly. A few of the participants said they research some companies online or collect bits of information over time from news sources, and even if they do not recall the particular facts, their impressions of companies remain.

Participants of all levels of cause involvement also liked the tips on packaging and advertisement about “What You Can Do.” I was surprised at how effective these tips were in generating feelings of involvement and action in participants, as if just reading about the tips empowered them against the overwhelming distress of “the machine” as one respondent called it. They seemed to feel a part of the cause support, and also more convinced of the sincerity of the supporting companies. I often feel overwhelmed as well, and was interested to see many participants being self-critical and almost self-deprecating about their lack of socially responsible efforts. However, it was interesting that many also consider themselves to be sharper than consumers not tuned-in to SRCB, referring to SRCB as distinguishing individuals from the consumer herd.

## APPENDIX B: Form B Application Approved by IRB

### THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

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#### I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI):**

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**Department:** Public Relations

2. **Project Classification:** Thesis

3. **Title of Project:** Consumers' Responses to and Perceptions of Green Cause Related Marketing

4. **Starting Date:** Upon IRB Approval

5. **Estimated Completion Date:** December 2005

6. **External Funding** (*if any*): None

1. **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:**

2. **Funding Agency:**

3. **Sponsor ID Number** (*if known*):

4. **UT Proposal Number** (*if known*):

#### II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of consumers' perceptions of and responses to cause-related marketing when the cause is an environmental issue. This specific type of CRM is labeled "green CRM." Therefore, green CRM consists of marketing activities communicating a company's promise to contribute to a designated environmental cause when consumers engage in profit-yielding exchanges with that company.

The overall goal is to gain understanding of how consumers perceive green CRM if and why they purchase in relation to those perceptions. Review of past studies and literature shows consumer perception of and response to CRM activity is complicated and difficult to generalize. Researchers have suggested that the variety of causes, campaign styles, companies, nonprofits and products creates a need for less general evaluation of consumer perception of CRM. Despite the need for specificity in CRM research, studies examining any aspect of green CRM are scarce.

A qualitative paradigm allows for in-depth evaluation of reasons why people do or do not respond positively to green CRM.

Though the findings cannot be statistically generalized to a population, they offer consumers' detailed descriptions of the perceived value of green CRM to companies, nonprofits, and consumers.

### **Research Questions**

- How do consumers perceive green CRM?
- How do consumers respond to green CRM
  - What are some influential factors in the process?
    - skepticism/cynicism?
    - perceived fit between cause and companies?
    - attribution-making and balance-seeking about companies' motivations for practicing green CRM?
- Do consumers' levels of cause involvement affect their responses/perceptions?
- Do consumers' levels of purchase involvement affect their responses/perceptions?
- Are green CRM purchases perceived as pro-social acts by consumers?
  - If so, does it affect their surplus giving activities?
- How do consumers' react to actual examples of green CRM?

### **III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Participants will be recruited from area stores (Earth Fare and Kroger) carrying green CRM products such as Barbara's Bakery food products and Ben & Jerry's food products. Store managers have been given information sheets about the study and have signed letters of permission (see attached).

The researcher will approach every customer exiting the selected store and ask if they would be willing to answer a few questions about shopping. If yes, the researcher will explain that she is working on her thesis at UT and is conducting a study on consumers' awareness of environmental causes in marketing.



Participants do not have to purchase products featuring green CRM to be approached for the study. However, in an attempt to include consumers familiar with CRM in the study, the researcher will screen for individuals' awareness of green CRM by asking if shoppers have ever bought as brand because they liked the environmental cause support, and if they can think of an example. The researcher will be wearing a name tag on which will be clearly printed her full name and "The University of Tennessee College of Communication and Information."

If the shopper does purchase brands because of environmental cause support, the researcher will continue, asking if he or she would be willing to participate in a study examining these types of shopping decisions. If so, the participant's phone number and first name only will be collected with his or her permission, and he or she will be given an instruction sheet explaining the study, confidentiality, contact information for questions, and directions about parking and location. The researcher will call the participant 24 hours before the interview time to confirm the appointment, and to answer any questions regarding the study or location.

These recruitment sheets with names and numbers will be kept locked in a desk at the researcher's home except during that individual's interview appointment. This information will be destroyed after the interview with each participant. Please see "Screening Guide" and "Participant Information Sheet" attached.

Because this study uses a constructivist paradigm with the goal of gaining understanding, qualitative research is the most appropriate method. The use of long interviews will allow for consumers to express the meaning of green CRM and shopping experiences in their own words, providing context and specific reasons for perceptions and behavior. According to McCracken's suggestion, recruiting will include no more than 12 participants.

#### **IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The use of long interviews will allow for consumers to express the meaning of green CRM and shopping experiences in their own words, providing context and specific reasons for perceptions and behavior.

McCracken (1988) sites eight long interviews as a sufficient number towards achieving understanding. For this study, no more than 12 participants will be recruited. Redundancy in responses is another useful guide to sample size. Constructivist epistemology expects the interviewee and the interviewer to combine meanings into one or more strong amalgams of understanding (Guba, 1990, p. 27). No "true" independence of experience is possible for participants, or for consumers in their experiences. The discussion guide, in accord with the emergent design of the study, will be flexible depending on participants' responses, but will adhere to the research goals and questions (see attachment).

The interview will begin with the participant reading and signing a copy of the consent form (see attached) and keeping one copy for him- or herself. Though expressed in the consent form, the researcher will again ask if the participant is comfortable with taping of the interview, and if so taping will begin.

Questions will address how levels of involvement with environmental causes affects perception of green CRM; cynicism and skepticism towards advertising and corporations; how consumers make attributions to explain companies' motives to use green CRM, and CRM purchases as pro-social behavior. A confidential, brief questionnaire after the interview will assess biographical information. These questions address levels of income and other potentially influential factors in shopping behavior. The participant will not put a name anywhere on this questionnaire. It will be assigned a number, along with the interview transcript. All interview information will be stored in envelopes marked with numbers. The records of names and phone numbers of participants will be destroyed immediately following each interview, no longer linked with information collected. The researcher will deliver the incentive of a \$10.00 gift certificate, purchased by the researcher from participating stores, to the participant after the interview has been completed.

Summaries of the researcher's understanding of the data will be provided to participants for their review and evaluation, known as "member checking" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking not only provides additional feedback from participants, but also reaffirms the equality between the researcher's and participants' understanding, crucial to the constructivist paradigm of this study. Therefore, at the close of each interview, e-mail addresses will be obtained from those participants willing to participate in the member-checking follow-up contact via e-mail. The participant will write his or her e-mail on a slip of blank paper. The researcher will compile a list of the addresses for member-checking follow-up. These e-mail addresses will be kept in a list completely separate from interview information, locked securely in a desk within the researcher's home. In accordance with Lincoln and Guba's member-checking, when the results of the study have been drafted, the researcher will e-mail each participant separately the draft of the results, asking for feedback about the findings.

The researcher will review the feedback, considering participant suggestions to improve the emergent discussion guide while following McCracken's (1988) questionnaire format, which allows "respondents to tell their own story in their own terms" (p. 34). The consumer perceptions of and responses to green CRM will assist in letting the researcher "hear the participants' perspectives on [her] goals" (Morgan, 1998, p. 14).

For this study, it is fitting that the researcher use the supportive leadership style, treating respondents as equals (p. 73), and using "emphatic neutrality" towards responses and findings (Patton, 1990, p. 475). Analysis of interview data will be based on the transcripts typed verbatim by the researcher from the tape recordings of sessions. Participants will be informed of the taping at the time of recruitment, and asked permission in the consent

form (see attached). No one but the researcher, and her thesis committee by request, will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed at the close of the study.

## **V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES**

Analysis of interview data will be based on the transcripts typed verbatim from the tape recordings of sessions. Only the researcher will be transcribing the interview recordings. Participants will be informed of the taping at the time of recruitment, and asked permission in the consent form (see attached). These audio recordings will be stored in Dr. Candace White's office, locked securely in a drawer (476 Communications and University Extension Building). No one but the researcher, and her thesis committee by request, will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed at the close of the study, December 2005.

Only first names of participants and phone numbers will be obtained for interview appointment confirmation purposes. Immediately after each interview, that participant's record of name and number will be destroyed—shredded and disposed. This information will not be connected with the participants' tape-recorded interviews or questionnaires. Transcripts and questionnaires will be numbered and kept in numbered envelopes, no names involved. E-mail addresses will be kept separately, used only for individual member-checking follow-up, and then immediately destroyed.

Consent forms obtained from every participant will be kept separate from all other data collected, to ensure confidentiality of participants, and filed securely in Dr. White's office. These forms will be kept on campus securely in Dr. White's office for three years.

Names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of participants will never be connected with any of the data in any way. They are only for contacting participants with their permission for interview confirmation and/or follow-up, and then destroyed.

Risks to participants may include anxiety during the interview, or feelings of regret about sharing information about shopping and pro-social behaviors. The researcher will attempt to eliminate these risks by holding the interviews in a safe, public area (reserved study rooms at the UT Pendergrass Library) at reasonable times during the day; ensuring confidentiality by not recording the interviewees' names with their comments at any point in the study, including taping; clarifying verbally and in consent forms that the participants may leave the study at any time without consequence; and also by member checking—allowing participants to give feedback about the research.

## **VI. BENEFITS**

The risks to participants are minimal. They have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The anticipated benefits include insight into the effects and effectiveness of green CRM on socially responsible consumers, nonprofits, and companies. By evaluating these consumers' perceptions of and responses to green CRM, the researcher hopes to offer information about how green CRM may be improved to benefit companies, causes,

and nonprofits, aiding in achievement of their goals while meeting the needs of consumers.

Participants will also benefit from the \$10.00 maximum gift certificates from participating stores provided by the researcher.

## **VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING “INFORMED CONSENT” FROM PARTICIPANTS**

A written consent form, following the format offered by the University of Tennessee Office for Research & Information Technology, must be signed by all participants before interviewing takes place (see attached). An extra copy will be provided for each participant. All signed forms will be kept locked in Dr. Candace White’s office (476 Communications and University Extension Building).

## **VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

The researcher received certification for research on human subjects from NIH in May 2004. She has also conducted interviews and focus groups for other UTK projects.

## **IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH**

The researcher will use a tape recorder, tapes, and PC with a jump drive for storage which will be kept secure in the researcher’s home during the study. Recruitment of participants will take place at local stores (see attached letters of permission). Interviews will take place in the UT Pendergrass Library’s study rooms.

## **X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)**

*The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:*

**By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in “The Belmont Report” and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:**

- 1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**
- 2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**
- 3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**

4. **Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

## **XI. SIGNATURES**

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

**Principal Investigator** Betsy Saylor

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Co-Principal Investigator** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Advisor (if any)** \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Candace White

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

**The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:**

**[ ] Expedited Review – Category(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

**[ ] Full IRB Review**

**Chair, DRC** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Head** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Approved:**  
**Research Compliance Services**  
**Office of Research**  
**404 Andy Holt Tower**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX C: Company Details**

**AVEDA:** In 1978 Horst M. Rechelbacher founded Aveda Corporation, a subsidiary of The Estée Lauder Companies Inc., based in Minnesota. Aveda is a wholesaler and retailer of “plant, flower, and mineral-based professional salon and spa as well as personal care and life style products” (Aveda CERES Report, 2001-2002, p. 5).

Aveda’s mission statement reads, “Our mission at Aveda is to care for the world we live in, from the products we make to the ways in which we give back to society. At Aveda, we strive to set an example for environmental leadership and responsibility, not just in the world of beauty, but around the world” (Aveda, 2004). The company has been involved with environmental conservation since its start. Rechelbacher was one of the three founders of Business for Social Responsibility, an organization globally promoting corporate social responsibility since 1992 (Business for Social Responsibility, 2005). Aveda’s “natural” products provide a fitting platform for green CRM.

Aveda’s green CRM tactics are blended into its display of information about its concern for responsible use of resources for its products, responsible treatment of workers, responsible disposal of company waste, and reduction of production emissions from its manufacturing facilities. These issues are outlined in Aveda’s participation in CERES, the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies. CERES, formed in 1988, includes businesses, environmental organizations, and public interest groups. CERES’ mission is “to move businesses, capital, and markets to advance lasting prosperity by valuing the health of the planet and its people” (CERES, 2005).

Amid its concern for other environmental issues, Aveda uses green CRM to promote its products and support for protection of watersheds. Aveda's website describes its financial contribution through International Rivers Network and World Resources Institute to global "nongovernmental organizations" that are working to minimize and prevent water pollution (Aveda, 2004). Aveda also advertises its involvement in fighting habitat destruction by describing its support for Conservation International, a 501(c)(3) based in the United States that has projects around the world, aiming to protect the "earth's richest regions of plant and animal diversity in the hotspots, major tropical wilderness areas and key marine ecosystems" (Conservation International, 2005). In 2002, Aveda generated \$720,000 from "designated product and donations" from "distributors, retail stores, salons and spas" for 17 organizations focusing on biodiversity and global warming solutions (Aveda CERES Report, 2001-2002, p. 18). Aveda continues its partnerships with environmental nonprofits, and promotes both product and causes through green CRM.

**BARBARA'S BAKERY:** Beginning in 1971 as a small bakery specializing in "natural" products in northern California, Barbara's Bakery was purchased in 1986 by Weetabix LTD, the second largest cereal company in the United Kingdom. The subsidiary's concern with environmental issues has remained somewhat similar as the founder continues to be involved in the business. Barbara's was the 2003 "Centennial Sponsor" the National Wildlife Refuge System's 100 anniversary. Currently most of Barbara's Bakery's corporate socially responsible behavior stems from its Barbara's for a Brighter Future program and support of the National Audubon Society's Project Puffin: Seabird Restoration Program (Barbara's Bakery, 2005).



Barbara's for a Brighter Future has generated over \$500,000 for "organizations involved in environmental, hunger and children's issues" since its 1993 founding, a fact advertised on its website. Barbara's also advertises its efforts to match "Every hour an employee donates to a non-profit organization" with "\$10 to that organization" (Barbara's Bakery, 2005).

**BEN & JERRY'S:** One of the most well-known companies for social responsibility, Ben & Jerry's ice cream company has a history of contributing to social and environmental causes. Founded during 1978 and based in Vermont, Ben & Jerry's began its Ben & Jerry's Foundation in 1985, through which it began making grants to community- and environment-oriented organizations. In 1989, Ben & Jerry's introduced Rainforest Crunch ice cream. A portion of the ice cream's proceeds benefit rainforest preservation efforts (Ben & Jerry's, 2005).

The company was bought by Unilever in 2000, reaching a "unique agreement enabling Ben & Jerry's to join forces with Unilever to create an even more dynamic, socially positive ice cream business with a much more global reach. Under the terms of the agreement, Ben & Jerry's will operate separately from Unilever's current U.S. ice cream business, with an independent Board of Directors to provide leadership for Ben & Jerry's social mission and brand integrity" (Ben & Jerry's, 2005).

Ben & Jerry's mission states: "Ben & Jerry's is founded on and dedicated to a sustainable corporate concept of linked prosperity. Our mission consists of 3 [sic] interrelated parts: (a) Product Mission: To make, distribute and sell the finest quality all natural ice cream and euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating wholesome, natural ingredients and promoting business practices that

respect the Earth and the Environment; (b) Economic Mission: To operate the Company on a sustainable financial basis of profitable growth, increasing value for our stakeholders and expanding opportunities for development and career growth for our employees; and (c) Social Mission: To operate the company in a way that actively recognizes the central role that business plays in society by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of life locally, nationally and internationally.

Additionally, Ben & Jerry's website states that "all three parts must thrive equally in a manner that commands deep respect for individuals in and outside the company and supports the communities of which they are a part" (Ben & Jerry's, 2005).

Currently Ben & Jerry's uses green CRM through its "Lick Global Warming" annual campaign. Along with the Dave Matthews Band and SaveOurEnvironment.org (twenty environmental advocacy groups), Ben & Jerry's has created the ice cream flavor called Dave Matthews Band Magic Brownies, with "a portion of every sale of the flavor going to Dave Matthews Band's Bama Works Foundation and then on to help global warming initiatives" (Lick Global Warming, 2005).

Also part of the Lick Global Warming campaign, Ben & Jerry's has partnered with Native Energy, an organization offering alternative energy for individuals, businesses, and organizations. Ben & Jerry's advertises that it donates a free pint of its ice cream to donors of \$15 gifts or more to Native Energy's *WindBuilders* program (Native Energy, 2005).

**ENDANGERED SPECIES CHOCOLATE COMPANY (ESC)** was founded in 1993, and is headquartered in Indianapolis. The company employs 38 people. Environmental stewardship is the focus in the company's mission: "Our Mission, at the

Endangered Species Chocolate Company, is to use the universal appeal of chocolate to spread a positive environmental message as far as possible.” Addressing CSR, ESC’s 2005 website included the statement: “The Endangered Species Chocolate Co. was created to raise environmental and social awareness. Using premium, all natural chocolate as a medium for that message, Endangered Species Chocolate hopes to spark change in commerce and instill a sense of responsibility in consumers and the corporate world as well.”

The company’s production facility was designed to “accommodate fieldtrips by schools and youth groups. Students will not only witness the production of all natural chocolate, but also participate in educational programs promoting conservation.” ESC’s website provides details about how the company works with “food rescue and job training not-for-profit agencies.” ESC said its products are Fair-Trade and shade grown. Descriptions of its CRM are available on the website.

Their 10% donations are an important part of their companies’ image: “We add to the impact of each bar by donating at least 10% of our net profits to a variety of environmental groups around the world. We invest in organizations, such as The Jane Goodall Institute, that are working to help protect endangered species and preserve their habitat “ (Endangered..., 2005).

**KALAHARI LIMITED** was formed in 1999. Producing multiple types of tea, most from resources in South Africa, the company has production headquarters in Atlanta as well as other international locations. On its website, Kalahari states it recognizes “how important it is for businesses to give back. Our company is committed to improving quality of life both in the States and in Africa. Currently, Kalahari provides support for

two U.S. based African-focused charities: The Kalahari Peoples Fund, a charity benefiting the people of the Kalahari and other arid lands, and The African Wildlife Foundation, a charity working to ensure a future for Africa's wild places." The company said it is "committed to being a fair trade manufacturer and a socially conscious company. Whenever possible, we source raw materials and products from South Africa to support the local economy. In addition, we try to give back through two top notch organizations who focus their efforts on the people and animals of Africa" (Kalahari..., 2005).

Kalahari's red tea packaging features a small textbox mentioning support of these two organizations, but does not provide specific details. The company's website stated that the company provides "annual support" of the Kalahari Peoples Fund and links to both that organization's and The African Wildlife Foundation's websites. No other details were available. The researcher contacted a spokesperson for the company, but was told information about donation amounts were not available.

**PATAGONIA:** This California-based outdoor clothing and equipment company was founded in the 1970s. The company's mission includes "commitment to the core" which entails commitment to "the soul of the sport," "grassroots environmental activism," "uncommon culture," and "innovative design" (Patagonia, 2005).

Patagonia began green CRM in 1986 through advocating a local river restoration/protection project, which led to further commitment, and increased green CRM tactics. In 1988, Patagonia launched its first national environmental campaign involving a plan to restore the Yosemite Valley. Each year since, the company has undertaken "a major education campaign on an environmental issue," including "an early

position against globalization of trade where it means compromise of environmental and labor standards.” In 1989, Patagonia co-founded The Conservation Alliance “with the goal of encouraging companies in the outdoor industry to support environmental organizations’ efforts to protect threatened wildlands” (Patagonia, 2005).

An ongoing form of green GRM comes from Patagonia’s “1% for the Planet” program. In the last 20 years, Patagonia has pledged 1% of sales to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment, totaling over 18 million dollars in grants to “domestic and international grassroots environmental groups making a difference in their local communities.” The founder of Patagonia, Yvon Chouinard, and Craig Mathews, owner of Blue Ribbon Flies, have created a nonprofit organization that encourages businesses to advocate environmental issues. The 1% for the Planet program is an alliance of businesses aware that “profit and loss are directly linked to the health of our environment.” In addition, the alliance is concerned with the “social and environmental impacts of industry” (Patagonia, 2005).

Patagonia advertises that it has given “more than \$20 million to more than 1,000 organizations” since its grants programs began in 1985.

**STONYFIELD FARM** was founded in 1983 as an organic farming school. Its current products include all natural certified organic refrigerated yogurts, and certified organic ice cream and frozen yogurt sold in the United States. Stonyfield Farm’s mission is broken into five parts: “To provide the very highest quality, best-tasting all natural and Certified Organic products; to educate consumers and producers about the value of protecting the environment and of supporting family farmers and sustainable farming methods; to serve as a model that environmentally and socially responsible businesses

can also be profitable; to provide a healthful, productive and enjoyable work place for all employees, with opportunities to gain new skills and advance personal career goals; and to recognize our obligations to stockholders and lenders by providing an excellent return on their investment” (Stonyfield..., 2005).

Under a section of its website titled “Earth Actions,” the company described its efforts to “educate consumers about the value of supporting family farms and sustainable agriculture.” The company stated that although it is now a large company (and mostly owned by parent corporation Danone), its “commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and to the development of a sustainable agricultural system” remains strong. Stonyfield stated over 80% of its sales are certified organic products.

Stonyfield Farm was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s WasteWise Program for its solid waste minimization efforts. The company stated it is working to reduce the amount of energy used and waste created in the process of making yogurt. Stonyfield also advertises its 10% donation of profits to environmental nonprofits including The Sustainability Institute, Children’s Health Environmental Coalition, Nesenkeag Cooperative Farm, Northeast Organic Farming Association, and The Rainforest Foundation.

The company also said it reduces excess packaging by using a lighter-weight plastic, eliminating the production and disposal of over 100 tons of plastic per year. The company’s website offered a number of specific challenges and efforts to reduce packaging. Stonyfield Farm opposes use of genetically engineered recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH). The company’s Have-A-Cow Educational Program has allowed thousands of people to “adopt” a dairy cow since 1989. Stonyfield’s website

provides extremely detailed information about its philosophy of humane treatment of its animals, and provides contact information for additional information (Stonyfield..., 2005).

## APPENDIX D: Screening Questionnaire

### *Consumer Response to and Perception of Green CRM*

Approach potential recruits by stating that I'm conducting a study at the University of Tennessee, and ask if they would mind to answer two questions about shopping.

- 1. In the past year, have you selected and purchased a specific brand of product because it is known to support a non-profit environmental cause? For example, the brand might use proceeds to financially support wildlife conservation, or other environmental efforts.**

If no: Thanks for your time.

If yes:

- 2. Can you think of an example?**

If yes or no:

- 3. Would you agree to participate in a study that examines how consumers respond to this type of marketing?**

If yes: Hand respondent an information sheet, and say:

- I would need to meet with you for a one on one interview that would last no longer than 90 minutes.
- You will receive a gift certificate to this store at the close of the interview.
- The interview will be tape recorded but is confidential.

- 4. What would be a convenient time for you to meet? *Record time:*\_\_\_\_\_**

- 5. Do you have transportation to UT Pendergrass Library?**

If yes:

- 6. Is there a phone number at which I can reach you?**

If yes: *Record number:* \_\_\_\_\_

We will meet on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in Pendergrass Library.  
*Date*
*time*

Hand recruit appointment card with time, date, my work number, and directions to UT Library and parking.



**This sheet is a reminder that you have agreed to participate in a graduate research project at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The project, Consumers' Perceptions of and Responses to Green Cause-Related Marketing, is conducted by Betsy Saylor, graduate student in the College of Communication and Information.**

Please keep your appointment with Ms. Saylor, scheduled:

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Day and Date* *Time*

If you cannot make the above appointment, or are delayed, please notify Ms. Saylor as soon as possible.

The one-on-one interview will be held for no longer than 90 minutes at the **UT Pendergrass Library on the UT Agricultural Campus**. Parking for the library is available in **lot 65** next to the building (see below for directions). Ms. Saylor will meet you inside the library beside the front desk. The interview will be tape recorded, but is confidential. Your name will not be connected in any way with the information collected.

Once the interview is completed, you will receive a **gift certificate** to the store from which you were recruited. You may be asked for brief consult on the findings at a later date. Please bring a **current e-mail address** if you will be available to review findings.



#### **Directions to the Library**

The library is located on the UT Agriculture campus, just off Neyland Drive on the corner of River Drive and Joe Johnson Drive (formerly Center Drive). It is in Room A113 of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital building.

#### **Parking**

After 5pm Monday-Friday, all day Saturday and all day Sunday, park in lot 65 nearest the library entrance if space is available, or any other campus lot.

Between 8am and 5pm Monday-Friday, the researcher will provide the permit that is required to park in campus lots.

## **APPENDIX E: Consent Form and Discussion Guide**

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine how consumers perceive and respond to cause-related marketing when the cause is an environmental one.

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### **INFORMATION**

Participants will answer open-ended questions during one-on-one interviews. The interviews will be either audio recorded or noted by hand.

Each interview should take less than 90 minutes. A brief follow-up may be requested via e-mail. The time frame of this study will not extend past December 2005.

Participants will be fully informed of all intentions and uses of information from the beginning of their participation until the end of the study.

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### **RISKS**

Risks to participants in the study are minimal, including possible anxiety about answering questions and concern about sharing information about purchasing behaviors. Participants should know that their information will be kept confidential, and that they may choose to discontinue their participation at any time.

---

### **BENEFITS**

This study will attempt to explore the consumer side of green cause-related marketing—their beliefs about the effects of this type of marketing on consumers, environmental causes, nonprofits, and companies. By exploring the phenomena of green CRM this study aims to expand on the literature available to consumers, nonprofits, and companies about this connection of the environment to consumerism and marketing. Participants will have a chance to make suggestions for improvement of this study.

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### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.

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### **INCENTIVES**

You may be offered an incentive for participating in this study. Gift certificates to local stores may be provided by the researcher after the completion of the interview.

## CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researchers, Betsy Saylor et al. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Research Compliance Services section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

---

## PARTICIPATION

**Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.**

---

## CONSENT

**I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.**

**Participant's name (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## Discussion Guide

**Introduction to participants:** After thanking the participant for showing up, the consent form has been signed, and the participant has his or her copy, the researcher will again explain that the participant can choose to leave at any time. The researcher will remind the participant that he or she can refuse to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable, and that his or her name will not be linked to information at any point in the study. “There are no ‘wrong’ answers, so please be honest.” Taping begins.

### [Question Area 1: Consumers’ Responses in Relation to Perceptions of Green CRM]

#### **Grand-tour Q1: Can you think of some brands that support environmental causes?**

- If yes, what is the cause?

#### ***Planned Prompts:***

- Do you ever make a point of buying brands that support environmental causes?
  - If no, why not?
  - If yes, How so?
    - Why?
- Does information on packaging ever influence your decision about what to buy?
  - If yes, how so?
- Does information in ads affect your decision about what to buy?
  - If yes, how so?

\*\*\*\*\**General Responses to Green CRM Examples*\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Please look at these examples. Ask:**

- What do you think of this ad/package? (Probe about the environmental cause info):
  - How would it influence your decision to purchase?
  - Does the company/product go well with the cause? HOW?
  - Who benefits the most here? (company, cause, nonprofit, consumer?)
  - Would you look online at their website for more info about the cause support?

### [Question Area 2: Consumers’ Levels of Purchase Involvement]

**Grand-tour Q2:** How does the price of the purchase affect your interest in a brand's support of an environmental cause?

*Use floating prompts to explore purchase involvement's affect on response to green CRM.*

***Planned Probes:***

- Probe for perceptions and responses with routine purchases
- Probe for perceptions and responses with luxury and/or indulgent purchases.

### **[Question Area 3: Green CRM Purchases Perceived as Pro-social Acts]**

**Grand-tour Q3:** How do you feel when you make a purchase based on the fact that the company, and part of your payment, is going to help an environmental effort?

*Use floating prompts.*

***Planned Prompts:***

- Do you feel that shoppers make a difference in the efforts for the cause?
- How significant do you feel the portion of the sale is that's usually given to the cause?
- What is the difference between buying a product, with some of the profit going to an environmental cause, and making a direct donation to an environmental cause?
- Do you also donate money to an organization advocating environmental causes if you were already buying brands that support similar causes?

### **[Question Area 4: Consumers' Perceptions of Companies Using Green CRM: Skepticism, Attributions, Balance-seeking, "Fit".]**

**Grand-tour Q4:** How do you feel about companies that partner with environmental nonprofit organizations?

***Floating Prompts:*** Prompt to find out why they believe as they do by repeating interrogatively key terms and phrases.

***Planned Prompts:***

- Why do you think companies partner with nonprofits to help environmental causes?
- Can you think of some companies that are well matched with environmental causes?
  - If no, why not?
  - If yes, which ones?
    - Why?
- Can you think of some companies that are *not* well matched with environmental causes?
  - If no, why not?
  - If yes, which ones?
    - Why?

#### [Question Area 5: Consumers' Levels of Cause Involvement]

**Grand-tour Q5:** Have you ever donated time or money to an environmental cause?

***Planned Prompts:***

- If yes, what cause?
  - When?
  - How long?
  - Why?

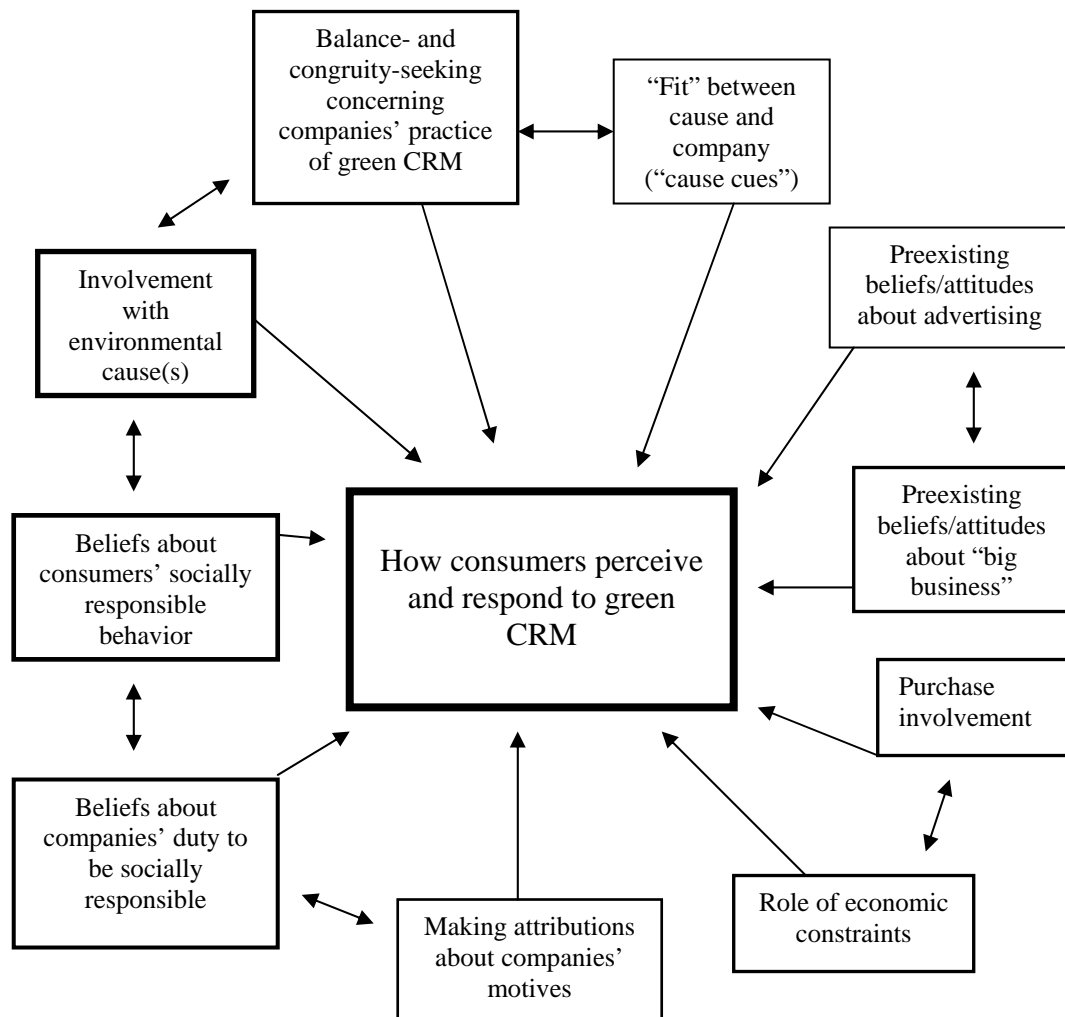
**Biographical Questions:** These questions were completed on a written questionnaire after the interview.

Please answer the following questions. Place a check beside the most appropriate answer. Please do not put your name on this questionnaire.

1. **Gender**    M\_\_\_\_\_    F\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. **Age:**    <20 \_\_\_\_\_    21-30 \_\_\_\_\_    31-40 \_\_\_\_\_    41-50 \_\_\_\_\_    51-60 \_\_\_\_\_    >60 \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Your highest level of education (please include specialty, if any):  
     Less than high school education \_\_\_\_\_  
     Some college \_\_\_\_\_  
     Associate's Degree \_\_\_\_\_    Specialty \_\_\_\_\_  
     Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_    Specialty \_\_\_\_\_  
     Some Graduate School \_\_\_\_\_    Specialty \_\_\_\_\_  
     Graduate Degree \_\_\_\_\_    Specialty \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Current occupation:  
     \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Estimated annual income:  
     \_\_\_\_\_ <\$20,000  
     \_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000-\$39,000  
     \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000-\$59,000  
     \_\_\_\_\_ \$60,000-\$79,000  
     \_\_\_\_\_ \$80,000-\$100,000  
     \_\_\_\_\_ >\$100,000

## APPENDIX F: Concept Map

*(Developed from exercise in Maxwell, 1996, p. 47-48)*

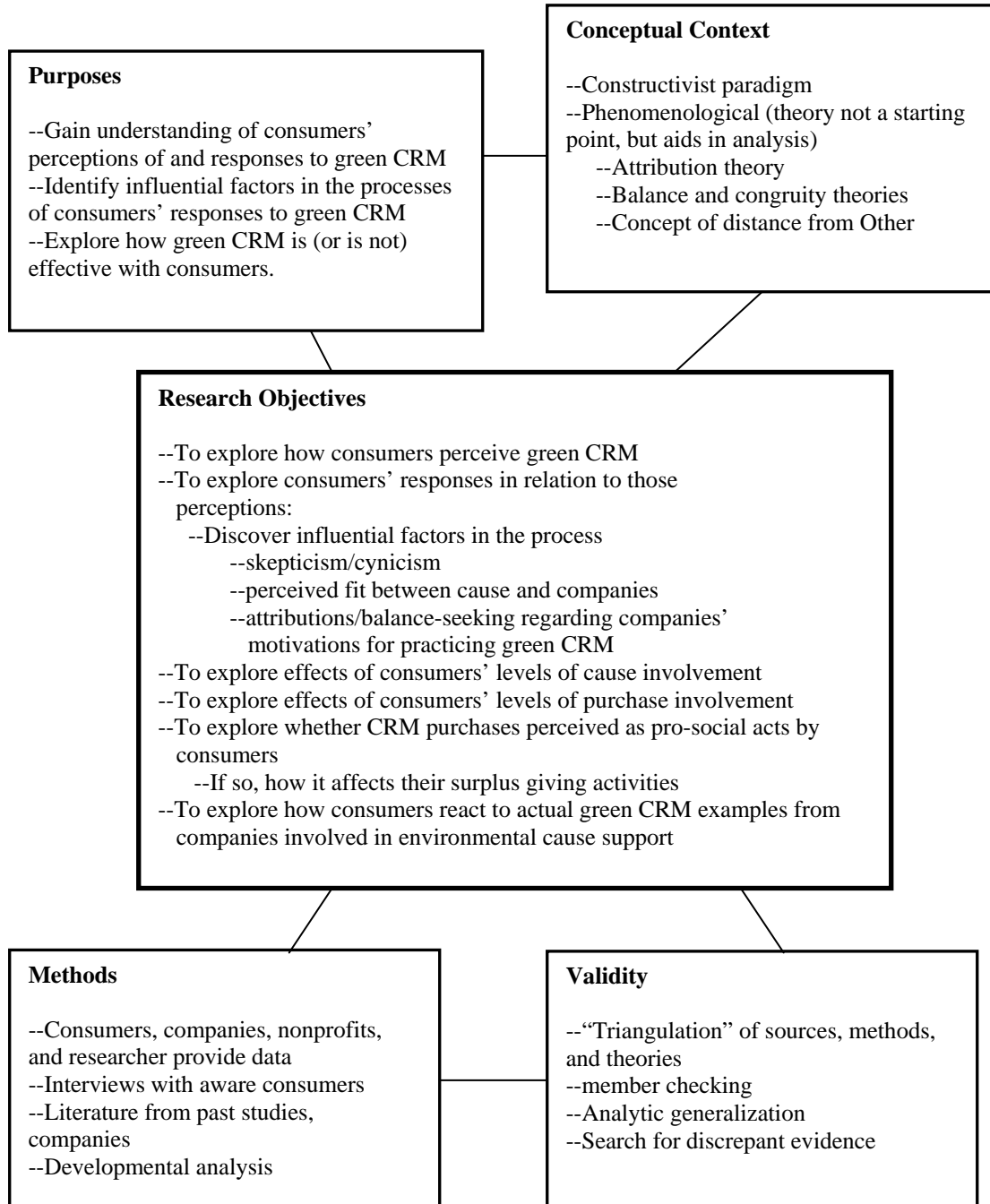


Arrows hypothesize existence of some (but obviously not all) relationships.



## APPENDIX G: Research Design

*Developed from exercise in Maxwell, 1996, p. 61.*



## APPENDIX H: STAGE ONE EXAMPLE

SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS, NOTED PATHS AND CONNECTIONS TO LITERATURE AND THEORY  
PER TRANSCRIPT.

Trans 4:

### INITIAL PATHS:

- Said “*it used to be better*” as far as environmental options went in shopping
- *His education* in food science changed his lifestyle (packaging in landfills); he “went off the deep end”
- *Synergy*: looks for minimal packaging, more fresh produce which means frequent shopping—he tried to plan combined trips ahead of time to use less gas
- *Consistency in packaging*: dislikes mylar in plastic wrappers
- Wants to see partnerships advertised more
- *Boycott versus positive support*: more likely to actively boycott
- *Skeptical of advertising*: avoids advertising, dislikes being in an age demographic, would rather be targeted for having “taste,” but even heavy green CRM okay, “different”
- *Label reader and nutrition*: looks for any info he can find about anything
- *Online*: Said it’s more of a “personality trait” that he wouldn’t go online to look at websites, only might with Patagonia

### B & J’s:

- *B & J’s “sold out,”* but liked what he read, *raises awareness*
- *Suspicious*: fear of “being duped,” “lured into a false sense of security” of thinking that buying B & J’s is in no way harmful to the environment, when in fact, it may be
- *Fit*: Made point that dairy farms have a huge toll on the environment

### Aveda:

- *Aveda*: noted use of advertising space/paper; and it is “not a necessary product”
- *Liked organizations listing, recognition* of one organization was positive, but not enough to convince—wants dollar amounts, too
- *Skeptical of CRM*: the marketing as a feel-good thing for consumers and more profit for companies
- *Less info about claim = More skepticism = Less likely to go online, and less likely to buy*

### Endangered Species Chocolate:

- Liked chocolate, liked *quality ingredients—biggest influence*, an indulgence; *price* an issue
- *10%*: would prefer it be of purchase price, not profits
- Liked *consistency in practices* (shade-grown)

- *Liked many details* = cause as beneficiary

#### **Patagonia:**

- Patagonia called “Patagucci”; brand loyal but *price* an issue—said it does allow them to donate, but he can’t really afford
- Liked dollar amount listed

#### **Kalahari:**

- *Liked Tea*: Liked understatement, “more honest”
- Liked two organizations listed on tea

#### **Barbara’s Bakery:**

- *Barbara’s* sponsored Garrison Keillor’s Rhubarb Tour = effective association, will buy
- *Good product*: no hydrogenated oils
- *Clever fit*
- *Recognized Audubon Society* = “not bogus”
- *Biggest beneficiary* = cause because he trusts Keillor

#### **Stonyfield Farm:**

- Critical of small amount of product for amount of packaging = inconsistent
- Cited his education’s influence
- Found “contradiction” with the dairy company—can’t produce without doing damage
- Biggest beneficiary = Stonyfield “definitely” because of “inconsistency”
- BUT, said he wouldn’t “think poorly of *NativeEnergy*” for partnering with them

#### **CONNECTIONS TO LITERATURE AND THEORY:**

- *Fit*: In general, can be between product/company/region/harvest and cause
- *Price*: “Buyer’s remorse”: Has a budget, and skepticism, feels “guilty” about not being able to afford green CRM and other “green” products
- *Luxury and Routine Purchases*: Wants cheaper brands to start partnering however they can (“*the cheaper feel-good option*”)
- *Pro-social*: Feels remorseful about CRM purchases because sometimes he spends more on them, and is skeptical of amount donated—needs “proof”
- *Shopper difference*: Said it’s “a good thing,” but usually in higher end stores, and not as available in East TN
- *Donation significance*: Significant over fiscal year, insignificant with his single purchase
- *Direct donation versus shopping*: Said he prefers direct donation, but frugality/budget make CRM purchases an easier option—a sort of middle ground, but the products are pricier = skepticism
- *Doesn’t directly donate*: said his purchases make up his donations
- *Skeptical of companies/CRM*

- *Motives*: said mostly bandwagon effect; but also cited Puffins as a positive example
- *Fit*: Food brands—a big part of the “machine” we’re “stuck in” (p. 13!); outdoor companies
- *Poor fits*: dairy companies; gasoline companies—should still partner, but need to work on consistency
- *Cause involvement*: highly involved
  - Co-founded environmental student organizations in college
  - Volunteers with parks and environmental nonprofits
  - Has given money to environmental nonprofits in the past
  - Changed lifestyle
  - Feels obligated to live environmentally conscious lifestyle

## APPENDIX I: STAGE TWO EXAMPLE

DEVELOPED OBSERVATIONS AS LENSES PER TRANSCRIPT, FINDING RELATIONSHIPS-SIMILARITIES-CONTRADICTIONS PER TRANSCRIPT.

Trans 4:

### Relationships:

- Organic/Natural/Healthy products are priorities, CRM a bonus, not a heuristic
- His income/values limit his shopping decisions
- Skeptical of corporations, suspicious of vague claims and percentages
- Feels obligated to lower consumption, and buy responsibly
- Active label reader, critical of claims and he's highly involved in cause support
- More reactive to negative info and boycotting than supporting positive info

### Similarities:

- Skeptical corporations and advertising
- Buyer's remorse about buying routinely, and indulgently
- Feels guilty about buying anything he doesn't need, and not being able to afford pricier "green" options

### Contradictions/Paradoxical Points:

- Liked details, but also liked "understated" tea with little info
- Skeptical of CRM, but says CRM purchases make up his donations—does not currently donate money directly, just much of his time, and career

**Bold**= organic/natural/healthy; *Italics* = Monetary concerns;  
Underlined = Skepticism; **CAPS** = EDUCATION'S INFLUENCE;  
**BOLD ITALICS** = Socially Concerned; UNDERLINED ITALICS = Consistency

From Stage One:

### INITIAL PATHS:

- Said "it used to be better" as far as environmental options went in shopping
- **HIS EDUCATION IN FOOD SCIENCE CHANGED HIS LIFESTYLE (PACKAGING IN LANDFILLS); HE "WENT OFF THE DEEP END"**
- Synergy: looks for less packaging, **more fresh produce** which means frequent shopping—he tried to plan combined trips ahead of time to use less gas
- Consistency in packaging: dislikes mylar in plastic wrappers
- Wants to see partnerships advertised more
- Boycott versus positive support: more likely to actively boycott
- Skeptical of advertising: avoids advertising, dislikes being in an age demographic, would rather be targeted for having "taste," but even heavy CRM okay, "different"
- Label reader and **nutrition**: looks for any info he can find about anything

- Online: Said it's more of a "personality trait" that he wouldn't go online to look at websites, only might with Patagonia

B & J's:

- B & J's "sold out," but liked what he read, raises awareness
- Suspicious: fear of "being duped," "lured into a false sense of security" of thinking that buying B & J's is in no way harmful to the environment, when in fact, it may be
- Fit: Made point that dairy farms have a huge toll on the environment

Aveda:

- Aveda: noted use of advertising space/paper; and it is "not a necessary product"
- Liked organizations listing, recognition of one organization = positive, but not enough to convince—wants \$ amounts, too
- Skeptical of CRM: the marketing as a feel-good thing for consumers and more profit for companies
- Less info about claim = More skepticism = less online, and less likely to buy

Endangered Species Chocolate:

- Liked chocolate, liked **quality ingredients—biggest influence**, an indulgence; *price an issue*
- 10%: would prefer it be of purchase price, not profits
- Liked consistency in practices (shade-grown)
- Liked many details = cause as beneficiary

Patagonia:

- Patagonia called Patagucci; brand loyal but *price an issue*—said it does allow them to donate, but *he can't really afford*
- Liked \$ amount listed

Kalahari:

- Liked Tea: Liked understatement, "more honest"
- Liked two organizations listed on tea

Barbara's Bakery:

- Barbara's sponsored Garrison Keillor's Rhubarb Tour = effective association, will buy
- **Good product: no hydrogenated oils**
- Clever fit
- Recognized Audubon = "not bogus"
- Biggest beneficiary = cause because he trusts Keillor

Stonyfield Farm:

- Critical of small amount of product for amount of packaging = inconsistent

- CITES HIS EDUCATION'S INFLUENCE
- Found “contradiction” with the dairy company—can’t produce without doing damage
- Biggest beneficiary = Stonyfield “definitely” because of inconsistency
- ***BUT, said he wouldn’t “think poorly of NativeEnergy” for partnering with them***

Connections to Literature/Theory:

- Fit: In general, can be between product/company/region/harvest and cause
- Price: Buyer’s remorse: *Has a budget, and skepticism, feels “guilty” about not being able to afford CRM and other “green” products*
- Luxury and Routine Purchases: Wants cheaper brands to start partnering however they can (“*the cheaper feel-good option*”)
- Pro-social: Feels remorseful about CRM purchases because sometimes he spends more on them, and is skeptical of amount donated—needs “proof”
- ***Shopper difference: Said it’s “a good thing,” but usually in higher end stores, and not as available in East TN***
- Donation significance: Significant over fiscal year, insignificant with his single purchase
- Direct donation versus shopping: Said he prefers direct donation, but *frugality/budget* make CRM purchases an easier option—***a sort of middle ground, but the products are pricier = skepticism***
- Doesn’t directly donate: said his purchases make up his donations
- Skeptical of companies/CRM
- Motives: said mostly bandwagon effect; but also cited Puffins as a positive example
- Fit: Food brands—a big part of the “machine” we’re “stuck in” (p. 13!); outdoor companies
- Poor fits: ***dairy companies; gasoline companies—should still partner, but need to work on consistency***
- Cause involvement: highly involved
  - Co-founded environmental student organizations in college
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  - Has given money to environmental nonprofits in the past
  - Changed lifestyle
  - Feels obligated to live environmentally conscious

## APPENDIX J: STAGE THREE EXAMPLE

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSCRIPT OBSERVATIONS *IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER*, RESULTING IN ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS PER TRANSCRIPT: REFINE! THEMES AND PATTERNS EMERGE, ORGANIZED SPECULATION BEGINS. GENERAL OUTLINES OF EACH TRANSCRIPT SHOULD BECOME APPARENT.

Trans 4:

### PATTERNS:

- Skepticism with most advertising claims
- Limited budget a factor
- Skepticism with corporations
- Socially concerned traits overall
- Education helps evaluate
- Wants more competitively priced CRM products
- Strong SRCB, reduced consumption, high cause-involvement

### THEMES:

- Desires environmental consistency
- Likes thorough labels
- Likes multiple causes supported
- Convinced by lists of multiple organizations
- Organic/healthy products priority
- Firm skepticism, but, likes CSR
- Gives green CRM brands competitive edge
- Desire for SRCB
- Favors direct donation of time

(From Stage 2)

### **Relationships:**

- Organic/Natural/Healthy products are priorities, CRM a bonus, not a heuristic
- His income/values limit his shopping decisions
- Skeptical of corporations, suspicious of vague claims and percentages
- Feels obligated to lower consumption, and buy responsibly
- Active label reader, critical of claims and he's highly involved in cause support
- More reactive to negative info and boycotting than supporting positive info

### **Similarities:**

- Skeptical corporations and advertising
- Buyer's remorse about buying routinely, and indulgently
- Feels guilty about buying anything he doesn't need, and not being able to afford pricier "green" options

### **Contradictions/Paradoxical Points:**

- Liked details, but also liked "understated" tea with little info
- Skeptical of CRM, but says CRM purchases make up his donations—does not currently donate money directly, just much of his time, and career



## APPENDIX K: STAGE FOUR EXAMPLE

JUDGING SPECIFIC CLUSTERS WITHIN TRANSCRIPTS—LAY BARE THE GENERAL THEMES IMPLIED **PER CLUSTER**. NEXT, HARVEST & ELIMINATION: LOCATE THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP. DEVELOP A HIERARCHY: ONE OR TWO CHIEF THEMES UNDER WHICH THE OTHERS FALL. EVALUATE ALL CATEGORIZED THEMES, AND RESIDUAL THEMES—DO THEY CONTRADICT? ARE THEY RELEVANT?

Cluster Theme: Transcript 4	PERCEPTIONS:	RESPONSES:
<b>General View of Green CRM:</b>		
Makes a point of buying when...	Perceived as consistent and genuine	Will buy if already buying product; competitive edge
Packaging Influence	Mostly looks for nutritional/natural/organic, consistency (minimal, recycled)	Will buy if product healthy, consistently packaged (CRM more of a bonus)
Advertising Influence	Skeptical of advertising, avoids, but CRM “different”	Prefers other sources, dislikes age demographic
<b>Purchase Involvement:</b>		
Price	Likes to buy green and CRM products if within budget	Feels guilty if can’t afford cause supporting goods
Routine purchases	“Important,” but wants more affordable routine purchases	CRM usually a bonus to routine purchases
Luxury Purchase	Spending more; CRM eases guilt—and he feels much guilt	CRM a good bonus to luxury purchases
<b>Pro-social Acts:</b>		
CRM Purchases	Not enough info to evaluate closely, but must be making a difference in many ways. Not as available as he would like	Seeks CRM products; said East TN not offering best availability
Direct Donations	Direct donations best; hinted at CRM purchases’ ease	Does not donate currently, said CRM purchases make up his donations
<b>Companies’ Green CRM Use:</b>		
Skepticism	Highly skeptical of marketing and companies	Distrusts some CRM claims, wants details
Balance Seeking	Believes companies’ motives are bandwagon—CRM successful with other companies	Evaluates critically, gives CRM products approval/competitive edge in examples (Puffins)
Fit	All should partner, food in particular, but some have many issues to clean up	Need consistency in practices
Socially Concerned	Accepts companies’ profit concern; hopes for the best; some maintainer traits, reduced consumption priority	Would like to see more CRM, competitive edge
<b>Level of Cause Involvement:</b>		
High/Moderate/Low	High involvement: Has donated time, money, very dedicated to SRCB	Does not donate money now; does time, maintainer lifestyle choices

## **APPENDIX L: STAGE FIVE EXAMPLE**

BRING TOGETHER CONCLUSIONS FROM STAGE 4: HOW DO THESE THEMES FORM A THESIS?  
TRANSFORMATION FROM CULTURAL CATEGORIES TO BROADER, ANALYTIC CATEGORIES.  
THESE ARE THE GENERAL PROPERTIES OF THOUGHT AND ACTION WITHIN THE GROUP.

### *CONCLUSIONS FROM STAGE 4:*

- **EXPLORING HOW CONSUMERS *PERCEIVE* GREEN CRM:**

Participants did have some skepticism of advertising and business, but not enough to reject green CRM claims. This skepticism did lead many to evaluate those claims closely, but socially concerned traits prevailed, and participants supported green CRM partnerships and efforts.

Participants did seek balance and congruency between companies and causes, but did not make many attributions about companies' motives for partnering. The majority of participants accepted a two-fold view of company motives: financial and genuine interest.

"Fit" between companies and products and causes was evaluated by participants in a variety of ways, with most participants seeking consistency between companies' practices, product, packaging, and environmental stewardship. The majority of participants said all companies should partner with environmental nonprofits, as long as they work to make their companies as environmentally responsible as possible.

- **EXPLORING HOW CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF GREEN CRM AFFECT THEIR *RESPONSES* TO GREEN CRM:**

Green CRM is a welcome "bonus" to these socially responsible consumers' shopping experience. The choice of brands from companies showing CSR makes consumers feel consistent with their values, giving them the opportunity to practice SRCB. Regardless of level of cause involvement, participants gave green cause-related marketed brands the competitive edge. They were willing to suspend any skepticism to "hope for the best" for the support involved.

- **EXPLORING HOW CONSUMERS' LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES AFFECT THEIR PERCEPTION OF GREEN CRM:**

All participants, low to high cause-involved, perceived green CRM as a positive phenomenon in the marketplace, and said they would like to see this type of partnering grow.

▪ **EXPLORING HOW CONSUMERS' LEVELS OF PURCHASE INVOLVEMENT AFFECT THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF GREEN CRM:**

All but one participant described price as a concern, stating that green cause-related marketed products tend to be more expensive. However, most participants said that did not preclude their search for green marketed products; just limited the amount they could buy. Luxury purchases were reported to be ideal candidates for green CRM, easing the guilt involved.

▪ **EXPLORING WHETHER GREEN CRM PURCHASES ARE PERCEIVED AS PROSOCIAL ACTS BY CONSUMERS:**

Though green CRM purchases were perceived by all participants as pro-social acts, in the sense that they felt proactive in spending a little more and processing the information about such brands, they also perceived the acts as shopping behavior and not the end-all-be-all of environmental stewardship. All but one participant perceived direct donations as the best option, but liked the ease and instant return of green CRM purchases. The four participants actively donating time and money to environmental nonprofits said their green CRM purchases would not reduce or end their direct donations. Many participants said they liked green CRM because of the easy access to new information about causes and support.

▪ **EXPLORING CONSUMERS' REACTIONS TO ACTUAL GREEN CRM EXAMPLES:**

Almost all of the participants responded positively to all of the examples of green CRM. Only a few participants found specific examples lacking the information needed to be convincing. Participants were, for the most part, willing to give cause-related marketed brands the competitive edge and go online to websites to learn more.

**STAGE 5 SUMMATION:**

Green CRM offers socially concerned consumers an additional cue for CSR and option for SRCB; consumers who accept the partnerships involved as long as companies show environmental consistency and specific details about the cause support.

## **Vita**

Betsy Suzanne Saylor was born on February 18, 1978, in Knoxville, Tennessee. She completed her bachelor's in English Literature from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 2000. In May 2002, she completed her M.A. in English Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park. After teaching English Composition for a year, she decided to enter the Master of Science program in communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her research of consumer culture aligns with advocacy of deep ecology.

Saylor is currently pursuing a career working with consumer and/or environment issues.