

MESSAGING IN THE TARGET/FEED CAMPAIGN: THE INTERSECTION OF
CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING AND ORGANIZATIONAL RHETORIC

A Thesis

presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri- Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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DECEMBER 2015

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**MESSAGING IN THE TARGET/FEED CAMPAIGN: THE INTERSECTION OF
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my committee members, Dr. Frisby, Dr. Mislán, Dr. Astrid and Dr. Greenwood, for their time, insight, encouragement. Both last semester as I prepared for this thesis and this summer and I undertook it, I felt so grateful to have such a wonderful committee, whom I both learned from and enjoyed working with.

Thanks to others in the journalism school who made this thesis possible. Martha Pickens, Dr. Perry and Dr. Rodgers who played huge roles in helping the initial proposal take form. This project would not have been possible without the contributions of my friends, family, former and present classmates as well.

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ABSTRACT

Cause-related marketing (CRM) relationships are mutually beneficial and occur when a non-profit organization and a corporation partner together for a specific campaign. To research the organizational rhetoric and how well these messaging construction choices influence messaging of the campaign, I conduct a rhetorical analysis informed by the visual analysis approach of the Target FEED cause-related marketing campaign. This analysis examines the different visual and textual components of the campaign, as well as analyzes how these representations portray social issues in a cultural context. This approach focuses on the dialect between text, context, visual components and themes. The main interest in this analysis is to understand the campaign messaging as a whole, but specifically relates to the visual selection choices used in these types of campaigns and contribute to the cultural perception of social issues messaging. Ultimately, it comments on ways this campaign perpetuates commoditization of social issues and stereotypes, masked by the monetary success of the campaign and positive associations with partnership. This research also has significant political and economic implications as the relationship between social issue messaging and commodification are analyzed in the context of a cause-related marketing partnership. This thesis will examine

existing cause-related marketing visual and rhetorical strategies in a literature review, analyze the messaging in content and explain the current impact and potential future implications in the marketing partnership world.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cause-Related Marketing's Influence

There is an ever-increasing interest in corporate social responsibility and social involvement activism efforts by corporations. It seems to be a coined 'fad' that has taken permanent roots in the marketing community. Cause-related marketing campaigns have become one of the most popular and fastest growing messaging tools for marketers (Polonsky and Macdonald, 2000). Traditionally, non-profit organizations (NPO) have had to figure-out creative ways to increase public awareness and increase funding as a result of having fewer resources and smaller budgets than their counterpart for-profit corporations. Cause-related marketing (CRM) has helped close that resource gap. CRM has been around for approximately 30 years, but has recently become a prominent area of interest in the strategic communication realm. Cause-related marketing refers to the marketing efforts by non-profits and according to Liu and Ko's (2011) definition is useful in promoting corporate social responsibility efforts and implementations through collaborative social alliances with non-profit organizations and corporations about a specific social issue. Social alliance is one delivery form pattern for CRM, which includes a partnership existing between a company and a non-profit organization. These two entities then work together to create and put into practice a joint CRM campaign concerning a social issue.

This type of partnership is particularly of interest because of its innate benefits in conjunction with CRM. This relationship creates a cycle. Non-profits benefit by getting

increased funding and publicity, consumers benefit from participation and receiving the positive feeling that they are making a significant impact, and companies benefit from increase in sales and affirmative public image (Grau, 2007). Regarding implementation strategy, the most strategic benefit in this type of relationships is that non-profits and corporations both benefit. These benefits include a stronger resource profile, deeper customer relations, more trust towards the business, better sales and stronger corporate image, all while working towards a larger goal of helping a social problem. This thesis will examine existing cause-related marketing visual and rhetorical strategies in a literature review, analyze the messaging in content and explain the current impact and potential future implications in the marketing partnership world.

Marketing scholars have already examined and commented on similar cause-related marketing campaign messaging (a primary example being Gap's Red campaign), but despite the scope of existing literature, there has yet to be an in-depth study on the Target /FEED campaign's reflection on today's social issue messaging. This thesis will also study organizational rhetorical content analysis research done on the specific cause-related marketing campaign, Target/FEED Campaign. This research will examine the campaign rhetoric, messaging, and interplay in various elements of this campaign specifically related to how social issues are represented.

The analysis sought to answer the following questions:

- **RQ 1:** How do text and images used in the Target/FEED campaign present, construct and represent its social justice messages about global hunger?

- **RQ 2:** How does the strategy of the campaign use text and images to contribute to the cultural discourse surrounding global hunger relief?

To answer these questions, this exploration of the Target/FEED Campaign employed an organizational rhetoric methodology informed by a visual analysis approach for holistically analyzing Target/FEED's commercial, print and digital campaign elements released during the nine-month campaign launched in June 2013. Looking closely at the organizational rhetoric of these two partners in this campaign, the author conducted an analysis constructing themes within the campaign to demonstrate how Target/FEED incorporated social issue messaging using visual and rhetorical strategies.

This study contributes to existing knowledge about cause-related marketing advertising campaigns and more specifically how social issue messaging is employed in said campaigns. More generally, this study contributes to existing literature about cause-related marketing strategy with an emphasis on visual components. By identifying specific themes and characteristics in the Target/FEED campaign, this study problematizes the commodification of social issues in a corporate setting through ethically misleading stereotype messaging regarding social issues and exposing some overlooked morally negative results of a campaign that is notably monetarily successful. Further, through a critical lens, it unpacks the strategy behind the Target/FEED campaign to demonstrate how easy and profitable it is for cause-related marketing partnerships to use commodification of social issues as a means to meet a monetary goal, but while disregarding the potential ethically negative implications this imposes on the social cause itself. Finally, this study contributes to cause-related marketing discourse surrounding

potential and ethical issues related to the social issue messaging ideals perpetuated in our culture by corporations and their profitability focus.

Conceptual Framework

Cause-related marketing through the lens of organizational rhetoric theory serves as the methodology theoretical framework for this study. There is an intersection of CRM and organizational rhetoric in the context of advertising campaigns. In this interaction, corporate philanthropy and market strategy meet. Much of this theoretical framework is rooted in the relationship between corporate entities and non-profit organizations working together usually in a specific campaign, to ultimately benefit both and promote products and social issue awareness. The messaging in this campaign innovatively portrays the issue of global hunger showing unique, limited available products for ‘Target only.’

Pioneer researchers in this field include Sue Adkins and her predecessor, P.R. Vandarajan. Adkins established CRM as a “legitimate” form of marketing, but also asserts that there are no clear boundaries confining the terms. Similarly, Vandarajan establishes that CRM has a lot of overlap with other established areas of marketing such as corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and public relations. Experts in the field Varadarajan and Menon define CRM as “the process of formulating and implementing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives”. (Varadarajan and Menon 1988, 60).

This phenomenon has been measured and tested for about 30 years and is often associated with qualitative research and under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR). As CRM continues to grow and mold, more of the intricacies involved in this sector of marketing can be further explored and researched.

This organizational rhetoric theory framework provides the core to the implementation of this examination research. The concept of cause-related marketing and the intricacies of campaigns involved in this niche directly influence the rhetoric in messaging and campaign messaging construction. With the understanding of CRM and organizational rhetoric, these types of messaging decisions and results can more easily and accurately be analyzed.

Since the majority of research on these topics is recent, there has not been much conflicting evidence. Major trends in this research include exploring consumer involvement, attitude and participation and the extent to which these variables affect effectiveness of cause-marketing campaigns. Benefits for both the corporation involved in the partnership, the non-profit and the consumers is also an area of tension and debate in terms of who benefits the most. Although with the discussion of benefits come the discussion of consequences that may be overlooked in these types of studies.

Among the limited amount of literature related to CRM, much of the established research and studies in the CRM field have a primary focus on consumers. Consumers are extremely important to the success of CRM campaigns because these campaigns could not be successful without their participation. However, there are gaps in the research, specifically in the area of campaign messaging and visual cultural context.

Consumers influence the decisions behind the construction of a campaign, but at face value, construction and message presentation are important considerations. These considerations include, what social messages are campaigns portraying? What is the result of the decisions behind the construction of these messages?

The literature accompanying these questions reveal even bigger gaps, but also provides a deeper understanding of the foundation of cause-related marketing as a theoretical framework and marketing concept. This literature combines CRM literature, visual culture literature and organization rhetoric literature to create a basis for the primary research. Through this literature, a major split emerged. A majority of research was focused on the consumption side of CRM campaigns. There was a lack of research on the campaign message construction discourse portion of CRM campaigns.

There are a variety of ways and methods to analyze messages. Early organizational communication studies focused heavily on aspects from the social scientific movement, but as the movement progressed, researchers began embracing more qualitative techniques. They wanted to understand how individuals processed and made sense of their experiences with organizations (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

Organizational rhetoric is carefully thought out and planned by organizations communications professionals to ideally exert the most meaning and influence possible. Another primary goal of organizational rhetoric analysis is to assess the persuasive impact of a message on an audience (Wichelns, 1925).

Thus, this method is a good fit to analyze meaning in messages, especially in regard to not only cause-related campaigns in general, with notorious reputations for

packing messages with meaning and powerful persuasion methods, but specifically the Target/FEED campaign with their innovative visual campaign approaches.

Background Information: Target/FEED Campaign Case Study

A sector of these relationships involves creating a campaign to support a specific social issue or social cause that is associated with the work of the non-profit organization in the CRM partnership. One of these emerging CRM partnerships began in 2013 between global retailer Target and non-profit organization FEED. Over the last 10 years, Target has promoted a few different cause-related endeavors. As a part of their back-to-school promotion, Target launched their partnership campaign with FEED in June 2013. FEED is an organization whose ultimate goal is to help alleviate global hunger with a specific emphasis in Africa. Lauren Bush Lauren founded the non-profit and the vision behind the specific partnership with Target was to create a limited-edition collection of products that provide a direct-give back. This partnership was unique because the purpose of the campaign was to help alleviate hunger in the United States. Thus, the Target and FEED USA partnership was born. The Target/FEED USA campaign included TV commercials, print ads, digital campaign components as well as in-store broad-based support. The partnership between Target and FEED included promoting a limited-edition collection of FEED apparel products. The partnership agreement involved Target agreeing to donate the monetary equivalent of food listed on each the tag of product sold. Thus, when a customer bought a t-shirt, the tag showed 23 meals meaning that Target gave the monetary equivalent of the number of meals listed on each product to Feeding America and then distributed locally at local food banks across the United States.

The campaign marked the first time that Target treated a cause-related marketing campaign as one of their prevalent designer collaborations involving the entire spectrum of the marketing mix including TV and print ads, commercials, digital campaign components and broad-based support in store. In the past Target had done smaller efforts that revolve around lesser product categories or brands, but they had never done a collaboration involving social consumerism to this magnitude until this campaign. This collaboration was designed to have appeal to the core consumer as well as specifically the younger millennial audience. This is a unique example of an innovative partnership and a willingness to experiment in the collaborative sphere.

To further understand this campaign, a rhetorical visual analysis approach of the Target/FEED campaign occurred in the context of an established literature and theoretical framework. This research will specifically focus on the campaign and the discourse of the marketing campaign. This analysis will focus around various research questions:

- **RQ 1:** How do text and images used in the Target/FEED campaign present, construct and represent its social justice messages about global hunger?
- **RQ 2:** How does the strategy of this campaign use text and images to contribute to the cultural discourse surrounding global hunger relief?

Investigating these questions and gaining a better understanding of this campaign's message construction and components of that message, a deeper understanding of CRM is gained as well as a better understanding of the intersection of visual culture and social justice representation issues.

This campaign began in March 2013 and was finished in December 2013 with the actual launch of the products in stores in June 2013. This was the planned time period duration and the goal of the campaign was to raise enough money for 10 million meals and the campaign was successful in meeting and even exceeding that goal. This collaboration was unique because FEED as an organization had a globally focused mission, but this campaign project with Target was specifically focused on the USA hunger issue. Many praised this campaign for its innovative marketing approaches and success; but there were a few critiques that focused on transparency concerns.

The monetary success of the Target/FEED campaign has been shared with other brands, too, with their own proclaimed goals of empowering non-profits and contributing to global hunger relief while adding stature to their good corporate citizen reputation. Like Target/FEED, these other cause-related marketing partnerships have gained traction in the media for contributing to ‘goodwill efforts’ in society, and ‘making-the-world-a-better-place’ with the resulting assumption that profit gain has been replaced as a forefront motive. Regardless of how well these types of campaigns actually impact social issue relief or motivate the target audience to purchase these exclusive aid-contributing products, the level of media experience by brands like the Gap Red campaign and now Target/FEED merits further study of how these social messaging appeals are incorporated with product-based appeal. The following literature review presents a collection of studies, journals and examples that not only address various conceptualizations of cause-related marketing, but also serve as a foundation for analyzing Target/FEED campaign for its own cause-messaging characteristics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

From the existing literature on Cause-Related Marketing (CRM), there are empirical generalizations and research themes that emerge and influence the understanding of CRM as a field of study as a whole. These themes show how CRM has been studied in the past and the findings in these studies. The most dominant empirical generalization is the idea that non-profits and corporations work together. This concept is key to defining the CRM relationship as well as analyzing the organizational rhetoric of the Target/FEED campaign. This literature also emphasizes the gap of the intended research in this thesis with lack of messaging and cultural emphasis in cause-related marketing research. Thus, although this literature covers a broad spectrum within CRM, it lays the necessary foundation for the research in this particular study.

Non-profits and Corporations Working Together

When corporations and non-profits enter into a relationship it is risky and time consuming, but ultimately both groups benefit in some way. Some of the early research done in this area of study was by Sue Adkins. Adkins (2000) discusses the unique strategic role that CRM can play in a company's marketing strategy and marketing mix. This perspective mostly highlights the company's benefits and great potential these types of efforts have as a whole. When CRM is done well, it can compete with commercial objectives. CRM has begun to influence many areas of mass communication such as marketing, communications and corporate affairs. It already has a reputation as intrinsically inspirational and innovative (Adkins, 2000) and its influence can be leveraged in objective and tactical ways. This understanding of CRM defines the role and

distinguishing features of this concept, while also defending its legitimacy in the marketplace. Target has worked with many non-profits in the past, all of which had been monetarily successful. This was Feed's first partnership with a major corporation. Both organizations brought a unique cause-related marketing perspective to this collaboration.

Taking a more recent approach to Till (2000), Demetriou (2010) emphasizes the benefits of CRM to corporations not only as a marketing tool that can help in accomplishing their marketing objectives, but an integral part to their image as a brand. CRM can play an important role in enhancing the image and identity of a company. Demetriou's primary research objective in their research was to examine how people feel about the necessity for companies to be socially responsible. Through surveys and interviews of marketing managers, they found that a majority of consumers have the expectation for companies to be involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR), which includes CRM. Cause-related marketing is objectively important to companies and consumer relationships, (Demetriou, 2010 and Polonsky, 2012) agreed with this perspective and did extensive research from the non-profit perspective of the partnership. He found similar results compared to the common corporation perspective. CRM is often seen as an asset to partnerships with corporations at the forefront of these benefits, but, similar to corporations, CRM can influence brand awareness and brand attitude of non-profit organizations as well.

This existing literature confirms the multitude of benefits for all parties involved in CRM partnerships. This conclusion does not ignore the potential risks and is not a guarantee that all partnerships will be completely and equally beneficial to both parties.

However, this analysis does conclude that in a healthy partnership, and using creative implementation strategies raises the probability that these benefits are evenly distributed across all partners.

The Target/FEED Campaign, which is the case study focus of this research is a social alliance and was an effort that benefited both FEED and Target. The understanding of the complexities and parameters in CRM relationships is essential to the research explored in this thesis. Without a solid understanding of how these relationships work, a case study examining this type of partnership visually and in a cultural context would be difficult. Target has a strong history of community involvement as well as well-established, cause-related marketing, partnerships. This influences Target's brand as a high-valued priority. Both FEED and Target have influences on their brand in this relationship and based on the outcome of the campaign, both companies were affected positively. Without further primary research investigation, it is impossible to know the exact extent this innovation and positive outcomes apart from the documented monetary success, since this is not the focus of this study. However, these innovations and positive outcomes are recognized for what there are and contribute to the understanding of this campaign and relationship as a whole, but also put under critical analysis for the not-so-positive messages visually displayed in this campaign that are more subtly noticed, but just as negatively impactful.

The Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Consumer Relationship in the Partnership Mix

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an integral part of social marketing, and CRM is a tool used to perform corporate social responsibility. These two concepts are similar with a significant overlap. They are similar in the sense that both CRM and CSR are more influential and have greater impact with social issues, when there is a long-term commitment to these types of efforts, but different in regards to their specific roles in these efforts; and for the purposes of this research are seen as synonymous terms.

Topics in social marketing such as corporate social responsibility, cause-related marketing and public relations are all conceptually similar, both dealing with societal issues. After evaluating the overlap and differences among these topics, Kestane (2014) brings some clarity on these individual concepts. These concepts are used both in the profit sector and the non-profit sector and some are used in both. The primary goal of CRM is to have a target group of people that benefit from a NPO's efforts to alleviate a social problem. Similar to CSR, it relates to brand image and brand loyalty increasing customer relations and profits (Kestane, 2014).

It is common and expected by social norms that corporations have some elements of corporate social responsibility in their business model. Angelidis and Ibrahim (1993) define corporate social responsibility as corporate social actions taken to administer to social needs in the surrounding community and larger society. These types of social actions have both measurable outcomes and non-quantifiable benefits, but all require a committed investment. In the competitive market place, one of the major ways CSR

influences a corporation is by contributing to their overall reputation, aiding in brand awareness and brand differentiation (Bronn 2011).

CSR in general is a philanthropic way for a corporation to invest in something outside of itself and humanize the company. The importance of CSR has also evolved with our constantly transforming society to reflect the important and relevant social issues of the time. The broad umbrella of CSR has a lot of positive factors and benefits, but is difficult to concretely define because of its variety and variability. One common component of the definition is that CSR is a company's commitment to look outside of itself and invest in something society, as a whole, will benefit from, ranging from social to environmental issues.

The connection between CSR and CRM is without question. They are separate, but are pieces of the greater social marketing methods scope. Though their distinction is subtle, there seems to be an emphasis on the importance of their dissimilarity because of their individual goals. This leads us to further examine the connection, importance and role of the consumer in this marketing mix.

Throughout cause related marketing's emergence as a specific field, its legitimacy and influence became quickly apparent. Establishing the amount of overlap and influence that corporate social responsibility has with cause-related marketing is important to the differentiation process. They are connected yet distinct, thus when approaching an analysis of a cause-related marketing campaign, it is essential to consider the consumer social responsibility factors, and recognize that they are both under the term of CSR as partners and parts of the greater whole.

A key component to CSR and CRM is the consumer and stakeholder participation. Maignan (2004) provides a conceptualization of CSR and where it fits into the marketing field. This conceptualization has a particular emphasis on stakeholders and the idea that CSR is more than just planning a bunch of events and initiatives around CRM, but rather it is more of a holistic approach, committing to the principles and processes that help companies understand the stakeholder. Part of this understanding relates to how consumers identify with campaigns. This conceptual framework links CSR and CRM initiatives and the relationship with the stakeholders to the positive impacts of the organization in relation to stakeholder identity (Maignan 2004).

One unique aspect of the Target/FEED campaign is the unique consumer participation contributing to a new consumer experience. Consumers have the opportunity to interact with the brand and the cause in a new way.

Cause-related marketing is widely accepted as a marketing tool that aids in building positive brand reputation and maintaining consumer brand loyalty. Consumers tend to identify with companies when they have a strong connection to the CSR initiatives that a company is participating in, thus showing that this identification leads to lasting benefits beyond purchase behavior. (Bhattacharya, 2004). Target is known for its strong corporate social responsibility efforts. *Corporate Responsibility Magazine* named Target as one of the top 100 companies that is a great Corporate Citizen, and Target's team members have volunteered over a million hours to local community efforts in the last year, (according to Target's 2014 Corporate Social Responsibility Report Executive Summary). Since the Feed partnership, Target has continued to engage in cause-related

efforts including their most recent campaign dealing with school supplies and contributing to the Kids in Need Foundation.

It is important not to underestimate the consumer because consumers easily identify which companies have strong corporate social responsibilities. They found that the benefits of CSR initiatives go beyond revenue increases, but also influence effective word-of-mouth behaviors and brand loyalty perceptions. These internal consumer influences are key and more evident than transactional effects, but this importance is sometimes overlooked because the benefit is not as glaringly obvious. Consumers respond to CSR and influences how they identify with a brand. Often the specific cause involved in a CRM partnership is key to the consumer identification process. How easily and naturally consumers identify with a specific cause is influenced by their individual experience with the CRM campaign. This process and overall experience is key to identification and should be emphasized when considering specific strategy implementations (Bhattacharya, 2004). Through the purchase of the FEED product items, the consumer is interacting on a brand level and on an experience level. The consumer is interacting with Target as a national brand retailer, FEED and global hunger as an issue in their community and then taking a part in the solution with a purchase by trusting Target to donate the promised amount with the purchase as well as the material benefit of the actual purchased good. Target's participation in this identification process with this campaign is seen in the strategic approach and will be discussed further in the data section of this paper.

Target and FEED are in a social alliance partnership through this specific campaign. The concept of social alliances as a specific marketing plan and as something that allows employees and both organizations in the partnership can be used to align social, commercial and moral identities as well. Through this concept, Target and FEED align themselves under the value of caring about food scarcity and global hunger as an important social issue. This unique facet of identification and influence can be applied to not only consumer identification, but also corporate identification. Findings from Berger (2006) include that social alliances help with intra- and inter-organization identifications particularly on the corporate side of the partnership. Long interviews were the primary method choice in this research. This research counters previous research by saying that connections can be deep and influential on a multitude of organizational identity levels, particularly in the lines of emotional attachment. Corporations saw themselves as more complete and unified (Berger, 2006). One of Target's top stated values in their identity is a value stated all over in the brand's official documents and seen in the way their stores interact with communities.

Through this analysis of the consumer identity component of CRM, the link and importance of consumer identification is clear. The depth of the importance of identification proved to even extend past consumer identification into employee identification attitudes and benefits.

The majority of cause-related marketing studies reveal the importance of consumers and their role in the relationship, however there is a gap in the understanding and analysis of content messaging in these types of campaigns. The understanding of the

consumer role is necessary to successfully construct these campaigns, but there is a gap in exploring the content and construction of these campaigns.

The Role of Emotions

Cause-related marketing has powerful consumer emotional involvement. Broderick (2003) performed a study analyzing customer awareness and involvement factors and their influence on cause-related marketing, (Broderick, 2003).

When discussing emotional influence and different types of appeal, a common approach in many areas of marketing is guilt appeal. CRM and guilt appeal have a relationship that can be very powerful, but if used incorrectly guilt appeal can have extreme negative effects. Another study with the research done by Chang (2011) focuses on the processing side of cause-marketing related messages particularly in light of emotional appeals. The study found that guilt appeal is effective, but that donation magnitude has a greater influence on the overall effectiveness. Which is a notion that the Target/FEED campaign effectively employs with the number of meals donated with each product purchase on the tag. As a result, campaigns should pay careful attention to how guilt appeal is used and how it influences consumers. The reality of its potential negative uses should not be overlooked. Emotional appeals strategy as part of CRM is significant, however, there is an importance of taking into account the processing of information emotionally by consumers (Chang 2011). Target decided to not to risk the use of the guilt appeal approach but rather capitalize on other aspects of emotional appeal.

Eikenberry (2013) did a case study of CRM dealing specifically with a United Way campaign. They did interviews, observation and document analysis to examine how

CRM campaign directors frame their activities and efforts particularly in the area of ethics. Their findings showed that framings tend to be around engagement, brand recognition and ease of participation. Ultimately findings confirm that consumer experience is significant and influential. They also found that there is not a lot of evidence that link the purchases to the emotional notion of ‘making the world a better place’ (Eikenberry, 2013.) This data is contradictory to the approach that Target took with a main appeal in their campaign focusing on helping others and making the world a better place. Target’s success in their campaign puts this data in tension with their findings potentially disproving their findings or creating an outlier.

According to Kim (2013), moral emotions have a significant impact on the purchase decision for a social-cause product. These moral emotions range from ego-focused, such as pride to ‘other-focused’, such as guilt. Target’s campaign focuses more in the ego and pride part of the spectrum with their approach. There is an interdependence of the customer influences and moral emotions, which had a more significant pull to the individual. It is no surprise that cause-related marketing has an ingrained moral component, since many of the social issues involved in CRM have moral components. Further, the study found that there was not conclusive relationships between cultural orientation and self-construct and the way this influences moral emotions in the purchase of social-cause products. This shows a correlation between emotions and cause-related purchase decisions providing further insight into how to approach CRM strategically with morality as a part of strategic implementations (Kim 2013).

Since many CRM campaigns involve non-profits working with sensitive social and environmental issues, it is no surprise that emotions play a key role in these types of campaigns and the literature reinforces that notion. Emotional responses can easily be used to impact CRM campaigns positively, but approached with caution because emotions exude the possibility of a powerful negative effect if not approached with sensitivity.

Advertising is always an emotional transaction and the consumers' emotions have a powerful influence on the perception of all elements in a campaign including the product and brand, but also larger more esoteric elements like culture and social issues. The consideration of emotional influence is important considering the organizational rhetoric approach of the study and the larger role that emotional implications can play on culture. Target plays to the emotions and is discussed further in detail later in the data portion of this research.

Visual Culture

Visual Culture is a term that has conventional meaning in the fine art realm, but has also significance across other fields of study. It has come to be defined as referring to all the items of culture whose visual appearance is important of their existence and often times, these items purpose. (Jenks, 2003). Generally, visual culture is interested in aspects of culture that is expressed in visual elements and how those elements interplay and add meaning to the culture they are associated with. According to some critics, pictures themselves contain such strong rhetorical authority that they require drastic

action to curtail their persuasive appeal (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Schroeder, 2002; Scott, 1994)

Visual Culture looks at the intersection of the interpretation process that coincides with visual experience and the intellectually engaged approach that is often associated with cultural studies. Thus, visual culture isn't just defined as media, but rather a cultural interaction. Mirzoeff notes in his research that visual power evokes something in the dimension of visual culture that is at the heart of all visual events (Nicholas Mirzoeff 1995). In his research, Paul Merraris (1996) looks at the importance of images in persuasion in advertising. He discovers that there are two main properties that contribute to visual persuasion in advertising: semantic properties and syntactic properties. Considering images through the lens of these properties allows images to be examined on a complex level. The complexity of images influences the perception of reality.

The smallest nuances in visual interpretations can produce a variety of strong emotional responses. By drawing on their intuitive understanding of visual perception and the growing body of research concerning the relationship between vision and emotion, advertisers are able to carefully construct all aspects of their visual components of their campaigns to elicit responses to accomplish the campaigns goals. (Merraris, 1996). This is not an easy endeavor, but is key to a successful campaign with visual elements.

The direction of the marketing world as a whole is moving to an extensively visually focused platform, because research reinforces the power of images as more persuasive than just words alone (Messaris, 1996). Thus it is not a surprise that the cause-

related marketing sector of the marketing world is following a similar trend. There are different types of visual representations in CRM campaigns. Visually, there is the stylized approach and the documentarian approach. Most CRM campaigns use a combination of these approaches to create a campaign. The stylized approach includes visualizations that are illustrated or constructed in a studio. More documentarian visualizations use a more journalistic approach and capture visuals in the field; often showing the work the non-profit is doing in the environment their organization is working with. The intersection of these two types of visualizations produces a strong visual campaign approach and is used successfully by the Target/FEED Campaign. This campaign exists among and in visual culture, thus understanding that culture contributes to understanding the messaging with a new perspective in the visual culture in which it exists.

Visual images exist within a unique environment because unlike textual or verbal sentiments, pictures cannot be held to the same true/false standard (J.L. Borgerson & J.E. Schroeder, 2005). For example, Even when consumers realize an image or image-based scenario is not “real,” these images influence how they perceive and respond to their world. Further, with such wide-ranging influence, recent studies in marketing urges the consideration of marketing images as cultural texts, and not merely as accurate or true strategic pictures that transparently record faces, families, or familiar products, services, and sights (Mick, Burroughs, Hetzel, & Brannen, 2004; Schroeder, 2002; Scott, 1994).

The Downfall of Cause-Related Marketing

Although CRM has many benefits to the corporation, the non-profit and the consumers, there is significant amount of literature that exposes some of the potential

downfalls to these types of philanthropic relationships. Surrounding the idea of philanthropic giving in general is a discussion of how beneficial it is to participate in activities that are outside of a company's core activity, (Argandoña 1998). Often these endeavors take away time, effort and resources from the primary mission of the company. There are strong perspectives on both sides of the spectrum. Some side with Friedman (1962) who argues that corporate giving is an inappropriate use of shareholder resources, while others align more with Osterhus (1997) with the perspective that including noneconomic objectives is important to positive corporate development.

In many regards, CRM commercializes giving and philanthropic participation. Through this commercialization companies use the giving effort as a point to leverage a positive company image but also, the companies do not give unless there is a consumer transaction. Thus, the non-profit only benefits if the company is making a profit. There is a direct connection between consumer transaction and non-profit benefit. The commodification of giving through CRM is a substantial shift in philanthropic perspective and participation from other more traditional forms of giving like sponsorships or gift-in-kind. CRM has transformed philanthropic participation into a commodity that companies and non-profits sell. Polonsky suggests that CRM type of giving is the most cost beneficial form of corporate social responsibility from the companies' perspective. However, it is important to consider the potentially ethically problematic perspective of commodifying charitable partnerships in the form of CRM (Polonsky, 1999).

There is a significant negative degree in which the social issue that the non-profit contributes to is devalued and potentially masked by a company's opportunity to just engage with a consumer in a transaction. The significance of the benefit in CRM partnership is overshadowed by a 'buy my product' mentality without any emphasis on understanding the social issue that is benefiting financially. It can be argued that Target is commodifying the issue of global hunger, thus actually hurting the efforts trying to aid this cause rather than helping. Though these concerns exist it is difficult to argue that these risks outweigh the monetary and awareness success for both companies in the Target/ Feed partnership, but is an important aspect of concern in the process of study that takes place in this paper.

Earlier, the literature discussed six important findings from the CRM scholarship. The first is the benefits and popularity of nonprofits and corporations working together. When FEED and Target partnered together they chose to engage in a CRM partnership but with an innovative touch. The benefits for both are evident in the monetary success of the campaign. Feed received the promised goal of meals to local food pantries and in return Target received business. The second major finding from the scholarship is the influence of CRS as a significant element of Corporate Social Responsibility. As discussed early Target values community involvement and takes pride in their employee team. Through their tactful and intentional corporate social responsibility efforts, embracing a cause-related marketing campaign was a logical next step to continue to grow in this area. Another finding exposed the importance of the consumer relationship in the partnership mix. It is evident in the structure of the campaign and the already evident existing values

of the companies as whole that Target and Feed embrace the consumer as an essential aspect of their partnership.

CRM campaigns are known for their emotional appeal and as discussed in the literature many campaigns rely on the guilt emotional appeal. This is where Target and Feed embraced innovation where they easily could've followed the industry norm but instead decided to take an alternative approach. Target and Feed went against the scholarship and embraced an empowering positive emotional appeal rather than one of negativity and guilt. Another important aspect of the literature was looking at the campaign through the lens and context of visual culture. The Target/FEED campaign exists in visual culture with a visually driven campaign and this played a significant role in the interpretation process. The final finding in the literature discussed the downfall of CRM. This idea is exposed in the campaign when the commodification of social issues is emphasized in campaign and is one of the most significant elements in the research to follow. Since the campaign was deemed a success monetarily. This was an interesting aspect of CRM to explore. This campaign focuses on the transaction and purchase of the product. This literature argues that although CRM campaigns do good, however there are subtle yet significant ways that CRM can be harmful. Since this campaign happened only two years ago, many of these potential harms are not prominently evident at a surface level evaluation, but that does not mean that they don't exist, but rather should continue to be considered in in-depth analysis.

The above collection of studies and examples demonstrate the breadth of existing knowledge surrounding the recently developed niche cause-related marketing, with

particular regard for the way these campaigns have been constructed based on consumer involvement research. This collection emphasizes the lack of research attributed to content messaging in terms of greater cultural context specifically regarding social issues and their role in the corporate environment. With this consideration in mind, the following analysis draws on questions raised in the above bodies of literature and pursues the same critical approach used on consumer participation, and now used to analyze the social issue messaging in the Target/Feed campaign in a visual culture context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Analyzing CRM in a specific, in-depth context creates a deeper understanding in the visual messaging construction of these campaigns in this niche-marketing sector. Informed by organizational rhetoric, this study employs a campaign analysis with the purpose of revealing insights about ways text and images used in the Target/FEED reflect characteristics of social-issue messaging and ultimately perpetuate the commoditization of social issues in cause-related marketing advertising campaigns. A case study of the cause-marketing campaign partnership between Target and Feed will be the primary focus of this research by the conduction of an analysis informed by the organizational rhetoric approach with an emphasis in the visuals. The core of this analysis was discovering how this campaign presents the cause-related messages, how the message is constructed and presented through rhetoric and visual analysis and analyzing what the deeper cultural implications are from this type of social justice messaging. More specifically, the combination of organizational rhetoric and visual analysis approaches to this study aim to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ 1:** How do text and images used in the FEED campaign present, construct and represent its social justice messages about global hunger?
- **RQ 2:** How does the strategy of this campaign use text and images to contribute to the cultural discourse surrounding global hunger?

As mentioned earlier, while this study considers the many conceptualizations of cause-related marketing, it is based particularly on visual messaging in the context of

contemporary visual culture. According to Mitchell (2002), visual analysis is a concept of social construction and not merely biological vision. Thus, this visual analysis involves both visual elements and context in conjunction. One goal of this approach is “to provide usable descriptions of major compositional structures and analyze how they are used to produce meaning” (Ailleo, 2006). This is considered a formal approach and focuses on the dialect between text and context and ultimately performs under the assumption that have actions are semiotic and have meaning.

Given the time constraints of this study, the research questions provide focus on two specific components that are introduced in a preliminary scope of the campaign content in the context of visual culture: cause-related marketing monetary success doesn't account for all types of campaign success as well as it's emphasis on the commoditization of social issues and the ethical implications that arise from that campaign choice. By examining these two angles together, the findings of this study provide a more holistic understanding of how the Target/FEED advertising campaign conveys global hunger messaging, as well as how visual vulture manifests itself in cause-related marketing campaigns.

When studying organizational rhetoric through this lens, there is the belief that no text is an accident, rather all parts of the composition have purpose. This approach has two main parts. Hoffman & Ford (2009) layout the process in their book *Organizations and Rhetoric: Situations and Strategies* and is the process that this study followed as a reference. They state the process in three specific steps: The first is rhetoric signification in both visual and text components, which focuses on the descriptive relationships

between the different elements of a specific visual text. This process is broken down even further in three distinct strands: (a) a descriptive analysis identifying the rhetoric components; (b) an interpretive analysis considers the communicative strategies used and the potential meaning in the interplay of these campaign components; (c) a critical analysis looking at how this messaging influences the perception of social justice hunger issues in the present US culture. An important aspect of this methodology is identifying the rhetoric, rhetorical discourse and the rhetor. Rhetoric refers to the practice of the product of message creations (Hoffman & Ford, 2009). In this study the rhetorical discourse is identified as the visuals and texts that make up the aspects of the Target/FEED CRM campaign. The rhetor is the combined voice of the partnership between Target and Feed. There is a circular relationship that forms between rhetorical theory and rhetorical criticism, and elements of both aspects of this partnership are explored on a theoretical and critical level in the Target/FEED study that follows (Hoffman & Ford, 2009).

Some of the rhetorical strategies and organizational patterns explored in this methodology include Narration, Description, Cause & Effect and Compare and Contrast Orders. Narration is a strategy that focuses on the use of stories that are relevant to the main idea and illustrate the points of the message. Description is a strategy that focuses on the perception of the five senses. Cause & Effect highlights the causes and effects presented by evaluating these components of results, consequences of something etc. These specific rhetorical strategies and organizational patterns are identified in the Target/FEED campaign and used to convey the messaging of this campaign.

This study applied an organizational rhetoric approach as a way of guiding the overall methodology. More specifically, the visual/textual analysis component of this study informed which content was analyzed within the Target/FEED campaign, while the organizational rhetoric theory informed the ways in which the data was collected and interpreted. Because organizational rhetoric is an industry practice derived from experts rooted in the relationship between messaging and impact, it served as an important guide for this study's methodological approach, allowing greater flexibility in developing the appropriate methods for coding and analyzing data. The flexible nature of the organizational rhetoric analysis allowed the researcher to analyze any and all emerging themes without being confined to restrictions of a more regimented theoretical framework. This process involved thorough note taking and the categorization of those notes into themes. Through this data-collecting process patterns emerged in the literature resulting in themes that were applicable to the proposed research questions of this study.

When used together they allow for a dynamic analysis of related social tendencies and political implications, while also integrating quality perception elements of visuals. This intersection is where organizational rhetoric analysis occurs. For this proposed research the organizational rhetoric approach was applied to the selected campaign. This CRM campaign included commercials, print ads, and digital components including social media integration. This approach was applied to each of these components separately and then ultimately synthesized for a holistic perspective on the campaign resulting in themes that provide the foundation for a critical analysis of this monetarily 'successful' campaign.

Given that this campaign utilized three main platforms to speak to its target consumer, this study specifically looked at the television commercial usage in comparison to its other communication strategies. This campaign's commercial usage is especially of interest due to its notable Clio award recognition in 2014. Focusing on the social issue messaging on this commercial platform allowed for the most holistic, thorough and great-depth analysis since these commercials provide a narrative complexity not demonstrated as extensively in the other platforms. These commercials utilize similar elements cohesive with the other platforms of the campaign and provide great depth and opportunity for a dynamic analysis. More specifically the researcher analyzed all known and available campaign components on the three platforms over the 9-month campaign.

This campaign includes a three commercial/video campaign strategy, print advertisement strategy, and a nine-month social media strategy on Facebook and Twitter. This study acknowledged Target/FEED's social media presence, however since their presence on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were not an integrated part of the rest of the campaign, they remained secondary to the print and commercial aspects of the campaign.

Therefore, despite the inconsistent posting and activity and lack of presence on their social media outlets, the print and digital components provided a multitude of texts and images to be considered for analysis and examination. The analysis involves analyzing messaging components and themes carried out with the physical text as part of the context, but also how that is carried out visually. What visually did they use to portray 'alleviating world hunger'? What do the images say about the type of person that

participates in the cause? How does the social media text contextualize and add to the images used on social media? How did their image choices effect their messaging? What do their color choices and element placement imply? How does the commoditization of social justice influence the messaging? These questions emerged when visual culture and cause-related marketing intersect and create cultural meaning for social issues.

To answer the research questions in this study, each element's individual analysis of the campaign will be considered in rhetorical textual elements and visual contextual factors. Each component of the campaign will have its own significant and complete analysis, however when viewed relevant to each other, the campaign's analysis in its entirety draws upon deeper and extensive conclusions resulting in themes. When cultural implications and themes emerge from the content, potential answers to the research questions explored in this thesis will be discovered.

Maignan (2004) establishes a strong consumer relationship and the importance of understanding the consumer. His research does not consider understanding the consumer in relation to cultural identity concepts leaving room for research. Kim's (2013) research also explored the influence of morality in purchase decision. This morality consideration in conjunction with cause-related marketing, which is already a morally charged concept, offers room to further explore morality in the context of culture. The heart of any campaign is visual (Mirzoeff, 1995). Exploring how culture and social issues manifest themselves and drive a campaign is at the core of this analysis and research questions.

Within this campaign's nine-month time frame, included a primary two television commercial campaign with one supplemental promotional video on Target and FEED's

personal web pages. The print strategy included a 28 print ads approach with minimal concept variations creating a cohesive and consistent campaign. These print advertisements appearing mostly in magazines popular among millennial men and women such as *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *GQ*, *The Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone* and many more. Throughout this examined time Target and FEED had ample of promotional material appearing on BullsEye, (Target's blog), news outlet articles as well as some personal seemingly authentic celebrity endorsement. However, looking specifically at the Target/FEED campaigns television commercial platform allowed for a closer analysis of the complexity of the messages within a narrative form aimed to communicate at the intended millennial audience. The campaign elements specifically analyzed for this study provide an essential understanding to the social issue messaging specifically about global hunger that these two companies conveyed to their combined consumer base and ultimately the contemporary visual culture in which it exists.

The analysis process began with data collection. While collecting the various campaign texts and components, the note-taking and preliminary exposure were conducted simultaneously. Upon preliminary exposure to the materials, more extensive exposure and note taking contributed to the analysis. The campaign material gathering process took 10 weeks, as was the duration of the preliminary note-taking analysis of these resources. During this first process general themes and patterns began to be identified both in terms of images in commercial and print advertisements, but also in the text that accompanied these images. When considering these preliminary results in the

context of the research questions, these patterns and themes were noted and kept for closer examination later in the analysis and critical process.

Chapter 4: Discussion of Findings - Presentation, Analysis & Interpretation of Data

This section focuses on the findings and analysis of the primary themes that emerged in the data gathered descriptively, interpretively and then critically in this process. These research findings focused around an organizational rhetoric data informed questions:

- **RQ 1:** How do text and images used in the FEED campaign present, construct and represent its social justice messages about global hunger?
- **RQ 2:** How does the strategy of this campaign use text and images to contribute to the cultural discourse surrounding global hunger?

To approach these research questions, a three- step approach is implemented based on Hoffman & Ford's (2009) Organizational Rhetoric Approach. First, the collected elements of the campaign underwent a descriptive analysis. This process included a thematic approach, identifying major themes in the content of the campaign and describing elements that repeat and contribute to pattern formation. Next, these identified themes underwent an interpretative analysis where the descriptions from the primary step of this process are more deeply understood. Finally, these interpretations are critically analyzed and more deeply evaluated.

Although many critical and problematic themes were identified in this first descriptive process, three overarching themes strongly emerged as characteristic of this campaign's social messaging: 1) the transactional commodification of global hunger, 2)

the role of partnership, brand awareness and mutual benefit: a not-so equal collaboration and 3) the stereotyping of those in need and the providers of relief.

The next few sections outline these three themes using specific campaign images as supporting examples. As mentioned earlier, these campaign examples range primarily from Target/FEED's print and commercial efforts using their social media and digital platforms as context and support since most of the images were on the latter two platforms. The digital components of this campaign include a Facebook page called *Feed USA* and a twitter hashtag *#feedUSA*. Target as well as FEED Projects used their personal social media accounts to promote the partnership the during campaign duration. This digital component of the overall campaign was the weakest and vague in its inconsistency with the campaign. In 2013 there was a huge industry push to engage on social media. This push has continued to present day, however, surprisingly, this was something that this campaign chose not to focus on. Only 50 percent of their posts/tweets received engagements. Nowhere in other parts of the campaign is it mentioned that there are ways to socially engage with the campaign, thus consumers must go out on their own accord seeking out the interaction which is not an ideal approach and interesting choice to take note of especially considering the monetary success of the campaign. This portion of the campaign wasn't embraced to its full capacity but didn't affect the overall monetary effectiveness of the campaign. However, since this platform has such a multitude of inconsistencies, it was not considered as a major platform to examine further these research questions.

While not all of the campaigns efforts are exhaustively analyzed in the following analysis, the construction of these primarily and emergent themes took into consideration all accessible elements of the Target/FEED campaign in a holistic approach. Through investigating these research questions and gaining a better understanding of this campaign's message construction and components of that message, a deeper understanding of CRM is gained as well as a better understanding of the intersection of visual culture and social issues. Through analyzing the different campaign components for messaging themes and persuasion elements through these questions, conclusions a deeper understanding is obtained.

General Data Description

The Target Feed Campaign is a print and television commercial driven campaign with some digital elements. The different components of the campaign are founded on primarily clean backgrounds with simple layouts and clean design concepts. There are three traditional rhetoric components consisting of ethos, logos and pathos elements. These three major components are the major standard that the analysis was based off of. This analysis consisted of three major steps. The first step is a descriptive analysis, followed by an interpretive analysis and then concluding with a critical analysis (Hoffman & Ford, 2009) "Ethos" refers to the authority and character of the voice displayed. "Logos" refers to the structural aspects. "Pathos" refers to the emotional aspects of the campaign construction. Each of the parts of the campaign was studied using these steps as traditional methodological guides to ultimately inform the interpretation and critical portions of the analysis. Traditionally these rhetorical

components are applied to just textual rhetoric, however, as discussed in the literature review campaigns and specifically the Target/Feed campaign exists among a visual culture. Thus, amidst this visual culture are visual components that interact with the textual components and amongst this interaction meaning is made in the analysis.

The general foundation aesthetic of the campaign is almost exclusively white backgrounds with a large amount of white space between the elements on the medium and this style choice is consistent across all of platforms in the campaign. This approach provides a clean background to prominently display the products of this limited edition line and in about half of the print advertisements models are shown with the products. In the ads with the models, the models act as accessories to the products, with the products remaining the main focus.

Overall, Target took an innovative mostly stylized approach to the print and commercial aspects of this campaign resulting in a strong commodification of global hunger focus since there was immense emphasis on the products. This innovation and success won them a 2014 Clio award in the Partnership category, but the messaging beyond the aesthetic is not as commendable. This analysis of the various components of the campaign provides insight into answering the research questions that this study is based on dissecting and revealing the negative commodification perpetuations occurring as a result of these messaging construction choices.

Theme 1: The Transactional Commodification of Global Hunger

This section addresses the Target/FEED campaign's utilization of content and images in the campaign reinforcing the commodification of a social issue – making

global hunger a ‘product to be purchased’ rather than a pervasive problem in the world that needs to be understood and engaged with on multiple levels. By examining the combined use of words (text and audio transcript) to communicate to the consumer and visual representations (photos and illustrations) the author identified ways in which the campaign’s rhetoric reinforces this transactional mentality. This section also identifies the ways in which the campaign places value on the products and goodwill that come from their purchase, rather than social issue and more specifically global hunger comprehension and education.

This is an extremely product driven campaign. There are no aspects of the print campaign that show the recipients of aid through the partnership or any type of describable setting, but rather a plain and stylized studio type representation was used and not meant to draw any direct attention, but rather act as a canvas for elements of the ads to be displayed. This campaign constructed advertisements with a distinct awareness of their target audience demographic (presumably young, White, heterosexual, middle-class men and women with access to disposable income, and a little to moderate desire to invest in the world around them). A majority of the models in both the print advertisements and commercials are Caucasian. Their appearance is simplistic with an absence of complexity and decoration in their apparel style and overall appearance. They blend well into the background remaining unmemorable as individual people. They act as accessories to the main aspects of the ad, which are the products (Figure 1). Finally, this section discusses how the campaign’s descriptions and positioning of elements in the advertisements contribute to the commoditization of social issues and specifically global

hunger and perpetuates the trivialization of these social issues, rather than contributing to sustainable relief. This appearance of models and emphasis on products emphasizes the values of youthfulness and self-fulfillment. This emphasis is further illustrated in the commercial platform of the campaign.

Identification: youthful whiteness as the ideal consumer and happiness as the ideal consumption. This section identifies the ways in which values such as youthfulness and self-fulfillment/ happiness are displayed in the model/character representations in the advertisements. Also, it discusses how the campaign's descriptions and positioning of the 'ideal' Target/FEED consumer is personified in the exterior lackluster model appearances with the intention to help the consumer identify more strongly with the product.

Thus the commodification of the social issue is further perpetuated in the product itself, rather than the nature of the cause—global hunger. This raises an ethical question about profiting off of non-profit social issues. Although this raised question is outside of the scope of this study it's important to note those ethical implications in the commoditization of 'goodwill' endeavors.

The style seen in Figure 1 is seen throughout the campaign. This curated style, which made an appearance in several of the following campaign examples during the examined time period, reflected the main message of the campaign: that Target/FEED product consumers can remain focused on themselves in stylish products and feel even better about themselves because they're helping do some good through hunger relief at the same time.

Such an emphasis on the commoditization of goods and how that contributed to self-fulfillment and brand loyalty is one of the main characteristics explored in Shamir's research on *The Commodification of Corporate Social Responsibility* (2005). The Target/FEED campaign, therefore presents the hunger relief as secondary to the consumer's satisfaction. One of the first few campaign contributions that emerged from the Target/FEED campaign was the designated appeal to happiness and affirmation.

One Target/FEED commercial demonstrates this prioritization of consumer happiness. Created as an essential component to the campaign's commercial platform, this commercial presents many dynamic aspects of this campaign highlighting the commodification of social issues through CRM. This commercial presents the story of Kate. The final seconds of one of the commercial narratives following character Kate states {because of Kate} "Lots of people smile because of Kate. Kate did a great thing. Well-done Kate. Enjoy the plates." This type of positive messaging appears in the audio of all the commercial advertisements. This line reflects the main messages of the campaign: that these products fulfill a 'need' (like in Kate's case, the first line is- "Kate needs plates, and a tote and a shirt for her date) while making you feel you good as a side bonus for making 'someone smile' because now they can eat dinner. This type of messaging dulls the urgency of such a significant issue as global hunger--- nourishment for survival and the sustainability of life. This narrative significantly trivializes the need. The push for consumers to focus on themselves and identify with these young, white, happy characters presented in the commercials plays a significant role in Target/FEED campaign. This example of narrative and cause and effect rhetoric discussed by Ford and

Hoffman (2009) in their organizational analysis strategies furthers this identification with the models in the commercials. They argued that narration strategy leads to a strong identification component (Ford & Hoffman, 2009) thus perpetuating that helping others is actually more about helping yourself.

Unlike many standard advertising campaigns this campaign lacked a traditional consistent slogan to add cohesion to the campaign. Here Target/FEED missed out on an opportunity to draw an emphasis away from just the product and make a connection with the severity of the need. No data or information on the issue of global hunger is ever mentioned in any aspects of the campaign. This lack of information assumes the consumer is either already well informed on the social issue or presenting the issue as unimportant or secondary to the products. Several of the campaign texts and visuals across campaign platforms emphasize this consumer happiness.

With such a primary focus on consumerism in this collection of advertisements from the campaign, the lack of text apparent in the materials is explained. As seen in the figure above, there is little to no text in the print advertisements, which is consistent throughout the majority of the campaign material. The most bold and prominent text is the product name in bold black followed by a lighter gray notation of the resulting meal donation. One print advertisement demonstrates this product focus well is seen below.

The advertisement shown above consists of solely the products. There is no text and no context with the products appearing on a white background. There is not even an

implication that these products have any unique benefit (such as providing relief) unless the viewer is already familiar with the campaign from earlier exposure. It can be deduced that food has something to do with the products since the word “Feed” appears in the combined Target logo, but no other contextual information can be found helping the viewer to understand the hunger relief aspect of this campaign.

The Illustration and Exemplification rhetorical strategy (Hoffman and Ford, 2009) surfaces in several other campaign components during the 9-month duration of the campaign. The images of common household items and accessories stand alone to be interpreted at their most basic functional or aesthetic level of appeal. Such a product emphasis and repeating language like ‘need’ in the campaign synonymous meaning for both trivial products for purchase and necessities for survival and well being (such as food). This reinforces that the focus on this campaign is not helping those in need, it’s selling products and the helping others aspect is an added bonus of sorts. Not only is this social issue aspect not a focus on the visual messaging, it’s not represented in any capacity.

Looking back at the commercial campaign aspects of the campaign we also ‘meet Mike’ who is a living representation (like Kate) of the essence of this campaign – the products and the happiness of the consumer. “Mike likes bikes and blankets...” and these products. The commercial portions of this campaign rely heavily on the story of these few individual’s narrative and life experience clips with the featured FEED products. Their fulfillment and satisfaction on a physical level from the utility aspect of the products, but exceed beyond that as well bringing situational happiness--- according to

the commercial Mike's (FEED) blanket got Mike a date with Kate (The same character from the corresponding commercial).

We see the narrative of Kate in one commercial and the narrative of Mike in another as well as well as the intersection of the characters in both of the advertisements narratives'. Their connected narratives are not a coincidence, but rather an intentional element to add cohesion to the campaign. The campaigns take us through the narratives of individuals as they utilize many different products in the Feed line. The emphasis of the narrative provided by the narrator is on the benefits for the individuals using the products and not on the social issue relief benefit that comes from the partnership with FEED. These benefits include "the blanket gets Mike a date". "the bag gets Kate a mention." The narrative does briefly explain that this benefit also provides meals for the people. The commercial cuts to a smiling elementary school age child holding a lunch tray and 'everybody smiles.' The commercial closes with saying 'Mike/Kate did a great thing. Enjoy the (product).' --emphasizing once again that the consumer's satisfaction and benefits from the products are the key focus, not the resulting social issue relief.

Although the campaign claims a purpose "a lifestyle collection (of products) that feeds children and families across America" (Target/FEED, 2013. Figure 1), the execution of its campaign strategy--especially in print and commercial platforms--poorly meets this purpose considering how little of an emphasis there is on the hunger relief aspect of the campaign.

Several of the campaign components across all platforms feature models who are no older than 30 (Refer to Figure 1). As indicated by these depictions, it is assumed that

the primary participants in this campaign are young adults. The products' usability factors are overall universal across a broad range of age groups, so this intentional emphasis on youth implies that partaking in this campaign is the trendy, youthful thing to engage with. This could even broaden the intended audience to people outside the millennial age group range, but desire to identify with that group of individuals with the consumption of conveniently age versatile objects intended for a younger consumer.

Although the campaign claims a primary purpose of the campaign is to contribute significant aid to global hunger relief efforts, the messaging and images in the campaign are not consistent with that intention, but rather primarily emphasize personal well-being of people and product consumption.

Theme 2: The Importance of Partnership, Brand Awareness and Mutual Benefit: A Not-So-Equal Collaboration

Notably displayed on the print pieces is the Feed USA and Target logo combined logo. This logo was created specifically for exclusive utility in this campaign. This synthesis of the two logos implies a literal partnership as well as more subtly suggests a mutual benefit of 'equal' partners. The fact the Feed's logo is positioned first in this synthesis is also an interesting feature to note. Target helps establish legitimacy and create trust with the consumer by stating the number of meals donated with each product item or collective 'look.' Almost all 50 items in the limited product line appear at least once in the print advertisements and the commercials. As shown below (Figure 4), the products range from a wide variety of uses. Most have a practical use and rarely have a strictly aesthetic function.

This quantity mentality is further instilled in the consumer through the number of meals each item qualifies to donate appears physically somewhere in every product. This creates a reminder to the consumer long after the product was purchased of the significance and difference this particular purchase made to aid these hunger relief efforts. The charity name is also on every product reminding the consumer not only about the specific campaign, but also where their money is going and helping directly. Many of the products displayed in these advertisements are graphically simple and all are some variation of red, white, blue and olive green relating back to the emphasis of the USA aspect of the campaign. This nostalgic and patriotic color scheme emphasizes patriotism in participating in this partnership – buying the products and contributing to the cause. This patriotic inspired campaign also strategically launched right before The Fourth of July where patriotism is at its peak and families are gathered around a meal together.

The results from this portion of the campaign point significantly to the commodification of social issues, but also expose and inequality in the partnership. The focus is almost entirely on the consumer and the products. The ‘character’ voice in the print ads is the consumer. Based on the elements in the advertisements, this voice is clean and simplistic with the minimalistic approach in the stylization of the ads. These ads are also trendy in the representation of the products. The products of this campaign are presented as the focus of the advertisements. This trendy-ness aspect is explored and emphasized more in the commercial portions of the campaign. In this partnership, the products overshadow the hunger relief aspect. The claim behind this partnership is to

provide hunger relief all across the USA, but that is minimally evident in the text and visual representations of this campaign. More often than not, the products are featured on heavily Target emphasized representations and there is no supplemental information about hunger as a social issue that is not only valuable in a general humanistic sense, but also a valuable partner in this relationship.

One of Target/FEED's print advertisements promotes a plethora of the collection products. These products range from cookware to apparel accessories. There is no copy but the partnership logo, leaving a lot for the customer to infer. When considered within the context of Target/FEED's models (or lack thereof in this example) and campaign messaging, this type of representation communicates an unspoken emphasis on Target and the products with the complete disregard for the ideal and expected balance between these two partners and conveying each partners' stake equally. Adkins (2007) explains this delicate balance but also warns that often one partner 'takes advantage' of the other and the partner that often loses-out is the non-profit partner. The equality disparity can be detrimental to the cause, but often goes uncontested when the corporate partner follows through on the monetary agreement. This almost fear that is instilled by the corporation creates a domineering relationship and is misleading in CRM endeavors.

Ultimately, all of these unbalanced aspects of the partnership produce a skewed campaign that is masked under monetary success. This infiltration of over-representation of products contradicts the very purpose of the idea of partnership: equal representation. While acknowledging the substantial resources that Target contributes to the partnership, these photos diminish the importance of representing the issue in CRM partnerships

especially with the lack of representation of FEED. From the campaign, we never get an understanding of who FEED is as a company and how their efforts actually contribute to hunger relief in the USA.

Theme 3: The Stereotyping of Those in Need and the Providers of Relief

As mentioned, the lack of diversity, both in terms of race and physical appearance, is evident immediately even upon just initial exposure and browsing of the campaign elements. The majority of the models represented, specifically in the one's associated with the products appear tall, thin/fit, Caucasian and align closely with the Western standards of beauty/attractiveness. The models associated with more diversity primarily are depicted as the 'subjects in need'. This is especially seen in the commercial ads when the purchases of Kate and Mike fed Sean—an elementary age boy appearing from an Asian descent and an unnamed boy presumably from a Middle Eastern descent that is also displayed benefiting from these purchases. The predominate use of white subjects aiding the ones in need represented by minority groups perpetuates the White Savior complex. This concept derives from the idea that in a narrative a white character rescues people of color from their plight. (Hughey, 2014). In this case the primary consumers are white middle-aged citizens whose purchase of this campaign's products aid the 'hungry' individuals who happen to be portrayed as part of minority groups. This campaign does not necessarily ignore people of color, but rather affirms a white subject. This representation affirms the White Savior mentality thus skewing the representative perception and reinforcing assumption about those in need and those that provide relief.

This lack of diversity only perpetuates the White Savior mentality on the modern day psyche and ultimately misrepresenting not only those who give said but those who receive relief as well. The models featuring the products are predominantly white and as a result showcase a largely homogenous representation of those who purchase these products. The predominant use of white models in Target/FEED advertisements is characteristic of ethical issues of representation in marketing communication. Borgerson and Schroeder (2005) discuss these ethical representation issues and emphasize the importance of how visual representation sheds light on the appropriate dimension of marketing communications. One of their major arguments is that advertisement appropriateness must be informed by awareness of the ethical relationship between marketing representations and identity (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2005). This means that the Target/FEED campaign is in a sense advocating for identification with this white standard with consumers. This completely ignores the significant group of consumers particularly of Target, since that is where these products are purchased, who don't identify by this standard of White, but are just as viable consumers and thus contribute to relief. This representation completely skews the reality of who provides aid and what those in need 'look like.' As seen in Figure 6, many of the models used to display the products are white and even further emphasize the importance of the product with the 'three looks' she portrays with the Target/FEED collection of products. This representation ignores the consumers who are not white. By providing little representation of those 'in need' the campaign does attempt to eschew potential concerns of misrepresenting those 'in need.' However, minority groups represent the few

representations of those receiving the relief provided from purchases of this campaign, in the commercials.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As a whole, the organizational rhetorical analysis provided a lot of insight on exploring this study's research questions. These questions were answered through the analysis of all of the components of the campaign. Although these questions do not analyze every part of the campaign, they offer significant insight in social issue messaging particularly global hunger messaging in the context of the Target/FEED campaign. This study specifically analyzed the text and images of this campaign and the construction of social messaging about global hunger and how this messaging contributes to the cultural discourse surrounding global hunger.

Presented in my literature review are many aspects of cause-related marketing that scholars have described as aspects of cause-related marketing. These aspects include partnership, mutual benefit and brand awareness. In this particular campaign the emphasis on partnership is the most evident aspect of cause-related marketing campaigns. Target and FEED created a combined logo for this campaign that appears on all of the various aspects of the campaign. This logo includes a visible plus sign between the two companies further enforcing this idea of partnership. Although the mutual benefit aspect is a reality created from this campaign this idea is not emphasized as much across the marketing mix. This aspect is most highlighted in the commercial portions of the campaign which show the benefit for you, the consumer, the people receiving the aid/food and everybody because 'everybody smiles. However, the positive association

that comes with partnership is skewed when analyzing the elements of the campaign shows partnership disparity and representation disparity.

Target and FEED present this campaign and global hunger in a very transactional way. It creates this distance between the person purchasing the products and the individuals receiving the aid from that purchase. This reinforces the idea that education on an issue is not the main concern of CRM, but you can contribute to these efforts without having to fully invest in the issue. Convenience is key here. The issue of global hunger is huge, but now you don't have to worry about what that actually means and play your part by purchasing this bag or blanket all while residually feeling good about yourself by doing it. To some extent this campaign completely ignores the reality of global hunger, but rather plays on a lighter and happier approach to help sell products and not emphasize relief.

Simply, the message Target wants to display at the forefront can be broken down into a straightforward message. This message is that hunger in the USA is a real issue, but you can help. Even helping at a distance, everybody wins. You not only get cool stuff, many of which are practical, some of which are just fun, you also tangibly help people eat 'lunch' and 'dinner' and 'everybody is happy.' This ultimately results in the commodification of corporate giving and social causes. They are now a product to purchase rather than a cause to interact with and contribute relief to. However, as analyzed in the above section, three major themes occur bringing to light the significant downfalls of this campaign in terms of messaging and representation. Monetarily this campaign was a success, but lacks integrity with the blatant commoditization of social

issues, trivialization of real needs focusing on consumer satisfaction and does not even attempt to educate on the issue of global hunger. Rather this campaign provides a flippant, passive Band-Aid approach to interacting with a major issue like global hunger.

Campaigns like the one analyzed above firmly requires further examination in order to fully understand the foundational assumptions made by such proportional messages. Cause-related partnerships appear to radiate benefits, reaffirming these type of relationships in the corporate sphere. Under the surface however, it is evident that such a partnership may present misinformed, deceptive representations. This commoditization of social issues only worsens and continues to perpetuate an apathy self-focused mentality in consumers, rather than an educated, empathetic, motivation approach that could drive real foundational relief to various social issues and especially global hunger relief. The implications of Target/FEED as a result are more negative than positive, seeing as the social issue of global hunger is trivialized, while consumption is elevated. Looking at this campaign in particular elevates that global hunger is not worth understanding the complexities of the issue, but easy to slap a bandage on the issue with the purchase of a new sweater. This perspective is cleverly masked under the ‘goodwill’ mentality innate to many cause-related marketing campaigns.

With this discussion in mind, it would be of interest to determine the audience perspective of such a campaign and see if consumers detect these types of messaging observations. Also, a discourse analysis of the actual conversations taking place around social issues messaging and education specifically about global hunger would be a potential topic to pursue in further studies. Examining what these partnerships are

actually saying about global issues is the first step in making informed decisions about your cause-oriented purchases. These discussions would be of interest in future studies and add to the discourse surrounding CRM campaigns.

Significance of the Study

This study's essence and core can be replicated and duplicated to create other case studies of CRM campaign partnerships and potentially bring to light some not so radiantly successful aspects of partnerships. As noted, there is a significant gap in visual research done in cause-related marketing, and this research will be a step in closing that gap but opening opportunities for further research. CRM is a significant and emerging niche in marketing and is important to understand. By understanding the messaging construction of these campaigns, more companies and partnerships can learn from their success and create similar influential campaigns. They can learn from their strengths and adjust in their weaknesses and criticism. This understanding of campaign construction and messaging choices made in the construction is invaluable to the marketing world and both the corporations and nonprofits involved in this kind of work.

This study also contributes to the greater developing and growing visual and organizational rhetoric analysis chapter. This type of research illuminates transparency and trust issues that consumers have with these types of cause-related campaigns. Even in light of recent events exposed about Target as a corporation and the apparent mistreatment of their employees. -- Are these sort of cause-related marketing endeavors just a way to cover up some of Target's downfalls as a corporation? Although that

question exceeds the scope of this study, it's interesting to observe in light of this context and could be a basis of further research studies.

Based on my research questions, my results emphasize the importance of the beauty aesthetic in campaigns as well as the importance of cohesion across platforms in successful cause-related campaigns, but ultimately this study exposes disparity in messages. By analyzing the interplay of social justice messaging in the framework of this campaign we look specifically at the messaging of global hunger. This messaging is specifically influenced by commoditization in the cause-related marketing type of relationship and has larger political, economic and social implications that can influence how other social justice messages are being communicated in a cultural context.

The one perceived limitation involves access to context. Since this campaign is no longer active, it allows for a complete and holistic hindsight perspective, but limiting because parts of the campaign may be difficult to locate. This research also has applications that extend beyond the borders of advertising and marketing. By providing insight into these campaigns ultimately, these relationship partnerships can be made stronger and more efficient which ultimately to causes allows the partners more shares resources and exposure. From a broader scope, this research also contributes eventually to helping these specific nonprofits aid and alleviate their specific designated social issue causes.

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