



Emotional Responses to Cause-Related Advertisements

A Case of Korean Consumers

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This study aims to investigate consumers' multi-level information processing of cause-related advertisements that are representative of corporate cause-related marketing. In particular, this study considers consumers' information processing as a unidirectional linear process. It examines the course of the effects of consumers' empathy and sympathy generated during the process on each step of the process, ranging from advertisement attitudes, consumers' perception of corporate social responsibility activity (i.e., consumers' perception of CSR activity), and corporate image, to brand attitude. The main survey was conducted with consumers who resided in Seoul between November 1 and 14, 2015. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed and 246 were collected. Following the exclusion of six incomplete or unanswered questionnaires, a total of 240 questionnaires were used in the final analysis. Data processing was performed using the SPSS ver. 15.0 and AMOS 7.0 programs. The results showed that there were positive relationships between all of the variables involved in the processing. Consumers' emotional response to cause-related advertisement is the best starting point for consumers' information processing regarding brand attitude. The results of this study confirm that a positive relationship exists among every variable in consumers' information processing. This study informs researchers and companies that cause-related advertisements can improve the consumer's emotional response and can be an effective alternative to high cost, but low efficiency, brand advertisements.

KEY WORDS Cause-related advertising • Emotional responses
• Sympathy and empathy on brand attitudes • Information processing

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1. Introduction

Recent technological advances have helped companies to launch similar products. Consequently, the differentiation of products according to their external attributes is becoming increasingly difficult (Sheehan and Morrison, 2009). Marketers have engaged in the competitive production of unique images for use in various forms of media, which has resulted in significant increases in marketing costs (Mitchell and Chaudhury, 2014). Thus, rather than adopting a strategy that focuses on individual brand advertisements, it may be more effective to adopt an image-improving approach that employs a variety of marketing communication tools in an integrated manner. Additionally, marketers should diversify their contact opportunities with consumers (Yu et al., 2013; Ettenberg, 2003). Of the different types of image-improving approaches referred to above, cause-related marketing is a type of representative strategy that many advertisers have adopted (Mitchell and Chaudhury, 2014).

The term “cause-related marketing” refers to a marketing operation in which businesses and the public form a partnership for their mutual benefit in order to promote consumer purchasing of products and services (Barone et al., 2000). The engagement of corporations in cause-related marketing has resulted in enhanced and differentiated brand images, improvements in consumers’ favorable attitudes, the development of positive reputations, heightened pride among corporate insiders, and increases in sales and purchasing powers (Barone et al., 2000; Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Furthermore, cause-related marketing yields a number of positive effects on corporations because it attracts the attention of the media, addresses consumers’ complaints, and eases negative public opinions (Tangari et al., 2010).

Therefore, the most important task that corporations must consider when they choose to employ cause-related advertising is the development of methods that will most effectively integrate cause-related advertisements into their complete marketing strategies. Cause-related advertising is a type of advertisement that promotes the message that, based on consumers’ purchases of an advertised product, that a portion of a corporation’s profits will be spent to benefit the public

(Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). The goal is to increase consumers' awareness of, and desire to, purchase the corporations' products. A number of early studies that examined cause-related advertising primarily focused on the corporations' perspective (Chan et al., 2011). These studies suggested possible methods that corporations could use to create effective cause-related advertisements. These methods involve the application of different variables, such as characteristics of the public, product types, relevance between products and public interest, and consumers' awareness of corporations' intentions to participate in activities that benefit the public (Baron et al., 2000; Becker-Olsen and Simmons, 2002; Ellen et al., 2000; Rifon et al., 2004). In general, cause-related advertisements contain more social messages than typical commercial advertisements, because cause-related advertisements stress a corporation's social responsibility. It is expected that the social-related messages can induce emotional responses that can be categorized as sympathy and/or empathy. These types of emotion have been considered very important factors in the persuasion processes of consumers (Escalas and Stern, 2003; Sturmer et al., 2005).

Cone Communication (2013) confirmed that, when consumers experienced emotional responses to social messages induced by cause-related advertisements, over 50% of those customers purchased products that supported public activities. Additionally, 75% of those customers remembered more than one cause-related advertisement and purchased products from brands introduced in those advertisements. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of informative and emotional messages included in cause-related advertisements. They also highlight the fact that consumers' emotional responses to corporations' socially oriented activities can increase the effects of advertising (Tangari et al., 2010). These results imply that consumers' emotional responses to cause-related advertisements could serve as links between corporations and their related brands. As a result, consumers' attitudes toward those brands might be positively strengthened (Zairi and Peters, 2002).

Based on this perspective, the present study aims to explore the influence of consumers' emotional responses to cause-related advertisements within a specific context. It examines the impact of consumers' sympathy and empathy to-

ward cause-related advertisements on brand attitudes. Specifically, this study will provide empirical evidence that supports the efficient operation of cause-related marketing, which will eventually transform into new forms in the future (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). It examines consumers' attitudes toward advertisements, consumers' perception of CSR activity, and cause-related advertising's effects on corporate images and brand attitudes based on consumers' emotional responses.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Emotional response

Emotional response, a term that describes both sympathy and empathy, has been studied primarily in the fields of aesthetics and psychology (Clark, 2010). In these fields, emotional response is defined as a multidimensional response that can be triggered by a psychologically important incident or stimulus, regardless of whether it is real or imagined, past or present (Sturmer et al., 2005). However, sympathy and empathy are separate concepts of emotional response. Each concept represents different, complex mental abilities (Escalas and Stern, 2003). Although many studies have examined empathy, only a limited number have examined sympathy. In modern psychology, the definitions offered for these two concepts have been unclear, which may explain why the amount of studies examining these two separate concepts has been disproportionate (Switankowsky, 2000). Despite the fact that they remain unclear, sympathy and empathy have been used interchangeably for many years.

Recently, Escalas and Stern (2003) classified the differences between sympathy and empathy – two emotional responses that affect consumers' attitudes toward advertisements. They researched how these differences influence the process by which consumers form their attitudes toward advertisements. They were able to describe the emotional response process involved in the development of attitudes toward advertisements, which had not been measured until this

time because no clear differentiations had been made between sympathy and empathy. Therefore, Escalas and Stern (2003) studied the relationships that exist between emotional responses and consumer attitudes. They described sympathy as an emotional response that derives from another individual's emotional state and empathy as a corresponding emotion. Detailed descriptions of these two concepts are given below.

2.1.1 Sympathy

Sympathy consists of an observer's awareness of another individual's state of mind, in which the observer's emotional responses are never affected by the emotion itself (Escalas and Stern, 2003). Specifically, an observer remains clearly aware of their self-consciousness so that they remain uninvolved in the other person's emotions. Additionally, sympathy is an emotional response that is expressed by a consumer's intention or meaning (Vossen, et al., 2015). Therefore, sympathy is an emotional response that includes a cognitive component. It involves a feeling of fellowship that arises when an individual recognizes the differences between him/herself and the other person in that individual's consciousness. The individual understands the other person by taking a third-party perspective.

2.1.2 Empathy

Empathy is an emotional response in which an individual shares the emotional experience of another person, such as a character featured in an advertisement or soap opera. The individual becomes absorbed in the emotional content, losing him/herself in the emotion (Escalas and Stern, 2003). Empathy is triggered by another person's emotional state or condition, and corresponds with the other person's emotional state or situation (Van Lange, 2008). Thus, empathy is an emotional response that contains an affective component. An individual unconsciously experiences the same emotion by becoming unaware of the differences that exist between him/herself and the other person. The individual becomes immersed in the other person's feelings.

Thus, empathy and sympathy are distinct and different emotional responses.

Both concepts can be emotionally assimilated yet, with respect to sympathy, the individual remains conscious of him/herself while empathy causes an individual to become unaware of him/herself. In other words, sympathy is based on cognition whereas empathy involves feeling rather than thinking. In sympathy, an individual's free-will remains functional and controllable. When consumers are exposed to an advertisement, they respond in both cognitive and sentimental ways. These emotional experiences influence the effectiveness of the advertisement (Dean, 2004). An effective, persuasive advertisement generates the strongest empathy responses that go beyond sympathy because an advertisement's effectiveness is highly dependent on the extent to which consumers respond emotionally to its message, the means of delivery, and its content (Howard and Gengler, 2001).

2.2 Attitudes toward advertising

Attitudes toward advertising can be defined as consumers' tendencies to react favorably or unfavorably to specific advertisement stimuli (Yu and Cude, 2009). Studies related to attitudes toward advertising take two differing views. One view considers attitudes toward advertising on a three-dimensional level that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components (Burke and Edell, 1989; Jin and Lutz, 2013). The second view considers attitudes toward advertising, including faith and behavioral intentions, on a one-dimensional level that solely involves an emotional component viewed separately from cognitive and behavioral components (Ewing, 2013; Kim and Punji, 1992).

The first study, which was based on the three-dimensional approach, demonstrated that attitudes toward advertising included cognitive and emotional factors. Each factor was formed independently (Jin and Lutz, 2013). This finding implies that the participants in the study employed cognitive factors to judge the characteristics of advertisements. They also employed emotional factors because they experienced a variety of emotions when they viewed advertisements. Moreover, consumers rely on their emotions to judge the characteristics of advertisements. Their emotions can affect their attitudes toward advertising in di-

rect or indirect ways.

In contrast, Kim and Punji (1992) believed that emotional components were the sole elements involved in consumers' attitudes toward advertising. They noted that the three-dimensional approach tends to obscure the relationship between attitudes toward advertising and its constituent elements. Ewing (2013) also supported a one-dimensional approach. He argued that attitudes toward advertising can be formed without faith or behavioral intentions. If both views related to attitudes toward advertising are combined, then the emotional component can be defined as consumers' favorable or unfavorable responses, overall assessments, and preferences for advertisements that arise following their observations of advertisements.

Furthermore, Holbrook and Batra (1987) have established a model of the general course of consumers' information processing that involves stimulation caused by advertising, emotional responses, cognitive responses, attitudes toward advertising, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. This model demonstrates that emotional responses, such as sentiments, and cognitive responses can be considered as mediating factors. During the processing, customers' emotional responses affect their attitudes toward advertising. These responses then lead to advertising effects that cause consumers to form brand attitudes. Ultimately, they discourage or encourage consumers' purchase intentions (Ewing, 2013). Moreover, consumers' attitudes toward advertisements represent the "cause and effect parameter" during the process that involves advertising's effects on consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Jin and Lutz, 2013).

2.3 Marketing efforts based on corporate social responsibility

As the roles of corporations become increasingly important in society, corporate social responsibility continues to receive attention. Society now urges corporations to return some of their enormous fortunes back to society. To address this social responsibility, corporations now attempt to respond actively to society's requests by engaging in a variety of socially responsible activities. Socially responsible activities are promotional strategies that aim to inform wider society of

the corporations' efforts to fulfill their social responsibilities, as well as to recover their tarnished corporate images (Dean, 2004). Moreover, Maignan (2001) stated that socially responsible activities are performed in response to the expectations of interested parties. He also believed that socially responsible activities provide corporations with opportunities to link business activities and policies to the social environment by satisfying the mutual interests of corporations and society.

In addition to society's concerns about whether corporations practice their economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities, society has recently begun to question whether corporations fulfill their charitable social responsibilities. It has been alleged that corporations' social responsibilities can be positively correlated with consumers' attitudes toward those corporations (Ellen et al., 2000). Specifically, when a corporation receives positive recognition from its customers because of its participation in a variety of social responsibility activities, the resulting good impression can serve as an important yardstick to measure customers' purchase intentions. Additionally, consumers' awareness of a corporation's ethics and honesty, as well as its sense of environmental responsibility, or its efforts to address its customers' needs, can contribute significant merit to the corporation's reputation (Mishra and Suar, 2010).

Previous studies that examined socially responsible activities were divided primarily into negative or positive viewpoints. Corporations' socially responsible activities do not solely involve building corporations' images and attitudes. They also contribute to customer's positive images of those corporations, even after customers are exposed to negative information about these corporations (Klein and Dawar, 2004). Furthermore, scholars have stated that the improved corporate images created by participation in socially responsible activities directly affect consumers' purchase intentions (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Till and Nowak, 2003). On the other hand, when consumers develop negative impressions based on the implication that a corporation's ultimate motivation to participate in socially responsible activities is commercial, their decision-making might not be affected (Lacey and Kennett-Hensel, 2010). As mentioned previously, conflicting views have been expressed in relation to consumers' awareness of corporations' socially responsible activities. However, in general, consumers' cognitive re-

sponses can improve corporations' positive images and induce purchases. Moreover, socially responsible activities promote public interest, and enhance consumers' and corporate insiders' loyalty to their companies (Lantos, 2001).

2.4 Corporate image

Scholars have provided a variety of definitions for the term "corporate image." Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) believed that a corporate image is an important marketing tool that has a positive impact on a corporation's management goals. However, in general, a corporate image is constructed by the customers' direct or indirect experiences with the corporation. A corporate image is a characteristic of a corporation that reflects consumers' overall impressions (Barich and Kotler, 1991; Tang, 2007).

Obviously, a corporate image plays a critical role in a corporation's marketing strategy. It is also an important factor in corporate growth because a corporation must build a customer- and market-friendly corporate image (Brown and Dacin, 1997). A corporate image sends positive signals to a number of interested parties. Moreover, it is important in this competitive market because these types of signals deliver corporate information that the public may have difficulty observing directly (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Therefore, to enhance a corporate image, it might be effective to adopt an approach devoted to image improvement that involves the comprehensive use of diverse marketing and communication methods, and that diversifies opportunities with consumers (Ettenberg, 2003).

Many factors are involved in the improvement of a corporate image. Above all, persistent engagement in social contributions can serve as a powerful communication tool in the long-term (Brown and Dacin, 1997). Consumers develop perceptions of a corporation's image by experiencing a product or by consuming corporate publicity related to the corporation's internal and external activities. Therefore, corporations must work hard to promote positive images to customers through the use of advertisements or public activities (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). More specifically, construction of a corporate image based on the communion between the corporation and the public is not generally the type of element the

corporations possess or attempt to develop. Yet, consumers' emotional imagery reflects corporate activity. These images significantly contribute to perceptions of product quality. Thus, a corporate image serves as a crucial factor that can determine consumers' faith and attitudes toward a corporation (Yoon et al., 2006).

2.5 Brand attitude

A corporation's brand is its most important factor because it represents the corporation's crucial qualities or abilities. Furthermore, consumer awareness of a brand is critical because it is the focus of customer attitudes (Aaker, 1996). Thus, brand attitude can be described as consumers' continuous assessment of a brand. When customers become satisfied with a brand, their preference for that brand preference will increase. As such, customers will make purchase decisions that lead to actual purchases (Low and Lamb, 2000).

Brand attitude is a combination of brand and attitude, which means that consumers respond to brand information with either cognitive or emotional responses (Holbrook and Batra, 1987). Although definitions of brand attitude vary, it is defined generally as the customers' learned prejudices (i.e., their tendencies to react positively or negatively toward a brand). Brand attitude is a crucial factor in a corporation's ability to understand and predict customers' purchase behaviors (Keller, 1998). If a customer feels satisfied with a specific brand, that customer will show a tendency to prefer that brand. This preference may lead to an actual purchase and eventual re-purchases (Low and Lamb, 2000). As favorable and positive brand attitudes reduce consumers' perceived risks, corporations make significant efforts to instill positive brand attitudes in consumers (Goldsmith et al., 2000).

Studies related to brand attitude have focused primarily on the effectiveness of advertising. When consumers are exposed to advertisements, they develop attitudes toward brands. They also develop attitudes toward the advertisements. Advertisements deliver various types of information to customers related to brands. Consequently, advertisements influence consumers' attitudes by connecting positive emotions related to the advertisements themselves to the actual

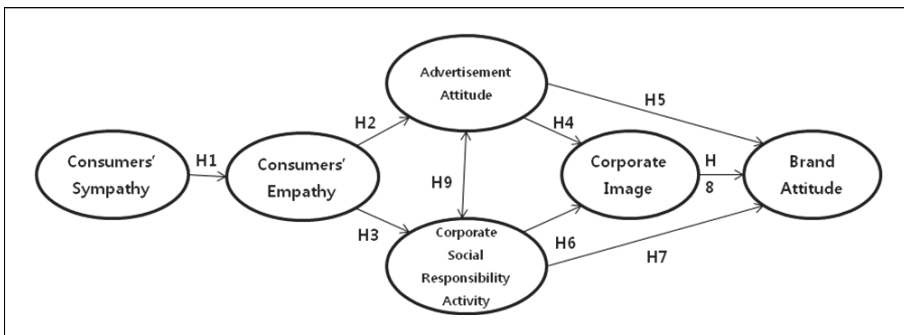
brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Recently, corporations' diverse socially responsible activities have begun to act as links between businesses and brands. They contribute to the customers' development of brand attitudes. These activities might encourage and increase customers' positive attitudes toward brands (Brian and Nowak, 2000; Zairi and Peters, 2002).

3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

3.1 Research model

The consumers exposed to the advertisements promoting a specific brand could not only have a positive attitude toward the brand in the ads but also have a unique image of the company. In other words, it is highly possible for consumers to build up friendly images toward a brand and a company if they like the ads and perceive the messages from the ads positively (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Consumers' positive attitude toward advertising and their perceptions toward the messages from the ads were realized, in the case that they agree with the perspectives claimed in the ads and finally experience empathy (Escalas and Stern, 2003). Thus, this study attempts to understand customers' information processing of cause-related advertisements as a unidirectional linear process, as suggested by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). It also attempts to uncover the ef-

Figure 1. Conceptual model



fects of customers' emotional responses (i.e., sympathy and empathy) on each phase of the process, including on attitudes toward advertising, and consumers' perception of CSR activity, corporate images, and brand attitudes. In particular, this study considers the concepts of sympathy and empathy to be multidimensional emotional responses, based on the study by Escalas and Stern (2003). The study stated that an advertising stimulus is not based on consumers' real-life incidents, rather it is created by the media. Additionally, the study focused on consumers' responses to advertisements and clarified the differences between sympathy and empathy. As a result, a study model was developed (see Figure 1).

3.2 Hypotheses

3.2.1 Sympathy and empathy

An advertising stimulus is transformed into empathy, a sentimental emotional response, after it passes through sympathy, a cognitive emotional response. Escalas and Stern (2003) described sympathy as preceding empathy. They stated that sympathy and empathy are consecutive emotional responses that may act separately when they are detached from the emotional response system. However, these responses normally function as parts of a complementary and sequential relationship. Moreover, previous studies have described the connection that exists between sympathy and empathy (Stout et al., 1990; Vossen et al., 2015). These studies state that sympathy affects empathy, which is the final stage of the emotional response, which then exerts a strong influence on the formation of positive attitudes (Clark, 2010). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 1: Consumers' sympathy for cause-related advertisements will positively influence empathy.

3.2.2 Empathy and attitudes toward advertisements

When consumers empathize with an advertisement, it might affect their attitudes toward that advertisement. Stayman and Aaker (1999) claimed that empathy is

the final stage of the emotional response. Thus, favorable responses toward advertisements for objects engender positive effects on attitudes toward those objects. Consumers' empathetic responses to advertising messages based on altruism can affect their positive attitudes toward advertising (Escalas and Stern, 2003; Van Lange, 2008). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 2: Consumers' empathy for cause-related advertisements will positively influence their attitudes toward advertisements.

3.2.3 Empathy and consumers' perception of CSR activity

The greater the empathy consumers feel toward to an advertisement, the greater the likelihood they will feel positive attitudes toward advertising, and will have positive reactions to corporations' socially responsible activities (Howard and Gengler, 2001). This implies that consumers' understanding of corporations' motives for engaging in socially responsible activities influences the consumers' attitudes toward those corporations (Yoon et al., 2006). In fact, when consumers feel empathy for advertisements that contain social messages, they develop positive attitudes toward corporations' socially responsible activities. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 3: Consumers' empathy for cause-related advertisements will positively influence their perception of CSR activities.

3.2.4 Attitudes toward advertisements, corporate images, and brand attitudes

Consumers' positive attitudes toward advertisements can transform into faith that will be returned to corporations. This transformation occurs because advertisements can affect customers' cognitions and preferences with respect to corporations and, as a result, can influence the development of corporate images (Chang et al., 2011). Yoon et al. (2006) noted that a positive correlation can be observed between consumers' attitudes toward advertising and corporate images. When consumers' attitudes toward advertising improve, corporate images also tend to improve.

Moreover, when a consumer is exposed to an advertisement, they generally form an attitude toward that advertisement. This attitude influences the consumer's brand attitude (Jin and Lutz, 2013). Goldsmith et al. (2000) argued that attitudes toward advertising play a crucial role in the development of brand attitudes. Advertisements favored by consumers eventually contribute to consumers' favorable brand attitudes. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 4: Consumers' attitudes toward cause-related advertisements will positively influence corporate images.
- Hypothesis 5: Consumers' attitudes toward cause-related advertisements will positively influence brand attitudes.

3.2.5 Consumers' perception of CSR activity, corporate images, and brand attitudes

Businesses are motivated to improve their corporate images by engaging in socially responsible activities. Socially responsible activities exert direct influences on corporate images. Furthermore, they simultaneously create differential competitive advantages (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). By engaging in active and continuous socially responsible activities, corporations can strengthen ties with communities and build trust with consumers. These types of activities can also reduce anti-business sentiments and improve corporate images (Forehand and Grier, 2003).

Moreover, corporations' engagement in socially responsible activities arouses consumers' favorable attitudes toward related companies or brands (Brown and Dacin, 1997). Ellen et al. (2000) state that the linkage of socially responsible activities with corporations' long-term visions or strategic goals can help to improve corporations' brands. These types of socially responsible activities encourage consumers' favorable attitudes toward both corporations and their brands (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 6: Consumers' perception of CSR activities will positively influ-

ence corporate images.

- Hypothesis 7: Consumers' perception of CSR activities will positively influence brand attitudes.

3.2.6 Corporate images and brand attitudes

If consumers develop positive perceptions of a corporation's image, then consumers' attitudes toward that corporation's brand will transform. Thus, corporate image is an important part of a corporation's marketing strategy. Corporate image is a differentiated image that represents the competitive edge for which a corporation aims (Tang, 2007) and it can have a significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward a corporation's brand (Barich and Kotler, 1991; Nguyen and Leblanc, 2001). Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 8: Corporate images will positively influence brand attitudes.

3.2.7 The relationship between consumers' attitudes toward advertisements and consumers' perception of CSR activities

Because no interactional relationship exists between consumers' attitudes toward advertisements and their perceptions of corporations' socially responsible activities, corporations may create significant synergistic effects if they employ both factors together as a method that integrates marketing and communication strategies. According to Brown and Dacin (1997), consumers' greater understanding that a corporation's campaign is in the public's interest will cause consumers to provide better assessments of that corporation and result in improved attitudes toward advertising. Additionally, Lai et al. (2010) argued that the effects of socially responsible activities on corporations are relatively higher for corporations that receive positive recognition from consumers because of related advertisements than those that fail to receive positive recognition. Therefore, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 9: An interactional relationship exists between consumers' cause-related advertisements attitudes and consumers' perception of CSR activities.

4. Method

4.1 Measures

4.1.1 Sympathy

Escalas and Stern (2003) conceptualized sympathy as an emotional response that contains a cognitive factor. It involves an individual's observation of another individual's feelings. The first individual experiences a feeling of fellowship and enters into a state in which he/she understands and perceives the situation of an individual featured in an advertisement. However, the first individual does not become absorbed in the second individual's situation. Therefore, this study defined sympathy as a state in which an individual understands and perceives the situation of another individual featured in a cause-related advertisement. To measure sympathy, five questions were devised based on partially revised questions employed in a previous study by Escalas and Stern (2003).

4.1.2 Empathy

Escalas and Stern (2003) stated that empathy is an act in which an individual's experience merges with another person's feelings. It is a state in which a consumer becomes absorbed in a specific situation created by an advertisement. The consumer experiences the same feelings as those experienced by the character featured in the advertisement. Therefore, this study defined empathy as a state in which a consumer understands and becomes absorbed in a specific context and situation created by a cause-related advertisement. To measure empathy, five questions were created based on partially revised questions previously used by Escalas and Stern (2003).

4.1.3 Attitudes toward advertisements

Attitudes toward advertisements can be defined as customers' favorable or unfavorable responses following their exposure to advertisements (Chang et al., 2011). Moreover, Yoon et al. (2006) considered attitudes to be consumers' overall assessments of a specific advertising stimulus after a certain period of exposure.

To measure consumers' attitudes toward advertising, eight questions were created based on partially revised questions used by Yoon et al. (2006).

4.1.4 Consumers' perception of CSR activities

Corporations' socially responsible activities can be defined as their efforts to notify the public that they have fulfilled their social responsibilities by returning a certain amount of their profits to society (Ellen et al., 2000). Furthermore, they can be defined as corporations' abilities to relate their activities and policies to the social environment in ways that produce mutual interest between the corporations and society (Maignan, 2001). Therefore, this study defined consumers' perception of CSR activities as customers' perceptions of corporations' activities performed in support of important causes, such as public service, sponsorship donations, and volunteer efforts unrelated to profit-based activities. To measure consumers' perception of CSR activities, we formulated three questions based on partially revised questions used in previous studies by Ellen et al. (2000) and Maignan (2001).

4.1.5 Corporate images

Corporate images can be defined as consumers' attitudes toward corporations. Corporate image is a comprehensive concept, including subjective faith, thoughts, and impressions that consumers feel toward specific corporations. Corporate images are dominated by individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward objects (Barich and Kotler, 1991; Tang, 2007). Therefore, this study defined corporate images as comprehensive sets of impressions that consumers form about corporations' products and information related to corporations. To measure corporate images, this study devised seven questions based on partially revised questions used by Barich and Kotler (1991) and Tang (2007).

4.1.6 Brand attitudes

Brand attitude can be described as consumers' overall assessments of brands (Zairi and Peters, 2002). According to Grace and O'Cass (2005), brand attitudes consist of consumers' positive or negative perceptions that result from their sat-

isfaction or displeasure following their experiences with elements of brands. Thus, this study defined brand attitudes as consumers' overall emotional affection or lack of affection for brands. To measure brand attitudes, three questions were formulated based on partially revised questions used in previous studies by Zairi and Peters (2002) and Grace and O'Casey (2005).

4.2 Sample and data collection

The present study aims to find out the influence of consumers' sympathy and empathy feeling toward cause-related advertisements, not only on the images of a company and but also on a brand. We need the cause-related advertisements portraying a product and public service which are highly related each other, because people could consider cause-related ads as a mere marketing tool for a specific company. Based upon the motivation above, this study conducted a pilot test among 20's in order to figure out what specific type of cause-related ads could be used for the main survey. A pre-survey was conducted with 20 students who attended H University, located in Seoul. First, based on examples of CSR activities performed by the Federation of the Korean Industries (www.korbiz.or.kr), the following nine items were selected as cause-related activities: "helping hungry children," "improving educational facilities," "helping youth in need," "supporting the homeless," "sending books to youths who live in underdeveloped regions," "developing a project to support the outplacement of the unemployed," "helping children afflicted with incurable diseases," "protecting the environment," and "helping our northern brethren." Ultimately, "helping hungry children" and "helping children afflicted with incurable diseases" were selected as public services that required the most support. Then, participants were asked to select products most relevant to each of these two public services. Chocolate and lactic acid fermented milk appeared to have the highest associations with "helping hungry children" and "helping children afflicted with incurable diseases" respectively. As a result, chocolate and lactic acid fermented milk were selected as products for use in the main survey. "Helping hungry children" and "helping children afflicted with incurable diseases" were the two public services that would be linked to

these products.

This study produced two different advertisements for the main survey. One is a print ad promoting a milk product and company which is giving some donations for needy children using the catch phrase “helping hungry children.” The other ad was also a print ad showing a chocolate product using the slogan “helping children afflicted with incurable diseases.” In the survey, the print ads were seen on the first page of the survey and the participants were asked to look through the ads before answering the questions. Using simple random sampling method, the authors conducted the survey for two weeks starting at November 1, 2015 in Seoul, Korea. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed and 246 were collected. Following the exclusion of six incomplete or unanswered questionnaires, a total of 240 questionnaires were used for the final analysis. Data processing was performed using the SPSS and AMOS programs. The variables employed in the main study were measured using a multi-item format with a 7-point Likert-type scale.

5. Analyses and results

5.1 Characteristics of the sample

The characteristics of the sample, including general characteristics, are shown in Table 1.

5.2 Reliability analysis and factor analysis

5.2.1 Exploratory factor analysis

To check the unidimensionality of the operationalized measures for all concepts, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated, as shown in Table 2. As a result, each item included in the main survey was grouped as intended. When an eigenvalue greater than one was applied, a total of six dimensional factors were deducted. However, among the

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

		Number of respondents	%
Gender	Male	126	52,5
	Female	114	47,5
Age (years)	19 ~ 28	218	90,8
	29 ~ 38	16	6,7
	30 ~ 39	3	1,3
	49 ~ 58	2	0,8
	59 plus	1	0,4
Occupation	Student	215	89,6
	White-collar job	13	5,4
	Production work	3	1,3
	Specialized job	6	2,5
	Self-employed	1	0,4
	Others	2	0,8
Sum of respondents		240	100
Educational background	High school graduates	135	56,3
	Junior college	3	1,3
	Undergraduates	82	34,2
	College graduates	1	0,4
	Others	19	7,9
Monthly income	1 million won and under	206	85,8
	1 million won ~ under 2 million won	14	5,8
	2 million won ~ under 3 million won	10	4,2
	3 million won ~ under 4 million won	7	2,9
	4 million won plus	3	1,3
Marital status	Married	8	3,3
	Single	232	96,7

measurement items of attitudes toward advertising, two cross-loading items were discovered and therefore deleted. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha co-

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis

Measured items	Variables	Questions related to measured items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue (%)	Cronbach's α coefficient
Consumers' sympathy	G1	I understood the emotion in the cause-related advertising.	0.847	0.5978 (59.779)	0.759
	G2	I understood the message in the cause-related advertising.	0.828		
	G3	I tried to understand the situation in the cause-related advertising.	0.778		
	G4	I tried to understand the cause-related advertising.	0.619		
Consumers' empathy	H2	I felt empathy for the beneficiary of the cause-related advertising.	0.737	0.4850 (46.497)	0.789
	H3	I felt pity for the beneficiary of the cause-related advertising.	0.756		
	H4	I felt like I was the beneficiary of the cause-related advertising.	0.782		
	H5	I felt emotions similar to emotions expressed in the cause-related advertising.	0.689		
Consumers' attitudes toward advertisements	J1	The message in the cause-related advertising is reliable.	0.778	0.3275 (32.758)	0.857
	J2	The message in the cause-related advertising contains much useful information.	0.870		
	J3	The message in the cause-related advertising is helpful.	0.837		
	J5	The message in the cause-related advertising is favorable.	0.747		
	J6	The message in the cause-related advertisement is persuasive.	0.784		
	J8	The message in the cause-related advertisement attracts attention.	0.841		
Consumers' perception of CSR activities	S1	Companies that run cause-related advertisements are actively involved in solving social issues.	0.817	0.6403 (64.030)	0.751
	S2	Companies that run cause-related advertisements are active in socially responsible activities.	0.843		

Measured items	Variables	Questions related to measured items	Factor loading	Eigenvalue (%)	Cronbach's α coefficient
	S3	By participating in cause-related activities, corporations return some of their profits to society.	0,758		
Corporate image	C1	This corporation supplies products at fair prices.	0,675	0,5730 (57,302)	0,872
	C2	This company produces high quality products.	0,594		
	C3	This company is active in protecting the environment.	0,682		
	C4	This company pays significant attention to the protection of consumers' rights and interests.	0,749		
	C5	This company pays taxes properly.	0,713		
	C6	This company contributes to cultural development.	0,689		
	C7	This company contributes to social welfare development.	0,739		
Brand attitude	A1	I feel positive about the brand.	0,798	0,5627 (56,274)	0,731
	A2	I feel fond of the brand.	0,849		
	A3	I like the brand.	0,758		

efficients were calculated to verify internal consistency. Most measured items demonstrated coefficients of more than 0,6. However, one of each of the measurement items for sympathy and empathy showed a relatively low factor loading that affected the reliability of variables. They were therefore deleted.

5.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Following the exploratory factor analysis and verifying the reliability of the sample data, the discriminant validity and convergent validity were statistically re-examined. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to discover contradictions occurring between the hypotheses, which were based on preceding studies and on collected data (Anderson and Gerbing, 1998). No items

Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis

Factor	Variables	Standardized estimate	t value	p value	Cronbach's α	r	r ²	AVE
Consumers' sympathy	G1	0,776	16,275	0,000***	0,759	0,437	0,213	0,602
	G2	0,816	17,034	0,000***				
	G3	0,818	17,070	0,000***				
	G4	0,687	13,883	0,000***				
Consumers' empathy	H2	0,785	10,873	0,000***	0,789	0,473	0,226	0,653
	H3	0,816	11,319	0,000***				
	H4	0,912	10,248	0,000***				
	H5	0,679	12,141	0,000***				
Consumers' attitudes toward advertisements	J1	0,637	10,529	0,000***	0,857	0,572	0,143	0,671
	J2	0,815	14,560	0,000***				
	J3	0,787	11,773	0,000***				
	J5	0,759	13,382	0,000***				
	J6	0,785	14,170	0,000***				
	J8	0,727	13,249	0,000***				
Consumers' perception of CSR activities	S1	0,652	11,385	0,000***	0,751	0,423	0,205	0,662
	S2	0,647	11,264	0,000***				
	S3	0,613	10,740	0,000***				
Corporate images	C1	0,870	18,122	0,000***	0,872	0,437	0,202	0,653
	C2	0,767	14,607	0,000***				
	C3	0,788	16,497	0,000***				
	C4	0,670	13,632	0,000***				
	C5	0,868	18,031	0,000***				
	C6	0,564	11,688	0,000***				
	C7	0,801	17,755	0,000***				
Brand attitudes	A1	0,839	18,619	0,000***	0,731	0,386	0,147	0,682
	A2	0,817	18,521	0,000***				
	A3	0,755	16,575	0,000***				

χ^2 (df)	GFI	AGFI	RMR	SRMR	CFI	RMSEA
$p > 0,05$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,80$	$\leq 0,08$	$\leq 0,08$	$\geq 0,90$	$\leq 0,08$
428,479 (215) $p = 0,000$	0,916	0,892	0,036	0,052	0,938	0,049

*** $p < 0,01$

were deleted because the significance levels of the measured variables' factor scores were less than 0,001. Table 3 shows the results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

As shown in Table 3, to check the adequacy required to deduct each scale's optimal composition of items, it was necessary to examine χ^2 , GFI, AGFI, RMR, SRMR CFI, and RMSEA. It was found that the value of χ^2 did not meet the standard. However, most of the other model fit indexes demonstrated satisfactory model fits: 0,916, 0,892, 0,036, 0,052 0,938, and 0,049 respectively. To verify the internal consistency of each construct, the confidence coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was used. All factors used for measurement showed coefficients of more than 0,7, which is the standard of internal consistency suggested by Nunnally (1978). Additionally, convergent validity was tested using the values of the average variance extracted. The results showed that the constructs exceeded the standard of 0,5. All measured items were confirmed to have convergent validity (Hair et al., 2005). When the value of the average variance extracted for each factor is bigger than the square value of the two factors' coefficient, it is acceptable to state that discriminant validity exists. As shown in Table 3, the average variance extracted values of all factors exceeded the square value of the correlation coefficient, which confirmed the discriminant validity.

5.2,3 Model adequacy assessment and hypothesis testing

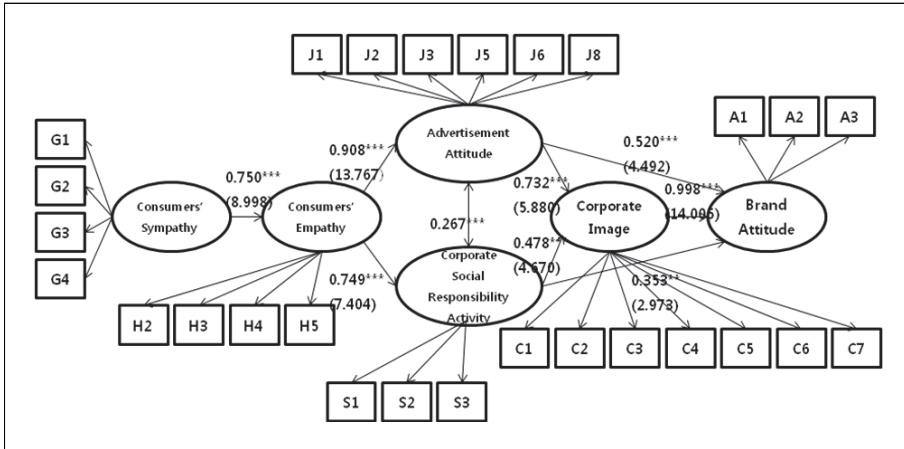
Prior to conducting a hypothesis test related to structural equation modeling, the proposed model's adequacy was assessed. The results of the model adequacy assessment are shown in Table 4.

The results of the assessment are as follows: $\chi^2 = 482,325$, $df = 222$, $p =$

Table 4. Assessment of model adequacy

χ^2 (df)	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RMR	SRMR	CFI	RMSEA
$p > 0,05$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,80$	$\geq 0,80$	$\leq 0,08$	$\leq 0,08$	$\geq 0,90$	$\leq 0,08$
482,325 (222) $p = 0,000$	0,906	0,883	0,869	0,052	0,057	0,924	0,054

Figure 2. Structural equation model for the study



** $p < 0,05$, *** $p < 0,01$

0,000, GFI = 0,906, AGFI = 0,883, NFI = 0,869, CFI = 0,924, RMR = 0,052, SRMR = 0,057 and RMSEA = 0,054. χ^2 was slightly below the standard. However, it is still possible to analyze the model (Hair et al., 2005). The structural equation model of the study model was based on a course that ranged from consumers' sympathy, empathy, and consumers' perception of CSR activities to brand attitudes and moved toward cause-related advertisements. This model is illustrated in Figure 2.

In the results from the SEM, it was found that the consumers' sympathy influenced on the empathy positively, empathy influenced on the advertisement attitude and consumers' perception of CSR activity. It was also found that the advertisement attitude and consumers' perception of CSR activity were very influential on corporate image and brand attitude in a direct way. Corporate image was influential on the brand attitude as well. The attitude toward advertisements and consumers' perception of CSR activity were correlated each other. Table 5 presents the synthesis of the hypotheses tests results.

Table 5. Results of hypotheses tests

	Hypothesis	Estimate	Standardized estimate	t value	p value	Result
H1	Sympathy-Empathy	0,750	0,083	8,998	0,000	Accept
H2	Empathy-Attitudes Toward Advertisements	0,908	0,069	13,767	0,000	Accept
H3	Empathy-Consumers' perception of CSR Activities	0,749	0,101	7,404	0,000	Accept
H4	Attitudes Toward Advertisements-Corporate Images	0,732	0,124	5,880	0,000	Accept
H5	Attitudes Toward Advertisements-Brand Attitudes	0,520	0,116	4,492	0,000	Accept
H6	Consumers' perception of CSR Activities-Corporate Images	0,478	0,102	4,670	0,000	Accept
H7	Consumers' perception of CSR Activities-Brand Attitudes	0,353	0,119	2,973	0,003	Accept
H8	Corporate Images-Brand Attitudes	0,998	0,071	14,005	0,000	Accept
H9	Attitudes Toward Advertisements-Consumers' perception of CSR Activities	Correlation Coefficient				Accept
		0,267				

6. Discussion

6.1 Implications

Corporations exist to create profits. Marketing aims to increase sales that will maximize their profits. However, because capitalism today is intensifying, corporations have increased in size. Their roles and responsibilities in society have grown in correspondence with their increased size. Furthermore, consumers' subjectivity, which was once solely considered an object of business activities, has increased. As a result, demands for corporate social responsibility have rapidly increased. Cause-related marketing, which attempts to relate corporate public service activities with marketing, has come to the forefront as a possible meas-

ure to counteract the effects of these changes.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine consumers' multi-level information processing of cause-related advertisements that represent corporations' cause-related marketing attempts. In particular, this study considered consumers' information processing to be a unidirectional linear process. It observed the generation of consumers' empathy and sympathy during this process and examined the effects of these emotions on each step as the process moved through consumers' attitudes toward advertisements and consumers' perception of CSR activities to corporate images and brand attitudes. The results of this study confirmed that a positive relationship exists among every variable in consumers' information processing. The specific results and implications of this research are outlined below.

First, the results confirmed that consumers' sympathy for cause-related advertisements exerted a positive effect on empathy. This finding concurs with the results of Escalas and Stern's (2003) study that showed that sympathy and empathy occur during a phase in consumers' information processing of an advertisement. These emotions serve as two separate systems that operate at a distance from the emotional response structure. Therefore, businesses can apply this result by producing cause-related advertisements. For example, to produce cause-related advertisements that are to be broadcast by mass media, corporations can include advertising copy at the beginning of these advertisements and insert images related to public service toward the end of these advertisements. These features might generate public sympathy for the advertisements. Additionally, regarding print media, corporations can insert titles and copy in the beginning segments of advertisements to help customers recognize the brands being advertised. Then, corporations can insert public service-related pictures in the middle of the advertisements to induce emotions in consumers.

Second, the results verified that consumers' empathy for cause-related advertisements has a positive impact on their attitudes toward advertising and consumers' perception of CSR activities. This finding implies that empathy is an important indicator of the effects of advertising. Therefore, corporations should manage factors that might influence empathy in a systematic and strategic

manner. Corporations can employ this finding in their corporate strategies by, for example, conducting basic research and determining clear classifications of the characteristics of groups of consumers who feel strong emotional empathy.

Third, the results confirmed that consumers' attitudes toward cause-related advertisements exerted positive effects on brand attitudes through the medium of corporate images. Additionally, they had a direct impact on brand attitudes. In general, a cause-related advertisement contains messages related to a corporation's social responsibility. Hence, it is possible to state that this type of advertisement functions to enhance a corporation's reputation and to inspire reliability in customers in the long-term. As such, the results affirmed that increases in customers' favorable attitudes toward advertising through the use of cause-related advertisements eventually resulted in a more favorable corporate image and increasingly positive attitudes toward the corporation's brand. Moreover, consumers' attitudes toward cause-related advertisements directly affected brand attitudes. This result supports previous studies that found that consumers' attitudes toward advertisements can have meaningful effects on their attitudes toward brands featured in advertisements (Chang et al., 2011). This result demonstrates that consumers' favorable attitudes toward cause-related advertisements could affect brand attitudes without requiring corporations to advertise their individual brands. Therefore, the results revealed that cause-related advertising is a powerful communication tool because it can influence corporate images and act as an accelerator for brand marketing activities.

Fourth, the results confirmed that consumers' perception of CSR activities could affect brand attitudes through the medium of corporate images. These may also have direct impacts on brand attitudes. Until now, scholars in academia and business have predominantly agreed that consumers' perception of CSR activities contribute to the formation of its corporate image. However, doubt has been expressed about whether consumers' perception of CSR activities contribute to the development of brand attitudes. Therefore, the results of this study, which indicate that consumers' perception of CSR activities exert a positive effect overall on its corporate image, and that this corporate image contributes to positive brand attitudes, demonstrate that consumers' perception of CSR activities im-

prove brand attitudes. The results verify that CSR activities can have a direct impact on brand attitudes. These findings are congruent with those achieved in Brown and Dacin's (1997) study. Their study demonstrated that a corporation's engagement in activities that support public interest increased consumers' favorable attitudes toward the corporation's products. However, if consumers recognize that CSR activities are geared toward increasing marketing-related profits, improving the corporation's image, and effectively responding to negative reports, the results could be worse than results achieved prior to the release of this type of advertising. Thus, brand attitudes may be affected only positively if businesses can succeed in convincing consumers that their intentions are pure.

Fifth, the results confirmed that corporate images exert positive influences on brand attitudes. These results correspond with those of prior studies that established that if consumers consider a corporate image to be positive, they will then consider the brand attitude as positive as well (Barich and Kotler, 1991). Therefore, to achieve positive effects from cause-related advertising, corporations should adopt strategies oriented toward the improvement of corporate images, rather than the improvement of brand images.

Finally, it is apparent that an interactional effect occurs between cause-related advertisements attitude and consumers' perception of CSR activities. The results demonstrated that there is a synergistic effect when a corporation simultaneously provides cause-related advertisements and engages in socially responsible activities as part of its integrated marketing-communication strategy.

The results showed that some emotional responses are the initial points which can be related to the people's attitude toward specific brands. Therefore, the most important insights from the present study are that using cause-related advertisements could result in empathy and some other emotional responses which could be very helpful for a specific brand to build up their own brand images. In addition, the present study figured out the relationships between the sympathy and empathy which can be very helpful for advertising research dealing with people's emotional reactions.

The results from this study could let the companies realize that cause-related advertisements could be such an important alternative which can build up a cor-

porate image and reinforce the attitude toward brand. In conclusion, it was found that the consumers' empathy and sympathy could cause people's very positive images toward the brand.

6.2 Limitations

Although this study demonstrated significant results, it also had certain limitations. First, this study attempted to balance participants' genders and age groups. However, there were more respondents in their 20s and 30s than respondents in other age groups. Further studies should attempt to achieve generalization by analyzing and suggesting multidimensional scaling of emotional responses. Second, despite the fact that time exposure to a stimulus and experience are important in the capture of emotional responses, this study failed to provide sufficient conditions for the activation of emotional responses because it relied on a simple exposure measurement. To address this issue, this study attempted to expose participants to advertisements for a sufficient amount of time. However, these efforts had limitations. Therefore, future studies should attempt to measure the effects of mass media advertising to obtain clearer effects because visual media may be able to effectively elicit emotional responses. This study hoped to induce consumers' emotional responses based on general types of cause-related advertising. However, the study overlooked the diversity involved in cause-related advertising. Future studies should separate the different types of cause-related advertising. Such studies could then examine the effects of fear appeal, humor, and other factors that might affect consumers' emotional responses. Finally, it is possible that participants naturally recognized the messages conveyed by cause-related advertisements because the products and public services used in these advertisements were very common. To address this issue, future studies should select additional types of products and public services to encourage the successful generalization of the results from cause-related advertisements.

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공익연계광고에 대한 소비자들의 감정적인 반응에 대한 연구

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본 연구는 기업들이 최근 더욱 활발하게 이용하고 있는 공익 연계 마케팅(Cause-Related Marketing) 가운데 공익 연계 광고에 대하여 우리의 소비자들이 과연 어떠한 태도를 보이며, 제공되는 정보에 대한 처리 과정을 어떻게 실행하고 있는지 탐구하고 있다. 특별히, 본 연구는 소비자들의 정보 처리 과정을 일 방향의 선형 프로세스로 상정하고 있다. 연구의 진행 과정에서 소비자들이 정보 처리 과정에서 경험하는 감정 이입과 동조 등의 '감정' 측면에 대하여 다각도로 살펴볼 예정이며, 광고에 대한 태도, CSR 활동에 대한 인식, 기업 전반에 대한 이미지, 그리고 해당 기업이 판매하는 브랜드에 대한 태도 등도 상세히 고찰할 것이다. 2015년 11월 시점에서 서울 지역에 거주하는 소비자들을 대상으로 설문 조사가 진행되었으며, 최초 250부의 설문을 배부하여 246부를 회수하였다. 하지만 이 가운데 주어진 문항에 대한 대답이 과도하게 불성실하거나, 무응답이 많은 설문을 제외한 다음 최종적으로 240부를 분석하게 되었다. SPSS 프로그램과 AMOS가 분석을 위해 활용되었으며, 연구 결과, 먼저 소비자들의 정보 처리 과정과 관련하여 질문한 모든 변수들 사이에서 유의한 관계가 발생되고 있음을 알 수 있었다. 특히, 본 연구의 핵심 사항 중 하나인 소비자들이 갖게 되는 특정 브랜드에 대한 태도는 해당 기업이 진행하는 공익 연계 광고를 통해 제공되는 정보들을 처리하는 과정에서 긍정적으로 형성된다는 사실을 알 수 있었다. 본 연구의 결과는 특정 마케팅 유형에 대하여 소비자가 유지하는 정보 처리 과정, 광고에 대한 태도 등은 변수는 다양해도 전반적인 관계가 유지된다는 사실을 알 수 있게 하였다. 특별히 개별 기업의 마케팅 담당자 혹은 관련 분야 연구자들에게 최근 갈수록 각광을 더하고 있는 공익 연계 광고는 노출되는 소비자들의 감정적인 반응 및 태도에 긍정적 영향을 미친다는 사실도 확인할 수 있었다. 이는 곧 기존의 브랜드 혹은 세일즈 광고만을 선택지로 설정하고 마케팅 비용을 주로 배분하던 관행에 시사점을 줄 수도 있다고 생각된다.

KEY WORDS 공공 연계 광고 • 감정적인 반응 • 공감 • 감정 이입 • 브랜드 태도 • 정보 처리

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