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This dissertation explores emerging social interactions in relation to economic value, more specifically how social interactions at the organizational and individual levels may affect individual consumers and companies economically as well. To help shed light on this broad theme, it focuses on two recent phenomena in the marketing environment that potentially combine the creation of social value with consumers' and companies' economic interests: business-nonprofit partnerships, and online social networks. The dissertation suggests that, under certain conditions, value created for consumers can be integrated with companies' economic interests as well as with society's interests more broadly.

Social Interactions for Economic Value?

Social Interactions for Economic Value?

A marketing perspective

Marlene Vock

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Social Interactions for Economic Value? A Marketing Perspective

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Preface

Thinking of all those I would like to thank for accompanying me on this four-year journey made me reminiscing about how I ended up at the Amsterdam Business School in the first place, conducting research on corporate social responsibility. My interest in societal issues has strongly been shaped during my years in Vienna, where I volunteered for nonprofit organizations concerned with raising consumer and business interest in fair trade products. My passion for fair trade resulted in memorable experiences, such as walking through Vienna dressed up in a life-sized banana costume, meeting coffee farmers from the South, and introducing fair trade coffee to the vending machines at university. I also remember the ambivalence I felt in those times with regard to large supermarket chains wanting to introduce fair trade products. On the one hand I understood why some consumers and nonprofit organizations rather preferred to keep fair trade separate from mainstream outlets. On the other hand I started to realize the potential impact that for-profit organizations could (and wanted) to have in the process of mainstreaming and thus boosting fair trade. This ambivalence triggered my interest in societal issues, and how to best approach them, even more.

During my master's studies I also discovered my interest in academic research. I would like to thank August Österle who triggered this interest by involving me in a research project on the care for the elderly. August, your passion for research, your unconventional way of teaching (especially the lectures in Sagya) and your affirmative feedback on my master's thesis encouraged me to seek a Ph.D position, for which I would like to thank you!

Yet, it took another one and a half years after my relocation to the Netherlands, before I finally started with my Ph.D. I was very excited when I found a job opening for a Ph.D. position on business-nonprofit partnerships at the Amsterdam Business School, a research project in the intersection of marketing and strategy. Without a degree from a Dutch university, having written my master's thesis in the field of social politics rather than on a marketing topic, and speaking with a slightly strange Dutch accent, I was wondering about the odds of getting the position. However, my worries disappeared after the first meeting with my (back then still potential) Ph.D. advisors Ans Kolk and Willemijn van Dolen, whom I experienced as surprisingly open and amicable. I consider myself very lucky

that I had not just one, but two motivating and very committed Ph.D. advisors. Ans, thank you for your outstanding and continuous efforts and dedication with regard to supervision and guidance! Despite a full agenda you always had an open door (and e-mail account) for my questions and requests, and you always replied in no time, even if it was late in the evening, during the weekends or holidays. I have benefited greatly from your expertise, ambitious way of working and your eye for detail, and I look forward to many more years of fruitful collaboration. Willemijn, thank you for your inspiring and helpful ideas, which put me on the right track when most needed. I greatly appreciate all your efforts, and that you always view things from the bright side of life. I enjoyed the numerous interesting discussions we had during the past few years, and look forward to having more of them in the future!

This dissertation would not exist in its present form without the important contributions of many others. In particular, I would like to thank Nanet Stoelwinder, Sabine Feirabend and Astrid Huijssoon for their valuable contributions to various studies of this dissertation, particularly for their help with data collection. Furthermore, I would like to thank Ko de Ruyter for the pleasant and productive interactions we had while working on a paper together. Ko, it was a great pleasure and a very instructive experience of high social and – potentially even economic – value! I also enjoyed discussing my research with Charles Weinberg and Zeynep Gürhan-Canli, and would like to thank them for their encouraging feedback and suggestions. Certainly, my gratitude also goes out to the anonymous reviewers, whose feedback on manuscripts submitted to conferences and journals have helped to improve the quality of the papers included in this dissertation.

Following a Ph.D. trajectory has not only been rewarding because of the nature of the work itself, but also because of the inspiring and challenging environment, and most importantly, because of my colleagues, whom I would like to thank for their friendship and collegiality, their advice, help and encouragement, or simply for taking my mind off from work every now and then. Meg and Karianne, thank you for being my friends, neighbours, former roommates and paranymphs, and for the invaluable distractions from work in Oost, The Hague and Athens! Our discussions about research, Ph.D. life, but especially those about the more important things in life have been very enriching throughout the years. Karianne, I also would like to thank you for proofreading parts of my thesis. Rene, Liselore, Hella, Pawan, Mark, Marc and Oscar, sharing various offices with you has been a joy! Your

company and the many breaks we had for coffee and sweets provided a pleasant and productive working environment. My appreciation also goes out to many other (former) Ph.D. colleagues, post-docs and 'young researchers' from various sections of the Amsterdam Business School. I did (and still do) enjoy our drinks, lunch breaks, dinners, Chinese New Year celebrations and billiard games, and look forward to many more to come. Jonatan, thank you for introducing me to the ABS and all its peculiarities when starting my Ph.D., and for the tons of advice I received from you throughout the years.

I kindly acknowledge the efforts of the members of my Ph.D. committee, Louise Fresco, Deanne Den Hartog, Adam Lindgreen, Ko de Ruyter and Jozef Tettero. Thank you agreeing to be part of the committee in the first place, and especially for the time you put into reading and evaluating my thesis.

Finally, working on a dissertation can at times be a balancing act between work and private life. I would like to thank my family and friends in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands for their support throughout the years, for their understanding, and for always being there. Your distractions, online (your nonsensical and witty postings sometimes really made my day) and offline, including a trip to the best chocolate factory in Austria, cosy meals in the 'Leuvense' park and at the 'Westelse' pool in Belgium, memorable nights in The Hague and Delft and a spontaneous bachelor party in Amsterdam, made me forget about my Ph.D. thesis for a while. There are too many close friends to name here in person, but I would like to thank Marie, Julia, Chiaki, Rosi, Raff, Michael, Kathi, Johanna, Karin and Veronika in particular – your long-term, unconditional friendship, which has survived (partly vast) geographic distances, is invaluable to me! Vika, thank you for your help with the cover. Hanne, thank you for proofreading.

Mama, Papa und Sabine, danke fürs Zuhören, eure Ratschläge, und dass ich mich bei euch immer 'daheim' fühlen darf und kann! En uiteindelijk Bert, die de schitterende omslag van dit boekje heeft gemaakt. Liefje, je hebt zo veel voor mij gedaan en betekent, ook voor dit proefschrift, dat een bedankje hier in dit boek zeker niet volstaat. Maar toch, voor al je hulp en steun, jouw geloof in mij, en vooral omdat ik samen met jou door het leven mag gaan, wil ik je bedanken, bis zum Mond und zurück. You make me auto-happy!

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Social Interactions for Economic Value?

A Marketing Perspective

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the aftermath of the economic crisis, consumers' expectations of companies seem to have changed. Prior to the economic downturn, in 2006, for example, US consumers ranked a company's strong financial performance as the third priority for building trust, after high quality products and a strong customer orientation. By 2010, however, a company's reputation was judged mainly by its transparency, honesty and trustworthiness, while the importance of financial returns dropped to rank ten (Edelman, 2010). Moreover, consumers lost confidence in corporate information provided by CEOs, and demanded more stakeholder engagement (Edelman, 2009). This included a clear expectation that companies partner with nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and governments to address societal issues or problems that go beyond the bottom line. In addition, fuelled by technological developments, consumers demand to become more involved themselves, and increasingly interact, share, collaborate, and engage with companies and other consumers online (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie and Purcell, 2011; Trendwatching, 2009).

These recent developments in society, which seem to hint at a trend towards more interactions across a variety of stakeholders, are also reflected in the academic literature, which calls for a broadened marketing perspective that includes several stakeholders and integrates economic and social value. More generally, changes in the marketing environment, such as economic or technological developments, raise questions about marketing's role and responsibility in a broader sense, which has important implications for practitioners, scholars and educators (cf. Gundlach, 2007; Sheth and Uslay, 2007). Perceptions of marketing have evolved over the years, which is also reflected in the academic debate on marketing definitions. While earlier definitions of marketing focused primarily on exchanges between consumers and the company¹, recent definitions embrace

¹ American Marketing Association's (AMA) marketing definition of 1985: "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to *create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals*" (Gundlach and Wilkie, 2009: 259, footnote 1, emphasis added)

a broader, more extensive perspective. The American Marketing Association (AMA), whose marketing definition is widely known and generally accepted by the academic marketing community as well as by practitioners, adopted the following definition in 2007: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2007). This definition appears to reflect a shift in focus from 'exchange' to 'value' (cf. Sheth and Uslay, 2007), and moves beyond the dyad of the company and the consumer by including a variety of stakeholders, and society more generally. Additionally, it seems to hint at a move beyond mainly self-interested or economic exchanges, towards value creation for several stakeholders, suggesting a potential win-win situation (Sheth and Uslay, 2007).

While many scholars have welcomed these changes in focus, the 'new' definition has also been criticized, as it, for example, still concentrates on companies and their marketing activities, with less attention for the fact that value can often only be created in an interaction with other stakeholders (Lush, 2007; Sheth and Uslay, 2007). Sheth and Uslay (2007) also put forward that even consumers may be the primary drivers of value creation, while the role of other actors is reduced to that of a facilitator, for instance, in the case of online social network sites. Interestingly, the focus on economic value indicated by earlier marketing definitions (e.g., benefiting the organization²), seems to have shifted towards a stronger emphasis of social value by explicitly addressing society's needs, reflecting the role of corporate social responsibility in today's society. This evolution represents a departure from the traditional divide between economic concerns, which are usually attributed to the private sector, and social ones, seen to belong to the realm of public/nonprofit sectors (Porter and Kramer, 2011). However, rather than regarding social value (e.g., benefits created for society through interactions between business and nonprofit actors, such as improved health), and economic value as conflicting or a trade-off, recent publications stress the opportunity and importance of combining them.

Porter and Kramer (2011), for example, recently highlighted the need for more strategic approaches to combine and maximize social and economic value for a variety of

² AMA marketing definition of 2004: "Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that *benefit the organization and its stakeholders*." (Gundlach and Wilkie, 2009: 259, emphasis added).

stakeholders, an idea they termed 'shared value creation'. They contrast this approach, which also includes strategic collaboration between for-profit and nonprofit actors, with more traditional forms of corporate social responsibility, such as philanthropy, which they describe as "separate from profit maximization" (p. 16). Such a strategic focus is in line with the growing body of literature on business-nonprofit partnerships, which suggests that collaboration across sectors can lead to social value for society (e.g., reduced poverty, improved health and education), while creating economic value for the partnering organizations (e.g., an improved reputation, access to new markets and complementary resources) (Austin, 2010). Strategic approaches to capitalize on social interactions, however, are not restricted to value that is created through collaboration across sectors. Online social networks are another domain in which value creation depends on social interactions among other actors, namely individuals. Due to the specific nature of value creation in such networks, through interactions between consumers, and the limited role of network providers, companies need to think about viable revenue models to capture economic value.

This dissertation, which adopts a broadened marketing perspective, aims to explore emerging social interactions in relation to economic value. More specifically, it analyzes how social interactions at the organizational and individual level may affect individual consumers and companies economically as well. To help shed light on this broad theme, the Ph.D. thesis focuses on two emerging phenomena, namely business-nonprofit partnerships (chapters two to four), and online social networks (chapter five). Both will be briefly introduced in the following sections.

Business-nonprofit partnerships

Strategic interactions among business and nonprofit sectors have increased strongly over the years. Business-nonprofit partnerships are one of four types of cross-sector collaboration, including cooperation between government and business (frequently referred to as public private partnership), government and nonprofit organizations, and trisector partnerships, which involve actors from the state, the market and from civil society

(Seitandi and Crane, 2009; Selsky and Parker, 2005). Three chapters of this dissertation focus on partnerships between business and nonprofit sectors, which have also been termed 'social alliances' in the marketing literature (Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright, 2004 & 2006).

This emerging form of collaboration has been defined as "close, mutually beneficial, long-term partnerships designed to accomplish strategic goals for both entities" (Berger et al., 2004: 59). As such they go beyond more traditional forms of corporate social responsibility (CSR), such as cause-related marketing, philanthropy or sponsorship (Berger et al., 2006; Seitandidi and Ryan, 2007), which have mainly been associated with marketing goals and resources. Different from such charitable or transactional activities, business-nonprofit partnerships address problems or public policy issues of mutual concern that are usually too big or complex to be solved by one actor alone (Ashman, 2001; Selsky and Parker, 2005). Motivated by a lack of critical competences to tackle such issues (Selsky and Parker, 2005), partnerships make "synergistic use of organizational core competencies and resources to address key stakeholders' interests and to achieve both organizational and social benefits" (McAlister and Ferrell, 2002: 690). This win-win approach for society and the partnering organizations stresses the strategic nature of partnerships.

An example is the long-term partnership between TNT, an international transport and logistics company, and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), a humanitarian organization fighting famine. Since 2002, TNT has used its core business skills and expertise in logistics to help the WFP, for instance, with optimizing transport routes and efficiency. Moreover, TNT provides resources such as warehouses, airplanes or trucks to support WFP's emergency food deliveries. This type of strategic partnerships between the business and nonprofit sectors is part of a wider trend. A recent survey among businesses and nonprofit organizations shows that 90% of practitioners believe that business-nonprofit partnerships will become increasingly important during the next few years. Among companies, 72% also expect to increase their investment in such alliances (C&E, 2010).

As companies and nonprofit organizations usually possess distinct resources and capabilities, collaboration across sectors may help to overcome problems that are too complex to be addressed by one single actor (Austin, 2010). Furthermore, companies are experiencing increasing external pressures from a variety of stakeholder groups, including customers, investors, interest groups and the media (cf. Pedersen, 2005; Selsky and Parker,

2005). In addition, these external forces that drive cross-sector collaboration are accompanied by partner organizations' internal motivations, such as a lack of critical resources or competences, the aim to improve the corporate image or brand reputation, need for higher visibility, and access to the partner's network, managerial or technical skills, and new markets (Austin, 2000; Kolk et al., 2008; Selsky and Parker, 2005).

It might be said that there is a certain convergence between business and nonprofit sectors, particularly with regard to value creation, stakeholder management, organizational structure and the mobilization of capital (Austin, Gutierrez, Ogliastris and Reficco, 2007). With nonprofits globally earning 57% of their income from the sale of goods and services, a clear separation between sectors based on social versus economic value creation no longer holds (Austin et al., 2007). The blurring between sectors seems to require a different managerial mind-set, driven by perceptions of interdependence rather than by a focus on 'us' versus 'them' (Austin et al., 2007). In order to capture the synergies from both sectors and to truly benefit society, companies and nonprofit organizations need to collaborate and learn from each other. Bouwen and Taillieu (2004), for instance, argue that actors need to form networks across sectors as classical bureaucratic and hierarchical designs are no longer appropriate to meet requirements for efficiency and innovativeness. Value can hence be created collectively through organizational interactions for the benefit of society (macro level), the partnering organizations (meso level), and individuals more broadly, including employees and consumers (micro level).

Despite this positive potential, many partnerships fail to deliver the desired effects. One of the main challenges identified by the practitioner community is the experienced difficulty to convince and engage the partner organizations' internal and external constituents (C&E, 2010; Tennyson and Harrison, 2008). A recent survey shows that 70% of partnering business organizations regard the engagement of stakeholders and effective communication as one of the key factors to a successful partnership with nonprofits (C&E, 2010). Nevertheless, a lack of coordinated communication and management of partnerships has been identified as a major obstacle for creating enthusiasm among important stakeholders (Tennyson and Harrison, 2008).

This need for more managerial guidance is also reflected by a scarcity of academic marketing and management research that focuses on the micro level of business-nonprofit partnerships, that is, the level of individual actors within or outside the partnering

organizations. In particular, Seitanidi and Ryan (2007: 256) called for more research at the micro level of partnerships as “organizational benefits not only stem from the outcomes of the interaction but also from the process of interaction”. Similarly, other authors highlighted the importance of understanding stakeholders’ needs and how benefits for different stakeholder groups derived from business-nonprofit collaboration can be integrated into organization’s strategies (McAlister and Ferrell, 2002). Chapters two to four of this thesis aim to contribute to the theoretical and managerial issues raised above by paying specific attention to the micro level of business-nonprofit partnerships, including the role of consumers, whose responses towards partnerships have been hardly studied from a marketing perspective.

Online social networking

Social network sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter, are online communities that facilitate communication and interactions among members and allow them to share personal content (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009; Enders, Hungenberg, Denker and Mauch, 2008). They help members to create networks including friends, family, acquaintances and colleagues in order to build and maintain social and professional relationships (Trusov et al., 2009). In Europe, about four out of every 10 internet sessions include a visit to a social network site, with women spending somewhat more time on social networks (24.3%) than men (16.8%). With 84.4% of internet users engaging in online social networks, penetration in Europe is slightly lower compared to North America (89.8%). However, ongoing growth for social network site use has been predicted for 2011 (comScore, 2010).

The creation of online social communities has been facilitated by the advent of Web 2.0, a term inspired by new technologies enabling online platforms for collaboration, interaction and content sharing. These developments are considered a “paradigm shift” from consuming content that is provided by the website operator, to content or value created by active members through their interactions with others (Enders et al., 2008: 199; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). As value creation depends on consumers’ online interactions,

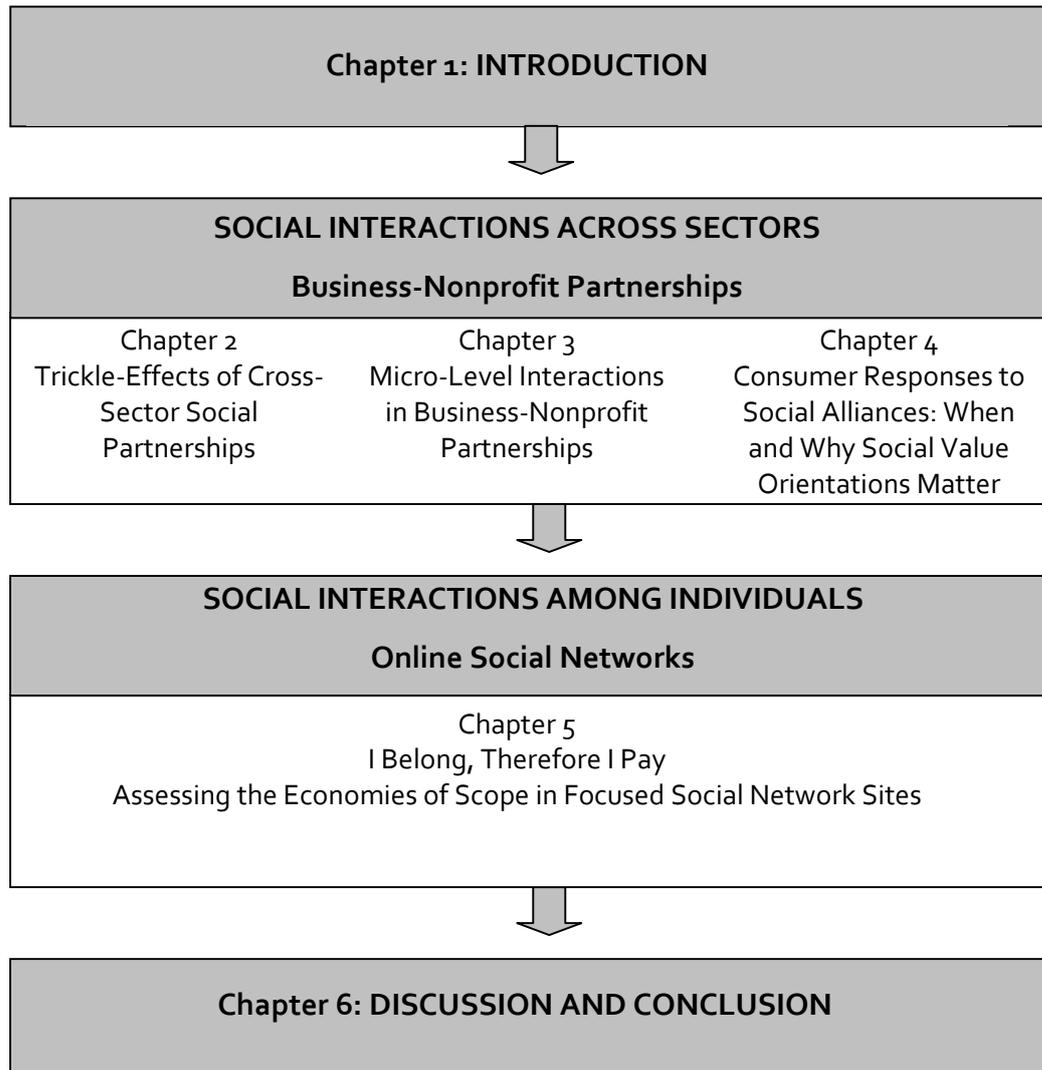
the website operator's role is reduced to that of a facilitator who builds and maintains network services. This limited role of social network site operators raises the question about viable value propositions for members, as well as about profitable revenue models for operators who increasingly aim to capitalize on members' online interactions (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). On the one hand it has been suggested that large online networks, relative to small, focused ones, may offer more value to their members due to increased possibilities for interaction and lower switching costs (Aschoff, Aschoff and Schwabe, 2010). On the other hand, many members of mega social network sites such as Facebook feel increasingly uncomfortable to share information with their network that often includes their friends, family, but also colleagues and business contacts (Sharp, 2009). In fact, the 2011 Edelman Trust Survey (Edelman, 2011) showed that on average, users of Facebook only know about 100 out of 500 individuals they list as 'friends' on their profile. While generally opinions of peers or 'people like me' are considered important for the creation of trust (Edelman, 2007), the 2011 survey suggests that credibility in peers is hampered in such mega networks. In line with these observations, the practitioner community predicts an increase of niche social network sites (Sharp, 2009), which underlines the importance of managerial and theoretical insights, which will be addressed in chapter five of this thesis. In particular, chapter five aims to explore how social interactions among members of a niche social network site can be translated into economic value for network site providers.

Introduction of the chapters and objectives

This thesis consists of a collection of four papers based on one theoretical study (chapter 2), and three empirical studies (chapters 3, 4 and 5). These four chapters illuminate the two general topics outlined above, with the following three chapters (i.e., 2, 3, 4) discussing business-nonprofit partnerships, and chapter five dealing with online social networks (see Figure 1 for a graphical depiction of chapters and their titles). As common in article-based dissertations, each chapter forms a separate study which can be read independently. This explains some overlap with regard to theory and method descriptions across chapters. The papers presented in chapters two to five were conducted in

collaboration with other (co-)authors. Therefore, in this thesis, 'we' is used instead of 'I' to refer to the (co-) authors of the research papers. While the articles presented in chapters two and three are already published and forthcoming, respectively, the articles based on chapters four and five are currently prepared for submission to academic journals.

Figure 1. Graphical depiction of chapters



Business-nonprofit partnerships: chapters two, three and four

The second chapter is based on a conceptual study and outlines potential diffusion mechanisms of business-nonprofit partnerships. First, drawing on the economics and marketing literature we refer to potential diffusion effects of partnerships as “trickle-down”, “trickle-up”, and “trickle-round”. We theorize that these three processes can explain how (positive) outcomes of such alliances are diffused across the macro (i.e., societal), meso (i.e., organizational) and micro (i.e., individual) levels. This conceptualization attempts to demonstrate that the success or failure of cross-sector partnerships might have much more multifaceted implications than previous studies implied, which have mainly focused on only one of these three levels. Second, as most extant research on partnerships has focused on the macro and meso perspectives, chapter two pays specific attention to the micro level by considering interactions among individuals within and across organizations (i.e., employees, consumers). The aim of this micro study is to conceptually explore factors that might promote or hamper the successful diffusion of partnerships within and across organizations. According to Berger et al. (2006: 134), “(t)o be successful and long lived, alliances must be diffused throughout organizations, enhancing the relationships between employees and their organizations”. To date, however, theoretical and managerial understanding on how to ensure internal and external stakeholders’ involvement with a partnership has remained undeveloped. Based on theories from various disciplines we attempt to explain potential spill-over effects between superiors’, subordinates’ and customers’ evaluations of the partnership and their respective behaviors, such as telling others about the initiative or actively participate in it.

The third chapter focuses on the micro level of business-nonprofit partnerships and combines a theoretical and empirical approach. First, this study zooms in on potential interactions among employees and consumers as illustrated in chapter two. It draws on various theoretical perspectives from both marketing and management to conceptually relate potential partnership outcomes for employees and consumers. More specifically, we theorize how partnerships, and active employee participation in particular, may affect employees, and how those effects may in turn spill over to consumers. This study proposes that employee participation in partnerships could have favorable (i.e., high self-interest) or unfavorable effects (i.e., low self-interest) for consumers. In a second step, we empirically

investigate how consumers respond to perceptions of high versus low self-interest. In particular, we build on attribution research and consistency theories to hypothesize that consumers' responses towards the company will not always be more positive in the case of high self-interest. Rather, we suggest that their responses will depend on the level of company-cause fit. The aim of this study is two-fold: first, although employees have been identified as important advocates of business-nonprofit partnerships who may even create awareness among external constituents (Berger et al., 2004; Drumwright, 1996), to our knowledge, no studies so far have explicitly related employees' behaviors with regard to such partnerships to consumers' responses. By conceptualizing this link we hope to pave the way for future research on this topic. Second, considering company-cause fit as potential boundary condition, this study aims to contribute to the academic debate on the (relative) importance of self-interest as a motivator for consumers' beliefs and behavioral intentions.

While in chapter three self-interest was theorized to be created equally for all consumers, chapter four explores the role of self-interest versus other-interest based on personality traits. Drawing on the literature of social value orientation (SVO), this empirical study differentiates between prosocials and proselfs. While individuals characterized as prosocials generally strive for cooperation and equality and consider the consequences of their choices on others, proselfs first and foremost aim to maximize their personal and relative advantage (Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten and Joireman, 1997). This chapter aims to explore empirically for which type of consumer (i.e., prosocial versus proself) business-nonprofit partnerships matter more. Moreover, as in chapter three, the level of company-cause fit is considered as a potential moderating factor. In an attempt to explain the hypothesized differential responses by prosocials and proselfs, this study also takes consumers' corporate ability perceptions into account, which are expected to be influenced by consumers' individual social value orientation and their perceptions of fit. By doing so this study aims to contribute to the literature on social value orientation and fit.

Online social networks: chapter five

Chapter five is based on an empirical study that attempts to enhance our understanding of viable value propositions for niche social network sites, which are enjoying

growing popularity in response to mega social network sites such as Facebook or Myspace (Holahan, 2007; Sharp, 2009). Moreover, we are interested whether and how niche social network site providers can transform members' perceived value into economic returns in the form of paid subscription fees. This study draws on existing research on online communities which adopted social capital theory to explain members' commitment towards the network (e.g., Mathwick, Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2008). To capture the narrow focus of a niche social network site, we add entitativity, a concept from psychology that still needs to pave its way into the marketing literature. Entitativity describes to what extent a group is perceived as a single, meaningful, coherent entity (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011; Lickel, Hamilton, Wierzchowska, Lewis, Sherman and Uhles, 2000). While this concept seems particularly insightful in the context of online social networks and may spur future marketing research, we also attempt to contribute to the existing entitativity literature more generally. Furthermore, we investigate whether entitativity and social capital may – directly and indirectly – impact niche social network site members' willingness to invest in membership fees. By doing so, this chapter also aims to contribute to the academic debate on the success of subscription-based online revenue models (e.g., Enders et al, 2008; Pauwels and Weiss, 2008), which has hitherto been inconclusive. Table 1 provides an overview of the studies discussed in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The final chapter of this thesis, chapter six, discusses the main findings and conclusions of the four studies presented in chapters two to five. It outlines the main theoretical contributions and practical implications of this thesis. Finally, it depicts some implications for future research by embedding the findings in the broader academic and societal debate, and also addresses potential limitations.

Table 1: Overview of studies discussed in chapters two to five

Chapter	2	3	4	5
Topic	Business-Nonprofit Partnerships			Online Social Networks
Levels of social interaction	cross-sectoral and individual			individual
Individual actors considered	Managers, Employees, Consumers	Employees, Consumers	Consumers	Consumers
Main concepts/theories: Predictors	Leadership style, Open communication climate, Social exchange & contagion, Social learning, Attraction-selection-attrition	Self-interest, Fit	SVO, Fit Corporate abilities	Entitativity, Social capital Social value Economic value
Outcomes	Partnership-related evaluations and behaviors	Attitude, Trust, Word of Mouth, Switching, Buying	Attitude, Trust, Word of Mouth	Willingness to invest
Main contributions	Conceptualization of trickle-up, -down and -round effects to explain potential diffusion mechanisms of business-nonprofit partnerships at the macro, meso and micro levels	Conceptualization of spillover effects of partnerships from employees to consumers; Empirical investigation on whether and when consumer self-interest to be derived from partnerships is important	Empirical investigation on whether, when and why stable personality traits (SVO) matter with regard to consumers' responses to partnerships	Empirical investigation of viable value propositions for niche social network sites, considering paying and non-paying members

Chapter 2

Trickle Effects of Cross-Sector Social Partnerships

Abstract

Cross-sector social partnerships are often studied from a macro and meso perspective, also in an attempt to assess effectiveness and societal impact. This paper pays specific attention to the micro perspective, i.e. individual interactions between and within organizations related to partnerships that address the 'social good'. By focusing on the potential effects and mechanisms at the level of individuals and the organization(s) with which they interact, it aims to help fill a gap in research on partnerships, including more insight into the process of interaction. We conceptually explore micro-level interactions, and how partnership effects may 'trickle down' (e.g. from management to employees), or 'trickle up' (from employees to management), or 'trickle round' (e.g. between employees). Based on literature from various disciplines, we discuss how more generic theories on social exchange and contagion, social learning and attraction-selection-attrition can help shed light on micro-level interactions in a partnership, considering in particular transmission mechanisms via employees, top and middle management, and customers. In this way, partnerships can have wider benefits, as individuals have multiple roles and effects at the micro level can spread to the meso and macro levels as well. Implications for research and practice are outlined³.

³ This chapter was published in *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2010, 94 (Supplement 1), pp. 123-137 (co-authored with A. Kolk & W. van Dolen).

Introduction

With growing interest in partnerships in the past decade, research has started to address difficult questions related to effectiveness and societal impact (e.g. Selski and Parker, 2005). These aspects are, however, hard to assess in view of the wide diversity of partnerships, the lack of data, the absence of 'control groups' and the fact that partnerships are 'moving targets' (e.g. Kolk et al., 2008). Moreover, what has remained underexposed is that partnerships can address the 'social good' in many more subtle ways as well via stakeholder interactions that might trickle from one level to another (e.g. from macro, to meso and micro, and vice versa). For example, a partnership may become known to employees working in the organization(s) involved and/or to consumers buying products or services. They can subsequently spread the word about this initiative to colleagues, but also to others beyond their specific stakeholder group, thus raising awareness much more broadly. As people have multiple roles and belong to different stakeholder groups at the same time (one person can e.g. be employee, consumer, member of a non-governmental organization or trade union simultaneously) (cf. Wolfe and Putler, 2002), transmission of knowledge about the social good may take place in a variety of ways, thus having an indirect impact as well. To shed more light on the effects of partnerships in a broad sense, this paper will explore conceptually how social interactions spread and evolve, with particular attention to the micro and meso levels, covering individuals and the organization(s) they interact with. Using insights from the marketing, psychology, organizational and economic literature, it will outline social interactions involving 'trickle down', 'trickle up' and 'trickle round' effects.

So far, partnerships have mainly been studied from either a macro, or a meso cross-sector perspective, i.e. at the societal and (inter)organizational levels. In this paper we will pay specific attention to the micro perspective, i.e. individual interactions between and within organizations, thus taking a somewhat different focus on transmission of partnership effects. Moreover, we consider the interrelatedness between the macro, meso and micro levels. Partnerships are formed between partners from different sectors (private-nonprofit; private-public; tripartite – public-nonprofit is a more traditional form with somewhat different peculiarities as the profit motive is absent) to realise both organizational and societal goals. How this may 'trickle down' *between* and *within* organizations that

participate in a partnership (e.g. from management to employees), or 'trickle up' (from employees to management) or 'trickle round' (e.g. between employees) has hardly been studied in the context of partnerships. By focusing on the potential effects and mechanisms at the level of individuals and the organization(s) with which they interact, this paper aims to help fill a gap in research on partnerships. It responds to a call for more insight into the interactions themselves instead of their forms and types. Seitanidi and Ryan (2007, p. 256), for example, pointed at the importance of studying process-based interactions instead of just outcomes as "organizational benefits not only stem from the outcomes of the interaction but also from the process of interaction"; they mentioned learning opportunities and exchange of non-financial resources in this regard. This will also help to move the research agenda forward by paying attention to partnerships as (potential) agents of change within and between organizations, and at multiple levels (Seitanidi, 2008).

More insight can also be helpful for those interested in the actual implications of partnerships for participants and society more generally. As partnerships evolve their effects can trickle up from the micro level (i.e. individual interactions), to a meso level (i.e. organizational or sectorial interactions), and finally to a macro level of interactions (i.e. societal interactions). The proposed diffusion can be ascribed to individuals holding several roles in society simultaneously, such as being an employee, a customer, an investor, or a family member. Individuals who are affected by a partnership as a company's employee, investor or customer are likely to generate positive associations and feelings (micro level), which may not only benefit themselves (e.g. in terms of job/customer satisfaction), but also result in favourable outcomes for the participating organization(s) – this can be either one organization or more than one across sectors (meso level). While companies can profit via higher sales and a better reputation vis-à-vis employees and consumers, for example, nonprofit partners may get access to more funding and increased visibility of the causes they care about. In addition, these benefits on the meso level can evoke desired outcomes at a macro level, as societal problems become more visible and well-known amongst multiple individuals and groups and can hence be addressed more effectively, for example, if people spread the word and/or become supportive of the social cause beyond the realm of the partnership (as voters, active citizens, donors).

Trickle Effects

The basic approach for the proposed diffusion mechanisms of partnerships is borrowed from economics, where the transmission of consumption patterns between different hierarchical levels of society is described by so-called 'trickle-down', 'trickle-up', and 'trickle-round' effects (cf. Trigg, 2001). While Veblen believed consumption patterns to trickle-down from higher to lower social classes as each social class tries to imitate tastes and preferences of the subsequent higher level (cf. Trigg, 2001), critics of this concept stated that trickle-up and trickle-round effects of consumption behaviour are "at least as important as 'trickle down'" (Trigg, 2001, p. 103). Within the marketing literature, trickle-down, trickle-up, or trickle-round effects have also been applied, for example in the context of fashion adoption and the global diffusion of technology.

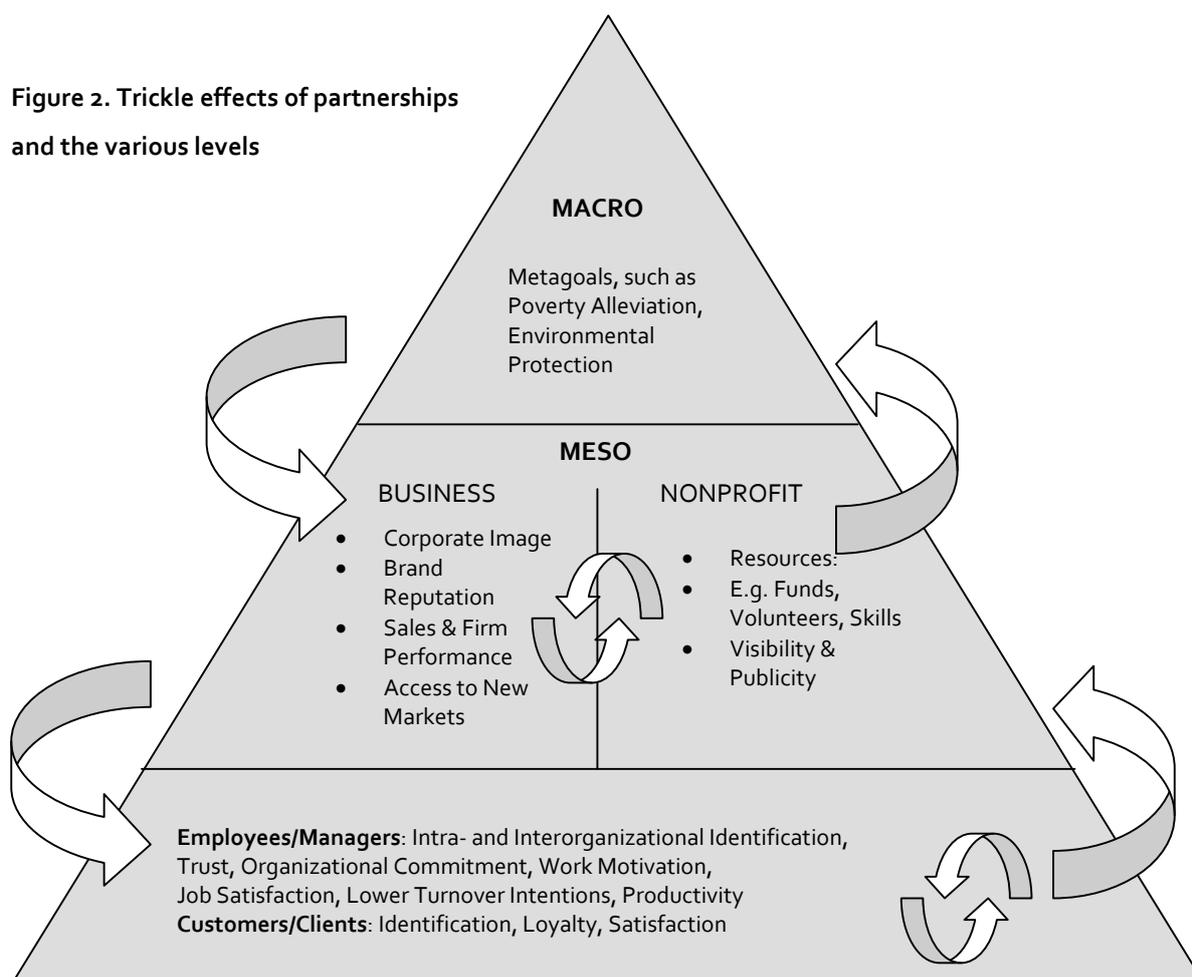
The fashion adoption process provides an example of all three kinds of effects. Consumer behaviour with regard to fashion adoption can be described either as a top-down process from higher to lower socio economic groups (e.g. for luxury fashion which can be afforded only by wealthy groups in society in the beginning, but is adopted by less wealthy groups when prices drop), or as a bottom-up process (jeans, for instance, were preliminary worn by working class people only, but were gradually adopted by higher social classes). In addition, as opinion leadership and self image are considered important concepts in the diffusion process of fashion, early adopters may cause trickle-round effects of fashion adoption as they can be found at all levels of the social stratum (Evans, 1989).

Somewhat differently, across markets, academics proposed the adoption of a trickle-up theory for the global diffusion of new technologies. Sheth and Parvatiyar (2001) state that advantages with regard to scale and scope can be realized by introducing new technology products to global consumer markets first before moving to commercial, industrial and government markets. The result of such an approach would be "more homogeneity in the demand and usage of consumer electronic products across the nations" (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2001, p. 24), as governments are usually slower in adopting new technologies.

Drawing on the use of trickle effects in the economics and marketing literature, in the current study the concept will be applied to the context of partnerships to shed light on

how the effects of such initiatives can transmit from one level to another and have broader implications than just the organization(s) and the social cause involved. Before moving to the micro level (interactions of individuals), which is our main focus, we will first pay some attention to the macro and meso levels, specifically from a cross-sector perspective which has predominated in the partnership literature. Obviously, partnerships are first and foremost meant to address the social good (macro level), and the partnering organizations (meso level). However, they can also have implications for individuals who interact with(in) these organizations, such as managers, employees or customers (micro level) (see Figure 2, which shows the trickle effects and the various levels). These types of interactions and changes that result from partnerships are relevant in themselves but can also be important for transmission of the 'social good' and trickle to other levels, thus having much wider effects (cf. Seitanidi, 2008). In view of the lack of insight into these latter mechanisms, we will be relatively brief in discussing the macro and meso levels, and concentrate on those aspects that may be helpful for a further understanding of the interaction processes involving individuals. Propositions related to the micro level are formulated as well.

Figure 2. Trickle effects of partnerships and the various levels



Macro level

Selsky and Parker (2005) distinguish three motivational levels for partnerships, namely metagoals or the common cause (referring to the macro level of interactions), the goals of each partner (meso level of interactions) and the motivations of specific individuals involved in the partnership (micro level of interactions) (cf. Figure 2). Research at the macro level hence addresses such 'metagoals', as actors and efforts from different sectors are necessary to deal with issues and problems that are usually too great and too complex to be solved by one actor alone (Selsky and Parker, 2005; Ashman, 2001). A typical metagoal would be the improvement of social welfare (Bhattacharya et al., 2004), which might be addressed for instance by initiatives for poverty alleviation, environmental protection, or better education. Cross-sector interactions seem particularly appropriate to address such large-scale issues by sharing risks, funds or skills (Kolk et al., 2008). An important aspect of partnership effectiveness is that partners learn from each other in order to capture synergies that only the cooperative efforts can bring (Austin et al., 2007).

According to Bouwen and Taillieu (2004, p. 114), collaboration across sectors "moves away from the expert top-down planning-implementation action mode towards a joint involvement action mode", thereby creating opportunities to build social capital and reach broader societal goals as well. More specifically, practices such as partners' joint decision-making, open conversations or common activities can drive such an empowerment process. For example, in the case of the Infierno people, an indigenous community in Peru, Spreitzer (2007) found that an integrative leadership approach by their partner, an ecotourism company, led to the community-initiated creation of various committees addressing the community's sectoral development, inter alia regarding agricultural or educational strategic planning. The community developed a sense of collective agency as a result of its partnership with the company, which resulted in a "more peaceful society" (Spreitzer, 2007, p. 1082).

Despite the potential benefits of partnerships at the macro level, criticism has also been raised as to whether they can actually bring about the desired outcomes (e.g. Ashman, 2001; Pedersen, 2005). Ashman (2001) described issues related to control, goals and the partners' motivations to enter into a partnership as some of the reasons why partnerships may fail to benefit the social good. Whether partnerships are effective thus seems to

depend also on factors related to the meso level, to which we will turn next.

Meso level

Besides cooperating for broader societal objectives, organizations also have their own motivations to participate in a partnership. By joining forces, organizations may acquire access to 'critical competences' that they do not have individually (Selsky and Parker, 2005). Thus a partnership may create advantages, such as greater learning opportunities (e.g. improving employees' interpersonal, technical or reflective skills), increased social capital, access to partners' networks, and a better ability to attract, motivate and retain employees (cf. Austin, 2000; Kolk et al., 2008; Selsky and Parker, 2005). For companies, there is also the possibility of enhancing the corporate image or brand reputation and hence boosting sales, preventing potentially negative public confrontations and tapping into new markets (Elkington and Fennell, 1998). Similar to companies, nonprofit organizations (NPO) seek benefits that help the organization and its cause. Drivers of nonprofit engagement may not only be resource-related (such as funds, goods, services, a greater volunteer base, technical or management skills), but also broader visibility and publicity (Austin, 2000; Elkington and Fennell, 1998; Kolk et al., 2008).

However, as there are substantial differences between sectors, organizational interactions do not always flow smoothly. Studies have mentioned, in the case of profit-nonprofit collaboration in particular, issues related to mistrust, misunderstandings and power imbalances (Berger et al., 2004; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004; Elkington and Fennell, 1998; Pedersen, 2005; Seitandi and Ryan, 2007; Selsky and Parker, 2005). Mistrust can be caused by the business partner's concerns regarding the confidentiality of information shared with the NPO, or by the NPO's belief that the company is only seeking a public relations benefit (Elkington and Fennell, 1998) rather than social improvement. Consequently, mistrust can disrupt interactions between partners due to covert behaviour, opportunism and communication breakdowns (Berger et al., 2004). Misunderstandings may occur if the partners' objectives and expectations diverge, which is primarily seen as an early stage partnership problem (Berger et al., 2004; Selsky and Parker, 2005). Furthermore, power imbalances can be caused by either partner. While the NPO may possess higher brand equity and better relations with stakeholders (Berger et al., 2004), the company's

power may be rooted in a higher level of financial assets. In either case power imbalances can constrain the partnership in reaching its full potential if main resources are not used efficiently or even remain unused (Berger et al., 2004).

Quite some research has consequently addressed issues related to partner selection and implementation, including frameworks and tools to better understand potential problems and help avoid them where possible (e.g. Ählström and Sjöström, 2005; Seitanidi and Crane, 2008). Factors have been identified that could drive and improve cross-sector interactions, such as alignment of better fit between the collaborating organizations' missions and values, emotional bonds between managers from both sectors, clarity with regard to mutual expectations about the contributions of each, and involvement of employees at all organizational levels (Austin, 2000; Berger et al., 2004). Moreover, Austin (2000) stressed the significance of trust between partners' representatives, which is also seen as an important outcome of business-NPO dialogues, next to enhanced relationships and better understanding.

Based on empirical research on 15 business-NPO partnerships, Austin (2000) noted the importance of leadership support, communication and human resource management practices. First, by engaging top management the company can make sure that the alliance occupies a distinct and "ongoing share of mind" (Austin, 2000, p. 85) on the part of leaders. Second, by means of frequent, open and efficient communication between the partners trust can be created. In addition, internal communication about the partnership (e.g. through employee newsletters or opportunities to get involved) may help to further employee pride. Third, effective partnerships may be realized when managers are evaluated with regard to partnership performance. In other words, businesses that stimulate cross-sector collaborations amongst managers may be rewarded by higher partnership benefits. Thus, it appears that by communicating a partnership throughout the organization and by engaging top management and employees, cross-sector collaborations are more likely to succeed. Only then will they yield desired company benefits, such as an enhanced corporate image, reputation, higher product sales, and increased attractiveness to (potential) employees, and also be effective in reaching nonprofits' and societal goals. While it may depend on the successful implementation of partnerships at the meso level whether and to what extent societal problems can be addressed successfully at the macro level (i.e. a trickle-up effect), positive results with regard to a partnership's metagoals are also likely to

favourably impact the partner organizations. For instance, if society perceives a decline in poverty due to a partnership initiative to create more jobs in a specific region, the company may benefit from increased reputation, and in turn commit more resources to the nonprofit partner (i.e. a trickle-down effect). However, in order to understand how the processes described above work at the meso level, we need to delve into the micro level of cross-sector interactions. The investigation of individual interactions at the organizational level will reveal in what ways transmission processes might take place.

Micro level

Interactions at the micro level can take place *between* employees of the organizations involved, between employees *within* organizations, and *between* employees and customers. Respective examples are that the top manager of an NPO can influence employees of the partnering company during face-to-face meetings, explaining the importance and value of the partnership; that a manager of the partnering company can influence his/her employees by spreading the word about the partnership and encouraging them to participate; and that an employee can tell customers about the partnership. When partnerships evolve, they offer many possibilities for interaction with internal and external stakeholders (Berger et al., 2006), which in turn may result in more favourable personal, work and/or customer related perceptions and behaviours.

These multiple effects at the individual level (within and across organizations) have hardly been studied so far, and certainly not in a comprehensive manner in the partnership context. Their (potential) importance has been noted though, also more generally or regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR). Research has, for example, shed some light on how CSR can be driven within organizations (e.g. by employee participation in CSR events, cf. Berger et al., 2006, or in corporate volunteering programmes, cf. Reed et al., 2007). Taking a more generic approach and focusing on relationships within one organization, Maignan et al. (1999), for example, found a significant influence of proactive corporate citizenship behaviour on employee commitment, customer loyalty and performance, with customer loyalty favourably affecting performance. How these trickle processes (might) work, however, was not shown. It has also been suggested that in addition to employees' identification with their employer's organization (i.e. intra-

organizational identification), employees also identify with the partnering NPO (i.e. inter- or cross-organizational identification), as well as with the 'community' that is presented by the supported cause (Berger et al., 2006). Employees are transformed through personal interactions that they otherwise would not have had access to and informal contacts among individuals from various organizational units can contribute to a feeling of unity and to a flattening of hierarchies. This indicates that trickle effects can occur both within one organization but also between organizations across sectors.

We are not aware of studies that systematically investigate how partnership-related perceptions and behaviours are diffused between and within organizations, and whether trickle down, up or round effects seem more effective. To shed more light on (micro-level) interactions as relevant for partnerships, also to help move empirical research forward, we will below first present some relevant insights from publications on other (CSR) topics, distinguishing trickle down, trickle up and round effects. This will be followed by a discussion of three more generic theories, which we will link to trickle effects of partnerships. These aspects in our view deserve further attention in follow-up publications, as laid down in some propositions, and in the actual 'management' and implementation of partnerships within and across organizations, as indicated in the final paragraphs of this paper.

Trickle effects: some insights from CSR and organization studies

From the perspective of *trickle-down effects*, several authors have stressed the importance of upper management for the organizational diffusion of CSR (e.g. Collier and Esteban, 2007; Reed et al., 2007; Waldman et al., 2006). Waldman et al. (2006) found that CEO intellectual stimulation influences top managers' perceptions of the relevance of considering CSR in their decision-making. Moreover, they indicate that this mainly holds for shareholder and stakeholder related CSR values, whereas top managers' perceptions of the importance of community welfare issues were affected to a lesser extent. An implication for partnerships may be that such a trickle-down effect can only be expected for those that have moved beyond the mere philanthropic stage, which seems to be applicable for most

current partnerships. Waldman et al. (2006) explain the trickle-down effect of CSR values from CEOs to top management by stating that values demonstrated by leaders lead to an internalisation of these values by 'followers'.

Regarding comparable effects from top management to lower-level employees, Reed et al. (2007) suggested that top management's commitment to an organization's time donation programme may influence employees at lower organizational levels, due to employees' desire to comply with cultural norms or to contagion, referred to as affect transfer based on personal interaction (Brown and Lam, 2008). Similarly, Collier and Esteban (2007) argued that top management's commitment to CSR is indispensable for establishing an integrated CSR culture within the organization. Partnerships might play such an integrative role as they can be accompanied by employee engagement and knowledge sharing. However, eventually only top management can make sure that CSR is embedded in the organization's policies, practices and procedures, which requires considerable commitment of upper hierarchies to CSR.

Maon et al. (2008) also underline the importance of upper managers – and particularly their values and beliefs – for the development of strategic CSR agendas. They developed a conceptual model according to which CSR can be implemented strategically if upper managers' CSR perceptions converge into a joint "organizational interpretation" (Maon et al., 2008, p. 419), which is then shared with other stakeholders by means of a structured dialogue. However, the authors also state that their approach does not leave much room for stakeholders' contributions to a company's CSR strategy (indicating potential trickle-up effects), which may not always reflect reality.

To create *trickle-up and trickle-round effects*, the importance of an integrative process of CSR policy formulation, meaning that different stakeholders – and employees in particular – should have the possibility to raise their voices, has been expressed by several researchers (Appels et al., 2006; Berger et al., 2007; Hemingway and Maclagan, 2004; Maclagan, 1999). Maclagan (1999) pointed at the need for a dialogue between management and employees, encouraged by participative leadership styles and open communication. We will discuss these two components in turn.

Participative leadership potentially drives bottom-up CSR initiatives, i.e. trickle-up effects. A participative leadership style, which has been defined as "joint decision-making or at least shared influence in decision-making by a superior and his or her employees"

(Somech, 2003, p. 1003), likely benefits the company and its employees in terms of better quality of decisions, increased employee motivation, satisfaction and commitment (Somech, 2003). Participative leaders discuss relevant issues with employees, ask for their opinions and take these into account when making decisions (Schul et al., 1983). In case these discussions take place 'en groupe' they may also generate trickle-round effects as employees will get to know each other's opinions. This leads to the following proposition:

P1: Participative leadership is positively related to organizational members' active engagement in partnership-related conversations with (a) superiors (trickle up), (b) peers (trickle round), and (c) subordinates (trickle down).

Transformational leadership has also been associated with organizational bottom-up effects, suggesting that lower-level employees may influence their superiors' style of leadership (Avolio and Bass, 1995). Transformational leaders are described as moving their subordinates beyond self-interest by means of idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, which "elevates the follower's level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualisation, and the well-being of others, the organization, and society" (Bass, 1999, p. 11). Hence, similar to participative leadership, transformational leadership may evoke not only trickle-down effects (e.g. leaders inspiring their subordinates to get involved in partnership-related activities), but also trickle-up effects (e.g. inspired employees feel encouraged to initiate activities themselves). Finally, transformational leadership triggers the creation of a "(s)hared vision and strong group identity", increasing the degree of "collective identification" (Jung and Sosik, 2002, p. 318), which may even cause trickle-round effects within and between organizations (cf. intra- and interorganizational identification, Berger et al., 2006). We thus expect:

P2: Transformational leadership is positively related to organizational members' active engagement in partnership-related conversations with (a) superiors (trickle up), (b) peers within and between the partnering organizations (trickle round), and (c) subordinates (trickle down).

Open communication is a factor that potentially drives trickle-round effects, i.e. by openly talking to colleagues and organizational members of the partner organization, employees can influence each other. It may, however, also cause trickle-up effects, in case management is involved. Open communication is determined by the communication climate, defined as “the perception of employees with regard to the quality of the mutual relations and the communication in an organization” (Bartels et al., 2007, p. 177). This describes whether employees feel comfortable talking to management and peers, and whether they perceive information they receive from the organization as trustworthy (Smidts et al., 2001). If the communication climate is evaluated positively employees are more likely to engage actively in conversations around organizational issues or in organizational decision making processes. This has been discussed in the context of organizational greening (Branzei et al., 2004), and can be applied to partnerships as well. Moreover, open communication allows managers to share their views and values with employees, which may result in trickle-down effects.

P₃: An open communication climate is positively related to employees' active engagement in partnership-related conversations with (a) superiors (trickle up), (b) peers within and between the partnering organizations (trickle round), and (c) subordinates (trickle down).

In the next section we will delve a little deeper into underlying theories originating more from social psychology and marketing that can be related to trickle effects in partnerships.

Analysing micro-level interactions: theoretical inputs from (social) psychology

Three theories in particular can be linked to trickle effects. One, already mentioned above, relates to *social exchange and contagion*, pointing at the phenomenon that an individual's attitudes and behaviour may be strongly influenced through exposure to other individuals' attitudes and behaviour as a result of social interactions (e.g. Brett and Stroh, 2003). Dabholkar et al. (2009) used this concept for studying the impact of employee communication styles on customers in an online group chat encounter. Social contagion

explained why consumers reciprocated the communication style used by the employee even without face-to-face interaction. Various theoretical reasons have been proposed for social contagion, each describing a different causal mechanism of social influence. One rationale is the reciprocity principle of social influence, i.e., the development of an individual's "sense of obligation to reciprocate" (Masterson, 2001, p. 596) resulting from having received something valuable from another party before (Gouldner, 1960). Another rationale is that driven by the need for social presentation and cognitive consistency (e.g. Festinger, 1954), individuals use socially induced cognitive and affective strategies to match the behaviours of those with whom they interact. Alternatively, the influence of another person may occur without conscious motivation. For instance, it has been demonstrated that individuals learn from others without deliberation through vicarious modelling (Bandura, 1986), or they automatically imitate the emotional reactions of others through emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002). The concept of emotional contagion has often been used to explain the influence of service employee affect on customer responses, in the sense that affect transfer during employee-customer interaction explains customer responses (Brown and Lam 2008). Despite these many different theoretical explanations, the practical phenomena described are the same, and thus social contagion theory provides clear direction for suggesting that managers, employees, and customers may influence each other with respect to their views and feelings of partnerships.

So if we would apply this logic to employee-consumer interactions in a partnership context, it is expected that consumers will respond in a similar fashion to employees' attitudes towards the partnership. Thus, an employee who tends to be positive about a partnership will trigger similar evaluations by customers (e.g. Jacobs et al., 2001), causing a trickle-down effect. Similarly, an employee who is negative about the partnership will generate a tendency of negative processing among customers (e.g., Pugh, 2001; Stock and Hoyer, 2005). Furthermore, we expect that employees of the partnering NPO can influence the company's employees and vice versa, causing trickle-round effects (cf. research on strategic alliances which shows relational social exchanges between alliance partners to foster interfirm learning, increase interdependence and create trust, Muthusamy and White, 2005). An employee of a company who strongly expresses his enthusiasm about the partnership in a meeting with the social partner may trigger positive involvement of the partner's employees (or volunteers). These influences could be subconsciously or a more

direct response could occur if employees take additional efforts and talk about their engagement in partnership activities.

A necessary condition for the direct route of social contagion is that employees spread the word about the partnership among external stakeholders (e.g., customers, social partners). There is some evidence in the academic marketing literature that a company's CSR initiatives can encourage employees to "evangelise" among customers and other external constituents (Drumwright, 1996). Drumwright (1996) suggests that "evangelising" is a way to generate affinity for the social cause among external constituents. Also, employees of both organizations involved as well as customers may strive to reciprocate a company's partnership activities (implying trickle-down effects, cf. Masterson, 2001). Since employees and customers may infer from partnership activities that the organization is not only focused on self-interest, but also cares about the social good, it can be expected that they will perform good behaviours to 'return' the favours they – indirectly – receive from the organization. For instance, in return for the 'good work' of the company, volunteers may share their expertise with the company's employees and help improve their performance. Moreover, customers and employees may reciprocate 'good' behaviour by staying loyal to a company.

Finally, although social exchange and contagion theories have mainly been applied in a trickle-down setting, these concepts may explain bottom-up effects as well. As (emotional) contagion explains that behavioural attitudes can be transferred among individuals or groups even unconsciously (Barsade, 2002), it is likely that employees are affected by customers' positive or negative partnership evaluations through social interaction. This may also apply to superiors if subordinates reveal either positive or negative opinions regarding the partnership. Such trickle-up effects may be particularly pronounced if individuals' opinions become manifest at the group level, which has been described as a bottom-up process driven by social exchange (Mayer et al., 2009).

According to a second concept, *social learning theory*, individuals learn by observing others and by imitating values or behaviours of those they consider as role models (Mayer et al., 2009; Simons et al., 2007). Since role models are considered to possess status, competence, power, or the control over critical rewards (Simons et al., 2007), social learning theory has often been applied in the context of work organizations: employees emulate leaders' or co-workers' perceptions and behaviours, especially when spurred by sanctions or

rewards. By imitating others, employees make sure that their behaviours are in line with generally accepted norms (Mayer et al., 2009). Therefore, role modelling can be regarded as a means of passing on values, attitudes and behaviours, which are subsequently internalized by followers due to identification with the role model (Weaver et al., 2005). In line with social learning theory Mayer et al., (2009) found that followers do not only emulate their leaders' ethical behaviour but are at the same time influenced by leaders' ability to punish and reward.

Applied to partnerships, social learning theory suggests that employees of the NPO and the company will view their supervisors or managers as role models. They will thus emulate supervisors' perceptions or behaviours similar to employees copying their superiors' ethical leadership behaviours (cf. Mayer et al., 2009) or behavioural integrity (Simons et al., 2007). If superiors talk favourably about the partnership or are actively engaged in partnership activities themselves, employees are likely to imitate these behaviours, causing trickle-down effects. By doing so employees may want to make sure that their thoughts and deeds are in accordance with accepted social norms. For example, if call-centre volunteers of an NPO experience that their manager helps the employees of the company with setting up their call-centre, they might copy that helping behaviour and do the same. Moreover, not only superiors but also other employees of the work group can be seen as role models (Mayer et al., 2009), causing trickle-round effects within organisations. Although social learning theory has mainly been applied in the context of groups *within* an organization, Bouwen and Taillieu (2004) extended the concept to collaborations *between* organizations. According to these authors, social learning processes among different stakeholder parties can emerge through problem sharing and "working with different kinds of knowledge and competencies" (Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004, p. 137). Frequent communication or participation in common activities by employees from both partner organizations is therefore expected to result in shared views regarding the partnership initiative (i.e. trickle-round effects). Moreover, employees may be considered role models due to competences and knowledge that employees of the partner organization lack.

Although social learning theory – to our knowledge – has not yet been used explicitly to explain bottom-up effects, we argue that trickle-up effects of partnerships may be attributed to social learning for several reasons. First, as open communication, which was associated with trickle-up effects above, fosters social learning (Schusler et al., 2003), an

open communication climate could be a necessary condition for superiors to learn partnership-related values and behaviours from their subordinates. Second, as “(h)ierarchical leadership is usually not accepted” in collaborations involving parties from different sectors and backgrounds, and “power differences require a ‘neutral’ form of facilitation or a distributed form of leadership” (Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004, p. 146), the common description of role models being organizational leaders or superiors may not be appropriate in the context of partnership initiatives, where organizational members from various levels participate in projects together. Finally, different from traditional organizational contexts, such role-model effects are also seen with customers who engage in the social activities that companies organize (e.g. if customers run marathons together with their account managers to raise money for the NPO).

A third theory, which builds on the concept of value congruence, is the *attraction-selection-attrition* model which suggests that “people are attracted to firms whose general core or dominant values they share” (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2003, p. 48). Therefore, individuals whose personal preferences (e.g. being helpful) fit with the organization’s values or characteristics are more likely to be attracted, hired and also retained which in turn results in relatively homogeneous work groups with a shared view on behavioural norms (Maxham and Netemeyer, 2003; Mayer et al., 2009). According to this definition, the model describes a “bottom-up process” (Ployhart et al., 2006, p. 661) driven by human resource practices which eventually ensure some sort of homogeneity among employees.

If we relate the attraction-selection-attrition model to partnerships we can expect companies that are visible as good corporate citizens to attract potential partners, employees and customers who perceive an overlap between their personal identity and their perceived image of the organization (cf. social identity theory, e.g. Dutton et al., 1994). Some of these mechanisms have been found in the CSR area more generally. Turban and Greening (1997) reported that companies with a higher corporate social performance had a more favourable reputation and consequently attracted more potential employees. Furthermore, Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) suggested that values shared by employees may create an organizational culture that guides employees’ behaviours. Therefore, if employees perceive the organization to be CSR friendly, they are likely to adopt the values demonstrated by organizational members (i.e. values shown by superiors, subordinates or peers, indicating trickle-down, up and round effects within the organization). Similar effects

were found for consumers who identify with a company's CSR activities (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Moreover, research has shown that employees identify with their organization if they perceive that outsiders (e.g. customers) believe it to have "socially valued characteristics" (Smidts et al., 2001, p. 1052). Such a construed external image (cf. Smidts et al., 2001) suggests that employees are affected by the values they believe customers attribute to the organization, indicating potential trickle-up effects. Finally, in line with interorganizational identification (cf. Berger et al., 2006), employees may feel attracted by the partnering organization as well, causing identification and hence trickle-round effects. Drawing on the concepts discussed above, the following propositions can be formulated:

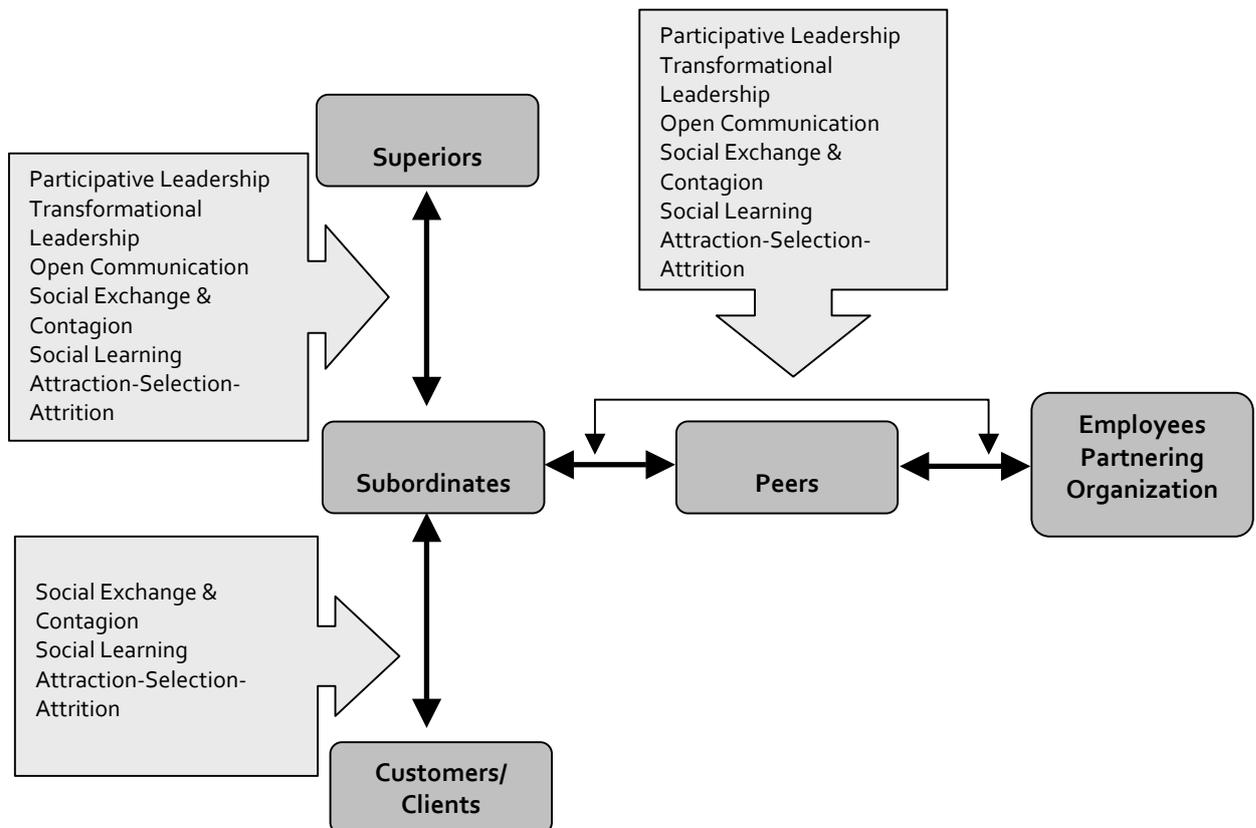
P4: Superiors' partnership-related evaluations and behaviours are positively related to subordinates' evaluations and behaviours (trickle up, trickle down).

P5: Subordinates' partnership-related evaluations and behaviours are positively related to customers' evaluations and behaviours (trickle up, trickle down).

P6: Subordinates' partnership-related evaluations and behaviours are positively related to peers' evaluations and behaviours, both within and between the partnering organizations (trickle round).

It should be noted that not all theories from the various bodies of literature apply to all micro-level interactions. In Figure 3 we suggest which theories seem to apply in particular to specific relationships (and respective trickle-up, trickle-round and trickle-down effects). Obviously, this is something to be investigated further in follow-up empirical research (see the next, final section of this paper).

Figure 3. Overview of relationships and possible relevant theories



In conclusion, we posit that if partnerships are diffused effectively within and between the partner organizations (micro level), the resulting benefits most likely will not be restricted to individuals (e.g. in terms of employee or customer satisfaction and loyalty). These benefits may spill over to the organizational level (meso level), impacting both the company (e.g. in terms of an improved corporate image), and the nonprofit partner (e.g. in terms of more visibility or access to more resources). Conversely, more visibility of the nonprofit partner and an improved corporate image of the company resulting from a partnership will aid employees and customers/clients to identify more closely with both organizations (cf. social identity theory, Dutton et al., 1994), which in turn triggers employee commitment and customer loyalty, indicating a trickle-down effect from the meso to the micro level. And, as indicated in an earlier part of the paper, outcomes at the meso level are likely to be positively related to those at the macro level (cf. Figure 2).

Implications for research and practice

As a contribution to the topic of cross-sector social interactions, this paper paid specific attention to micro-level trickle effects of partnerships. We conceptually explored how social interactions spread and evolve, focusing on individuals and the organization(s) they interact with. Based on literature from various disciplines and perspectives, trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-round effects were distinguished, both within and between organizations involved in a partnership. We explored how insights related to leadership, communication, social exchange and contagion, social learning and attraction-selection-attrition can help shed light on micro-level interactions in a partnership, considering in particular transmission mechanisms via employees, top and middle management, and customers. Drawing on theories that have previously been used primarily to describe organizational trickle-down effects and applying them to a partnership context, we suggest that they explain in what ways evaluations and behaviours with regard to such initiatives may not only trickle down the organizational hierarchy, but also diffuse upwards. Due to the integrative character of partnerships we propose that theories that are typically applied to an intraorganizational context can be extended to an interorganizational setting, and even to customers/clients.

Although the proposed links seem tempting, we are not aware of any studies applying multi-informants research designs to study the effects of a partnership on employees of partner organizations and customers simultaneously. This points at several possibilities for future research on trickle effects of cross-sector social partnerships. Firstly, studies could explore if trickle effects as found on other topics, and the suggested theories for the diffusion processes, also hold for partnerships. While trickle-down effects have received some attention in the area of CSR, this is not really the case for particularly trickle-up and trickle-round effects. This also applies to the customer perspective, e.g., how customers can influence private, public and nonprofit organizations with respect to partnerships.

Secondly, it is particularly interesting to find out how employees of NPOs influence employees of partnering companies (at all levels) and vice versa. Whereas it is understandable that the same trickle-down, up, and round effects of CSR activities within

companies will be found for partnership activities *within* the company, it very well might be that these effects differ *between* partnering organizations as formal positions and relations between the persons involved are dissimilar. For example, can a manager of the partner NPO act as role model for an employee of the company, i.e. a cross-sector trickle-down effect? It may also be that an employee of the company inspires the manager of the partnering NPO to change, for instance, call-centre procedures, which would mean a cross-sector trickle-up effect. Or a cross-sector trickle-round effect may occur in case of same-level interactions. Since the formal and social structures are different in cross-sector partnerships compared to intra-organizational structures, these effects might differ as well.

Thirdly, future research could investigate trickle effects in a variety of partnership contexts, for instance in private-nonprofit and private-public partnerships. As organizational structures within non-profit and public organizations are likely to differ (e.g. as to volunteers versus salaried employees) this might influence the type of and intensity of trickle effects related to a cross-sector partnership. It might well be, for example, that the intrinsic motivation of a volunteer (who is not doing the job to earn money) brings such enthusiasm that this creates stronger contagion effects.

While further empirical research is needed to get more insight into the exact mechanisms, findings from other (CSR) settings as well as mere anecdotal evidence suggest that the role of individual interactions has been underexposed, also in realizing wider effects of partnering for the 'social good'. It might be good to pay explicit attention to possible trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-round effects to transmit partnerships effectively throughout the organization. By communicating, role modelling and engaging managers and employees, (top)management may create commitment and a sense of felt obligation to reciprocate. As has been shown for CSR more generally, a partnership might then also have a positive effect for organizations and their employees themselves, if it helps to create favourable employees' perceptions of organizational fairness, support, trust and job satisfaction, with positive implications for work motivation, commitment, turnover intentions and productivity (Brammer et al., 2007, Gond et al., 2007; Koh and Boo, 2001; Peterson, 2004). In turn, and in line with the service-profit chain concept, satisfied and committed employees might have a positive impact on customers as well, which is explained by the creation of a pleasant service climate or affect transfer (e.g. Brown and Lam, 2008; Wangenheim et al., 2007).

Finally, as employees and customers have multiple roles, positive interactions at the micro-level in relation to organization(s) they interact with, may extend to the meso and macro levels as well. This would in fact represent multiple benefits of cross-sector partnerships, as “agents of change” in organizations and societies, via more diverse mechanisms than assessed so far, including those related to the process-based interactions themselves.

Chapter 3

Micro-Level Interactions in Business-Nonprofit Partnerships

Abstract

While most research on business-nonprofit partnerships has focused on macro and meso perspectives, this paper pays attention to the micro level. Drawing on various theoretical perspectives from both marketing and management, we conceptually relate the outcomes of active employee participation in such partnerships to consumer self-interest. We also explore empirically whether and when self-interest affects consumers' responses towards firms in relation to business-nonprofit partnerships. The study reveals that self-interest can directly influence consumers' behavioral responses towards firms (i.e. switching and buying intentions, and word of mouth), whereas the impact on evaluative responses in terms of attitude and trust is only weak. The fit between the firm and the nonprofit partner (company-cause fit) turns out to moderate this effect, with consumer self-interest only playing a role if fit is high. Implications for research and practice are discussed⁴.

⁴ This chapter is based on an article that has been accepted for publication in *Business & Society* (co-authored by W. van Dolen and A. Kolk). The authors would like to thank Sabine Feirabend for her valuable contribution to the implementation of this research.

Introduction

In the past decade, much attention has been paid to the emergence of new forms of cooperation between firms and nonprofit actors to address societal challenges that are considered too great and too complex to be solved by one actor alone (Austin, 2000; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Lucea, 2010). Such business-nonprofit collaborations, which are known as partnerships in the management literature and social alliances in the marketing field, are seen as a strategic approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2006; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Selsky & Parker, 2005). They have been described as “close, mutually beneficial, long-term” partnerships that involve more than philanthropy, sponsorship or cause-related marketing (Berger et al., 2006, p.129). Different from such tactical (or transactional) types of CSR, which are mainly associated with marketing goals and resources, partnerships denote “the synergistic use of organizational core competencies and resources to address key stakeholders’ interests and to achieve both organizational and social benefits” (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002, p. 690).

As such, partnerships go beyond financial contributions, demanding resource commitments in terms of time, knowledge and efforts from both partner organizations (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Waddock, 1988). For instance, the firm may provide managerial advice, technological support or a volunteer work force to the non-governmental organization (NGO) that it partners with (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2004). Such partnerships are hence described as highly integrative, and frequently characterized by active employee involvement by potentially all organizational members (Austin, 2000; McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). They therefore require concerted efforts by various organizational departments. While tactical CSR approaches usually target relatively short term, product- or brand-related outcomes, partnerships are seen as a long-term investment seeking to affect and benefit various stakeholder groups simultaneously, thereby addressing both economic and non-economic objectives (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002).

So far, partnerships have mainly been studied from either a macro, or a meso cross-sector perspective, i.e. at societal and (inter)organizational levels. This study, however, pays attention to the micro perspective which focuses on effects or interactions among

individuals (i.e. consumers and employees). Organizational benefits derived from partnerships, such as employee learning or non-financial resource exchanges, have been underexposed, and so has research on the potential implications of such benefits, particularly with regard to consumers and the firm (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). Although researchers increasingly recognize that not only the focal firm may have an interest in CSR initiatives (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), few studies have addressed the question whether consumers could derive personal benefits from partnerships as well, let alone the potential interrelatedness of benefits for different stakeholder groups or their implications for the firm. To implement partnerships effectively, however, it is important to understand stakeholders' needs and how benefits for different stakeholder groups can be integrated into an organizational strategy (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Bhattacharya, Korschun and Sen (2009) referred to this gap when asserting that CSR initiatives first need to bring about benefits for individual stakeholders in order to be beneficial for firms.

This study aims to contribute both empirically and theoretically. Drawing on organization and marketing studies we theorize how partnerships, and active employee participation in particular, may affect employees, and how those effects may spill over to consumers. We argue that employee participation in partnerships may affect consumers either favorably or unfavorably, depending on whether or not consumers perceive that employees' involvement with the cause during work hours distracts them from serving customer needs well, being referred to as high versus low 'consumer perceived self-interest' in this study. Our theoretical contribution lies in the conceptualization of a link between employees and customers. Surprisingly, this link has been neglected by previous CSR studies, although employees have been identified as important advocates who may create awareness of and engagement with social causes among external constituents (Berger et al., 2004; Drumwright, 1996). Furthermore, we empirically investigate how consumers respond to perceptions of high versus low self-interest. In particular, drawing on attribution research and consistency theories, we test hypotheses that consumers will not always favor high self-interest, but that their responses towards the firm will depend on the level of company-cause fit. By doing so this study aims to contribute to the self-interest literature in the context of CSR by investigating boundary conditions to the generally emphasized importance of self-interest.

This paper is structured as follows: first we conceptualize the impact of active employee participation in partnerships on employees' perceptions and work-related behaviors, and how those in turn may spill-over to customers. Second, we review the literature on self-interest which is subsequently used to develop hypotheses related to the level of self-interest and the moderating effect of company-cause fit. This is followed by an explanation of our methodology and a presentation of the results. The paper ends with a discussion of the findings and conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

Partnerships: Linking Employees and Consumers

While past research has focused on how partnerships, or CSR more generally, can impact employees *or* consumers, there are neither conceptual nor empirical studies on how consumers can be affected via employees, thus involving both stakeholder groups. Drawing on the literature on CSR, particularly partnerships, the service-profit chain, and related psychological mechanisms, we argue that in a partnership context the effects of employees' active partnership participation may spill over to consumers, impacting them either favorably or unfavorably, depending on whether or not consumers believe that their personal self-interests are positively or negatively impacted by employees' involvement with the cause.

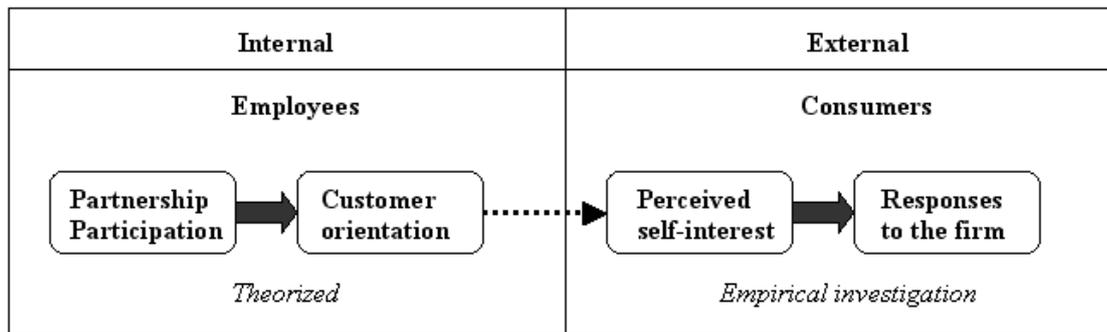
As stated earlier, partnerships can be characterized as an integrative form of CSR, often requiring an active commitment of time and efforts not only from managers, but also from employees of the partnering organizations (Waddock, 1988). For instance, employees of the firm may volunteer for the partnering non-governmental organization (NGO) or use their professional skills to help NGO staff during business hours (Smith, 1994). Due to this integrative approach employees may gain emotional rewards or acquire career-enhancing skills by conducting tasks outside their daily work environments. Similarly, partnership initiatives may help employees to integrate their private and work lives, for instance if such initiatives are linked to employees' own social communities (Bhattacharya, Sen, &

Korschun, 2008). Such benefits have shown to trigger employee identification with firms (Berger et al., 2006; Bhattacharya et al., 2008), which in turn can result in favorable work-related perceptions and behaviors, including job satisfaction, pride, commitment and loyalty to the firm (Bhattacharya et al., 2008).

Building on the service-profit chain concept, Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer (2009) demonstrated that the effects of identification are not only limited to employees' work-related perceptions and behaviors, but that they are transferred to customers as well. The authors demonstrated empirically that employee-company identification can impact customers' identification with an organization either directly (i.e. via emotional contagion) or indirectly (i.e. due to employees' customer orientation or productivity). Customer identification, in turn, triggers customer loyalty and willingness to pay, and hence firms' financial performance (Homburg et al., 2009). As CSR has been identified as a major driver of employee and customer identification, the processes outlined above are considered relevant in a partnership context as well (Berger et al., 2006; Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Kolk, Van Dolen and Vock (2010) suggested similar psychological mechanisms that might cause spillover effects of partnerships from employees to customers. For instance, an employee who is enthusiastic about the partnership and talks about it during interactions with a customer might trigger favorable partnership thoughts on the part of the customer as well.

According to the service-profit chain concept, satisfied (service) employees impact customers favorably through increased levels of productivity, affecting customer satisfaction and in turn firm profitability (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994). Employee volunteering, which constitutes an important element of partnership initiatives, has been associated with improved work motivation, customer orientation and productivity, which may in turn benefit consumers, thereby strengthening their personal self-interest in the partnership (cf. Basil, Runte, Easwaramoorthy, & Barr, 2009). For instance, employees might experience an improved work-life balance due to their engagement with the cause, and may hence appear more friendly in customer-contact situations due to increased job satisfaction, signalling more responsiveness to customers (cf. Figure 4).

Figure 4: Overview of the study's main constructs and connections



The Role of Self-Interest in Relation to CSR

Most theories of human motivation and behavior assume that individuals are primarily motivated by self-interest (cf. Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002; Miller & Ratner, 1998; Miller, 1999). Especially in individualistic cultures self-interested motives are considered as normal or rational (Miller, 1999). Meglino and Korsgaard (2004, p. 946) define rational self-interest as “thinking and acting in a manner that is expected to lead to an optimal or maximum result for a person”. Although the widely held view of self-interest as “the cardinal human motive” (Holmes et al., 2002, p. 144) has been criticized and challenged by more recent research (see e.g. Abelson, 1995), there is evidence that individuals are even guided by self-interested motives in their responses to social initiatives (Holmes et al., 2002; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004; Simpson, Irwin, & Lawrence, 2006).

According to social exchange theory, which builds on the concept of reciprocity, individuals’ voluntary deeds are stimulated by expected returns from others (Blau, 1964). Such benefits could accrue in the form of gratitude, trust, or economic returns (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Similarly, in the marketing literature consumer choice processes are described in terms of economic utility maximization (e.g. Arora & Henderson, 2007). As suggested by the common practice of offering people products in return for their donations to charities, Holmes et al. (2002) demonstrated empirically that individuals are more willing to donate to charitable organizations when the act of giving is presented as an economic transaction rather than as charity. Building on Holmes et al.’s study, Simpson et al. (2006) obtained similar results, although their theoretical approach differed. While Holmes et al. (2002) argued that donors try to avoid inner conflicts by creating the ‘fiction’ of an economic

exchange, providing them with a self-interested justification for their good deeds, Simpson et al. (2006) criticized this approach. They asserted that responding to one's personal *and* others' interests does not necessarily imply a discrepancy. Rather, individuals behave in a way that is consistent with their self-perception of being moral (i.e. donating to a cause) *and* rational (i.e. receiving something in return). Consistency theory implies that not accepting an economic exchange in return for a philanthropic donation would create dissonance which individuals tend to avoid.

Arora and Henderson (2007) explicitly created tensions between concern for 'self' and 'other' in three experimental studies. In the context of transaction-based CSR activities (i.e. cause-related marketing) respondents were asked to trade off price discounts (i.e. "self" component) against donations of equal monetary value for varying social causes (i.e. "other" component). Their findings suggest that promotions with a 'self' component seem to be more effective than promotions with a social cause component. However, their findings also indicate that this is only true if the monetary value of promotions is sufficiently high. Similarly, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) found that consumers punish firms in terms of unfavorable evaluations if they perceive a trade-off between the firm's CSR initiatives and its corporate abilities, such as producing high-quality products.

Apart from such economic exchanges, Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) identified consumer well-being and behavior modification as CSR effects beneficial for consumers. The authors stated that even though these outcomes do not directly impact business, firms should acknowledge such benefits as they may contribute to the bottom line in the long term. In addition, Bhattacharya et al. (2009) theorized that various benefits could arise to consumers depending on their perceptions of firms' CSR initiatives. They developed a conceptual model describing in what ways individual stakeholders can derive potential benefits from a firm's CSR activities. The authors drew on the concept of means-end chain according to which consumers' purchase decisions are based on functional, psychological and value-based benefits. Although the model was not investigated empirically, the authors theorized that the degree to which stakeholders derive such personal benefits from firms' CSR initiatives (e.g. employee harmony, work-life integration, consumer well-being) will impact their responses towards the firm.

While such consumer benefits may be derived from CSR directly, partnerships can also create consumer-perceived self-interest indirectly through consumers' interactions

with employees, as described above. The implications of such indirect effects will be discussed next, with Table 2 containing some examples of direct and indirect partnership effects as illustration.

Table 2. Examples of hypothesized direct/indirect partnership effects in relation to high/low consumer-perceived self-interest

	Direct partnership effects	Indirect partnership effects
High consumer self-interest	Perceived economic advantage: perception that greater customer orientation (i.e. consumer self-interest) is not accompanied by price increases.	Employees' active participation in the partnership can increase work satisfaction and customer orientation which positively impacts consumer self-interest. Customers do not feel that employees are distracted by their partnership engagement.
Low consumer self-interest	Economic implications such as perceived price increases for consumers which are ascribed to the company's engagement with the cause.	Although employees' active participation in the partnership may increase their work satisfaction and commitment to their job, their engagement with the cause is not perceived positively because consumers feel their interests are neglected at the expense of the company's partnership engagement.

Hypotheses Development

As discussed earlier, employee participation in partnership activities may increase work motivation, customer orientation and productivity, which may trigger a high level of consumer self-interest (cf. Basil, et al., 2009). In line with the literature on self-interest it can be expected that consumers will respond favorably towards a firm if they perceive that the firm's partnership initiative is beneficial for them personally.

Despite these potential positive effects of partnerships on employees and hence customers, there is some evidence that partnership initiatives may not always result in high consumer self-interest. More specifically, we argue that the extent to which consumers perceive such initiatives to distract employees from their core job tasks will influence consumers' responses to the partnership. This reasoning is in line with Sen and Bhattacharya's (2001) advice for CSR-active firms to inform customers that the initiative is not be carried out at the expense of the firm's core abilities.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that CSR may distract firms from their core business activities (cf. Grayson & Hodges, 2004; Motorola, 2008). In particular, employee

volunteering programs supported by firms may create a conflict of interest between business-related obligations and participation in the partnership program (Pancer, Baetz, & Rog, 2002), for instance if a planned volunteer activity coincides with an important business meeting. As many volunteer activities take place during work hours, Basil et al. (2009) mentioned the blurring of boundaries between work and recreational time. Based on interviews with partnership participants, Berger et al. (2006, p. 133) found that employees even characterized partnership participation as "hard work" if it took place on a day-to-day basis. For instance, Randstad, a temporary employment company, offered to provide its NGO partner with advice regarding its human resource system free of charge, as human resource solutions belong to the firm's core activities (Insead, 2004).

Therefore, it can be argued that employees' distraction from their daily business tasks due to their participation in partnership activities may cause inconveniences for customers, such as longer waiting time in call centers, resulting in a low level of consumer self-interest. Following the logic of self-interest as "the cardinal human motive", consumers will punish the firm if they perceive that their interests are neglected by (service) employees due to their commitment to the nonprofit partner in terms of time and effort. In addition to these indirect effects on consumer self-interest via employees, consumers are expected to reward the firm if they perceive that the partnership activity benefits them directly (e.g. by contributing to their personal well-being, as suggested by Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Similarly, consumers will punish the firm if they believe that partnerships negatively impact their economic self-interests directly, such as price increases which consumers attribute to the firm's financial commitment to its NGO partner. This reasoning is supported by Arora & Henderson (2007), who described economic utility maximization as an important aspect in consumer choice processes.

To operationalize consumer reward and consumer punishment of the firm, the marketing literature often distinguishes between evaluative responses of consumers, particularly trust and attitude, and their behavioral responses, which includes buying and switching behavior, and word of mouth. Studies have shown that CSR influences these types of responses, but also that the impact may depend on other factors (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001).

We believe that the level of consumer-perceived self-interest will impact their evaluative and behavioral responses towards the firm in a way that consumers will respond

more favorably if they feel that the partnership benefits them personally (i.e. high self-interest), compared to if they believe that their personal interests are neglected (i.e. low self-interest). First, attitudes, which describe consumers' assessment of firms more generally (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006), aid the realization of personal goals and the avoidance of personal costs. As individuals are usually opposed to situations involving potential losses, their attitudes are favorable if they perceive a benefit for themselves (Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995). Although the effects of self-interest on attitudes are often considered as weak, such effects have shown to be stronger when self-interest is temporarily primed (Boninger et al., 1995). Second, trust, which has been defined as "confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity", relates to the belief that a (business) partner's actions will result in favorable outcomes for oneself (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23). In line with this reasoning, Bhattacharya et al. (2009) theorized that stakeholder benefits derived from CSR will improve trust as the firm demonstrates its caring behavior towards stakeholders. In the context of the current study it is therefore expected that increased perceptions of consumer self-interest will favorably impact consumer trust in the company.

On the one hand, consumers' behavioral intentions, such as word of mouth, which refers to consumers' willingness to recommend the firm to others (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), buying intentions (i.e. consumers' likelihood of purchasing the firm's products or services, Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), and switching intentions (i.e. likelihood of changing from one supplier to another, Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, & Murthy, 2004), can be seen as outcomes of attitude and trust (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). For instance, Bhattacharya et al. (2009) theorized that consumer-related benefits derived from CSR impact firm-directed behaviors, such as purchase intentions, through relationship building factors (e.g. trust, satisfaction). Moreover, extant CSR research has confirmed the relationship between consumers' evaluative (i.e. attitudes, trust) and behavioral responses measures (i.e. word of mouth and switching intentions) (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, & Avramidis, 2009).

On the other hand, we expect also a direct effect of self-interest on the behavioral response measures as self-interest predicts behavior rather than evaluations. Different from stating one's opinion, the expectancy of behavioral engagement prompts consumers to consider actual costs, which makes acting upon one's perceived self-interest more likely

(Miller and Ratner, 1998). Furthermore, Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggest that customers whose relationships with firms result in superior benefits, will be more committed, which directly affects switching or buying intentions (Bansal, Irving, & Taylor, 2004). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₁: A high level of consumer self-interest derived from a partnership activity causes more favorable consumer responses in terms of (a) attitudes, (b) trust, (c) word of mouth, (d) switching intentions and (e) buying intentions compared to a low level of self-interest.

The Relative Importance of Self-Interest: Fit as a Moderator

Although the literature on self-interest suggests the importance of this concept in explaining consumer responses, even in the context of CSR, other literature proposes that individuals are not only guided by self-interest but also by motivations concerning others; this can occur simultaneously, even if these motives are conflicting (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996; Bowles, 2008). Proponents of this view assert that rational self-interest cannot fully explain individuals' attitudes and behaviors, and that the impact of self-interest is often overestimated, as supported in several empirical studies (e.g. Miller & Ratner, 1998; Van Lange, 2000). Some CSR research suggests that consumers reflect on the reasons for firms' engagement in social initiatives, considering the firm's sincerity or honesty of its engagement with the NGO as important (e.g. Bigné Alcañiz et al. 2010; Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez, & Sánchez-García, 2009; Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006). Conveying these insights to a partnership context, consumer self-interest derived from a partnership may not always elicit favorable consumer responses towards firms. Whether consumers reward firms for accruing self-interest may depend on the perceived sincerity of the firm's engagement with the NGO. The level of fit or congruence between the firm and the cause (often called company-cause fit) has shown to inform consumers about the firm's motivations and sincerity in this regard (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009).

Insights on company-cause fit are derived from the more generic literature on cause-brand fit in cause-related marketing activities or sponsorship, that included some empirical studies. Building on that debate, we can describe company-cause fit as the perceived

“degree of similarity or compatibility” (Lafferty, 2007, p. 448) between two partnering organizations. In the context of partnerships, Berger et al. (2004) identified various dimensions of fit, such as congruence among the collaborating organizations’ missions, their leaders, employees or resources. Several benefits can arise to partners with a high fit, such as that the implementation of the partnership will be easier in case both organizations share a similar culture or values. Similarly, if employees share an affinity for the cause (i.e. work force fit), they will more easily identify with their work organization, which can in turn result in favorable job-related behaviors (Berger et al., 2004). Although some of the more generic empirical research has found no or only weak support for the importance of high fit, particularly conceptual and some other empirical fit studies have stressed that high fit is essential to evoke favorable consumer responses (e.g. Lafferty, 2007). These studies have often used congruence theory, stating that relatedness or similarity will influence storage in memory and retrieval of information (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Lafferty, 2007). As people prefer to establish and maintain harmony among their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, they strive for uniformity among cognitive elements (Jagre, Watson, & Watson, 2001; Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Hult, 2004). In line with this theory, Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) argue that experienced cognitive consistency, such as in the case of high fit, leads to favorable consumer responses, while low fit evokes perceptions of inconsistency and consequently causes negative responses.

Following this argumentation, Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) conceptualize that fit, among other CSR communication elements, can influence consumers’ evaluative (i.e. attitudes, trust) and behavioral (i.e. word of mouth, purchase intentions) responses towards firms. Empirical research has demonstrated that high product/brand-cause fit favorably impacts consumers’ attitudes and corporate credibility and hence trust, relative to low fit (Basil & Herr, 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Rifon, Choi, Trimble, & Li, 2004; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006). Furthermore, past research suggests a positive link between high fit and favorable word of mouth intentions, which can be explained by consumers’ attributions regarding the firm’s motives to engage in a partnership, or by consumers’ willingness to trust the firm (Ellen et al., 2006; Rifon et al., 2004; Vlachos et al., 2009). Moreover, high fit has shown to increase buying intentions (Ellen et al., 2006), and is also expected to impact switching intentions, which are said to be predicted by evaluative responses as trust and price perceptions (Bansal, Taylor, & James, 2005).

Regarding consumers' perceptions of the firms' motivations to engage in CSR, past research has shown that high fit triggers mainly altruistic attributions, which may be accompanied by strategic (i.e. firm-serving) attributions as well (Ellen et al., 2006; Rifon et al., 2004). As altruistic and firm-serving motives are regarded as two extremes on a continuum, and it is the predominant attribution that influences how consumers evaluate firms, consumers' altruistic beliefs are prevalent in the case of high-fit alliances (Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2010). Consumers use these attributions to judge the firm's sincere intentions towards the partnering NGO, and thus its credibility (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009; Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2010), which in turn impacts consumers' trust, attitudes and purchase intent. Low fit, on the other hand, causes more egoistic attributions (i.e. purely firm-centered), such as taking advantage of the NGO, which consequently elicits less favorable consumer behavior. Consumers appear to perceive such firm-centered motives as less honest towards the NGO, which may explain their negative responses towards firms.

As it is unclear how consumers will respond to self-interest in the light of high versus low company-cause fit, arguments can be made for four descriptive scenarios, depending on whether high/low self-interest is coupled with a high-fit or low-fit partnership initiative. They are shown in a 2-by-2 matrix in Table 3 which illustrate the four scenarios. As this study focuses on the outcomes of consumers' impressions based on their integration of information about fit and self-interest, rather than on the relationship between these two constructs, causality between fit and self-interest is not assumed. Nevertheless, for illustrative purposes, Table 3 represents examples for each of the four scenarios, suggesting that consumers might derive perceptions about self-interest from the level of company-cause fit. Examples for high and low-fit partnerships, with a hypothesis for each, will be given next.

An example of a high-fit partnership activity is a commercial employment agency using its network and offices to recruit volunteers for an NGO that places professional volunteers in developing countries in an attempt to fight poverty. In this case, the partnership activity would be integrated into employees' daily job tasks, which could result in either high or low self-interest for consumers. An example of a low-fit partnership activity is an accountancy firm helping an NGO that requires less specialized skills, such as accountants helping to build or paint houses, activities that are completely unrelated to their daily job tasks. Although the strategic focus of partnerships seems to imply at least

some congruity between the firm and the cause, such a fit may not always be visible or obvious for consumers. Moreover, many firms manage a diverse portfolio of partnerships, including causes with various levels of logical fit (Austin, 2003). For instance, Timberland, a footwear and apparel manufacturer and retailer, partners with such diverse causes as the American Red Cross, GreenNet or Skills USA (Timberland, 2010). While partnership activities which are not well integrated into firms' strategy are sometimes considered a distraction from the business purpose, indicating low consumer self-interest, an alternative scenario is possible (Grayson & Hodges, 2004). The present study aims to disentangle the consequences with regard to these descriptive accounts shown in Table 3 by manipulating the level of consumer self-interest and of fit.

Table 3. Descriptive Scenarios Self-Interest & Fit Manipulations

	High company-cause fit	Low company-cause fit
High consumer self-interest	<p>Scenario I Volunteering for the NGO can easily be integrated into employees' daily job routines. As employees can largely rely on their existing skills, activities for the NGO cause no distraction from daily job tasks, allowing them to help the cause while serving customers well.</p>	<p>Scenario IV There is no direct link between employees' core activities and the efforts required for helping the cause, which facilitates a clear separation between the two types of activities. This might help employees to stay more focused on their commercial job tasks, avoiding potential distraction by cause-related activities.</p>
Low consumer self-interest	<p>Scenario II The blurring of core-job and cause-related activities may distract employees. And as consumers can infer from a high-fit initiative that it is implemented strategically, they may feel that resulting trade-offs faced by employees may have negative implications for them, by being less well-served. E.g., a customer cannot get hold of a contact person who is working on an urgent project for the NGO.</p>	<p>Scenario III Employees may need to acquire additional skills to serve the NGO well, and/or leave their daily working environment as their partnership commitments cannot be integrated into their daily job routines due to a lack of fit (e.g. accountants helping to build or paint houses). Their absence in the office may cause inconveniences for customers of the firm, who, analogous to scenario II, may feel that their interests are neglected, causing customer dissatisfaction and hence low perceived self-interest.</p>

High Fit

According to consistency theories, perceived dissonance among consumers' thoughts and expectations is regarded as unpleasant and hence avoided (Simpson et al., 2006). While inconsistent information about the firm prompts attitude changes in an attempt to resolve perceived imbalances, consistent information can enhance consumers' attitudes towards firms as corporate behavior is evaluated as appropriate (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Cornwell et al., 2005). Applying this concept to our study, the notion of high fit will be consistent with high self-interest in consumers' minds, as both indicate favorable information about the firm and will thus be perceived as consistent, prompting favorable consumer responses (Scenario I). The notion of low consumer self-interest, however, will be perceived as unpleasant, and hence as inconsistent with information regarding high fit. As consumers strive to establish harmony among their beliefs about the firm, the positive impact of high fit will be undermined by perceptions of low self-interest, causing overall negative responses (Scenario II). Drawing on the effects of self-interest and fit on consumers' evaluative and behavioral responses towards firms discussed earlier we hypothesize:

H₂: When company-cause fit is high, consumer responses towards the firm in terms of (a) attitudes, (b) trust, (c) word of mouth, (d) switching intentions and (e) buying intentions will be more favorable in cases of high self-interest compared to low self-interest.

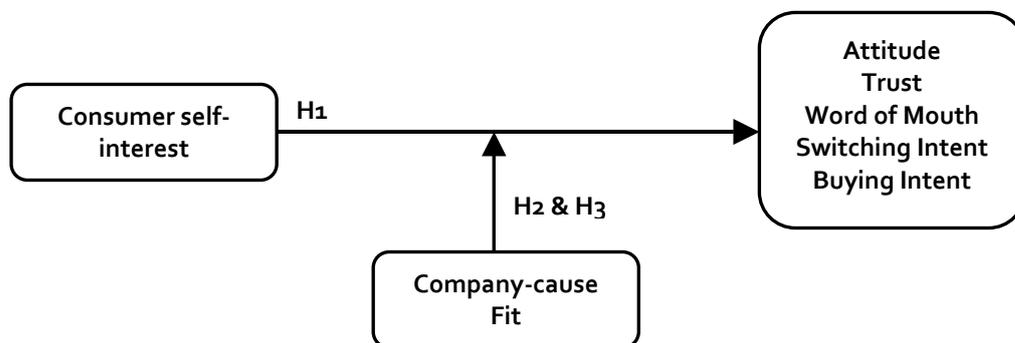
Low Fit

According to Becker-Olsen et al. (2006), perceptions of low company-cause fit are inconsistent with individuals' prior expectations, which complicates the integration of new information into existing memory structures. This process results in less favorable thoughts and attitudes towards the firm, which are more focused on the firm's motives to engage in social initiatives. These motives are considered mainly firm-centered in the case of low fit, and have been associated with negative consumer responses in past research, including a perception of less sincerity of firms' intentions (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009; Ellen et al., 2006). Such unfavorable beliefs are incongruent with the notion of high consumer self-interest, which prompts overall positive firm beliefs. In line with

consistency theory, such inconsistent beliefs will trigger an attitude change as consumers may not believe that the partnership results in high self-interest for them, causing overall unfavorable responses towards the firm (Scenario IV). Similarly, it is expected that low fit in combination with low self-interest will prompt unfavorable consumer responses (Scenario III). Although consistency theory suggests that two negative beliefs are in balance and should hence prompt favorable attitudes towards the firm (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006), Basil and Herr (2006) argue that consistency is not sufficient to cause favorable responses, but that positive, or well-liked organizational attitudes need to be present as well. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₃: When company-cause fit is low, consumer responses towards the firm in terms of (a) attitudes, (b) trust, (c) word of mouth, (d) switching intentions and (e) buying intentions will not differ between cases of high and low self-interest.

Figure 5: Hypothesized relationships



Data and Method

Sample and Procedure

We recruited participants at public places (airport, train station) in the Netherlands to assure a large variety of people with different demographic backgrounds. A total of 308 participants completed the questionnaire. Framing the data collection method as a field experiment, we assigned respondents randomly to one of four conditions (high fit, high self-

interest/ high fit, low self-interest/ low fit, high self-interest/ low fit, low self-interest). The advantages of field experiments, which involve data collection in a realistic rather than a laboratory setting while manipulating the variables of interest, are the precision of measurement, due to the possibility to control the independent variables, and the realism of context (cf. Scandura & Williams, 2000). Respondents were selected based on two criteria: (1) being at least 18 years old, as this is considered a reasonable age to buy the focal firm's products and services, and (2) being a Dutch speaking resident of the Netherlands. Participants first read a (fictitious) press release informing them about the firm's engagement in a partnership. Fit was manipulated in these press releases. We framed it as a retrospect on the two-year partnership between the focal firm and an NGO. Respondents were informed that several employees of the firm volunteered for the NGO, which was supported by the firm through the provision of working hours. Subsequently, we asked respondents to read (fictitious) consumer responses to these press releases. Self-interest was manipulated in these responses. In a final step, all respondents completed the questionnaire.

We excluded 12 questionnaires from the dataset, leaving 296 respondents for the data analysis. From these 296 respondents 52.5% were female, and 47.5% male. One person did not answer this question. With regard to participants' age, about 44% of the respondents were between 18 to 25 years old, followed by 26 to 35 year-olds (29%), 46-55 year-olds (11%) and 36 to 45 year-olds (10%). Those aged 56 to 65-plus accounted for about 6%. Respondents were distributed almost equally across the four conditions: 72 respondents in the high fit, high self-interest condition, 74 respondents in the high fit, low self-interest condition, 81 respondents in the low fit, high self-interest condition, and 69 respondents in the low fit, low self-interest condition.

Measures

Independent variables. We used a 2 (high/low self-interest) x 2 (high/low fit) factorial design for this study.

Consumer self-interest was manipulated by varying fictitious consumer responses to the online press release described earlier (cf. Wiener, LaForge, & Goolsby, 1990 for self-interest manipulation). In the high self-interest condition we primed that consumers

benefited from the partnership indirectly due to improved customer service quality. Fictitious consumers shared their experiences they had with employees during the past two years. They concluded that employees were much more motivated, open minded and customer oriented since the launch of the partnership and that customer service employees had told them that sickness leave among employees had decreased as a positive side effect of the partnership. With reference to the partnership, one consumer mentioned that the firm had won a customer satisfaction award, and that the partnership with the NGO had not caused price increases. In the low self-interest condition, on the other hand, we primed that since the initiation of the partnership customer service quality had deteriorated as call center employees devoted too much time and efforts to the partnership. Fictitious consumers complained, for instance, about longer waiting time on the phone or employees asking them to contribute to a fundraising activity for the cause, distracting employees from their core business activity. In addition, one consumer feared that prices had increased since the launch of the partnership.

While employee performance might as well be influenced by various other factors, such as training, or interactions with commercial and other, non-commercial clients, this study focuses on the effect of a partnership on consumer perceptions. By providing consumers with information about the firm's partnership and its employee volunteering program, and by linking this information to the quality of employees' customer orientation/service, this study explores consumers' responses towards firms. While consumers might not be aware of employee training opportunities, partnership activities are often communicated to consumers, and may hence be integrated into consumers' overall perceptions of the organization, which also includes their experiences regarding customer service quality or employees' customer orientation. While consumers may attribute poor customer service to a variety of reasons, the aim of this study is to investigate the potential benefit or damage arising to a firm if consumer perceptions about customer service are linked to the potential consequences of employees' active participation in a partnership.

Moreover, while consumers may have little insight into the actual internal processes and effects of partnerships, they form impressions based on their perceptions, interpretations, and the integration of pre-existing and new information (cf. Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005). Therefore, new information about employees' active engagement in

corporate volunteering programs may be integrated with (negative or positive) past experiences with customer service employees, thereby attributing the quality of employee-customer interactions to the partnership. As consumers increasingly share their opinions about companies online, the question how such a scenario would affect companies is a relevant and interesting one to explore.

Company-cause fit was manipulated by varying two existing nonprofit organizations in the press articles described above, informing respondents about the long-term partnership with the focal firm, a telecommunications service provider. In a pretest two coders evaluated the actual level of fit for both NGO based on nine dimensions of fit identified by Berger et al. (2004). We identified the partnership between the firm and a telephone and internet help-line for children as high fit as it scored high on several of these dimensions. For example, both organizations share the central idea of inclusion of society, which indicates a fit among the organizations' missions. However, we found almost no corresponding matches for an organization caring for the conservation of nature, which consequently served as the low-fit partner (e.g. the NGO's mission with a focus on nature did not match with the firm's social mission). We stressed the differences between both partnerships in the fictitious press articles to ensure that the manipulation would be successful. The manipulation texts can be found in Appendix A.

Dependent variables. Although evaluative outcomes in consumers' responses to CSR (e.g. attitude, trust) are usually greater and also more easily assessable than behavioral outcomes (e.g. word of mouth, buying intentions), in this study we investigate both in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of consumer self-interest and fit in partnerships (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Despite a trend observed with field experiments to use dependent variables at the organizational level, measuring dependent variables at individual levels is a common approach in management studies (cf. Scandura & Williams, 2000).

Evaluative responses. We used attitude (4 items, Cronbach's alpha=0.74) and trust (4 items, alpha=0.91) to measure evaluative consumer responses, and averaged all items measuring the same construct into a single measure. CSR initiatives can build trust and evoke positive attitudes towards firms among consumers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Vaaland, Heide, & Grønhaug, 2008). Moreover, these attitudes were found to be even

greater if consumers perceive a high fit between the firm and the cause (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). We phrased attitude items as “My attitude towards [the firm] is...”, and trust items as “I can count on [the firm]”.

Behavioral intentions. We used word of mouth (4 items, $\alpha=0.84$), switching intentions (3 items, $\alpha=0.62$), and buying intentions (3 items, $\alpha=0.71$) to measure consumers’ behavioral responses, and averaged all items measuring the same construct into a single measure. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) word of mouth can be seen as one of the key behavioral outcomes of CSR. This behavior can be explained by consumers’ identification with a firm engaging in CSR activities. Similarly, CSR was found to impact buying and switching intentions, which is particularly relevant in the context of the service firm used in this study (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). We phrased word of mouth items as “I will encourage others to purchase the products and services of [the firm]”, items for buying intentions as “I am planning to buy the products and services of [the firm]”, and items for switching intentions as “If I had to choose a (new) internet provider, [the firm] would be my first choice”. We measured all items in the questionnaire on a 7-point scale, anchored by ‘totally agree’ and ‘totally disagree’, except for one item of attitude, which was anchored by ‘extremely positive’ and ‘extremely negative’. The measures can be found in Appendix A.

Manipulation Checks

In order to assess the self-interest manipulation we asked participants to evaluate the perceived level of consumer self-interest (3 items averaged into a single measure, $\alpha=0.80$). We phrased self-interest items as “The partnership between [the firm] and [NGO] explicitly entails benefits for the customer”. One-way ANOVA results showed that our manipulation worked, as consumers rated perceived self-interest higher in the high self-interest condition ($M=4.56$) compared to the low self-interest condition ($M=2.91$) ($F=137.82$, $p<0.001$).

Similarly, we asked participants to evaluate the fit between the two allied organizations presented to them (3 items averaged into a single measure, $\alpha=0.65$). We worded fit items as “The link between the core business of [the firm] and [NGO] is clear to me”. Again, results of a one-way ANOVAs showed that our manipulation was successful, as

the firm's cooperation with the well-fitting nonprofit was evaluated more favorably than the partnership with the low-fit NGO ($M_{\text{high fit}}=4.78$, $M_{\text{low fit}}=3.78$, $F=62.16$, $p<0.001$).

Results

To test H_1 , stating that high consumer self-interest derived from a partnership activity will lead to more favorable consumer responses than low self-interest, we conducted a series of one-way ANOVA's for the five dependent variables used in this study. We found significant differences between high and low consumer self-interest for attitude, word of mouth, switching intentions and buying intentions (see Table 4). Although the results for trust point into the same direction, we could not detect any significant difference.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Effect Test Comparison of Means

	Level of Consumer Self-Interest		F-value	p
	Means (Std.)			
	High	Low		
Attitude	4.08 (1.07)	3.78 (1.04)	5.90	0.02
Trust	3.95 (1.06)	3.78 (1.12)	1.83	0.18
Word/Mouth	3.66 (1.06)	3.31 (1.31)	6.41	0.01
Switching	4.16 (1.10)	3.87 (1.14)	5.04	0.03
Buying	3.77 (1.07)	3.48 (1.35)	4.16	0.04

Therefore, our findings do support H_1 with regard to the behavioral response measures used in this study, and for attitude. These findings are in line with Millner and Ratner (1998), who stated that self-interest rather predicts behavior than attitudes, which are closely related to trust conceptually (cf. Selnes, 1998). If primed, however, self-interested reasoning can temporarily cause stronger impacts on attitudes (Boninger et al., 1995).

In order to test H_2 and H_3 , we conducted a series of two-way ANOVA's in a first step. These hypotheses propose that there will be interaction effects between consumer self-interest and company-cause fit. Subsequent one-way ANOVA's focusing first on the high-fit condition, and then on the low-fit condition were conducted to adopt or reject H_2 and H_3 .

Based on the two-way ANOVA's we found significant interaction effects between self-interest and fit for word of mouth, switching and buying intentions, while we could not detect any significant interaction effects for attitude and trust (see Table 5).

The insignificant findings for attitude and trust are not surprising in view of the results we obtained when testing H_1 . Again, the generally weak power of self-interest on evaluative responses, compared to behavioral responses, might explain why no significant interaction effects were detected. This reasoning is supported by Figures 6 to 10, which show that the graphs for attitude and trust point into the same direction as the graphs for behavioral intentions, for which we did find a significant interaction effect.

Table 5. Two-Way ANOVA Effect Test Comparison of Means. Interaction Test Consumer Self-Interest & Company-Cause fit

Dep.Var.	Consumer self-interest	Means (Std.)		F-value	p
		High fit	Low fit		
Attitude	High	4.60 (0.55)	4.20 (1.21)	2.71	0.10
	Low	4.10 (0.95)	4.07 (0.94)		
Trust	High	4.15 (0.68)	3.78 (1.29)	1.43	0.23
	Low	3.81 (1.16)	3.75 (1.09)		
Word/Mouth	High	4.04 (0.58)	3.33 (1.26)	5.01	0.03
	Low	3.36 (1.39)	3.26 (1.23)		
Switching	High	4.44 (0.82)	3.92 (1.26)	9.35	0.00
	Low	3.74 (1.17)	4.01 (1.09)		
Buying	High	4.05 (0.81)	3.53 (1.21)	5.51	0.02
	Low	3.42 (1.44)	3.56 (1.25)		

Figure 6. Two-Way ANOVA for Attitude

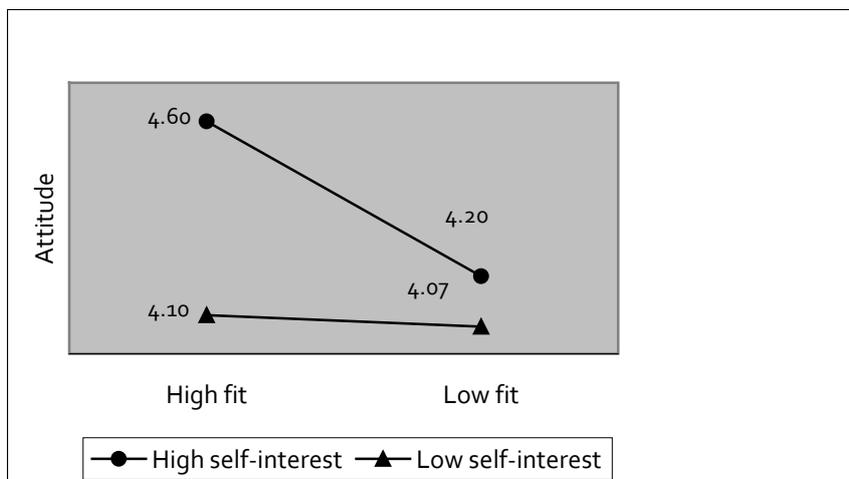


Figure 7. Two-Way ANOVA for Trust

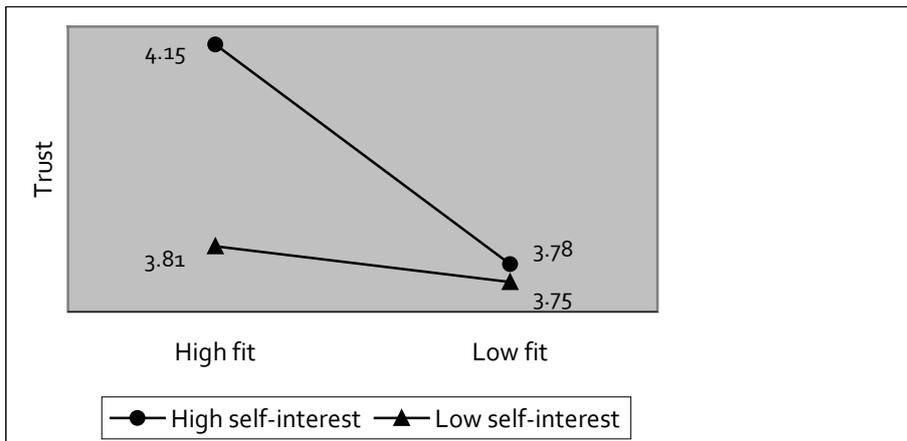


Figure 8. Two-Way ANOVA for Word of Mouth

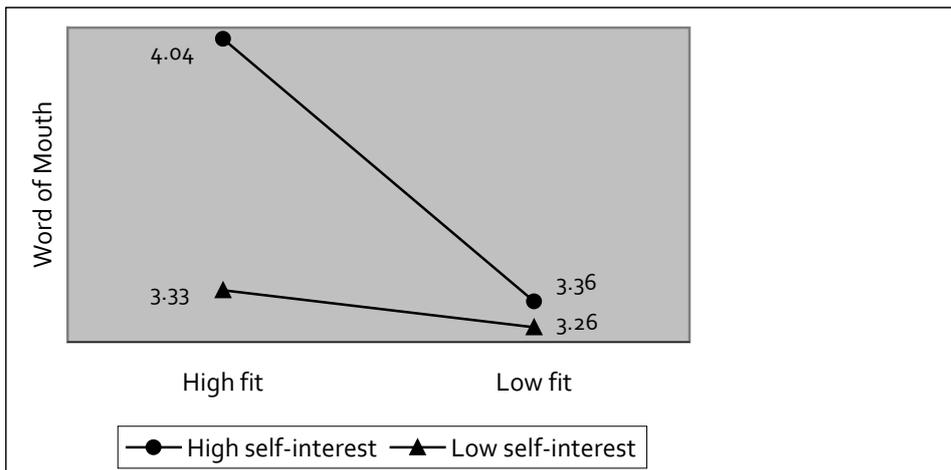


Figure 9. Two-Way ANOVA for Switching Intentions

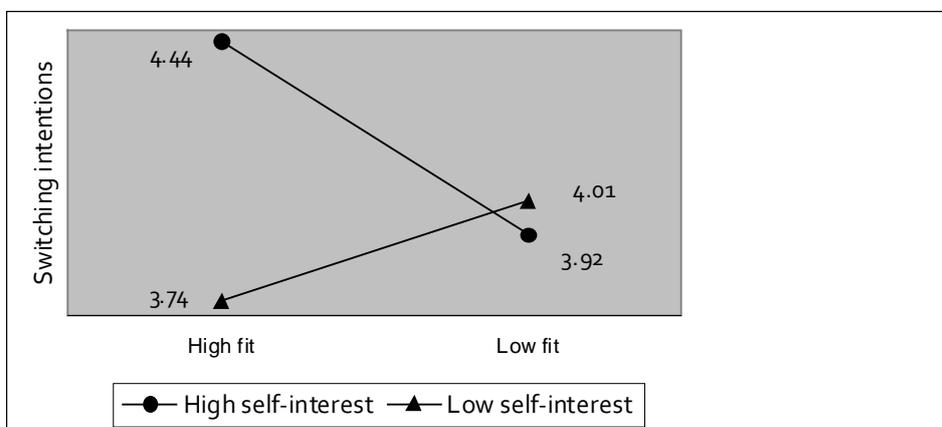
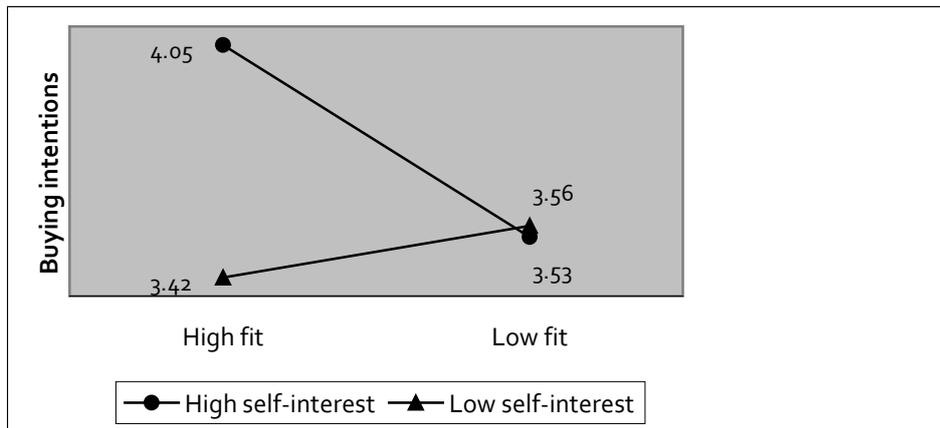


Figure 10. Two-Way ANOVA for Buying Intentions



To test H_2 and H_3 , we conducted a series of one-way ANOVA's, using consumer self-interest as independent variable. For the high-fit condition, we found significant differences between high and low consumer self-interest for attitude, trust, word of mouth, switching intentions, and buying intentions, lending full support for H_2 (see Table 6).

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA Effect Test Comparison of Means

Dep.Var.	Level of Consumer Self-Interest (means, std.)		F-value	p
	High	Low		
Attitude	4.60 (0.55)	4.10 (0.95)	14.52	0.00
Trust	4.15 (0.68)	3.81 (1.16)	4.50	0.04
Word/Mouth	4.04 (0.58)	3.36 (1.39)	14.54	0.00
Switching	4.44 (0.82)	3.74 (1.17)	17.15	0.00
Buying	4.05 (0.81)	3.42 (1.44)	10.57	0.00

For the low-fit condition, we found no significant differences between high and low consumer self-interest for attitude, trust, word of mouth, switching intentions, and buying intentions, lending full support for H_3 (see Table 7). In accordance with our hypotheses these results indicate that consumer responses towards the firm are only affected by perceived consumer self-interest in a high fit condition, whereas self-interest does not seem to matter if company-cause fit is low.

Table 7. One-Way ANOVA Effect Test Comparison of Means

Dep.Var.	Level of Consumer Self-Interest (means, std.)		F-value	p
	High	Low		
Attitude	4.20 (1.21)	4.07 (0.94)	0.51	0.48
Trust	3.78 (1.29)	3.75 (1.09)	0.03	0.87
Word/Mouth	3.33 (1.26)	3.26 (1.23)	0.12	0.73
Switching	3.92 (1.26)	4.01 (1.09)	0.21	0.65
Buying	3.53 (1.21)	3.56 (1.21)	0.02	0.89

Discussion and Conclusions

This study focused on the micro perspective of cross-sector partnerships between firms and NGO, which has received little attention so far as partnerships have mainly been investigated at the macro and meso levels. To conceptualize how partnerships affect employees and how these effects may spill over to consumers, we drew on insights from various theoretical perspectives, from marketing, management and organization studies. In this way we also respond to calls for more research on the relation between partnership initiatives and firm success using such cross-disciplinary approaches (Harrison & Freeman, 1999; McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Particularly the strategic and long-term nature of partnerships can be seen to require cross-disciplinary studies in order to comprehend and seize the full potential of this promising form of business-nonprofit collaboration. Tactical CSR programs, such as sponsorship or cause-related marketing, predominantly aim at short-term marketing benefits, and are hence often limited to marketing departments' budgets and sphere of influence (McAlister and Ferrell, 2002). Partnerships, however, tie a firm's core competencies and overall resources to a social cause, demanding resource commitments and contributions from various organizational departments and employees across the whole organization. Such an approach calls for coordinated and cross-departmental action and the combined assessment of impacts on various stakeholder groups. In particular, the successful implementation of partnerships requires an understanding of how benefits for different stakeholders can be integrated into an organizational strategy (McAlister & Ferrell, 2002). Our study contributes to this lack of understanding by providing theoretical and empirical insights.

First, by drawing on past insights on the effects of CSR on employees and customers, as well as on the service-profit chain concept and related psychological mechanisms, we conceptualized potential spillover effects of employee outcomes of active partnership participation on consumers. In particular, we illustrated how employees' engagement in such partnerships (e.g. providing professional knowledge or volunteer services to the NGO) may affect consumer perceived self-interest, for instance, due to perceptions of increased/decreased customer orientation. By bridging insights from the organizational and marketing literature, we advance extant partnership studies, and research on CSR more generally, by contributing a conceptual framework that may inspire and spur future empirical investigations in this field.

Second, as an initial empirical exploration of the combined effects of partnerships on several stakeholder groups, we investigated how consumers respond to high versus low self-interest arising from employees' active partnership engagement, and whether these responses are influenced by the level of company-cause fit. While past research has paid much attention to the business case of CSR, revealing potential benefits of CSR for the firm, Bhattacharya et al. (2009) state that we first of all need to understand how CSR may benefit individual stakeholders to fully comprehend impacts on the firm. Our empirical investigation hence contributes novel insights to past CSR research by exploring whether the level of company-cause fit impacts consumers' responses to perceived self-interest derived from partnerships.

The findings of our research suggest that overall, consumer self-interest primarily matters with regard to consumers' behavioral intentions towards firms, while consumers' evaluations of firms in terms of trust remain largely unaffected. More specifically, consumers' word of mouth, and switching and buying intentions towards the firm were more favorable if they perceived self-serving benefits derived from the partnership initiative, such as an increased level of customer satisfaction since the launch of the partnership. These findings are in line with Boninger et al. (1995, p. 61), who stated that "the prospect of behavioral involvement (unlike the request for an opinion) forces people to consider cost, and hence prompts self-interest reflection", which might also explain the weak result for trust.

In line with our expectations, the data analysis revealed boundary conditions to the favorable impact of consumer self-interest. Taking company-cause fit into account, our

results indicate that high consumer self-interest does not always trigger favorable consumer responses towards the firm. More specifically, while consumers rewarded the focal firm for accruing self-interest if fit was high, a low level of fit turned the priming of consumer self-interest ineffective. Apparently, despite consumers' general appreciation of personal benefits, specific partnership characteristics (i.e. the similarity between the firm and the cause) have to be met in order to ensure the effectiveness of priming consumer self-interest. Our observation that the two-way interaction effect between fit and self-interest was not significant for the evaluative response measures was not altogether surprising after having detected weak effects for trust on testing H_1 . However, the graphs displaying the proposed interaction effects (Figures 6-10) show similar patterns for the evaluative and behavioral response measures, supporting our reasoning, and are in line with insights from attribution and consistency theory explained in the theoretical part of the paper. Obviously, further investigation is needed, also amongst broader sets of respondents and covering firms from different sectors, for example, while using multi-informant research designs or different methods of data collection can be other extensions to the present study.

Future research may also be expanded to other countries to investigate whether the findings of this study hold in other contexts as well. While Maignan and Ferrell (2003) demonstrated that overall US consumers' perceptions differ from those of Western European consumers (i.e., Germany and France) with regard to the assigned importance of different stakeholder responsibilities, their study also indicates that US and European consumers equally consider customers' fair and satisfactory treatment as a firm's primary responsibility. Although the central importance of consumers' personal interest identified by Maignan and Ferrell suggests that our results with regard to self-interest in a Dutch context might hold for consumers in the US as well, it would be interesting to explore whether outcomes differ for consumers of countries that are typically considered less individualistic compared to the Netherlands (such as many Asian countries).

Caution should be exercised concerning the generalizability of our finding across sectors. As personal contact between employees and consumers is inherent to the theoretical framework we established, we framed our experimental scenarios in the context of customer service employees of a telecommunications service provider. Results may differ for more traditional consumer product firms with regard to switching or buying intentions, as choosing a new telephone or internet provider involves much more complex choices

compared to switching, for instance, to a new soap brand. And while our conceptual model will most likely be tied to service-intensive firms, the findings of our empirical study might as well be relevant for more production-oriented firms as long as there are comparable clear customer contacts.

Our theoretical framework intended to exemplify how consumer self-interest may be created in the context of business-NGO partnerships. However, self-interest may be generated or hurt in different ways, such as a firm that uses inferior materials for production while dedicating resources to an NGO-partnership. Moreover, there are several ways to implement partnerships, as well as various possibilities to involve employees. Our study focuses primarily on volunteering by firms' employees, as commitment of employee time and knowledge has been identified as an important aspect of business-NGO collaboration (Austin, 2000). A recent study showed that more than half of the surveyed firms "either attempts to accommodate employee volunteering during regular working hours", or already actively supports it (Basil et al., 2009, p. 391). Since partnerships can be more multifaceted than the ones presented in this study, future research could explore other partnership activities to increase generalizability. In this way, different sources of consumer self-interest may be identified to see whether they may impact consumer responses differently, also in relation to the level of company-cause fit. Furthermore, consideration of time scales could inform researchers which sources of self-interest may require a long-term rather than a short-term perspective, potentially emphasizing the need for long-term partnerships in contrast to more tactical CSR programs which are usually short-term.

While our data collection among real consumers – in contrast to student samples that are rather common in experimental studies – increases the generalizability of our findings, the use of fictitious scenarios represents a limitation of this study, as it jeopardizes the degree of external validity. In particular, our scenario descriptions insinuate that customers understand how effects of partnerships internal to the firm may translate into consumer self-interest. While this scenario might not be representative of consumers' actual understanding of partnership processes, it builds on the assumption that consumers integrate various pieces of information about the firm to draw this conclusion. Despite some evidence that consumers indeed do perceive trade-offs between a firm's CSR efforts and its corporate abilities, further empirical research is needed to investigate the employee-customer relationships conceptualized in our model (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). In

particular, future research designs would benefit from including employee respondents as well in the empirical investigations, which was not done in the current research.

Despite these caveats, some practical implications can already be indicated. First, our study suggests that partnerships can benefit the firm and stakeholders in multiple ways. More specifically, managers should bear in mind that such initiatives may not only be beneficial for the social cause and the firm itself, but also for individual employees and customers of the firm. Our findings support Bhattacharya et al.'s (2009) notion that a broadened stakeholder perspective is needed to more fully assess the 'return on investment' of partnerships. Concerted efforts by various departments, including personnel and marketing departments, seem needed to exploit the full potential of this promising form of CSR. By recognizing the role of employees as advocates of firms' partnership initiatives (cf. Drumwright, 1996), this research highlights the importance of considering not only the desired corporate outcomes, but also how such initiatives can benefit employees and consumers in the first place.

Second, we showed that while priming consumers' self-interest seems to have a direct impact on a firm's bottom line (through buying or switching intentions), long-term strategic effects for the corporate image (via positive attitudes or trust) are less likely. In addition, firms that wish to improve their bottom line by communicating consumer-centered benefits to their target groups need to consider (the communication of) good company-cause fit as a necessary premise. More generally, it seems advisable to engage in partnerships with a high fit and avoid those with a low fit. While this implication clearly stresses the business case of CSR, it should be noted that the choice to collaborate with a high-fit cause to further strategic business interests may mean that pressing problems that simply do not fit well with the firm's objectives are neglected. Criticism that many firms assign more weight to the business case than to the importance and urgency of community issues has been raised in academic research more broadly (e.g., Seitanidi, 2010).

The conceptual and empirical insights provided by our study suggest that stakeholder demands do not necessarily need to compete. To the contrary, partnerships may provide platforms that are actually capable of consolidating stakeholder needs that might have been conflicting otherwise. A better understanding of the potential interrelatedness of the effects of such partnerships on different stakeholder groups

provides managers with tools to balance competing stakeholder needs effectively. However, further research is necessary to validate the findings of our exploratory study.

Chapter 4

Consumer Responses to Social Alliances: When and Why Social Value Orientations Matter

Abstract

This research examines consumers' responses to social alliances, in which companies cooperate with non-profit organizations as part of a strategic approach to corporate social responsibility. This study explores for which type of consumers social alliances matter (considering consumers' social value orientation), under which alliance condition (company-cause fit) consumer type matters, and whether company factors (corporate ability) might account for differences. A 2 (prosocials/ proselfs) x 3 (high /low fit/ control group) experimental design was conducted. The findings suggest that while prosocials reward companies for high-fit social alliances, proselfs even punish the company. This effect can be explained by differences in prosocials' and proselfs' perceptions of the company's corporate abilities, which are influenced by the level of fit. Interestingly, neither prosocials nor proselfs seem to care for a low fit or no alliance⁵.

⁵ This chapter is based on a paper that is co-authored by W. van Dolen & A. Kolk, which is currently being prepared for submission to an academic journal. The authors would like to thank Nanet Stoelwinder for her valuable contribution to the implementation of this research.

Introduction

Attention to the societal dimensions of business activities is considerable and extends to marketing specifically (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort, and Hillier, 2008; Kirchgeorg and Winn, 2006; Peattie, 2001), given its potential of “changing consumer behavior and more generally in influencing attitudes and beliefs” (Jones et al., 2008, p. 127). Extant research suggests that consumers’ attitudes are generally positive about companies’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, and tend to reward CSR active firms in terms of favorable evaluations and behaviors (cf. Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Nevertheless, some studies show that companies should not consider CSR as a panacea for favorable consumer behavior, as under certain circumstances CSR seems ineffective or may even hurt the company.

Some consumer characteristics moderate the effectiveness of CSR, such as consumers’ personal support for or affinity with specific causes (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). While companies may be able to partly control the impact of such personal characteristics (e.g., by partnering with popular causes), relatively stable personality traits are typically beyond corporations’ sphere of influence. Research on whether and how consumers’ more stable personality traits impact their responses to CSR is rather scarce. This paper aims to contribute to the CSR literature in the marketing field by considering individuals’ social value orientation (SVO). The importance of empirically studying the impact of SVO is underlined by a recent conceptual paper by Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010), which suggested that SVO might influence the effectiveness of CSR communication to consumers.

Insights into SVO are rooted in social dilemma research, denoting conflicts between individual and collective interests (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994), which seems particularly relevant in a CSR context. While most extant studies on SVO report controlled experimental settings including dyads or small groups of people, hardly any studies used SVO to predict prosocial behavior in everyday life situations, where decisions and behaviors one actor takes may impact large groups of others, either directly or indirectly (Van Lange, Bekkers, Schuyt, and Van Vugt, 2007). Those that took such approach either investigated whether SVO can

predict individuals' donation behaviors to charities (Van Lange et al., 2007), or consumers' environmentally friendly behaviors. In both situations consumers were requested to make trade-offs between their individual and collective interests. The current study, however, examines whether SVO (i.e., prosocials versus proselves) can also predict consumers' responses towards companies in the case of trade-offs at the corporate level, thus examining the impact of consumers' SVO in reaction to company initiatives.

This research not only examines the role of SVO, but also draws on the concept of company-cause fit to investigate under which social alliance condition (i.e., high versus low fit) SVO matters. Taking fit into account seems particularly relevant from a practical perspective. As companies cannot influence consumers' stable personality traits, identifying interrelated factors which companies are able to control, as is the case with fit, may help them to cope with specific personality characteristics. Despite some contradictory results (Lafferty, 2007), researchers often see high fit as a premise for favorable consumer responses to company/brand-cause alliances (e.g., Becker-Olsen and Hill, 2006). The literature on SVO, however, suggests that fit may not affect all consumers equally. This study hence considers fit as potential moderating factor.

Furthermore, to explore whether company factors (corporate ability) might account for differences, this research considers consumers' perceptions of the company's corporate abilities (i.e., product/service quality and innovativeness) at varying levels of fit. With regard to SVO, corporate abilities may be particularly important for proselves, who care more about their individual gains or advantages compared to prosocials. Consumers' perceptions regarding the company's corporate abilities may therefore help to predict consumers' overall responses towards companies. This approach responds to calls for an exploration of potential mediating factors that might influence the (in)effectiveness of CSR communication (Du et al., 2010).

The context of this study are social alliances, also called partnerships in the management literature, which have emerged in the past decade to address both societal goals (helping a particular social good) as well as organizational objectives of the partners (Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright, 2004; Selsky and Parker, 2005). Social alliances are "close, mutually beneficial, long-term" partnerships which have "moved beyond cause-related marketing and philanthropy" (Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright, 2006, p. 129). They are hence a more strategic type of CSR (cf. Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007), which is why

they are increasingly adopted by corporations. For example, in 2002 the Dutch logistics company TNT started an alliance with the World Food Program (WFP). Due to the organizations' joint efforts to enhance logistics services, the WFP was able to improve its impact on emergency food deliveries (Thomas and Fritz, 2006). In spite of a considerable number of publications in the management literature (e.g., Kolk, van Tulder, and Kostwinder, 2008; Selsky and Parker, 2005), research on the effects of social alliances on consumer responses is still very limited. Several authors therefore call for more research on social alliances to increase the current understanding of this promising form of long-term company-nonprofit collaboration (e.g., Austin, 2000; Berger et al., 2004). Preliminary findings suggesting that strategic CSR programs have more impact on consumer brand loyalty than tactical programs support these calls (Van den Brink, Odekerken-Schröder, and Pauwels, 2006).

The structure of this paper is as follows. The following theoretical section comprises a review of the relevant literature on SVO and company-cause fit. Based on this review we develop a conceptual framework that explains the hypothesized contingent impact of SVO on consumers' responses to a company's social alliance activity. Next, this paper reports an empirical investigation of the hypotheses formulated and the results. The paper ends with a discussion of the findings and implications for theory and practice.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Social Value Orientation

SVO has been described as "stable preferences for certain patterns of outcomes for oneself and others" (Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten, and Joireman, 1997, p. 733). They are predictors for helping behavior, judgments of everyday life incidents of co-operation and competition and also have an impact on decision-making and judging others (Van Lange et al., 1997). This study identifies two types of SVO, namely prosocials and proselfs, with the latter combining individualistic and competitive orientations (De Cremer and Van Lange, 2001). While prosocials exhibit clear tendencies towards cooperation and equality, proselfs

try to maximize “their own and relative gain” (Van Lange et al., 1997, p. 733). Compared to proselves, prosocials seek greater opportunities to enhance collective and equal outcomes and feel more responsible to further the group’s interests. As prosocials consider the consequences of their choices on others, they are generally more sensitive to social norms (such as social responsibility), which describe how someone should act in interdependence situations. Social responsibility accounts at least partly for behavioral differences between prosocials and proselves.

Based on their SVO, individuals interpret identical social dilemmas, which are conflicts between individual and collective interests, differently (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994). Depending on which perspective on rationality an individual takes, (non-) cooperative decisions can be rational or intelligent for one person, while they appear irrational or unintelligent for another (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994). This is particularly relevant for cognitive processes with regard to judging others and impression formation (Van Lange et al., 2007). While prosocials define interdependent situations in terms of win-win solutions, proselves define an identical situation in terms of solutions that are best for themselves in the first place. Similarly, while prosocials think of others mainly in terms of morality and hence attribute moral judgments such as good or bad, honest or dishonest, proselves evaluate others rather in terms of intelligence or power. For proselves, cooperation is a sign of weakness, signaling less intelligence and power (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994). As proselves strive for independence and dominance in interdependence situations, which helps them to fulfill their individual self-interests and which they hence consider as smart (Beersma and De Dreu, 2005), they regard information about others’ strengths or weaknesses as important.

According to Marin and Ruiz (2007), attributions in terms of morality or competence are not only relevant with regard to people, but can describe companies as well. In fact, recent research by Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner (2010) shows that in general, consumers perceive companies as more competent (e.g., intelligent, capable, competitive) than nonprofit organizations (NPOs), which, conversely, score higher on dimensions of warmth (e.g., sincerity, generosity, helpfulness). Furthermore, the authors argue that perceptions of competence signal strong corporate abilities to consumers, which in turn impact purchase intent.

While most research on SVO focuses on experimental social dilemmas and game situations (Van Lange et al., 2007), researchers have paid little attention to differences between prosocials and proselfs in response to CSR. However, some empirical studies consider everyday life situations of prosocial behavior. Van Lange et al. (2007), for instance, show that SVO influences individuals' donation behavior to social causes, with prosocials reporting to donate to various and more donation goals. Different from donation situations, which require active involvement through the commitment of funds by citizens, empirical evidence still needs to confirm whether prosocials' likelihood to be more supportive than proselfs also holds for social alliances at the company level, and hence from a consumer perspective.

Due to prosocials' tendency to enhance collective outcomes and their sensitivity for social norms (relative to proselfs), they will be more positive towards a social alliance, which signals companies' helping behavior and social responsibility towards society. The concept of consumer-company (C-C) congruence lends support for this proposition, stating that consumers' reactions to CSR depend on the level of congruence they perceive between the company and their own personality. The company's engagement in a social alliance may reflect consumers' caring personality characteristics. Past research shows that perceptions of C-C congruence mediate consumers' responses to CSR (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Ahearne, Bhattacharya, and Gruen (2005) assert that whether and to what extent C-C identification occurs depends, among other factors, on whether consumers perceive the company's central and distinctive characteristics as attractive, and whether these characteristics help them to express themselves. As consumers' identification with a company has shown to impact their evaluative and behavioral responses towards organizations positively (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Ahearne et al., 2005), prosocials are expected to respond more favorably towards the company compared to proselfs in an alliance condition.

H₁: Prosocials respond more favorably towards the company than proselfs in terms of (a) attitudes, (b) trust, and (c) word of mouth, if the company engages in a social alliance.

On the one hand, prosocials are likely to respond to social alliances generally more positive than proselfs. On the other hand, the literature on SVO informs reason to believe that prosocials' and proselfs' responses to alliances will be sensitive to the level of company-cause fit, due to individuals' differences in interpreting identical situations either more in terms of morality (i.e., prosocials) or intelligence (i.e., proselfs).

The Moderating Role of Company-Cause Fit

Company-cause fit can be based on several dimensions of fit, such as congruence among the collaborating organizations' missions, cultures, employees, resources or offerings (Berger et al., 2004). In a social alliance context, Berger et al. (2004) stress that a high level of fit on several of these dimensions will benefit the alliance partners and is thus important. As a reflection of the literature in which the concept of fit covers multiple dimensions (cf. Berger et al., 2004; Menon and Kahn, 2003; Gourville and Rangan, 2004; Nan and Heo, 2007; Becker-Olsen and Hill, 2006), the current study likewise adopts a broad approach and defines fit as perceived overall congruence between the company and the cause. This definition builds on the literature on cause-brand fit, which describes fit as "the degree of similarity or compatibility that consumers perceive exists between the cause and the brand" (Lafferty, 2007, p. 448).

Many studies on cause-brand fit draw on congruence or consistency theory (e.g., Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Hult, 2004; Barone, Norman, and Miyazaki., 2007) to explain why consumers are likely to respond more favorably to high-fit cause-brand alliances compared to low-fit alliances (Becker-Olsen and Hill, 2006). Congruence theory states that relatedness or similarity influences storage in memory and retrieval of information (Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy, 2005; Lafferty, 2007). As people prefer to establish and maintain harmony among their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, they strive for uniformity among cognitive elements (Lafferty et al., 2004; Jagre, Watson, and Watson, 2001). Despite strong conceptual and empirical support for the importance of high fit alliances (e.g., Becker-Olsen and Hill, 2006; Berger et al., 2004), recent empirical research, which examined the effects of fit in more detail, finds only partly or even no support at all for the importance of high fit (e.g., Lafferty, 2007). Again other researchers identified boundary conditions for the effect of fit,

suggesting that the impact of fit may depend on other factors and that high fit might not matter for all individuals equally (e.g., Barone et al., 2007; Nan and Heo, 2007).

Prosocials and proselves are likely to interpret information regarding a company's engagement in a social alliance differently, depending on the perspective taken and the information available. As SVO influences what kind of information individuals search, encode, retrieve and share (De Dreu, Nijstad, and Van Knippenberg, 2008), prosocials are more inclined to focus on cues signaling whether a company behaves morally and honest. Proselfs, on the other hand, will search for cues regarding a company's rational and intelligent intentions and behaviors. In the context of social alliances, this study poses that information about the company's social engagement indicates morality information, describing the company's good intentions towards society. Information about the level of fit, on the other hand, informs consumers about the company's rationality and intelligence, indicating to consumers the company's motivations behind such social engagement (cf. Ellen, Webb, and Mohr, 2006).

With regard to fit, Rifon, Choi, Trimble, and Li (2004), who studied consumers' perceptions of companies' motivations to engage in sponsorship, report that high fit triggers more altruistic attributions by consumers, which causes higher firm credibility. Rifon et al.'s (2004) study shows that altruism and firm credibility in turn influence consumers' attitudes towards the company favorably. Although Rifon et al. (2004) acknowledge that consumers may attribute firm-serving motivations as well, they argue that consumers may downplay such profit-motivated goals in high-fit initiatives. Low fit, on the other hand, triggers more perceptions of firm-serving motivations, which diminish potential altruistic beliefs.

Ellen et al. (2006) report similar results on studying consumers' attributions elicited by CSR in more detail. While high fit simultaneously evokes altruistic motivations (e.g., the moral obligation to give back to the community) and strategic firm motives (i.e., typical business motives), low fit prompts egoistic attributions by consumers. An example for corporations' egoistic motivations would be that the company takes advantage of the NPO to help its own business (cf. Ellen et al., 2006), which reflects its non-cooperativeness with regard to the NPO. More specifically, Van Lange and Liebrand (1991b) demonstrate that impressions about others' morality (e.g., their sincere intentions towards others) impact individuals' expectations of their cooperative behaviors, for instance in social dilemma

situations. The egoistic/ self-serving attributions triggered by low fit, however, diminish a company's credibility with regard to its sincerity towards the partnering cause (cf. Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez, and Sánchez-García, 2009), and will hence decrease consumers' perceptions of the company's cooperative intentions towards the NPO. High fit, on the other hand, primarily signals corporations' altruistic motivations (Bigné-Alcañiz et al., 2009), which consumers use to draw inferences regarding the company's sincere and honest intentions towards the cause (Bigné Alcañiz, Chumpitaz Cáceres, and Currás Pérez, 2010). By contributing resources and capabilities that are closely related to corporations' core business (i.e., high fit), companies share strategically important assets and capabilities with their nonprofit partner. Such a willingness requires high levels of trust and that the company abandons dominance, which indicates cooperativeness.

As morality is particularly important for prosocials, and they perceive cooperativeness as more moral than non-cooperativeness (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994), the company's altruistic or win-win motives attributed to high fit will lead to positive responses towards the company. As consumers associate low fit with a company's egoistic motivations, the importance prosocials assign to morality and sincerity will cause less favorable responses towards the company compared to high fit. The opposite will be true for proselfs. As reading about a company's social initiative will evoke the question among proselfs whether the company has made a rational or intelligent decision to engage in a social alliance, they will focus mainly on the aspect of fit. As stated earlier, consumers use information about fit as a signal for corporations' altruistic versus self-centered motives to engage in social alliances. As non-cooperativeness, that is low fit, signals more independence and power, and thus intelligence to proselfs compared to cooperativeness (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994; Beersma and De Dreu, 2005), they will prefer a low-fit alliance to high fit. Put differently, and drawing on the concept of C-C congruence, proselfs are more likely to identify with a company if they perceive that the company's decisions resemble their own way of thinking and acting (cf. Ahearne et al., 2005). As proselfs strive for dominance in interdependent relationships, the company's non-cooperativeness, signaled by low-fit alliances, mirrors their personal preference for strategies that help them to realize individual gains, and which they hence consider as an intelligent choice.

Analogously, the company's sincere commitment to cooperation, signaled by high-fit alliances, will be evaluated as unintelligent decision by proselfs, as the company turns in

some control by giving the NPO access to its core-business related resources and capabilities. As proselves will find it difficult to identify with the company's decision to partner with a high fit cause, they are expected to punish the company in terms of evaluations and behavioral intentions. Perceived value incongruence between an individual and an organization has shown to translate into negative word of mouth (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002) and negative perceptions of the organization (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004).

H₂: Company-cause fit interacts with individuals' SVO in such a way that high fit leads to more favorable responses by prosocials compared to proselves, in terms of (1) attitude towards the company, (2) trust in the company, and (3) word of mouth.

The Mediating Effect of Corporate Abilities

Corporate ability (CA) perceptions describe consumers' beliefs about the company's capabilities to produce and deliver high quality products and services (Brown and Dacin, 1997). In line with previous studies on CSR more generally (cf. Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006; Brown and Dacin, 1997), this study considers two specific CAs, namely product quality and innovativeness capability, which have shown to impact consumers' responses to CSR-active companies. While perceived product quality describes consumers' overall evaluation of product/service superiority or excellence (Zeithaml, 1988), innovativeness denotes a company's ability to "explore" new market possibilities in terms of developing new products" (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006, p. 6).

Building on the literature on SVO and fit, this study asserts that consumers' perceptions of quality and innovativeness may explain why prosocials will reward the company if fit is high, while proselves will punish the firm. Whereas previous studies either treat consumers' CSR and CA associations as independent constructs (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Marin and Ruiz, 2007), or focus on the moderating role of CAs (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006), this study proposes a mediating role. This study hence draws on Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) who propose that information about a company's CSR activity may influence and thus explain consumers' CA perceptions. Different from previous studies, this research does not make the focal company's CAs salient or manipulate them. Consumers will therefore use their knowledge about the social alliance activity and the level of

company-cause fit in particular, to draw inferences regarding the company's product quality and innovativeness.

With regard to product quality, Brown and Dacin (1997) report that consumers' perceptions of CSR influence their overall evaluation of the company and subsequently of its products. These results imply that consumers will use information regarding a company's social alliance activity to judge its offerings. In particular, the authors conclude that negative CSR associations (e.g., low financial contribution to social causes) can harm the company in terms of unfavorable product evaluations, while positive CSR associations impact consumers' product evaluations favorably. In line with these findings, our study expects proselves to evaluate high fit as negative social alliance information. It is argued that the company's cooperativeness towards the NPO is considered a weakness by proselves and does not comply with how they would act in a comparable situation. Building on Brown and Dacin (1997), such negative social alliance associations will cause negative evaluations of the company's product/service quality. To prosocials, on the other hand, the company's cooperativeness towards the NPO, signaled by high fit, will be seen as desirable behavior, and hence evaluated as positive social alliance information. Following Brown and Dacin (1997), such positive associations likely have a favorable impact on prosocials' perceptions of the focal company's product/service quality.

With regard to innovativeness, this study asserts that prosocials and proselves differ in their interpretations concerning what kind of behaviors they consider innovative, which would explain why high-fit alliances signal high corporate innovativeness to prosocials but not to proselves. Innovative or creative individuals are more likely to be proself oriented, which might explain why innovative people usually perform better in work-related tasks than in handling relationships (Helson, 1996). By contrast, consensus and harmony, which is particularly valued by prosocials, can hamper creativity and innovation according to the literature. For instance, some creative tasks, such as brainstorming, necessitate divergence rather than convergence in performance, which complies with proselves' values of independence and personal success rather than with prosocials' values of harmony and inclusiveness (Beersma and De Dreu, 2005). Therefore, a climate of competition, disagreement and independence stimulates innovation, and is hence more likely to be found among proselves (Beersma and De Dreu, 2005). However, not only proselves are innovative. Rather, whereas prosocials' innovativeness becomes visible in designing

strategies for cooperation, which are necessary to promote integrative win-win agreements, proselves appear to be relatively more innovative with regard to competition or conflict strategies, which promote their individual advantage (De Dreu and Nijstad, 2008). In line with these insights, prosocials will evaluate the cooperation strategy signaled by high-fit alliances as innovative, whereas proselves will fear that the climate of consensus and dependence on the nonprofit partner signaled by high-fit will impede the company's innovativeness capabilities.

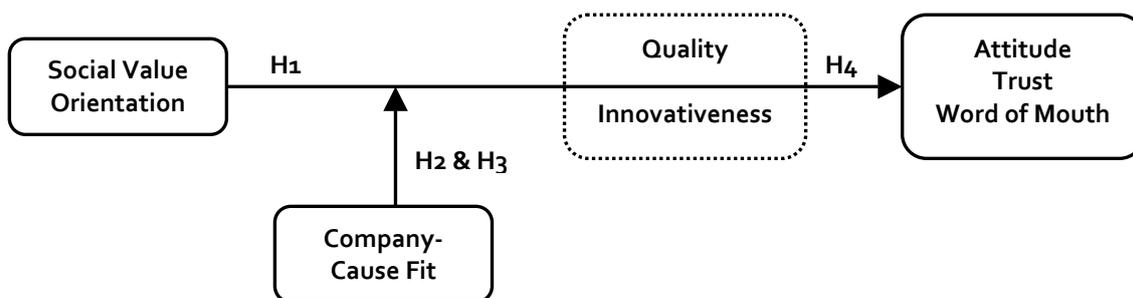
H₃: Company-cause fit interacts with individuals' SVO in such a way that prosocials evaluate the focal company's corporate abilities (i.e., product/service quality and innovativeness) more favorable than proselves when fit is high.

Past marketing research suggests that consumers use social alliance associations, as well as performance-related CA associations, to form overall evaluations of the company in terms of attitude or trust (Marin and Ruiz, 2007; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Marin and Ruiz's (2007) empirical study demonstrates that perceived CA influences consumers' corporate evaluations directly, whereas perceptions of C-C congruence mediate the impact of CSR associations. Furthermore, Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) suggest that CSR-active companies with low corporate abilities generate lower levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn may even hurt companies. In particular, past research has established a link between perceived product quality or innovativeness capabilities and market value.

Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) report that companies with low innovativeness capabilities may generate a negative market value from CSR initiatives due to decreased customer satisfaction levels. Although they find no penalizing effect for low product quality, results show that companies with high product quality can benefit from CSR (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). Drawing on Luo and Bhattacharya's (2006) research, Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, and Avramidis (2009) identified consumer trust as an important factor that (partially) mediates the impact of service quality perceptions on consumers' intentions to recommend the company. In line with these findings, positive (negative) perceptions of product/service quality and innovativeness will lead to favorable (unfavorable) responses towards companies in terms of evaluative and behavioral consumer responses.

H₄: Consumers' perceptions of the company's corporate abilities (i.e., product/service quality and innovativeness) mediate the interaction between SVO and fit on consumers' responses towards the company in terms of a) attitudes, b) trust, and c) word of mouth.

Figure 11: Hypothesized relationships



Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited at public places (airport, train station, restaurant) in the Netherlands to assure a large variety of people with different demographic and personal characteristics. A total of 216 participants completed the questionnaire. Respondents, who were assigned randomly to one of three conditions (high fit, low fit, control group), first completed a nine-item decomposed games measure to determine their SVO. Subsequently, they read one of three press articles and filled out the questionnaire. 29 participants whose SVO could not be determined based on their responses to the games measure were excluded, leaving 187 respondents for the analyses. From these 187 respondents 58% were male, and 42% female (three respondents did not answer this question). With regard to participants' age, 53% of the respondents were between 18 to 25 years old, followed by 26 to 35 year-olds (19%), 36 to 45 year-olds (12%) and 46-55 year-olds (10%). Those aged 56 to 65-plus accounted for 6%.

Measures

Independent variables

This study includes a 2 (prosocial/proselfs) \times 3 (high fit/low fit/control group) factorial design. Respondents of the control group, whose SVO was assessed as well, were not informed about the company's social engagement. The design includes a defined minimum of 25 respondents for each of the six cells.

Social Value Orientation. Participants' SVO was assessed by their responses to a nine-items decomposed games measure, which has been used extensively in controlled experimental settings (e.g., Declerck and Bogaert, 2008; De Bruin and Van Lange, 2000; Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994), as well as in real world settings (e.g., Gärling, Fujii, Gärling, and Jakobsson, 2003; Van Lange et al., 2007). The games measure, which is adopted from Van Lange et al. (2007), is known for its reliability of results and its internal validity (cf. Declerck and Bogaert, 2008). Respondents had to make choices between three combinations of outcomes, each allocating points for oneself and for a hypothetical other person. They had to imagine that this other person, whom they would never meet in the future, was also exposed to these choice combinations. This person's choice would therefore influence the respondent's outcomes as well. Each outcome-combination represents a specific type of SVO. Respondents were classified to one of them if at least six out of nine choices were consistent (Van Lange et al., 1997; Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994; De Cremer and Van Lange, 2001). For example, if the choice is between option A (480 points for self and 80 points for other), option B (540 points for self and 280 for other) and C (480 points for self and 480 points for other), A would represent the competitive choice (maximizing the difference between one's own outcome and the other's outcome), B the individualistic option (maximizing one's own outcome), and C the prosocial or cooperative option (equal distribution of outcomes). Consistent with previous research, individualists and competitors were combined in one group called proselfs (cf. De Cremer and Van Lange, 2001; Van Lange and Liebrand, 1991a), as the group of competitors is usually relatively small (only 12 individuals in the current study). Together, individualists and competitors form a group of basically self-interested individuals (Van Lange and Liebrand, 1991a). From

the 187 respondents who could be classified and were hence included in further analyses, 96 were prosocial (51%) and 91 proself (49%).

Company-cause fit was manipulated by varying two nonprofit organizations in fictitious press articles, whereas the company was held constant across the three conditions. These articles, which were partly based on real press releases, informed respondents about the launch of an alliance between a NPO and the focal company, an existing provider of telephone and internet services. In a pretest two coders evaluated the actual level of fit between the company and both nonprofit organizations based on nine dimensions of fit identified by Berger et al. (2004). The alliance between the focal company and the first NPO, a telephone and internet helpline for children, was identified as high fit, scoring high on several of these dimensions. For example: both organizations share the central idea of inclusion (of society), indicating a fit among the organizations' missions. Almost no corresponding matches were found, however, between the company and the second NPO, an organization caring for the conservation of nature, which consequently served as the low-fit alliance partner. For instance, the nonprofit's mission with a focus on nature did not match with the company's social mission. Differences between both alliances were stressed in the fictitious press articles to ensure that the manipulation would be successful. The control group was assigned a general press release about the focal company, mentioning no alliance with a NPO at all. 59 out of 187 respondents were assigned to the high fit condition, 63 to the low fit condition and 65 to the control group. The manipulation texts can be found in Appendix B.

Dependent variables

According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) internal outcomes in consumers' responses to CSR (e.g., attitudes or trust) are greater and also more easily assessable than behavioral or external outcomes (e.g., word of mouth). In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer responses to social alliances, this study includes both, evaluative consumer responses and behavioral intentions.

Evaluative responses. Attitude towards the company (4 items, Cronbach's Alpha=0.82 after deletion of one item) and trust (4 items, Alpha=0.94) are used to measure evaluative consumer responses. Social alliance activities can build trust (cf. Vaaland, Heide,

and Grønhaug, 2008; Marin and Ruiz, 2007) and evoke positive attitudes towards companies among consumers. These attitudes are even greater if consumers perceive a high fit between the company and the cause (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Attitude items are phrased as "In general my impressions of [the company] are positive", and trust items as "I can count on [the company]". In addition, this study includes constructs for product/service quality and innovativeness perceptions to investigate the hypothesized mediational role of corporate abilities. Quality items (3 items, Alpha= 0.79) are phrased as "[The company] offers products/services of high quality", and innovativeness items (3 items, Alpha=0.76) as "[The company] adapts quickly to a changing environment". Items of one construct are averaged into a single measure.

Behavioral intentions. Word of mouth (3 items, Alpha=0.91) is used to measure consumers' behavioral intentions toward the company. All items measuring the same construct are averaged into a single measure. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) word of mouth (i.e., consumers' willingness to talk favorably about the company to others) can be seen as one of the key behavioral outcomes of CSR. This behavior can be explained by consumers' identification with a company engaging in CSR activities. Word of mouth items are phrased as "I will encourage others to purchase the products and services of [the company]".

All items in the questionnaire are measured on a 7-point scale, anchored by "totally agree" and "totally disagree", except for one item of attitude, which is anchored by the terms "extremely positive" and "extremely negative". The measures can be found in Appendix B.

Results

In order to assess the fit manipulation participants evaluated the fit between the two allied organizations presented to them (3 items averaged into a single measure, Alpha=0.87). An exemplary item is "The link between the core business of [the company] and [the nonprofit] is clear to me". Results of a one-way ANOVA show that the manipulation is successful, as the company's cooperation with the well-fitting nonprofit

resulted in more favorable responses than an alliance with the low-fit nonprofit organization ($M_{\text{high fit}}=4.94$, $M_{\text{low fit}}=3.92$, $F=12.70$, $p=0.001$).

Hypothesis 1 proposes that in an alliance condition prosocials will respond more favorably towards the company than proselfs, relative to the control condition. The test for H_1 includes a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA), first for an alliance condition (regardless of high or low fit), and subsequently for the control condition. For the dependent measures attitudes, trust and word of mouth the alliance condition resulted in significant differences between prosocials and proselfs. As expected, the control condition did not show significant differences across the two groups. These findings lend full support for H_1 (see Table 8).

Table 8. One-way ANOVA effect tests comparison of means (means, standard deviations, F-values and p-values)

	Alliance condition			Control group		
	Prosocials	Proselfs	F-value & p-value	Prosocials	Proselfs	F-value & p-value
Attitude	3.95 (1.20)	3.43 (1.11)	6.34 ($p=0.01$)	3.49 (1.30)	3.72 (1.17)	0.55 ($p>0.40$)
Trust	4.13 (1.22)	3.51 (1.23)	7.67 ($p<0.01$)	3.61 (1.48)	3.65 (1.23)	0.01 ($p>0.90$)
Word/Mouth	3.39 (1.33)	2.89 (1.37)	4.16 ($p<0.05$)	3.04 (1.53)	3.23 (1.28)	0.30 ($p>0.50$)

Hypothesis 2 proposes that the effect of SVO will be moderated by company-cause fit. A series of two-way ANOVAs was conducted to test this hypothesis. Analyses for the dependent measures attitude ($F=3.54$, $p<0.05$) and trust ($F=3.10$, $p<0.05$), but not word of mouth ($F=1.98$, $P>0.10$) result in significant interaction effects between fit-condition and SVO. Therefore, prosocials and proselfs differ significantly across different fit conditions with regard to the evaluative response measures (i.e., attitude and trust), but not with regard to the behavioral response measure used in this study (i.e., word of mouth) (see Figures 12, 13 and 14). The level of fit did not cause main effects with regard to the three outcome measures, meaning that the control condition and each of the partnership conditions do not differ significantly for attitudes ($F=0.25$; $p=0.78$), trust ($F=0.78$; $p=0.46$) or word of mouth ($F=0.05$; $p=0.95$). With regard to SVO, a significant main effect emerges only for trust ($F=4.53$; $p=0.04$), meaning that overall, prosocials trust the focal company more than proselfs. No main effects emerged, however, for attitudes ($F=2.25$; $p=0.11$) or word of

mouth ($F=1.79$; $p=0.18$). As the interaction between SVO and fit was non-significant for word of mouth, we conducted multiple regression analysis to detect potential indirect effects on word of mouth. Attitude ($B=0.36$, $\text{Beta}=0.32$, $t=3.98$, $p=0.00$) and trust ($B=0.56$, $\text{Beta}=0.52$, $t=6.62$, $p=0.00$), which accounted for 63% of the variation ($R^2=0.63$, adjusted $R^2=0.63$, $F=155.32$, $p=0.00$), significantly impacted word of mouth, suggesting that consumers' recommendation intentions may be influenced indirectly.

Figure 12. Two-way ANOVA for Attitude

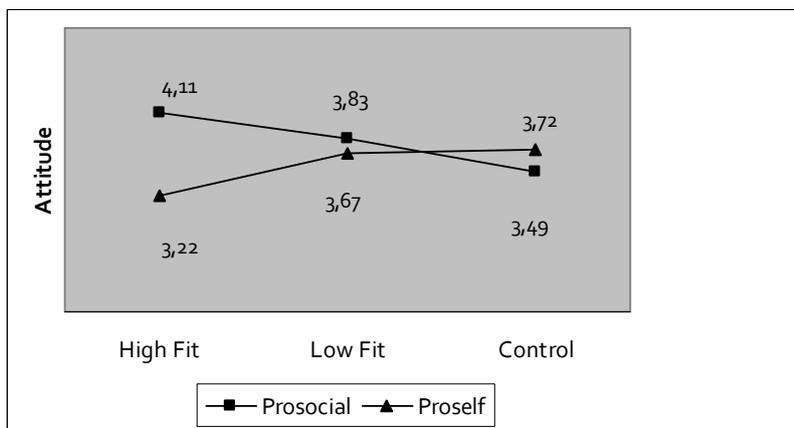


Figure 13. Two-way ANOVA for Trust

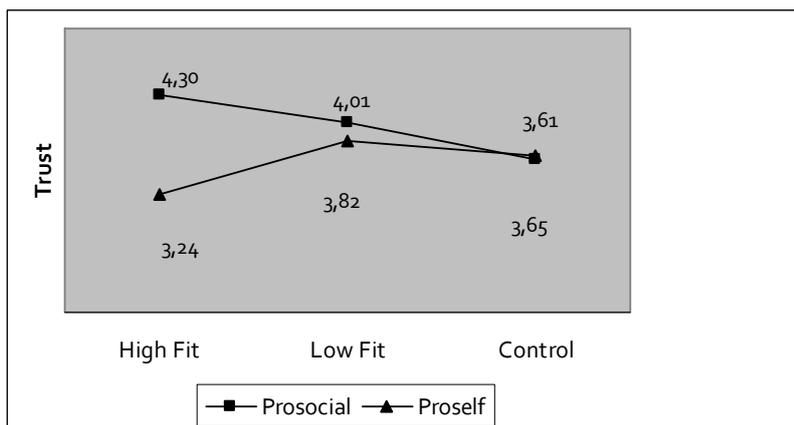
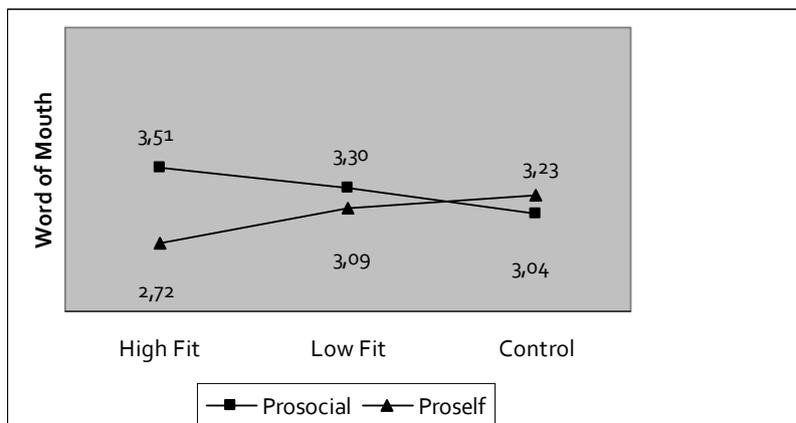


Figure 14. Two-way ANOVA for Word of Mouth



To test whether or not the nature of the observed interaction effects indeed supports H_2 , we conducted a series of one-way ANOVAs. Focusing on the high fit condition only, SVO served as the independent variable and attitude, trust and subsequently word of mouth served as dependent measures. Significant differences between prosocials and proselfs emerged for attitude, trust, and word of mouth (see Table 9). Another series of one-way ANOVAs tests whether prosocials and proselfs do not respond differently towards the company in case of a low-fit alliance or the control group. For the low-fit condition as well as for the control group no significant differences emerged between prosocials and proselfs with regard to attitude, trust, or word of mouth (Table 9). These findings lend support for H_2 , as prosocials respond more favorably towards the company in terms of evaluative and behavioral measures than proselfs in a high fit condition, whereas SVO does not seem to matter in the low fit or control condition.

Table 9. One-way ANOVA effect tests comparison of means (means, standard deviations, F-values and p-values)

	High Fit			Low Fit			Control		
	Prosocials	Proselfs	F-value & p-value	Prosocials	Proselfs	p-value	Prosocials	Proselfs	p-value
Attitude	4.11 (1.30)	3.22 (1.13)	7.97 (p<0.01)	3.83 (1.11)	3.67 (1.06)	p>0.50	3.49 (1.30)	3.72 (1.17)	p>0.40
Trust	4.30 (1.26)	3.24 (1.08)	11.77 (p=0.00)	4.01 (1.19)	3.82 (1.34)	p>0.50	3.61 (1.48)	3.65 (1.23)	p>0.90
Word/Mouth	3.51 (1.37)	2.72 (1.38)	4.87 (p<0.05)	3.30 (1.32)	3.09 (1.36)	p>0.50	3.04 (1.53)	3.23 (1.28)	p>0.50

Hypothesis 3 suggests that the interaction between SVO and fit causes prosocials to evaluate the company's corporate abilities (in terms of product/service quality and innovativeness) more favorable than proselfs when fit is high. The tests for H_3 included two two-way ANOVAs (interaction effect between fit and SVO), with quality and innovativeness serving as dependent variables. The results show significant interaction effects for both, quality ($F=3.65$, $p<0.05$) and innovativeness ($F=5.72$, $p<0.01$) perceptions. In order to support or reject H_3 , a subsequent series of one-way ANOVAs was conducted, first for the high fit condition, and then for the low fit condition. As hypothesized, the results demonstrate that in a high fit condition, prosocials evaluate the focal company's product/service quality and its innovativeness capabilities significantly higher than proselfs, whereas no significant differences were detected in the low fit condition, supporting H_3 (Table 10). Combined with the results of past research (e.g., Marin and Ruiz, 2007), these results suggest that consumers' quality and innovativeness judgments may mediate their responses towards the company, which is tested in the next step.

Table 10. One-way ANOVA effect tests comparison of means (means, standard deviations, F-values and p-values)

	High Fit			Low Fit		
	Prosocials	Proselfs	F-value & p-value	Prosocials	Proselfs	F-value & p-value
Quality	4.40 (0.94)	3.61 (0.98)	9.58 ($p<0.01$)	4.05 (1.00)	4.25 (0.74)	0.75 ($p>0.40$)
Innovativeness	4.77 (1.07)	4.14 (0.90)	5.69 ($p<0.05$)	4.35 (1.04)	4.15 (0.82)	0.65 ($p>0.40$)

Hypothesis 4 suggests that the interaction between SVO and fit (i.e., independent variables) on evaluative and behavioral consumers responses (i.e., dependent variables) will be mediated by perceptions of a company's corporate abilities (i.e., proposed mediators). In line with Baron and Kenny (1986) additional analyses were conducted to test for mediation effects. The first step advocated by Baron and Kenny (1986) was met for the dependent variables attitude and trust, as our two-way ANOVA's conducted earlier to test H_2 were significant for attitude ($F=3.54$, $p<0.05$) and trust ($F=3.10$, $p<0.05$), but not for word of mouth ($F=1.98$, $P>0.10$). Word of mouth was hence not considered in the next steps. The second criterion by Baron and Kenny (1986) requires a significant effect of the independent variables on the mediator, which has been confirmed by testing H_3 , as the interaction effect of SVO and fit was significant for quality ($F=3.65$, $p<0.05$) and innovativeness ($F=5.72$,

$p < 0.01$). We then ran two-way ANCOVA's and included first quality and then innovativeness as covariates. Our analyses showed significant results for these covariates for attitude (quality: $F=119.55$, $p < 0.001$; innovativeness: $F=32.28$, $p < 0.001$) and trust (quality: $F=97.50$, $p < 0.001$; innovativeness: $F=30.08$, $p < 0.001$). The previously significant interaction effects for attitude and trust became non-significant, and were co-varied out by quality and innovativeness (Table 11). We hence conclude that quality and innovativeness fully mediate the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent measures attitude and trust, lending support for H_4 with regard to the evaluative measures used in this study, but not for word of mouth.

Table 11. Results mediation tests

Dep.var.	Interactions	Mediation tests	
	No Mediators (SVO * Fit)	Interaction effects co-varied out by:	
		Quality	Innovativeness
Attitude	3.54 ($p < 0.05$)	2.53 ($p > 0.05$)	1.66 ($p > 0.10$)
Trust	3.10 ($p < 0.05$)	1.46 ($p > 0.20$)	1.74 ($p > 0.10$)
Word/Mouth	n.s.		

Discussion and Conclusions

Although past marketing research identified several factors that may hamper the positive effects CSR can have on consumers' responses towards firms, researchers have paid little attention to the role of consumers' stable personality traits, and their interactions with other factors in particular. The purpose of this study was to understand for which type of consumer (i.e., prosocials or proselfs) social alliances are more important, under which alliance condition (i.e., high or low company-cause fit), and whether consumers' perceptions of the company's corporate abilities (i.e., quality and innovativeness) may account for differences.

With regard to the type of consumer, overall, the results of this empirical study suggest that prosocials seem to be more sensitive to social alliances than proselfs, as they reward the company in terms of favorable evaluations (attitudes, trust) and behavioral intentions (word-of-mouth) more than proselfs. However, taking a closer look, evidence for

the effect of SVO was only found in cases with a high level of fit or congruence between the company and the cause, indicating that SVO matters only under certain alliance conditions. In fact, while prosocials reward companies for high-fit social alliances, proselfs even seem to punish them, which poses a dilemma for companies when choosing a suitable cause for an alliance. This finding is particularly intriguing given that the frequently adopted congruence theory emphasizes the importance of high-fit alliances in order to evoke favorable consumer responses.

Seemingly, consistency among one's thoughts and feelings, as suggested by congruence theory, is not established equally for all individuals. Information that may be consistent with the thoughts and feelings of prosocials, might be inconsistent with proselfs' values and ideas, and hence cause different evaluations and behaviors. Furthermore, the findings suggest that not only proselfs, but even prosocials do not seem to care about companies' engagement in low-fit alliances, or no social alliance at all, as prosocials and proselfs do not differ in their responses towards the company in both the low-fit and the control condition. Therefore, considering SVO, low-fit social alliances neither seem to help nor hurt the company.

Our investigation of factors that might explain these effects demonstrates that individuals' perceptions of a company's corporate abilities account for differences among prosocials and proselfs. In particular, perceptions of high fit prompt inferences of favorable product/service quality and innovativeness capabilities among prosocials, whereas the opposite occurs for proselfs. To them, high-fit alliances seem to be a negative indication of the company's ability to deliver high quality and innovation. The fact that the low-fit condition revealed no such differences in SVO supports our reasoning that the notion of a high-fit alliance signals different meanings to prosocials and proselfs. This finding is also supported by extant SVO research which states that prosocials and proselfs interpret identical situations differently (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994). Finally, perceptions of quality and innovativeness seem to mediate consumers' trust in and attitude toward the company, which consequently seem to impact their intentions to recommend the company to others.

This study responds to calls for research on SVO that is not restricted to the outcomes of controlled experimental games, but also uses SVO to predict behaviors of societal interest (Van Lange et al., 2007). It extends past investigations which demonstrate

the importance of considering SVO in an attempt to explain individuals' divergent behaviors with regard to charitable donations and pro-environmental acts (Gärling et al., 2003; Van Lange et al., 2007). While in these studies individuals were requested to make choices that could either benefit or harm themselves directly (e.g., donating money versus saving for oneself), consumers' responses in the current study reflect their opinions about decisions taken by the company, which could at most impact them personally in an indirect way.

What is striking is that consumers seem to infer personal consequences (i.e., in terms of corporate abilities) from a company's decision to support high-fit causes. In particular, the results of our study suggest that the level of fit signals different messages to prosocials and proselfs. While prosocials value cooperativeness (Van Lange et al., 1997), a notion that seems to be reflected by high-fit alliances, they appear to believe that high-fit alliances can help companies to strengthen their corporate abilities. Proselfs, on the other hand, seem to regard cooperativeness as weak and unintelligent business decision (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994). They thus do not seem to trust the company's abilities to produce innovative and high quality products and services if they are aware of a high-fit alliance.

Managerial Implications

Companies face a dilemma if they decide to engage in a high-fit alliance. Our results hence suggest that managers should be cautious when selecting alliance partners. As consumers seem to infer corporate abilities from information about the level of fit, and social alliance activities more generally, managers should make sure that consumers are not only aware of the company's social alliance, but also of its strong corporate abilities. Apparently, and also in line with past research, favorable beliefs about the company's social activities *and* its corporate abilities are crucial for consumers to form positive associations (cf. Brown and Dacin, 1997).

Moreover, even though proselfs seem to punish companies that engage in a high fit alliance, relative to prosocials, it should be noted that the potential benefits or drawbacks of high fit go beyond consumers' responses towards the company and relate to a successful collaboration among the alliance partners more broadly. A high level of congruence among the organizations' missions or cultures, for instance, is likely to reduce potential conflicts of

interest or power (Berger et al., 2004), and might thus ensure a more fruitful and effective collaboration.

Limitations and Future Research

First, to assess whether or not the results of this study are replicable in other settings, extending research to companies from other industries and to other (non-profit) causes than the two used in the present study might be worthwhile. Second, while this study focuses primarily on a high-fit condition, researchers could also give some further attention to alliances with a low fit, particularly since these appear to hardly differ from a situation in which the company had no social alliance at all. A more detailed investigation of why particular (types of) consumers value high-fit only, and whether specific fit dimensions are crucial in this regard, could add further insight to the findings of the present study. Third, while the findings suggest that proselves even punish companies for high-fit alliances, the practical recommendations of this study for alliance managers are limited mainly to calling for caution during the partner selection procedure and when communicating alliances. Follow-up research, however, might identify ways to overcome such negative responses by proselves with regard to high-fit alliances. More specifically, despite the fact that value orientations are relatively stable personality traits, situational characteristics, such as incentives or payment contingent on collective performance, may promote prosocial behavior among proselves (Beersma and De Dreu, 2005). Cooperation might become a rational choice for proselves if self-interest is made salient at the collective level (De Cremer and Van Vugt, 1999). Taking these aspects into account in follow-up research seems worthwhile to explore ways of turning a high-fit alliance into a seemingly rational and intelligent choice for proselves as well, by tying personal interest to the collective one, or by focusing more explicitly on the link to the improvement of corporate abilities. These are next steps to consider on the basis of the findings here.

Chapter 5

I belong, therefore I pay

Assessing the economies of scope in focused social network sites

Abstract

In view of the growing number of online social network sites (SNS) and their struggle for profitability, the aim of this study is to expand our understanding of viable value propositions for the specific context of niche SNS. We also investigate how perceived customer value can be translated into economic returns for niche SNS operators. Building on previous conceptual models which adopted social capital theory as a value proposition for online communities, we add the concept of entitativity to capture the distinctive and narrow scope of a niche. A survey among 5,738 members of a niche SNS reveals that entitativity and social capital directly impact members' willingness to invest in memberships fees. Moreover, whether realized economic and social customer value can explain this willingness depends on the type of customer relationship (i.e., free versus fee-paying member). Implications for theory and practice are discussed⁶.

⁶ This chapter is based on a paper that is co-authored by W. van Dolen & K. de Ruyter, which is currently being prepared for submission to an academic journal. The authors would like to thank Astrid Huijssoon for her valuable contribution to the implementation of this research.

Introduction

According to a recent comScore report (2011), online social network use is globally on the rise. More specifically, by the end of 2010 almost 90 percent of North American internet users had profiles on social network sites (SNS), closely followed by Europe, where penetration by then had reached 84.4 percent. SNS are online communities that facilitate communication and interactions among members and allow them to share personal content (Enders, Hungenberg, Denker and Mauch, 2008; Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009). They thereby enable members to “build and maintain a network of friends for social and professional interaction” (Trusov et al., 2009: 92). While the SNS landscape today is dominated by few big global players, including Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn, many small sites are competing for a share of the market as well, sometimes by explicitly targeting a narrow audience (boyd and Ellison, 2008; Sharp, 2009). Rather than being everything to everyone, MiGente, for example, is a niche SNS targeting the Latino-American community, and Ravelry appeals to those who enjoy knitting and crocheting and like to share their experiences with others. Individuals can even create their own niche social network on Ning against payment of a fee.

In view of increased competition and limited knowledge with regard to sustainable online business models, SNS providers are looking for value propositions to attract and retain members profitably. This is not only challenging because of large SNS dominating the market, but also due to the nature of value creation in online social networks. While generally the main value proposition offered by SNS is connectivity, the narrow scope of niche players requires the identification of a more distinctive proposition which reflects a specific purpose or scope narrowly defined segments can identify with. Niches have been defined as “a small group of customers with similar characteristics or needs” that are not served well by competitors (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994: 40). On the one hand, the practitioner community predicts a growing popularity of niche SNS in response to mega networks such as Facebook or MySpace, where many people feel uncomfortable sharing information (Holahan, 2007; Sharp, 2009). On the other hand, preliminary research suggests that members of niche SNS may experience inconvenience in the form of trade-offs or high

switching costs related to the narrow focus (Aschoff, Aschoff and Schwabe, 2010), which raises questions regarding the potential success of highly targeted networks, also with regard to their economic payback. While currently many SNS services are free for consumers, providers' desire to capitalize on members' online interactions has brought forward new online business models. One example is the 'freemium' strategy, where basic service is available for consumers for free, whereas upgraded, premium services are only accessible against payment of a subscription fee (Dou, 2004; Enders et al., 2008; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). Many social network providers are struggling, though, to upsell users from a free account to paying subscription fees, a question that seems even more pressing for niches. While large SNS may benefit from economies of scale as the value of an online network increases with a growing member base (Aschoff et al., 2010), niche SNS need to rely on economies of scope, as they deal with a rather narrow group of members. Insights on the economic returns for niche SNS are rudimentary and at best inconclusive. While Enders et al. (2008) suggest that advertising revenue is mainly put aside for networks with large user bases, Sharp (2009) asserts that advertisers are willing to pay premium prices to reach a narrowly defined audience. Moreover, while revenue models based on paid subscriptions were suggested to depend on a "critical mass of users" for SNS more generally (Enders et al., 2008: 209), it is unclear whether and how this works for niche SNS, which need to focus on scope rather than scale. Therefore, the objective of this study is to gain insight with regard to how economies of scope can be realized for focused niche SNS.

The emerging literature on online communities adopted social capital theory as a lens to study viable value propositions for online providers. In particular, studies focusing on a variety of online communities have shown that the value inherent to social capital can explain members' contributions to online networks in terms of knowledge sharing and commitment (Chiu, Hsu and Wang, 2006; Mathwick, Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). They did not consider, however, its potential conversion into economic returns for members or SNS providers. Moreover, while social capital created in an online community context has usually been discussed in terms of consequences at the individual level, it may as well affect higher levels, namely the community as an entity. Drawing on qualitative research, Mathwick et al. (2008) identified the existence of such a genuine community based on strong feelings of 'we-ness' in the context of a highly focused online (niche) community, and described it as a consequence of social capital. Rather than

considering it as an outcome, we are interested in the potential role of such a group feeling, which still requires a proper definition, to serve as a value proposition for members of a niche SNS. Therefore, by extending the social capital perspective, this study aims to broaden existing theories on value propositions for SNS, particularly with regard to niches. Specifically, our study aims to make the following two substantive contributions to the marketing literature:

First, we introduce the concept of entitativity, which enjoys growing popularity in psychology (cf. Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens and Paladino, 2000), but still needs to find its way in the marketing literature. The concept has been described as “(t)he degree to which a collection of persons are perceived as being bonded together in a coherent unit” (Lickel, Hamilton, Wierzchowska, Lewis, Sherman and Uhles, 2000: 224), or simply the “groupness” of a group (Hamilton, Sherman and Castelli, 2002: 140). Entitativity hence serves as an excellent reflection of the strong group feeling identified by Mathwick et al. (2008). It also describes the scope of a niche, characterized by a homogeneous group that offers distinctiveness to its members (cf. Correll and Park, 2005), and encourages social cohesion (Aschoff et al., 2010). As entitativity has mainly been studied from the perspective of how one evaluates other groups, while paying little attention to perceptions or evaluations of one’s own in-group (Sherman, Hamilton, and Lewis, 1999; Yzerbyt et al., 2000), we attempt to contribute to the entitativity literature more generally as well. Moreover, to our knowledge, entitativity has not hitherto been applied in the context of online social networks.

Second, by studying whether entitativity and social capital can be transformed into economic value, we contribute to the ongoing academic debate that has been inconclusive with regard to whether and when subscription-based online revenue models can be successful (e.g., Dou, 2004; Enders et al, 2008; Lopes and Galletta, 2006; Papies, Eggert and Wlömert, 2010; Pauwels and Weiss, 2008). This research investigates whether entitativity and social capital may directly impact members’ willingness to invest in a niche SNS, thereby influencing a niche SNS provider’s financial returns. Moreover, it also suggests potential indirect routes by considering social and economic value as outcomes of entitativity and social capital. Finally, drawing on insights from the relationship marketing literature, which suggests heterogeneity among members of a network, we also

differentiate between free and upgraded fee-paying members, whose motivations for investing in memberships fees are expected to differ.

In order to achieve the aforementioned contributions, the remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section addresses the theoretical background and research hypotheses, followed by a description of the empirical study which was conducted among members of a niche SNS. The last section discusses the findings and implications of the study, including directions for future research.

Theoretical Background

Value propositions for niche social network sites

Social capital

Social capital, which has been identified as value proposition by previous studies on online communities (e.g., Chiu, Hsu and Wang, 2006; Mathwick et al., 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005), is regarded as a multi-disciplinary concept that has been applied predominantly in social sciences. The different perspectives taken by various disciplines and authors brought forward a variety of definitions, which, however, agree that relationships between and within groups can be regarded as a resource for social action (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998: 243) defined social capital as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit”. According to Adler and Kwon (2002) social capital is determined by the structure and content of one’s social relations, which endow the actor with information, influence and solidarity, thereby creating value for the actor. For instance, research has confirmed that people use their personal contacts, and hence the social capital endowed in these relations, to find jobs, exchange resources, or for product innovations and entrepreneurship (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

The social capital concept it is often regarded as an umbrella theory which is based on a variety of concepts, including those describing the sources or process of social capital

creation and its outcomes (Glenane-Antoniadis, Whitwell, Bell and Menguc, 2003; Mathwick et al., 2008). In particular, social capital, which reflects one's likelihood or willingness to provide resources to connected others (Moran, 2005), is often described in terms of attributes such as social trust (Mathwick et al., 2008; Moran, 2005; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998; Wasko and Faraj, 2005), norms and sanctions (e.g., the norm of voluntarism), obligations and expectations (e.g., the obligation to reciprocate), identification (Mathwick et al., 2008; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), and commitment (Wasko and Faraj, 2005), which are combined differently in a variety of studies. While these dimensions differ conceptually, they are undoubtedly connected: members of a social community are willing to provide favors to other members, even to strangers (i.e., voluntarism), as they believe (i.e., trust) that those favors will be returned by some community member in the future (i.e., reciprocity). In other words, exchanges between members are facilitated by trust, which is safeguarded by established community norms and sanctions for free riders (Oh, Chung and Labianca, 2004; Wasko and Faraj, 2005).

While most studies to date have discussed social capital in offline contexts, such as neighborhood communities or work groups, researchers have recently started to investigate social capital production in online environments. Several studies in this field focused on social capital as a driver of knowledge sharing. For instance, Wasko and Faraj (2005), who investigated an online network linking members of a legal professional association in the U.S., concluded that online social capital can spur knowledge exchange. Similarly, Chiu, Hsu and Wang (2006) found that tie strength, as well as reciprocity and identification enhanced the quantity of knowledge shared, while trust only had a positive impact on the quality of knowledge contributed to a professional online community. A different outcome focus was taken by Mathwick et al. (2008) who studied the impact of social capital on the values derived for the members of a peer-to-peer problem solving community, and how those benefits in turn influenced their commitment towards the group. The authors (p. 842) concluded that online communities are governed by norms that "impose a moral responsibility to volunteer, to reciprocate, and to act in a trustworthy manner", three attributes that are considered relevant for the current study on SNS as well. While not investigated further by Mathwick et al. (2008), a qualitative exploration of members' interactions on the site suggests the existence of a strong group feeling and collective sense among expert members that differentiates them from other, non-

community members. Following up on this finding, entitativity is introduced as a novel value proposition in this study.

Entitativity

While the concept has been developed more than 50 years ago by D.T. Campbell (1958), only recently entitativity has been re-discovered, mainly by the psychology discipline, to explain group perceptions, their antecedents and consequences (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011; Sherman et al., 1999). Campbell (1958: 17) defined entitativity as "(t)he degree of having the nature of an entity, of having real existence", describing to what extent aggregates of people can be described as a single meaningful and ongoing entity, being bonded together in a coherent unit (Lickel et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 1999; Stenstrom, Lickel, Denson and Miller, 2008). The degree of entitativity differentiates perceptions of mere aggregates or collections of individuals, such as people waiting at a bus stop (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011) from unified groups that are perceived as meaningful entities, such as a football team (Lickel et al., 2000). Drawing on Gestalt principles, Campbell (1958) identified several characteristics that influence individuals' perceptions of entitativity, including similarity and proximity among individuals or sharing a common fate (e.g., collective goals) and collective movement. Additional cues for perceptions of high entitativity were discovered by Lickel et al. (2000), such as the degree of interaction among group members and the importance assigned to the group by its members. The main question that drove Campbell's investigations were how such cues are used by individuals to attribute the quality of 'groupness' to an aggregate of individuals (Hamilton et al., 2002: 140). Other aspects, such as the size of a group or its tenure of existence were either unrelated to the level of perceived entitativity, or caused conflicting results (cf. Hamilton et al., 2002; Lickel et al., 2000).

Based on the level of perceived entitativity, groups have been categorized along a continuum ranging from high to low levels of entitativity, namely intimacy groups, social categories, task groups and loose associations. Typical examples comprise members of a family, friends or romantic relationships for intimacy groups, a common nationality, ethnic or professional background for social categories, an airline flight crew or a company committee for task groups, and people at a bus stop or a cue at the bank for loose

associations (Lickel et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 1999). It has been suggested that social rules governing interactions among members may differ for those groups in a way that intimacy groups may be dominated by communal exchange principles, whereas task groups may be regulated rather by equity principles (Lickel et al., 2000). As entitativity strongly builds on literature describing how individuals perceive groups they do not belong to (i.e., out-groups), past research has paid little attention to the consequences of entitativity for in-groups, which are groups one belongs to (Sherman et al., 1999; Yzerbyt et al., 2000).

Online SNS differ widely in terms of size or purpose and hence may range from tight-knit entities to loose aggregates of anonymous members. Entitativity, to our knowledge, has not been applied in research on online social networks. An exception is a study by Mathwick et al. (2008: 843), which found evidence for a “strong group feeling” or “we-ness”, however, did not refer to the concept explicitly. A study by Sohn (2009) mentioned entitativity in this context, however, conceptualized it as network density and thus as the strength of connections rather than an overall perception of being a group. Moreover, entitativity has been studied from the perspective of offline social networks, with individuals judging other groups based on the representation of abstract network graphs (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011). Findings suggest that network entitativity depends strongly on the level of interaction among members. Moreover, the authors conclude that in very small networks (i.e., up to five members) perceptions of entitativity may be based mainly on ties among dyads, whereas for larger networks (i.e., up to 150 members) entitativity perceptions depend on how social connections are organized into a meaningful unit. These findings underline the importance of considering the concept of entitativity in research on SNS, as it extends the idea of relationship dyads which has received quite some attention by researchers who focused on tie strength in online contexts. Moreover, the distinctive scope denoted by a highly entitative group could serve as an important value proposition for niche SNS, and may hence be key for a successful online revenue model.

Economic returns through subscription fees

In this research, SNS providers' economic return on investment is conceptualized as members' willingness to invest (WtI) in the SNS, either by showing intentions to upgrade their current free accounts to a fee-based account, or by deciding to extend their paid

membership period. According to recent studies, the 'free-mentality' on the internet makes it difficult or even "impossible" for SNS providers to charge membership fees (Dou, 2004; Pauwels and Weiss, 2008; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010: 28). Dou (2004), for instance, reported a study according to which 69 percent of respondents announced they were not willing to pay for online services. While many academic studies have discussed consumers' Wtl in the context of e-commerce or online brand communities, users' Wtl for online content has received considerably less attention, not to mention to the specific case of SNS, where value is co-created by users themselves. Different from traditional marketing contexts, where Wtl has received a lot of attention, the peculiarities of online content or value as a paid product (e.g., lack of uniqueness, many alternatives and little differentiation) constitute challenges for online service providers (Dou, 2004). The few studies available on this topic either focused on price promotions and marketing communications, the quality of the content or service (e.g., up-to-date, superior or exclusive content) or perceived risks with regard to online credit card use or unknown brands (Dou, 2004; Pauwels and Weiss, 2008; Wang, Ye, Zhang and Nguyen, 2005). While most of these factors can be reasonably controlled by the online content provider, operators of online SNS depend on the value proposition of connectivity, and have to rely on members' willingness to contribute to the group and to stay loyal and/or pay subscription fees. Surprisingly little is known regarding how to transform social interactions in online communities into benefits for profit-oriented providers, a process that requires "a deep understanding of the economic and social motivations of the participants" (Balasubramanian and Mahajan, 2001: 104). An exploratory case-study investigation by Enders et al. (2008) suggests that the success of paid subscription models for SNS may, among more functional factors, also depend on members' trust in other users and the platform, as well as on their social interactions and network ties. As these factors are reflected by social capital and entitativity, it is argued that both concepts will drive niche SNS members' willingness to pay subscription fees.

Hypotheses Development

The direct route

Entitativity and Willingness to Invest (WtI)

Due to the meaningfulness and coherence conveyed by highly entitative groups, they are generally perceived as very stable, controllable and predictable, which are characteristics that are generally highly valued by group members (Sherman et al., 1999). Therefore, highly entitative groups have been suggested to serve their members better than groups that are perceived low in entitativity (Yzerbyt et al., 2000). As members strive for continuity and permanence of groups from which they derive value, and wish to protect them from intruders or change, they are generally very committed and willing to invest in groups they perceive as highly entitative (Sherman et al., 1999). Or as Yzerbyt et al. (2000: 286) put it: "Clearly, entitativity cements the members to their group". Drawing on this reasoning, we expect members of a SNS who perceive their network as a meaningful and ongoing entity to commit time and resources to safeguard the valuable group feeling. As in the freemium business model advanced functionalities and possibilities for interaction are usually restricted to upgraded members who pay subscription fees, it is anticipated that members with high entitativity perceptions show higher WtI in the SNS to ensure multiple and sustained interactions with their network.

H₁: Entitativity will positively impact SNS members' intentions to invest in an online social network.

Social capital and Willingness to Invest (WtI)

Social trust, the first social capital dimension considered in this research, has been described as the belief that others are open, competent, reliable and have good intentions, which moderates the risk of vulnerability and in turn enhances communication, resource exchanges and cooperation (Bolino, Turnley, and Gloodgood, 2002). Trust has been described as a main driving force for online financial transactions (Enders et al., 2008), and

is expected to be an important factor impacting SNS members' decision whether to pay subscription fees or not. If members do not trust the site operator or other members in the social network, they will perceive a higher risk with regard to committing financial resources when paying subscription fees. The second social capital dimension, reciprocity, has been regarded as a norm of mutual indebtedness, inferring that members of a social network strive to reciprocate favors or benefits they have received from others (Wasko and Faraj, 2005). This norm of felt obligation ensures a stream of ongoing exchanges, including favors that may be returned to the sender directly, or the community more generally. The latter notion, also termed generalized reciprocity, assumes that members of a social network make resources available to others at a personal cost, while expecting that they will be repaid at some point in the future (Mathwick et al., 2008). Third, community voluntarism, which has been described as "proactive engagement in community life", includes the voluntary provision of time and effort with the intent to benefit others (Mathwick et al., 2008: 834). The dimensions reciprocity and voluntarism are both likely to drive social interactions as SNS members perceive a moral duty to reciprocate the value they receive by volunteering their time or efforts (cf. Mathwick et al., 2008). These felt moral obligations ensure an ongoing stream of interactions, which, according to Enders et al. (2008: 207), may create "unique customer value" and hence positively affect members' Wtl in SNS by paying subscription fees. Similarly, Cova and Dalli (2008) argued that consumers' participatory role in the value creation process increases their Wtl, as consumers' active engagement enhances their commitment towards the process of co-creation and enables them to identify more easily with the outcome of their collaborative efforts. In conclusion it can be stated that social capital, through its three components, is expected to drive SNS members' Wtl in membership fees.

H₂: Social capital will positively impact SNS members' intentions to invest in an online social network.

The indirect route

The indirect route suggests that entitativity and social capital will result in specific value for members, which in turn will favorably affect their Wtl. In 2001, Balasubramanian

and Mahajan stressed the need for more insights into members' social and economic motivations for participating in online communities in order to understand how such social interactions can derive economic returns for businesses. Since then, recent studies in this field have identified a variety of drivers for user participation, including functional/instrumental, social and hedonic benefits (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia, Blazevic, Wiertz and Algesheimer, 2009; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Social benefits are described as socializing and building relationships with others, resulting in an increased social network and the enjoyment of communication. Functional benefits, on the other hand, are mostly associated with users' access to valuable information provided by other community members, and have also been termed informational value by Matwick et al. (2008). Interestingly, despite an acknowledgement of members' instrumental motivations for participating in online communities, the explicit notion of economic motives advocated by Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001) has been largely neglected by recent research.

In order to streamline the variety of potential benefits identified in previous studies, we draw on the relationship marketing literature which describes the dichotomy of social and economic value (Gassenheimer, Houston and Davis, 1998). Online social communities are about building relationships, suggesting that the relationship marketing literature may provide valuable frameworks to explain why customers develop and maintain relationships, potentially by paying subscription fees in order to maintain their online social networks. In particular, we draw on a framework developed by Gassenheimer et al. (1998), which suggests that a combination of social and economic value is necessary to sustain most relationships. According to the authors, these two values can be regarded as two extremes on a continuum describing the relational distance between two parties. Consequently, if a relationship is characterized by a high level of social value for the partners, the level of economic value will be rather low, and vice versa.

Entitativity and social value

Social value or benefit has been described as communicating or getting involved with others, thereby receiving help and social support, camaraderie, friendship and intimacy (cf. Dholakia, Bagozzi and Klein Pearo, 2004; Mathwick et al., 2008; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004). Relationships yielding such benefits are usually characterized by a high level of

closeness, group solidarity, expectations that exchanges will be continued in the future, and strong prevailing norms of giving and receiving for the group's well-being (Gassenheimer et al., 1998). These characteristics that are typically inherent to entitativity and social capital.

Following the entitativity literature, groups perceived as high in entitativity due to high degrees of interaction, common goals and outcomes, should derive higher value for their members compared to less entitative groups (cf. Sherman et al., 1999). This reasoning has been explained by the causal link between entitativity and benefits derived from group membership as identified in other literature streams. For instance, identification with one's in-group has been identified not only as antecedent, but also as potential consequence of entitativity (Yzerbyt et al., 2000). According to social identity theory, identification with one's in-group can increase self-esteem, and at the same time aids in distinguishing one's group from other, out-groups, which causes a more favorable evaluation of one's in-group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Yzerbyt et al., 2000). Yzerbyt et al. (2000) argued that high entitativity is thus more likely to strengthen one's self-esteem, need for inclusion and aim to differentiate one's group from other groups. Moreover, investigations of the four groups that constitute the entitativity continuum described earlier, suggest that high social identity value is mainly derived from intimacy groups. These groups are evaluated as extremely important by group members and represent high levels of entitativity (Yzerbyt et al., 2000). As high entitativity is usually associated with intimacy and friendship, we hypothesize that entitativity will be positively related to social value.

H₃: Entitativity will positively impact SNS members' social value.

Social capital and social value

Social capital has been defined as an intangible resource that potentially creates value for members of a social network (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2007). Or as stated by Mathwick et al. (2008: 835): "The use of the term 'capital' implies that it is not a good in and of itself but a means to a set of outcomes". Among the benefits to be derived from social capital that have been discussed most frequently in the literature are (1) access to a variety of information sources, which may enhance the quality, importance and timeliness of information and (2) solidarity, which is strengthened by strong social norms

and a high degree of closure⁷ (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) discussed “material profits” and “symbolic profits” as social capital outcomes. While such benefits are most frequently mentioned in the context of social capital created offline (e.g., in neighborhood communities, company networks), Mathwick et al. (2008) investigated informational and social benefits in the context of online communities. Their empirical study demonstrated that social capital, which was significantly predicted by the components trust, voluntarism and reciprocity, drives users’ perceptions of informational and social value. We aim to replicate these findings for social value and therefore hypothesize:

H₄: Social capital will positively impact SNS members’ social value.

Entitativity and economic value

While extant research on the benefits to be derived from online communities discussed functional or instrumental benefits, to our knowledge, economic value as such has not been studied so far. Rather than regarding functional value, such as sharing or accessing relevant information, as an end in itself, this study considers it as means to an end, potentially resulting in an economic advantage for the actor. In the context of online SNS, we define economic value in terms of direct and indirect financial benefits, such as saving money due to valuable information provided by other network members, or realized benefits in the area of work, studies or accommodation. Therefore, while functional value considers access to superior information as a benefit in itself, economic value, as defined in our study, describes an effectively realized benefit in terms of financial advantages, reflecting the implications of informational value.

We hypothesize that the benefits and value to be derived from high levels of entitativity will not only be restricted to the social sphere, but encompass economic advantages for group members as well. The entitativity literature suggests that for high entitativity, perceptions of the in-group are positively biased in a way that members

⁷ Another social capital benefit frequently mentioned is the potential to exercise power, control and influence, caused by other network members’ obligation to reciprocate based on an ongoing history of interactions (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

perceive the group as more capable of realizing positive achievements relative to in-groups low in entitativity (Sherman et al., 1999). Yzerbyt et al. (2000) argued that high entitativity perceptions may increase members' expectations that the group will act upon its intentions, and that it is more likely to accomplish its goals. According to the authors, it is this potency and efficacy of groups that attracts members to join, not only the desire of belonging to a group. It is therefore expected that the positive bias towards a highly entitative in-group with regard to its perceived efficiency, potential and readiness to act will influence SNS members' evaluations of the economic value they realized by participating the group. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that friendship relations, which are representative of high levels of entitativity (Lickel et al., 2000; Sherman et al., 1999), can have a favorable impact on business outcomes, but only if role conflict is perceived as low. This positive effect has partly been attributed to high levels of loyalty, helpfulness and openness among friends (Grayson, 2007). Drawing on the reasoning above we hypothesize:

H₅: Entitativity will positively impact SNS members' realized economic value.

Social capital and economic value

In the social capital literature functional benefits to be derived from access to information have been subsumed under the so-called "economic function of social capital" (Werner and Spence, 2004: 13). According to Bourdieu's overall perspective on capital, which comprises economic, social and cultural dimensions, social capital can, under certain conditions, be converted into economic capital. Bourdieu (1986: 47) described economic capital as "immedi-ately and directly convertible into money".

Literature on economic sociology has remained inconclusive on whether weak relationships (i.e., low levels of social capital) or rather strong ones (i.e., high levels of social capital) are more likely to create economic benefit. Proponents of weak tie theory have argued that sparse networks that are characterized mainly by arm's-length relationships, such as acquaintances, are more likely to result in information benefits and exchanges, due to access to more variety of information (cf. Adler and Kwon, 2002; Uzzi, 1999). Proponents of the strong tie approach, however, argue that embeddedness of relations in social networks can positively impact trust and reciprocity, which facilitate the exchange of

private resources, which otherwise might be difficult to get hold of through market relationships (cf. Uzzi, 1999). Again others have suggested a combined approach (Uzzi, 1999), or state that the advantage of strong versus weak ties depends on other factors, such as the task to be addressed through a network.

In the context of online social capital, Mathwick et al. (2008) found that high levels of social capital effectuate informational value, supporting the strong tie approach. Drawing on these insights, we argue that access to information about job opportunities, special offers or business contacts will increase SNS members' likelihood of realizing actual economic benefits. We hence hypothesize that social capital will have a positive impact on SNS members' realized economic value.

H₆: Social capital will positively impact SNS members' realized economic value.

The moderating role of member heterogeneity in online social networks

Studies in the field of online services marketing have called for the development of differentiated strategies for new and established customers, as customer relationships unfold over time (Falk, Hammerschmidt and Schepers, 2010). In line with these studies we argue that the type of SNS membership – free versus fee-paying – will influence the effects of social and economic value on Wtl. Falk et al. (2010), for instance, showed that functional-utility benefits to be derived from e-service sites are more important for inexperienced users. For experienced, long-term users, on the other hand, higher-order benefits (e.g., hedonic benefit) gain increasing importance. The authors draw on Maslow's hierarchy of needs framework and explain that for experienced users fundamental needs have been satisfied, meaning that functional characteristics may cease to cause customer satisfaction. This finding is also supported by other studies stating that instrumental benefits are essential for consumers' first visit or choice of online service channels or communities (Dholakia et al. 2004). Similarly, for offline contexts, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) mention that psychological benefits may be stronger drivers of sustained subscriptions than financial ones. They discuss that consumers' relationships with companies can be regarded on a continuum ranging from transactional to relational exchanges, on which customers evolve over time. Drawing on the relationship characteristics of both types of relationship,

Gassenheimer et al. (1998) suggest that transactional exchanges are associated rather with economic value, whereas social value is more important for relational/communal relationships.

Building on those insights, we argue that SNS members' motivations to pay subscription fees will differ for 'regular members', who are currently using SNS services for free, and 'premium members', who are already paying fees and may decide to extend their subscription period, or not. In particular, we believe that premium members are comparable to experienced users, as the fact that they are already paying subscription fees is likely to be associated with increased use of the SNS, relative to regular members. In line with the literature discussed above, their relationships with other SNS members are hence likely to be communal, being described by a feeling of sincere concern for the exchange partner's welfare. As according to the communal principle exchange partners do anticipate future exchange, but do not expect to receive monetary re-payment in return for their help (Aggarwal, 2004; Gassenheimer et al., 1998; Ryu and Feick, 2007), economic value will not be a strong driver of premium members' Wtl. Instead, we expect that social value will act as a primary motivator to ensure ongoing relationships with others. Support for this reasoning is provided by Bhattacharya (1998). Based on interviews with current paying members of a museum he concluded that tangible benefits such as discounts in the gift shop or not having to pay admission fees did not seem to drive their willingness to renew their subscriptions, as many of them left those benefits unused.

H₇: For premium members, social value will have a more positive impact on Wtl than economic value.

Regular members, on the other hand, are expected to be rather inexperienced members of the SNS compared to premium members. In freemium-based business models the functionalities of SNS available to regular members are limited relative to those of members who pay subscription fees. Regular members' interactions in the online network will therefore be less frequent and intense and hence characterized by the principle of exchange relationships. Exchange relationships are described as interactions that are mainly motivated by self-interest, which implies that actors' primary goal is to maximize their own outcomes. In return for their support, actors often expect monetary and prompt

re-payment. As those relations are usually driven by economic value and one-time exchanges, exchange partners do not feel responsible for each other, a relationship that has been associated primarily with weak ties (Aggarwal, 2004; Gassenheimer et al., 1998; Ryu and Feick, 2007). In line with this reasoning it is expected that the primary motivational driver for regular members to upgrade their status by paying subscription fees are realized economic returns in the form of financial benefits, derived from previous interactions in the social network. Premium members enjoy the social benefits of more personalized interactions due to premium functionalities associated with an upgraded account. As regular members' possibilities to interact with other members are limited, they are expected to derive less social value, which is thus less likely to act as a driver for Wtl.

H₈: For regular members, economic value will have a more positive impact on Wtl than social value.

Methodology

Sample and procedure

Data for this study was collected among registered members of an online niche SNS with the primary purpose of helping members find and interact with former classmates and friends. Online niche communities have been defined based on their regional scope (e.g., global versus local), or specialization (Aschoff et al., 2010). The SNS investigated in this study predominantly serves a national member base of a European country. Moreover, registered members need to indicate which educational institutions they attended, which directs their connections to former classmates, and hence to a network that is narrowly defined. Registered members can create a personal profile, upload photos and other personal information, and they can use the online service either for free, or upgrade their account against payment of an annual fee. Upgraded members, whom we call premium members, enjoy certain benefits which are not available to non-paying, so-called regular

members, such as sending personalized messages or being able to see by whom one's profile has been viewed.

In cooperation with the SNS, a link to an online survey was posted in a newsletter sent out to registered members during a period of two weeks. Data collection resulted in 5,738 usable responses, including 3,458 regular, and 2,280 premium members. Overall, the dataset consists of more females than males, which is particularly true for premium members, who seem to be more likely to pay subscription fees (Table 12). With regard to age, the distribution of the sample is skewed towards higher age categories, which corresponds with the network operator's description of the distribution of the SNS's actual member base. This distribution might be explained by the specific purpose of the niche SNS we investigated, namely helping individuals to reconnect with former classmates and sharing memories of the past.

Table 12. Demographics

Gender	male	female	total			
Regular members	45.70%	54.30%	3458			
Premium members	37.30%	62.70%	2280			
Age distribution	25 or less	26 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 55	56 or more	
Regular members	3.80%	9.90%	25%	31.20%	30.10%	
Premium members	1.30%	6.80%	24.30%	35.90%	31.70%	

Measures

All measures – with the exception of economic value – were adapted from existing studies to fit the context of our study. If not mentioned otherwise, seven-point Likert type scales were used for all items, anchored by strongly disagree/agree. The measures can be found in Appendix C.

Entitativity has been measured in a variety of ways in past research, ranging from single to multiple item scales (cf. Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino and Sacchi, 2002; Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner and Moffitt, 2007; Igarashi and Kashima, 2011; Ruthick, Hamilton, and Sack, 2008; Sohn, 2009). Drawing on prior studies we measured entitativity with three items, asking respondents to what extent they perceived that users of the SNS (1) formed an entity, (2) had a bond, (3) were a unity.

Social capital was measured by the three components identified by Mathwick et al. (2008), namely trust, reciprocity and volunteerism. Building on the measurement items used in their study, we developed three items for trust (e.g., integrity of SNS members, trust in information provided by other members of the site), three for reciprocity (e.g., importance of 'giving and receiving' on the SNS, contributing to the SNS) and five for voluntarism (e.g., helping others to find information). We hence modeled relational social capital as a formative latent construct determined by three reflective constructs.

Perceived value. The social value measure (3 items) was adapted from Mathwick et al. (2008), including items such as whether interaction with other SNS members results in perceptions of camaraderie, or to what extent members consider social contact with others as valuable. Economic value (4 items) has not previously been studied in this context and was therefore developed for this study. Drawing on our definition of economic value described earlier, namely realized direct and indirect financial benefits resulting from valuable information, we identified potential economic benefits to be derived from SNS by browsing various SNS. Based on members' activities on SNS such as LinkedIn, Facebook and other, predominantly domestic sites, several categories were identified, such as job- or study- related aspects, finding accommodation or receiving advice with regard to products. Many SNS even include separate sections for searching and advertising jobs, internships, apartments, or for buying and selling goods or services, reflecting existing demand for such services. Building on insights with regard to the type of information and goods exchanged online, the following four items were developed: (Recurring) contacts on SNS (1) resulted in commercial benefits, (2) gave me financial benefits, (3) provided me with advantages with regard to work, studies or accommodation, (4) offered me advice or products for which I otherwise would have had to pay.

Willingness to Invest (Wtl), the dependent measure of our model, was assessed with a single item measure phrased "I am going to upgrade to premium membership soon" for regular members, and "I will extend my premium membership" for premium members.

Measurement Model and Analysis Approach

We employed partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), a path modeling approach that is increasingly used in marketing and business studies (Hair, Ringle

and Sarstedt, 2011). Different from covariance-based (CB-)SEM techniques (e.g., Lisrel, Amos), PLS is more prediction oriented and aims to maximize the explained variance in the dependent outcomes (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009). While PLS-SEM is generally regarded as an alternative and sometimes complementary technique to CB-SEM (Chin, 2010), PLS-SEM is explicitly recommended for models including formative measurement constructs. This is particularly the case for second order molar models, where a second-order formative latent construct (in our case social capital) is formed by several first-order reflective latent constructs (i.e., reciprocity, voluntarism, trust) (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011). We modeled the second-order construct by using the hierarchical component model, where the indicators of the first-order reflective constructs are repeated to measure the second-order formative construct (cf. Chin, 2010; Vlachos, Theotokis, Pramataris and Vrechopoulos, 2010).

Analyses were conducted using the SmartPLS 2.0 software (Ringle, C. M./Wende, S./Will A., 2005⁸). We followed the advocated two-step procedure of evaluating the measurement model first, followed by an estimation of the structural model (e.g., Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2009). While the results of the measurement model resemble the outcomes of principal component analyses, the path coefficients calculated as part of the structural model can be interpreted in a similar way as the beta coefficients in ordinary least squares regression (Naranjo-Gil, Hartmann and Maas, 2008).

Results

Measurement model evaluation

In order to assess the psychometric properties of the multiple item scales, we estimated the measurement models, separately for regular- and premium members, by calculating individual indicator reliabilities, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (e.g., Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2009). To do so we ran the PLS

⁸ SmartPLS 2.0 (beta), www.smartpls.de.

algorithm (path weighting scheme) and bootstrapping procedure (500 samples) for both models.

To assess the reliability of individual items, we checked whether the loading of each item on its respective latent construct was higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7, which was confirmed for all item loadings for premium members. For regular members, only two item loadings fell slightly below this threshold (Tables 15 & 16). However, as all item loadings were significant (t -statistic > 1.96), and it is recommended to remove reflective items only if their loadings are smaller than 0.4, we decided to keep all items for further analyses (Henseler et al., 2009). Next, internal consistency was assessed by evaluating the level of the composite reliability (CR) scores for each latent construct. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7, which is considered satisfactory (Tables 13 & 14). CR scores are interpreted in a similar way as Cronbach's alpha, which are calculated by PLS as well and are reported in Tables 13 & 14. The level of convergent validity is indicated by AVE scores (average variance extracted). They indicate the amount of shared variance between reflective measurement items and their respective latent construct, and should be at least 0.5, which indicates that at least half of the indicator's variance is explained by the variance of its respective construct, and not by error (Naranjo-Gil et al., 2008). According to our analyses, all AVE scores are higher than 0.5 (Tables 13 & 14). Discriminant validity was assessed in two ways: first, according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, each latent construct should share more variance with its own block of indicators than with any other latent variables from the model. Therefore, the AVE score of a latent variable should be higher than the construct's squared correlation with any other latent variable, which is confirmed for our models (correlations Tables 13 & 14). A second test to assess discriminant validity is that each indicator's loading should be higher than all of its cross-loadings with other latent variables. Observing Tables 15 & 16, it can be concluded that this is the case for all indicators. Overall, our assessment supports the reliability and validity of our reflective measurement models.

As suggested for formative measurement models, we also examined the degree of multicollinearity among the three social capital components (Hair et al., 2011). We calculated the variance inflation factor ($VIF = 1 / [1 - R^2]$), which should be lower than 10, or ideally even lower than 5 (Hair et al., 2011). Calculations showed that multicollinearity was

not a problem as the mean VIF for social capital was 1.87 for regular members⁹, and 1.40 for premium members¹⁰.

Table 13. Regular Members

composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), cronbach's alpha (CA), correlations

	CR	AVE	CA	Vol	Trust	Recip	Ent	SV	EV	Wtl
SC Voluntarism (Vol)	0.89	0.62	0.84	0.785						
SC Trust (Trust)	0.85	0.65	0.73	0.375	0.806					
SC Reciprocity (Recip)	0.81	0.59	0.66	0.443	0.334	0.769				
Entitativity (Ent)	0.95	0.87	0.93	0.412	0.280	0.306	0.933			
Social value (SV)	0.92	0.79	0.87	0.586	0.520	0.363	0.473	0.891		
Economic value (EV)	0.99	0.95	0.98	0.201	-0.03	0.099	0.366	0.160	0.974	
Wtl	1	1	1	0.272	0.117	0.290	0.401	0.253	0.310	1

* numbers in bold refer to the square root of AVE scores

Table 14. Premium Members

composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), cronbach's alpha (CA), correlations

	CR	AVE	CA	Vol	Trust	Recip	Ent	SV	EV	Wtl
Voluntarism (Vol)	0.90	0.64	0.86	0.798						
Trust (Trust)	0.85	0.66	0.74	0.465	0.811					
Reciprocity (Recip)	0.84	0.64	0.71	0.498	0.405	0.797				
Entitativity (Ent)	0.95	0.87	0.93	0.418	0.353	0.315	0.933			
Social value (SV)	0.93	0.81	0.88	0.572	0.589	0.394	0.464	0.898		
Economic value (EV)	0.99	0.95	0.98	0.180	-0.001	0.076	0.344	0.0922	0.9743	
Wtl	1	1	1	0.317	0.261	0.255	0.332	0.329	0.027	1

* numbers in bold refer to the square root of AVE scores

⁹ VIF per social capital construct: VIF_{RECIP} = 1.28, VIF_{VOLUNT} = 1.30, VIF_{TRUST} = 1.16

¹⁰ VIF per social capital construct: VIF_{RECIP} = 1.39, VIF_{VOLUNT} = 1.48, VIF_{TRUST} = 1.34

Table 15. Full correlation matrix (loadings and cross loadings) - Regular Members

	SC Volunt	SC Trust	SOC Value	ECO Value	ENT	SC Recip	Wtl
Vol1	0.800*	0.208	0.406	0.173	0.304	0.342	0.216
Vol2	0.807*	0.222	0.410	0.157	0.305	0.309	0.209
Vol3	0.776*	0.428	0.515	0.106	0.312	0.391	0.208
Vol4	0.847*	0.381	0.542	0.163	0.364	0.393	0.213
Vol5	0.685*	0.197	0.4080	0.203	0.330	0.288	0.227
Trust1	0.338	0.794*	0.480	-0.047	0.212	0.271	0.088
Trust2	0.265	0.847*	0.393	-0.071	0.182	0.247	0.058
Trust3	0.298	0.776*	0.380	0.041	0.282	0.288	0.135
SV1	0.515	0.478	0.851*	0.079	0.330	0.31	0.189
SV2	0.531	0.451	0.917*	0.178	0.483	0.344	0.249
SV3	0.520	0.466	0.904*	0.165	0.443	0.316	0.234
EV1	0.197	-0.034	0.154	0.979*	0.358	0.094	0.295
EV2	0.193	-0.038	0.150	0.984*	0.353	0.094	0.307
EV3	0.199	-0.030	0.155	0.980*	0.354	0.102	0.309
EV4	0.195	-0.022	0.164	0.953*	0.361	0.095	0.299
Ent1	0.372	0.263	0.432	0.344	0.921*	0.286	0.366
Ent2	0.395	0.276	0.452	0.309	0.927*	0.286	0.363
Ent3	0.386	0.247	0.441	0.370	0.951*	0.285	0.392
Recip1	0.376	0.220	0.288	0.111	0.245	0.790*	0.271
Recip2	0.223	0.211	0.212	0.030	0.170	0.679*	0.171
Recip3	0.396	0.328	0.324	0.078	0.276	0.830*	0.221
Wtl	0.272	0.117	0.253	0.310	0.401	0.290	1

* loadings significant with $p = 0.01$ (i.e., t -statistic > 2.58)

Table 16. Full correlation matrix (loadings and cross loadings) - Premium Members

Item	ENTI	SC Recip	SC Trust	SC Volunt	SOC Value	ECO Value	Wtl
Ent1	0.926*	0.297	0.331	0.383	0.411	0.306	0.308
Ent2	0.928*	0.302	0.343	0.406	0.472	0.281	0.335
Ent3	0.946*	0.282	0.314	0.3811	0.415	0.351	0.285
Recip1	0.248	0.818*	0.3116	0.427	0.318	0.065	0.240
Recip2	0.202	0.719*	0.250	0.295	0.252	0.065	0.150
Recip3	0.293	0.848*	0.392	0.451	0.360	0.055	0.212
Trust1	0.265	0.352	0.811*	0.417	0.559	-0.033	0.257
Trust2	0.230	0.281	0.844*	0.323	0.443	-0.039	0.176
Trust3	0.360	0.347	0.776*	0.383	0.421	0.069	0.195
Vol1	0.339	0.363	0.271	0.798*	0.386	0.190	0.207
Vol2	0.339	0.350	0.309	0.816*	0.429	0.182	0.215
Vol3	0.323	0.462	0.485	0.805*	0.527	0.091	0.306
Vol4	0.365	0.463	0.453	0.851*	0.541	0.117	0.289
Vol5	0.300	0.328	0.304	0.714*	0.376	0.152	0.238
SV1	0.336	0.357	0.564	0.534	0.870*	0.022	0.323
SV2	0.474	0.367	0.504	0.510	0.913*	0.120	0.288
SV3	0.442	0.335	0.519	0.498	0.912*	0.108	0.274
EV1	0.312	0.065	-0.013	0.170	0.084	0.969*	0.021
EV2	0.325	0.069	-0.011	0.168	0.075	0.985*	0.021
EV3	0.324	0.075	0.004	0.177	0.094	0.979*	0.031
EV4	0.341	0.085	0.013	0.186	0.105	0.964*	0.033
Wtl	0.332	0.255	0.261	0.317	0.329	0.027	1

* loadings significant with $p = 0.01$ (i.e., t -statistic > 2.58)

Hypotheses testing

Building on Mathwick et al.'s (2008) research, it was expected that social capital, modeled as a formative second-order latent construct, would be formed by three first order, reflective constructs. This assumption was tested together with hypotheses 1 to 5. To test our hypotheses we specified two structural models in PLS and performed separate analyses for regular members and premium members. This approach was necessitated by the difference in the phrasing of the outcome variable, willingness to invest (Wtl), for regular and premium members. For each of these sub-samples, we ran the PLS algorithm as well as the bootstrapping procedure to obtain path coefficients, their respective t-values, and R^2 coefficients of the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2011). Similar to multiple regression, the quality of PLS models is evaluated based on the directions and significance of path coefficients, and the magnitude of R^2 , which signifies the amount of variance in a construct that is explained by the model (Chin, 2010; Götz, Liehr-Gobbers and Krafft, 2010). While some experts suggest that there is no generally acceptable threshold for the size of R^2 (cf. Götz et al., 2010), a value of 0.20 is considered as high in consumer behavior studies according to Hair et al. (2011).

Consistent with Mathwick et al.'s (2008) research, our results confirm the three-dimensional structure of social capital, which is formed by voluntarism, trust and reciprocity (refer to Table 17 for beta coefficients and t-values). In line with hypothesis 1 and 2, entitativity and social capital positively impact SNS members' Wtl. H_1 and H_2 are hence confirmed for regular and for premium members. The estimation of the two structural models also confirmed hypotheses 3 and 4, which suggested that entitativity and social capital will positively impact SNS members' social value. The explained variance in social value accounted for by entitativity and social capital is $R^2 = 0.47$ for regular members and $R^2 = 0.46$ for premium members. A positive effect of entitativity and social capital was also expected for economic value (H_5 & H_6). This hypothesis, however, was only confirmed for entitativity, (H_5), while the effect of social capital on economic value (H_6) was non-significant for regular and premium members. H_6 was thus rejected. For economic value, entitativity and social capital account for a R^2 value of 0.13 for regular members, and 0.11 for premium members, values than are considerably lower than those for social value.

To test H₇ and H₈, we observed the path coefficients and significance values for the effects of social and economic value on Wtl. In line with H₇, for premium members the effect of social value ($\beta = 0.11$; $t = 3.74$) had a more positive impact on Wtl than economic value, which was even significantly negative ($\beta = -0.08$; $t = 4.23$). In line with H₈, for regular members, economic value ($\beta = 0.19$; $t = 8.99$) had a more positive impact on Wtl than social value, which was non-significant ($\beta = -0.00$; $t = 0.20$). The combined variance in Wtl explained by our model, including entitativity, social capital, social and economic value, resulted in R² values of 0.21 for regular members and 0.17 for premium members. While the predictive quality of both models slightly deteriorates when the indirect factors social and economic value are excluded ($R^2_{\text{Regulars}} = 0.18$; $R^2_{\text{Premium}} = 0.16$), the effect sizes¹¹ of these differences are weak.

Table 17. Hypotheses testing - path analyses (Beta, t-value)

Path analyses		Regular Members		Premium Members		Outcome
Hypotheses	Path	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value	
	SC Voluntarism -> Social Capital	0.670	75.533	0.618	62.678	supported
	SC Trust -> Social Capital	0.308	36.232	0.325	39.180	supported
	SC Reciprocity -> Social Capital	0.280	40.883	0.282	38.304	supported
H ₁	Entitativity -> Wtl	0.263	12.540	0.221	8.941	supported
H ₂	Social Capital -> Wtl	0.155	7.347	0.190	6.756	supported
H ₃	Entitativity -> Social Value	0.225	14.747	0.205	9.675	supported
H ₄	Social Capital -> Social Value	0.555	39.934	0.562	27.923	supported
H ₅	Entitativity -> Economic Value	0.372	19.183	0.348	16.173	supported
H ₆	Social Capital -> Economic Value	-0.014	0.679	-0.029	1.180	rejected
H _{7&8}	Economic Value -> Wtl	0.191	8.995	-0.082	4.229	H ₇ : supported
	Social Value -> Wtl	-0.004	0.198	0.109	3.735	H ₈ : supported

¹¹ Effect size calculation: Cohen's $f^2 = (R^2_{\text{full model}} - R^2_{\text{partial model}}) / (1 - R^2_{\text{full model}})$

Figure 15. Regular members

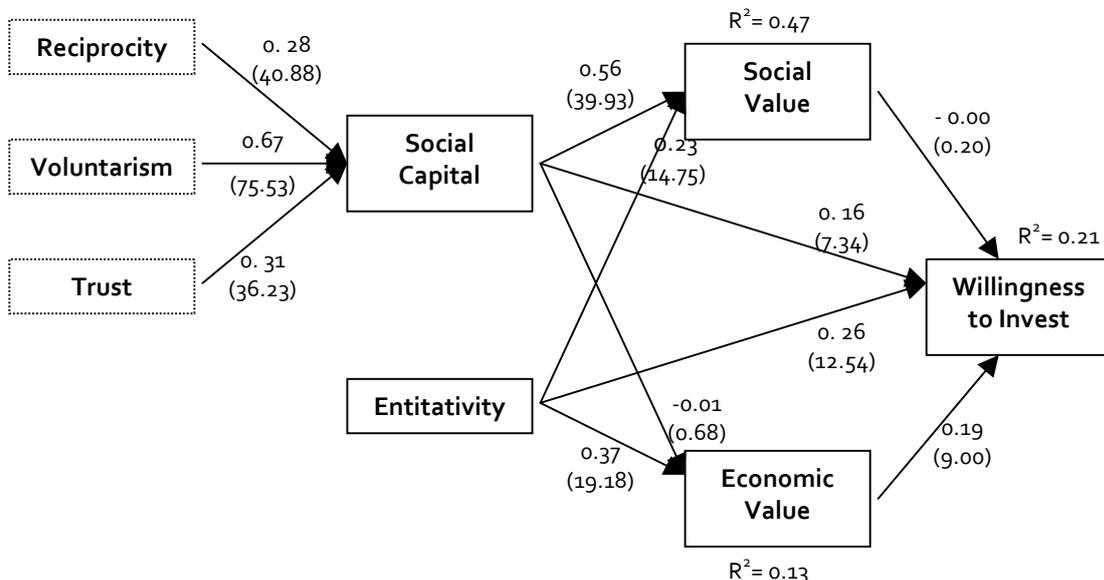
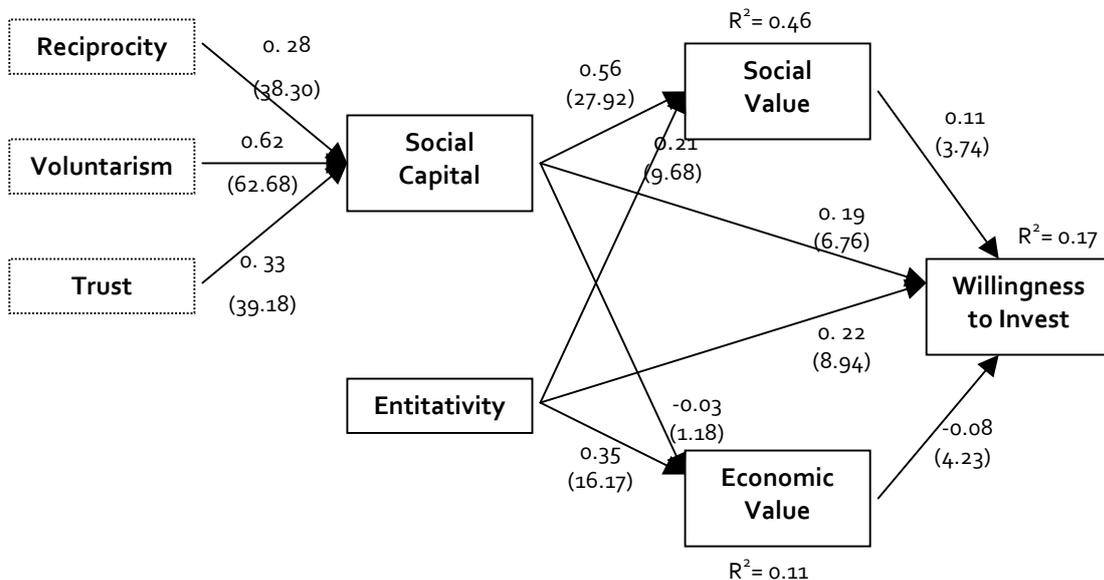


Figure 16. Premium members



Post hoc analyses

As we were interested in potential differential effects of entitativity for regular and premium members, we tested whether the effects of economic and social value respectively on Wtl were moderated by entitativity. To do so, we extended our structural models for regular and premium members by including interaction terms for entitativity and

social/economic value respectively. We used the stepwise product term approach which is recommended for reflective PLS measurement models (Henseler and Fassott, 2010). For regular members, our results show significant and positive interaction effects for entitativity with social ($\beta = 0.05$; $t = 2.82$) and economic value ($\beta = 0.08$; $t = 3.25$), suggesting that both values have a stronger impact on Wtl for members high in entitativity. For premium members, however, no significant interaction effect was detected for social ($\beta = -0.06$; $t = 1.36$) or economic value ($\beta = -0.02$; $t = 0.82$), indicating that the impact of benefits on their Wtl is unaffected by the level of entitativity.

Discussion and Implications

Considering the growing number of online SNS and their struggle for profitability, the aim of this study was to expand our understanding of viable value propositions for different customer groups of niche SNS. Moreover, we also investigated how perceived customer value can be translated into economic returns for niche SNS providers. Our conceptual model builds on Mathwick et al. (2008), who adopted a social capital lens to explain customer value creation in online communities. To capture the distinctive scope of a niche, we added entitativity to this model, a concept from psychology that still needs to find its way into the marketing literature. Moreover, we – directly and indirectly – linked entitativity and social capital to members' willingness to invest in a niche SNS by considering the heterogeneity of customers in terms of their membership status. Based on the freemium business model of the niche SNS we investigated, where registered members participate in the network either for free (i.e., regular members), or decide to upgrade their account by paying subscription fees (i.e., premium members), two customer groups were considered.

This study contributes to the academic literature in several ways. First, it adds insights to the literature on value propositions for online communities by introducing entitativity. The concept describes to what extent a group represents a single, meaningful entity rather than a mere collection of individuals (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011; Lickel et al., 2000). It hence captures the narrow scope of a niche, which exists of a rather homogenous

group of customers that is willing to pay premium prices for highly distinctive offerings (cf. Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994). By linking entitativity to members' perceptions of increased social and economic value, and to their willingness to invest in subscription fees, our results confirm that the concept serves as a value proposition for niche SNS. Moreover, entitativity has mainly been studied from the perspective of how individuals perceive out-groups, rather than how they see and respond to their own in-groups (Sherman et al., 1999; Yzerbyt et al., 2000). By studying the effects of in-group entitativity, we contribute to this literature stream more generally, also in the specific context of online social networks, where, to our knowledge, the concept has not hitherto been studied.

Second, this study adds insights to the ongoing academic debate on whether and when subscription-based online business models are successful (e.g., Dou, 2004; Enders et al., 2008; Pauwels and Weiss, 2008). In particular, we considered the specific case of niche SNS and introduced and empirically investigated factors that may impact members' willingness to invest. While according to some researchers it is almost impossible for online providers to capture economic value from SNS in the form of subscription fees (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010), others have started to explore ways to capitalize on members' online interactions. While these studies focused, for instance, on the quality of online content (Dou, 2004; Wang et al., 2005), or marketing practices (Pauwels and Weiss, 2008), we studied entitativity and social capital, two concepts that can be less easily controlled by online providers. The results of our empirical analysis confirmed that both concepts have a direct and positive impact on members' willingness to invest and thus favorably impact niche SNS providers' financial returns. These findings also contribute to the social capital literature, which has shown that online social capital can increase individuals' commitment towards communities in terms of investing time and efforts (Chiu et al., 2006; Mathwick et al., 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). We add to these insights by confirming a positive impact on members' financial investment intentions. In addition to these direct effects, we also investigated indirect routes via social and economic value to be derived from social capital and entitativity. While entitativity positively impacted both types of value, social capital only seems to spur social value, while our hypothesis that it would also generate economic value was not supported. We described realized economic value as a consequence of informational value, which, according to Mathwick et al.'s (2008) study, is predicted by social capital. Our results suggest, however, that the underlying logic for economic value

might differ from how informational value is realized. As suggested by Adler and Kwon (2002: 31), strong community norms may hamper entrepreneurial activity as members of tight-knit communities may feel obliged to share their resources with their closest members, which could hence “slow the accumulation of capital”. The authors (p. 30) referred to this phenomenon as “overembeddedness” and warned of possible backfire effects of social capital, which may be reflected by our findings as well. Interestingly, our results suggest that entitativity drives economic value to a somewhat larger extent than social value, whereas the normative impact of social capital only affects social value (cf. beta values in Table 17). These outcomes suggest that these concepts, although they are both group phenomena, might serve different purposes and should thus not be used interchangeably.

Third, this study underscores the importance of considering member heterogeneity when investigating SNS members’ motivations to invest financial resources. Our study shows that economic value acts as a driver only for regular members, whereas for premium members it is social value that elicits favorable investment intentions. These results suggest that regular members’ online interactions might be characterized rather by exchange relationships, which are mostly motivated by self-interest and thus by economic value (Gassenheimer et al., 1998). Premium members’ interactions, on the other hand, seem to resemble communal relationships, which are reflected by group solidarity and thus driven by social value (Gassenheimer et al., 1998). Our study hence supports the applicability of established relationship marketing principles to the specific context of online social networks. It provides preliminary evidence that free and fee-paying members of subscription-based SNS seem to be guided by different relationship principles and hence seek out different sources of customer value. Interestingly, even though we expected the impact of economic value on WtI to be rather weak for premium members relative to social value, it turned out to be even significantly negative. Seemingly, the realization of economic value has a detrimental effect on premium members’ intentions to extend their paid membership period. Although we find this outcome rather surprising, it might be explained by the communal relationship paradigm among premium members. They do not only lack the expectation of receiving rewards for their efforts, but may even perceive economically motivated behavior as a social risk for the relationship (cf. Ryu and Feick, 2007). A similar explanation is provided by Habisch (in Werner and Spence, 2004), who

states that motivations typical of strong relationships, such as a sense of belonging or prevailing norms, can be damaged by monetary compensation. Premium members might therefore strongly reject economic value as a motivation for their financial investment into the social network.

Interestingly, post-hoc analyses revealed significant and positive moderating effects of entitativity for the paths connecting social/economic value respectively with Wtl, however, only for regular members. These preliminary findings suggest that niche SNS members might be even more heterogeneous than previously assumed in our model. In particular, seemingly not all regular members are motivated equally by economic value. Rather, both economic and social value work as an incentive to pay membership fees only for those members who perceive high levels of entitativity. Regular members low in entitativity, however, are less likely to be motivated to upgrade their accounts by any kind of benefit. This latter group seems to resemble 'lurkers', one of four relationship types identified by Mathwick (2002). Lurkers use online environments to observe what others are doing, while they do not wish to actively engage in communal or exchange relationships themselves. Premium members, on the other hand, are closer to the communal end of Gassenheimer et al.'s (1998) relationship continuum, which has been associated with friendship and family relations and thus also with high entitativity, which might explain why their motivations to pay membership fees were not influenced by entitativity.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, this study offers useful insights and recommendations for niche SNS operators, but potentially for broader online networks as well. In view of an increasingly mature and competitive SNS landscape, SNS providers may wish to focus on one or several niches which they are able to serve better than their "big brothers" (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994: 44). It has been suggested that many individuals find large SNS intimidating and do not feel comfortable sharing personal information with a highly diverse audience (Sharp, 2009). Rather, they wish to create close connections with a smaller audience in more purposeful networks, comparable to an "intimate dinner party com-prised of like-minded people with the same general focus or interest" (Sharp, 2009: 32). Niche SNS therefore need to define a unique value proposition which cements

members to the group, and sets it apart from competitors in members' minds. Entitativity has been suggested to have this effect and, according to our findings, even increases members' intentions to pay or extend their membership fees. Network operators should hence try to stimulate perceptions of entitativity among members, for instance, by identifying and communicating aspects that highlight members' common ground. Potential cues could be derived from the literature on the antecedents of entitativity (e.g., Campbell, 1958; Lickel et al., 2000). The niche SNS we investigated for the purpose of this study does so in several ways: first, as members are requested to indicate any educational institutions they attended upon registration, the focus is put on interactions with former classmates. Second, by focusing on stories, music and fashion from the past, active members are invited to share common memories from the time they went to school, which might again strengthen perceptions of belonging, or common interest.

Furthermore, this research suggests that the value sought by members differs for non-paying, regular members and fee-paying premium members, which bears important implications for SNS operators' marketing approaches. Based on our findings we suggest that for regular members, the focus of SNS facilities and marketing communications should be put on potential economic benefits. For instance, operators could consider providing more functionalities that lead to economic value, such as including website categories for job search, housing and for exchanging goods and services. For premium members, however, the focus should be reversed and stress group solidarity and the fun of interacting with others, while refraining from the communication of potential economic advantages.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. Despite the large sample size ($n = 5,738$) which increases generalizability of our findings for the specific niche SNS we investigated, future research should consider a variety of niche SNS in order to verify whether our results are representative across other online social networks as well. More specifically, future studies could include SNS of different size, geographic scope (e.g., local, regional, national) or topical interest to define the niche context based on a variety of factors. Moreover, while in this study we were interested whether and why entitativity spurs members' Wtl in a niche SNS, future research could apply the concept to large, global online communities as well, or

even compare the impact of entitativity on Wtl across niche and non-niche SNS. As broader, global SNS might have a variety of possibilities at their disposal to influence paying intentions relative to niche SNS, entitativity might be less important as a driver relative to other factors, an assumption that certainly requires further investigation.

As economic value has shown to encourage regular members to invest in the SNS, other factors that might complement entitativity in explaining how economic value is created could be explored in future research. The observation that entitativity and social capital only accounted for 13.4% of the variance in economic value suggests that there might be other, more influential aspects, which, however, still need to be explored.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation shed light on two emerging phenomena in the marketing environment, business-nonprofit partnerships and online social networks, which might be vehicles for integrating social value with companies' economic interests. In particular, this thesis aimed to explore how social interactions at the organizational level (i.e., between business and nonprofits) and individual level (i.e., among consumers in an online network) can influence consumers as well as companies. The four chapters suggest that, under certain conditions, value created for consumers can be integrated with companies' economic interests as well as with society's interests more broadly. The findings and implications are discussed in more detail below.

Business-nonprofit partnerships

Chapter two is a conceptual piece of work that draws on insights from the marketing, psychology, organizational and economic literatures to explore potential diffusion mechanisms of business-nonprofit partnerships. First, we suggested that there exist potential trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-round effects of partnership outcomes between different levels, including society (macro level), the partnering organizations (meso level) and interactions among individuals (micro level). Second, focusing on the micro level, we conceptualized how partnership-related perceptions and behaviors may spread among managers, employees and consumers of the company partner. With regard to the micro level, this theoretical study brought forward a number of propositions. In particular, we suggested that participative and transformational leadership styles, as well as an open communication climate would be positively related to organizational members' engagement in partnership-related conversations with their superiors (trickle-up), their

peers within and across the partnering organizations (trickle-round), and subordinates (trickle-down). Equally, our conceptual model suggested that theories on social exchange and contagion, social learning and attraction-selection-attrition may explain how partnership-related evaluations and behaviors trickle up, down and round among managers, employees and consumers.

Our conceptualization suggests how partnerships may be effectively diffused among individuals within and across the partnering organizations. By doing so this study contributes to the academic literature that has called for more research on the processes of cross-sector collaboration, as “organizational benefits not only stem from the outcomes of the interaction but also from the process of interaction” (Seitanidi and Ryan, 2007: 256). Similarly, Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright (2006) underlined that partnerships need to be diffused successfully within organizations in order to be sustained. Most previous research on business-nonprofit partnerships has concentrated either on the categorization of partnerships/individual organizations, or on partnership outcomes at the organizational level (meso). While these studies identified factors that may advance or inhibit successful collaboration between the partners at the meso level, the focus of the current theoretical exploration is on processes that might explain the successful implementation of a partnership at the micro level (i.e., within organizations). Through the identification of specific theoretical constructs that can be used in future empirical studies, this chapter fosters theory building with regard to micro-level interactions. More specifically, we applied theories that have mostly been used to explain organizational top-down effects to a partnership context and suggest that these same theories could also explain trickle-up and trickle-round effects. This reasoning is explained by the collaborative nature of value creation in business-nonprofit partnerships, which – as a matter of principle – abandons hierarchical structures.

The micro level of business-nonprofit partnerships introduced in chapter two was further explored in chapters three and four by considering potential effects on employees and most notably, on consumers. In particular, similar to chapter two, chapter three theoretically established a link between employees and consumers. By paying specific attention to the service-profit chain concept and related psychological mechanisms, this study illustrated how employees’ active participation in partnership activities might impact consumers either favorably (i.e., high consumer self-interest), or unfavorably (i.e., low self-

interest). In chapter two we introduced theories that stress the consistency of perceptions among employees and consumers, by arguing that (un)favorable thoughts about the partnership would spill-over from one actor to the other. In chapter three we elaborated further on this by suggesting that consumers could object to the partnership if they feel neglected by employees, even though employees may enjoy being involved in the partnership and hence support it. Drawing on studies from different disciplines, chapter three bridges insights from the marketing and organizational literature, and contributes a conceptual framework for future empirical investigations.

In addition to the theoretical approaches used in chapters two and three, chapters three and four were based on empirical studies and investigated the relative importance of consumers' self-interested motivations from different perspectives. While chapter three theorized how self-interest can be created equally for all consumers (i.e., through interactions with employees), chapter four viewed self-interest versus other-interest from the perspective of personality traits. Both studies are similar in a way that they suggest that self-interested motivations would impact consumers' responses towards business-nonprofit partnerships in terms of their evaluative and behavioral responses with regard to the company. Furthermore, we hypothesized that these effects would be moderated by the level of fit between the company and the cause (i.e., company-cause fit). In both studies we found that consumers' self-interested motivations, whether they are induced by the company's actions or inevitably related to a person's personality, only seem to influence consumers' responses in the case of high-fit partnerships, whereas in the case of low fit such motivations did not seem to matter.

More specifically, chapter three suggests that neither high consumer self-interest, nor high company-cause fit should be regarded as a panacea for favorable consumer evaluations and behaviors. While self-interest is often considered as "the cardinal human motive" (Holmes, Miller and Lerner, 2002), and high fit should evoke more positive consumer responses than low fit according to congruence theory (e.g., Lafferty, 2007), our findings suggest that both tactics may only deliver the desired results for companies when communicated in combination. This reasoning is supported by consistency theories, according to which consumers try to avoid dissonance among their thoughts and expectations (Simpson, Irwin and Lawrence, 2006). It seems that any information related to either low self-interest or low fit is perceived as unfavorable, and undermines potential

positive effects of either high self-interest or high fit. These results contribute to the emerging academic debate in the marketing field that calls for more understanding on how corporate social responsibility (CSR) may benefit individual stakeholders' interests in order to understand its effects for the company (Bhattacharya, Korschun and Sen, 2009; Peloza and Shang, 2011).

Consumers' individual self-interest was also addressed empirically in chapter four. However, instead of theorizing that self-interest is created equally for all consumers, as we did in chapter three, chapter four studied the importance of self-interest versus other-interest from the perspective of personality traits. Drawing on the social value orientation (SVO) literature, which differentiates between prosocials and proselfs (Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten and Joireman, 1997), chapter four suggests that identical information about a partnership and the level of fit may signal different meanings to prosocials and proselfs. Whereas prosocials appear to reward companies for their engagement with a well-fitting cause in terms of positive evaluations and word-of-mouth intentions, proselfs rather punish them for high fit. Drawing on consumers' attributions to fit, congruence and social identity theories, our reasoning challenges and extends prevailing conceptions of the CSR literature. In particular, previous CSR studies drawing on congruence or consistency theories maintained that consumers' responses to high-fit alliances would be more favorable compared to low fit, as individuals strive for harmony and consistency among cognitive elements (Lafferty, Goldsmith and Hult, 2004; Jagre, Watson and Watson, 2001). However, as prosocials and proselfs value different things and interpret identical situations differently (Van Lange and Kuhlman, 1994), it is likely that consistency is not established equally for all consumers. This reasoning was also confirmed by our findings that prosocials and proselfs perceive a company's product quality and innovativeness differently according to the information on fit. While high fit seems to signal high corporate abilities to prosocials, the opposite is true for proselfs, which also explains their responses towards the company in terms of attitude and trust, which in turn influence their recommendation intentions.

In summary, chapters three and four suggest that congruence or consistency theories may provide a meaningful lens to study consumer responses to business-nonprofit alliances beyond the context in which these theories have hitherto been applied. In particular, while congruence theory has mainly been used to underline the importance of high company-cause fit (e.g., Jagre et al., 2001; Lafferty et al., 2004), our studies imply that

consumers' positive or negative responses towards companies depend on whether information on fit is consistent with their interactive and relativistic experiences (Holbrook, 2006). Put differently, individual customer value seems to be created through business-nonprofit partnerships to the extent that consumers' thoughts evoked by information about the partnership are in line with their subjective values and other experiences with the company.

Online social networks

Similar to chapters three and four, congruence or consistency theories may provide a meaningful lens to study consumer responses to online social networks as well. In particular, in addition to the direct effects of social capital and entitativity on willingness to invest in membership fees, we find that members' payment intentions also depend on the value (i.e., social versus economic) they derive from the community phenomena social capital and entitativity. However, as hypothesized, not all members' intentions to invest in fees seem to be motivated equally by these values. Whereas non-paying members appear to be driven mainly by economic value (e.g., realized financial advantage, finding a job or housing through the online network), upgraded members who already pay subscription fees are motivated to extend their paid membership period rather by social value. Interestingly, upgraded members even seem to strongly reject economic value as a driver to extend their subscription period, which might be rooted in the communally-oriented relationships they seem to maintain on their online networks. Therefore, members' willingness to invest financial resources in the form of membership fees seems to depend on whether the realized benefits (i.e., economic versus social value) are consistent with the relationship norms that govern members' online interactions (i.e., exchange versus communal relation). Economically motivated behavior seems to be inconsistent with the communal relationship paradigm where individuals truly care about the other's welfare, and may hence cause negative feelings (cf. Ryu and Feick, 2007).

More generally, chapter five contributes to the hitherto inconclusive academic debate on the potential success of subscription-based online revenue models. While some literature highlights social network site members' general reluctance to pay subscription fees due to the nature of value creation in such networks (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010),

others refer to the indispensability of a “critical mass of users” (Enders, Hungenberg, Denker and Mauch, 2008: 209). While this discussion may bear indirect (adverse) implications for niche social network sites, the academic literature has remained largely silent on niches. Therefore, our results lend support for the emerging literature suggesting that subscription fees may provide a viable online revenue model for social network site providers, even in the context of a niche.

Finally, the findings of chapter five add new insights to the available literature on online value propositions, which, to our knowledge, has not yet addressed the specific context of a niche. While social capital theory has been suggested as a value proposition for online communities by previous research (e.g., Chiu, Hsu and Wang, 2006; Mathwick, Wiertz and de Ruyter, 2008; Wasko and Faraj, 2005), our study adds the concept of entitativity, which seems particularly meaningful to capture the narrow scope of a niche. Entitativity describes to what extent a group is perceived as a single, meaningful, coherent entity (Igarashi and Kashima, 2011; Lickel, Hamilton, Wierzchowska, Lewis, Sherman and Uhles, 2000). The concept hence closely resembles a niche, which has been defined as a relatively homogenous group of customers with similar attributes or needs (cf. Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994). The results of our empirical investigation show that members who perceive their online social network as high in entitativity derive more social and economic value. These findings also advance previous studies on entitativity, which – to our knowledge – have not yet applied the concept in an online context. Our preliminary findings may spur future investigations on entitativity in the (online) marketing field.

In summary, all studies to some extent seem to reflect the overall struggle and objective to balance and integrate social and economic needs, which seems to apply for organizations as well as for consumers. While consumers are willing to engage in social interactions, thereby contributing to social value, either directly (chapter 5), or indirectly by supporting business-nonprofit partnerships (chapters 3, 4), this readiness is accompanied by economic considerations as well (e.g., self-interest, importance of high corporate abilities, economic value). Similarly, at an organizational level, companies increasingly contribute to and facilitate social interactions (e.g., by providing online social networks, or through the collaboration with other actors in society), while at the same time they strive to capitalize on the social value that is created.

Implications for practice

While our findings pose some managerial challenges, they also depict important implications. First, the empirical findings of this thesis suggest that customer value is not created equally for all consumers. While companies may be able to manage consumers' expectations to some extent, for instance, by choosing or communicating an appropriate level of fit, or by stressing specific benefits (e.g., consumer self-interest, social or economic value), they have to accept that certain aspects are beyond their control. Individuals' social value orientations, for example, are beyond companies' sphere of influence. Similarly, as suggested by our post-hoc analyses in chapter five, common segmentation criteria, such as differentiating between fee-paying and non-paying social network members, might not fully explain consumers' expectations or needs. Rather, members' subjective perceptions of entitativity seem to provide an additional explanation for which benefits in fact drive regular members' behavioral intentions, which, however, will be difficult for companies to assess.

While at first sight this might seem problematic from a managerial point of view, insights from the literature on online (brand) communities may provide interesting avenues, even in the context of business-nonprofit partnerships. More specifically, similar to brands that engage in online communities, companies that facilitate or stimulate interactions among different actors in the marketing environment abandon control as well. For instance, in business-nonprofit partnerships, companies share their well-guarded core business related expertise with their nonprofit partner, and providers of online social networks fully rely on their members to create value through interactions. Rather than seeking control, the literature on brand communities recommends managers to nurture and facilitate communities by creating beneficial conditions, and by trying to understand developments in the community rather than steering them. Similarly, it is advocated that consumer loyalty should be regarded as a "reward for meeting people's needs", rather than as a motive to set-up a community, and that these needs may differ across consumers (Fournier and Lee, 2009: 107).

Applying these insights to the findings of this thesis, companies should refrain from viewing social interactions (e.g., business-nonprofit partnerships, online social networks) as a marketing tool to boost economic returns. Rather, social interactions, either at the

organizational or individual level, should be evaluated based on their potential to create differential value for a variety of stakeholders. Acknowledging that consumers have different needs and seek diverse values, companies should make sure that social interactions do not only contribute to consumers' social, but also their economic benefits, and that they can choose a value proposition that suits them most in a certain situation. Strategic business-nonprofit partnerships seem particularly suitable to achieve this aim. By partnering with a nonprofit organization that complements a company's lacking skills or helps the business to innovate (cf. Holmes and Smart, 2009), partnerships can appeal to consumers' social *and* economic needs. Moreover, companies could offer different levels of stakeholder engagement in these partnerships, for instance for employees, managers and consumers, to meet different audiences' interests in such initiatives.

Second, and related to the previous implication, companies face a variety of possibilities with regard to whether, what and how to communicate about their CSR initiatives. Whereas many companies are cautious to inform important stakeholders about their good deeds, desired business returns depend on whether these constituents are aware of and support the company's CSR efforts (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010). The findings of this thesis suggest that the issues companies should stress in their CSR communication depend on what they want to achieve. While priming consumers' self-interest can have a direct and positive impact on a company's bottom line (in terms of buying and switching intentions), effects on the corporate image in terms of favorable attitudes or trust are less likely, at least, if not accompanied by a high level of fit between the company and the cause. Although this finding seems to imply that it is advisable for companies to choose a nonprofit partner with a high fit, such a notion should be taken with caution in view of the findings revealed in chapter four. In particular, chapter four suggests that companies selecting a high-fit cause face a dilemma. On the one hand, high fit seems to signal good corporate abilities to prosocials, who will hence reward the company. On the other hand, high fit seems to imply low corporate abilities to proselfs, who thus punish companies. While business organizations might not be able to specifically target prosocials and proselfs, they should make sure consumers are aware of their strong corporate abilities to avoid potential pitfalls of CSR communication in the first place.

It should be noted, though, irrespective of consumers' preferences for fit, that the choice for a high-fit partnership seems more advisable from the viewpoint of ensuring the

success of business-nonprofit collaboration. Similarities in the partners' missions, cultures and core business facilitate understanding and interactions between the partners (Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright, 2004). High fit may thus seem a logic choice from a strategic point of view. From a societal perspective, however, a company's deliberate choice for a high-fit partner could also have detrimental effects, as certain urgent causes simply might not fit well with most companies' objectives, and might therefore be neglected as potential partners. Overall, considering the pros and cons, it seems advisable for companies to choose a high-fit cause that is best equipped to help address pressing societal issues, and meets the company's strategic objectives. At the same time, however, they should ensure that consumers have no reason to believe that the partnership activity might be carried out at the expense of the company's corporate abilities or its customer orientation.

Third, a broadened stakeholder perspective seems not only advisable with regard to company-cause fit, but for business-nonprofit partnerships more generally. As implied by our conceptualizations in chapters two and three, such initiatives may not only benefit society and the partnering organizations, but bear important implications for individual constituents (consumers, employees, managers) as well. In order to align the needs and expectations of different stakeholders, companies should strive for concerted efforts by various organizational departments. Instead, the responsibility for partnerships, and CSR more generally, is often assigned to the marketing (or CSR) department alone, and usually only constitutes one task among many. Coordination across departments may help to tackle problems of uncoordinated communication and poorly managed engagement of stakeholders, two aspects that have been identified as key impediments for the success of business-nonprofit partnerships (C&E, 2010; Tennyson and Harrison, 2008).

While our conceptual model in chapter two still requires empirical validation, more attention to potential trickle-up effects might be desirable. To facilitate employee engagement among lower levels of the organizational hierarchy, management may need to ensure that employees can openly exchange their ideas about the partnership, or that they are able to initiate partnership-related activities (such as fundraising or knowledge sharing) themselves. To create such an environment, management may also need to pay attention to (team) leaders and their ways of interacting with subordinates. Managers' indispensable commitment towards the partnership, as already advocated by previous studies (Collier and Esteban, 2007; Waldman, Siegel and Javidan, 2006), seems even more important when

considering more subtle diffusion mechanisms implied by for instance, social exchange, contagion or learning theories. The long-term and integrative character of partnerships provides promising possibilities for engagement of and interaction with a variety of stakeholders and could be an adequate vehicle to consolidate a variety of needs of different stakeholder groups.

Fourth, companies should also consider accommodating consumers' desire for more online interactions with business, as well as among individuals (Trendwatching, 2010). In particular, chapter five of this thesis suggests how individuals' online interactions on niche social network sites may be translated into economic returns for social network site providers. As niche social network sites, different from their 'big brothers', do not have scale advantages available, the general value proposition of 'connectivity' seems insufficient to attract and retain a stable crowd of members. Rather, our findings suggest that by focusing on the right people for the right purpose, niche social network sites are able to attract a relatively homogenous group of members with similar interests or needs. The group-feeling that connects these members, together with community norms arising in the form of social capital, provide value for group members. Our results imply that members are willing to pay subscription fees in order to sustain the group and the value they derive. Niche social network site providers are hence advised to stimulate perceptions of entitativity among members, for instance by focusing on a specific purpose or common interest that strengthens members' perceptions of similarity to or proximity with other group members. Moreover, as not all niche social network site members are motivated equally to participate in the network, providers should stress the potential realization of economic value for non-paying members, while highlighting social value and the fun of interaction to address paying members.

Limitations and future research directions

Although chapters two to five have already discussed limitations of the individual chapters and provided many suggestions for future research, this section attempts to highlight some general constraints and overarching ideas.

First, the need for more collaboration across organizational departments to successfully manage, implement and diffuse business-nonprofit partnerships, as indicated in the managerial implications above, is also reflected by a need for more cross-disciplinary research on this topic. A broadened stakeholder perspective is needed to grasp the multiple effects on a variety of actors. While our conceptualizations in chapters two and three provide a first step into that direction by integrating literature from the marketing, psychology, organizational and economics disciplines, they still require an empirical investigation, which points at a limitation of this thesis. In addition to a conceptual study, and the empirical studies of components of a more comprehensive model, empirical investigations of the entire model depicted in chapter two, ideally including multiple informants to study their interactions (e.g., employees at various organizational levels, consumers, members of nonprofit organizations), seem a promising and interesting avenue for future research.

Unfortunately, the collection of primary data on corporate social responsibility can be very difficult, for instance, due to the emergent nature of specific CSR issues (Hahn, Kolk and Winn, 2010; Kolk and van Tulder, 2010), or when it aims to include a variety of stakeholders. Our call for cross-departmental data collaboration with regard to partnerships also responds to the difficulties we experienced concerning data collection. This issue was particularly pressing during the economic crisis, when interests of the CSR/marketing department seemed to clash with those of the human resource management department. While the CSR manager of a company that we approached was committed to data collection among employees and underlined the importance of the company's ongoing commitment towards the partnership during the crisis, the human resource management department had to deal with upcoming layoffs, and considered the timing of approaching employees with partnership-related issues as inappropriate.

Another difficulty in measuring the effects of the (intra-organizational) diffusion of business-nonprofit partnerships relates to our observation that some partnerships, or CSR activities more generally, are not well-diffused in terms of awareness or active engagement (yet), even though they are communicated to internal and external audiences. The measurement of the effects of partnerships and the identification of effective ways to diffuse them throughout organizations, however, requires that managers and employees are aware of and actively engage in partnership activities. Despite these complexities, we

recently managed to start a research collaboration with a company to empirically study the intra-organizational diffusion of partnerships based on (parts of) the conceptual model developed in chapter two.

Second, in addition to spill-over effects within and across organizations, as well as between employees and consumers, it could be interesting to consider effects on families or friends of employees and consumers as well. As suggested in chapter two, individuals hold multiple roles in society simultaneously, including being an employee, a consumer and a family member. Employees getting actively involved with a cause through a corporate partnership program might as well pay more attention to partnership initiatives of other companies in their role as a consumer. Similarly, they may tell their friends and family members about the partnership, or even try to engage them (e.g., by inviting them to a partnership-related event or asking them to donate money), which could in turn fuel those friends' enthusiasm as well, potentially even in their roles as employees or consumers. Such spill-over effects go beyond recommending a CSR-active company to others, an aspect that has been investigated in extant CSR research. Furthermore, taking individuals' multiple roles into account in an online social network context could be another fascinating avenue for future research. With the global proliferation of online social network use, and the gigantic growth of mass SNS such as Facebook or Twitter, friends, family, colleagues, acquaintances and members of leisure clubs are increasingly combined in one network. As it has been suggested that many people feel uncomfortable sharing information with such broad audiences online (Sharp, 2009), the question whether overlapping roles indeed hamper, or rather fuel customer value derived from online social networks seems an exciting one to explore.

Third, insights from online social network studies could also be applied in the context of business-nonprofit partnerships. It has been suggested that partnerships have the potential to facilitate the creation of social capital among individuals through the active participation of managers, employees and consumers (Austin, 2010). Such interactions might facilitate informal contacts with other intra- or inter-organizational members to whom one otherwise would not have access. The joint contribution to a cause could then contribute to a flattening of hierarchies and might even contribute to a feeling of unity, as suggested in chapter two. Therefore, future research on partnerships at the micro-level could empirically investigate whether and to what extent social capital and entitativity are

created in a partnership context. More specifically, perceptions of entitativity could arise among a group of employees, potentially including members of the for-profit and the nonprofit partner, who collaborate on a partnership-related project for the benefit of a social or environmental cause. Strong group feelings, driven by group members' collective goals or similarities, might derive benefits for the participating members, and fuel their willingness to invest time, effort or even money to sustain the existence of the group, and hence the partnership initiative. It might also be worthwhile to explore whether partnership-related online social networks, set up either by the company, the nonprofit partner or employees themselves, might strengthen the creation of a group feeling among participants.

Similar to value creation in online social networks, collaboration for a social cause is likely to create social and psychological value for those involved. Moreover, in an organizational context it might also mean that individuals are able to build a valuable network that could benefit them economically as well. Similar to differences between paying and non-paying members of online social networks, employees who actively contribute to a partnership, for instance by volunteering their time or knowledge or by donating money, may be primarily motivated to continue their support due to social value they derive from their involvement, rather than for realized economic advantages. However, employees who are not at all or less involved in the partnership (e.g., they might be aware of it, but have not contributed actively themselves), might be motivated to invest time or money for less intrinsic reasons. For instance, they might decide to participate to improve their intra-organizational network and relationships or career opportunities. More generally, employees' (differential) motivations to participate in business-nonprofit partnership activities seem an interesting topic for future research as well.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: MATERIALS CHAPTER 3

Please note that all the materials for this study were presented to respondents in the Dutch language. Below the materials in Dutch are included, accompanied with an explanation in English plus translations of main manipulations and the questionnaire items; they have not been used as such in English, but were translated for the purpose of this Appendix to give some more insight in the underlying approach for those readers interested in it. Further information can be obtained from the author, who can also explain possible caveats related to the translated versions.

Manipulations – Press releases

The press releases (full press releases available in Dutch below) are framed as a review on and celebration of two years of partnership between the company and the non-governmental organization (NGO¹²). While the company is held constant across conditions, the NGOs differ in the high-fit and low-fit conditions. The fit manipulations used in these press releases (i.e., priming high fit versus low fit) were translated from Dutch:

High Fit (HF) Condition:

Director of the COMPANY: "...It was a logical choice for us to support the NGO (HF). There is a clear link between our activities. Our core business is offering telephone and internet services, which are exactly the resources the NGO (HF) needs to help children in the Netherlands. Moreover, we both give advice to our audiences through call centers. Some of our employees also work as volunteers for the NGO (HF), for which COMPANY provides working hours."

Low Fit (LF) Condition:

Director of the COMPANY : "...It might not have been the most logical choice to support the NGO (LF). We do not have the same core business, there is no clear link between our activities, and our activities are not complementary. However, we think that this is the best way for us to help society. Some of our employees also work as volunteers for the NGO (LF), for which COMPANY provides working hours."

High Fit (HF) Condition (full press release in Dutch as used in the study)

BEDRIJF sponsor van NGO_{HF} - Een terugblik op twee jaar partnerschap

Amsterdam, 28 juni 2008 – Op 27 juni was het dan zover. Medewerkers van NGO_{HF} en van BEDRIJF vierden hun tweejarige samenwerking. Sinds juni 2006 levert BEDRIJF gedurende drie jaar gratis telefonie- en internetdiensten aan de zestien regiokantoren van NGO_{HF}, een organisatie die zich richt op actuele vragen en problemen van kinderen.

NGO_{HF} bestaat uit ruim 750 vrijwilligers die een luisterend oor bieden, informatie verlenen en adviezen geven aan kinderen en jongeren tussen de 8 en 18 jaar. Internet wint ook binnen de dienstverlening aan terrein en sinds 2003 wordt er bijvoorbeeld via de chat met de jongeren gecommuniceerd. De programmaleider van NGO_{HF} over de samenwerking: "Kinderen en jongeren blijven een enorm kwetsbare groep. Wij, ouders en opvoeders, het onderwijs, eigenlijk de gehele

¹² The abbreviations NGO and NPO in appendices A and B are in line with the terminology used in chapters 3 and 4.

maatschappij moet zich inzetten voor hun veiligheid en welbevinden. Het klinkt cliché maar onze kinderen zijn de toekomst. Voor ons is het belangrijk dat partners uit het bedrijfsleven, zoals BEDRIJF, zich bij ons aansluiten om een steentje bij te dragen aan het welzijn van kinderen in Nederland.”

Algemeen Directeur BEDRIJF: “Vanuit onze maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid ondersteunen wij graag deze dienstverlening en de vrijwilligers die deze soms zware taak vervullen. Voor ons was het een logische keuze om NGO_{HF} te ondersteunen. Er is een duidelijke link tussen onze werkzaamheden. Onze core-business, het aanbieden van telefoon- en internet diensten, zijn precies de resources die NGO_{HF} nodig heeft om kinderen in Nederland te woord te staan. Ook geven we beide advies aan onze doelgroepen vanuit een callcenter. Een aantal van onze medewerkers werken bovendien als vrijwilliger bij de NGO_{HF}. Daarvoor stelt BEDRIJF ook werktijd beschikbaar.”

Low Fit Condition (full press release in Dutch as used in the study)

BEDRIJF sponsor van NGO_{LF} - Een terugblik op twee jaar partnerschap

Amsterdam, 28 juni 2008 – Op 27 juni was het dan zover. Medewerkers van NGO_{LF} en van BEDRIJF vierden hun tweejarige samenwerking. BEDRIJF doneert gedurende drie jaar geld aan NGO_{LF} ten behoeve van het behoud van de Braziliaanse Amazone. NGO_{LF} maakt onderdeel uit van een wereldwijd opererende organisatie, die zich sinds 1962 actief en met succes inzet voor natuurbescherming.

Het wereldwijde natuurbeschermingsnetwerk bestaat uit 30 nationale organisaties, waaronder NGO_{LF} in Nederland. NGO_{LF} streeft ernaar de voortschrijdende vernietiging van de natuurlijke rijkdom aan plant- en diersoorten op aarde te stoppen en waar mogelijk natuurlijke processen te herstellen. De algemeen directeur van NGO_{LF} over de samenwerking: “De natuur is enorm kwetsbaar. NGO_{LF} en de gehele maatschappij moeten zich inzetten voor het voortbestaan van de natuur. Het klinkt cliché maar zonder natuur is er geen leven. Voor ons is het belangrijk dat partners uit het bedrijfsleven, zoals BEDRIJF, zich bij ons aansluiten om een steentje bij te dragen aan het behoud van de natuur.”

Algemeen Directeur BEDRIJF: “Vanuit onze maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid ondersteunen wij graag NGO_{LF}. Dit doen we onder andere door middel van het doneren van geld waarmee nieuwe bomen in de Amazone worden geplant. Het is misschien niet de meest logische keuze om NGO_{LF} te ondersteunen. We hebben namelijk niet dezelfde core business, er is geen duidelijke link tussen onze werkzaamheden en onze werkzaamheden zijn niet complementair. Toch denken we op deze manier het beste de maatschappij te kunnen helpen. Een aantal van onze medewerkers werken bovendien als vrijwilliger bij NGO_{LF}. Daarvoor stelt BEDRIJF ook werktijd beschikbaar.”

Manipulations – Customer responses to press releases

High versus low consumer self-interest was primed by manipulating consumers’ responses to the press releases, framed as postings on the website of a Dutch newspaper (NRC Next). Excerpts of these responses have been translated from Dutch below (full manipulation texts are available in Dutch below):

High consumer self-interest:

Marije (Amsterdam): “I have been a customer of the COMPANY for years now. Such partnerships are great, and I believe that the skills of the COMPANY’s employees have improved as well because of their interactions with the NGO! De callcenter representatives are much more open en customer oriented now.”

Low consumer self-interest:

Marije (Amsterdam): “I have been a customer of the COMPANY for years now. Such partnerships are great, but it’s a shame that this has led to longer waiting times in the call center during the past two years!”

High Self-Interest Condition (Full description in Dutch as used in the study)

Reacties van consumenten naar aanleiding van bovenstaand persbericht op de Internetsite van de NRC Next (<http://www.nrcnext.nl>):

Marije (Amsterdam): "Ik ben al jaren klant van BEDRIJF. Leuk zo'n partnerschap, en volgens mij hebben de BEDRIJF medewerkers wel wat vaardigheden opgestoken door het contact met NGO! De callcenter medewerkers zijn nu veel opener en klantgerichter."

Joost (Amsterdam): "Ik vind dit partnerschap ook een goed initiatief. Volgens mij zijn de callcenter medewerkers gemotiveerder dan ooit aan het werk! Ik heb laatst nog gelezen dat BEDRIJF weer de Nationale Contact Center Award op het gebied van klanttevredenheid heeft gewonnen, het tweede jaar op rij. En met recht!"

Kees (Leeuwarden): "Een callcenter medewerkster van BEDRIJF vertelde me laatst over wat neveneffecten van dit partnerschap: het ziekteverzuim was gedaald en de werknemer- en klanttevredenheid gestegen. Grappig, ik wist niet dat zo'n partnerschap ook goede gevolgen kan hebben voor ons! Leuk!"

Marjolein (Utrecht): "Ik had verwacht dat de prijzen n.a.v. dit partnerschap omhoog zouden gaan. Maar terugkijkend op de afgelopen twee jaar kan ik met zekerheid zeggen dat dit niet het geval is geweest."

Low Self-Interest Condition (Full description in Dutch as used in the study)

Reacties van consumenten naar aanleiding van bovenstaand persbericht op de Website van de NRC Next (<http://www.nrcnext.nl>):

Marije (Amsterdam): "Ik ben al jaren klant van BEDRIJF. Leuk zo'n partnerschap, maar wel jammer dat het de afgelopen twee jaar heeft geleid tot langere wachttijden in het callcenter!"

Joost (Amsterdam): "Op zich vind ik dit partnerschap ook wel een goed initiatief, maar niet als het ten koste gaat van de bereikbaarheid van het callcenter! Ik heb laatst nog gelezen dat een ander bedrijf dan BEDRIJF dit jaar de Nationale Contact Center Award voor klanttevredenheid heeft gewonnen, in tegenstelling tot de twee jaar daarvoor. Dit verbaast mij helemaal niet! Ik moest ook lang wachten toen ik met een simpele vraag belde naar het callcenter."

Kees (Leeuwarden): "Een callcenter medewerkster van BEDRIJF vroeg me onlangs enthousiast om mee te doen aan een inzamelactie voor NGO. Ik heb zelf ook kinderen, dus ik begrijp het wel. Maar volgens mij leidt dit partnerschap medewerkers wel af van hun hoofdtaak, het oplossen van problemen met internet of telefoon!"

Marjolein (Utrecht): "Hoewel ik NGO een belangrijk initiatief vind heb ik het gevoel dat de prijzen sinds deze samenwerking omhoog zijn gegaan."

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS (translated from Dutch)

Company-Cause Fit (Manipulation check)

I understand why COMPANY and NGO work together.

The link between the core business of COMPANY and NGO is clear.

COMPANY and NGO complement each other well.

Consumer Self-Interest (Manipulation check)

The cooperation between NGO and COMPANY provides clear benefits for the customer.

The cooperation between NGO and COMPANY is a win-win-win situation for the children (high fit condition)/ nature (low fit condition), the company, but especially for the customer.

I see no benefit for the customer in the collaboration between COMPANY and NGO.

Attitude

Generally, I have a positive image of COMPANY.

COMPANY gives me a feeling of joy.

COMPANY gives me a feeling of anger.

My attitude towards COMPANY is...

Trust

COMPANY gives me a feeling of confidence.

I can rely on COMPANY.

COMPANY appears trustworthy.

I have confidence in the products and services of COMPANY.

Word of Mouth

I will recommend the products and services of COMPANY when someone asks my advice.

I will encourage others to buy the products and services of COMPANY.

I will say positive things about COMPANY to others.

I will tell friends/family about the press release I've just read just about COMPANY.

Buying Intentions

I am planning to buy products and services of COMPANY.

I am going to buy products and services of COMPANY in the next six months.

I will never buy the products and services of COMPANY.

Switching Intentions

If I had to choose a (new) internet service provider, COMPANY would be my first choice.

I prefer COMPANY to its competitors when I have to choose a cable provider (for television, internet and/or phone).

I would never (again) consider signing a contract with COMPANY (for television, internet and/or phone).

** All items - except for one attitude item - were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). One attitude item was measured on a scale from 1 (extremely negative) to 7 (extremely positive).*

Questionnaire items in Dutch as used in the study**Company-Cause Fit**

Ik begrijp waarom BEDRIJF en NGO samenwerken.

De link tussen de core business van BEDRIJF en NGO is duidelijk.

BEDRIJF en NPO kunnen elkaar goed aanvullen.

Self-Interest

De samenwerking tussen BEDRIJF en NGO levert voor de klant duidelijk voordelen op.

De samenwerking tussen BEDRIJF en NGO levert een win-win-win situatie op voor de kinderen (high fit)/de natuur (low fit), het bedrijf, maar vooral voor de klant.

Ik zie geen voordeel voor de klant in de samenwerking tussen BEDRIJF en NGO.

Attitude

Over het algemeen heb ik een positief beeld van BEDRIJF.

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van blijdschap.

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van boosheid.

Attitude continued

Mijn houding ten opzichte van BEDRIJF...

Trust

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van vertrouwen.

Ik kan op BEDRIJF rekenen.

BEDRIJF geeft me een betrouwbare indruk.

Ik heb vertrouwen in de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF.

Word of Mouth

Ik zal de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF aan iemand adviseren wanneer iemand mijn advies vraagt.

Ik zal iemand aanmoedigen om de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF aan te schaffen.

Ik zal positieve dingen zeggen over BEDRIJF tegen anderen.

Ik zal vrienden/familie over het persbericht vertellen dat ik net over BEDRIJF heb gelezen.

Buying Intentions

Ik ben van plan de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF te gaan kopen.

Ik ga de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF in de aankomende 6 maanden kopen.

Ik ga de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF nooit kopen.

Switching Intentions

Als ik een (nieuwe) internet aanbieder zou moeten kiezen, zou BEDRIJF mijn eerste keuze zijn.

Ik geef BEDRIJF de voorkeur boven haar concurrenten als ik een kabelaanbieder (voor televisie, internet en/of telefoon) moet kiezen.

Ik zou nooit (meer) overwegen om een contract met BEDRIJF aan te gaan (voor televisie, internet en/of telefoon).

APPENDIX B: MATERIALS CHAPTER 4

Please note that all the materials for this study were presented to respondents in the Dutch language. Below the materials in Dutch are included, accompanied with an explanation in English plus translations of main manipulations and the questionnaire items. Instructions for the social value orientation measure are included in English as well; they have not been used as such in English, but were translated for the purpose of this Appendix to give some more insight in the underlying approach for those readers interested in it. Further information can be obtained from the author, who can also explain possible caveats related to the translated versions.

Social Value Orientation (SVO) Measure¹³

Respondents received shortened instructions adopted from Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten and Joireman (1997), both verbally and in writing. They were asked to imagine that they had been randomly paired with another person, referred to as the "Other." Respondents had to imagine that this other person is someone they did not know and that they would not knowingly meet in the future. Both, the respondent and the "Other" person would make choices by circling either the letter A, B, or C. Respondents were told that their own choices would produce points for both themselves and the "Other" person. Likewise, the other's choice would produce points for him/her and for the respondent. Respondents were informed that every point has value: the more points the respondent receives, the better for him/her, and the more points the "Other" receives, the better for the "Other". Respondents were asked to keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. They were requested to choose the option that they, for whatever reason, prefer most.

In the first example presented below, if the respondent chose A, he/she would receive 480 points, and the "Other" would receive 80 points. For choice B, the respondent would receive 540 points, and the "Other" 280 points, and so forth. So whatever choice the respondent makes influences the number of points the "Other" receives, and vice versa (cf. Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten and Joireman, 1997).

Tasks	A	B	C
1. You get	480	540	480
Other gets	80	280	480
2. You get	560	500	500
Other gets	300	500	100
3. You get	520	520	580
Other gets	520	120	320
4. You get	500	560	490
Other gets	100	300	490
5. You get	560	500	490
Other gets	300	500	90
6. You get	500	500	570
Other gets	500	100	300
7. You get	510	560	510
Other gets	510	300	110
8. You get	550	500	500
Other gets	300	100	500

¹³ SVO measure: directly adopted from Van Lange, De Bruin, Otten, and Joireman (1997), "Development of prosocial, individualistic, and competitive orientations: Theory and preliminary evidence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(4), 733-746.

9.	You get	480	490	540
	Other gets	100	490	300

Participants were classified when they made 6 or more consistent choices. Prosocial choices are: 1c, 2b, 3a, 4c, 5b, 6a, 7a, 8c, 9b; Individualistic choices: 1b, 2a, 3c, 4b, 5a, 6c, 7b, 8a, 9c; Competitive choices: 1a, 2c, 3b, 4a, 5c, 6b, 7c, 8b, 9a (Van Lange et al., 1997).

Respondents received verbal instructions for the social value orientation measure in Dutch. In addition, a brief summary of the instructions was included in writing (description in Dutch as used in the study below):

In dit schema vraag ik je om je voor te stellen dat je met een willekeurig iemand anders (deze persoon ken je niet!), genoemd 'ander' samen bent. Maak een keuze in de puntenverdeling voor jezelf en de ander. Hoe meer punten jij krijgt, des te beter voor jezelf en hoe meer punten de ander krijgt, des te beter voor de ander. Er zijn hier geen goede en geen foute antwoorden, kies de optie waarvan jij vindt dat deze de beste is. De punten verdelen doe je door middel van het voor alle negen situaties omcirkelen van A, B of C, afhankelijk van waar je voorkeur naar uit gaat.

Experimental Manipulations

The press releases (full press releases available in Dutch below) are framed as an announcement of a partnership between the COMPANY and the nonprofit organization (NPO¹⁴). While the company is held constant across conditions, the NPOs differ in the high fit and low fit conditions. The fit manipulations from the press releases (i.e., priming high fit versus low fit) were translated from Dutch below:

High Fit (HF) Condition:

Director of the COMPANY: "...It was a logical choice for us to support the NPO. We have the same core business (telephony and internet), there is a clear link between our activities, our activities are complementary. For example, we both provide advice and information to our target audiences through call centers. With our support in the form of free phone and internet services, the NPO can expand and improve its activities."

Low Fit (LF) Condition:

Director of the COMPANY: "... It might not have been the most logical choice to support the NPO. We do not have the same core business, there is no clear link between our activities, and our activities are not complementary. Yet, we think that this is the best way for us to help society."

Control Condition

The control group received a more general press release about the COMPANY, where no partnership with a nonprofit organization was mentioned. The press release (full description in Dutch below) states that the company's complaint team actively searches for customer complaints online to anticipate potential problems.

¹⁴ The abbreviations NGO and NPO in appendices A and B are in line with the terminology used in chapters 3 and 4.

High Fit (HF) Condition (full press release in Dutch as used in the study)

NPO_{HF} en BEDRIJF gaan samenwerken - BEDRIJF sponsort NPO_{HF}

Amsterdam, 27 februari 2007 – NPO_{HF} en BEDRIJF gaan samenwerken. BEDRIJF levert gedurende drie jaar gratis telefonie- en internetdiensten aan de zestien regiokantoren van de NPO_{HF}. Door de bijdrage van het kabelbedrijf kan de NPO_{HF} een nieuwe opleidings-methodiek ontwikkelen voor het trainen van haar vrijwilligers. De NPO_{HF} is een organisatie die zich richt op actuele vragen en problemen van kinderen.

De NPO_{HF} bestaat uit ruim 750 vrijwilligers die een luisterend oor bieden, informatie verlenen en adviezen geven aan kinderen en jongeren tussen de 8 en 18 jaar. Internet wint ook binnen de dienstverlening aan terrein en sinds 2003 wordt er bijvoorbeeld via de chat met de jongeren gecommuniceerd. De programmaleider van NPO_{HF} over de samenwerking: "Kinderen en jongeren blijven een enorm kwetsbare groep. Wij, ouders en opvoeders, het onderwijs, eigenlijk de gehele maatschappij moet zich inzetten voor hun veiligheid en welbevinden. Het klinkt cliché maar onze kinderen zijn de toekomst. Voor ons is het belangrijk dat partners uit het bedrijfsleven, zoals BEDRIJF, zich bij ons aansluiten om een steentje bij te dragen aan het welzijn van kinderen in Nederland."

Algemeen Directeur BEDRIJF: "De NPO_{HF} biedt kinderen en jongeren een luisterend oor en advies wanneer er problemen spelen. Vanuit onze maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid ondersteunen wij graag deze dienstverlening en de vrijwilligers die deze soms zware taak vervullen. Voor ons was het een logische keuze om de NPO_{HF} te ondersteunen. We hebben dezelfde core business (telefonie en internet), er is een duidelijke link tussen onze werkzaamheden, de werkzaamheden zijn complementair aan elkaar. Wij geven bijvoorbeeld beide advies en informatie aan onze doelgroep vanuit een callcenter. Met onze steun, in de vorm van de gratis telefonie- en internetdiensten, kan de NPO_{HF} haar werkzaamheden uitbreiden en verbeteren"

Low Fit Condition (full press release in Dutch as used in the study)

NPO_{LF} en BEDRIJF gaan samenwerken - BEDRIJF sponsort NPO_{LF}

Amsterdam, 27 februari 2007 – NPO_{LF} en BEDRIJF gaan samenwerken. De Amazone wordt ernstiger dan ooit bedreigd door ontbossing. Als er nu niets gebeurt dan verdwijnt er de komende vijf jaar alleen al in de Braziliaanse Amazone een gebied ter grootte van bijna 2,5 maal Nederland. BEDRIJF doneert gedurende drie jaar geld aan het NPO_{LF} ten behoeve van het behoud van deze bossen. Door de bijdrage van het kabelbedrijf kan NPO_{LF} nieuwe bomen planten in de Amazone. NPO_{LF} is een wereldwijd opererende organisatie, die zich sinds 1962 actief en met succes inzet voor natuurbescherming.

Het wereldwijde natuurbeschermingsnetwerk bestaat uit 30 nationale organisaties, waaronder NPO_{LF} in Nederland. NPO_{LF} streeft ernaar de voortschrijdende vernietiging van de natuurlijke rijkdom aan plant- en diersoorten op aarde te stoppen en waar mogelijk natuurlijke processen te herstellen. Algemeen directeur van NPO_{LF} over de samenwerking: "De natuur is een enorm kwetsbaar. NPO_{LF} en de gehele maatschappij moeten zich inzetten voor het voortbestaan van de natuur. Het klinkt cliché maar zonder natuur is er geen leven. Voor ons is het belangrijk dat partners uit het bedrijfsleven, zoals BEDRIJF, zich bij ons aansluiten om een steentje bij te dragen aan het behoud van de natuur."

Algemeen Directeur BEDRIJF Nederland: "NPO_{LF} biedt de natuur een helpende hand wanneer zij dit nodig achten. Vanuit onze maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid ondersteunen wij graag NPO_{LF}. Dit doen we onder andere door middel van het doneren van geld waarmee nieuwe bomen in de Amazone worden geplant. Ook gaan alle medewerkers van BEDRIJF een dag vrijwillig donateurs werven voor NPO_{LF}. Het is misschien niet de meest logische keuze om NPO_{LF} te ondersteunen. We hebben namelijk niet dezelfde core business, er is geen duidelijke link tussen onze werkzaamheden en onze werkzaamheden zijn niet complementair. Toch denken we op deze manier het beste de maatschappij te kunnen helpen."

Control Group (full press release in Dutch as used in the study)**Klachtenteam BEDRIJF actief op zoek naar klachten**

AMSTERDAM, 27 februari 2007 - Kabelexploitant BEDRIJF heeft een team van zeven personen aan het werk gezet dat op internet speurt naar klachten over het bedrijf.

BEDRIJF hoopt hiermee vaak voorkomende klachten tijdig te kunnen ontdekken, zodat een escalatie kan worden voorkomen.

Het zevenkoppige helpdeskteam gaat diverse internetfora en weblogs langs om broeinesten van ergernissen betreffende BEDRIJF op te vangen. Het team mengt zich actief in discussies en reageert op fora op de klachten. Op deze manier probeert BEDRIJF snel te kunnen anticiperen op problemen, voordat de helpdesk overspoeld wordt met klachten. Ook wordt er op deze manier actief voorkomen dat consumentenorganisaties in actie moeten komen tegen BEDRIJF en negatieve publiciteit schade kan aanrichten. Afgelopen week bleek meteen de waarde van het nieuwe speurteam. Weblog GeenStijl berichtte over de trage service van BEDRIJF. Het team pikte de klacht van de weblogger op en kon snel handelen om verdere ruchtbaarheid te voorkomen. Hierdoor is dit nieuwsitem over BEDRIJF uit de grotere publiciteit weg gebleven. Het team is onder meer actief op de community die is opgezet als klachtenpunt tegen BEDRIJF: www.x.com. Binnenkort komt BEDRIJF zelf met een forum waar klanten hun klachten kunnen plaatsen. Op deze manier streeft BEDRIJF ernaar om hun service te verbeteren.

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS (translated from Dutch)**Company-cause fit (Manipulation check)**

(only used in the high fit and low fit conditions, not in the control condition)

I understand why COMPANY and NPO work together.

The link between the core business of COMPANY and NPO is clear.

COMPANY and NPO complement each other well.

Attitude

Generally, I have a positive image of COMPANY.

COMPANY gives me a feeling of joy.

COMPANY gives me a feeling of anger.

My attitude towards the COMPANY is ...

Trust

COMPANY gives me a feeling of confidence.

I can rely on COMPANY.

COMPANY appears trustworthy.

I have confidence in the products and services of COMPANY.

Word of Mouth

I will recommend the products and services of COMPANY when someone asks my advice.

I will encourage others to buy the products and services of COMPANY.

I will say positive things about COMPANY to others.

Product quality

COMPANY provides products/services of high quality.

COMPANY offers good value for money.

COMPANY meets customer needs.

Innovativeness

COMPANY is an innovative company.

COMPANY is among the first when it comes to new products on the market.

COMPANY adapts quickly to a changing environment.

** All items - except for one attitude item - were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). One attitude item was measured on a scale from 1 (extremely negative) to 7 (extremely positive).*

Questionnaire items in Dutch as used in the study**Company-cause fit** (not used in the control condition)

Ik begrijp waarom BEDRIJF en NPO samenwerken.

De link tussen de core business van BEDRIJF en NPO is duidelijk.

BEDRIJF en NPO kunnen elkaar goed aanvullen.

Attitude

Over het algemeen heb ik een positief beeld van BEDRIJF.

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van blijdschap.

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van boosheid.

Mijn houding ten opzichte van BEDRIJF.

Trust

BEDRIJF geeft me een gevoel van vertrouwen.

Ik kan op BEDRIJF rekenen.

BEDRIJF geeft me een betrouwbare indruk.

BEDRIJF geeft me een betrouwbare indruk.

Word of Mouth

Ik zal de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF aan iemand adviseren wanneer iemand mijn advies vraagt.

Ik zal iemand aanmoedigen om de producten en diensten van BEDRIJF aan te schaffen.

Ik zal positieve dingen zeggen over BEDRIJF tegen anderen.

Product quality

BEDRIJF biedt producten/diensten van hoge kwaliteit.

BEDRIJF biedt een goede prijs-kwaliteit verhouding.

BEDRIJF komt tegemoet aan de behoeften van klanten.

Innovativeness

BEDRIJF is een innovatief bedrijf.

BEDRIJF is bij de eersten als het erom gaat nieuwe producten op de markt te brengen.

BEDRIJF past zich snel aan veranderende omstandigheden aan.

APPENDIX C: MATERIALS CHAPTER 5

Please note that materials for this study were presented to respondents in the Dutch language. Below the questionnaire items in Dutch are included, preceded by a translation in English; the items have not been used as such in English, but were translated for the purpose of this Appendix to give some more insight in the underlying approach for those readers interested in it. Further information can be obtained from the author, who can also explain possible caveats related to the translated version. The abbreviation SNS stands for the social network site used in the study.

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS (translated from Dutch)

Social capital

Reciprocity (Social capital)

If you visit SNS, at some point you have to contribute as well.

Visitors of SNS have to make a contribution if their classmates are tagged, but they themselves cannot be identified (e.g., on a class photo or a former school).

The principle of 'give and take' is important on SNS.

Voluntarism (Social capital)

I assist others with finding former classmates.

I help others to find information about their schools.

I like to post information about myself on SNS.

I utilize my knowledge and memories to make useful contributions to SNS.

I enjoy being an administrator of a class photo.

Social trust (Social capital)

I believe that people who visit SNS also want to find back their friends and former classmates.

I trust the information that others put on SNS.

People who contribute to SNS have high integrity.

Entitativity

Users of SNS form an entity.

Users of SNS have a bond.

Users of SNS are a unity.

Social value

I enjoy exchanging information with other members.

Interactions with former classmates on the website provide a sense of camaraderie for me.

Social contact with former classmates through SNS is valuable to me.

Realized financial value

(Recurring) contacts on SNS...

...resulted in commercial benefits.

...gave me financial benefits.

...provided me with advantages with regard to work, studies or accomodation.

...offered me advice or products for which I otherwise would have had to pay.

Willingness to invest (Wtl)

I am going to upgrade to premium membership soon (for regular members only).

I will extend my premium membership (for premium members only).

** All items were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).*

Questionnaire items in Dutch as used in the study¹⁵

Social Capital

Reciprocity (Social Capital)

Als je SNS bezoekt moet je op een zeker moment ook een bijdrage leveren.

Bezoekers van SNS moeten een bijdrage leveren als klasgenoten wel vermeld staan, maar men zelf onvindbaar is (bv. op een schoolfoto of op een oud- school).

Het principe van 'geven en nemen' is belangrijk voor SNS.

Voluntarism (Social Capital)

Ik help anderen met het vinden van oud-klasgenoten.

Ik help anderen met het vinden van informatie over hun school.

Ik zet graag mijn informatie op SNS.

Ik gebruik mijn kennis en herinneringen om een zinvolle bijdrage te leveren aan SNS.

Ik vind het leuk om een beheerder van een klassenfoto te zijn.

Trust (Social Capital)

Ik vertrouw erop dat de mensen die SNS bezoeken ook graag hun vrienden en oud-klasgenoten willen terug vinden.

Ik geloof de informatie die anderen op SNS hebben gezet.

Mensen die een bijdrage leveren aan SNS zijn integer.

Entitativity

De gebruikers van SNS vormen een geheel.

De gebruikers van SNS hebben een band.

De gebruikers van SNS zijn een eenheid.

Social value

Het uitwisselen van informatie met andere bezoekers vind ik heel leuk.

De interactie tussen oud-klasgenoten op de site geeft me een gevoel van kameraadschap.

Het sociale contact met oud-klasgenoten via SNS is voor mij waardevol.

Realized Financial Value

(Hernieuwde) contacten via SNS hebben mij:

...zakelijk iets op geleverd.

...financiële voordelen gegeven.

...mij voordelen opgeleverd op werk-, studie-, of woongebied.

...mij advies of producten gegeven waarvoor ik anders had moeten betalen .

Willingness to Invest

Ik ga binnenkort een Premium-lidmaatschap nemen. (only for Regular members)

Ik ga mijn Premium-lidmaatschap verlengen. (only for Premium members)

¹⁵ The abbreviation SNS stands for the social network site used in the study.

English summary

This dissertation explores emerging social interactions in relation to economic value, more specifically how social interactions at the organizational and individual levels may affect individual consumers and companies economically as well. To help shed light on this broad theme, it focuses on two recent phenomena in the marketing environment that potentially combine the creation of social value with consumers' and companies' economic interests: business-nonprofit partnerships (chapters two to four), and online social networks (chapter five). The dissertation suggests that, under certain conditions, value created for consumers can be integrated with companies' economic interests as well as with society's interests more broadly.

Chapter two, which follows the introductory first chapter, contains a conceptual study. It outlines potential diffusion mechanisms of business-nonprofit partnerships (which involve collaboration between business and non-profit organizations to serve both social value for society as well as economic value for both types of organizations). First, this study theorizes that so-called "trickle-down", "trickle-up", and "trickle-round" effects can explain how (positive) outcomes of such partnerships are diffused across different levels: macro (i.e., related to society), meso (i.e., to partnering organizations) and micro (i.e., individuals). Second, focusing on the micro level of the company, it conceptualizes how partnership-related perceptions and behaviors may spread among managers, employees and consumers of the corporate partner. With regard to the micro level, this chapter brought forward several propositions. In particular, it suggests that participative and transformational leadership styles, as well as an open communication climate are positively related to organizational members' engagement in partnership-related conversations with their superiors (trickle-up), their peers within and across the partnering organizations (trickle-round), and subordinates (trickle-down). Equally, the conceptual model suggests that theories on social exchange and contagion, social learning and attraction-selection-attrition may explain how partnership-related evaluations and behaviors trickle up, down and round among managers, employees and consumers. In this way, partnerships can have wider benefits, as individuals have multiple roles and effects at the micro level can spread to the meso and macro levels as well.

The micro level of business-nonprofit partnerships introduced in chapter two is further explored in chapters three and four by considering potential effects on employees and most notably, on consumers. Chapters three and four contain empirical studies which investigate the relative importance of consumers' self-interested motivations to support business-nonprofit partnerships from different perspectives. Bridging insights from the marketing and organizational literatures, chapter three theorizes how self-interest can be created equally for all consumers (i.e., through interactions with employees). By paying specific attention to the service-profit chain concept and related psychological mechanisms, this study illustrates how employees' active participation in partnership activities might impact consumers either favorably (i.e., high consumer self-interest), or unfavorably (i.e., low self-interest). Subsequently, drawing on the literature of social value orientation, chapter four views self-interest versus other-interest from the perspective of personality traits and differentiates between prosocials and proselfs for that matter.

Both studies are similar in that they suggest that self-interested motivations will impact consumers' responses towards business-nonprofit partnerships in terms of their evaluative and behavioral responses with regard to the company. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that these effects are moderated by the level of fit between the company and the cause (i.e., company-cause fit). Both studies find that consumers' self-interested motivations, whether they are induced by the company's actions (chapter 3) or inevitably related to a person's personality (chapter 4), only seem to influence consumers' responses in the case of high-fit partnerships, whereas in the case of low fit such motivations do not seem to matter. Combined, the findings of chapters 3 and 4 suggest that congruence or consistency theories may provide a meaningful lens to study consumer responses to business-nonprofit partnerships beyond the context in which these theories have hitherto been applied. Specifically, business-nonprofit partnerships seem to create value for consumers to the extent that their thoughts evoked by information about the partnership and its fit with the partnering cause are in line with their subjective values and other experiences with the company.

Similarly, the findings from chapter 5 suggest that congruence or consistency theories may also provide a meaningful lens to study consumers' willingness to pay for online social network use. This chapter explores the impact of social interactions among individual consumers in an online social network, and relates it to economic outcomes for

the network operator. The aim of this study is to expand our understanding of viable value propositions for the specific context of a niche social network site. Building on previous conceptual models which adopted social capital theory as a value proposition for online communities, this study adds the concept of entitativity to capture the distinctive and narrow scope of a niche. Entitativity describes to what extent a group is perceived as a single, meaningful, coherent entity. The findings of this chapter suggest positive and direct effects of social capital and entitativity on willingness to invest in membership fees. In addition, members' payment intentions also depend on the value (i.e., social versus economic) they derive from the community phenomena social capital and entitativity. However, not all members' intentions to invest in fees seem to be motivated equally by these values. Whereas non-paying members appear to be driven mainly by economic value (e.g., realized financial advantage, finding a job or housing through the online network), upgraded members who already pay subscription fees are motivated to extend their paid membership period rather by social value. Therefore, members' willingness to invest in membership fees seems to depend on whether the realized benefits (i.e., economic versus social value) are consistent with the relationship norms that govern their online interactions (i.e., exchange versus communal relation).

In summary, all studies to some extent seem to reflect the overall struggle and objective to balance and integrate social and economic needs, which applies to organizations as well as consumers. While consumers are willing to engage in social interactions, thereby contributing to social value, either directly (chapter 5), or indirectly by supporting business-nonprofit partnerships (chapters 3, 4), this readiness is accompanied by economic considerations as well (e.g., self-interest, importance of high corporate abilities, economic value). Similarly, at an organizational level, companies increasingly contribute to and facilitate social interactions (e.g., by providing online social networks, or through the collaboration with other actors in society), while they concurrently strive to capitalize on the social value that is created. This points at the need for further research. As a first step in this direction, insights from an online social network context could be applied to business-nonprofit partnerships. For instance, future research on partnerships at the micro-level could empirically investigate whether and to what extent social capital and entitativity are created among individuals (e.g., managers, employees, consumers) who jointly participate in partnership-related activities. Strong group feelings, driven by group members' collective

goals or similarities, might derive benefits for the participating members, and fuel their willingness to invest time, effort or even money to sustain the existence of the group, and hence the partnership initiative. Similar to consumers in an online social network context, employees' motivations to actively contribute to business-nonprofit partnerships may differ according to their level of involvement with the partnership, which seems an interesting topic for future research as well.

This dissertation has not only implications for research but also for practice. The findings suggest that the issues companies should stress in their corporate social responsibility communication depend on what they want to achieve. While priming consumers' self-interest can have a direct and positive impact on a company's bottom line (in terms of buying and switching intentions), effects on the corporate image in terms of trust are contingent upon a high level of fit between the company and the cause. As suggested by chapter four, however, choosing a high fit cause can also have detrimental effects for the company. Considering the pros and cons, companies may be well advised to choose a high-fit cause that effectively addresses both, societal issues *and* a company's strategic objectives. Additionally, companies should ensure that consumers are aware of the company's high corporate abilities, to avoid potential negative effects among proselves. More generally, also with regard to online social networks, companies need to accept that the facilitation of social interactions among broader stakeholder groups may imply that their ability to exercise control might be limited. Companies should acknowledge that consumers seek diverse value propositions and hence ensure that social interactions can contribute to social as well as economic benefits, thereby catering differential needs. In the case of online niche social networks, network providers may be able to capitalize on members' online interactions by focusing on a narrow purpose and a relatively homogeneous member base, which may contribute to the creation of a strong group feeling (i.e., entitativity) among members. In order to serve niche members of social network sites well, network operators are advised to stress economic benefits for non-paying members, while emphasizing social benefits for paying members.

Finally, this thesis calls for a broadened stakeholder perspective with regard to academic research on business-nonprofit partnerships. Similarly, it recommends practitioners to adopt more concerted efforts across organizational departments to successfully manage and diffuse business-nonprofit partnerships within and across

organizations. Such collaborations may not only benefit society and the partnering organizations, but bear important implications for a variety of stakeholders (consumers, employees, managers) as well.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Tijdens de recente economische crisis lijken de verwachtingen van consumenten ten opzichte van bedrijven veranderd te zijn. Het Edelman Trust Barometer onderzoek van 2010 toont bijvoorbeeld aan dat consumenten meer transparantie, eerlijkheid en betrouwbaarheid verwachten van bedrijven. Consumenten verwachten ook dat bedrijven met nonprofit organisaties en de overheid samenwerken om maatschappelijke vraagstukken en problemen aan te pakken. Daarnaast stellen consumenten zich, mede gedreven door technologische ontwikkelingen, ook zelf meer open en vragen ze om interactie met bedrijven en andere consumenten, bijvoorbeeld via online kanalen. Deze veranderingen in verwachtingen van consumenten hebben tevens impact op de marketing activiteiten van bedrijven.

In dit proefschrift wordt onderzocht wat de effecten zijn van sociale interacties tussen bedrijven en nonprofit organisaties aan de ene kant, en tussen individuen in online sociale netwerken aan de andere kant. Vanuit een marketing perspectief wordt er onderzocht in hoeverre sociale interacties tussen organisaties en individuen kunnen leiden tot sociale waarde (voor de consument en voor de maatschappij) en tot economische waarde (voor de consument en voor bedrijven). Om meer inzicht te krijgen in de effecten van sociale interacties richt dit proefschrift zich, na het inleidende eerste hoofdstuk, eerst op samenwerkingsverbanden tussen bedrijven en nonprofit organisaties (hoofdstukken twee, drie en vier), en vervolgens op online sociale netwerken (hoofdstuk vijf). Het blijkt dat door sociale interacties waarde kan ontstaan voor de consument, en dat deze waarde vervolgens weer gecombineerd kan worden met de economische belangen van een bedrijf. De bevindingen van dit proefschrift worden samengevat in hoofdstuk zes.

Hoofdstuk twee bevat een conceptuele studie en schetst mogelijke mechanismen voor de verspreiding van partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en nonprofit organisaties. Dit hoofdstuk stelt dat verspreidingseffecten, genoemd 'trickle-down', 'trickle-up', en 'trickle-round' effecten, kunnen verklaren hoe de (positieve) effecten van dergelijke partnerschappen zich kunnen verspreiden tussen verschillende niveaus binnen de samenleving en binnen een organisatie. Zo kunnen positieve effecten van een partnerschap

op individuen, bijvoorbeeld op consumenten of werknemers (met andere woorden, op micro niveau), ook positieve effecten hebben op de samenwerkende bedrijven en non-profit organisaties (dat wil zeggen, op meso niveau), die vervolgens weer wenselijke uitkomsten kunnen opleveren voor de maatschappij in de brede zin (op macro niveau), en vice versa.

Hoofdstuk twee richt zich met name op het microniveau van een bedrijf en conceptualiseert hoe percepties van zo'n partnerschap en de bereidheid van werknemers en managers om aan partnerschap-gerelateerde activiteiten deel te nemen (bijvoorbeeld door kennisoverdracht, vrijwilligerswerk) zich kunnen verspreiden onder managers, werknemers en consumenten van het bedrijf. In dit hoofdstuk is de verwachting dat specifieke leiderschapsstijlen van managers (namelijk participatief en transformationeel leiderschap), evenals het bestaan van een open klimaat voor communicatie binnen de organisatie positief gerelateerd zijn aan de waarschijnlijkheid dat werknemers/managers over het partnerschap praten met hun leidinggevende ('trickle-up effect'), met collega's binnen het bedrijf, met collega's van de non-profit partner ('trickle-round effect') en met ondergeschikten ('trickle-down effect'). Verder stelt het conceptuele model ook dat verschillende theorieën uit de psychologie en management literatuur (namelijk, social exchange, social contagion, social learning, attraction-selection-attrition) kunnen verklaren hoe percepties over het partnerschap en de actieve deelname daaraan zich kunnen verspreiden tussen managers, werknemers en consumenten. Volgens de sociale leertheorie (social learning theory), bijvoorbeeld, wordt er verwacht dat werknemers het gedrag van hun leidinggevende met betrekking tot het partnerschap imiteren ('trickle-down effect'), bijvoorbeeld als deze positief over het partnerschap praat, of zich er actief voor inzet.

In hoofdstukken drie en vier wordt het microniveau van partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en non-profit organisaties verder uitgediept door empirisch te toetsen wat de mogelijke effecten op de consumenten zijn. In de hoofdstukken wordt getoetst in hoeverre de bereidheid van consumenten om bedrijven te ondersteunen afhangt van het persoonlijke voordeel (dus, eigenbelang) die door zo'n partnerschap voor consumenten mogelijk kan ontstaan. Eigenbelang wordt in hoofdstukken drie en vier echter vanuit verschillende perspectieven benaderd. Door het koppelen van inzichten uit de marketing- en managementliteratuur theoretiseert hoofdstuk drie hoe eigenbelang gecreëerd kan worden voor alle consumenten (namelijk, door interacties tussen medewerkers en klanten). Dit hoofdstuk besteedt met name aandacht aan het service-profit keten concept en

aanverwante psychologische mechanismen, die stellen dat tevreden en gemotiveerde werknemers een goede band hebben met hun klanten, die op hun beurt hierdoor loyaal aan het bedrijf zullen zijn. Tevens wordt in hoofdstuk drie beargumenteert dat de actieve deelname van werknemers aan partnerschap-gerelateerde activiteiten ofwel gunstige (dus veel eigenbelang) of ongunstige gevolgen (dus weinig eigenbelang) kan hebben voor de consument. Hoofdstuk vier kijkt eveneens naar eigenbelang, echter vanuit het perspectief van persoonlijkheidskenmerken. Dit hoofdstuk maakt gebruik van de theorie over sociale waarde-orientatie (social value orientation), waarin een onderscheiding wordt gemaakt tussen 'prosocials', die vooral naar een goede samenwerking en gelijkheid streven, en 'proselfs', die vooral op hun eigen voordeel gericht zijn, en die weinig oog hebben voor de belangen van anderen.

In zekere zin is er sprake van overlap tussen de twee studies in hoofdstukken drie en vier: in beiden wordt er verwacht dat motivaties die door eigenbelang gedreven zijn een impact hebben op hoe consumenten op partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en non-profit organisaties reageren. De impact van eigenbelang uit zich zowel in hun evaluaties als ook in hun gedragsintenties ten opzichte van het bedrijf. Verder wordt er in beide hoofdstukken gesteld dat deze effecten gemodereerd worden door de overeenstemming tussen het bedrijf en de non-profit partner (company-cause fit). Beide studies tonen aan dat de motivaties van consumenten die door eigenbelang gedreven zijn enkel in het geval van een goede fit tussen de samenwerkende organisaties een invloed hebben op het bedrijf. Dit is zowel gevonden in hoofdstuk drie, waar eigenbelang veroorzaakt wordt door de activiteiten van het bedrijf, als in hoofdstuk vier, waar eigenbelang gerelateerd is aan de persoonlijkheid van de consument. Bij een lage fit tussen het bedrijf en de non-profit partners blijken dergelijke motivaties niet van belang te zijn voor de reacties van consumenten. Naar aanleiding van de uitkomsten van hoofdstukken drie en vier wordt geconcludeerd dat consistentietheorien (consistency theories) mogelijk een nuttig uitgangspunt zijn om de reacties van consumenten op partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en non-profit organisaties te onderzoeken. Samenwerkingsverbanden tussen bedrijven en non-profit organisaties lijken namelijk met name waarde voor consumenten te creëren naar mate deze personen een overeenkomst/ consistentie ervaren tussen hun percepties van het partnerschap en hun sociale waarde-orientatie (hoofdstuk 4), en met hun overige ervaringen met het bedrijf (hoofdstuk 3).

Ook de bevindingen van hoofdstuk vijf laten zien dat consistentietheorien mogelijk een interessant uitgangspunt zijn om te onderzoeken wanneer consumenten bereid zijn te betalen voor het gebruik van online sociale netwerken. Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de impact van sociale interacties tussen individuele consumenten in een online sociaal netwerk, en linkt deze aan de economische voordelen voor bedrijven, namelijk voor beheerders van online sociale netwerken. Het doel van deze studie is om een beter inzicht te krijgen in de toegevoegde waarde voor consumenten die door interacties in sociale netwerken ontstaat (genoemd waardeproposities). Daarbij wordt er gekeken naar niche-netwerksites, die zich, in tegenstelling tot grote spelers zoals Facebook of MySpace, richten op kleine, doelgroepgerichte marketsegmenten. In eerdere studies is de sociaal kapitaal theorie gebruikt als een waardepropositie voor online communities, en in dit hoofdstuk wordt het concept van "entitativity" toegevoegd om de specifieke context van een niche te kunnen vatten. "Entitativity" beschrijft in welke mate een groep wordt gezien als een enkel, betekenisvol, en samenhangend geheel. De resultaten tonen een positief en direct effect van sociaal kapitaal en entitativity op de bereidheid van consumenten om voor lidmaatschap in een online sociaal netwerk te betalen, of dit lidmaatschap te verlengen. Daarnaast komt uit de resultaten naar voren dat de bereidheid van leden om te betalen ook afhangt van de soort van waarde (namelijk, sociaal versus economisch) die uit het sociaal kapitaal en entitativity voortvloeit. Echter, de motivatie om in lidmaatschap te investeren lijkt niet voor alle leden dezelfde te zijn. Niet-betalende leden (genoemd, 'Regular members') lijken vooral gedreven te zijn door economische waarde (bijvoorbeeld, een gerealiseerd financieel voordeel, het vinden van een baan of huis via het online netwerk). Daarentegen zijn leden die reeds betalen voor het gebruik van een online sociaal netwerk (genoemd, 'Premium member') eerder gemotiveerd om hun betaalde lidmaatschap te verlengen vanwege de sociale waarde die uit de interacties met anderen resulteert. Er kan geconcludeerd worden dat de bereidheid van leden om in lidmaatschap geld te investeren afhangt van de vraag of de gerealiseerde waarde (dat wil zeggen, economische versus sociale waarde) overeenkomt met de onderliggende normen van hun sociale relaties binnen het netwerk.

Kortom, zowel organisaties als consumenten lijken tot op zekere hoogte naar een balans tussen economische en sociale belangen te streven. Hoewel consumenten bereid zijn om aan sociale interacties deel te nemen, en dus bijdragen aan het ontstaan van sociale

waarde – zowel direct (hoofdstuk vijf), als ook indirect door partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en nonprofit organisaties te ondersteunen (hoofdstukken drie en vier) – gaat deze bereidheid veelal gepaard met economische overwegingen (bijvoorbeeld eigenbelang, economische waarde). Ook bedrijven faciliteren in toenemende mate sociale interacties (bijvoorbeeld door middel van online sociale netwerken, of door samen te werken met nonprofit organisaties), terwijl ze tegelijkertijd ernaar streven om van de ontstane sociale waarde (bijvoorbeeld voor de maatschappij) te profiteren. Deze inzichten wijzen op de noodzaak voor verder onderzoek. Als een eerste stap in deze richting zouden inzichten uit de context van online sociale netwerken kunnen worden toegepast op partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en nonprofit organisaties. Toekomstige studies naar het microniveau van partnerschappen zouden bijvoorbeeld empirisch kunnen onderzoeken of, en in welke mate, sociaal kapitaal en entitativity ontstaan tussen individuen (bijvoorbeeld, managers, werknemers, consumenten) die gezamenlijk deelnemen aan activiteiten die in het kader van een partnerschap georganiseerd worden. Het gevoel van groepssamenhorigheid (dus entitativity), dat gedreven wordt door de gemeenschappelijke doelstellingen of overeenkomsten van leden, kan mogelijk waarde opleveren voor de deelnemende leden. Ook zou zo'n gevoel van groepssamenhorigheid hun bereidheid kunnen versterken om tijd, inspanningen of financiële middelen in het partnerschap te investeren, en daardoor het voortbestaan van de groep te ondersteunen, en dus ook het partnerschapsinitiatief. Net als bij consumenten in online sociale netwerken, zouden de motivaties van werknemers om actief aan partnerschappen deel te nemen kunnen verschillen, afhankelijk van de mate waarin ze betrokken zijn bij het partnerschap. Ook dit lijkt een interessant onderwerp voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Dit proefschrift heeft niet alleen implicaties voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek, maar ook voor de praktijk. De bevindingen laten zien dat de onderwerpen die bedrijven in hun communicatie over maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen moeten benadrukken afhankelijk zijn van wat ze willen bereiken. Het benadrukken van eigenbelang voor consumenten heeft een directe en positieve invloed op de financiële resultaten van het bedrijf (in termen van aankoopintenties en intenties om over te stappen). Er zijn ook effecten op het imago van het bedrijf in termen van vertrouwen en deze zijn afhankelijk van een goede fit tussen het bedrijf en de nonprofit partner. Zoals uit hoofdstuk vier blijkt, kan het kiezen van een nonprofit partner met een goede fit echter ook nadelige gevolgen

hebben voor het bedrijf. Gezien de voor- en nadelen, kunnen bedrijven wellicht beter kiezen voor een partnerschap met een goede fit, dat geschikt is om zowel de maatschappelijke vraagstukken als ook de strategische doelstellingen van het bedrijf te belichten. Bovendien moeten bedrijven ervoor zorgen dat consumenten op de hoogte zijn van de innovativiteit en de hoge kwaliteit van de producten en diensten van het bedrijf, om eventuele negatieve effecten bij proselves te voorkomen.

Over het algemeen hebben bedrijven te accepteren dat het faciliteren van sociale interacties tussen diverse groepen van belanghebbenden mogelijk betekent dat hun vermogen om controle uit te oefenen beperkt wordt, ook met betrekking tot online sociale netwerken. Bedrijven kunnen erkennen dat consumenten op zoek zijn naar verschillende waarde proposities. Het is voor bedrijven een aanrader om te zorgen dat sociale interacties zowel een bijdrage kunnen leveren aan sociale als ook aan economische waarde voor de consument, waardoor ze tegemoet komen aan verschillende behoeftes. In het specifieke geval van niche online sociale netwerken kunnen netwerk providers mogelijk een voordeel halen uit de interacties tussen leden door zich op een specifieke doelstelling te richten en op een relatief homogeen ledenbestand. Daardoor kan een sterk groepsgevoel (entitativity) onder de leden ontstaan. Om leden van niche sociale netwerken goed van dienst te zijn, worden netwerk operators geadviseerd om voor niet-betalende leden de economische voordelen te benadrukken, en voor betalende leden met name sociale voordelen.

Tot slot vraagt dit proefschrift om een breder stakeholder perspectief voor toekomstig academisch onderzoek naar partnerschappen tussen bedrijven en non-profit organisaties. Ook wordt managers in de praktijk aanbevolen om meer samen te werken met andere afdelingen binnen de organisatie om deze veelbelovende partnerschappen met succes te managen en te verspreiden, binnen en tussen de deelnemende organisaties. Deze partnerschappen kunnen niet alleen de maatschappij en de partnerorganisaties ten goede komen, maar hebben ook belangrijke implicaties voor diverse individuele belanghebbenden (zoals consumenten, werknemers, managers).

About the author

Marlene Vock was born on February 27, 1981 in Mistelbach, Austria. She studied commerce at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration (Austria), and also spent one semester at the Faculty of Applied Economics at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). During her studies she specialized in the fields of marketing und social politics, and wrote her master thesis on European integration policies for ethnic minorities. She also assisted with academic research projects on care and social insurance at the Institute of Social Politics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration. After having received her master degree in 2005, she worked as a marketing assistant at Stichting WWZ and Mades Cosmetics in The Netherlands, before she started with her Ph.D. at the University of Amsterdam Business School in 2007. Her areas of research and teaching are marketing and strategy, consumer behavior and corporate social responsibility. Her research on business-nonprofit partnerships has been presented at national and international conferences, including the European Marketing Academy Conference and the Academy of Management annual meeting. Her work has also been accepted for publication in *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Business & Society*. She will continue her research at the Amsterdam Business School as Assistant Professor of Marketing, on topics such as business-nonprofit partnerships, consumers and energy, and online social networks.