

Donations to Charity as Purchase Incentives: How Well They Work May Depend on What You Are Trying to Sell

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This article focuses on the bundling of products with promised contributions to charity. Two lab experiments and one field study are conducted that compare the effectiveness of promised donations to charity in promoting "practical necessities" (e.g., a box of laundry detergent) to their effectiveness in promoting "frivolous luxuries" (e.g., a hot fudge sundae). The results suggest that charity incentives are more effective in promoting frivolous products than in promoting practical products. This research extends prior work on the effects of bundling complementary positive outcomes into the domain of affect-based complementarity with product-charity bundles.

The use of promised donations to charity as a purchase incentive has become quite common in the market. In 1994 companies spent over \$1 billion on cause-related marketing campaigns. The type of products and the range of companies that have used cause-related marketing have been quite diverse. For example, Nabisco animal cookies have been bundled with donations to the World Wildlife Fund, Cottonelle toilet paper has been bundled with donations to the Ronald McDonald House, and Hershey's chocolates have been bundled with donations to UNICEF. These practices reflect the view that linking purchases with charitable donations can be an effective marketing tool. But despite the increased use of charity-linked promotions, few investigations have examined the factors that influence the effectiveness of this tactic. This article focuses on examining how the nature of the product being promoted (i.e., hedonic vs. utilitarian) influences the effectiveness of using donations to charity as a purchase incentive.

BACKGROUND

The Role of Complementarity in the Evaluation of Multiple Outcomes

One way of approaching the bundling of products with donations to charity is to view it as a method of offering consumers two distinct positive outcomes for one price. Acquiring the product provides a gain to the consumer, while the donation to charity offers an additional gain that consists of the good feelings generated from knowing that one is helping a worthy cause. In contrast to other types of incentives, such as discounts and rebates, which offer the utility of saving money, or free gifts and lotteries, which offer the utility of receiving something extra, charity incentives offer a more selfless utility that comes from giving to others.

Previous research on the evaluation of multiple outcomes has suggested that when multiple gains are of a similar nature, individuals will derive more pleasure from segregation than from integration (Thaler 1985; Thaler and Johnson 1990). However, work by Linville and Fischer (1991) has qualified this outcome. They examined preferences for separating or combining events from three domains: financial (e.g., win the lottery), social (e.g., receive a warm letter from a close friend), and academic (e.g., get tenure). Linville and Fischer found that the tendency to prefer temporal separation did not occur in cases where the specific gains being evaluated came from different domains. In fact, in several of their examples involving relatively small positive experiences from different domains, Linville and Fischer (1991) found that temporal integration was actually preferred to

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temporal segregation by a significant proportion of the subjects, suggesting that the total value of the two positive outcomes could be increased by bundling them together.

Why would certain positive events lead to more pleasure when they occur together than when they occur separately? Linville and Fischer suggest that certain types of positive outcomes may serve as complements for one another such that bundling them together would result in greater happiness than offering them separately. To illustrate, a significant portion of the subjects in Linville and Fischer's study indicated that they would prefer to receive an excellent grade on a quiz (an academic gain) and share a pizza with some good friends (a social gain) on the same day rather than have those two events occur on different days. It could be that having a reason to celebrate complements having friends and food to celebrate with.

Although Linville and Fischer's work did not deal with product bundling, their results do suggest that complementarity could influence the effectiveness of bundling pleasant things together. What factors could make the two components of a bundle complement one another? Most discussions of complementarity in economics have focused on functional (use-based) complementarity, which occurs when two bundled components are used or consumed together. An increase in the supply of cameras increases the demand for film; an increase in the supply of peanut butter increases the demand for jelly, and so forth. Applied to the individual consumer, owning a car increases the value of gasoline; having chocolate sauce increases the value of ice cream, and so forth.

The effect of functional complementarity on the valuation of product bundles was examined by Gaeth et al. (1990). They found that willingness to pay for functionally complementary product bundles (e.g., VCR + VHS tape) was significantly affected by the perceived quality of the less valuable item in the bundle. However, this effect was not observed when the less valuable bundle component was functionally unrelated to the main product (e.g., electric typewriter + calculator). This result suggests that the presence of functional complementarity between bundle components can influence the value attached to that bundle. In later work examining the effects of product bundling on judgments of monetary value, Gaeth et al. (1997) demonstrated that bundling functionally related goods leads to a higher willingness to pay than bundling functionally unrelated goods.

The observation that functional complementarity appears to affect the valuation of bundles raises the question of whether there are other dimensions, beyond the fact that two items are generally consumed together, that might make them complement one another. For example, 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. In the case of product-

charity bundles, if the feelings associated with acquiring a given product in some way complement the feelings associated with giving to a good cause, linking the donation to charity to the product would be an example of offering affect-based complementarity.

To understand how affect-based complementarity could be applied to predicting what types of products might best complement charity incentives, it is helpful to examine previous work on altruism as well as previous studies that have examined the mediating role of emotion on people's tendencies to behave altruistically. Because this article compares the effectiveness of charity incentives in promoting pleasure-oriented hedonic products to their effectiveness in promoting more goal-oriented utilitarian products, previous work addressing the affect-based distinction between hedonic and utilitarian consumption is also discussed.

Altruistic Giving and the Affective Nature of Consumption

In 1994, in the United States, charitable giving in the form of monetary donations on the part of individuals, corporations, and foundations totaled \$130 billion. Clearly, there is some value associated with acts of altruism, otherwise, people would not be contributing. Indeed, altruism has been described as the consumption of "warm glow" (Andreoni 1990; Isen 1970) and the purchase of moral satisfaction (Kahneman and Knetsch 1992). Regardless of whether altruists pay for this glow or satisfaction by donating cash, contributing their time, or risking their own welfare, they must be gaining some sort of utility from the transaction.

Companies involved in cause-related marketing campaigns clearly see advantages to bundling their products with the utility derived from giving to others. However, prior research suggests that the appeal that contributing to a charity will have for a given individual at a given point in time may be influenced by that individual's emotional state. More specifically, previous work has indicated that experiencing either pleasure (Cunningham 1979; Forbes and TeVault 1975; Isen and Levin 1972; Isen et al. 1978; Levin and Isen 1975) or guilt (Baumann, Cialdini, and Kendrick 1981; Carlsmith and Gross 1969; Cialdini, Darby, and Vincent 1973; Freedman, Wallington, and Bless 1967; Ghingold 1981; Izard 1977) can significantly increase an individual's likelihood of engaging in charitable behavior.

When might pleasure and/or guilt be embedded in the acquisition of a product? Prior work has called attention to the affective nature of many everyday consumption experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). As several scholars have pointed out (Ahtola 1985; Babbitt, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Lofman 1991), not all products evoke the same emotional states when consumed. For example, the feelings associated with purchasing utilitarian or "practical"

items, such as textbooks, laundry detergent, or skim milk may not be the same as the feelings associated with purchasing more hedonic or “frivolous” items, such as chocolate truffles, expensive cologne, or a luxury cruise. On the basis of this observation, a distinction has been made between two types of consumption that differ in terms of their affective content and which are driven by quite different motives:

Hedonic, pleasure-oriented consumption is motivated mainly by the desire for sensual pleasure, fantasy and fun (e.g., the consumption of a hot fudge sundae or a week in the Bahamas). In Western culture, such products are often labeled “frivolous” or “decadent.”

Utilitarian, goal-oriented consumption is motivated mainly by the desire to fill a basic need or accomplish a functional task (e.g., the consumption of a bottle of dishwashing liquid or a box of trash bags). In Western culture, such products are often labeled “practical” or “necessary.”

Although there are several consumption experiences that could fit into both of these categories (Babbin et al. 1994), there is little doubt that some products are much more pleasurable than others. However, it has been noted that the pleasure of hedonic consumption does not come without a price (Lascu 1991). Indeed, when consumers seek to gain hedonic pleasure, guilt can set in even before consumption takes place, adding a negative component to an otherwise pleasurable experience. For example, the consumption of a hot fudge sundae may be innately pleasurable. Yet, for today’s weight-conscious consumers, such decadent indulgence often leads to the disutility of guilt. As Lascu points out, it is often the things that give consumers the most pleasure that they also feel the most guilty about.

The observation that pleasure-oriented consumption often leads to feelings of guilt has interesting implications for the bundling of hedonic products with charity incentives. Although the pleasure generated from hedonic consumption and the warm glow derived from charitable giving are both pleasurable emotional experiences, the first is likely to induce guilt, whereas the latter is likely to reduce guilt. As mentioned earlier, both pleasure and guilt have been shown to increase the appeal of altruistic behavior (Berkowitz 1972; Cunningham, Steinberg, and Grev 1980). This suggests that affect generated from hedonic consumption may be especially complementary to the utility derived from contributing to a good cause. To illustrate, if treating oneself to an extravagant four-course French dinner creates both the pleasure and the guilt of self-indulgence, and this combination of emotions complements the warm glow generated from altruistic behavior, then it follows that a decadent dinner could increase the appeal of a donation to charity. Thus, the bundle “lavish dinner + donation” could create more value than would have been achieved by offering the dinner and the donation separately. Such an effect would suggest a type of affect-based complementarity in that the emotions created by the acquisition of the product would complement

the good feelings derived from the contribution to charity. Basically, the notion of affect-based complementarity suggests that charity incentives will be more effective with frivolous, hedonic, pleasure-oriented products (e.g., lavish dinners and luxurious cruises) than with more practical, functional, goal-oriented products (e.g., vacuum cleaners and garbage disposals). More formally,

H1: Donations to charity are more likely to be preferred to a monetary incentive when they are bundled with hedonic or frivolous products than when they are bundled with utilitarian or practical products.

This hypothesis was tested in study 1. Two additional hypotheses, introduced later in the article, were tested in studies 2 and 3, respectively.

STUDY 1

Method

Selection of Stimuli. A pretest using undergraduate student subjects was conducted to facilitate the selection and accurate labeling of stimuli for study 1. Initial pretests using labels such as hedonic versus instrumental, and experiential versus utilitarian, which are commonly used in the literature, led to misunderstandings among subjects. Thus, we chose to use the terms with which our pretested undergraduates seemed most familiar: “practical” and “frivolous.” Forty subjects received a long list of products that were being considered for the experiment along with the following definitions:

Frivolous Products—Pleasure-oriented consumption. Something fun, experiential, and perhaps even “decadent.” Purchasing such goods or experiences for oneself may sometimes bring on feelings of guilt, and this “acquisition guilt” may diminish the pleasure of consumption.

Practical Products—Goal-oriented consumption. Something which one ordinarily buys to carry out a necessary function or task in one’s life. No guilt is brought about from purchasing these products, and relatively little pleasure is associated with their consumption.

Subjects were instructed to classify each of the products on their list into one of four categories: practical, frivolous, both practical and frivolous, or neither practical nor frivolous. Only those alternatives that were placed into either the frivolous or practical category by at least 90 percent of these subjects were considered for use in the experiment. A list of the selected products appears in Table 1. None of the subjects who participated in this classification exercise participated in the actual experiment.

Procedure. Subjects were 150 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory marketing course at a major university. The students participated in the study as a part of their course requirement. Each subject received a questionnaire with 12 questions. Seven of these questions were relevant to testing the first hypothesis. An additional

TABLE 1
RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHARITY VERSUS CASH WITH IDENTICAL PRODUCTS IN A NONPURCHASE CONTEXT

Frivolous product	Practical product	Chose charity offered alone (%)	Chose charity with a practical product (%)	Chose charity with a frivolous product (%)	Alone versus with practical product <i>t</i> -value	Alone versus with frivolous product <i>t</i> -value	With frivolous product versus with practical product <i>t</i> -value
Dinner for two at French restaurant	Mountain bike	34	62	76	2.89***	4.61***	1.52
Chocolate truffles	Required textbooks	28	58	74	2.93***	4.85***	1.70*
Theme park tickets	Six-month supply of toothpaste	12	32	48	2.46***	4.23***	1.64*
Large bag of M&M's	Spiral notebook	36	62	80	2.67***	4.93***	2.00**
Chocolate brownie	Bottle of correction fluid	44	58	72	1.40	2.93***	1.47
Hot fudge sundae	Quart of milk	34	72	82	4.08***	5.51***	1.19
Movie pass	Pocket dictionary	30	42	46	1.25	1.65*	.40

NOTE.—*n* = 50 in all conditions.

*Significant at *p* = .10.

**Significant at *p* = .05.

***Significant at *p* = .01.

five questions were added to disguise the true purpose of the study. For each of the 12 questions, subjects were asked to indicate which of two alternatives they would prefer, assuming that they were making these choices for themselves. To encourage honest answers, they were promised that 10 of the participants would be selected at random to receive one of the alternatives they had chosen in the study. These prizes were delivered in class after the experiments had been completed.

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in a single-factor between-subjects design. In the seven questions relevant to the hypothesis, subjects were presented with a choice between receiving a given amount of money and having that same amount donated to a specific charity. The amounts and specific charities used varied from question to question. Depending on the condition, these incentives were presented either with no product, with a practical product, or with a frivolous product. To minimize the chances of subjects guessing the purpose of the study, they were consistently assigned to the same condition for all seven of the questions. To control for the possible effect of different monetary values, practical and frivolous products were paired so that for each specific question, the range of prices of the two products in the choice set was the same. Only the presence and nature of the products varied from condition to condition. (A sample question from study 1 showing all three conditions appears in the Appendix).

Results

Altruistic incentives were compared to monetary incentives under three conditions: unbundled, bundled with a

practical product, and bundled with a frivolous product. Table 1 shows the results for each of the seven examples.

The first hypothesis predicted that the proportion of subjects who would prefer charity over cash would be higher when the two options were bundled with a frivolous product than when the two options were bundled with a practical product. On average, 68 percent of the subjects in the frivolous product condition preferred the donation to charity over the cash equivalent, while only 55 percent preferred the donation to charity in the practical product condition. Analysis of study 1 was carried out at the aggregate level. The dependent variable for each subject was the number of times out of seven that subjects chose charity. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product condition to the bundled-with-a-practical-product condition. On average, subjects in the frivolous condition chose charity in 4.78 out of seven cases. In the practical product condition, subjects chose charity only 3.86 out of seven times. This difference was significant ($F(1, 147) = 6.31, p < .05$). Individual *t*-tests were also carried out on each of the seven individual questions. These results appear in Table 1. Although the differences were in the predicted direction in all seven product categories, the differences were significant at the *p* < .10 level in two of seven examples, and significant at the level of *p* < .05 in only one example.

In addition to examining the hypothesis that compared the two bundled conditions, we also compared the proportion of subjects who preferred charity over cash in the no-product control condition to the proportion who preferred charity over cash in each of the two bundled-with-a-prod-

uct conditions. Since the attractiveness of charity incentives was significantly higher in the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product condition than in the bundled-with-a-practical-product condition, the no-product condition was compared to the practical and frivolous product conditions separately.

As Table 1 shows, in comparing the bundled-with-a-practical-product condition to the no-product condition, for all the individual comparisons tested, more subjects chose charity in the bundled-with-a-practical-product condition than in the no-product condition. This difference was significant in five of the seven examples tested (p 's < .01). On average, subjects chose a donation to charity over a cash equivalent in 55 percent of the examples when each alternative was bundled with a practical product and in only 31 percent of the examples when each alternative was offered alone.

The difference between conditions was even more pronounced in the comparison between the no-product and the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product conditions. On average, 68 percent of the subjects assigned to the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product condition preferred charity over cash, compared to 31 percent of the subjects in the no-product condition. As can be seen in Table 1, the difference in choice shares was in the same direction in all seven of the examples used, and the difference was significant in six of the seven examples (p 's < .01).

Although not hypothesized, the results of the two with-product versus without-product comparisons are not surprising in that they serve as an illustration of the basic principal of diminishing marginal utility. Clearly, the benefits derived from helping to support a good cause are quite distinct from the benefits obtained from receiving something for ourselves. Therefore, it is likely that the utility derived from an acquisition that offers both a receiving component (i.e., the product) and a contributing component (i.e., the donation to charity) should not be lessened by the fact that these two positive outcomes are acquired simultaneously. In contrast, a bundle that consists of two receiving components (product + cash incentive) would more likely be subject to diminishing marginal value. In short, although it is true that the more you get the less marginal value there will be to getting more, it is not likely to be true that the more you get the less marginal value you will derive from giving to others. Again, both giving and receiving offer utility, but the presence of one is unlikely to diminish the ability to derive pleasure from the other. Therefore, adding cash to a product should offer less utility than the same amount of cash would alone, while adding a contribution to charity to a product should offer no less utility than would be attained from that contribution to charity alone.

A good way to illustrate this point is to imagine you have just won a brand-new stereo system, and moments later you assist a homeless person in finding shelter for the night. Chances are that the first positive experience will not diminish your ability to appreciate the second, regardless of the order in which the two events occurred.

In other words, your ability to experience the good feelings associated with carrying out a good deed should not be depleted by the fact that you have just derived utility by acquiring something for yourself. In contrast, if you had just won a new stereo system and moments later found a five-dollar bill in the street, chances are that finding the five-dollar bill would not be as exciting as it would have been had you not just won a new stereo system.

An alternative explanation for the differences between the bundled conditions and the no-product condition is that both the frivolous and practical bundles in study 1 were basically freebies (i.e., no price or cost was mentioned). It seems plausible that the mere act of getting anything for free, be it practical or frivolous, will be, to some extent, a pleasurable experience. Frivolous gifts are likely to be more hedonically charged than practical gifts because they are more fun to receive and also more likely to create guilt. However, this does not mean that no pleasure would be involved in receiving a practical item for free. Indeed, the findings observed in comparing the three conditions in study 1 could be due to the fact that receiving free practical goods creates more pleasure than not receiving anything, while receiving free hedonic goods creates more pleasure than receiving practical ones.

STUDY 2

One potential weakness in the procedure used in study 1 is that since each of the two products within each choice set were identical, it is possible that some of the subjects were simply ignoring the common element (be it the frivolous product or the practical product) in each choice task. This might explain why the difference between practical products and frivolous products, though significant at the aggregate level, was only significant (p < .05) in one of the seven individual examples. Perhaps in a more realistic setting, where consumers choose between different *brands* of the same product rather than identical generic items, individuals would be far less likely to cancel out the product and, therefore, more likely to be affected by the nature of that product. It follows that the relative effectiveness of charity incentives with frivolous products compared to their effectiveness with practical products would be more accurately assessed if the two practical and two frivolous alternatives in the choice set were different brands of the same product. This leads us to a modified version of the first hypothesis.

H2: Compared with cash rebates of equal magnitude, donation-to-charity incentives will be more effective in stimulating *brand* preference when bundled with different brands of a hedonic or frivolous product than when bundled with different brands of a utilitarian or practical product.

Study 2 tested Hypothesis 2 by giving subjects paper-and-pencil choice tasks involving descriptions of different

brands of the same type of product. The brands varied on several attributes rather than just in terms of the type of incentive (donation to charity or cash) being offered.

Unlike study 1, in study 2 only the bundled-with-a-practical-product and the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product conditions were represented. Study 2 focused exclusively on testing Hypothesis 2, which addressed the relative effectiveness of altruistic versus monetary incentives in a purchase context with different brands of the same product. For each question in this study, subjects were assigned to one of two conditions: either bundled with a practical product or bundled with a frivolous product. The dependent variable was stated willingness to purchase.

Method

Selection of Stimuli. For this study, we relied in part on the pretest used in study 1 to classify products as either frivolous or practical. As in study 1, only those products that had been classified into one of these two categories by at least 90 percent of the subjects in the first pretest were considered for this experiment. After developing two different brand descriptions, each varying on a variety of dimensions (such as price, color, size, and location), 20 undergraduate students were given a list of the actual brand descriptions under consideration for study 2. Since the subjects for the actual experiment were to be recruited from a marketing class, we made sure that none of the pretest participants were enrolled in a marketing course that semester. Each of the students was asked to classify each of the brand descriptions according to the same classification criteria as in study 1. Only those brand descriptions that were placed into the same category by at least 90 percent of the subjects were used in study 2. Rather than using real brand names that the subjects may or may not have been familiar with, fictitious names (such as Brand X and Brand Y) were used. This allowed us to match up practical and frivolous products without worrying about preexisting brand preferences.

Procedure. The subjects were 264 undergraduate students from the same university as the students who had participated in the pretest. Participation in the study was a class requirement for an introductory marketing course. The data were collected over two semesters. None of the subjects in study 2 had participated in study 1.

Subjects were randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups in a single-factor between-subjects design. The two groups received different questionnaires. On the basis of the questionnaire that they received, each subject was assigned either to the practical condition for all odd-numbered questions and to the frivolous condition for all even-numbered questions or vice versa. The specific charity used, the price range of the products, and the magnitude of the incentives varied from question to question but were kept constant across both conditions within each question. As a result, each subject was exposed to each of the six charities once and to each of the two

conditions three times. This was important because it allowed us to control for any possible effects of the popularity of the charity, the price of the product, or the magnitude of the contribution and rebate. Furthermore, within each of the questionnaires, there was no repetition in charity, price range, or incentive magnitude.

For each question, subjects were asked to indicate which of two alternatives they would be most likely to purchase. The two alternatives they were given for each question were either two different brands of a practical product or two different brands of a frivolous product. For six of these questions in each condition, one alternative involved a monetary incentive and the other involved an altruistic incentive. In order to conceal the purpose of the study, four filler questions were added to each questionnaire. These questions did not involve either an altruistic or a monetary incentive but merely asked subjects to choose between two different brands of various products. The four filler questions used were identical in both questionnaires and were inserted before the first, third, fourth, and sixth "real" questions.

Unlike study 1, in which subjects were simply asked to state preferences between various items and bundles of items, the questions in this study were framed in a purchase context. Subjects were given descriptions of two different brands for each product category and asked which of the two brands of the product they would be most likely to purchase. For example, one choice task involved choosing between a box of Lemony-Fresh Brand X Detergent with a portion of the price going to Save the Seals or a box of Minty Blue Brand Y Detergent with that same amount rebated at the register.

Each of the brand descriptions offered information on several attributes such as price, quality, color, and size. Each pair of brands varied on at least two attributes. To control for brand preferences, within each of the two bundled conditions, each brand of each product was promoted with a cash incentive in 50 percent of the questionnaires and with a charity incentive in the other 50 percent. This counterbalancing allowed us to compare the choice shares of charity versus the rebate equivalent while controlling for brand preference. The monetary incentives were framed as a cash rebate at the register. The altruistic incentives were framed as an automatic donation of equal value to a specified charity. The practical products used included laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, a backpack, textbooks, and a dental cleaning. The frivolous products used included high-fat ice cream, malt balls, concert tickets, a luxurious vacation getaway, and a professional massage.

In addition to testing Hypothesis 2, this study allowed us to minimize demand effects by varying the alternatives in each choice set on multiple dimensions. Thus, unlike the subjects in study 1, each subject in study 2 was exposed to the frivolous condition in half of the questions and to the practical condition in the other half of the questions. This allowed us to control for any tendency subjects may have had to remain consistent regarding their preferences for charity compared to cash.

TABLE 2
RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHARITY VERSUS CASH WITH DIFFERENTIATED BRANDS IN A PURCHASE CONTEXT

Frivolous product	Practical product	Chose charity with a frivolous product (%)	Chose charity with a practical product (%)	Practical versus frivolous <i>F</i> -value
Ice cream	Laundry detergent	57	42	6.157***
Malt balls	Toothpaste	48	45	.242
Weekend getaway	\$500 textbook credit	39	14	24.378***
Concert tickets	Backpack	53	36	7.573***
Frozen yogurt	Dishwashing liquid	48	39	2.610*
Frozen yogurt + toppings	Thesaurus	52	47	.543

NOTE.—*n* = 132 in all conditions.

*Significant at *p* = .10.

***Significant at *p* = .01.

Results and Discussion

The results for each of the examples represented in study 2 appear in Table 2. On average, 51 percent of the subjects in the bundled-with-a-frivolous-product condition indicated a preference for the brand promoted with a donation to charity over the brand promoted with a cash rebate at the register. In contrast, on average only 36 percent of the subjects in the bundled-with-a-practical-product condition indicated a preference for the charity-linked brand.

Independent *t*-test comparisons were conducted to test for the significance of the differences in the choice share of cash over charity when bundled with practical versus frivolous products. As can be seen in Table 2, the results were in the predicted direction and significant ($p < .05$) in three out of the six examples used. In the other two comparisons tested, the results were also in the predicted direction, although not significant. Analysis of study 2 was also carried out at the aggregate level. The dependent variable was the number of times out of three that each subject chose charity under each condition. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the mean number of times that the brand promoted with a charity incentive was chosen when it was bundled with a frivolous product to the mean number of times that charity was chosen when it was bundled with a practical product. On average, when assigned to the frivolous product condition, subjects chose charity in 1.54 out of three cases, whereas, when assigned to the practical product condition, subjects chose charity in only 1.07 out of three cases. This difference was significant ($F(1, 262) = 15.62, p < .001$).

The results of study 2 support the prediction that in a purchase context, charity incentives will be more effective in stimulating brand preference when bundled with frivolous products than when bundled with practical products. Beyond the issue of examining the phenomenon in a purchase context, in evaluating the contribution of study 2 to our work, it is worth recalling that in study 1 each subject was either consistently assigned to the practical product condition or consistently assigned to the frivolous

product condition. Thus, if subjects in study 1 were anchored by their responses to the first question in their questionnaire, the results of study 1 may have been affected by a desire to remain consistent in stating preferences for charity as opposed to cash. In contrast, in study 2 each subject was assigned to each condition three times and the number of subjects that started out with a practical product scenario was equal to the number that started out with a frivolous product scenario. Therefore, any tendency subjects in study 2 may have had to remain consistent regarding their stated preferences for a charity incentive as opposed to a cash rebate would have only diluted the results. Nevertheless, significant differences in the predicted direction were observed.

Furthermore, subjects in study 1 had been asked to indicate preferences for simple pairs of positive outcomes that involved no cost. In contrast, in study 2, price information was given and subjects were asked to evaluate the pairs of alternatives as if they were actually spending their own money. This difference between the two studies, in addition to the fact that the purchase alternatives in study 2 varied on multiple variables, including quality attributes and price information, could have caused subjects in study 2 to use more rational and less emotional criteria for making their decisions. Yet, even in what may well have been a more rational frame of mind, subjects in study 2 still appeared to be influenced by the affective nature of the products in their choice sets. Thus, compared to study 1, study 2 served as a stronger test of the same basic prediction. Indeed, even though any inclination to remain consistent could have only diluted the results, and even though the products were evaluated in a context where more rational criteria were likely to be used, charity incentives were still found to be more effective in promoting frivolous products than in promoting practical products.

STUDY 3

In studies 1 and 2, lab experiments using paper-and-pencil questionnaires were designed to explore the phenomenon of product-incentive bundling. One of the prob-

lems with the hypothetical scenarios set up in these two studies is that, in the context of willingness to contribute to a good cause, one might expect a bias toward choosing charity in a questionnaire that does not involve real cash incentives being offered or actual donations to charity being made. After all, stating a preference for making a contribution costs nothing, while actually forgoing a cash incentive in order to make a donation requires a sacrifice. This bias did not create a confound in studies 1 and 2 because the bias was consistent across all conditions. Because we were interested in differences between conditions, the likely tendency to overstate altruistic tendencies when no real cost is involved should not have affected our results. Therefore, one should expect that similar results would be obtained when using actual purchases rather than stated preference as the dependent measure. Nevertheless, given that a central goal of this research was to examine contexts in which charity incentives would be relatively more effective in stimulating purchase, it seemed worthwhile to test the following hypothesis:

- H3:** Donation-to-charity incentives will be relatively more effective in stimulating actual purchases when they are offered for purchases of hedonic or frivolous products than when they are offered for purchases of utilitarian or practical products.

Method

Procedure. Twelve hundred undergraduate dormitory residents at a major American university were randomly selected to participate in this field experiment. Each subject received a fluorescent green coupon in his or her mailbox for one of four experimental conditions in a 2 (frivolous shop, practical shop) \times 2 (monetary incentive, charity incentive) between-subjects design. Each of the coupons specified the value and type of incentive being offered as well as the name of the specific store at which the coupon could be redeemed (see Fig. 1 for coupon layouts). Except for these differences, all four of the coupon layouts were identical. In all conditions, the coupons clearly indicated that redemption would require a purchase of \$1.00 or more. To minimize the interaction between individuals with different coupons, we used only one type of coupon per hall. Because the dormitory residents at the participating university were randomly assigned to their dorm rooms, this did not interfere with the internal validity of our experiment. The dependent measure in this study was coupon redemption rates.

The first factor was the type of store at which the coupon could be redeemed. Two stores participated in this study. Sweet on You, which sells chocolates, pralines, cookies, and other pleasurable, high-sugar food items, was the frivolous, pleasure-oriented shop. The Inkstone School Supply Store, which sells school supplies such as correction fluid, pencils, notebooks, and other functional products, was the practical, utilitarian shop. The second

factor was the nature of the incentive being offered. Here a \$0.50 cash rebate given at the register served as a monetary incentive while a \$0.50 donation to the March of Dimes served as an altruistic incentive.

It should be noted that in both study 1 and study 2, the effectiveness of charity incentives was measured in a choice context relative to cash incentives. In other words, subjects chose between a charity and a cash incentive. In everyday settings, however, consumers are not offered a choice of which type of incentive they will receive. Instead, products are bundled with only one type of incentive, and the consumer's options are either to buy, and thus receive the incentive being offered, or not to buy, and thus not receive that incentive. The design of study 3 was structured to reflect this real-world context. Subjects were offered either a cash rebate or a donation-to-charity incentive. The incentive was a given and their choice was to buy or not to buy. This allowed us to compare the effectiveness of each type of incentive independently.

Selection of Participating Shops. Forty undergraduates who were from the same university, but not living in the residence halls, were given a brief questionnaire. Each questionnaire consisted of a list of 12 different shops commonly frequented by students at this university. Each of these shops was located either on campus or no more than two blocks away. In the first part of the questionnaire, students were asked to circle the names of the shops with which they were familiar. Next, they were asked to classify each of the shops they had circled as "practical," "frivolous," "both," or "neither." For this task, they were given the same definitions of practical and frivolous that had been used in studies 1 and 2. After eliminating those shops on the list that were not recognized by at least 75 percent of our subjects, we tallied the number of times that each of the remaining shops was placed into a given category in both of the classification tasks. Only those shops that were placed in a given pleasure/guilt category in at least 90 percent of the cases in which they were recognized were considered for the actual study. This generated a list of two stores that were perceived as carrying practical products, and four that were perceived as carrying frivolous products. After approaching the store managers in each of these six shops, we were left with three stores that were willing to participate in our study—one that was perceived as practical and two that were perceived as frivolous. The final decision of which frivolous store to use in our study was made by selecting the one with which our pretest subjects had been most familiar.

Results

Overall, 11 percent of the 1,200 coupons distributed were redeemed. Redemption rates by condition appear in Table 3. A binary logit analysis was performed on the aggregated data to assess the significance of the effects

FIGURE 1
COUPON LAYOUTS



of store type (practical vs. frivolous), the incentive type (donation to charity vs. cash rebate), and the interaction between the two on redemption. The dependent variable was redemption—either “redeemed” or “did not redeem.”

The dependent variable was a 0–1 variable, where 1 indicated that the coupon was redeemed and 0 indicated that it was not. The independent variables included (1) a 0–1 dummy variable, where 1 indicated that the product

was practical and 0 indicated that it was frivolous, and (2) a 0–1 dummy variable, where 1 indicated that the incentive was a cash rebate and 0 indicated that the incentive was a donation to charity.

The effect for type of store (frivolous vs. practical) was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 8.70, p < .005$). The overall redemption rate for the practical store (Inkstone) was significantly higher than the overall redemption rate for the frivolous store (Sweet on You). This

TABLE 3
FIELD EXPERIMENT COMPARING COUPON REDEMPTION RATES

	Fifty-cent donation to the March of Dimes (an altruistic incentive)	Fifty-cent cash rebate at register (a monetary incentive)
Number of coupons redeemed at Inkstone School Supplies (a practical store)	9 (<i>n</i> = 300)	62 (<i>n</i> = 300)
Number of coupons redeemed at Sweet on You Candy Shop (a frivolous store)	27 (<i>n</i> = 300)	31 (<i>n</i> = 300)

NOTE.—*n* = the number of coupons distributed in each condition.

result is probably attributed to the fact that Inkstone is a larger shop that has longer hours of operation and is generally more crowded with students than Sweet on You.

The effect for type of incentive (charity vs. cash) was also significant ($\chi^2(1) = 33.67, p < .0001$). The promise of a \$0.50 discount led to a higher redemption rate than the promise of a \$0.50 donation to the March of Dimes. However, this main effect for type of incentive does not necessarily indicate that monetary incentives will generally be more effective than altruistic incentives. Indeed, the relative effectiveness of charity over cash could very well have been affected by the magnitude of the value of incentives. For example, if our subjects were more sensitive to the magnitude of a rebate than to the magnitude of a donation to charity, it is possible that a \$0.10 rebate would not be as effective as a \$0.10 donation to charity. Furthermore, various characteristics of our student subjects (e.g., limited budgets) could have played a role in the relative effectiveness of cash over a donation to charity. Also, it is possible that had we used another charity, one with greater appeal to undergraduates than the March of Dimes, the overall effectiveness of the charity incentive would have been higher.

Although the main effects for store and incentive type are worth noting, the hypothesis focused on the interaction between the two. As hypothesized, the interaction between type of store and type of incentive was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 18.50, p < .0001$). While the cash-rebate incentive led to a higher redemption rate in the practical store than in the frivolous store ($\chi^2(1) = 8.70, p < .001$), the donation-to-charity incentive led to a higher redemption rate in the frivolous store than in the practical store ($\chi^2(1) = 11.81, p < .001$). This outcome provides further support for Hypothesis 3, which predicted that charity incentives would be more effective with frivolous products than with practical products.

In addition to the main effects and the interaction effect, the simple effect of store type within the cash and charity condition was also examined. For charity incentives in the frivolous store, 27 out of 300 charity coupons were redeemed, while in the practical store nine out of 300

charity coupons were redeemed. Thus even though the Inkstone may have been a more popular store overall, the bundle March of Dimes + Sweet on You was more attractive than the combination of March of Dimes + Inkstone. This result further supports the notion that charity incentives will be more effective with frivolous products than with practical products. The interaction effect here demonstrates that the relative effectiveness of charity to cash depends on the nature of the store. Indeed, the simple effect within the charity condition suggests that if we are concerned with the redemption rates of charity incentives, store type matters.

In sum, the results in study 3 support the prediction that, relative to cash rebates, charity incentives will stimulate more purchases when bundled by a shop carrying frivolous products than when bundled by a shop carrying practical products. Apparently this phenomenon is sufficiently powerful that it can be observed in the context of an everyday marketing environment.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The three studies reported in this article provide strong evidence that charity incentives are more effective with frivolous products than with practical products. In study 1, this effect was demonstrated in a nonpurchase context using simple bundles that were framed as pairs of outcomes where the frivolous or practical item was held constant within conditions. In study 2, the same effect was observed using bundles that were framed as purchase alternatives. The purchase options included price information as well as qualitative differences between the two products in the choice set. Finally, in a third study, which was a field experiment, subjects were more likely to spend their own money to redeem a coupon with a charity purchase incentive when that coupon was offered by a shop carrying frivolous products than when that coupon was offered by a shop carrying practical products.

These outcomes seem congenial with findings reported by Linville and Fischer (1991) and by Gaeth et al. (1997), which suggest that complementarity can affect

consumer reactions to bundled versus separated positive outcomes. The work presented here advances our understanding of the effects of complementarity by demonstrating that this effect can also be obtained when the complementarity is affect-based rather than use-based. More specifically, our results suggest that the altruistic utility offered by charity incentives may be more complementary with the feelings generated from frivolous products than with the more functional motivations associated with practical products.

Alternative Explanations

Although the notion of affect-based complementarity can account for our observation that charity incentives are more effective with frivolous products than with practical ones, there are other plausible explanations for our data. The differences in popularity observed between a donation bundled with a frivolous product and a donation bundled with a practical product might also be explained by the principal of diminishing marginal value. If the frivolous products used in our studies consistently offered subjects more utility than the practical products, our results could be due to the fact that the individuals in the frivolous product condition started out with a higher level of base utility. Thus, the marginal utility of receiving cash, or some sort of rebate, would be less for those in the frivolous product condition than for those in the practical product condition.

The diminishing marginal utility explanation might seem similar to the affect-based complementarity explanation in that the amount of pleasure derived from a product should increase the utility it offers. However, under certain conditions, these two explanations could lead to different predictions. Whereas the affect-based complementarity explanation predicts that the hedonic content of a product would determine how effectively it could be promoted with a donation to charity, the diminishing marginal value explanation predicts that the relevant independent variable would be the amount of utility offered by that product. To illustrate where these two explanations might differ in their predictions, one can imagine a consumer who loves French cuisine and has severely stained teeth. This consumer would probably derive more pleasure from having dinner at a good French restaurant but more overall utility from having his teeth cleaned by a well-trained oral hygienist.

Although proximal measures of the base utility of the products were not administered in the present research, it is worth noting that the effects observed in the field study favor the affect-based complementarity explanation. If the frivolous goods, such as fancy gourmet candy, were of greater value to our subjects than the practical items, such as school supplies, we would expect greater overall coupon redemption at the candy store than at the school supply store. Yet the opposite was the case. Significantly more coupons were redeemed at the practical shop both overall and within the monetary-incentive con-

dition. Still, the purchase frequency of a given population in a given store may not be the best indication of the appeal of that store's products to that population. Thus, a useful avenue for future research would be to incorporate measures of the base utility of both the frivolous and the practical products, making sure to include some examples where the base utility would be higher for the practical product options than for the frivolous product options. Such an approach would allow us to determine which of these rival explanations best explains the observed phenomenon.

Other Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Charity Incentives

Another way to extend understanding of the effectiveness of using donations to charity as purchase incentives would be to examine the effects of the ratio of an incentive's value in relation to the price of the product. It has been shown that the more people spend on a product, the less sensitive they will be to the magnitude of any given discount or rebate (Tversky and Kahneman 1981). In other words, the percentage of the price being discounted appears to matter more than the absolute discount size. Current work in progress by the first author suggests that the more people are spending on a product, the more likely they will be to prefer a donation to charity over a rebate of equal magnitude. Future research could go on to examine the interaction between the nature of the product being promoted, the price of that product, and the magnitude of the charity incentive being offered. It might be especially interesting to see whether the affective nature of the product being promoted could affect individual thresholds for what is considered a reasonable donation magnitude.

Furthermore, research exploring the notion that certain types of charities may work better with certain types of products—suggesting a type of product-charity complementarity—could prove quite valuable. Another possibility might be to investigate the factors that could cause a specific charity and a specific product to be mismatched. To illustrate, the interaction effect observed in study 3 could have been in the other direction if the charity used had been the California Literacy Fund (which may complement school supplies, given that both fit under the umbrella of “education”). The results of study 3 may also have been different had the charity been the National Diabetes Research Fund (which may be mismatched to a dessert shop, given the negative effect that high-sugar foods can have on certain forms of diabetes).

Interestingly, it appears that several companies have caught on to the idea of linking themselves to charities that are somehow related to the products they are promoting. For instance, the Condom of the Month Club not only offers its customers 10 new condoms in the mail each month but also gives them the good feeling of knowing that 15 percent of the \$40 annual membership fee that they pay goes to help fund research on AIDS. Purina

Pet Foods has had promotional campaigns involving saving endangered animals, supporting the local zoo, and sponsoring a program that provides pets for senior citizens and the disabled. Could condoms be promoted just as effectively by sponsoring the planting of trees? Could Purina do just as well by sponsoring an organization that feeds hungry children? Future research could help to answer such questions, thus clarifying the mediating role that purchase context might play in influencing an individual's preference for one charity over another.

Examining New Dependent Variables

In discussing the current work, it is important to point out that all of the research in this article has examined the relative effectiveness of one type of incentive over another in the short run. Yet the type of incentive that is used to promote a product may very well have an effect on variables other than short-term sales. Aaker (1991) has called attention to the negative impact that monetary promotions can have on a firm's brand equity (i.e., brand associations, brand awareness, brand loyalty, etc.). Although Aaker does not discuss altruistic incentives, he does suggest that noncash promotions may be less harmful and that they could in some cases improve brand equity. Similarly, it has been suggested that different promotional incentives may have different effects on the perceived quality (Gaeth et al. 1990) and reference price (Campbell and Diamond 1990) of the products being promoted. Although examining the long-term effects of linking one's brand to a good cause was beyond the scope of the current work, investigating this area could be a fruitful direction for future research.

The Spreading of "Warm Glow"

We should also note that beyond just wanting to sell products, some marketers may honestly prefer to use charities that they personally care about to promote their products. In such a case, the warm glow of giving may not affect only the buyer, whose purchases help to support a cause, but the seller as well. In some cases, this warm glow could be spread not only to the owners (or stockholders) of the charity-linked firm, but to the firm's employees and the retailers involved as well. Indeed, warm glow could be added to the value of earning a profit, commission, or salary. Investigations that look beyond the consumer and examine the value that altruistic incentives could offer to people in the firms that offer them could yield practical suggestions for improving employee morale, increasing loyalty to the firm, and perhaps even making the company a more attractive investment option.

Furthermore, for charity-linked products that are purchased as gifts, which is especially common with hedonic products, the warm glow of giving may be experienced not only by the purchaser of the gift (who can feel good about choosing to purchase a charity-linked product) but also by the recipient of the gift (who can feel good know-

ing that a charity-linked product was purchased because of them). In fact, while monetary incentives can only offer value to the individuals who receive them, altruistic incentives can simultaneously add value to the sellers, buyers, and end consumers, not to mention the good causes that are being supported. Going beyond consumers to investigate which factors might affect the warm glow that other parties will derive from being involved with charity-linked products suggests several additional directions for future research.

APPENDIX

Sample Question from Study 1

The example below was one of the actual questions used in study 1.

Condition 1. Subjects chose between two different types of incentives which were presented alone (i.e., unbundled).

Example: Which of the following would you prefer?

- a) One dollar in cash
- b) One dollar donated in your name to the United Way

Condition 2. Subjects chose between two bundles. Both of the bundles in the choice set consisted of the same two incentives used in the first condition. However, both of these incentives were bundled with a practical product.

Example: Which of the following would you prefer?

- a) A twenty-dollar gift certificate for textbooks + one dollar in cash
- b) A twenty-dollar gift certificate for textbooks + one dollar donated in your name to the United Way

Condition 3. This condition was identical to the second condition except that, rather than offering each incentive with a practical product, we offered each incentive with a frivolous product.

Example: Which of the following would you prefer?

- a) A twenty-dollar gift certificate for chocolate truffles + one dollar in cash
- b) A twenty-dollar gift certificate for chocolate truffles + one dollar donated in your name to the United Way

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