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CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING AND CONSUMER ATTITUDE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The first objective was to find out to what extent consumers reveal an effect of cause-related marketing on consumer attitude. Second, the article seeks to assess the moderating role of Cause Company fit on the relationship between cause-related marketing and consumer attitude.

Design/Methodology/Approach

An experimental design with 110 participants was used.

Findings: The results show that CrM significantly enhanced the level of consumer attitude and cause-company fit is significantly influencing the CrM-Attitude relationship.

Research Limitations/Implications: First, all respondents were students from a Ganpat university. Second, the experiment done for a well known company called [P&G], so consumer having some prior attitude towards the company.

Practical Implications: If companies intend to create positive attitude through CrM they should select a cause which is suitably fit to the company.

Originality/Value: The added value of this paper is the link between cause-related marketing and consumer attitude. Moreover, a distinction is explicitly made for role of cause-company fit between CrM & consumer attitude.

KEYWORDS: Cause Related Marketing, Cause Company Fit, Experimentation, Paper Type Research Paper

INTRODUCTION

Increased competition in the market has created urge of exercise nontraditional tools of brand differentiation like cause related marketing. In recent time, cause-related marketing (CrM) has become a popular marketing strategy for companies. Number of researches' suggests that CrM campaigns are beneficial for companies as well as for causes. It positively effecting on the sales of a company and can also enhance its image. It also leads more funding and publicity for the cause.

Varadarajan and Menon (1988) were the first to write in the academic article about the concept of cause-related marketing. One of the underlying contributions of that article was the presentation of a clear definition of the term. "Cause-related marketing is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives".

As CrM becomes more general, companies must be critical in designing their CrM campaigns. This is very

important as to ensure the success of CrM campaigns. There are some structural elements which are responsible for the success of the campaign (Grau and Folse, 2007). Several CrM's structural elements such as product type (Subrahmanyan, 2004; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998), cause-type (Cui et al. 2003; Ellen at al. 2000), cause-proximity (Grau and Folse, 2007; Ross et al. 1992) and fit between sponsoring company and the cause supported (Dong. J.Y and Hou. J. L., 2007) have been studied in the literature to influence consumers' response to CrM.

Cause-company fit as one of the important element of CrM campaign which can influence its effectiveness. To know how this factor is related with the Company's CrM campaign and consumer attitude we used following theories for this study. Associative learning principles can direct the company in a pursuit to build the most effective link between the brand and cause. Classical conditioning principle shows how a stimulus can benefit from being associated with another (McSweeney and Bierley, 1984; Shimp et.al., 1991). Previous studies have described the importance of conditioning consumers for effective transfer of positive attitudes to a brand (e.g. Shimp, Stuart and Engle, 1991) and can change consumer's beliefs about a brand (e.g. Kim, Allen and Kardes, 1996; Kim, Lim and Bhargava, 1998).

Therefore, to give a fresh look, the study attempts to infer whether the interest in CrM's influence the consumer's attitude or not and more importantly the effectiveness of campaign (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Less number of studies has been undertaken in Indian context in comparison to Western context specifying the partnership with causes alters the CrM and consumer attitude relationship. Next section outlines the detailed review of literature related to attitude and cause company fit, followed by research methodology. Data are analyzed in accordance with study's objectives. Findings are used to make recommendations with its and implications.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE - CAUSE RELATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN & CONSUMER RESPONSE

Cause Related Marketing (CrM)

CrM initiated by American Express Company in 1981 to help an arts group raise funds. After that alliance, American Express collaborated with the Ellis Island Foundation to launch a cause-related marketing program in support of the renovation of the Statue of Liberty. CrM can be use as synonymous with corporate sponsorship of charitable causes (Williams, 1986), and as the direct linking of a business's product or service to a named charity; each time the consumer uses the service or buys the products, a gift is made to that charity by the business (Caesar, 1986).

As a type of CSR, cause-related marketing (CrM) has received interest of many corporate. This is due to the fact that especially CrM might have positive effects on consumer behaviour (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). CrM is a useful strategy for-profit and non-profit organization to take up co branding marketing activity to promote products, services, or concepts (Hadjicharalambous, 2006).

Research indicates that consumer attitudes toward companies sponsoring CrM are largely positive (Webb and Mohr 1998). CrM has been widely accepted in many countries as a promising tool for building positive brand awareness (Nan and Heo, 2007). Consumers believe that the companies which are sponsoring CrM are socially responsible (Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992). In addition, purchase intention of a company's product is also positively influenced by the company's CrM activities (Smith and Alcorn, 1991). It has been observed that consumer have preference to brands which are associated with social causes in CrM strategy (Webb and Mohr, 1998; Till and Nowak, 2000; Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2005).

Consumer Attitude

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) believed that attitude is a learning tendency. Accordingly consumer may have tendency to like or unlike the specific object. Kotler (2000) given the definition of attitude: It is an individual like or unlike evaluation, emotional feeling, and behavioural intention for some object or idea.

Based on the given definition and as described by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) attitude consist three elements which are cognitive, affective, and behavioural factors. Cognitive means a belief in a specific objective, affective means an emotional response to a specific objective, and behavioural means a tendency to act in a certain way toward a specific objective. Someone's belief and emotion for a specific objective will form their attitude and their attitude will result in a behavioural tendency. Therefore, attitude plays an important role in consumers' purchase intention.

Previous research has shown that cause-related marketing can positively influence customers' attitudes and purchase behavior (e.g., Pracejus, Olsen, and Brown 2003; Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Hult 2004; Pracejus and Olsen 2004; Gupta and Pirsch 2006; Arora and Henderson 2007; Nan and Heo 2007; Chang 2008; Haruvy and Popkowski Leszczyc 2009; Krishna and Rajan 2009; Henderson and Arora 2010; Popkowski Leszczyc and Rothkopf 2010; Popkowski Leszczyc and Wong 2010).

Cause related marketing programs can create favorable purchase intent or product choice among the sponsoring firm's customers (Shell, 1989; Lawrence, 1993; Mohr et al., 2001) and favorable customer attitudes towards the sponsoring firm (Ross et al., 1990-1991, 1992; Brown and Dacin, 1997). Berger et al. (1996) also found that CrM led to favorable attitude toward the product involved.

Cause Company Fit

Brand-cause fit is defined as the "overall perceived relatedness of the brand and the cause with multiple cognitive bases" (Nan and Heo, 2007, p. 72). In simple words, it is the "perceived link between the company's image, positioning, target market, and the cause's image or constituency" (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). According to Kashyap and Li, (2006), Cause-brand fit is the degree of similarity an individual perceives between the brand and the cause. In this study, alliance fit refers to how complementary and consistent consumers perceive the cause-corporate pairing to be; that is, how similar are the alliance partners in image and idea?

The importance of fit between a company/brand and the cause in CrM is supported by many scholars in previous literature (Drumwright 1996; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Barone et al., 2007; Gupta and Pirsch, 2006; Lafferty, 2007; Nan and Heo, 2007; Samu and Wymer, 2009). Strahilevitz and Meyers (1998) and Till and Nowak (2000) have proposed that fit between brand and cause is important for the success of CrM. In addition, level of brand cause fit can improve the effectiveness of CrM campaigns (Drumwright, 1996; Bigne´-Alcan˜ iz et al., 2011).

Gupta and Pirsch (2006) and Samu and Wymer (2009) found that Company-cause fit can improves the credibility of a company cause association, and therefore ultimately enhance the customer's attitude and purchasing likelihood. Whereas Trimble and Rifon (2006) and Myers and Kwon (2013) believed that a high fit cause–brand alliance enhanced brand attitude. Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) and Myers and Kwon (2013) think that Cause–brand fit positively influences cause–brand alliance attitude and brand equity. When consumers encounter an alliance with low fit, they are more likely to have more thoughts and thoughts that are less favorable.

For attitudes toward the brand, Lafferty et al (2004) also found that the attitude toward the cause brand alliance positively impacted attitude toward the brand. When consumers have a more positive attitude toward an alliance, they will strongly tend to reinforce the linkage between the cause and the corporate brand, and thus transfer their favorable attitude toward the CrM to both partners (Stipp and Schiavone, 1996; Bennett et al., 2006). Also, there is some evidence indicating no effect of fit, where fit between the cause and the brand does not influence attitudes or purchase intentions (Lafferty, 2007).

According to Ellen et al.(2006) high fit can increase values-driven and strategic attributions while decreasing egoistic attributions. Rifon et al. (2004) describe that greater fit between a company and a cause can promote positive evaluations of the sponsoring company. He also believed that company–cause fit influences perceived motives, which, in turn, impacts the credibility and attitudes associated with the sponsoring firm.

H_1: A better fitting cause will have a more positive effect on attitude toward the brand than a poorer fitting cause.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Procedure

This study uses a one shot pre-experimental design in which the experimental group is exposed to the treatment. It may be symbolized as,

EG: X O_1

All the respondents in the experimental group are exposed to print advertisement of P&G with CrM message that is "shikha campaign" printed in non-disguised structured questionnaire to obtain measures of their attitude towards the brand and perceived cause-company fit.

Measures

Attitude towards the brand is a dependent variable in this study, To measure it, a five-item, seven point semantic differential scale was used with the anchors such as unpleasant/pleasant, unappealing/appealing, bad/good, unfavourable/favourable, dislike/like. The scale was adopted from Spears and Singh (2004) and Myers and Kwon (2013) study. Cause-company fit was measured with a four item, seven point semantic differential scale comprises statements as very compatible/very incompatible, makes sense/doesn't make sense, very believable/not believable, High fit/Low fit. The scale was adopted from Barbara A. Lafferty (2007), Nicole koschate-Ischer, Isabel v. Stefan, and Wayne d. Hoyer∗ (2012) study.

Sample

This present study test the effectiveness of cause related marketing on consumer attitude and also investigates the role of Cause-Company fit as a moderator. Sample was taken from UG and PG students of universities of Ahmedabad and Mehsana, Gujarat (considering high level of diversity of students). Students were chosen for this study as they represent emerging potential market for CrM products with powerful aggregate spending. Moreover so, they are young enough to start establishing values and buying principles that may last a lifetime (Cui et al. 2003). Use of such participants has been studied in prior CrM research (Dean, 2004; Grau and Folse, 2007).

A total of 212 usable responses were collected. Participants were selected from a convenience sample found

consistent in previous CrM research (Cheron et al., 2012). Moreover, data collection was done during March-May 2013. Demographic characteristics of participants, approximately 57.4% were male and 42.6% were female indicating balanced sample. Majority of the participants (78.8%) fall into age category of 21-30 years, 14.4% of the participants in the age group of 31-40 years and 6.8% in the age group of 40+. Moreover, 67.1% of participants were graduates and 22.6% were post graduates.

RESULTS

Reliability Tests

Scales were created by averaging the scale items for each measure. All scales were deemed reliable, with Cronbach's Alphas of 0.8 or higher. Table 1 refers to all constructs, source, specific items and Cronbach alpha for reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis for Study Variable

Variable	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach Alpha
Attitude towards Brand (AtB)	Unappealing _ _ _ _ _ _ _ appealing	0.648	0.851
	bad _ _ _ _ _ _ _ good	0.663	
	Unpleasant _ _ _ _ _ _ _ pleasant	0.611	
	unfavorable _ _ _ _ _ _ _ favorable	0.724	
	Unlikeable _ _ _ _ _ _ _ likeable	0.663	

Hypotheses Tests

In accordance with study's objective concerning differential effect of cause-company fit on attitude towards brand, one-way analysis (ANOVA) was performed. Attitude towards brand was taken as dependent variable and cause-company fit was taken as independent variable that classifies respondents into two categories based on its summated score: a) high fit between cause and company and b) low fit between cause and company. Before performing ANOVA, it is required to check the assumption of equality of variance (so called homogeneity of variance- HOV). To explore this, Levene's statistic was computed in order to investigate equality of variance assumption.

Table 2: Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Attitude towards Brand for Fit

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.892	1	210	0.091

Table 2 revealed that the Levene's statistic was found to be non-significant (value= 2.892; p>0.05). This implies that the assumption of equality of variance was not violated indicating variances are equal for low fit and high fit categories. This, in fact, allows displaying the confidence in results generated through ANOVA.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Attitude towards Brand

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.312	1	6.312	5.825	0.017*
Within Groups	227.541	210	1.084		
Total	**233.853**	**211**			

Note: *significant at 5 per cent level

Going for testing hypothesis, table 3 demonstrated that attitude towards brand was significantly different for cause-company fit ($F_{0.05,\ 1,\ 210}$ = 5.825; p<0.05). This indicates consumers who perceive high fit between cause and company have significantly different attitude towards brand than those who perceive low fit between cause and company. Hence, hypothesis H1 was supported as mentioned in review of literature section. After assessing the overall difference, it is necessary to investigate the mean score of each category for further insights.

Table 4: Mean Score Analysis for Attitude towards Brand

Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Low fit	98	4.1222	1.34975	0.1365
High fit	114	5.8412	1.00921	0.0939

After having the statistical significance difference, mean analysis for attitude towards brand (refer table 4) indicates that consumers perceiving high fit between company and cause ($\overline{x}$ = 5.8412) have more favourable attitude in comparison to consumers perceiving low fit between company and cause ($\overline{x}$ = 4.122). In simple words, companies having close fit with the supported cause are believed to be more trustworthy and hence consumers would have higher belief in the company/brand endorsed.

DISCUSSIONS AND MANAGERIAL APPLICATION

In this study, the results suggest that a company should support a suitable cause to show their goodwill, which is contingent on consumer attitude. Fit between the company and the cause may be the driving force in cause related marketing success, having a relatable cause helps to maximize the company-cause alliance effectiveness. This experiment studied the effects of brand-cause fit on consumers' attitudes towards CrM.

The results also suggest that cause company fit influences CrM attitude by strengthening perceptions of the unit relationship between the firm and the charity. These results suggest that when contemplating an alliance, fit should be a primary consideration. This study further revealed perceived cause–brand fit as a strongly influencing consumers' attitude towards the brand. Although previous literature has reported that attitude toward the brand is directly influenced by cause company fit (Pracejus and Olsen (2004), Basil and Herr (2006), Gupta and Pirsch (2006), Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006), Trimble and Rifon (2006), Samu and Wymer (2009)). A CrM program with high company/cause fit, compared with one of low company/cause fit, is no more effective in eliciting positive attitudes toward the brand.

In order to successfully design CrM campaigns, managers need to have a good knowledge of their current and potential customers. CrM is gaining popularity in India. Given the fact that CrM can influence consumers' attitude towards the brand and their evaluation of its products, marketing managers need to have clear knowledge of consumers' preferences with respect to CrM programs. The results of current study confirmed that company-cause fit is an important factor that influences Indian consumers' attitude. The company may be viewed as being more sincere when they chose a well-matched cause. On the other hand, companies may be viewed as more selfish and less sincere if the brand-cause fit is low.

For managers, this means that the consumer's decision to participate in a cause-related marketing initiative comes down at least in part to whether the consumer likes the company or not, and whether they have a positive attitude toward the brand. In conjunction with this conclusion, this study indicates that consumers on average are influenced by the level of

fit between sponsoring company and the cause. Finally, fit is important for CrM alliances. CrM alliances are seen as more appropriate when they fit. At least in part, fit operates by strengthening perceptions of the firm and charity relationship.

LIMITATIONS FUTURE RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS

Some important limitations of the present study are notable.

First, all respondents were students from a ganpat university. It is relevant to see whether the reported results would still hold in a more representative sample.

Second, Experimental subjects: Based on the considerations of time and cost, this study used convenient sampling and chose undergraduates to be research subjects. But the undergraduates for our research issues might not have paid close attention. Therefore this may have created an error in this study.

Thirdly, the cause, company in this research study is education and P&G. Consumers might identify different causes and show different attitude towards the brand (Lichtenstein et al., 2004).

Hence, further studies could explore the effects of these factors on consumers' attitudes towards CrM campaigns. In addition, the joint effects of brand-cause fit and consumers' existing perceptions toward the brand or the social cause on attitudes towards CrM could also be investigated. In a similar vein, the frequency of product purchase might influence consumers' attitudes toward CrM (Chang, 2008). Products that are purchased more frequently, such as tissues, might be more amenable to the altruistic cause (Subrahmanyan, 2004). Characteristics of the brand or cause that may influence responses, relative size or notoriety of the partnering organization can influence attributions. All these issues would be productive areas for future inquiry.

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