CAUSE EXHAUSTION: HOW THE LOSS OF POTENCY AFFECTS BRAND ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS

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MELANIE L. BUFORD

Dr. Paul Bolls, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

**CAUSE EXHAUSTION: HOW THE LOSS OF POTENCY AFFECTS BRAND ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS**

Presented by Melanie Buford,

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

______________________________
Professor Paul Bolls

______________________________
Professor Glenn Leshner

______________________________
Professor Kevin Wise

______________________________
Professor Antonie Stam
DEDICATION

This thesis was an interesting project. It was an assignment that offered me the opportunity to do one of the most difficult things I have ever done to date. There was a handful of individuals who consistently supported me throughout this roller coaster of a ride they call grad school. It would not be right if I did not attempt to name every one of them. The following people made the past year and half possible, because without them, there were so many opportunities that I would have forgotten to eat, sleep and most importantly shower.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study explored the relationship between a consumer’s perceived frequency with which a cause is featured in cause-related marketing and brand-related attitudes and intentions – an important issue in a time when consumers are looking to align themselves with socially conscious companies. Research has found that consumers expect companies to dedicate some of their time or profits to helping others (Edelman Public Relations, 2010). Cause-related marketing is a growing trend in the industry because marketers are responding to this consumer insight and implementing the strategy. According to a prediction by IEG, marketers dedicated over $1.55 billion to cause-related marketing campaigns in 2009 alone (“Sponsorship Spending,” 2009). While cause-related marketing has been prevalent in advertising for half a century, the frequency in which companies depend on the strategy is rapidly increasing (“Sponsorship Spending,” 2009).

In the past, literature has explored concepts that relate to specific message features in cause-related marketing executions. Some of the most prominently studied areas are fit between the cause and the brand (Lafferty, Goldsmith, Thomas, & Hult, 2004; Shruti & Julie, 2006), familiarity of cause and brands, (Lafferty, et al., 2004), and type of causes: disaster vs. ongoing (Cui, Trent, Sullivan, & Matiru, 2003; Ellen et al., 2000). In order to stay ahead of the potential effects of this type of advertising, researchers and industry professionals need a better understanding of how cause-related marketing messages affect consumers.
Cause-related marketing takes place when a company engages in communications that leverage its contributions to a cause for self-promotion and financial gain (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Polonsky and Speed offer an overarching description of cause-related marketing: it “is commercially motivated and involves the ‘giving’ firm acquiring and leveraging the right to be associated with the recipient” (2001 p. 1365). Although cause-related marketing strategies are often executed with messages that focus around donations to a cause per transaction (Kotler & Lee 2005), companies are also donating a fixed amount and leveraging branding from the cause in their communications much like they would in a sponsorship (Polonsky & Speed, 2001).

At its core, cause-related marketing is an emotional advertising strategy that seeks to connect consumers with brands that care about things that are important to them. Marketers are attempting to find something in common with the consumers outside of the fact that they need or want their products or services. Cause-related marketing can be explained by the classical conditioning theory. With this theoretical framework, cause-related marketing works because companies pair conditioned stimuli (CS), like heartfelt causes that are familiar to consumers, with unconditioned stimuli (US), like brands for which a new affective association is hoping to be built, to transfer their attitudes from the CS to US. For example, Pampers (US) recently ran a campaign featuring messages about partnering with Unicef (CS), an international organization that helps meet the basic needs of children. The cause-related marketing messages focused on Pampers giving children the vaccinations they need with the “1 Pack = 1 Vaccine” campaign (Zammit, 2008). The emotional messages throughout the 60-second television spots used phrases that gave nurturing mothers a reason to care about this cause that did not affect their own children.
but children much like their own who were suffering from inadequate health care. With this theoretical base, researchers would hypothesize that most likely the positive attitudes around the good deed or cause (CS) transferred to the consumers’ attitudes toward brand (US).

**Cause-Related Marketing Background**

Cause-related marketing has been a rising trend in the advertising industry from its onset in marketing solutions in the 1950s (Carroll, 1999). Literature evaluating cause-related marketing has evolved from simply defining the new type of advertising in the 1960s to relating cause-related marketing to other business related themes including business ethics theory and corporate citizenship (Carroll, 1999). Today, interest has peaked in regards to research that explains the role of marketers in highlighting corporate social responsibility through cause-related marketing campaigns (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005). It is vital for non-profits to explore other ways, like a cause-related marketing strategy, to gain financial support with the ever-changing landscape of donations and the economy (Basil & Herr, 2003).

Today, cause-brand alliances and cause-related marketing are the buzzwords of advertising and public relations (Lafferty, Goldsmith, Tomas, & Hult, 2004). Not only do consumers expect brands to be involved in socially responsible activities through monetary donations, they believe that cause support needs to be integrated into the brand’s business objectives as well (Carroll, 1999; Edelman Public Relations, 2010). Consumer attitudes seem to be shifting such that they expect more than product assortment in their stores, they expect socially responsible agents that can help them, help
others (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000). Expert Carol Cone discussed the rise of the citizen consumer: “Americans seek a deeper involvement in social issues and expect brands and companies to provide various means of engagement,” (Forbes, 2010).

Social responsibility is the overarching umbrella that encompasses cause-related marketing. In its most simple conceptualization, social responsibility consists of activities where brands align with causes or non-profit organizations (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005; Deshpande & Hitchon, 2002). In the past, cause-related marketing has been a short-term solution but now this marketing strategy is essential for marketers in differentiating themselves from other companies (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005; Werder, 2008).

Deshpande and Hitchon propose that the difference between brand advertising and cause-related marketing is that the focus of cause-related marketing is on emphasizing the good deed of the brand rather than just highlighting the functional benefits of choosing a particular product (2002). For example, in the past Diet Coke® partnered with the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health in order to draw attention to the risks of heart disease in women (Business Wire, 2010). While the product is featured in the campaign, the message content focuses primarily on the “Heart Truth,” encouraging women to celebrate healthy choices like maintaining a healthy weight by exercising and managing their calorie consumption (Business Wire, 2010).

Other cause-related marketing campaigns just like the Diet Coke® example, give consumers the ability to take part in a win-win situation. Not only can consumers buy products they want and benefit from, but also the products they purchase can help others too. Ultimately, the cause-related purchase leaves the consumer feeling positively about the transaction, because they helped someone in need (Strahilevitz & Meyers, 1998).
Cause-related marketing bundles gift-giving and product/service attributes into one item (Deshpande & Hitchon, 2002). Now, contributing to a cause has become a much simpler process. Consumers are drawn to companies that contribute on their behalf, because they have one less decision they have to make in order to help others around them (Deshpande & Hitchon, 2002).

In cause-related marketing, the types of gifts or contributions the brands can make in cause-brand alliances are vast. The company may give tangible gifts like products or intangible gifts like advertising, employee time, or company services (Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000). Cause-related marketing programs can benefit the brand significantly. Keller and Hoeffler identified six brand equity benefits companies acquire from well-implemented cause-related marketing programs: “building brand awareness, enhancing brand image, establishing brand credibility, evoking brand feelings, creating a sense of brand community, and eliciting brand engagement,” (2002). While consumers may not be able to identify the benefits brands gain from cause-related marketing programs, the lack of understanding about the what the brand gains is an underlying reason why consumers sway toward skepticism when it comes to cause-related marketing programs. Werder (2008) proposes that potential issues with these types of initiatives are that consumers often make the assumption that company donations to the cause will be inadequate because companies are not donating for the sake of doing good, but to increase their sales. This skepticism is relevant in consumer attitudes about cause-related marketing. However, according to a study conducted by Edelman Public Relations (2010), consumers continue to rank social purpose for brands as their number one deciding factor when choosing a brand despite previous research that has been discussed.
Implications of Increased Use of Cause-Related Marketing

With the continued growing popularity of cause-related marketing campaigns, skepticism of company intentions will just be one of the many concerns marketers will need to address as they form these programs. Cause-related marketing campaigns at one time were a strategy for selling products or ideas. As the strategy becomes more and more prevalent in advertising today, there is a concern that cause-related marketing will transition into a theme of people’s everyday lives. As this transition occurs, marketers have to be skeptical of their own cause-related marketing campaigns for fear of bombarding the consumer with too many cause-related messages. Just with any other trend, there will be some brands that will recreate historically successful cause-related marketing programs. Ultimately, this will increase the likelihood that many brands will use the same causes throughout their campaigns and create an environment where causes may not resonate as well as they once did.

This is the type of environment in which the researcher proposes that cause exhaustion, a new concept, could potentially occur. This concept questions previous research and the validity of claiming that cause-related marketing is always a good strategy for companies. The researcher theorizes that there is a critical point in which consumers may become exhausted by a seeing a cause featured in advertising repeatedly. More specifically defined, cause exhaustion occurs when messages feature causes that are used in cause-related marketing campaigns to frequently and in essence lose their emotional potency with a consumer.

During the past 50 years, researchers have gone from solely defining this relatively new emotional strategy to immersing themselves in the effects of cause-related
marketing campaigns on consumers and how to best develop messages to reach them. In the beginning, cause-related marketing campaigns were viewed as advertising that always had positive results. This is because marketers were doing something good, so consumers responded positively. Today researchers have identified cause-related marketing message features that have a positive influence on brand attitudes. However, research still concludes that cause-related marketing is good strategy regardless of the effectiveness of a specific message feature; research has found that consumers generally reward companies for doing good (Shruti & Julie, 2006). This study raises questions about the logic of this argument in the long run. Researchers in other sectors of advertising have identified that with all things equal, seeing a message over and over again can cause consumers to experience message “wearout” (Hitchon & Thorson, 1995). In television advertising, researchers have committed resources to understanding this phenomenon. Literature in this area defines three message views as the threshold for influencing consumer perceptions (Hitchon & Thornson, 1995). After that point, consumers begin to feel exhausted by the message.

With these findings, researchers and industry professionals should have concerns about supporting the notion that regardless of any other message feature, consumers will always reward companies for doing good. This study does not suggest that consumers will feel negatively about a brand when a high frequency cause is used, but rather offers speculation about the positive effects a brand can experience when high-frequency causes, defined as specific causes that brands extremely frequently attempt to associate with in cause related marketing efforts, are used. The study investigated whether or not there may be a point of cause exhaustion at which the transfer of positive affect evoked
by a cause and a perceived good deed on the part of the brand weakens. The rationale was that seeing a cause over and over again in cause-related marketing messages would exhaust consumers and ultimately the message would no longer have the same emotional effect on consumers.

This study was important to researchers because it intended to revise the claims that previous studies have made about the effectiveness of all cause-related marketing messages. While some studies attempted to refine the literature in this area, there still is an important discussion to have about whether or not good deeds would always be rewarded. For industry professionals, if cause exhaustion exists, partnering with high-frequency causes could be a poor use of limited advertising resources. Through this study, the researcher intended to inform the general effectiveness of cause-related marketing as an advertising strategy and to offer insight into the potential effects of cause exhaustion on consumer brand attitudes and intentions.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Cause-related marketing is when a company engages in communications that leverage its contributions to a cause for self-promotion and financial gain (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). This commercially motivated strategy is based on the “giving” organization “leveraging the right to be associated with the recipient” or cause (Polonsky & Speed, 2001, p. 1365). This study proposed that there is a significant relationship between consumers’ perceived frequency that a cause is featured in cause-related marketing and the potency of this emotional effect on consumers. More specially, the researcher suggests that there is a critical point in which consumers become exhausted by a cause that the consumer perceived to appear frequently in these types of campaigns. This study introduced a concept called cause exhaustion. Cause exhaustion occurred when messages feature causes that are used in cause-related marketing campaigns extremely frequently and in essence lose their emotional potency with a consumer. This study sought to understand the following relationships.

RQ1: How does the perceived frequency with which a cause is featured in cause-related marketing affect brand-related attitudes and intentions?

Previous Findings in Cause-Related Marketing Research

Researchers have conducted several studies that set out to understand the following components of cause-related marketing: (a) type of causes: disaster vs. ongoing, (b) fit between the cause and brand, (c) familiarity of cause and brands, and (d) beliefs, attitudes, and purchase intentions.
Disaster vs. Ongoing Causes

Type of cause is a decision that brand managers have made when developing cause-related marketing campaigns. In previous studies, researchers have studied the importance of national versus local causes and disaster versus ongoing causes for consumers (Cui, Trent, Sullivan, & Matiru, 2003; Ellen et al., 2000). The findings suggest that there is not a significant difference when brand managers choose a local or national cause for the cause-related marketing campaign (Cui et al., 2003). However, consumers did identify a significant difference in their evaluations of disaster versus ongoing causes (Ellen et al., 2000). Consumers felt more positively toward brands that helped disaster causes through donations and other efforts than ongoing causes (Ellen et al., 2000, Cui et al., 2003).

Fit Between the Cause and Brand

One of the most researched areas in cause-related marketing literature is the relationship between causes and brands and how congruent the fit is. Conceptually, fit refers to the degree which consumers believe the cause-brand alliance “makes sense.” Researchers have tried to determine if greater fit translates into greater response in attitude or purchase intention toward the brand. Research collectively found that a higher fit between the cause and the brand, most often results in a more successful cause-related marketing campaign than a low fit cause-brand alliance (Lafferty, Goldsmith, Thomas, & Hult, 2004; Shruti & Julie, 2006). Consumers have a more positive attitude toward cause-related marketing when the fit is high and their behavioral intention or purchase intention is ultimately affected by the pairing (Shruti & Julie, 2006). It is important to note that
there are not any consistent findings that show that a low cause-brand fit means consumers will not like the brand (attitude) or not purchase the product (purchase intention). Almost always, consumers will reward the brand’s good deeds regardless of how they perceive the fit between the brand and cause (Shruti & Julie, 2006). An example of a good brand-cause fit is between St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital and Disney (Shruti & Julie, 2006). Disney’s products and services are centered on a child’s experience with the brand. Therefore both organizations have a strong interest in children and together create a strong brand-cause fit relationship. An example of a poor fit with St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital would be Starbucks. Not only does Starbucks offer products that are irrelevant to children, their corporate social responsibility actions in the past have been related to fair-trade and coffee bean farmers. Therefore, the two organizations do not have similar interests in common and create a poor brand-cause fit relationship.

**Importance of Familiarity of Causes and Brands**

Familiarity is a key in any marketing campaign. If a customer does not know or recognize a brand, marketers have to do more than convince them to buy a product or service. In addition, advertising professionals have to raise awareness about the brand name. Causes and brands alike can have familiarity in consumers’ minds. Brand familiarity normally stems from consumer use of a product or a service (Lafferty et al., 2004). Cause familiarity comes from repetition of seeing the cause. It is important to note that cause familiarity is most often not a direct result of volunteering or benefiting from the organization. Lafferty, et al. found that often consumers do not experience the cause
first hand (2004). The experience they have with a cause is from their interest in helping others, who they may or may not know, that are dealing with the issue (Lafferty et al., 2004).

When the brand or cause is unfamiliar to consumers, the unfamiliar entity can benefit from pairing with a familiar and favorable brand or cause (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005; Lafferty, et al., 2004). The unfamiliar brand or cause acts as a brand extension from the positive brand or cause raising awareness of the brand or cause with the consumer and their perceptions of the brand or cause (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2009; Lafferty, et al., 2004).

Causes that are highly familiar with consumers have an upper hand in the cause-brand alliance negotiating process (Lafferty, et al., 2004). Lafferty, et al. found that highly familiar causes have the ability to elevate consumer attitudes towards the brands they partner with (2004). This finding is consistent with the classical conditioning theory, which will be discussed later in the chapter. This is why many brands are partnering with the same causes, because those causes have already proven that they have a special spot in consumers’ hearts. This study attempted to identify if cause exhaustion exists regardless of familiarity of the cause.

**Beliefs, Attitudes, and Purchase Intentions**

Kotler and Lee suggest that one of the many reasons companies decide to use cause-related marketing is to enhance their brand image and status among socially responsible consumers or what Carol Cone of Edelman Public Relations refers to as the “citizen consumer” (Kotler & Lee, 2005; Forbes, 2010). In order for a brand to enhance
its image and status, consumer attitudes must either be formed or changed. In its simplest form, an attitude is “an evaluation of an object of thought” (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). It is these attitudes that ultimately can influence action and are most often favorable or unfavorable (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). With this foundation for attitude, researchers can use theories like classical conditioning to explain how attitudes ultimately influence consumers’ evaluations of cause-related marketing campaigns and the cause-brand alliances within them.

Basil and Herr found that consumer’s attitude toward the brand involved in the cause-brand alliance had a significant influence on the consumer attitude toward the cause and nonprofit involved in the campaign (2003). This is an especially important finding for cause managers, because if not developed wisely, a campaign that was created to do good for the cause as well as the brand can hurt the cause. Basil and Herr also found that attitude toward nonprofits and causes significantly improved when prior attitudes toward the brand involved were positive than when they were negative prior to seeing the cause-related marketing campaign (2003). Many studies have concluded that spillover effects are prevalent in cause-brand alliances and need to be identified before creating partnerships (Simonin & Ruth, 1998; Lafferty, et al, 2004). Lafferty et al. found that when consumers’ attitudes are positive toward a familiar brand, they create an anchor (2004). This term offers a visual representation of when consumers have a positive feeling toward a brand and how the favorable attitude serves as a foundation for consumer attitudes toward the brand extension or cause in cause-related marketing campaigns.
Viral Videos Role in Cause-Related Marketing

As advertising evolves, the venues in which consumers receive cause-related marketing messages are changing as well. Cause-related marketing has used various forms of advertising to reach the consumer. Examples include traditional mediums like television spots, print advertisements, and corporate sponsorships. Some nontraditional means that are becoming more common are product packaging on consumer products like Yoplait® Yogurt or affinity programs like Bank of America’s ® credit cards that benefit nonprofits. Online videos have also become a prominent form of circulating media messages organically. Organic refers to a consumer-driven process of passing along a message without using a push strategy.

When an online video is passed along enough, industry professionals consider it a viral video. Viral advertising is defined as a personal, unpaid form of marketing (Porter & Golan, 2006). Generally content is posted on third-party websites and is distributed through word-of-mouth communication. The unofficial nature of the distribution of online video advertising is what makes it most credible among users. At one point, the habit of watching videos online only applied to a small niche group. According to Pew Internet and American Life Project study, about half (53%) of the adult US population has watched or download a video online from popular websites like YouTube and Google Video, that are used specifically for sharing videos (Purcell, 2010). The same study identified demographics of adults in the US who watch online videos, adults with at least some college education watch more online video (75%) than those who have high school degree or lower (58%) (Purcell, 2010).
A popular cause-related marketing viral video case study looks at the Dove’s campaign for real beauty. This cause-related marketing campaign used primarily online content to discuss women’s negative body perceptions. The online video that went viral was “Dove Evolution.” According to YouTube on September 1, 2011, the video had over 13 million views. The reason for this success is due to the nature of cause-related marketing messages. Researchers found that when an online message has greater hedonic or utilitarian content, users are more willing to share it with people they know (Chiu, Hsieh, Kao, & Lee, 2007). Other studies have supported this claim as well. MindComet found that viral videos are usually less about the product and more about an emotional aspect of the advertising message (MindComet, 2006), suggesting that marketers should use this online strategy for message content like cause-related marketing.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are several theories and models that have been used in the past to explain cause-related marketing. Researchers have attempted to explain relationships among the many concepts that influence the success of a cause-related marketing campaign with the attribution theory (Cui et al., 2004), information integration theory (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005), model for brand equity (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), and theory of planned behavior (Weber & Gillespie, 1998).

For this study, it is important to introduce two additional theories to the cause-related marketing literature to explain the phenomenon that exists between the perceived frequency with which a cause is featured in cause-related marketing and brand-related attitudes and intentions, otherwise known as cause exhaustion. This study primarily
draws from the classical conditioning theory and the limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing (LC4MP).

Classical Conditioning Theory in Cause-Related Marketing

The principles of classical conditional theory give rise to the strategy behind cause-related marketing campaigns. According to classical conditioning theory, when individuals view a conditioned stimulus (CS), a stimulus they are already familiar with, paired with an unconditioned stimulus (US), a stimulus they are unfamiliar with, the individual will transfer their attitudes from the CS to the US (Shimp, Stuart & Engle 1991). In cause-related marketing campaigns, marketing specialists typically aim to transfer the affective responses from a cause (CS) to a brand or product (US). Even if they are unfamiliar with the specific cause, the consumer should recognize the idea of giving, which serves as a positive CS.

As classical conditioning theory suggests, cause-related marketing campaigns have a strong influence on the consumer. Research in cause-related marketing supports the claim that positive attitudes about a cause or brand or the cause-brand alliance will be transferred positively to the brand or product (Simonin & Ruth 1998; Basil & Herr 2003; Lafferty et al. 2004); subsequent research found that when consumers have a high attitude toward a brand in the cause-brand alliances, they are more likely to purchase the product, a behavioral intention measure (Shruti & Julie 2006).
LC4MP Applied to Cause Exhaustion

While the classical conditioning theory offers a solid theoretical framework for cause-related marketing, the LC4MP provides an argument surrounding the essence of cause exhaustion. As stated previously, the researcher believes the phenomenon of cause exhaustion occurs when messages feature causes that have a high-perceived frequency in cause-related marketing campaigns and ultimately lose their emotional potency with the consumer. This emotional potency and its effects lie in the how individuals process cause-related marketing messages.

Two main assumptions about the LC4MP provide the theoretical framework for this study. First, information processing has a limited capacity, which means that there are a finite and limited amount of resources that individuals can use at any given time for three simultaneous sub-processes: encoding, storing and retrieving information (Lang 2006; Lang 2009). Second, individuals automatically allocate resources when the information is motivationally relevant. The LC4MP assumes that individuals’ motivational and cognitive systems are highly connected and constantly influence one another (Lang 2009). This is why all information processing is considered motivated processing.

In order for stimuli to be motivationally relevant, an individual’s aversive or appetitive motivational systems must be activated. The appetitive system is activated by positive stimuli, while the aversive system is activated by negative stimuli. According to Lang, the level of activation in these motivational systems is directly tied to the level of
arousing content in the message (2009). The more arousing the message is, the increased level of activation occurs.

One element of automatic resource allocation comes from the orienting response (Lang 2009). The orienting response occurs when a stimulus contains signal information. An example of signal information is when a stimulus is introduced into a new environment, like a scene change or a noise (Lang 2009). The orienting response elicits a signal that sparks the individual’s attention. This study will focus on novel stimuli introduced in the environment of cause-related marketing messaging. A stimulus is considered novel when it is new to the particular environment where it is being introduced (Lang 2006). It is important for researchers to know that novel stimuli do not differ among individuals, ultimately affecting individuals equally (Lang 2006).

The Effects of Cause Exhaustion on Brand Attitudes and Intentions

Previous studies in cause-related marketing show that consumers’ attitudes are almost always affected by brand partnering with causes (Simonin & Ruth 1998; Basil & Herr 2003; Lafferty et al. 2004). In addition, consumers classify this brand behavior as the brand doing something good (Shruti & Julie, 2006). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the research proposes that causes are in fact emotionally potent stimuli that resonate with the consumer to spur information processing. It was theorized that cause exhaustion occurs when causes are featured over and over again in messages. In essence, there is a critical point in which these causes lose their emotional potency otherwise referred to in the LC4MP as motivational relevance or novelty (Lang, 2006). The motivational relevance and novelty of the stimuli affect whether or not individuals
automatically allocate resources when processing cause-related marketing messages. This study suggested that the perceived cause frequency in cause-related marketing affects this automatic allocation of resources.

For example, cause-related marketing campaigns that feature the Susan G. Komen For the Cure, a philanthropic organization affiliated with the breast cancer research cause, are vast. The number of partnerships a consumer sees on any given day with this cause is overwhelming. The researcher suggests that the novelty of partnering with this cause has long passed because of the cause is perceived to be featured at a high frequency in product packaging and cause-related marketing campaigns. During a typical shopping experience, consumers see pink ribbons, a prominent image associated with the organization, in just about any aisle in the store. The researcher suggests, that while the pink ribbon is most likely information stored in memory, it may be too overused and with loss of novelty comes the loss of emotional potency ultimately reducing the effect of the cause-related message. The level of activation within the aversive and appetitive systems is reduced because the stimulus is less motivationally relevant than it once was. With the lack of novelty and motivational relevance, a message that once was highly arousing has a harder time activating motivational systems to that extent that it once did. Ultimately, the researcher believed that evoked arousal would be less for stimuli that are less motivationally relevant and novel, or in other words for this experiment stimuli with high-perceived frequency causes.

H1: There will be a significant main effect of perceived frequency of a cause on arousal such that perceived high-frequency causes will result in lower levels of arousal evoked by cause-related marketing messages than perceived low-frequency causes.
In Hypothesis 1, the researcher predicted that perceived high-frequency causes are less arousing than perceived low-frequency causes. In this study, it was proposed that a consequence of perceived cause frequency on arousal is that perceived high-frequency causes would lose their emotional potency and power on brand attitudes and intentions. In order to have a positive impact on brand attitudes and purchase intentions, individuals need to allocate resources toward processing the message. Perceived cause frequency is a psychological state in which individuals automatically decide the motivational relevance of the stimuli, the cause. The degree to which the cause is motivationally stimulating and has a direct effect on whether or not the cause-related marketing message is processed through the three subprocesses discussed earlier (encoding, storage, and retrieval).

The reason the LC4MP is vital to whether or not cause-related marketing messages are as effective as they once were is because motivationally relevant messages are key to the level of attention an individual gives a particular message. High levels of attention and memory (information processing) make it possible for an individual to evaluate a cause-related marketing message. Without attention (the allocation of resources), an individual is inherently less likely to evaluate a message and ultimately have a more neutral response to stimuli.

**H2a:** The effect of cause-related marketing on attitude toward the brand will be weaker for perceived high-frequency causes than perceived low-frequency causes.

**H2b:** The effect of cause-related marketing on purchase intentions will be weaker for perceived high-frequency causes than perceived low-frequency causes.
In addition, this study explores if there is any effect of cause-related marketing on intent to forward an online videos. More specifically the researcher identifies if there is a relationship between perceived cause frequency, evoked arousal, and intention to forward cause-related marketing messages online. As discussed earlier, how arousing a message is influences whether or not a message is motivationally relevant and the depth of information processing. The level of motivational relevance of a stimulus determines how much effort an individual puts forth towards encoding the information. The less motivationally relevant the information the less cognitive resources that are allocated during the encoding process. Encoding is vital to how an individual evaluates their attitudes and behaviors regarding the stimulus or message content. Due to the fact that there is a significant amount of cause-related marketing campaigns that are executed through online videos, it is important to understand if perceived cause frequency and the levels of arousal influence consumers’ intentions to forward cause-related marketing messages.

This research used a mediation model to test whether the perceived cause frequency affects forward intention through evoked arousal in cause-related marketing videos. Two simple mediation models were proposed, one for high-perceived frequency causes (see Figure 2.1) and the other for low-perceived frequency causes (see Figure 2.2). For both models, the perceived frequency (independent variable) was the participant’s self-reported perception of how often they see the cause in cause-related marketing messages. Evoked arousal (mediator) and forward intention (dependent variable) were both measured and calculated scores from self-report items in the experiment.
While research shows that online videos are more likely to be passed along when they have an emotional element (Chiu, et al, 2007), the researcher suggests that there may be a different effect on intent to forward a cause-related marketing message because the relationship among perceived cause frequency and evoked arousal in online videos is different than previous research on online videos and arousal.

**RQ2: How does perceived cause frequency and level of evoked arousal affect the intent to forward a cause-related marketing message?**
LC4MP posits that the amount of cognitive resources allocated is contingent on whether or not a message is motivationally relevant (Lang, 2009). From the previous discussion, the researcher suggests that causes that are perceived to have a higher frequency are less motivationally relevant therefore encouraging lower amounts of cognitive effort towards encoding. Therefore, the depth of information processing is shallower because fewer cognitive resources are allocated. In these situations, an individual’s ability to recognize a phrase from the stimulus materials when prompted is more difficult due to the shallow information processing that occurred. Audio recognition at key moments in cause-related marketing videos is important to measure because it serves as a great gauge as to the depth in which the information was encoded. Lang suggests that memory recognition is an indicator of how well stimulus materials are encoded (2000). By testing audio recognition, a much more difficult task than visual recognition, the researcher can determine if perceived frequency is a motivationally relevant stimulus feature and if it in turn has an effect on the information process in terms of encoding (Lang, Potter, Bolls, 1999).

**H3: Causes that are perceived to have a higher frequency will lead to worse audio recognition than causes that are perceived to have a lower frequency in cause-related marketing messages.**
CHAPTER III: METHODS

Experimental Design

The current study employed a 2 (perceived frequency: high/low) X 3 (cause) within-subjects repeated measures experimental design. The design included a pretest-posttest design. Independent variable was perceived frequency while cause was the repeated measures factor. The dependent variables were purchase intention and forward intention. Evoked arousal was a measured mediating variable in this study. Perceived frequency was also measured in exploratory testing as well as the experiment pretest to ensure there was a significant difference between the means of high-perceived frequency and low-perceived frequency causes.

Independent Variable

Perceived Frequency of a Cause

The perceived frequency of a cause is conceptualized as a psychological state in which an individual perceives a cause to be used in cause-related marketing. This study manipulated perceived cause frequency in online videos by classifying causes in two levels: high and low. The level of perceived frequency for each cause was assigned by measurements collected from a pretest.

Exploratory testing of perceived cause frequency. The researcher tested perceived cause frequency with 40 participants who did not take part in the final experiment. To test perceived cause frequency, 15 causes that are commonly used in cause-related marketing
were identified through a client list provided by IEG, a leader in cause-related sponsorships. The following causes were pretested: American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Boy Scouts of America, Children’s Cancer Research Fund, Susan G. Komen For the Cure, Make-A-Wish Foundation, March of Dimes, MDA, The Salvation Army, Special Olympics, National Geographic, Unicef, United Way, USO, and World Wildlife Fund.

Care was taken to only test national causes with which participants are most likely to be familiar. Thus, the researcher chose to test participants’ recognition of IEG’s cause client list to ensure that perceptions of well-known causes were being compared. In the exploratory testing questionnaire, participants were presented with a commonly used definition of cause-related marketing. After reading the definition, the participants viewed 15 cause logos and were asked to rate the perceived frequency with which each cause is perceived to be used in cause related marketing on a 9-point scale anchored by never to extremely frequently. There was a significant difference between the means of high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 7.41$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 3.08$), $F(1,40) = 317.844, p < .0001$. Complete list of means and standard deviations for each cause found in the Appendix in Table 3.1.

**Causes Featured in the Online Stimulus Videos**

In this study, a cause was conceptualized as a philanthropic organization that is featured in an online video. Cause was used as a repeated factor in the research design. Six causes were used in this study. Three causes were classified as having low frequency (Boy Scouts of America, Muscular Dystrophy Association, USO) and while the other
three were classified as having high frequency (American Cancer Society, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Susan G. Komen For The Cure). Each participant viewed videos about all six causes during the experiment.

**Dependent Variables**

**Change in Attitude Toward a Brand**

Attitude is conceptualized as an association “between a given object and a given summary evaluation of the object” (Fazio, 2007, p. 608). Operationally, this study defined change in attitude toward a brand by taking the difference of measured items’ means in both pre-test and post-test questionnaires. The questionnaire items contained a 9-point bivariate scale with endpoints of *strongly agree* and *strongly disagree*. Items were drawn from the BEAMs scale (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Bernston, 1997). Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with statements about their attitudes toward a brand. Both in the pretest and posttest, participants viewed 12 brand logos accompanied by the brand names in text format. They viewed six brands that were used in the stimuli and six foil brands.

For the pre-test questionnaire, participants responded to only two items drawn from the BEAMs scale. After viewing a brand logo, preexisting attitudes were measured by asking participants to report how favorable they felt toward the brand and how unfavorable they felt toward the brand on a 9-point bipolar scale with end points of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. For the post-test questionnaire, participants responded to eight items using a 9-point bipolar scale with end points of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Each of the following items were drawn from the BEAMs
scale and were presented one at a time after participants viewed a brand logo: Bad, Good, Negative, Positive, Unfavorable, Favorable, Dislike and Like (Cacioppo, et al, 1997).

**Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention is conceptualized as the participant’s reported belief that they would buy the brand’s product or service in the future. Operationally, this study defined purchase intention by measuring participants’ responses to two items. On a 9-point scale with endpoints of *definitely not* and *definitely*, participants expressed their purchase intention by rating how much they agreed with the following statements: “I intend to purchase the brand’s products and services,” and “I intend to purchase the brand’s products or services based on the brand’s support for the cause” (Hyllegard et al, 2010). The last item was used to measure the influence of the cause on the brand. Classical conditioning theory suggests that the cause serves as a conditioned stimulus. This item probes the assumption of the theory and explores how the affective association transfers from the cause, a conditioned stimulus to the brand, an unconditioned stimulus.

**Intention to Forward The Message**

Intention to forward the message is conceptualized by the participant’s reported belief that they would share the cause-related marketing message with someone else. Operationally, this variable was defined by responses to two items borrowed from previous research conducted by Bolls: “This ad is worth sharing with others” and “I will recommend this ad to others” (2011). These two items were measured on a 9-point scale anchored with *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree.*
Audio Recognition

Recognition is conceptualized as how successfully the message was encoded for the participant (Lang, 2009). Operationally, the study measured recognition through an audio recognition task. The researcher took three key copy points from each third of the video message for each cause. Then, the researcher recorded 18 target voiceovers to test accuracy of the audio recognition in this study. In addition, the researcher adjusted the copy from each of these videos to create 18 additional foil voiceovers to test the sensitivity and criterion bias of the individual’s responses. At the end of the study, participants were asked to identify which audio clips were from the video they just saw. Accuracy and signal detection measures were recorded.

Measured Variable

Due to the nature of this study and its base in the LC4MP, it was important to recognize arousal as a mediating variable. Previous research showed that evoked arousal was very closely tied to how motivationally relevant a message was to the individual. The level of activation that occurred in both the aversive and appetitive systems was dependent on this variable. The researcher assumed that perceived frequency of the cause could be directly tied to increased arousal. However, by measuring these two mediating variables, the researcher was able to draw more specific conclusions.

Evoked Arousal in the Individual

According to Lang, evoked arousal is conceptualized in messages by the level of excitement elicited by the message content (Lang, 2009). This study specifically
measured the participant’s perception of evoked arousal to the message. Arousal in this study was defined by how aroused the individual was. Operationally, this study defined evoked arousal as the participants’ self-report of their perception of how aroused they were after viewing the message content on a 9-point scale and anchored with \textit{not at all aroused, not at all excited} and \textit{extremely aroused, excited, awake} (Bradley & Lang, 1994).

**Exploratory testing of arousal in the message content.** In order to avoid introducing arousal as a confounding variable, care was taken to ensure that the perception of arousal in each unbranded video was as similar as possible before ever manipulating the stimulus materials. In the exploratory testing, participants were asked to rate how arousing the message was in the online videos by using the same scale used in the final experiment. Twenty-four online videos were tested with 23 college-aged students who did not participate in the final experiment. For the selected videos, the evoked arousal means were not significantly different for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.90$, $sd = 1.739$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.95$, $sd = 1.795$), $F(1, 23) = .052$, $p = .822$.

**Exploratory testing of perceived valence of the cause message.** In order to reduce the likelihood of valence affecting participant responses, like intention to forward a message, the study controlled for self-reported valence as well. Participants were asked how positively they felt toward the video and how negatively they felt toward the video on a 9-point scale. For the selected videos, the positive valence mean averages were not significantly different at a .001 level between high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 6.61$, $sd = 1.96$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 6.26$, $sd = 1.727$): $F(1, 23) = 1.296,$
For the selected videos, the negative valence mean averages were not significantly different at a .001 level between high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 2.31$, $sd = 1.67$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 2.78$, $sd = 1.827$): $F(1, 23) = 4.581$, $p = .043$.

**Stimuli**

Before creating the experimental stimuli, the researcher employed strategies to avoid two important confounding variables in the experimental design: level of evoked arousal and pre-existing attitude toward the brands to be presented.

Due to the overwhelming amount of differences in cause-related marketing executions and the variations among the messages, the researcher opted to develop six cause-related marketing videos for this controlled experiment in order to keep a consistent balance of brand messages and cause messages. To maintain consistent levels of evoked arousal, the researcher selected twenty-four public service announcements to pretest for arousal. These videos ranged in length from 35 seconds to 90 seconds. The universe of videos chosen included four videos for each pretested cause including high-perceived frequency causes (American Cancer Society, Make-A-Wish Foundation and Susan G. Komen For the Cure) and low-perceived frequency causes (Boy Scouts of America, Muscular Dystrophy Association and USO). During the exploratory testing, videos were rated for the level of arousal of the content on a 9-point scale. Only moderately arousing videos were chosen to as a strategy to eliminate arousal as a potential mediator. For the selected videos (See Appendix: Table 3), the evoked arousal means were not significantly different for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.90$, $sd$...
= 1.739) and low-perceived frequency causes \((M = 5.95, sd = 1.795)\), \(F(1, 23) = .052, p = .822\). In addition, the researcher took into consideration the potential effects of the participants’ attitude toward the brand could have on forward intention. In order to minimize attitude toward the brand effects on the dependent variable, the researchers employed two strategies. First, attitude toward the brand was measured on 20 brands in exploratory testing. Participants were asked to answer how they felt toward the brand on a 9-point scale anchored with completely negative and completely positive. Only brands with similar attitude scores were chosen. The mean averages (Appendix, Table 1) for the six brands chosen were not significantly different, \(F(1, 23) = 1.837, p = .184\). Second, the researcher formed two conditions and created 12 videos in total. See the Appendix, Table 2 for a complete list of cause and brand pairings per condition. This manipulation helped cancel out any potential effects attitudes toward the brand might have on the dependent variable of forward intention.

After the public service announcement videos were selected, the researcher manipulated the videos by adding branded cause-related marketing messages at the bottom of the screen during the video and at the end of video. At the bottom of each video, the participant viewed the following message accompanied by the brand’s logo “[Insert brand name] cares about the [insert cause name].” At the end of the video participants were reminded again about brand’s support for the cause and encouraged them to share the video with someone else, “Help [insert brand name] raise awareness about [insert cause name]. Share this video with your family and friends.” Beneath the text, the cause logo and brand logo appeared on the screen. An example of this video manipulation can be found in the Appendix (See Figure 6).
Participants

Participants were 76 university undergraduate students with an average age of 19.45 years (SD = ). Twenty-three students were male and 53 students were female. Recruitment for the study took place in two large lecture courses at a large midwestern university. Participants individually completed the testing in two settings. Before their scheduled appointment, participants were sent a link via email and given instruction to complete the pre-test questionnaire for the experiment at least 12 hours prior to their research appointment. The experiment and post-test questionnaire took place by appointment in campus computer lab. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, and those who participated received course or extra credit for their participation.

Procedure

First, participants were sent a link through Survey Monkey software to answer the pre-test questionnaire, self-reporting their attitudes toward the each brand, attitudes toward each cause, and perceived frequency that each cause was used in cause-related marketing messages. Only participants that completed the pre-test questionnaire at least 12 hours prior to their appointment time were invited to participate in the experiment in a research lab at a large state university. The computer program MediaLab was used to control the presentation of instructions, stimulus videos, and questionnaire items. Stimulus videos were presented in a random order. Participants watched the videos on individual desktop computers and listened to the audio through headphones. Participants were able to move forward at their own pace as they answered each question. After each
video, participants were asked to self-report valence, arousal, purchase intention, and intention to forward the cause-related marketing video. Before the posttest measurements, the participants watched a five-minute clip from a popular sitcom to serve as a distracter. As a part of post-test questionnaire, participants completed audio recognition tasks for each online video by identifying which of the 18 audio clips they heard were correct. Accuracy and signal detection measures were recorded each time. At the end of the study, participants were prompted to self-report their attitude toward the brand, their intention to purchase products or services provided by the brand, and their intention to purchase products or services due to the brand’s support for the cause. The study used the six brands featured in the online content and six foil brands. In addition, participants were asked to match which brands were partnered with which causes in the videos. Participants also reported their age and gender. After the participant concluded the 25-minute experiment, participants were thanked and dismissed.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Perceived frequency was measured again in the pre-test questionnaire to ensure this group of participants viewed the perceived frequency of the causes the same as exploratory participants did prior to stimuli exposure. This relationship was examined through a 2 (perceived frequency) X 3 (cause) repeated-measures ANOVA comparing the means of high-perceived frequency causes and low-perceived frequency causes in the exploratory testing to those in the pre-test questionnaire. Again, there was a significant difference between the means (Appendix, Table 6) of high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 6.82, sd = 2.417$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.056, sd = 2.253$), $F(1,70) = 49.802, p < .001, \eta^2_{part} = .416$.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a significant main effect of perceived cause frequency on arousal such that perceived high-frequency causes would result in lower levels of arousal evoked by cause-related marketing messages than perceived low-frequency causes. This main effect was examined using a 2 (perceived frequency) X 3 (cause) repeated-measures ANOVA comparing the average arousal across each level of perceived frequency. The analysis revealed a significant main effect between perceived cause frequency and evoked arousal, $F(1,75) = 38.36, p < .001, \eta^2_{part} = .338$. While this result is significant, it is in the opposite direction than predicted. The mean for evoked
arousal for high-perceived frequency causes was higher than that ($M = 6.23, sd = 1.967$) of low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.28, sd = 2.077$). This result does not support Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2a**

Hypothesis 2a predicted that there would be a weaker effect on the attitude toward the brand in cause-related marketing videos with high-perceived frequency causes than low-perceived frequency causes. Attitude toward the brand was measured in two separate variables of positive attitude and negative attitude. Change in brand attitude is the difference between pre-test and post-test self-reported attitude. Change in brand attitude data was examined using a 2 (perceived frequency) X 3 (cause) X 2 (attitude: positive, negative) repeated-measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed that the interaction between perceived cause frequency and attitude was not significant for positive attitudes, $F(1,75) = 1.189, p = .279, \eta^2 = .016$, or negative attitudes, $F(1,75) = .103, p = .079, \eta^2 = .001$. The mean for change in positive attitude was higher for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = .377, sd = 2.457$) than low-perceived frequency causes ($M = .160, sd = 2.233$). The mean change in negative attitude was higher for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = .527, sd = 1.470$) than low-perceived frequency causes ($M = .475, sd = 1.727$). This result does not support Hypothesis 2a.

**Hypothesis 2b**

Hypothesis 2b predicted there would be a weaker effect on purchase intention in cause-related marketing videos with high-perceived frequency causes than low-perceived
frequency causes. Purchase intention was computed by subtracting general purchase intention from purchase intention because of the brand’s support for the cause. Then the main effect was examined using a 2 (perceived frequency) X 3 (cause) repeated-measures ANOVA comparing the average purchase intention difference among the perceived frequencies. The analysis revealed an interaction that was approaching significance, $F(1,75) = 3.631, p = .061, \eta^2_{part} = .046$. The mean for purchase intention because of the brand’s support for the cause was higher for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = .513, sd = 1.690$) than low-perceived frequency causes ($M = .237, sd = 1.840$). This result does not support Hypothesis 2b.

Research Question 2

The mediation model tested whether perceived cause frequency affected intention to forward through evoked arousal in cause-related marketing. A paired-samples t-test indicated that there is a significant difference between the levels of evoked arousal in high-perceived frequency causes and low-perceived frequency causes, $t(75) = 6.19, p < .001$. The mean for evoked arousal of the message was higher for high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 6.23, sd = 1.46$) than low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.28, sd = 1.53$). This is why the researcher tested separate models to determine the indirect effect of evoked arousal on the relationship between perceived cause frequency and forward intention.

*High-Perceived Frequency Model* (Figure 4.1): For the “a path,” or the effect of perceived frequency on evoked arousal, $B = .2881$, $t(72) = 3.0529, p = .0032$. The path is significant but in the direction opposite than predicted, indicating support for the
mediation model but not for cause exhaustion. For the “b path,” or the direct effect of evoked arousal on forward intention, $B = .9291, t(72) = 6.1390, p < .0001$. The path is significant in the opposite direction than predicted, indicating support for the mediation model but not for cause exhaustion. For the “c path,” or the total effect of perceived-cause frequency on forward intention, $B = .1836, t(72) = 1.2447, p = .2174$. The path is not significant; indicating that perceived cause frequency has no total effect on forward intention. For the “c’ path,” or the direct effect of perceived-cause frequency on forward intention, $B = -.0841, t(72) = -.6608, p = .5109$. The path is not significant; indicating that perceived cause frequency does not have a direct effect on forward intention. For the “ab paths,” or the indirect effects of perceived cause frequency on forward intention through evoked arousal, $p = .0058$. The path is significant, indicating that evoked arousal mediates the relationship between perceived cause frequency and forward intention in cause-related marketing messages that use high-perceived frequency causes. This result does not support the theory of cause exhaustion. This model explains 34.89% of the variance in the dependent variable or forward intention.
Figure 4.1: Mediation Model for High-Perceived Frequency Causes

*Figure 4.1: Illustration of a mediation design. Independent variable (IV) is hypothesized to exert an indirect effect on dependent variable (DV) through the mediator (M).

*A significant path

Low-Perceived Frequency Model (Figure 4.2): For the “a path,” or the effect of perceived frequency on evoked arousal, $B = .0991$, $t(75) = 1.0569$, $p = .2941$. The path is not significant, indicating no support for the mediation model or cause exhaustion. For the “b path,” or the direct effect of evoked arousal on forward intention, $B = .7996$, $t(75) = 6.6277$, $< .0001$. The path is significant in the predicted direction, indicating support for the mediation model and cause exhaustion. For the “c path,” or the total effect of perceived-cause frequency on forward intention, $B = .0813$, $t(75) = .6680$, $p = .5063$. The path is not significant; indicating that perceived cause frequency has no total effect on forward intention. For the “c’ path,” or the direct effect of perceived-cause frequency on forward intention, $B = .0021$, $t(75) = .0218$, $p = .9827$. The path is not significant; indicating that perceived cause frequency does not have a direct effect on forward intention. For the “ab paths,” or the indirect effects of perceived cause frequency on forward intention through evoked arousal, $p = .2933$. The path is not significant, indicating that evoked arousal does not mediate the relationship between perceived cause
frequency and forward intention in cause-related marketing messages that use low-perceived frequency causes. This result does not support the theory of cause exhaustion.

Figure 4.2: Mediation Model for Low-Perceived Frequency Causes

*Through bootstrapping analyses, the researchers determined that there is a significant mediation model for high-perceived frequency causes but not for low-perceived frequency causes.*

**Hypothesis 3**

Hypothesis 3 predicted that causes that were perceived to have a higher frequency would have worse audio recognition than causes that were perceived to have a lower frequency in cause-related marketing messages. Recognition was indexed by measuring accuracy. To assess the influence of perceived frequency on audio recognition accuracy, all correct answers were coded with a one and all incorrect answers were coded with a zero after the data was cleaned for any errors. Then the researcher ran a 2 (frequency) X 3 (cause) X 3 (recognition measures) repeated-measures ANOVA. Perceived frequency and
accuracy interaction was not significant, \( (F(1,75) = 2.727, p = .103, \eta^2_{part} = .035 \). Even though the ANOVA showed the means approaching significance, the effect size was very small, only accounting for 3.5% of the overall variance. Accuracy mean was slightly higher for high-perceived frequency causes \((M = .817, sd = .3723)\) than low-perceived frequency causes \((M = .788, sd = .3835)\). This result does not support Hypothesis 3.

To further explore these results on audio recognition memory, a signal detection analysis of the recognition data was conducted (Sharpio, 1994). Sensitivity \((A')\) and criterion bias \((B'')\), nonparametric statistics, were computed for high-perceived and low-perceived cause frequency cases (Table 6).

Table 4.1: Sensitivity, Criterion Bias and Accuracy of Audio Recognition Memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Sensitivity ((A'))</th>
<th>Criterion Bias ((B''))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-perceived frequency</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.625</td>
<td>-.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-perceived frequency</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>-.436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Table features the differences between the audio recognition analyses for cause-related marketing videos with high-perceived and low-perceived frequency causes.

A 2 (frequency) X 3 (cause) repeated-measures ANOVA compared the sensitivity \((A')\) of the data for each level of perceived frequency. Perceived frequency effects on sensitivity was approaching significance, \( F(1,75) = 3.234, p = .076, \eta^2_{part} = .041 \). For high-perceived frequency causes, sensitivity was higher \((M = .625, sd = 1.853)\) than low-perceived frequency causes \((M = .333, sd = .6159)\). This is in the opposite direction than the researcher would have predicted. The general hypothesis guiding this study suggested
that cause-related marketing utilizing high-perceived frequency causes would experience lower levels of evoked arousal, worse encoding, and ultimately worse audio recognition. According to this finding, the individual’s sensitivity or memory strength for videos with high-perceived frequency causes were greater than those for low-perceived frequency causes.

A 2 (frequency) X 3 (cause) repeated-measures ANOVA compared the criterion bias \( (B^-) \) of the data for each level of perceived frequency. Perceived frequency effects on criterion bias was significant, \( F(1,75) = 4.271, p = .042, \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .054 \). For high-perceived frequency causes, criterion bias was more liberal \( (M = - .545, sd = .5544) \) than low-perceived frequency causes \( (M = - .436, sd = .5560) \). This is in the opposite direction than the researcher would have predicted. The hypothesis suggested that in cause-related marketing high-perceived frequency causes would experience lower levels of evoked arousal, worse encoding effects, and ultimately worse audio recognition.

According to this finding, the individual’s criterion bias or willingness to guess was more liberal for videos with high-perceived frequency causes were greater than those for low-perceived frequency causes. However, the individual’s criterion bias was highly liberal for both levels of perceived frequency of the cause. In addition, the difference between the criterion bias for each level of frequency had a very small effect size, \( \eta^2_{\text{part}} = .054 \). Meaning that perceived frequency only accounted for 5.4% of the variance in criterion bias calculated.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The underlying goal of this study was to determine if the researchers’ theory of cause exhaustion was accurate. The researchers suggested that there is a significant relationship between perceived cause frequency and an individual’s attitudes and intentions. Cause exhaustion suggests that a participant’s attitudes and intentions are negatively affected by high-perceived frequency causes and positively affected by low-perceived frequency causes due to the novelty of the message feature. The reasoning for this comes from the LC4MP model. When causes are featured over and over again, causes lose their emotional potency and motivational relevance for the consumer. For the LC4MP model, emotional potency or the novelty of the stimuli and motivational relevance are vital for an individual to automatically allocate their limited resources to information processing and ultimately to forming attitudes and behavioral intentions. The researchers suggested that low-perceived frequency causes were in fact more novel and therefore the results should illustrate higher evoked arousal and behavioral intentions for cases with low-perceived frequency causes than for high-perceived frequency causes. However, the results show that cause exhaustion did not stand up in any of the hypotheses or research questions investigated in this study.

The analysis of Hypothesis 1 showed an opposite interaction than the researcher had expected. For high-perceived frequency causes, evoked arousal was actually higher. More specifically, videos with a high-perceived frequency cause were more arousing than those with a low-perceived frequency cause. This is an interesting finding because the
videos that were selected had evoked arousal means that were not significantly different in exploratory testing. However, by introducing brand messaging that shows support for a cause, arousal increased, but not equally among high and low-perceived frequency cases. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that evoked arousal for a public service announcement, or unbranded cause message, increases when brand support is introduced. In addition, high-perceived frequency causes in cause-related marketing did not minimize arousal. In fact, it appeared as if these causes increased the difference in arousal means between high and low-perceived frequency causes.

When testing the effect of perceived cause-frequency on attitudes and purchase intentions, the results were not significant. In Hypothesis 2a, the researcher uncovered the effect of perceived frequency on change in attitude for both positive and negative attitudes. The change in both positive and negative attitudes was very small. This leads the researcher to believe that it is possible the branding was not apparent enough for the participant. If their change in attitudes were all less than .90, it is hard to conclude that the change was due to the effect of seeing the branded public service announcement. In addition, Hypothesis 2b follows the same form. The difference between purchase intention because of the brand’s support for the cause and purchase intention was very small. It is important to note that these measures were recorded in the post-test questionnaire. While evoked arousal does offer a significant effect, it was recorded immediately after viewing the cause-related marketing message. This timeframe offers a glimpse into the possibility that the depth of encoding was shallow and due to the lack of cognitive resources allocated, the good deed of partnering with the brand did not have an effect on brand attitudes or purchase intentions. In addition, the manipulation of the
videos is suspect to this minimal main effect. In attempt to keep the same level of branding across cause-related marketing examples, the researcher concludes that the stimuli may have in fact been under branded which is another probable cause for the minimal change in attitude and the minimal intent to purchase due to the brand’s support for the cause. Ultimately, these results suggest that this execution style may not have offered a good example of strong cause-related marketing messages; brand related attitudes and intentions were not swayed in a significant amount for either perceived frequency level.

The previous hypotheses focus mainly on the direct effects of perceived frequency on brand-related attitudes and intentions. In most cases, the results showed an inverse effect and not always significant effect of perceived cause frequency on the measures. Research Question 2 offers a unique glance at the indirect effects perceived cause frequency had on forward intention of a cause-related marketing video. The proposed mediation models also followed the same direction as the other analyses; high-perceived cause frequency did not minimize the effect it had on forward intentions. The results suggested that the perceived cause frequency did in fact motivate information processing due to how motivationally relevant a high-perceived frequency cause was to the individual. With this said, it can be concluded that the theory of cause exhaustion does not stand up in this study. The results showed that higher perceived frequency causes had higher means of evoked arousal and higher means for forward intention. With the LC4MP model, the results suggest that high-perceived frequency causes were possibly novel stimuli or at least learned information that signaled automatic allocation of resources.
The high-perceived frequency mediation model offers a very interesting insight into how perceived cause frequency and forward intention are related. While there was not a direct effect of perceived cause frequency on forward intention in the high-perceived frequency model, there is an indirect effect through evoked arousal as the mediator. The researchers predicted that the effect of perceived frequency on forward intention would minimize as the perceived frequency increased, but in actuality the results showed that this effect increased as perceived frequency did. The researcher suggests the possibility that high-frequency causes create a type of priming effect when introduced in cause-related marketing messages. While this study cannot claim an orienting response because there were not any physiological measurements collected, the researchers suggest that high-perceived frequency causes prime higher levels of evoked arousal, resulting higher levels of forward intention. For cause-related marketing specialists, this is an important finding. As noted in the introduction there are underlying tones in the cause-related marketing arena that pairing with causes that are used over and over again may minimize cause-related marketing effects. That’s why this study suggested the idea of cause exhaustion. However, the researcher is forced to conclude that it may not be as apparent as once believed.

As mentioned previously in the discussion around Hypotheses 2a and 2b, it is unlikely that many cognitive resources were allocated in the information processing of these cause-related marketing messages overall considering the minimal changes in attitude and difference in purchase intention due to support of the cause. The results from Hypothesis 3 solidify this finding. While participants did answer most of the audio recognition measures correctly, the difference between high and low perceived frequency
causes was not significant. Further signal detection analysis offered insight as to why. While the results showed that participants had a higher level of sensitivity to select the correct answer for high-perceived frequency causes, their criterion bias was so liberal and suggests that participants were very willing to guess. The most interesting finding is that while participants answered more audio recognition measures accurately for high-perceived frequency causes, they were significantly more liberal in their selection of the correct answer for high-perceived frequency causes. At a first glance, it appears that high-perceived cause frequency increased accuracy in the audio recognition tasks, following suit to the rest of the results. Meaning, perceived cause frequency actually had a positive effect on accuracy of audio recognition signals. However, the signal detection analysis suggests that because the participant’s criterion bias was so high, they were merely answering more liberally for high-perceived frequency causes therefore increasing their chances to select more correct answers. This finding suggests that the perception of the frequency a cause is used in cause-related marketing actually in turn lead the participant to believe he or she has heard a particular cause-related message before despite actually remembering the accurate information.

**Implications for Strategic Communication Professionals**

These findings have important implications for strategic communications practitioners. Previous discussion surrounding cause-related marketing suggested that there might in fact be a weaker effect of the good deed of supporting a cause on brand-related attitudes and intentions if a higher-perceived frequency cause was featured. However, this study suggested that when a high-perceived frequency cause was featured,
higher levels of evoked arousal occurred and participants had a higher forward intention immediately after viewing the message. This is very important on a practical level because an arousing video paired with a high-frequency cause can in fact motivate forward intent. For marketers who are focused on circulating a message, using a high-perceived frequency cause will increase the evoked arousal of the message and increase the intent to forward the message. However, the lack of effect of perceived cause frequency on brand-related attitudes or purchase intentions makes it hard to glean conclusions around what this means for marketers’ bottom line. The branding in the cause-related marketing videos may have been too minimal for a strong transfer of the positive feelings toward the cause to the brand considering the minimal change in brand attitude and purchase intention. Marketers should continue to question the influence of perceived frequency on attitudes and intentions, but the research shows that higher arousing videos with high-perceived frequency causes are effective means for pushing a message virally.

**Cause Exhaustion and the LC4MP Model**

In regards to the argument surrounding cause exhaustion, the researcher concludes that cause exhaustion does not effect the arousing nature of a message. While the LC4MP model offers a strong argument for why cause exhaustion could exist, the study does not support this claim because high-perceived frequency causes appear to be motivationally relevant and emotionally potent stimuli because evoked arousal is higher. While cause exhaustion may not hold up in the LC4MP model, the researcher suggests that some sort of fatigue may in fact exist, just not relating to the depth of information
processing but rather the ultimate levels of brand-related attitudes and intentions. Or in other words, high-perceived cause frequency does not minimize the amount of cognitive resources allocated, but rather the researcher questions what effect it has on affective associations toward to brand. Further research needs to be conducted in order to determine if there is a relationship between perceived cause frequency and brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

There were several limitations in this study. Arousal was a self-reported measure. This study is limited to how participants perceived their arousal to be. While the results may be similar, for each individual true arousal can only be tracked with physiological measurements like skin conductance and facial EMG (Potter & Bolls, 2011).

Another limitation included participants’ underlying attitudes toward cause-related marketing. Participants’ underlying attitudes could have had a significant effect on whether or not they would purchase a product due to the brand’s support for a cause if they were outright against companies that did this kind of marketing. In addition, it was unknown how often participants forwarded other video content online.

There are several opportunities for future research that could offer additional industry and scholarly knowledge in regards to cause-related marketing. As discussed previously, the researcher speculates that the cause-related marketing videos may not have been branded as heavily as cause-related messages currently are in the advertising space. The videos that were featured in this study were in essence branded public service announcements. The intention was to control the amount of branding in order to have
equal levels of brand and cause messages in the stimuli. The researcher suggests that branding may have been too minimal in these executions due to the fact that there were not any significant findings in regards to brand-related attitudes and intentions. The differences among the means for attitudes were very small, suggesting that the manipulation of branding was not adequate enough for the participant to evaluate their attitudes or purchase intentions based on the brand’s support for the cause. Possibly because there wasn’t enough brand-related information in the message to encode the good deed. In addition, there are many types of executions that exist in cause-related marketing. Future research could explore types of executions in regards to the level of branding that exist in cause-related marketing messages and if some kind of fatigue occurs when cause-centric messages are highly commercial versus the cause-centric messages that were shared in this study.

In addition, there is an opportunity for future research to dive into a deeper understanding surrounding the effects of perceived cause frequency through the LC4MP model. Psychophysiology may be able to further dissect the direct relationship between perceived frequency and evoked arousal. This study suggests that when a consumer’s perception is that a cause is used extremely frequently, that individual’s evoked arousal from the cause-related marketing video is higher. Further research with psychophysiology measures could identify if there is an orienting response elicited when a high-perceived frequency cause is viewed. Experiments developed with the LC4MP model often use physiological measurements like heart rate which indicate the amount of cognitive resources allocated to process a particular media message at every second of the media exposure (Leshner, Vultee, Bolls, & Moore, 2010; Lang, 1994). By using this
type of measurement, future studies could determine if perceived cause frequency
increases resource allocation at its most basic physiological level and whether or not an
orienting response exists with this message feature. This is an important area for both
scholars and marketing professionals. Despite speculations around partnering with
overused causes, this research can provide statistical evidence surrounding whether or not
a consumer’s perception of cause frequency effects evoked arousal, brand attitudes and
behavioral intentions.

Another area that offers room for inquiry is whether or not perceived frequency
exists at more than two levels. In this study, the researcher identified high and low
perceived frequency. The analyses of the data suggests that perceived frequency does not
have an affect on brand related attitudes and intentions in the predicted direction.
However, as discussed previously, the researcher still speculates to the extent at which
cause fatigue exists. Perhaps, future research could identify if cause exhaustion has more
of a curvilinear relationship with brand-related attitudes and intentions instead of a linear
relationship. Future research will offer insight into whether or not there is a point in
which the transfer of positive attitudes toward the cause to the brand-related attitudes and
intentions begins to taper off, ultimately creating a cause exhaustion effect.

Conclusion

As a preliminary experiment on perceived cause frequency, this study provides
important insights regarding consumers’ perceptions of cause frequency and brand-
related attitudes and intentions. The primary finding in this study was that a mediation
model exists in high-perceived frequency cause-related marketing videos: perceived
frequency effects forward intention through evoked arousal. However, this mediation
does not take place in low-perceived frequency cause-related marketing videos. This
offers an interesting insight into the effects of high-perceived frequency causes in cause-
related marketing campaigns. With higher levels of perceived cause frequency, evoked
arousal increases and consumers intent to forward a message increases. This finding
follows the LC4MP model directly. As an individual’s appetitive or aversive systems are
activated, levels of arousal, resources are automatically allocated for motivated
information processing. Therefore, allowing individuals the opportunity to evaluate their
behavioral intentions like forward intention.

This study’s primary purpose was to determine whether or not cause exhaustion is
viable theory in cause-related marketing. In each hypotheses and research question, the
effect of perceived frequency determined that cause exhaustion is not supported.
However, the researcher suggests that further studies need to be conducted in the area of
perceived frequency in order to determine whether or not the cause-related marketing
creative execution has effects on evoked arousal and ultimately behavioral intentions like
the purchase intent and intent to forward a cause-related marketing video.
## APPENDIX

Table 1: Exploratory Testing for Attitude Toward the Brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>1.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Express</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’oreal</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>1.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepsi</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPS</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>1.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagon</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>1.530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1*: The mean averages for the six brands chosen were not significantly different, $F(1, 23) = 1.837, p = .184.$

Table 2: Video Manipulation Perceived Frequency Causes and Brands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Brand: Condition 1</th>
<th>Brand: Condition 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-perceived frequency</td>
<td>Pepsi</td>
<td>UPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>Volkswagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>American Express</td>
<td>L’oreal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-a-Wish Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-perceived frequency</td>
<td>UPS</td>
<td>Pepsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>L’oreal</td>
<td>American Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>Amazon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2*: In condition one, Pepsi, American Express and Amazon were paired with high-perceived frequency causes. While in condition two, these brands were paired with low-perceived frequency causes. In condition one, UPS, L’oreal and Volkswagon were paired with low-perceived frequency causes. While in condition two, they were paired with high-perceived frequency causes.
Table 3: Exploratory Testing for Evoked Arousal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-a-Wish Foundation</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>1.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>1.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: For the selected videos, the evoked arousal means were not significantly different for high-perceived frequency causes (M = 5.90, sd = 1.739) and low-perceived frequency causes (M = 5.95, sd = 1.795), F(1, 23) = .052, p = .822. The table shows the evoked arousal means and standard deviations for each cause.

Table 4: Exploratory Testing for Positive Valence of the Cause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>2.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>1.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-a-Wish Foundation</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>2.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>1.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>1.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>1.488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: For the selected videos, the positive valence mean averages were not significantly different at a .001 level between high-perceived frequency causes (M = 6.61, sd = 1.96) and low-perceived frequency causes (M = 6.26, sd = 1.727): F(1, 23) = 1.296, p = .177. The table shows the positive valence means and standard deviations for each cause.
Table 5: Exploratory Testing for Negative Valence of the Cause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-a-Wish Foundation</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.663</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: For the selected videos, the negative valence mean averages were not significantly different at a .001 level between high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 2.31, sd = 1.67$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 2.78, sd = 1.827$): $F(1, 23) = 4.581$, $p = .043$. The table shows the negative valence means and standard deviations for each cause.

Table 6: Manipulation Check on Perceived Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>2.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan G. Komen for the Cure</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>2.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-a-Wish Foundation</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>2.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-perceived frequency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>2.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular Dystrophy Association</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>2.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>2.233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: There was a significant difference between the means of high-perceived frequency causes ($M = 6.82, sd = 2.417$) and low-perceived frequency causes ($M = 5.056, sd = 2.253$), $F(1,70) = 49.802$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{\text{part}} = .416$. 
Figure 6: Example of Video Manipulation

*Figure 6:* This video represents the stimuli shared with participants. In this execution, the participant saw American Express and Make-A-Wish Foundation paired together. See file, “figure6.mov” for complete video.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


