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Research Article

When donating is liberating: The role of product and consumer characteristics in the appeal of cause-related products

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Abstract

The present work examines the effectiveness of pairing a charitable donation with a product purchase. We propose a compensatory process, in which the guilt-laundering properties of charitable donations are more appealing the more consumption guilt is experienced. Consumption guilt is dependent on both product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian) and consumer characteristics (guilt-sensitivity), such that adding a charitable donation to hedonic products is more impactful than adding the same donation to utilitarian products, especially for guilt-sensitive consumers. As a result of the impact of product type and guilt-sensitivity, several non-intuitive findings emerge. For example, guilt-sensitive consumers, who normally indulge in hedonic consumption the least, indulge at least as much as their less guilt-sensitive counterparts when hedonic products are paired with a charitable donation. Moreover, guilt-sensitive consumers are relatively insensitive to the nature of the supported cause, indulging in hedonic consumption even when it supports disliked causes. Six studies demonstrate the impact of adding charitable donations to products as well as the unique role that consumption guilt and its alleviation play in the underlying process.

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies have been touted as “the next big thing” in marketing (Kotler & Lee, 2004; Mainwaring, 2011) and Fortune 500 companies spend upwards of \$15 billion a year on CSR efforts (Smith, 2014). However, to be effective, CSR strategies are required to contribute not only to society, but also to companies’ bottom lines. Although some findings suggest that CSR generates financial gains (Krishna & Rajan, 2009; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003), other findings show no positive impact on companies’ profits (Hamilton, Jo, & Statman, 1993; Nelling & Webb, 2009). This suggests that

perhaps we should continue to investigate when, why, and for whom CSR efforts are effective.

To do so, we extend existing work exploring the impact of product type on the appeal of cause-related products (Strahilevitz, 1999; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), that is, products whose purchase is accompanied by the company donating a portion of proceeds to charity (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Krishna, 2011; Menon & Kahn, 2003; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Strahilevitz, 1999; Torelli, Monga, & Kaikati, 2012; Winterich & Barone, 2011). Prior work shows that hedonic products paired with charitable donations are more appealing than hedonic products offering a discount of the same value, while utilitarian products paired with charitable donations are less appealing than equivalent discounts (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). This effect is explained using a multiplicative model that relies largely on the positive emotional characteristics of hedonic consumption. Yet,

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the role of these positive emotions has not been explored. Moreover, hedonic consumption has negative emotional characteristics as well, such as guilt (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007); the role of guilt in driving the appeal of cause-related products remains similarly unexplored.

The present work seeks to address these knowledge gaps by exploring the role of guilt in driving preference for cause-related products, particularly hedonic products. We distinguish between the role of guilt and that of other emotions associated with hedonic products. By doing so, we aim to enhance the field's understanding of the appeal of cause-related products and to better predict and understand consumers' preferences for such products.

Consistent with existing theories, we propose that because hedonic consumption is appealing and desirable, consumers covet hedonic products. However, because engaging in (or contemplating engaging in) hedonic consumption induces guilt (Bagozzi, Dholakia, & Basuroy, 2003; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Mellers & McGraw, 2001; Wilson & Gilbert, 2003), consumers seek justification for such consumption (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). We posit that cause-related products offer such justification—consumers can alleviate their consumption guilt by engaging in the prosocial behavior of charitable donation (Bybee, Merisca, & Velasco, 1997; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1997). Thus, we propose a compensatory process in which pairing a product with a charitable donation can be used to launder consumption guilt; the laundering (i.e., alleviation) of guilt liberates consumers to engage in hedonic consumption guilt-free.

The opportunity to launder one's guilt should be more appealing the more consumption guilt one experiences. Accordingly, hedonic products (whose consumption induces more guilt than utilitarian products; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b) should particularly benefit from offering charitable donations. While existing literature is suggestive and supportive of this idea (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), there is no empirical data on the impact of adding charitable causes to different products (e.g., hedonic vs. utilitarian) relative to a no-cause control. We provide such data.

Moreover, we propose that consumption guilt is driven not only by product type, but also by consumer characteristics. Specifically, we rely on literature showing some consumers find hedonic consumption induces more consumption guilt; we call these consumers "guilt-sensitive" (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006). We predict that guilt-sensitive consumers will be most likely to value the opportunity to reduce consumption guilt, therefore, they will be most likely to show an increase in hedonic consumption when a charitable donation is added to a hedonic product. Such a finding would extend our knowledge regarding which kinds of consumers respond more positively to CSR efforts.

In addition, the higher need of guilt-sensitive consumers for guilt-laundering is expected to result in some non-intuitive predictions. First, in an effort to reduce their consumption guilt, guilt-sensitive consumers are expected to (ironically) *increase* their hedonic consumption of products that offer charitable donations. Second, as a result of the presence of a charitable donation,

guilt-sensitive consumers, who usually indulge the least in hedonic products (Zemack-Rugar, Bettman, & Fitzsimons, 2007), may come to indulge at least as much as (and, in some instances, more than) their less guilt-sensitive counterparts. Third, we propose that due to their need for guilt-alleviation, guilt-sensitive consumers may be relatively insensitive to the characteristics of the donated-to cause, showing preference for products that support causes they dislike. Such a finding would run in contrast to extensive CSR work suggesting that an individual's liking of company-supported causes is critical for CSREfforts' success (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Winterich & Barone, 2011).

We elaborate further on these predictions below. First, we provide relevant theoretical background on CSR's effectiveness, consumption guilt, hedonic consumption, and helping; we also discuss the nature and consequences of individual differences in guilt-sensitivity, followed by our theory, hypotheses, and six experiments.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Background and the Role of Product Type

Previous research has explored many moderators of CSR's effectiveness, including when companies should engage in CSR (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006), why they should engage in it (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006), and what kind of causes they should support (Barone, Norman, & Miyazaki, 2007; Basil & Herr, 2006; Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Winterich & Barone, 2011). Companies must choose to associate their products with causes that are consistent with their corporate nature, values, or brand message (Barone et al., 2007; Hoeffler & Keller, 2002). For example, Home Depot should partner with charities related to home building (e.g., Habitat for Humanity), whereas Revlon should partner with charities related to domestic violence (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). In addition, for CSR efforts to be effective, consumers must have empathy toward the promoted cause (Mattila & Hanks, 2012), must perceive that they share the traits and values of the cause (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002), and must feel that they are similar to the cause (Barone et al., 2007; Basil & Herr, 2006; Bendapudi et al., 1996). In other words, for CSR efforts to succeed, consumers must believe in and like the supported charity (Sargeant, 1999; Winterich & Barone, 2011).

While work on which causes companies choose to associate with abounds, work on which products CSR efforts should be associated with has been sparser. One notable exception is Strahilevitz and Myers' (1998) research, which provided a first exploration of the role of product type in the effectiveness of CSR efforts. Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) looked at the effectiveness of adding a financial incentive (i.e., a discount/rebate) vs. a charitable donation to a given product type. The authors found that charitable donations were preferred over discounts for hedonic products, while the reverse was true for utilitarian products.

To explain these findings, the authors proposed a theory of affect-based complementarity. The term was derived from the concept of functional complementarity, which suggests that products that are functionally complementary (e.g., a printer and paper) have greater joint value than the mere sum value of

their individual parts (Gaeth, Levin, Chakraborty, & Levin, 1990). Instead of focusing on function, however, the theory focuses on complementarity of affect: “If the different sets of emotions generated by *two* distinct *positive* outcomes somehow complement each other, it is possible that the value created by bundling these two outcomes together might be greater than the value created by offering them separately. This suggests the possibility of affect-based complementarity” (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998, p. 435; emphasis added). In other words, the authors argue that combining two distinct positive outcomes, the satisfaction of donating to charity (Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973) and the enjoyment of hedonic products (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a), creates multiplicative enhanced value; this same enhancement does not occur for utilitarian products because their consumption is not as enjoyable.

We extend this framework by proposing that, in addition to the positive emotional aspects of hedonic consumption, there are also negative aspects. Specifically, consumers experience guilt when consuming hedonic products (Giner-Sorolla, 2001; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Mukhopadhyay & Johar, 2007) or when contemplating such consumption (Bagozzi et al., 2003; Mellers & McGraw, 2001; Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). We refer to this emotional experience as “consumption guilt” and propose that accounting for consumption guilt allows for a deeper theoretical exploration of cause-related products.

To account for consumption guilt, we propose a compensatory (rather than multiplicative) model. We suggest that when consumption guilt arises, it gives rise to a guilt-alleviation goal (Gross & John, 2003; Morris & Reilly, 1987; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001); this goal can be attained via the helping behavior that a charitable donation represents (Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1997; Tangney, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Once guilt is alleviated, hedonic consumption should become less hindered. This process is more likely to occur the more consumption guilt one experiences, as discussed next.

The Drivers of Consumption Guilt

We propose that consumption guilt is affected by the consumed product type (i.e., hedonic vs. utilitarian) and moderated by the consumer’s characteristics (i.e., guilt-sensitivity). The role of product type in CSR has received little attention since the seminal work of Strahilevitz and Myers (1998; Strahilevitz, 1999). The moderating role of guilt-sensitivity in CSR’s effectiveness remains unexplored. Accounting for these variables enables us to extend existing theory and findings.

Product Type and Consumption Guilt

Existing research outlines many differences between hedonic and utilitarian products (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b). One key difference is that the consumption of hedonic products can be accompanied by guilt, while the consumption of utilitarian products is unlikely to engender any guilt (Giner-Sorolla, 2001; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Mukhopadhyay & Johar, 2007). In fact, hedonic products are so

tightly associated with guilt that they are referred to as “guilty pleasures” (Giner-Sorolla, 2001).

While previous work has acknowledged the presence of consumption guilt in hedonic consumption (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), it remains unclear whether it is the positive aspects of such consumption (e.g., pleasure, happiness), the negative aspects of such consumption (e.g., guilt), or both that drive consumer reactions to cause-related hedonic products. Indeed, it is possible that these different aspects drive consumption in different ways. For example, the positive aspects of consumption may result in multiplicative effects, whereas the negative aspects (e.g., guilt) may lead to compensatory effects. We seek to distinguish between these possible explanations and to isolate the role of consumption guilt in driving preferences for cause-related hedonic products.

Moreover, we propose that the impact of product type on consumption guilt is moderated by the characteristics of the consumer, discussed next.

Guilt-Sensitivity and Consumption Guilt

Different individuals can respond to the same stimuli with different emotional responses (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999). In particular, different individuals respond to hedonic consumption with different levels of consumption guilt (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). Consumers who experience greater hedonic consumption guilt are less likely to engage in hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007) and are likely to pay less for hedonic products (Urminsky & Kivetz, 2003). We call these consumers “guilt-sensitive”.

Guilt-sensitive consumers are well aware of the appealing and enjoyable aspects of hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006), yet, for these consumers, guilt can serve as a barrier to such consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). This suggests that guilt-sensitive consumers, who desire hedonic consumption but struggle with its emotional consequences, would be particularly appreciative of an opportunity to alleviate their consumption guilt, liberating them to partake in hedonic consumption.

Previous research has explored some methods that allow for the alleviation of consumption guilt, including encouraging guilt-sensitive consumers to focus on enjoyment goals (Haws & Poynor, 2008), asking them to think about regrets they might have if they fail to indulge (Kivetz & Keinan, 2006), mentally distancing them from hedonic consumption (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b), and allowing them to justify hedonic consumption via effort (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a) or by enacting prior virtuous acts (Dhar & Simonson, 1999; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). We propose that one additional way for consumers to reduce or launder their consumption guilt is via helping (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1997; Tangney, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Guilt and Helping

Guilt, like other negative emotions, gives rise to a strong, automatic, emotion-regulation goal, that is, the goal to feel better

by reducing guilt (Gross & John, 2003; Morris & Reilly, 1987; Tice et al., 2001). One established guilt-alleviating behavior is helping. Prior research shows that guilt leads to an increase in helping (Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1997), even when the source of the guilt and the target of the helping behavior are unrelated (Darlington & Macker, 1966). Prior research also shows that increases in helping are pursued as an avenue for emotion-regulation; increases in helping occur when guilt is experienced, however, these increases disappear when guilt is alleviated via other means (Cialdini et al., 1973). Similarly, whereas the thought of not helping someone elicits guilt (O'Keefe & Figgé, 1999), the thought of helping someone has been theorized to reduce guilt (Khan & Dhar, 2006). More specifically, prior work shows that participants who imagined themselves helping someone were more likely to subsequently engage in hedonic consumption (Khan & Dhar, 2006). We build on this work in several ways.

First, rather than looking at sequential behavior in which helping and hedonic consumption are separate, we look at situations in which the two are combined. This allows for both practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, we are able to explore cause-related products and the role of guilt in the preference for such products, contributing to the CSR literature. Theoretically, we are able to explore how guilt-inducing and guilt-alleviating attributes of the same product are evaluated. It is possible that an additive, multiplicative, or compensatory process takes place; we seek to understand which will occur. Prior work does not address this research question as it explores these attributes separately, across different (often competing) products or behaviors (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007).

Second, the effects of consumption guilt on helping (even in a sequential context) have not been empirically examined. Prior work has theorized about the possible role of consumption guilt, but has only tested alternate processes such as self-concept (Khan & Dhar, 2006). We test the impact of consumption guilt on helping more directly by exploring consumption guilt's effect on the appeal of cause-related hedonic products.

Third, focusing on the role of consumption guilt allows us to explore two previously unexplored moderators of CSRefforts' effectiveness: (1) which kinds of consumers are more likely to respond to cause-related products, and (2) what kinds of charitable causes are more effective at increasing cause-related products' appeal. Finally, we note that prior work has focused on the impact of helping on the consumption of hedonic products that are luxuries (e.g., designer jeans, designer sunglasses, Rolex watches; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Torelli et al., 2012). Instead, we focus on everyday hedonic indulgences (e.g., candy bars). These two types of hedonic products can be quite distinct, a theoretical issue we address further in the [General Discussion](#) section.

Prior to discussing our hypotheses regarding cause-related products, guilt-sensitivity, and consumption guilt, it is important to note that other emotions may also be theorized to impact the appeal of cause-related products. For example, if happiness leads people to focus on the positives (e.g., pleasure, joy) of hedonic consumption and helping, it may be these positives that drive the appeal of cause-related products. Such a pattern would

be consistent with the multiplicative theory of affect complementarity described earlier. Similarly, if sadness leads people to focus on the potential negatives of hedonic consumption (e.g., missing out on the pleasures and joys of hedonic products; Haws & Poynor, 2008), this could highlight the value of helping via products involving charitable donations. This is particularly possible since both sadness and happiness can lead to an increase in helping (e.g., donation) behavior, often as an emotion regulation strategy (Baumann, Cialdini, & Kendrick, 1981; Benson & Catt, 1978; Cialdini et al., 1987; Isen & Levin, 1972; Manucia, Baumann, & Cialdini, 1984; Weyant, 1978). We seek to rule out these alternative explanations.

Theory and Hypotheses

We propose that preferences for hedonic (but not utilitarian) products are moderated by the presence (or absence) of a charitable donation and by consumers' guilt-sensitivity; these variables also impact consumption guilt, which mediates their effects on preference. Specifically, we predict that hedonic products will be less appealing to high (vs. low) guilt-sensitive consumers because they induce more consumption guilt for consumers high (vs. low) in guilt-sensitivity. Adding a charitable donation to hedonic products should serve to alleviate such consumption guilt, resulting in an increase in the appeal of hedonic cause-related products, particularly for guilt-sensitive consumers. Therefore, once a charitable donation is added to a hedonic product, guilt-sensitive consumers should prefer it at least as much as their less guilt-sensitive counterparts. This prediction suggests that, under some circumstances, guilt-sensitive consumers can reduce their consumption guilt by *increasing* hedonic consumption; this runs contrary to intuition and prior findings that suggest guilt-sensitive consumers typically attempt to alleviate guilt by *reducing* hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Zheng, 2006). At the same time, since utilitarian products are associated with little consumption guilt, adding a charitable donation to such products serves no emotion-regulation purpose, and should impact neither consumption guilt nor these products' appeal (see [Fig. 1](#)).

Moreover, we propose that because guilt-sensitive consumers have experienced the negative outcomes of under-indulgence (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006), they realize the value of hedonic consumption. Yet, their high consumption guilt prevents them from participating in such coveted consumption. Therefore, guilt-sensitive consumers should be motivated to find a way to reduce consumption guilt so that they can be liberated to indulge guilt-free. We predict that this motivation will render guilt-sensitive consumers relatively insensitive to the characteristics of the charitable donation. Consequently, guilt-sensitive consumers will continue to find cause-related hedonic products appealing, even when the causes these products support are ones that they dislike.

Overview of Studies and Measures

We test these hypotheses in six studies. The impact of adding charitable donations to hedonic vs. utilitarian products on the

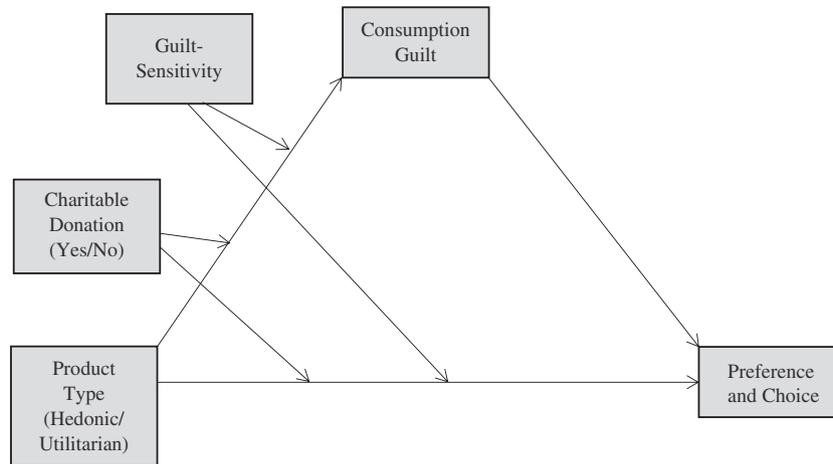


Fig. 1. Proposed theoretical model.

preferences and choices of consumers with high vs. low guilt-sensitivity is explored in Studies 1A–1B. Studies 2A–2B aim to show the unique role of guilt compared to other positive (happy) and negative (sad) emotions in the choice of cause-related hedonic products. Study 3 further explores the role of guilt by testing the mediating role of consumption guilt in driving the appeal of cause-related hedonic products. Finally, Study 4 examines guilt-sensitive consumers' insensitivity to charity characteristics by comparing their preference for cause-related hedonic products when the supported cause is liked vs. disliked.

As our stimuli, we use established hedonic–utilitarian product pairs; we also pretest these product pairs. In addition, we statistically control for the hedonic valuation of the hedonic product. The more appealing and tempting the hedonic product, the more likely it is to cause the tension between desire and guilt proposed in our theory; controlling for this tension makes for a strong test of our theory. This measure also controls for individual differences in the perceived hedonic nature of the stimuli, ensuring that the observed effects occur above and beyond any such idiosyncratic differences.

We use two convergent measures to capture consumers' guilt-sensitivity: the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992; Studies 1A–1B and 3) and the Hyperopia scale (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Studies 2A–2B and 4). The Test of Self-Conscious Affect is a behavioral scale in which individuals are asked to indicate their likelihood of engaging in guilt-related behaviors in response to various scenarios (e.g., whether one would apologize after losing a friend's dog). These behaviors are indicative of the cognitive and affective experience of guilt (Lewis, 1971; Tangney et al., 1992). The Hyperopia scale asks individuals to indicate their tendency to experience difficulty engaging in hedonic consumption (e.g., "It's hard for me to make myself indulge"). This difficulty is indicative of consumption guilt (Haws & Poynor, 2008). Previous work shows that individuals high on either scale tend to indulge in hedonic consumption the least (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007), suggesting a similarity in the constructs assessed by

these scales. Accordingly, similar patterns across these scales would provide converging evidence for the role of consumption guilt. At the same time, since neither scale measures consumption guilt directly, we provide such a measure (Studies 3–4) and empirically test the mediating role of consumption guilt.

Study 1A: The Effect of Adding a Charitable Donation

Study 1A measures preference between a hedonic and utilitarian product (i.e., candy bar vs. fruit) when either (or neither) is associated with a charitable donation; guilt-sensitivity is measured as a moderator. Consistent with existing literature, we predict that when neither product is associated with a charity (the no-cause, control condition), high guilt-sensitive consumers will prefer the hedonic product less than low guilt-sensitive consumers (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). In accordance with our theory, we further predict that adding a charitable donation to the utilitarian product should have no impact on preferences. In other words, when neither product offers a charitable donation or when the utilitarian product offers a charitable donation, individuals high in guilt-sensitivity should show a similarly reduced preference for the hedonic product.

In contrast, we predict that once a charitable donation is added to the hedonic product, this will alleviate consumption guilt, resulting in increased preference for the hedonic product, particularly for high guilt-sensitive consumers. Thus, high guilt-sensitive consumers are predicted to increase their hedonic consumption when a charitable donation is added to the hedonic product relative to when it is absent. As a result of this increase, guilt-sensitive consumers are predicted to prefer the cause-related hedonic product as much as less guilt-sensitive consumers.

Participants, Design, and Method

Participants on Amazon's Mturk ($N = 107$; 44% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.28$) completed a two-factor, between-subjects study with one manipulated factor (Cause: no-cause control, cause-

related hedonic, cause-related utilitarian) and one measured factor (Guilt-Sensitivity; continuous) in return for a small payment.

Participants were asked to imagine that they were hungry and in a rush, and needed to pick up a snack quickly; they stopped at a convenience store, where they saw a basket containing fruit and candy bars (Shen & Sengupta, 2012; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). A pretest indicated that fruit was seen as less hedonic and more utilitarian than candy bars, and that the two snacks were equally satisfying (details of the pretest are provided in the Methods Detail Appendix). In the “no-cause control” condition, neither snack was associated with a charitable donation. In the “cause-related utilitarian” condition, the fruit was associated with a charitable donation, and in the “cause-related hedonic” condition, the candy bar was associated with a charitable donation. Cause-related products had a tag noting “Portion of proceeds benefit cancer research” alongside a logo of the American Cancer Society (see Online Appendix A). In all studies, conditions were randomly assigned.

Upon viewing the basket, participants were asked to indicate their preference for the candy bar vs. the fruit using an 11-point scale (5 = *strongly prefer the fruit*, 0 = *indifferent between the two*, 5 = *strongly prefer the candy bar*); this was the dependent measure, with higher scores indicating a greater preference for the hedonic product. As a manipulation check, participants were asked whether any of the snack options were associated with a charity (*yes/no*); participants in the charity condition were further asked which of the snack items was associated with a charity (*fruit, candy bar, I don't remember*). Subsequently, participants were asked to think about candy bars in general, outside the context of the study, and to indicate how tempting, appealing, and desirable as a gift they were (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*); this was the covariate measure, controlling for individual differences in the hedonic valuation of the product (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). Finally, participants completed the Test of Self Conscious Affect (Tangney et al., 1992) as a measure of guilt-sensitivity and reported their gender and age.

Results

Age and gender

Age was a significant covariate in this study, but does not impact the results. Age and gender were not significant covariates in subsequent studies and have no theoretical meaning. Therefore, these variables are not included in any of the models and are not discussed further (complete data for these variables is provided in the Methods Detail Appendix).

Manipulation checks

94% of participants correctly remembered whether there was a charity associated with one of the products and 90% correctly remembered which product the charity was associated with (where relevant). In this and all subsequent studies, analysis is conducted including all participants; excluding participants who misremembered the charity information does not change the results. A hedonic valuation score for the candy bar was created (average of tempting, appealing, and desirable; $\alpha = .83$); this

score was significantly above mid-scale ($M = 5.74$, $t(106) = 13.71$, $p < .0001$). Guilt-sensitivity was unaffected by charity condition in this and all subsequent studies ($ps = .15-.80$). Moreover, in this and all subsequent studies there is no indication of multicollinearity between any of the measures based on the criteria set forth in Belsley, Kuh, and Welsch (1980).

Preference

We conducted an ANCOVA using the hedonic valuation of the candy bar as a covariate ($F(1, 100) = 20.16$, $p < .0001$), including cause condition (class variable), guilt-sensitivity (continuous variable; $M = 3.89$, $SD = .58$), and their interaction as independent variables, all predicting preference for the candy bar.

The model revealed a significant main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($F(1, 100) = 10.30$, $p < .005$), and a significant main effect of cause condition ($F(2, 100) = 3.49$, $p < .05$), both qualified by the predicted two-way interaction of cause condition by guilt-sensitivity ($F(2, 100) = 4.21$, $p < .05$). As seen in Fig. 2, adding a cause to a utilitarian product (i.e., the fruit) had no impact on preferences relative to the no-cause control, whereas adding a cause to a hedonic product (i.e., the candy bar) had a significant impact in the predicted direction. Specifically, continuous slope analysis (using dummy variable coding; Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013) revealed that, as predicted, in the no-cause control condition, individuals with high guilt-sensitivity (+1 SD) preferred the candy bar less than individuals with low guilt-sensitivity (−1 SD ; $M_{low} = 7.60$, $M_{high} = 4.57$, $t = -3.61$, $p < .0005$). As further predicted, this pattern replicated for the cause-related utilitarian product ($M_{low} = 7.40$, $M_{high} = 5.05$; $t = -1.80$, $p = .07$). Spotlight analysis (using dummy coding; Spiller et al., 2013) further revealed that preference for the hedonic product was the same in the no-cause control and the cause-related utilitarian conditions for participants with high ($t = 1.17$, $p > .20$) and low ($t = -1.35$, $p > .15$) guilt-sensitivity.

Most importantly, as predicted, in the cause-related hedonic product condition, individuals with high and low guilt-sensitivity showed an equally high level of preference for the hedonic product ($M_{low} = 7.44$, $M_{high} = 7.57$; $t = .08$, $p > .90$). Spotlight analysis showed that individuals with high guilt-sensitivity preferred the hedonic product more in the cause-related hedonic

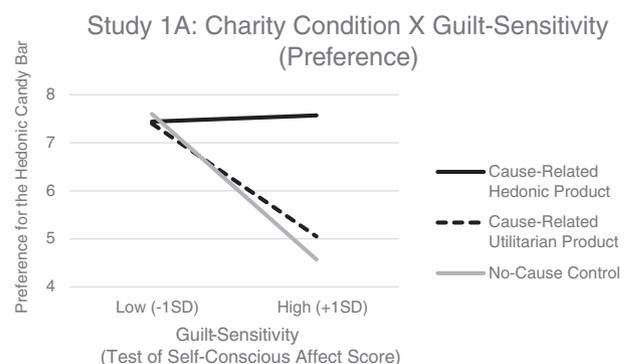


Fig. 2. Study 1A results—adding charitable donations to different product types. Note: For ease of readership, means are presented based on a mean split; all analyses are conducted and reported using the continuous variables.

product condition than in either the cause-related utilitarian product condition ($t = -2.14, p < .05$) or the no-cause condition ($t = -3.26, p < .005$). Individuals with low guilt-sensitivity showed the same preference for the hedonic product in all three conditions (all $ps > .30$).

Floodlight analysis (Spiller et al., 2013) revealed that the difference between the cause-related hedonic product and the no-cause control condition became significant at .09 *SD* above the mean value of guilt-sensitivity, and the difference between the cause-related hedonic product and the cause-related utilitarian product condition became significant at .40 *SD* above the mean value. In contrast, the difference between the cause-related utilitarian product and the no-cause control condition was non-significant across the entire range of the guilt-sensitivity measure.

Discussion

This study shows that adding a charitable donation to a hedonic product increases preference for that product relative to a no-charity control, particularly for guilt-sensitive consumers. Guilt-sensitive consumers, who normally show a reduced preference for hedonic products (as seen in the no-cause, control condition), responded to the addition of a charitable donation with increased hedonic consumption. As a result, these consumers' hedonic consumption level was similar to that of their less guilt-sensitive counterparts. Notably, consumers did not need to be extremely high on guilt-sensitivity to show such an increase in preference; being just above the mean was sufficient to generate the effect. The significant impact of guilt-sensitivity on preferences for cause-related hedonic products is suggestive of the role consumption guilt and its alleviation may play in the appeal of such products, lending support to the proposed theory.

Further support for the proposed model is offered in the finding that the addition of a charitable donation to a utilitarian product had no impact on preferences. This finding is inconsistent with the predictions of an additive utility model. If charitable donations offer positive value simply because helping is a positive behavior (irrespective of its guilt-alleviating properties), it should be the case that any product with a charitable donation strictly dominates that same product without a donation, increasing preference for all cause-related products relative to a no-cause control. Instead, preference increased only for cause-related hedonic products, suggesting that the value of charitable donations is dependent, at least in part, on the guilt-alleviation properties they offer.

Given that a null effect was found for cause-related utilitarian products, subsequent studies focus on cause-related hedonic products. This focus allows us to examine the role of consumption guilt and its alleviation in greater depth. First, however, we seek to replicate the key findings of Study 1A using a choice measure.

Study 1B: Replication in Choice

The primary goal of Study 1B was to replicate the effect observed in Study 1A for cause-related hedonic products using

a dependent measure of choice. A secondary goal is to show generalizability by using a different charity.

Participants, Design, and Method

Participants on Amazon's Mturk ($N = 197$; 64% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 35.49$) completed a two-factor, between-subjects study with one manipulated factor (Cause: yes/no) and one measured factor (Guilt-Sensitivity; continuous) in return for monetary compensation. The charitable donation was associated only with the hedonic product; otherwise, the design was identical to that of Study 1A with two slight modifications. First, the charity itself was a hunger relief organization, "Bread for the World". Second, upon viewing the basket, participants were asked to indicate which of the snacks they would choose; this hypothetical choice of the candy bar (the hedonic option) served as the dependent measure (1 if chosen, 0 otherwise).

Results

Manipulation checks

97% of participants correctly remembered whether there was a charity associated with either of the products and which product the charity was associated with (where relevant). The hedonic valuation of the candy bar ($\alpha = .82$) was significantly above mid-scale ($M = 5.63, t(196) = 16.89, p < .0001$).

Choice

We conducted a logistic regression using the hedonic valuation of the candy bar as a covariate ($\chi^2 = 26.83, p < .001$) and cause condition, guilt-sensitivity ($M = 4.05, SD = .53$), and their interaction as independent variables predicting hypothetical choice of the candy bar. The model revealed a main effect of cause condition ($\chi^2 = 5.20, p < .05$), and a main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($\chi^2 = 7.43, p < .05$), both qualified by the predicted significant interaction of cause condition by guilt-sensitivity ($\chi^2 = 5.82, p < .05$). Continuous slope analysis (Fitzsimons, 2008) revealed that, as predicted, in the absence of a charitable donation, participants with high guilt-sensitivity (+1 *SD*) chose the candy bar less ($M = 44\%$) than participants with low guilt-sensitivity (-1 *SD*; $M = 60\%$; $\chi^2 = 7.43, p < .005$). As further predicted, this difference was attenuated once a charitable donation was added to the candy bar, such that individuals with high and low guilt-sensitivity chose the candy bar equally ($M_{\text{low}} = 51\%, M_{\text{high}} = 64\%$; $\chi^2 = .44, p > .50$; see Fig. 3). Planned spotlight contrasts (Fitzsimons, 2008) showed that for participants with low guilt-sensitivity, the addition of the charitable donation had no impact ($\chi^2 = 1.29, p > .25$). As predicted, for participants with high guilt-sensitivity, the addition of a charitable donation significantly increased their choice of the candy bar ($\chi^2 = 5.73, p < .05$). Floodlight analysis revealed that the increase in choice of the cause-related candy bar became significant at .5 *SD* above the mean of guilt-sensitivity.

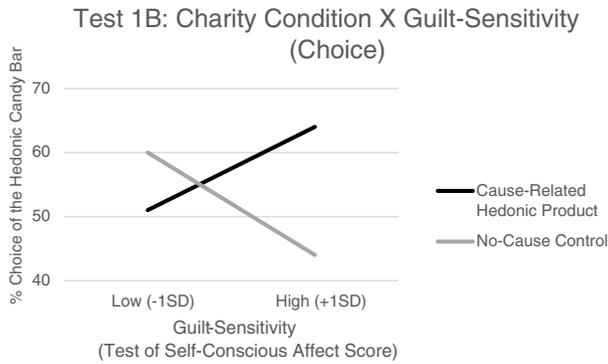


Fig. 3. Study 1B: Charity Condition X Guilt-Sensitivity (Choice).

Discussion

The interaction of guilt-sensitivity by cause condition from Study 1A was replicated. Absent a charitable donation, individuals high in guilt-sensitivity showed reduced hedonic consumption relative to those low in guilt-sensitivity. Once a charitable donation was added, guilt-sensitive consumers increased their hedonic consumption to a level no different from that of their less guilt-sensitive counterparts. Once again, consumers did not have to be extremely high on guilt-sensitivity for the addition of a charitable donation to exert its effects.

The observed interaction of cause condition and guilt-sensitivity lends support to the proposed consumption guilt and guilt-alleviation process. Yet, we have not directly examined or demonstrated the role of consumption guilt. The next three studies aim to provide evidence regarding the role of consumption guilt and to rule out alternative explanations based on other potentially relevant emotions.

Studies 2A–2B: The Unique Role of Incidental Guilt

In Studies 2A–2B, we compare the impact of guilt to that of two other emotions, happiness and sadness, by incidentally inducing these three emotions and observing choice of a cause-related hedonic product. The incidental activation of emotions tends to underscore those emotions in subsequent choice contexts (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). Therefore, eliciting incidental guilt should increase the focus on consumption guilt. If consumption guilt drives the previously observed effects, incidental guilt should serve to exacerbate these effects. Accordingly, we predict that when incidental guilt is activated, high guilt-sensitive consumers will focus on their consumption guilt even more. As a result, they will value the guilt-alleviating properties of the charitable donation even more highly. Consequently, when incidental guilt is activated, high guilt-sensitive consumers will choose the cause-related hedonic product more than their low guilt-sensitive counterparts. In addition, incidental guilt should result in more choice of the cause-related hedonic product than integral guilt (i.e., a no incidental emotion condition), particularly for high guilt-sensitive consumers. The idea that greater guilt will lead to *more* hedonic consumption (specifically, of cause-related products) is contrary to existing research and findings. Existing

work suggests that when guilt is salient, it leads to reduced hedonic consumption (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). Yet, due to the guilt-alleviating properties of adding charitable donations to hedonic products, we predict that an increase in the salience of guilt will, ironically, increase hedonic consumption. While such findings would be interesting in their own right, our key focus is on distinguishing the effects of guilt from those of other hedonic consumption emotions: happiness and sadness.

Specifically, previous research proposes a multiplicative effect whereby combining the joys of hedonic consumption with the joys of charitable donation creates enhanced value for cause-related hedonic products (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). These positive aspects of consumption should be highlighted by the activation of incidental happiness; if these positive emotions (and not guilt) drive our effects, incidental happiness (but not guilt) should increase choice of cause-related hedonic products. This increase should also be observable relative to a no incidental emotion (control) condition. Instead, we argue that focusing on the positives of hedonic consumption does nothing to alleviate consumption guilt; therefore, integral guilt should continue to drive the appeal of cause-related hedonic products even when incidental happiness is activated. Accordingly, an integral guilt condition (i.e., a no incidental emotion condition) should be similar to the incidental happiness condition. Such similarity would not only undermine a multiplicative explanation, it would also demonstrate that incidental happiness does not mask integral consumption guilt. Instead, we predict that integral guilt persists even as consumers experience joy in hedonic consumption (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007), and that this integral guilt (and not happiness) drives the choice of cause-related hedonic products.

In sum, we predict a two-way interaction of incidental emotion (guilt vs. happiness) by guilt-sensitivity, such that incidental guilt leads individuals to choose the cause-related hedonic product more when they are high vs. low in guilt-sensitivity. Incidental happiness (like a no incidental emotion condition) should result in no impact of guilt-sensitivity on choice. This interaction pattern is also predicted when incidental guilt is compared to incidental sadness. Incidental sadness can underscore negative consumption emotions such as sadness, disappointment, and regret; such emotions are common when contemplating foregoing hedonic consumption (i.e., choosing the utilitarian option; Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2007; Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006). These emotions can be regulated through helping behaviors (Baumann et al., 1981; Cialdini et al., 1987; Manucia et al., 1984) much like guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994; Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1997; Tangney, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Moreover, incidental sadness can increase focus on the pleasurable aspects of hedonic consumption (Raghunathan & Corfman, 2004; Rehm & Plakosh, 1975; Tice et al., 2001; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). Taken together, if negative aspects other than guilt drive hedonic consumption, incidental sadness should serve to highlight those aspects, and should lead to an increase in the appeal of cause-related hedonic products.

Yet, we predict that because incidental sadness, much like happiness, does not alleviate integral consumption guilt, it will neither exacerbate nor eliminate the previously observed effects. Instead, incidental sadness should be similar to the no incidental

emotion (control) condition. Only incidental guilt is expected to differ from the no incidental emotion condition, showing an increase in hedonic consumption, particularly for high guilt-sensitive consumers.

Studies 2A & 2B: Participants, Design, and Method

Each of these studies included a two-factor, between-subjects design, with one manipulated factor (Incidental Emotion: guilty/happy in 2A, guilty/sad in 2B) and one measured factor (Guilt-Sensitivity: continuous). The Hyperopia scale was used in both studies to measure guilt-sensitivity (Haws & Poynor, 2008). Study 2A was completed by Amazon Mturk participants for pay ($N = 184$; 63% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 34.10$); Study 2B was completed by undergraduate students from a Southeastern university for course credit ($N = 73$; 49% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.72$). Data for a hanging, no incidental emotion control condition was collected at a later time (Mturk participants, $N = 90$, 47% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 34.70$).

To reduce hypothesis guessing, participants were informed that they were participating in two unrelated studies. In the first study, described as an “Autobiographical Study,” participants were asked to describe an event from their past that made them feel either guilty (both studies), happy (2A), or sad (2B); this served as the incidental emotion prime (Baumann et al., 1981). In the no incidental emotion control condition, this procedure was omitted; this condition was therefore identical to the cause-related hedonic conditions in Studies 1A–1B.

In a purported second study, a “Consumer Scenario” study, participants indicated their hypothetical choice between fruit and a cause-related candy bar using the measure from Study 1B; the cause was the American Cancer Society as in Study 1A. All other measures were the same as Study 1B except that guilt-sensitivity was measured using the Hyperopia scale (Haws & Poynor, 2008).

Study 2A results: Guilt vs. Happiness

Manipulation checks

96% of participants remembered that one of the products was associated with a charity and 94% correctly remembered which product it was. The hedonic valuation of the candy bar was above mid-scale ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 5.62$, $t(183) = 15.18$, $p < .0001$).

Choice

We conducted a logistic regression using the hedonic valuation of the candy bar as a covariate ($\chi^2 = 26.38$, $p < .0001$) and emotion condition, guilt-sensitivity ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.37$), and their interaction as independent variables, all predicting hypothetical choice of the cause-related candy bar. The data revealed a significant main effect of emotion condition ($\chi^2 = 3.65$, $p = .05$), and a significant main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($\chi^2 = 4.38$, $p < .05$), both qualified by the predicted interaction of guilt-sensitivity by emotion condition ($\chi^2 = 4.56$, $p < .05$).

Continuous slope analysis revealed that when incidental guilt was induced, participants with high guilt-sensitivity (+1 SD) chose the candy bar marginally more ($M = 74\%$) than participants with low guilt-sensitivity (–1 SD ; $M = 58\%$, $\chi^2 = 3.21$, $p = .07$). In contrast, when incidental happiness was induced, there was no impact of guilt-sensitivity on choice ($M_{\text{low}} = 66\%$, $M_{\text{high}} = 62\%$, $\chi^2 = 1.36$, $p > .20$; see Fig. 4). Planned spotlight contrasts revealed that participants with low guilt-sensitivity chose the candy bar equally in the happy and guilty emotion conditions ($\chi^2 = 1.48$, $p > .20$). As predicted, participants with high guilt-sensitivity chose the candy more in the guilty than the happy emotion condition ($\chi^2 = 3.61$, $p = .05$). Floodlight analysis revealed that this difference became significant at 1 SD above the mean of guilt-sensitivity.

Study 2B results: Guilt vs. Sadness

Manipulation checks

96% of participants remembered that one of the products was associated with a charitable donation and remembered which product it was. The hedonic evaluation of the candy bar was above mid-scale ($\alpha = .89$, $M = 5.61$, $t(72) = 9.85$, $p < .0001$).

Choice

We conducted a logistic regression using the hedonic valuation of the candy bar as a covariate ($\chi^2 = 3.92$, $p < .05$) and emotion condition, guilt-sensitivity ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.24$), and their interaction as independent variables, all predicting hypothetical choice of the cause-related candy bar. The data revealed a significant main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($\chi^2 = 4.70$, $p < .05$), qualified by the predicted interaction of guilt-sensitivity by emotion condition ($\chi^2 = 3.66$, $p = .05$). Continuous slope analysis revealed that in the incidental guilt condition, participants with high guilt-sensitivity (+1 SD) chose the candy bar significantly more ($M = 82\%$) than participants with low guilt-sensitivity (–1 SD ; $M = 50\%$, $\chi^2 = 5.37$, $p < .05$). In contrast, in the incidental sadness condition, there was no impact of guilt-sensitivity on choice of the candy bar ($M_{\text{low}} = 52\%$, $M_{\text{high}} = 58\%$, $\chi^2 = .04$, $p > .80$; see Fig. 4). Planned spotlight contrasts revealed that participants with low guilt-sensitivity chose the candy bar equally, regardless of their emotion condition ($\chi^2 = .82$, $p > .35$). As predicted, participants with high guilt-sensitivity chose the candy bar more in the incidental guilt than in the incidental sadness condition ($\chi^2 = 3.86$, $p < .05$). Floodlight analysis revealed that this difference became significant starting at .83 SD above the mean of guilt-sensitivity.

Hanging, no incidental emotion control

As predicted, the slope of the no incidental emotion control condition was non-significant ($M_{\text{low}} = 54\%$, $M_{\text{high}} = 54\%$, $\chi^2 = .05$, $p > .80$), replicating the pattern for cause-related hedonic products seen in Studies 1A–1B. Simple contrasts revealed that the incidental happy and sad conditions were no different from the no incidental emotion control when guilt-sensitivity was low (happy: $\chi^2 = 1.98$, $p > .15$; sad: $\chi^2 = .02$, $p > .85$) or high (happy: $\chi^2 = .05$, $p > .80$; sad:

$\chi^2 = .00, p > .95$). As further predicted, the incidental guilt condition was no different from the no incidental emotion condition for those low in guilt-sensitivity (Study 2A: $\chi^2 = .02, p > .85$; Study 2B: $\chi^2 = .98, p > .30$), but was significantly higher than the no incidental emotion condition for those high in guilt-sensitivity (Study 2A: $\chi^2 = 3.64, p = .05$; Study 2B: $\chi^2 = 4.82, p < .05$). Given that the no incidental emotion condition data was collected separately, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, they are consistent with the predicted patterns.

Discussion

The findings of Studies 2A–2B further support our theory. We replicated the findings of our previous studies in the no incidental emotion condition, finding that high and low guilt-sensitive consumers chose the cause-related hedonic product to the same degree; we proposed that in this condition, integral consumption guilt was driving choice. Consistent with this proposition, activating incidental guilt led to an exacerbation of this pattern, such that individuals with high guilt-sensitivity chose the cause-related hedonic product more than their less guilt-sensitive counterparts. This finding shows that, contrary to prior literature, the experience of guilt can cause consumers to indulge in hedonic consumption more (rather than less), and that this increase in hedonic consumption is particularly likely for consumers who generally avoid hedonic consumption—those with high guilt-sensitivity. The observed increase in hedonic consumption on the part of guilt-sensitive consumers in the incidental guilt

condition occurred not only relative to the no incidental emotion control condition, but also relative to the other incidental emotion conditions, sadness and happiness.

In these alternate emotion conditions, as predicted, no increase in the choice of cause-related hedonic products occurred. Rather, the incidental happiness and sadness conditions did not differ from the no incidental emotion control condition. This suggests that neither joy from hedonic consumption nor sadness over the possibility of missing out on such consumption drive the observed effects. Moreover, this finding suggests that integral consumption guilt continued to operate even when these other emotions were active. This finding is consistent with prior work that shows both positive emotions and guilt can occur simultaneously in response to hedonic consumption (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007). These findings begin to rule out alternative emotion explanations and highlight the role of integral consumption guilt. In the next study, we seek to provide further evidence for the role of consumption guilt.

Study 3: The Unique Mediating Role of Consumption Guilt

Study 3 aims to provide direct evidence of the role of consumption guilt in the preference for cause-related hedonic products. We expect that preference patterns for hedonic products will replicate those found in previous studies, whereby individuals with low guilt-sensitivity prefer hedonic products with or without charitable donations equally, while individuals with high guilt-sensitivity prefer hedonic products with charitable donations more than hedonic products that do not offer such donations.

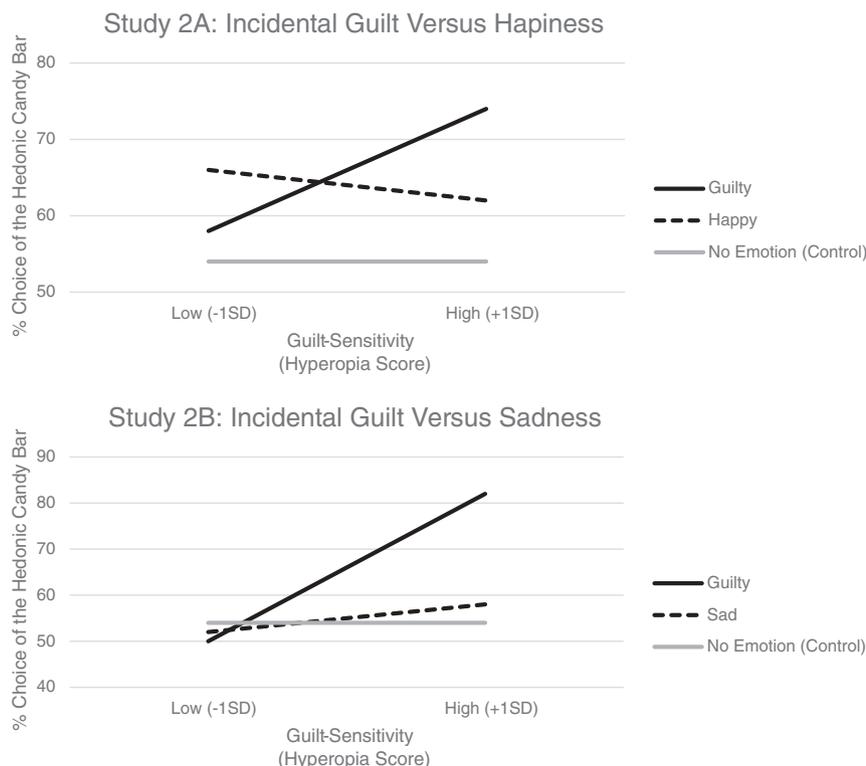


Fig. 4. Studies 2A–2B results—incidental happiness and sadness vs. guilt.

We proposed that these preferences are driven by consumption guilt. Accordingly, individuals high in guilt-sensitivity should indicate less consumption guilt when considering a cause-related hedonic product than when considering a no-cause hedonic product. Individuals low in guilt-sensitivity should indicate the same (relatively low) level of consumption guilt regardless of the presence or absence of a charitable donation. This consumption guilt is expected to mediate the (moderated) impact of charity presence on preferences (see Fig. 5). This moderated-mediation model is tested in Study 3. In addition, to further rule out explanations based on alternate consumption emotions, we also measure consumption happiness and sadness. We predict that these alternate consumption emotions will not be impacted by product or consumer characteristics and will not mediate preferences.

Participants, Design, and Method

Participants on Amazon's Mturk ($N = 100$; 51% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.77$) completed a two-factor, between-subjects study with one manipulated factor (Cause: yes/no) and one measured factor (Guilt-Sensitivity: continuous) in return for a small payment. Participants were asked to imagine that they had some free time and had identified two movie theaters nearby with shows at convenient times. One movie theater offered three high-brow movies: *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Pianist*, and *Citizen Kane*. The other movie theater offered three low-brow movies: *Anchorman*, *Identity Thief*, and *Ted*. Using high- vs. low-brow movies is an established manipulation for hedonic vs. utilitarian choice (Read, Loewenstein, & Kalyanaraman, 1999). A pretest showed that these two sets of movies were equally likely to have been seen or heard of, but significantly different on the evaluations of whether they were high- or low-brow (see Methods Detail Appendix). As in Study 1B, in the cause condition, the low-brow, hedonic theater was associated with a charitable donation; this was indicated by the words "A portion of the proceeds from ticket sales are donated to the American Cancer Society" alongside the charity's logo (see Online Appendix B). In the no-cause condition, no mention of a charitable donation was made.

Participants were asked to indicate which movie theater they would prefer to go to using an 11-point scale, as in Study 1A; this was the dependent measure, with higher scores indicating greater preference for the hedonic (low-brow) theater. Subsequently, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which five emotions (guilt, shame, pride, happiness, and sadness, presented in random order) were associated with either of the theater choices, using a 9-point scale (4 = *choosing theater 1 would make me feel more...*, 0 = *either choice would make me feel equally...*, 4 = *choosing theater 2 would make me feel more...*; see Online Appendix C). As in previous studies, participants evaluated how tempting, appealing, and desirable the low-brow, hedonic theater was (covariate measure), completed the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (Tangney et al., 1992), and provided age and gender information.

Results

Manipulation checks

85% of participants correctly remembered whether there was a charity associated with one of the products and 92% correctly remembered which product the charity was associated with (where relevant).

Preference

We conducted an ANCOVA using the hedonic valuation of the low-brow movie theater as a covariate ($\alpha = .90$; $F(1, 95) = 71.17$, $p < .0001$) and cause condition, guilt-sensitivity ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .55$), and their interaction as independent variables, all predicting preference for the hedonic movie theater. The model revealed a marginally significant main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($F(1, 95) = 3.67$, $p = .06$), and a significant main effect of cause condition ($F(1, 95) = 5.85$, $p < .05$), both qualified by the predicted two-way interaction of cause condition by guilt-sensitivity ($F(1, 95) = 6.80$, $p < .05$). Continuous slope analysis revealed that, as predicted, in the no-cause condition, individuals with high guilt-sensitivity (+1 SD) preferred the hedonic theater less than individuals with low guilt-sensitivity (−1 SD ; $M_{\text{low}} = 7.44$, $M_{\text{high}} = 5.12$; $t = -3.00$, $p < .005$). As further predicted, individuals with high and low guilt-sensitivity showed an equal preference for the cause-related hedonic theater ($M_{\text{low}} = 7.55$, $M_{\text{high}} = 7.22$; $t = .54$, $p > .55$; see Fig. 5). Spotlight analysis revealed that, as predicted, individuals with low guilt-sensitivity preferred the no-cause and the cause-related hedonic theater equally ($t = -1.04$, $p > .30$), while individuals with high guilt-sensitivity preferred the cause-related hedonic theater more than the no-cause hedonic theater ($t = 2.70$, $p < .01$).

Floodlight analysis (Spiller et al., 2013) indicated that the difference between the cause and no-cause conditions became significant at .36 SD above the mean value of guilt-sensitivity.

Moderated mediation

We created a consumption guilt score using the average of reported consumption guilt, shame, and pride (reversed); higher scores indicate greater consumption guilt associated with the hedonic theater ($\alpha = .86$). We tested the predicted moderated-mediation model using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012; model 8). The results showed significant mediation of preference by consumption guilt (95% CI: .57, 2.98); the mediation replicated when using each of the measures separately. Moreover, there was a significant interaction of cause condition by guilt-sensitivity predicting consumption guilt ($F(1, 95) = 13.61$, $p < .0005$). Analysis of the mean patterns of this interaction revealed the predicted pattern; consumption guilt was unaffected by cause condition for those with low guilt-sensitivity ($M_{\text{no cause}} = 4.94$, $M_{\text{cause}} = 4.33$, $t = -0.96$, $p > .30$), while for those with high guilt-sensitivity, consumption guilt was significantly lower when a cause was present ($M = 3.74$) relative to when it was absent ($M = 5.92$; $t = -6.38$, $p < .0001$; see Fig. 5).

Finally, we tested the same moderated-mediation model using either sadness or happiness as the mediator (in lieu of consumption guilt); neither measure was a significant mediator of preference (sadness 95% CI: −.17, 1.20; happiness 95% CI:

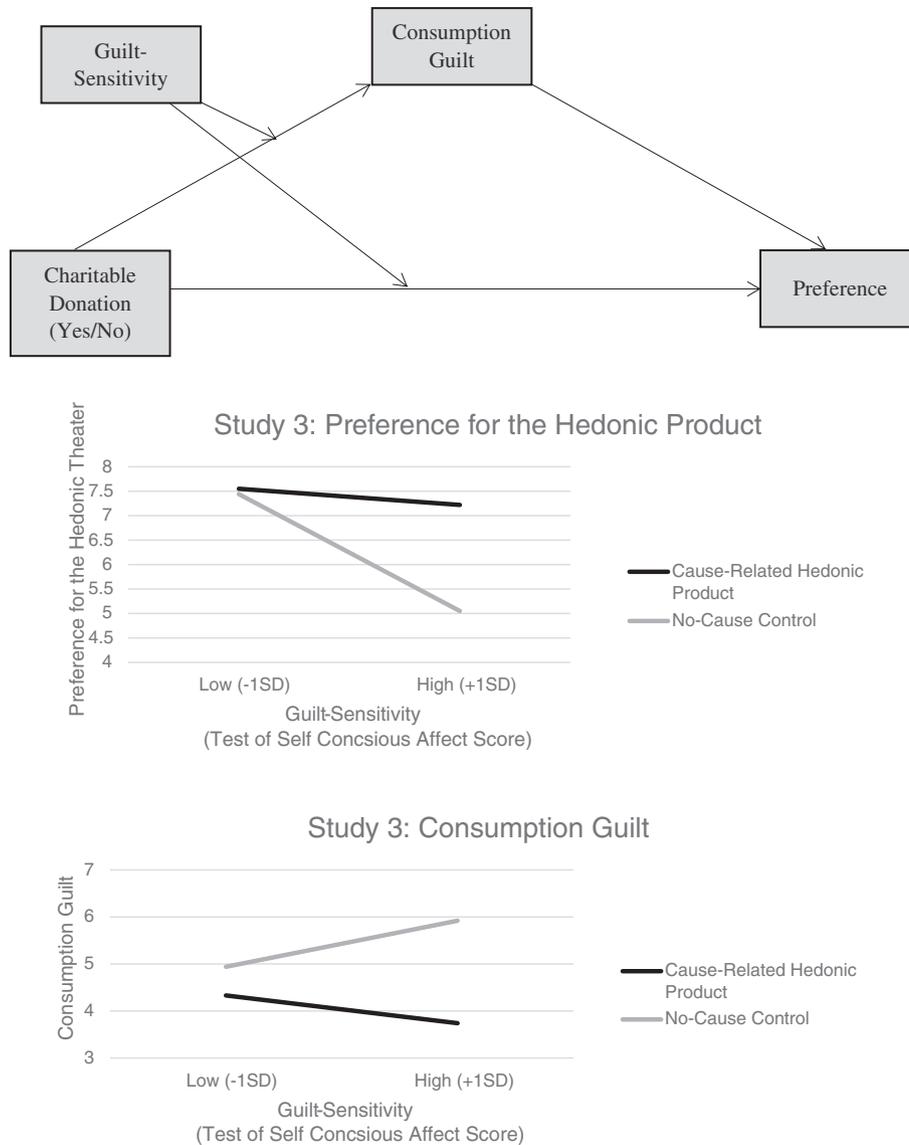


Fig. 5. Study 3—model and results.

-.51, 2.06). Neither measure was predicted by the independent variables (all main and interaction effect $ps > .25$).

Discussion

Study 3 provides empirical evidence of the role of consumption guilt in driving preferences for cause-related hedonic products. The data show that for high guilt-sensitive consumers, consumption guilt associated with hedonic consumption was significantly reduced once a charitable donation was added to the hedonic product; this reduction mediated an increase in preference. In addition, Study 3 shows that neither happiness nor sadness drove preferences for the cause-related hedonic product, further ruling out alternative explanations.

Study 4: Does Charity Liking Matter?

This study explores the impact of consumers' guilt-sensitivity (and resulting need for guilt-alleviation) on their sensitivity to the

characteristics of the charity supported by the product. Existing research suggests that for CSR efforts to be effective, consumers must perceive that supported charities are similar to them and that these charities support shared values. In other words, consumers must believe in and like the supported charity (Bendapudi et al., 1996; Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Mattila & Hanks, 2012; Sargeant, 1999; Winterich & Barone, 2011).

We predict that the impact of charity liking on CSR efforts' effectiveness will hold, but only for individuals with low guilt-sensitivity. When these consumers contemplate the purchase of a hedonic cause-related product, they experience less consumption guilt, therefore, they focus less on the guilt-alleviating properties of the associated charity. Instead, individuals with low guilt-sensitivity focus on the nature of the charity itself. Accordingly, these individuals should show greater preference for a hedonic product that donates to a charity they like than for a hedonic product that donates to a charity they dislike.

In contrast, we argue that high guilt-sensitive consumers will be relatively insensitive to charity liking. We propose that high

guilt-sensitive consumers are subject to two simultaneous motivations. First, high guilt-sensitive consumers recognize that they often under-indulge and miss out on hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006), therefore, they are motivated to find a way to engage in hedonic consumption. Yet, high guilt-sensitive consumers experience the most guilt from hedonic consumption, and are therefore motivated to avoid such consumption. In order to allow themselves to engage in such consumption, guilt-sensitive consumers need to find a way to alleviate their guilt. As seen in Study 3, adding a charitable donation to a hedonic product provides a way for high guilt-sensitive consumers to alleviate consumption guilt, liberating them to indulge in hedonic consumption. Therefore, high guilt-sensitive consumers are expected to focus on the guilt-alleviating opportunity that a charitable donation represents, using it as justification to indulge, while paying less attention to the exact nature of the charity. Consequently, high guilt-sensitive consumers are predicted to show equal preference for cause-related hedonic products, regardless of whether they support a liked or disliked charity.

We explore these preference patterns and the role of consumption guilt in driving these effects. Specifically, we predict that individuals with high or low guilt-sensitivity should report that selecting a hedonic product that donates to a liked charity is associated with little consumption guilt; the liked charity is a legitimate guilt-alleviating source for individuals with high guilt-sensitivity and a credible charitable opportunity for those with low guilt-sensitivity. However, relative to individuals with low guilt-sensitivity, individuals with high guilt-sensitivity should report *less* expected consumption guilt from selecting a hedonic product associated with a disliked charity. As noted above, high guilt-sensitive consumers should be motivated to find that donating to any charity, liked or disliked, alleviates consumption guilt.

In contrast, low guilt-sensitive consumers should be attuned to the nature of the specific charity. When a product supports a disliked charity, this can lead to two effects for these consumers. First, it can highlight justification issues. Selecting a product that donates to a charity one dislikes is hard to justify, and lack of justification for hedonic consumption can make guilt salient even for consumers who are otherwise less sensitive to such guilt (Giner-Sorolla, 2001; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a). Second, considering supporting a disliked charity can cause guilt, as behaving in ways that are contrary to one's beliefs, identity, and values elicits guilt (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985; Baumeister et al., 1994). Accordingly, low guilt-sensitive consumers should report higher (lower) expected consumption guilt for selecting a hedonic product associated with a disliked (liked) charity. Low guilt-sensitive consumers considering a product donating to a disliked charity should also report more consumption guilt than high guilt-sensitive consumers considering the same product. Importantly, consumption guilt is expected to mediate the (moderated) preferences for cause-related hedonic products (see Fig. 6).

To manipulate charity liking, we have participants identify a highly liked and highly disliked (i.e., rival) sports team. Previous research shows that liking or disliking sports teams runs strong

and deep, and impacts multiple behaviors. For example, individuals find beloved sports teams to be part of their identity (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Madrigal, 2000), so much so that they view team losses and victories as their own (Cialdini et al., 1976; Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992). As a result, individuals are inclined to support causes or products related to their favored team (Madrigal, 2000). In contrast, individuals view rival teams as distinct from themselves, disliking fans who support such teams (Wann & Dolan, 1994), delighting in the losses of such teams (Dalakas & Melancon, 2012), and showing a reduced likelihood of purchasing products associated with such teams (Dalakas & Levin, 2005). Accordingly, associating charities with liked or disliked sports team provides a strong manipulation for charity liking.

Participants, Design, and Method

Participants from Amazon's Mturk ($N = 87$; 34% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.27$) completed a two-factor, between-subjects study, including one manipulated factor (Charity Liking: liked, disliked) and one measured factor (Guilt-Sensitivity; continuous). To reduce hypothesis guessing, participants were told they would be completing two separate studies.

First, participants indicated which of five sports (football, basketball, baseball, hockey, and soccer) they were most enthusiastically involved in as a fan. Participants were asked to choose a sport in which they had "a very clear favorite team and a very clear team that you consider a rival" and were asked to write the names of both; those who were unable to provide such names were disqualified from participation and provided no further data. Qualified participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they disliked the rival team and how much of a rival they considered it (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). Participants with a score of 5 or lower for either question were disqualified from further participation and provided no further data. This ensured that all participants who responded to the key measures had identified a sports team they truly loved and a sports team that they intensely disliked. As a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with six questions for both their loved and hated team (e.g., "I love the <team name>", "I hardly ever miss a game of the <team name>"; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Participants were then told that the sports study was over and that they were moving on to a "Consumer Scenario" study. The study followed the design of Study 3 with three modifications. First, all conditions included a charitable donation attached to the hedonic product (as in Studies 2A–2B), but the type of charity varied: rather than the American Cancer Society, the low-brow, hedonic theater benefited a children's charity bearing the name of either the liked or disliked sports team (see Online Appendix D). Assignment to the liked or disliked charity conditions was random, ensuring an identical procedure for both conditions with the exception of the manipulation itself. Second, we measured only consumption guilt (3-item measure, as in Study 3). Third, the hyperopia scale served as the guilt-sensitivity measure.

Results

Manipulation checks

98% of participants correctly remembered that one of the theaters was associated with a charity and correctly remembered which theater. Participants indicated significant dislike for ($M = 6.56$) and a strong rivalry with ($M = 6.85$) their indicated rival team (both significantly above mid-scale; $ps < .0001$). Moreover, participants indicated significantly more liking for their preferred team (average of the 6-item measure; $\alpha = .91$, $M = 6.15$) than for the rival team ($\alpha = .77$, $M = 2.21$; $t(85) = 26.18$, $p < .0001$; one missing value on the evaluation of rival team due to computer error).

Preference

We conducted an ANOVA using charity liking, guilt-sensitivity ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.32$), and their interaction as independent variables predicting preference for the low-brow, hedonic movie theater. We found a significant main effect of charity liking ($F(1, 83) = 12.08$, $p < .005$) and a significant main effect of guilt-sensitivity ($F(1, 83) = 3.81$, $p = .05$), both qualified by the predicted interaction of charity liking by guilt-sensitivity ($F(1, 83) = 5.03$, $p < .05$). Continuous slope analysis revealed that in the liked charity condition, participants exhibited a strong preference for the hedonic cause-related theater regardless of their guilt-sensitivity score ($M_{\text{low}} = 9.42$, $M_{\text{high}} = 9.70$, $t = -.19$,

$p > .80$). As predicted, in the disliked charity condition, participants with low guilt-sensitivity ($-1 SD$) showed significantly less preference for the hedonic theater ($M = 5.81$) than participants with high guilt-sensitivity ($+1 SD$; $M = 8.04$, $t = 3.28$, $p < .005$; see Fig. 6). Planned spotlight contrasts revealed that for participants with low guilt-sensitivity, the hedonic theater was preferred significantly less when it was associated with a disliked relative to a liked charity ($t = 4.47$, $p < .0001$), whereas for participants with high guilt-sensitivity, the hedonic theater was equally preferred regardless of whether it was associated with a liked or disliked charity ($t = 1.20$, $p > .20$). Floodlight analysis revealed that the non-significant difference between the liked and disliked charity conditions was observed starting at $.92 SD$ above the mean of guilt-sensitivity, suggesting extreme guilt-sensitivity scores were not necessary for the effect to occur.

Moderated mediation

A consumption guilt score was created by averaging the three emotion measures (guilty, ashamed, and proud-reversed; $\alpha = .88$). A test of the proposed moderated-mediation model (PROCESS model 8; Hayes, 2012) showed significant mediation of preference by consumption guilt (95% CI: -1.16 , $-.10$). These mediation results replicated using each of the emotion measures separately. Moreover, an interaction of charity liking condition by guilt-sensitivity predicted consumption guilt ($F(1, 83) = 4.66$, $p < .05$). The mean patterns of consumption guilt were as predicted. For

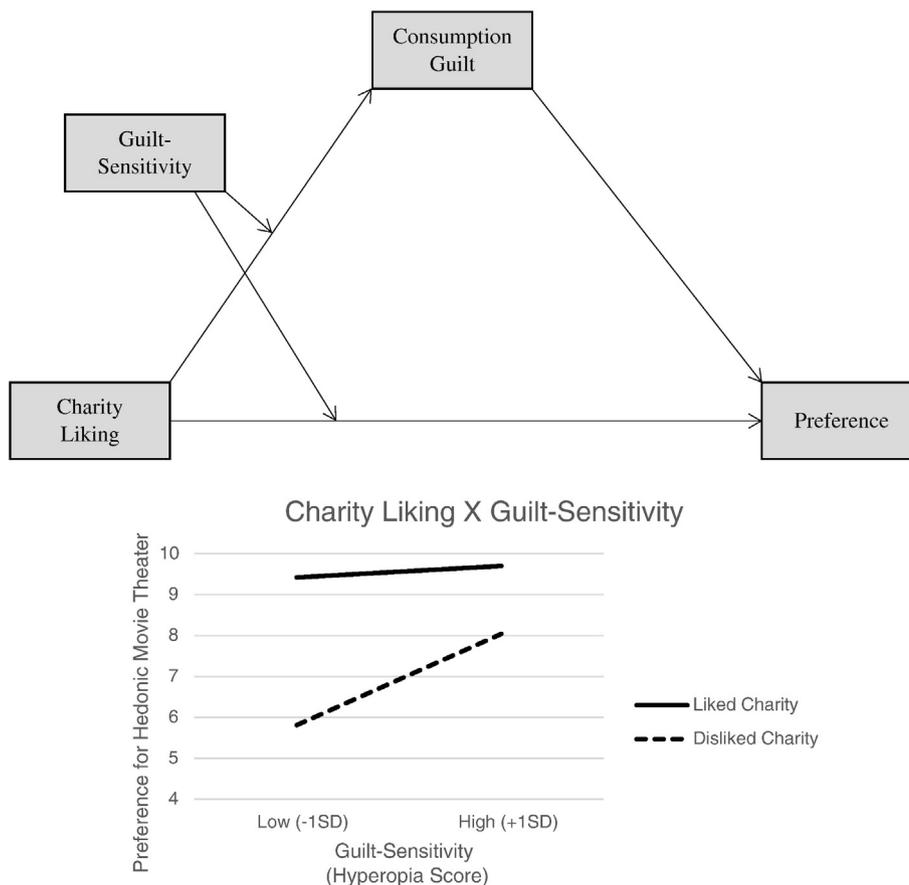


Fig. 6. Study 4—model and results.

participants with low guilt-sensitivity, consumption guilt related to the hedonic theater was higher when the associated charity was disliked ($M = 5.10$) relative to when it was liked ($M = 3.25$, $t = -4.27$, $p < .001$). As further predicted, for participants with high guilt-sensitivity, consumption guilt related to the hedonic theater was unaffected by charity liking ($M_{\text{disliked}} = 4.68$, $M_{\text{liked}} = 3.68$, $t = -1.12$, $p > .25$).

Discussion

Study 4 shows that consumers with high guilt-sensitivity are relatively insensitive to charity liking, preferring hedonic products with charitable donations regardless of whether the supported charity was liked or disliked. This finding supports our proposition that high guilt-sensitive consumers are seeking a way to indulge guilt-free, therefore, they are largely focused on the guilt-alleviating properties of the charitable donation. This proposition is further supported via the mediating role of consumption guilt. High guilt-sensitive consumers found supporting any charity to be guilt-alleviating; accordingly, they reported the same level of consumption guilt when supporting a liked or disliked charity. In contrast, individuals with low guilt-sensitivity reported greater consumption guilt when supporting a disliked (relative to a liked) charity. As a result, a paradoxical effect occurred whereby individuals with low guilt-sensitivity adjusted their preferences based on the characteristics of the cause supported, while individuals with high guilt-sensitivity made no such adjustments. As a result, high guilt-sensitive consumers engaged in hedonic consumption as much as their less guilt-sensitive counterparts when the charity was liked (replicating the results of our prior studies), but showed increased hedonic consumption (relative to low guilt-sensitive consumers) when the charity was disliked. Once again, this increased hedonic consumption occurred in the name of guilt alleviation, even though such alleviation was, arguably, unjustified.

General Discussion

Six studies sought to explore the impact of pairing products with charitable donations. The findings show that adding charitable donations to utilitarian products has no impact on their appeal, while adding charitable donations to hedonic products increases their appeal, particularly for individuals with high guilt-sensitivity (Studies 1A–1B). The data suggest that consumption guilt uniquely drives the observed effects (Studies 2A, 2B, 3, 4). In particular, it is shown that for individuals with high (but not low) guilt-sensitivity, adding a charitable donation to a hedonic product alleviates consumption guilt, resulting in increased preference for and choice of hedonic products.

High guilt-sensitive consumers' need for guilt-alleviation results in some interesting, non-intuitive findings. First, whereas high guilt-sensitive consumers normally indulge the least in hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007), once a charitable donation is added to the product, they indulge at least as much as less guilt-sensitive consumers.

Ironically, increasing the salience of guilt is shown to increase guilt-sensitive consumers' hedonic consumption (Studies 2A–2B). This finding is contrary to existing research which suggests that making guilt more salient serves to reduce hedonic consumption (Dhar & Simonson, 1999; Khan & Dhar, 2006; Kivetz & Keinan, 2006; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a, 2002b), particularly for guilt-sensitive consumers (Haws & Poynor, 2008; Ramanathan & Williams, 2007; Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). Moreover, it is shown that in some instances (e.g., when guilt is salient or when the charity is disliked), high guilt-sensitive consumers indulge in hedonic consumption more than low guilt-sensitive consumers; once again, this runs contrary to existing research which suggests that guilt-sensitive consumers are the least likely to engage in hedonic consumption.

Finally, the data show that due to their stronger need for guilt-alleviation, high guilt-sensitive consumers are relatively insensitive to the nature of the charity the product supports; they are equally inclined to support a hedonic product that donates to a charity they like as they are to support one that donates to a charity they dislike. This finding runs contrary to much research that shows charity liking is critical for the success of CSR efforts.

These findings have obvious implications for marketers planning their CSR strategies, particularly when selecting which products to associate with charitable donations and which charities to select. The findings show that adding charitable donations to hedonic products is more likely to increase sales than adding the same causes to utilitarian products. In addition, these findings suggest which customers are most likely to respond to CSR efforts; these findings are consistent with age-old segmentation practices in marketing, and suggest that marketers should be aware of how different CSR efforts are perceived by different consumers. At the same time, the data show marketers that it is possible to increase the hedonic consumption of customers who might otherwise avoid it. In addition, these findings chart a path for charities seeking to raise funds. Such charities should partner with companies selling every-day guilty pleasures, or attach their fundraising to such products. For example, charities may benefit from raising funds by selling cakes or cookies rather than fruit or popcorn. Importantly, these findings provide theoretical contributions and suggest some interesting avenues for future research.

Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

First, this work contributes to an accumulating literature on the role of guilt in consumption (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b; Mukhopadhyay & Johar, 2007). While previous work has theorized about the possible role of helping in guilt-alleviation (Khan & Dhar, 2006; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), we provide the first direct, empirical evidence showing how consumption guilt operates in driving preferences for cause-related products. Consumption guilt, as the data show, not only guides preferences, but can also determine which decision criteria consumers focus on, sometimes causing them to overlook important criteria. This non-normative impact of consumption guilt has not been

previously demonstrated. Future research might explore if consumption guilt leads to other non-normative effects.

Second, this work demonstrates the high priority that guilty consumers place on guilt-alleviation opportunities. This finding is consistent with previous work that argues for the primary importance of emotion-regulation in consumer decision making (Raghunathan & Corfman, 2004; Tice et al., 2001). However, prior work has focused on emotions such as sadness, happiness, anxiety, and anger; less work has looked at how consumers alleviate guilt via their consumption behavior. It is interesting to note that we find that consumers can alleviate guilt by consuming *more* hedonic products, not less. Future research could further explore these paradoxical effects.

Third, this work, while consistent with some existing findings (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998), is inconsistent with others. Specifically, recent work by Torelli et al. (2012) shows that associating luxury products with CSR efforts negatively impacts brand evaluations; on its face, this finding seems contrary to those presented here. However, some differences between Torelli et al.'s (2012) work and the present investigation are worth noting. Torelli et al. (2012) focused on high-end luxury products (e.g., Rolex watches), which are rarely purchased, and are often used to signal identity and values. In contrast, our work looks at everyday indulgences which are less related to self-definition and identity. As a result, Torelli et al.'s (2012) process, which proposes that the frivolous identity that luxury products convey conflicts with the selfless identity that charitable behavior conveys, may not hold in the present context. Future research may seek to draw a distinction between these different kinds of hedonic consumption. To date, the literature has treated all hedonic consumption as one and the same; this may be an insufficiently nuanced view.

Moreover, Torelli et al. (2012) measured brand concept evaluations, whereas we measured preference and choice. It is possible that consumers choose cause-related products as a way to alleviate their consumption guilt. However, they may still experience some guilt, for example, when reflecting on such consumption later (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). This guilt may be associated with the brand, leading to reduced brand evaluations over time. Therefore, it is possible that cause-associations increase preference and choice in the short run, but hurt brand associations in the long run. Future research could explore these long-term effects.

Fourth, the present work explores choices that involve a direct tradeoff between hedonic and utilitarian options. Such a direct tradeoff is practically and theoretically appropriate; consumers are regularly forced to make tradeoffs in their decision making (Bettman, Luce, & Payne, 1998), and a common tradeoff involves hedonic and utilitarian consumption (Baumeister, 2002; Dhar & Simonson, 1999; Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). Consumers do not decide whether or not to eat fruit in a vacuum, nor do they determine whether they will watch a low-brow movie absent other options. Instead, they decide whether to eat candy or fruit for a snack (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999), spend money on designer jeans or a vacuum cleaner (Khan & Dhar, 2006), reward themselves with wine vs. gasoline (Kivetz

& Simonson, 2002a), choose concert tickets over textbooks (O'Curry & Strahilevitz, 2001), select a close-by apartment vs. one with a great view (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000), choose high- vs. low-brow magazines (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002b) and movies (Read et al., 1999), or allocate their budget between school supplies and entertainment (Zemack-Rugar et al., 2007). The present inquiry offered similar choices between utilitarian and hedonic options.

Still, it is possible that our effects (and those of prior inquiries) occur because the presence of a utilitarian option alongside a hedonic one inflates consumption guilt. Without a tradeoff with a utilitarian item, perhaps consumption guilt would disappear. Prior research suggests that this is unlikely to be the case. Even absent direct tradeoffs with utilitarian options, individuals high on guilt-sensitivity are less likely to engage in hedonic consumption (Haws & Poynor, 2008). Notably, this effect was shown when aggregating over multiple decisions, suggesting that in any given independent decision multiple factors may play a role, but over time—individuals high in guilt-sensitivity will show reduced hedonic consumption. Consistent with our theory we would expect to replicate this finding. Importantly, we would expect this tendency to disappear once hedonic options were associated with charitable donations. Future research might seek to explore these effects over time and across multiple decisions.

Fifth, our findings demonstrate an asymmetric effect of product type on the effectiveness of cause-related marketing. This opens the door to questions about other possible asymmetric effects of CSR. For example, future research might explore whether other product characteristics (e.g., material vs. experiential) impact CSR effectiveness asymmetrically. Alternatively, future research might attempt to uncover conditions that make cause-related utilitarian products more appealing. In addition, researchers might explore how factors like consumers' ability to pay or the pricing of cause-related vs. no-cause products impact purchase patterns.

Moreover, not only products, but also companies themselves, can be seen as more utilitarian or hedonic. For instance, Mercedes is likely viewed as more hedonic than Ford, and Ben & Jerry's as more hedonic than SC Johnson. What happens when these companies engage in company-level CSR efforts, supporting charities not via sales-driven charitable donations, but via other, corporate-level efforts? Future research could seek to answer these questions, further mapping the effectiveness of different CSR strategies.

Finally, we propose that companies and charities should consider the implications of cause-related products not only for the company, but also for the cause. Often, when consumers see themselves behave a certain way, they learn something about themselves (Bem, 1967). Therefore, consumers may originally support a charity as a way to consume a coveted hedonic product. However, having observed themselves supporting the charity, cognitive dissonance may kick in, causing them to increase their genuine support for the charity. As a wise Jewish scholar once said: "A man ought always to labor in the Torah, even if not for its own sake. For doing it not for its own sake, he may come to do it for its own

sake.” (Maimonides, from Rosenak, 1995, p. 46). Similarly, donating to a cause for the sake of consuming a coveted product may later turn into donating to the cause for its own sake. Future research might explore when cause-related products have such positive implications for both companies and charities.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2015.06.001>.

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