



Silence is silver, talking is gold.

How embedded premium promotions influence the conversational potential of products and services

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Abstract

An embedded premium (EP) is a charity incentive, a purchase-contingent donation to a social cause, that when added on to a product or service, offers consumers the opportunity to behave prosocially through consumption. Previous research has demonstrated how EPs positively impact transaction-related outcomes such as willingness to pay. This thesis attempts to extend research to a novel domain of major relevance to firms – that of word of mouth (WOM). Based on the notion that individuals seek conspicuous means to draw attention to their good deeds, this study conceptualizes WOM as one such mean that consumers may capitalize on to highlight their prosocial consumption patterns. Therefore, this work tests whether consumers perceive purchases with EP to be more conducive to WOM than identical purchases without EP. The results of a between-subjects experiment, implemented with a recall-based approach, confirm that consumers are indeed more inclined to talk to others about a purchase when it involves a social cause. Furthermore, the study reveals that the additional conversational potential (CP) remains constant irrespective of the donation magnitude, which suggests that CP is invariant to promotion depth. Moreover, the findings uncover heterogeneity in effect size that might be explained by donation-related customer predispositions. Results indicate that the effect tends to be stronger for individuals with a high need for social status, a strong attitude towards helping others, and a pronounced warm glow motive. This work illustrates how conspicuous prosocial behavior manifests in consumption contexts and how EPs add value beyond what is already known.

Resumo

Uma angariação de fundos premium (embedded premium - EP) é um incentivo de caridade, uma doação contingente de compra a uma causa social, que quando adicionado a um produto ou serviço, oferece aos consumidores a oportunidade de se comportarem prosocialmente através do consumo. Esta dissertação tenta alargar a investigação, que se tem centrado predominantemente nas intenções de compra, a um domínio novo de grande relevância para as empresas - o do passa palavra (WOM). Baseado na noção de que os indivíduos procuram meios óbvios para chamar a atenção para as suas boas práticas, este estudo conceptualiza a WOM como um desses meios que os consumidores podem aproveitar para realçar os seus padrões de consumo prosocial. Desta forma, este trabalho testa se os consumidores percebem que as compras com EP são mais favoráveis ao passa palavra do que as compras idênticas sem EP. Os resultados de um design experimental entre sujeitos, implementada com uma abordagem baseada na recordação, confirmam que os consumidores estão de facto mais inclinados a conversar com outros sobre uma compra quando esta envolve uma causa social. Adicionalmente, o estudo revela que o potencial de conversação adicional é invariável à dimensão da doação. Por outro lado, os resultados revelam uma heterogeneidade no tamanho efectivo entre clientes com diferentes características relacionadas com a doação. Os resultados indicam que o efeito tende a ser mais forte para indivíduos com uma elevada necessidade de estatuto social, uma vontade de ajudar os outros, e um motivo de vislumbre caloroso pronunciado.

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I would also like to thank all the people who made the time in Portugal so incredibly enriching. You know when I refer to you. Thanks to Mother Nature and to my Grandparents. Special thanks also to my supervisor Marta Bicho and to the lovely Catarina Abreu.

Run to the rescue with love, and peace will follow.

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List of Abbreviations

- ANOVA – Analysis of variance
- CP – Conversational potential
- CRM – Cause-related Marketing
- CSR – Corporate social responsibility
- EP – Embedded premium
- PB – Prosocial behavior
- WOM – Word of mouth

1. Introduction

Calling attention to good deeds is a common practice in modern societies, although there is actually a strict norm to be modest about prosocial behavior (PB) (Berman et al., 2015). Anonymous donations are a rather rare phenomenon (Glazer & Konrad, 1996), and organizations use various instruments to make individual contributions visible to society (Ariely et al., 2009). To mention a few manifestations, this includes advertised donor lists, wrist bands, buttons, and T-shirts from charities, or even buildings named after benefactors. In 1997, a \$3 million donation to the New York City Children's Zoo was reversed after the donors argued that the city had not complied with the contract that specified exactly how their contribution would be publicly acknowledged (Dunlap, 1997). The public display of good deeds can also be observed in consumer contexts, for example in the consumption of conspicuous prosocial products such as eye-catching electric vehicles or products bundled with promised contributions to charity, such as the well-known TOMS shoes or Product Red goods. What all these examples illustrate is that in PB, be it in a donation or consumption context, the intended display of the prosocial act and the associated expression of a sense of pro-socialness is of central relevance (Johnson et al., 2018). To argue, however, that this behavior is only related to people's image pursuits falls short, because individuals who are genuinely concerned about a cause may also be interested in raising awareness for it, motivating others to behave similarly, and ultimately fostering a 'culture of giving' (Berman & Silver, 2022). Indeed, there is empirical evidence for the existence of impure altruism, according to which PB is motivated both selfishly and altruistically (Andreoni, 1989; Crumpler & Grossman, 2008; Videras & Owen, 2006).

"Consumers, for their part, increasingly shop with a cause in mind and consider a company's support of social causes when deciding which products to buy and recommend to others" (Cone et al., 2003, p. 96). Aware of that, companies across different industries are affiliating their products and services to social causes. For example, at the end of 2008, Starbucks committed to donating 50 cents to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS for each Starbucks RED exclusive beverage sold (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). A similar example, but different with respect to the type of donation, is the former TOMS Shoes buy-one give-one model, where for every pair of shoes sold, a free pair of shoes was given to those in need (Park & Marquis, 2013). These market offerings vary from conventional alternatives in providing an incremental element, a purchase-contingent donation to a social cause, also referred to as an embedded premium (EP)

(Arora & Henderson, 2007). Consequently, when companies add EPs to products and services, they offer consumers the opportunity to behave prosocially towards the beneficiaries of the donation through the act of consumption. The focus of previous research on EP promotions was primarily on the effectiveness in terms of purchase intention and willingness to pay for products bundled with promised contributions to charity (Arora & Henderson, 2007; C.-T. Chang, 2008; Henderson & Arora, 2010; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Strahilevitz, 1999; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Due to the proximity to pure PB, however, this study assumes that in addition to such transactional benefits, companies can expect further relational advantages from charity bundling, possibly resulting from certain post-transactional behavior.

Drawing attention to good deeds has a high relevance in PB, partly because if the good deeds go unnoticed, the prosocial actors cannot reap the associated benefits. Echoing Grace & Griffin (2009), individuals seek conspicuous means to highlight their good deeds. This study attempts to conceptualize interpersonal communication about products with EP promotions as such a means by which consumers can draw attention to their prosocial consumption behavior. In a context where interpersonal communication and consumption opportunities through which consumers can engage in PB are considered jointly, the question arises whether these types of purchases are particularly conducive to interpersonal conversations, and whether they are thus at an advantage in terms of positive word of mouth (WOM) activity.

Berman et al. (2015) state that people who draw attention to their prosocial product purchases are evaluated more positively with regard to their generosity. Additionally, Sabri (2018) has shown that EP promotions increase the likelihood that consumers will positively (versus negatively) report on products to their friends. These are first indications supporting the assumption that prosocial products might be more conducive to interpersonal communication. However, there is still a lack of research on whether consumers are actually more willing to talk about such products than about their alternatives without EP promotions. This knowledge gap is addressed by this study.

When consumers talk about products and brands for non-commercial reasons, marketing researchers refer to this as WOM (Arndt, 1967a; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Westbrook, 1987). Abundant research demonstrates the substantial influence of WOM on consumer behavior (Allsop et al., 2007). According to Bughin et al. (2010), WOM is the primary factor behind 20 to 50% of all purchasing decisions and the impact will probably increase as digitisation progresses and communication no longer operates on a one-to-one but on a one-to-many basis when opinions are shared online. Given this importance, firms have much to gain by fostering positive WOM. However, they are faced with the difficulty that a positive product

evaluation in and of itself is often not sufficient to stimulate positive WOM (Chung & Darke, 2006). In fact, WOM is a complex occurrence. Consumers converse upon certain purchases more than others. “Some products get a good deal of buzz, while others go unmentioned” (Berger & Schwartz, 2011, p. 3). Purchases therefore differ in terms of their conversational potential (CP) – i.e. the degree to which they trigger WOM communication (Bastos, 2020).

Based on concepts from the PB literature in conjunction with findings from the charity linked product and interpersonal communication literature, this study predicts that consumers perceive purchases with EP presence (vs. EP absence) to offer them greater CP. As discussed in the literature review, on the one hand, it is anticipated that the incremental charity element holds additional CP, as one reason consumers habitually share WOM is impression management, to pursue the fundamental desire to be perceived positively by others, and charity bundled products might be better suited for this purpose than comparable products without cause association. On the other hand, consumers are expected to develop the need to promote the issuing company based on positive inferences about its altruistic motives and also to persuade others to join the cause through consumption, thereby raising the collective donation amount across transactions in order to reap the resulting increasing altruistic and egoistic benefits.

When companies introduce products with purchase-contingent donations, the amount transferred to the charitable organization per transaction varies significantly (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). An important question to be addressed in this study is therefore how this aspect of EP implementation affects CP. Does a higher DM have a reinforcing effect on the CP, as the contribution to charity becomes larger? The question of whether the effect is variant to the donation size is fundamental because it affects profitability and social impact. A higher DM should be better for the customer and society in general, but it also translates to higher costs for the company, unless these are passed on to the customer. Beyond DM, the existing literature calls to analyze how individual differences may influence EP effectiveness (C.-T. Chang, 2008). This study assumes that the effect is heterogenous across consumers and therefore explores the extent to which individual donation-related customer predispositions, such as consumers' need for social status, attitude toward helping others, and warm glow motive, influence the main effect.

Against this background, this study makes the following contributions. By adopting a prosocial consumer behavior perspective within the field of interpersonal communication, this study constitutes an initial attempt to bridge the two domains. Although recent work has shown that consumers verbally informing others about prosocial purchases has a positive impact on an individual's reputation as a generous or altruistic person (Berman et al., 2015), to the best of the

researchers' knowledge, no study has yet shown whether consumers tend to capitalize on this behavior at all. While consumers may tend to increase WOM for a variety of reasons, such as to improve their reputation, to reward the company for their other-regarding business practice, or to persuade other consumers to also make charitable purchases, the methodology of the study does not allow for a clear inference on the motives behind increased CP. The aim, however, is to show a broader extent to which an EP can add value to products and services beyond primarily transactional benefits.

For this purpose, a static between-subjects online experiment was conducted, combining a recall-based approach with a scenario technique to expose participants to the stimuli. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three conditions, manipulating whether or not the purchase was associated with a cause and whether the DM was high or low. The dependent variable CP and the donation-related customer predispositions were measured using established multi-item scales. The data was analyzed in the R environment.

This study is divided into multiple sections. To begin with, an interdisciplinary review of the literature is presented, followed by a section highlighting the research framework and the derived hypotheses. Next, the methodological approach and the data collection process are reported. Thereafter, the results of the statistical analysis are described. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings and a section on limitations and directions for future research.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

This chapter reviews the relevant theoretical constructs in the study context. Based on the literature on EP promotions, PB and interpersonal communication, the overarching proposition is derived that purchases bundled with promised contributions to charity are predicted to have a higher CP than their non-bundled but otherwise identical alternatives. In other words, there is support in the literature for the idea that an incremental prosocial product enhancement can have a positive impact on the CP of products. Moreover, previous findings indicate that this relationship varies between different situations. Factors such as individual customer predispositions and the way firms execute EP promotions are likely to intervene in a moderating way.

2.1 Embedded premium promotions and prosocial behavior

Consumers' expectations of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and their desire to be increasingly involved in related initiatives continue to rise (H.-H. Chang, 2017). Accordingly, a wide range of socially responsible business activities have emerged (Menon & Kahn, 2003). One common business practice that falls under the umbrella of these activities is the bundling of products with promised contributions to charity. In this practice, companies commit to a purchase-contingent donation, a specified amount of money that is promised by companies to be contributed to a charitable cause, each time the customers purchase the company's products and services affiliated with that cause (Dean, 2003). Such market offerings integrate individual and collective interests and are referred to as so-called impure private goods (Arora & Henderson, 2007). The difference to a standard private good corresponds to the embedded premium (EP), the public good enhancement created by adding an incremental purchase-contingent donation element on to a product or service, which creates a market exchange involving not only a buyer and seller, but another third party, the social cause (Arora & Henderson, 2007; Dean, 2003).

This approach was first conceptualized by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) under the term cause-related marketing (CRM), a primarily profit-oriented marketing concept that has received considerable attention both in the literature and in practice. In line with the profit orientation of this type of prosocial firm behavior, the majority body of the respective literature is interested in measuring CRM effectiveness in the sense of value capturing of the issuing firms, studying dependent variables such as purchase intention and willingness to pay (C.-T. Chang, 2011; Lafferty et al., 2016). In general, research shows that CRM can have a positive impact on

purchase behavior and customers' attitudes (e.g. Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Haruvy & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2009; Henderson & Arora, 2010; Krishna & Rajan, 2009; Lafferty et al., 2004; Leszczyc & Rothkopf, 2010; Nan & Heo, 2007; Olsen et al., 2003; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004). Also, it can be observed that the outcome of CRM campaigns is influenced by three main categories of independent variables, implementation-related factors (such as the DM), customer predispositions (such as the attitude toward helping others), and product-related traits (such as the product type, that is associated with an EP) (Fan et al., 2020; Guerreiro et al., 2016; Lafferty et al., 2016).

The bundling of products with promised contributions to charity is not only applied by conventional for-profit companies as a marketing tool within the context of CRM, but also by part of the businesses from the social entrepreneurship domain, where, in contrast, this practice is in alignment with the social mission at their operations' core (Austin et al., 2006). Social enterprises operate at the intersection between conventional business and charity (Battilana & Lee, 2014). While the creation of positive change in society is the primary objective social enterprises aim for, their adoption of market-based organisational forms and execution of commercial activities (Gonin et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2012) is instrumental in achieving, sustaining and scaling social impact (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Mongelli et al., 2019; F. M. Santos, 2012). In accordance with the prioritization of the social mission, their focus is predominantly on value creation rather than value capturing (F. M. Santos, 2012). Generally, a distinction can be made between two ideal types of social enterprises: in some social enterprises the paying customers are also the beneficiaries (beneficiaries are integrated as paying customers), whereas in others customers and beneficiaries are from different groups (F. Santos et al., 2015). Only the latter are related to this study in the narrower sense, as parts of the revenue generated (the sum of the EPs earned across transactions) by the sale of products and services to paying customers are used to fund social activities aimed at helping beneficiaries who are not the primary customers of those social enterprises (Ebrahim et al., 2014).

Certainly, for-profits and social enterprises differ in the deployment of EP promotions with regard to the motivation (social mission versus economic mission), objectives (value capturing versus value creation) and duration (temporary versus permanent) (Austin et al., 2006; Battilana et al., 2012; L. Campbell et al., 1999; Chéron et al., 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2007; F. M. Santos, 2012; Schamp et al., 2019; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Nevertheless, they share commonality in that they offer customers both a contributing component (i.e., the promised donation to charity) in addition to a receiving component (i.e., the product), thus enabling consumption decisions that benefit not only consumers themselves but also third parties in

society who are not directly involved in the transaction (J.-E. Kim & Johnson, 2013; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). The pertinent literature conceptualizes impure private goods as providing consumers with two separate positive outcomes for one price, since the total consumption utility consists of the gain from receiving a product or service on the one hand, and an additional gain derived from contributing to the alleviation of neglected problems in society on the other (Dubé et al., 2017; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Figure 1 illustrates the difference in consumer utility between purchases with and without EP presence.

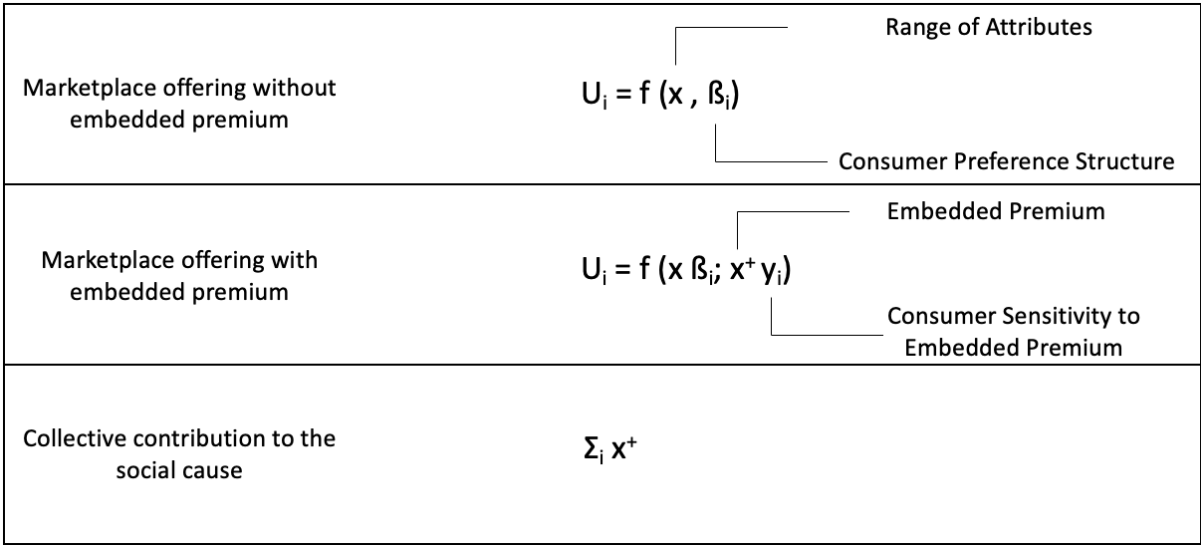


Figure 1. Consumer utility for choice alternatives with and without embedded premium presence. Source: Arora & Henderson (2007).

It can be argued that when EPs are added on to products and services, companies offer paying customers the opportunity to behave prosocially towards the third party through consumption. Indeed, PB by definition includes actions that aim to benefit one or more persons other than oneself and entail some cost to the performing individual (Batson & Powell, 2003; Ernst Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003; Kurzban et al., 2015). Although the consumption of impure private goods is certainly not purely PB in the conventional sense, the presence of the third party receiving support has crucial implications, in that the added dimension of regards for others to the self-regard has led pertinent scholars to draw on concepts from the literature body of PB to develop and test hypotheses (Henderson & Arora, 2010; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Strahilevitz, 1999). In this study, likewise, the literature on PB is intended to provide guidance in hypotheses development.

There is an extensive amount of research on PB at the interface between economics and psychology (Dubé et al., 2017). The historical debate revolves around the question of what

causes people to act at the expense of themselves for the benefit of others (Andreoni, 1990; Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Small & Cryder, 2016). The more recently emerging consensus advocates a broad set of motives, i.e., that PB is driven by a complex mix of interdependent motives, which can be divided into three categories: extrinsic, intrinsic, and image motivation (Ariely et al., 2009; Bénabou & Tirole, 2006; Goldstein et al., 2008; Griskevicius et al., 2010). Extrinsic motives refer to any material reward or benefit that comes from helping, for instance, it has been shown that we tend to give more to charity when contributions are tax deductible (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010). In the context of impure private goods, receiving the product or service could be considered an extrinsic incentive. Intrinsic motivation is based on personal preferences for giving per se (Ariely et al., 2009; Ernst Fehr & Schmidt, 2003; Meier, 2007). One view focuses on the egoistic motivational component, according to which individuals engage in PB to feel better about themselves. This is referred to as the consumption of warm glow (Andreoni, 1990; Isen, 1970) and the purchase of moral satisfaction (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992). The other perspective foregrounds the pure altruistic component, according to which PB is driven by individuals' inequality aversion (E. Fehr & Schmidt, 1999) and the desire to improve the well-being of recipients (Becker, 1974). Recent empirical studies acknowledge the existence of both components (Crumpler & Grossman, 2008; Videras & Owen, 2006). Therefore, this study also draws on the concept of impure altruism, according to which the benefits derived from purchases that involve a cause encompass both the selfish and altruistic dimensions of consumers (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). In contrast to these personal motives, image motivation, as a social motive, denotes the tendency of the consumer to be motivated by the perception of others (Ariely et al., 2009). The desire to be liked is a fundamental human need (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tetlock, 2002). Acts such as PB yield a positive image, whereas greed has a negative image effect (Ariely et al., 2009). Accordingly, Bénabou & Tirole (2006) assert that image is a function of others' perceptions of the rated person's prosocialness and greediness. Being aware of this, people often behave in a prosocial manner with the aim of positively influencing their image (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010; Ellingsen & Johannesson, 2011; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Lacetera & Macis, 2010). Successfully demonstrated generosity has a positive effect on reputation and status, making it tempting to communicate good deeds to others (F. J. Flynn, 2003; Francis J. Flynn et al., 2006; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006). Correspondingly, status needs have been shown to be positively related to conspicuous consumption of prosocial goods, irrespective of any associations with financial wealth (Johnson et al., 2018). In fact, prosocial products can also be expensive and signal wealth in addition to social concern (Johnson et al., 2018).

2.2 Embedded premium promotions and conversational potential

When interpersonal communication refers to products, services or brands and is not commercially motivated, it is considered as WOM (Arndt, 1967b; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Westbrook, 1987). Such conversations occur offline (e.g. face-to-face), as well as online (e.g. on social media platforms) (Bastos, 2020), and the consumer communication motivations identified in the literature are relevant to both domains (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Certain purchases apparently generate more WOM than others (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Purchases therefore vary in terms of their CP. CP is defined as “[...] consumers’ inclination to converse about a purchase with others; such that purchases high on this attribute are preferred by consumers as a topic of conversation and are perceived as more conducive to WOM conversations” (Bastos, 2020, p. 2). The proposition that purchases linked to charity are predicted to have a higher CP than their identical alternative without an EP resonates (as discussed next) with the functions that WOM offers to the transmitters and its compatibility with the prosocial product aspect, the key characteristic that distinguishes those impure private goods from standard private goods.

First, consumers commonly make choices to communicate desirable personality traits and avoid undesirable ones (Belk, 1988; Berger & Heath, 2007; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Kleine et al., 1993) in an effort to manage impressions others have of them (Berger, 2014). In doing so, people are more likely to converse about topics that make them appear good than bad (Chung & Darke, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sundaram et al., 1998). Underlying this phenomenon is the fundamental desire to be liked, an influential driver of consumer behavior (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Tetlock, 2002). Individuals can experience positive image effects through the demonstration of PB, which makes the communication of good deeds attractive (F. J. Flynn, 2003; Francis J. Flynn et al., 2006; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006). There appears to be a complementary fit between the fact that consumers buy prosocial products to reap reputational benefits from being seen as generous on the one hand, and, on the other hand share WOM with the intention to improve their image by conversing about purchases that are most suitable for this purpose. However, since the norm is to be modest about PB and evaluators of PB discount good deeds that result in gains for the actor (Lin-Healy & Small, 2013; Newman & Cain, 2014), potential transmitters of WOM may face the problem described in the literature as the Braggart's Dilemma (Berman et al., 2015). When conversing about prosocial consumption behavior, there might be the risk of being suspected as an image manager and therefore being perceived as selfish, whereas when not conversing, there is the

risk that no one observes the prosocial act and thus the consumer might not gain any image credits at all. Berman et al. (2015) demonstrate that under the condition that PB was unknown prior to bragging about it, the attribution of generosity outweighs the simultaneous undermining of generosity that arises from the suspicion of desires for image credit. Also there are certain communication strategies that are used to signal prosocial traits without triggering backfire reactions. WOM transmitters can invite others to buy the same product and help the cause, thereby providing an altruistic justification for disclosing their good deed and minimizing the risk of being perceived as a braggart (O'Connor et al., 2020). Given that consumers are most likely aware that bragging about PB can be image enhancing, these findings support the claim that products associated with a social cause generally offer them greater CP in terms of image benefits than the alternative products without a cause association.

In addition to impression management, consumers tend to spread positive WOM to help firms succeed if they perceive the company as worthy to support (Sundaram et al., 1998). One condition under which consumers view companies as worthy of support and develop a willingness to reward them is when they form positive inferences about altruistic motives and perceptions of CSR of the company being evaluated (Folse et al., 2010). Although there is potential for skepticism among consumers regarding EP promotions, they generally think of firms that offer them as doing so for altruistic reasons (Barone et al., 2007). Therefore, a company's involvement in selling products with charity associations should have a favorable consequence on consumers' willingness to reward it relative to a comparable business with a likewise initial reputation that does not offer products with charity associations. Customers regularly utilize positive WOM as an instrument to reward companies indeed (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), so positive WOM should tend to be higher in an EP promotion with regard to this aspect. In line with this, it was shown that companies with better CSR engagement receive more positive and less negative WOM (Vo et al., 2019).

These elaborations are more centered around the help or reward of the firm supporting a cause, whereas the following describes a cause-oriented support perspective through WOM. Among all consumers who purchase a given product bundled with promised contributions to charity, the collective donation amount and net impact on social welfare is equal to the sum of the individual donation amounts of each transaction conducted (Arora & Henderson, 2007). It can be reasoned that the collective donation amount may also have implications for individual consumer utility (Tsiros & Irmak, 2020). Echoing Andreoni (1989), it is argued that raising the collective donation amount (or even attempting to do so) indirectly through WOM can extend the utility consumers derive from solely purchasing the prosocial product. The additional utility

rests on the intrinsic motivational dimension of other regarding concerns. Both empirically verified components of the intrinsic motive, the altruistic benefits derived from the expectation to help the beneficiaries, and the egoistic benefits derived from feeling a warm glow, should increase with an increasing perceived personal contribution to the social impact of the EP promotion (Andreoni, 1989; Crumpler & Grossman, 2008; Videras & Owen, 2006). In fact, WOM is also shared to persuade others, especially in instances when consumers want others to do something and the choice of the other consumers affects the benefits of the WOM transmitter (Berger, 2014). Consequently, it can be anticipated that these additional benefits, which can arise from conversing about the purchase, translate to a positive impact on the CP of prosocial products and thus further support the key proposition of this study.

However, both of the WOM functions discussed, impression management and persuading others, and the benefits associated with them for the WOM sharer, are likely to depend on customer predispositions that vary individually. Indeed, heterogeneity in sensitivity to charity bundling has been demonstrated among individuals, indicating that the incremental buyer utility derived from a prosocial component being added on to a product varies across consumers (Arora & Henderson, 2007; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). Three key donation-related customer predispositions that have previously been studied in the research context and that also relate to the two WOM functions discussed are the need for social status, the attitude toward helping others, and the warm-glow motive (Arora & Henderson, 2007; Francis J. Flynn et al., 2006; Haruvy & Popkowski Leszczyc, 2009; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Krishna, 2011; Leszczyc & Rothkopf, 2010; Winterich & Barone, 2011).

Just as premium brands are talked about more to gain economic status (Lovett et al., 2013), it was argued that prosocial products could be talked about more to gain social status in the process of impression management. In the following, it is reasoned that the attempt to impress others with prosocial tendencies in order to gain social prestige should be particularly appealing to consumers who have a high need for social status. Social status refers to an elevated social standing (Bourdieu, 1984) based on the conferral of certain attributes (e.g. generosity) that are considered ideal by other people in social groups (Wegener, 1992). Demonstrating PB can serve as a means of attaining social status, as it has been shown that people are assigned greater social status when others perceive them as more generous (Blau, 1963; F. J. Flynn, 2003). As explained earlier, demonstrating PB can increase people's perceived generosity and therefore can have a positive impact on social status. Gaining social status is attractive because others are more willing to be persuaded by the person, opinions weigh more heavily, and one is thus more

influential (Anderson et al., 2001). Consequently, the more generous one is in the past, the more social status and influence one has on one's peers in the future (F. J. Flynn et al., 2006). However, individuals vary in their need for social status. High self-monitors, for instance, who not only have greater awareness of social and informational cues than the average but are also motivated to employ these cues to manage their image, have been shown to be impelled by a great need for social status - high self-monitors have a high need for social status (F. J. Flynn et al., 2006). This is shown to influence their decision making as consumers (DeBono, 1987), as they respond more positively to advertisements for products that are associated with prestige (DeBono & Snyder, 1989; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Accordingly, individuals with a great need for social status, for whom a positive public appearance and personal influence on others has a high value, may be particularly inclined to share WOM on prosocial products in order to enhance their perceived generosity and thus their social status than individuals for whom the development or maintenance of a positive appearance and the associated influence on others has less value.

Similarly, but distinct, as we suggest that need for social status is important to the CP of products affiliated with a cause, we also propose that the attitude toward helping others and the warm glow motive are relevant. It is argued that depending on how salient these traits are in consumers, persuading others holds greater or lesser CP. Webb et al., (2000, p. 300), in their development of scales to measure attitudes toward helping others, define them as “[...] global and relatively enduring evaluations with regard to helping or assisting other people”. These evaluations imply personal norms and internalized moral values (Piliavin & Charng, 1990). Consistently, individuals have been shown to differ in terms of their concerns for others (Andreoni & Miller, 2002; Palfrey & Prisbrey, 1997). A guiding mechanism for the moderating effect of the attitude toward helping others on the impact of the charity bundling on the CP is that consumer behavior is dependent on both the expectation to create specific outcomes and the individual evaluation of the corresponding importance (Atkinson, 1964; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Applying this to the consumption situation of an impure private good, the guiding expectation reflects the altruistic benefit of helping the beneficiaries and the associated personal importance depends on the attitude toward helping others. Since persuading others through WOM can help increase the total contribution to the cause, the expectation to personally help others will increase along with it (Andreoni, 1989). Respectively, a buyer with a stronger attitude towards helping others would consider it more important that the beneficiaries receive help through higher donation levels (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). A larger collective contribution would lead to greater altruistic benefits for such a customer, which in turn has a

positive effect on CP. A customer who is lower on the variable attitude toward helping others, on the other hand, would attach less value to an increasing social impact, so persuading others would lead to smaller altruistic benefits, which in turn implies a less positive CP.

Consistent with the reasoning about the attitude toward helping others, we propose that the warm glow motive might also have a moderating impact. The term “warm glow” refers to “[...] a purely internal satisfaction that comes from the act of giving [...]” (Harbaugh, 1998, p. 272) and is a pleasurable emotional experience (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). A consumer’s warm glow motive denotes the consumer’s desire to experience this warm glow feeling (Mayo & Tinsley, 2009) and has been shown to be a meaningful motivator for considering charity bundled products (Arora & Henderson, 2007). Similarly to the argumentation on the attitude toward helping others, it is posited that consumer behavior is dependent on the expectation to produce an outcome and the individual's appreciation of it. In this case the guiding expectation is to experience a warm glow emotion and the individual importance relates to the desire for doing so. The expectation of inducing a warm glow is likely to increase when the perceived personal contribution to the cause increases (Andreoni, 1989; Crumpler & Grossman, 2008; Videras & Owen, 2006). Since persuading others through WOM can lead to a greater social impact and thus a perceived greater personal contribution, the expectation of experiencing a warm glow should be higher at higher WOM levels. It is concluded that for a customer with a strong desire for a warm glow, products that are charity bundled are more conducive to interpersonal conversations than for a customer with a weak desire for a warm glow. In other words, persuading others holds greater CP for a consumer with a strong warm glow motive in particular, since a greater personal prosocial contribution leads to greater egoistic benefits for such consumers than for consumers with a weak warm glow motive.

From the above, it is apparent that the collective contribution to the social cause is likely to be of importance to the CP. Beyond this, we also assume that the individual contribution as such, which adds up to the collective amount across all consumers who buy the charity-linked product, is relevant for CP. The literature has shown that apart from donation-related customer predispositions, implementation-related factors, notably the DM, also influence the outcome of bundling products with promised contributions to charity (Fan et al., 2020). The DM refers to the size of contribution made per purchase transaction relative to the price of the product (C.-T. Chang, 2008; Thomas & Kureshi, 2020). It is argued that CP varies with the size of the donation amount and that three aspects may be driving this variation. First, the assumption is made that CP is affected by the inferences consumers make about the company at different

levels of donation amounts. Based on attribution theory, consumers tend to evaluate a company's motive as more positive when the DM is large (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016). In fact, it has been shown that higher donation amounts lead consumers to consider those companies as other-serving and more socially responsible, and ultimately to be willing to reward them in return (Folse et al., 2010). This is expected to benefit CP, as CSR engagement helps firms to receive more positive WOM (Vo et al., 2019) and consumers actually spread positive WOM to recompense firms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Second, a higher DM probably implies an increasing CP in terms of impression management, as well as the expectation arising from WOM persuasion, both to help others more and to experience a stronger warm glow feeling. Based on costly signaling theory (ESmith & Bird, 2000; Zahavi & Zahavi, 1999) it is supposed that small DMs (vs. high DMs) attenuate the signaling value of prosocial transactions (Bénabou & Tirole, 2006). The rationale underlying this assumption is that prosocial actors are regarded more favorably the greater the sacrifices (e.g. by exerting more effort) they have to undertake big (Bigman & Tamir, 2016), signaling greater foregoing of personal interests in favor of public welfare (Leng et al., 2020). When companies bundle their products with contributions to charity, corresponding costs are usually passed on to consumers via the price and costs are shared in some way (Andrews et al., 2014). An increasing relative share of the donation in the product price should be interpreted by the customer as a greater financial sacrifice for the social cause and not for the product itself. Accordingly, the signaling value would increase and with it the appeal of talking about the purchase. Third, it was shown that when the DM is high, customers expect the social cause to benefit significantly more than when the DM is low (Dahl & Lavack, 1995). Simultaneously, a higher donation amount increases a donor's interest in others making a contribution as well (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). Thus, it can be assumed that CP increases with an increase in DM, because in addition to improved signaling value, it holds greater potential altruistic and egoistic benefits for WOM sharing, resulting from the expectation of better helping beneficiaries and experiencing a stronger warm glow feeling as discussed above.

2.3 Summary of the conceptual model and hypotheses development

The research framework is presented in Figure 2. The framework draws on findings of research on EPs and links them to literature on PB, and interpersonal communication.

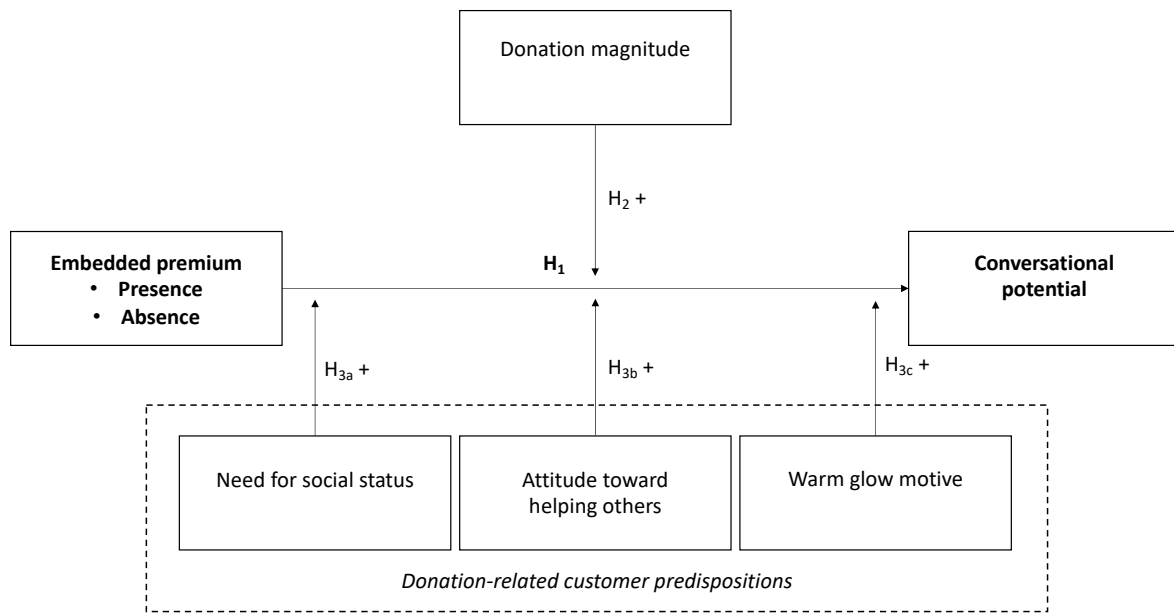


Figure 2. Research Framework.

From the literature review it appears that products that are associated with a social cause, in that they contain an incremental element of purchase-contingent donation (EP), are impure private goods that are of a mixed nature due to their aggregation of individual and collective interests and so possess unique properties. As these products are bundled with charity contributions, they enable consumers to act prosocially towards the beneficiaries of the donation through their behavior as consumers. Although this is not pure PB in the conventional sense, the motives known from research on PB are highly relevant to this study. The current consensus agrees on the interplay of three major motive categories driving PB, including extrinsic, intrinsic, and image motives. When applied to charity bundled products, the extrinsic motive refers to the utility derived from the product itself, the intrinsic motive refers to the contribution to society, which for the consumer carries an altruistic benefit of helping others, as well as an egoistic driven and positive warm glow emotion, whereas the image motive relates to the signaling value of making prosocial consumption visible to others. The conceptual model is based on the premise that WOM and its functions that appear to be complementary to the motives behind PB can serve as a means through which consumers can derive more utility from an EP promoted purchase. In other words, consumers can increase the utility they derive from an EP component through WOM over the utility that this component bears for them through purchase alone.

Impact of charity bundling on conversational potential

The key proposition is therefore that charity bundling holds additional CP, as consumers seek to use interpersonal communication to engage in impression management to advertise their good deeds and gain positive image effects, on the one hand, and to help the firm and persuade other consumers through WOM to also purchase, ultimately increasing the collective amount donated in the expectation of experiencing greater altruistic benefits and warm glow emotion, on the other. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H₁: A charity bundled product holds greater conversational potential than an identical unbundled alternative product.

Dependency of main effect from promotion depth

This study posits that CP varies with DM and that three dimensions can explain this variation. First, consumers evaluate companies more positively (in terms of other serving motives and CSR engagement) at higher DMs and are willing to reward them in return, with WOM being one potential way consumers engage in giving back to companies. Second, a high DM (vs. a low DM) signifies a greater sacrifice by the customer for the social cause relative to the product with which the cause is bundled. Following costly signaling theory, this translates to an increasing signaling value of the transaction, which in turn should increase the attractiveness of talking about the purchase in terms of image gains. Third, customers expect greater benefits for the beneficiaries of the social causes at higher donation levels. Since the collective donation amount can be increased more strongly by WOM persuasion at higher DMs than at lower DMs, there are greater potential altruistic and egoistic benefits for the WOM advocate, who expects more help for the social cause and stronger warm glow emotions at a higher DMs. Overall, an increasing DM should have a positive moderating effect on the link between charity bundling and CP. Thus:

H₂: The greater the donation magnitude, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

Effect heterogeneity across consumers with varying donation-related predispositions

Furthermore, we suggest that the relationship between the presence of an EP and CP is heterogenous across customers with varying donation-related customer predispositions.

First, we assume that the strength of the relation varies across consumers with different need for social status and that the effect is stronger for customers with a high need for social status. For this group of individuals, a prosocial public appearance is more important than for the group

with a low need for social status. Since WOM sharing on prosocial activities can increase perceived generosity and social status, the group that values this more highly should be particularly motivated to converse about prosocial purchases. In other words, the signaling value of charity linked products has a higher importance for this group of individuals. Since the conversion of signaling value to actual status gains ultimately depends on the observability of the good deed, and WOM represents one way by which consumers can publicize their prosocial consumption behavior, the higher relevance of the signaling value should have a reinforcing effect on the CP for individuals with a great need for social status. Hence:

H_{3a}: The stronger the customer's need for social status, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

Second, for a customer with a stronger attitude toward helping others, a charity linked product purchase should be perceived as more conducive to WOM communications than by a customer with a weaker attitude toward helping others. This will likely hold because persuading others through WOM and the associated potential increase in total social impact holds greater altruistic benefits for such a customer. Thus:

H_{3b}: The stronger the customer's attitude toward helping others, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

In line with the reflections on the attitude toward helping others, it is thirdly proposed that the warm glow motive also has an impact on the main effect. Persuading others through WOM likely holds greater CP for an individual with a stronger warm glow motive, as the accompanying increase in total social impact and greater perceived personal contribution raise the expectation of experiencing a warm glow, for which those individuals have a greater desire. So a greater personal contribution to the social cause (by causing further purchases or drawing attention to the problem through interpersonal communication) leads to greater egoistic benefits for these consumers than for consumers with a weaker warm glow motive, resulting in a varying slope across the two groups of individuals. Therefore:

H_{3c}: The stronger the customer's warm glow motive, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

3. Methodology

The aim of the study was to measure whether purchases that involve a social cause added on to the product (EP) have a higher CP than comparable purchases without EP promotion, and whether the strength of the predicted effect varies with the size of the DM and donation-related customer predispositions. This objective called for a quantitative research approach (Creswell, 2014). Since the study at hand was not concerned with trends, attitudes, or opinions but with testing the impact of the treatment (EP presence) on the outcome (CP) in isolation, an experimental design was applied (Creswell, 2014). Consequently, primary data were collected within the context of the experiment (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). The experimental setting was implemented through the online survey product Qualtrics, which made it straightforward to expose subjects to different stimuli and to collect data efficiently (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). One advantage of this alternative is that many participants can be recruited quickly and inexpensively (Reips, 2000, 2002), which is highly relevant given that this study was carried out as part of a master's thesis that was neither explicitly funded nor institutionally supported.

3.1 Experimental Design

The key independent variable in the study was the presence or absence of an EP – a purchase-contingent donation to charity added on to a product. Correspondingly, two levels (presence, absence) emerged, as the aim was to test whether the mere presence of an EP promotion makes products more conducive to WOM communication. Unlike the other independent variables, which belong to the group of customer predispositions and were included in the model to test for effect heterogeneity across consumers, DM was included to clarify under which implementation circumstances the effect is particularly strong. While the customer predispositions are relatively stable personal traits, the DM is a contextual variable and varies depending on how firms implement EP promotions, and was therefore not observed but manipulated in this experiment (Wu & Zumbo, 2008). The number of levels of the DM variable was also set at 2 (high and low) (such as in C.-T. Chang, 2008; Pracejus et al., 2003; Sabri, 2018), as more levels are usually only appropriate when non-monotonic relationships are assumed or when relationships are to be specified more precisely by means of non-linear functions (Koschate-Fischer & Schandelmeier, 2014), neither of which applied to this study. EP presence and EP absence were combined in an incomplete manner with high and low levels of DM, i.e., there was a combination of the EP presence level with both high and low DM, but not a combination of the latter two with the absence level of EP. After all, the absence of an EP

implies that the product does not feature a promised contribution to charity and thus logically excluded any associated manipulation with regard to a varying DM, which in this instance must have been kept constant at zero. Therefore, in the case of this study, it was not advisable to examine all possible interactions between the different levels of independent variables (Montgomery, 2008). Following this, the participants were allocated according to three conditions. The study employed a between-subjects design in which participants were randomly assigned to one of these conditions (Koschate-Fischer & Schandelmeier, 2014).

3.2 Variation of the independent variables

The following section describes how the independent variables were systematically varied and how the product selection and the donation framing were considered for stimuli development. The study employed a recall-based approach to vary the independent variables such that three conditions (EP absence, EP presence with low DM, and EP presence with high DM) were obtained. Participants were asked to recall a recent restaurant visit that they have enjoyed, that has cost about 20€ per person and where they have paid at least their fair share of the bill themselves. After having established the setting for the control condition (EP absence), the two scenarios for the EP presence were created in that the participants were asked to imagine, following a scenario technique (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 2002), that part (5% in the low and 25% in the high DM condition) of the bill incurred in the restaurant was donated to a social cause. The recall-based approach formerly undertaken by Bastos (2020) was selected and slightly modified, as both studies share a similar research setting. A disadvantage of that approach is that factors such as preexisting brand experiences and perceived neutrality of the firm's CSR reputation cannot be controlled as effectively as with fictional brands. The product selected was a visit to a restaurant, as an essential condition of the study was that the product is interesting and there exists at least some willingness to share WOM about the product (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). Restaurant visits are a topic that is regularly the subject of interpersonal conversation (Berger, 2014). In addition, the restaurant visit was suitable because for the scenario technique it is relevant that the participants are familiar with the context (Homburg, 2005). It is reasonable to assume that the average European consumer is familiar with the context of a restaurant visit. Moreover, EP promotions and related practices are not uncommon in the hospitality industry (Lee & Heo, 2009), as for instance Chipotle, Starbucks, Panera Bread, or McDonald's link their products with social causes, just to name a few (Kim et al., 2016). Finally, previous research has shown that EPs are more effective for frivolous than for utilitarian products and services (Strahilevitz, 1999; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), and restaurant visits are more likely to fall

into the first category. The epidemiological situation at the time of the experiment and its adverse effects on the industry argue against the selection of this product. It was further stipulated that the experience must have been a positive one in order for positive WOM to be assumed (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), as negative WOM is not to be investigated in this study. This restriction was intended to keep attitudes towards the recalled restaurants constant. The requirement that participants should think of a restaurant visit where they paid at least their own share of the bill was established, since it only counts as a purchase of a cause-related product and thus PB if there is some cost associated with it. The cost anchor (about 20€) was indicated to control for possible extraneous effects of different price levels. Regarding the determination of the DM levels, reference was made to previous studies suggesting that 5% of the product price should be perceived as low and 25% as relatively high (Arora & Henderson, 2007; C.-T. Chang, 2008, 2011; Folse et al., 2010; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; M Strahilevitz, 1999). To manipulate the DM, a percentage amount format was applied, which is commonly used in EP promotions (C.-T. Chang, 2008) and suits the vague price indication of the recall-based approach better than a fixed absolute amount format.

3.3 Pretest for selecting the charity organisation

Based on the notion that a proper fit between a company and a cause and its perceived importance are elementary for successful EP promotions (Lafferty et al., 2004; Deborah J. Webb & Mohr, 1998), a pretest was performed to identify an important and fitting cause for the predetermined purchase type “restaurant visit”. The pretest was carried out with 30 participants who evaluated 12 charities from 4 categories (Human Services, Health, Animal welfare, Environment; categories were selected as in Kim et al., 2016) in terms of their importance and fit with a restaurant they were asked to recall. The respondents assessed perceived cause importance and fit according to Robinson et al. (2012) measures by answering the questions “How important are the following causes to you?” (1 = “Not at all important”, and 7 = “Extremely important”, $M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.04$) and “How well do you think the following causes fit with that restaurant? The fit between a company and a cause means how well the two organizations connect, or appear to make sense together” (1 = “Extremely poor fit”, and 7 = “Extremely good fit”, $M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.64$). Overall, the pretest resulted in the “Local Food Bank” being selected as the charity for the experiment, as it had the highest combined score when aggregating both variables. In the pretest, it was stated that this charity collects surplus food and distributes it to people in need through local pantries.

3.4 Measurement of key variables

To measure the key variables only established scales from previous studies were used. A list of the construct items, their coefficient alpha values, and their respective sources can be reviewed in the appendix. Further variables are also included there, which are referred to in subsequent sections. As detailed in the appendix, the multi-item scales showed a pronounced internal consistency. The Cronbach's alphas exceeded the threshold of 0.8, which indicated high internal consistency without too much redundancy (Streiner, 2003). The total scores were formed by averaging the item scores.

To measure the dependent variable CP, the experiment adopted Bastos and Brucks's (2017) five-item scale (e.g. "That restaurant visit is a good topic to talk about."; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree; $\alpha = 0.89$).

The following scales were adopted to measure donation-related customer predispositions. An eight-item scale measured need for social status (e.g. "I would like to cultivate the admiration of my peers."; $\alpha = 0.81$, Flynn & Reagans, 2006), a four-item scale assessed attitude toward helping others (e.g. "People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate."; $\alpha = 0.86$; Webb et al., 2000), and a two-item scale determined warm glow motive (e.g. "I would feel good if I donated to charity."; $r = 0.61$; Taute & McQuitty, 2004). Participants were instructed to rate the extent to which they agreed with each of those items on seven-point scales with "Strongly Disagree" and "Strongly Agree" as anchors.

3.5 Participants and procedure

Participants completed the study using a web browser. The questionnaire was displayed in English and began with a screening question intended to exclude participants who did not meet the requirements to recall the desired purchase experience. Participants then reported how often they usually go out to eat in restaurants to control for affinity and expertise, which can affect propensity to share WOM (Berger, 2014). Next, the survey introduced the focal purchase. For this purpose, the participants read: "To begin with, I would like you to please recall and think of a pleasant restaurant visit you have made during the last 12 months that cost about 20€ and where you paid at least your fair share of the bill yourself. The restaurant visit should be one that turned out to be good and that you enjoyed." They were subsequently asked to briefly describe this experience in terms of a few characteristics (for example, type and taste of food, service, location, with whom they were there, vibe). These instructions were given to encourage participants to actually recall and think about the purchase. The further course of the

survey was determined by the random assignment of participants to one of three experimental conditions (EP absence [n = 44], EP presence with low DM [n = 45], EP presence with high DM [n = 47]). Those in the groups with EP presence were then described the following scenario: “From now on, imagine that at the time of the restaurant visit and still ongoing, the restaurant has committed to donating 5% [25%] of all proceeds to the Local Food Bank, a charity that collects surplus food and distributes it to socially and economically disadvantaged people through its local food pantries. So 5% [25%] of what you and others spend at that restaurant is contributed to this designated cause.” The participants in the EP absence group did not receive this statement. To ensure that participants in the control and treatment groups had actually imagined a restaurant visit with or without EP promotion, the survey included a manipulation check. Similar to Brown & Dacin (1997), participants were asked to assess whether there was an association between the restaurant and a social cause. Another manipulation check was conducted for the DM in both treatment conditions to verify whether participants actually perceived the high DM manipulation to be higher than the low DM manipulation (C.-T. Chang, 2008). In the following section, the dependent variable and the donation-related customer predispositions were recorded. Initially, the study assessed CP with the 5-item scale described earlier. Next, the need for social status, the attitude toward helping others, and the warm glow motive were measured. In a final section, sociodemographics were collected (Gender, Age, Country, Employment status, Income).

3.6 Sampling method and description

The target population was eurozone adult consumers aged 18-65 years. The observations resulted from a nonprobability, convenience sampling approach, allowing a sufficient number of participants to be reached in a short period of time (Fowler, 2009). The survey link was distributed via social media channels. Participation and forwarding was encouraged with the prospect of triggering a 1€ donation per completed questionnaire to ArbeiterKind.de, a non-profit organisation that promotes equal opportunities in education. The threat of a selection bias was deliberately accepted in favor of an adequate sample size. 14 observations were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete or contradictory responses. 8 participants were also excluded who indicated that they had not been able to recall an appropriate restaurant visit from the last 12 months, leaving a final data set containing 136 responses. Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample. To ensure that there was a balance between the experimental conditions with regards to respondent characteristics, the means of the independent variables were tested for significant differences. No significant differences were

found between the groups neither in terms of frequency of restaurant visits, donation-related customer predispositions, nor demographic characteristics, suggesting homogeneity across conditions. Furthermore, preliminary analyses showed that the frequency of restaurant visits and the sociodemographics had no influence on the results as control variables, which is why they were omitted from further analyses.

Demographic Variable	Level	Count	Share
Gender	Male	79	58%
	Female	57	42%
Age	18-23	15	11%
	24-29	51	38%
	30-39	42	31%
	40-65	28	21%
Nation	Germany	53	39%
	Italy	33	24%
	Spain	21	15%
	Other	17	13%
Employment status	Working full-time	76	56%
	Student	26	19%
	Working part-time	17	13%
	Other	17	13%
Income	500 € or lower	24	18%
	501 € - 1000 €	36	26%
	1001 € - 1500 €	30	22%
	More than 1500 €	46	34%

Table 1. Sample Demographics.

4. Results

The statistical computations were carried out in the R environment. The experimental design and the data collected on the chosen variables led to the selection of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent t-tests as the appropriate statistical methods (Hair et al., 2010). As these methods require homoscedasticity and a normal distribution of the residuals (Newbold et al., 2013), all groups to be compared were tested for these requirements. Various Levene-tests (Levene, 1960) confirmed homogeneous variances in the dependent variable across conditions and segments of respondents. Normality of residuals was also consistently given.

4.1 Manipulation Checks

An analysis of the manipulation check measures shows that the systematic variation of the two controlled independent variables (EP presence, DM) was successful. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of EP presence on participants' cause association with the restaurant visit they recalled ($F(2, 133) = 51.29$; $p < 0.001$). As intended, respondents associated the restaurant visit more strongly with a social cause in the EP presence + Low DM condition ($M = 5.77$; $SD = 0.80$) and the EP presence + High DM condition ($M = 5.65$; $SD = 0.93$) than in the EP absence condition ($M = 3.91$; $SD = 1.15$). A pairwise t-test applying the Bonferroni p-value adjustment method confirmed that the means of Cause Association in both EP presence groups were indeed significantly different from the mean in the EP absence group. In addition, participants perceived the 5% donation ($M = 3.82$; $S = 1.15$) as a significantly lower ($t(86.96) = -8.72$; $p < 0.001$) DM than the 25% donation ($M = 5.79$; $SD = 0.99$). Overall, it can be concluded that the scenario technique implemented resulted in a controlled and effective variation of the independent variables.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

4.2.1 Evidence for a positive main effect of EP presence on conversational potential

H₁: A charity bundled product holds greater conversational potential than an identical unbundled alternative product.

In support of H₁, the analysis confirms a positive main effect of charity bundling on CP. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of EP presence on the CP that respondents attributed to the purchase ($F(2,133) = 5.78$; $p < 0.001$). As expected, respondents perceived the purchase in the EP presence + Low DM condition ($M = 5.23$; $SD = 0.88$) and in the EP presence + High

DM condition ($M = 5.26$; $SD = 0.84$) to offer them greater CP than in the EP absence condition ($M = 4.73$; $SD = 0.73$). A pairwise t-test applying the Bonferroni p-value adjustment method confirmed that the means of CP in each of the EP presence groups were indeed significantly higher than the mean in the EP absence group. The graphical illustration of the effect is presented in Figure 3.

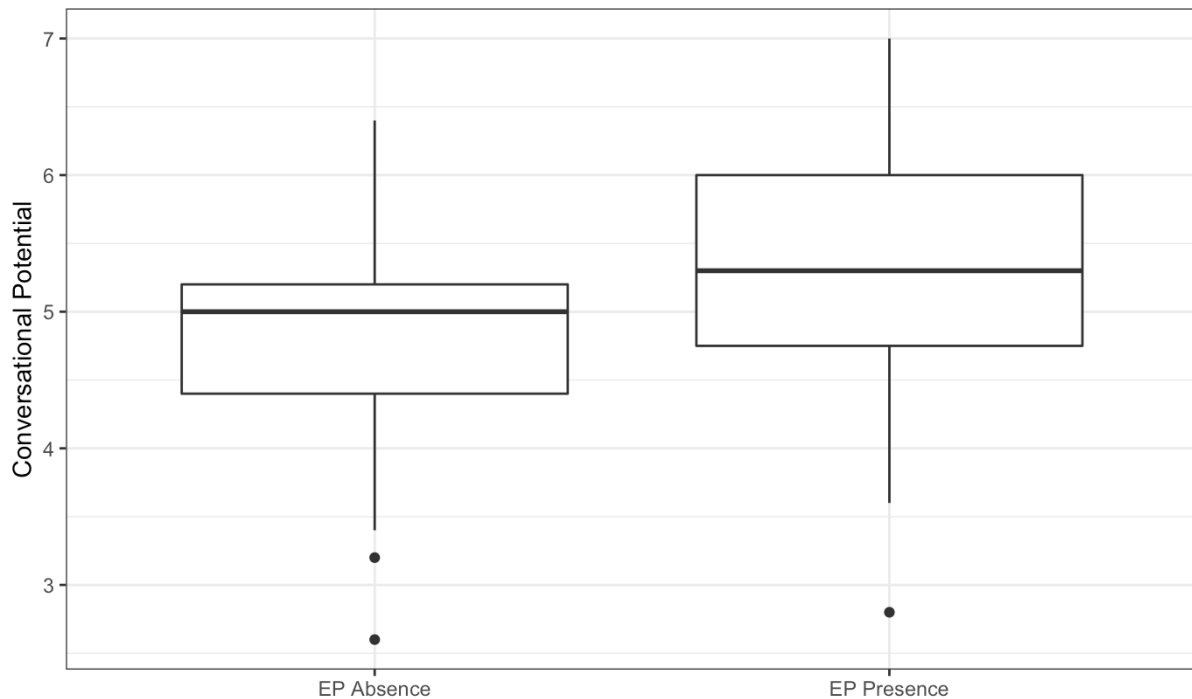


Figure 3. Boxplot on the impact of EP promotions on the conversational potential.

4.2.2 Independence of conversational potential from donation magnitude levels

H₂: The greater the donation magnitude, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

As Figure 4 tends to indicate and further analysis confirm, no significant effect for the DM of an EP promotion on CP can be found. Accordingly, H₂ cannot be confirmed. Since only the two EP presence groups were compared, an independent sample t-test was sufficient to test the hypothesis. The t-test found that there was no significant difference ($t(89.27) = -0.13$; $p > 0.05$) in CP between the EP presence + Low DM condition ($M = 5.23$; $SD = 0.88$) and the EP Presence + High DM condition ($M = 5.26$; $SD = 0.84$). It can be concluded that CP is likely to be invariant to promotion depth in a 5% versus 25% setting. Apparently, the mere presence of

a promised contribution to charity, regardless of the magnitude of that donation, is sufficient to positively impact CP.

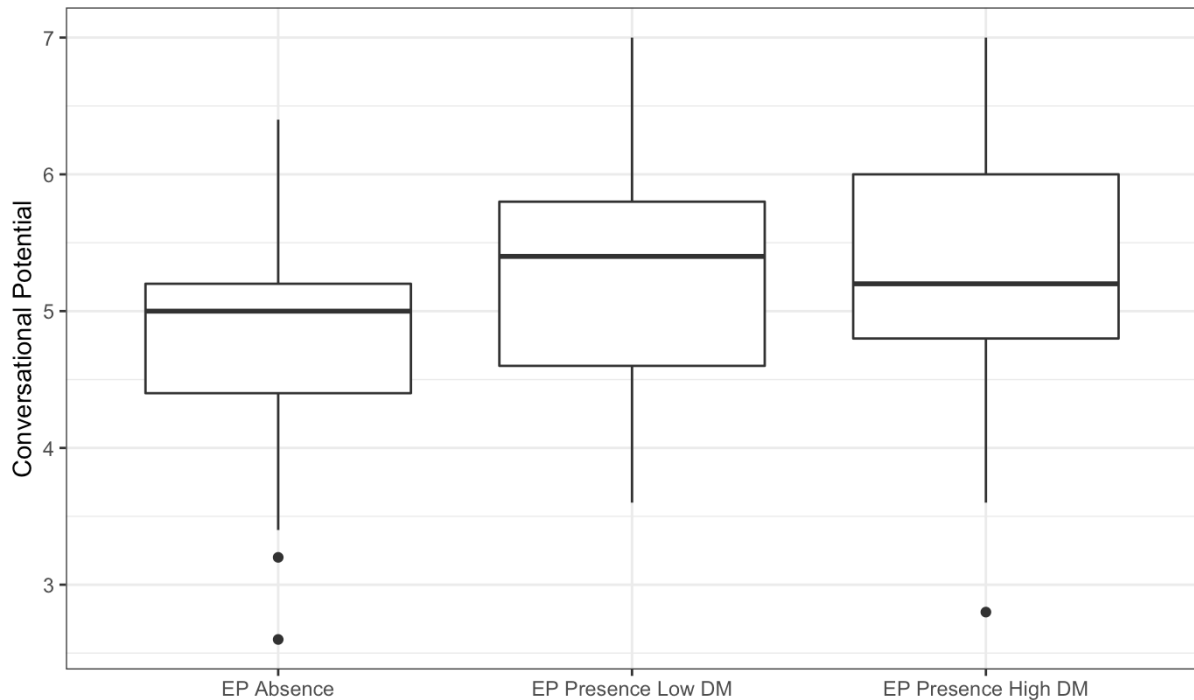


Figure 4. Boxplot on the conversational potential by all experimental conditions.

4.2.3 Effect heterogeneity across consumers

H_{3a}: The stronger the customer’s need for social status, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

H_{3b}: The stronger the customer’s attitude toward helping others, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

H_{3c}: The stronger the customer’s warm glow motive, the greater is the conversational potential for a product linked with a social cause.

In order to investigate whether the EP effect is heterogenous across individuals with different levels of need for social status, attitude towards helping others, and warm glow motive, dummy variables were created for each of these constructs. Applying a median split, participants could be divided into those with low or high levels on these traits.

To begin with H_{3a}, it can be observed that among individuals in the conditions where the purchase was linked with a social cause, those with a high need for social status assigned on

average a significantly higher CP to the purchase compared to those with a low need for social status (5.46 versus 5.04; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the data shows that respondents in the EP presence groups with above-median need for social status reported significantly higher CP scores than the control group as such (5.46 versus 4.73; $p < 0.001$), whereas those with below-median need for social status do not (5.04 versus 4.73; $p > 0.05$). Taken together, it can be stated that, in line with H_{3a}, for consumers with a stronger need for social status, a charity-linked product holds more CP. In addition, the main effect of charity bundling on CP seems to only hold for this group of individuals, but not for those with a low need for social status.

If these results are considered jointly with the graphical illustration of the inequality in the slopes (see Figure 5), one would assume an ordinal interaction effect. However, this effect is not statistically significant according to an N-way ANOVA ($F(7, 128) = 0.82$; $p > 0.05$). This does not mean that the effect is non-existent in the population (there seems to be at least an interaction tendency), but that there is not enough statistical power for this data set to reject the respective null hypothesis.

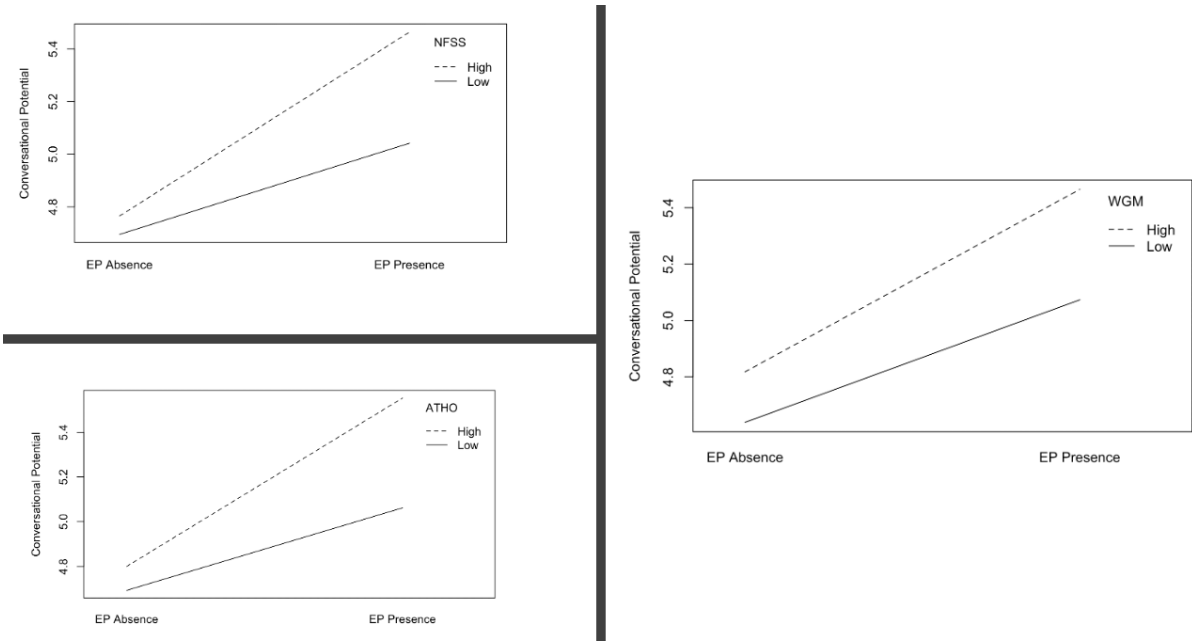


Figure 5. Interaction plot for effect heterogeneity across donation-related customer predispositions.

To proceed with H_{3b}, it can be observed that among individuals in the conditions with EP presence, those with a strong attitude toward helping others assigned on average a significantly higher CP to the purchase compared to those with a weak attitude toward helping others (5.55 versus 5.06; $p < 0.01$). In addition, analysis shows that respondents in the EP presence groups,

both those with an above-median attitude toward helping others reported significantly higher CP scores than the control group itself (5.55 versus 4.73; $p < 0.001$), and likewise those with a below-median need for social status (5.06 versus 4.73; $p < 0.05$). In essence, consistent with H_{3b} , a charity-related product holds more CP for a consumer with a strong attitude toward helping others. Furthermore, and in contrast to the previous statements on the need for social status, the main effect is shown to be significantly positive for individuals with both above and below median attitudes towards helping others. As before, the comparison of the means and the interaction plot (again, see Figure 5) also indicate a clear tendency, although the interaction term of the N-way ANOVA is not significant here either ($F(7, 128) = 0.93$; $p > 0.05$). Given enough statistical power, the interaction effect would probably be significant, as the slopes of the lines clearly deviate from each other.

To finish with H_{3c} , it can be observed that among individuals in the conditions with EP presence, those with a strong warm glow motive assigned on average a significantly higher CP to the purchase compared to those with a weak warm glow motive (5.47 versus 5.07; $p < 0.05$). In addition, analysis shows that respondents in the EP presence groups, both those with an above-median warm glow motive reported significantly higher CP scores than the control group itself (5.47 versus 4.73; $p < 0.001$), and likewise those with a below-median warm glow motive (5.07 versus 4.73; $p < 0.05$). In summary and supporting H_{3b} , for consumers with a strong warm glow motive, charity-bundled products offer more CP than for consumers with a comparatively weaker warm glow motive. It should be noted that the main effect here is also significantly consistent for both segments. As with the other donation-related customer predispositions, the results and the interaction plot (again, see Figure 5) also indicate an interaction tendency, albeit an apparently weaker one, which, however, does not show statistical significance according to the N-way ANOVA ($F(7,128) = 0.01$; $p > 0.05$).

5. Conclusion

5.1 Discussion of the results and contributions

The main objective of this study was to address the research question of whether purchases with promised contributions to charity are particularly conducive to interpersonal conversations, and thus at an advantage in terms of positive WOM activity, when compared to their identical alternatives without a cause association. Considering the wide variation in the size of such donations relative to the price of the products with which they are bundled with in practice, and its direct influence on the contribution margin of the market offerings, the question inevitably arose as to whether the CP varies with this central manipulable factor or not. The study was also interested in whether the effect is heterogeneous across consumers and whether certain consumers are therefore particularly sensitive. In this context, the study focused on donation-related customer predispositions as varying consumer characteristics. Methodology-wise, a between-subjects experimental design was implemented through an online survey to expose adult European respondents to the stimuli applying a recall-based approach. The focal purchase was a past restaurant visit where participants in the treatment groups were asked to imagine that this purchase was linked to a donation to a local charity, with the DM corresponding to either 5% or 25% of the price. The dependent variable CP and the donation-related customer predispositions (need for social status, attitude toward helping others, and warm glow motive) were measured using established multi-item scales.

Summarizing the findings, this study offers initial evidence that consumers indeed attribute higher CP to a purchase that is framed as if it contains a charitable donation (impure private good) than if it does not contain such a donation element (standard private good). In other words, purchases that involve a social cause, and thus consumption opportunities through which consumers can get prosocially engaged, offer additional CP and are perceived by consumers as more conducive to WOM conversations and preferred as a topic of conversation, as opposed to the same consumption choice without such a prosocial component. However, based on the data collected, no inferences can be made about the exact motivational aspects driving this effect. Apart from this, it was found that the size of the DM has no influence on the effect size or direction, and thus the main effect is invariant to the promotion depth. With regard to CP, it therefore appears that the mere presence of the embedded premium (EP) promotion is sufficient to bear additional CP, regardless of whether this donation is rather small or large relative to the price of the product or service. Coming back to the reasons behind the effect occurrence, as said before, no reliable inferences can be made, however, certain tendencies emerge that justify

cautious assumptions. The segmentation of the participants into groups in which individual character traits related to prosocial consumption were strongly or weakly pronounced indicate that there is a noticeable tendency toward effect heterogeneity across people. The patterns suggest that the stronger the consumers' need for social status, attitude toward helping others, and warm glow motive, the greater the CP for charity-linked products. These inconsistencies in the effect size indicate to some extent that the concepts drawn on in the literature review, namely that the additional CP could be driven on the one hand by a desire for a better image that WOM serves through prosociality signaling (costly signaling theory), and also by the aspiration of consumers to share WOM to draw attention to the social cause in order to ultimately gain altruistic benefits and warm glow emotions (impure altruism concept), are possibly jointly relevant for the effect occurrence.

With regard to the findings, some academic contributions are worth noting. First, and most importantly, the study extends the literature on transaction-contingent corporate donations to a new domain – that of WOM. This work demonstrates that, in addition to well-studied transactional benefits such as higher purchase intentions and willingness to pay, impure private goods, i.e., standard private goods with a public good enhancement added on to them, also can have advantages in terms of the conversational value they provide to consumers and ultimately to businesses. The study thereby makes an initial effort to examine the charity bundling business practice at an interface between what are actually rather separate research fields - namely PB, which is primarily studied in psychology and economics, and WOM communication, which is by contrast a marketing research issue. Moreover, the finding that, with regard to the CP of impure private goods, it is not the size of the DM that seems to be decisive, but rather the simple presence of an EP and the resultant prosocial act of consumption, also validates previous work in thematically related research publications that also found target variables to be invariant to promotion depth (Arora & Henderson, 2007; Baron, 1997). Furthermore, because this study examined interaction effects with individual character traits and observed interaction tendencies, it also responded to calls in the literature for more studies on how individual predispositions influence consumer behavior towards EP promotions (C.-T. Chang, 2008). The results imply that the customer's need for social status, attitude toward helping others, and warm glow motive are influential in this regard. This further underpins the co-existence of both selfish and altruistic motives in PB and their utility in explaining consumer behavior towards charity linked products.

What we already know from the PB context, and what this study confirms to some extent, is that prosocial actors, be it a donor or a consumer of an impure private good, seek conspicuous

means to draw attention to their good deeds. From the perspective of the marketing practitioners, the fact that charity bundled products are probably more conducive to WOM conversations, is beneficial because it provides an opportunity to receive more buzz on products and to draw attention to prosocial firm behavior without having to actively advertise it themselves. “Similar to individuals, corporations can benefit from being perceived as generous” (Berman et al., 2015, p. 101). The intuition here is that it is probably more favorable for firms if the customers brag on their behalf about the CSR activities of the companies than if they themselves have to heavily advertise their CSR behavior and run the increased risk of being suspected of persuading the customers (M. C. Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994). Since consumers appear to be interested in informing others about their prosocial consumption behavior, companies would be well advised to offer innovative ways to allow customers to broadcast their charity linked purchases. The most effective approaches may be those in which customers not only report their purchases, but also have the opportunity to recruit others to do the same, as this can signal an altruistic justification for the brag and reduce suspicion about their motives (Berman et al., 2015). The general recommendation, however, that companies should simply bundle one or more of their offerings with donations in order to get more positive WOM cannot simply be stated as such. In fact, “firms walk a fine line between reaping increased sales, goodwill and positive publicity, and incurring negative publicity and charges of exploitation of cause” (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). What can be expected, though, is that if companies want to increase positive WOM through EP promotions, then the DMs don't have to be very high, but small ratios are enough, which ultimately also translate to lower costs. It is assumed that the DM is not so relevant for the consumers, because the responsibility for the amount determination lies with the companies and the customers might not feel accountable for it. Rather the possibility to make a small contribution at all through consumption may be decisive. Finally, it can be recommended that a market that has a high need for social status, attitude towards helping others, or warm glow motives is probably particularly responsive for generating positive WOM occurrences through EP promotions.

5.2 Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations.

Starting with the selection of the focal purchase, it must be admitted that many products that are promoted with an EP are conspicuous in their appearance and the restaurant visit in this study is rather not. The issue here is that consumers of conspicuous prosocial products, such as TOMS Shoes or Product Red products, are already informing others that they have done a good

deed simply by displaying those products in public without having to converse about them. Since other people in such situations already know about an actor's good deed, a WOM conversation can backfire because it does not provide any new information but instead raises skepticism about the true motives and thus might even reduce CP (Berman et al., 2015). It is therefore assumed that the results cannot be easily generalized to this type of products. A comparison between conspicuous and inconspicuous prosocial products would be interesting. Perhaps these products are so successful precisely because of their conspicuousness, which makes bragging in the form of WOM redundant. The results also lack generalizability because only one product category was covered in the experiment, and restaurant visits are considered experiences rather than tangible products and therefore have additional unique characteristics (Bastos & Brucks, 2017). The recall of a single restaurant visit also has the disadvantage that this single restaurant visit may have had idiosyncrasies (such as high intimacy) that particularly affected CP. The expectation was that these uncontrolled effects would be balanced across a larger number of participants. A prospective study should consider a diverse range of product categories. In addition, the sample size has to be examined critically and in particular the median split technique used to divide the participants into numerous groups due to their different characteristics of donation-related customer predispositions. Possibly the insignificance of the interaction terms is related to both points of criticism. What further negatively affects the generalizability of the results was the allocation of the costs incurred by the EP promotion to the restaurant company, although in reality the costs for the donation are often at least shared or the customer bears the costs entirely (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016). It could be that with an existing market offer, a price increase due to an EP promotion launch even has a detrimental effect on the CP, because the customers possibly attribute selfish and profit-oriented motives to the company. A further limitation lies in the way WOM was measured. First, WOM occurrence was measured in terms of CP, i.e., how conducive participants perceive the product to be for conversations, but no actual WOM behavior was observed. A more precise assessment and conclusion about the idea that prosocial products receive particularly high WOM would, for example, require an experimental design where participants actually make a choice among various market offerings for a subsequent conversation. CP was also viewed as an output, but not how reliant others are on it, i.e., how great the social influence is. However, that would be very interesting given the charitable dimension of the topic. Furthermore, it could not be determined whether the higher CP is limited to a certain group of WOM addressees, for example closer acquaintances. Besides, the static experimental design also does not provide information about the development of CP over time,

i.e., whether charity-linked purchases are only the subject of immediate or also ongoing conversations. Furthermore, since the experiment was not based on a mediation approach, no reliable statements can be made about the drivers behind the increased CP. The inclusion of an open-ended question asking for the reasons why the participants would share WOM on this purchase would have been an initial attempt to get closer to the actual motives. Although this study assumed that the model applies to both online and offline conversations, it would be interesting to see whether, for example, social media channels are particularly suitable. At the time of the study, social media users of well-known platforms were able to integrate donation bars in their status information to largely broadcast that they had donated to a charitable organization and to encourage others to do the same. This again points to the importance of observability in PB and underlines the motivation behind this research project. Finally, regardless of how WOM on prosocial consumption is motivated, companies, charitable organisations, and people among themselves should encourage each other to speak proudly and openly about their prosocial deeds so that ultimately a culture of giving and a culture of more equitable wealth distribution can be fostered.

Appendix

Scales Used for Variable Measurement

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Coefficient Alpha</i>	<i>Selected Sources</i>
(1) Conversational Potential	That restaurant visit makes for a good conversation afterwards. I want to talk to others about that restaurant visit. That restaurant visit is a good topic to talk about. I desire to talk to people about that restaurant visit. I feel excited about telling others about that restaurant visit.	.89	Bastos & Brucks (2017)
(2) Need for social status	I want my peers to respect me and hold me in high esteem. I am not concerned with my status among my peers. Being a highly valued member of my social group is important to me. I would like to cultivate the admiration of my peers. I enjoy having influence over other people's decision making. It would please me to have a position of prestige and social standing. I don't care whether others view me with respect and hold me in esteem. I care about how positively others view me.	.81	Flynn & Reagans (2006)
(3) Attitude toward helping others	People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate. Helping troubled people with their problems is very important to me. People should be more charitable toward others in society. People in need should receive support from others.	.86	Webb et al. (2000)
(4) Warm glow motive	I would feel good if I donated to charity. I would feel bad if I didn't donate to charity even though I had the chance.	.61 (P. Correlation)	Taute & McQuitty (2004)
(5) Cause Association	That restaurant visit involves a social cause. That restaurant visit is more beneficial to society's welfare than other restaurant visits. That restaurant visit contributes something to society.	.83	Brown & Dacin (1997)
(6) Perceived Donation Level	Do you perceive a 5% (25%) donation to be a low or high donation magnitude in this situation?	-	C.-T. Chang (2008)
(7) Perceived Cause Importance	How important is the following cause to you?	-	Robinson et al. (2012)
(8) Perceived Fit	How well do you think the following cause fits with the company?	-	Robinson et al. (2012)

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