



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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CONCEPTUALISING CAUSE RELATED MARKETING: A REVIEW & RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, corporate social responsibility has gained lot of importance among companies because of its long-term benefits. Companies should be responsible to the society for their activities and owe to the environment in which they operate. This review aims to investigate the consumer perceptions towards the cause related marketing. This review also examines the effectiveness of cause related marketing in building brand image. Finally this review also suggests how cause related campaigns can be created & what can be possible hindrances in creating cause related campaigns. This review will generate & develop relevant research propositions. This will be justified by the conceptual & managerial implications that would radiate from the proposed study.

KEYWORDS

Brand Image, cause related marketing, Consumer perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Cause related marketing took root during the early 1980s in the US, essentially as a marketing and promotional tool. However, gradually, the rising level of public awareness and education levels resulted in the adoption of cause related marketing by a wide variety of companies throughout the world, not only as a marketing tool, but also as a means for fulfilling societal responsibilities while simultaneously pursuing one's business goal. Cause marketing benefits the society and also provides a niche identity for the organization. Many empirical studies have established that effective cause marketing programs can enhance a company's reputation and brand image, thereby leading credibility to its marketing efforts. In the process, customers also gain access to a simple and easy way to contribute to social causes through their purchase decisions.

Despite the fact that corporate social responsibility has gained lot of importance among companies because of its long-term benefits little progress has been made in showing how cause related marketing works and improve the brand image.

Consequently the main aim of this review is to examine the how cause related marketing works and improve the brand image. Building from the literature some research questions/problems is inherent. Does cause related marketing has any impact on brand image? How customers perceive the cause related marketing campaigns? What are the advantages and hindrances of cause related marketing?

As such the literature review revolves around these issues. To build the theoretical frame work issues pertaining to cause related marketing, brand image will be reviewed.

The second part of review examines the impact of cause related marketing on brand image and customers perceptions towards cause related marketing. This is done by building on findings of research study "Brand benefits 2003/2004.

The third part of the review examines prior research on how cause related marketing works. But very limited research has been conducted in this respect. This could be due to complexity involved coupled with inconsistencies that may have arisen because different geographical areas. This review will generate & develop relevant research propositions. This will be justified by the conceptual & managerial implications that would radiate from the proposed study.

RELEVANT LITERATURE**CAUSE RELATED MARKETING**

Cause marketing or cause-related marketing refers to a type of marketing involving the cooperative efforts of a "for profit" business and a non-profit organization for mutual benefit. The term is sometimes used more broadly and generally to refer to any type of marketing effort for social and other charitable causes, including in-house marketing efforts by non-profit organizations. Cause marketing differs from corporate giving (philanthropy) as the latter generally involves a specific donation that is tax deductible, while cause marketing is a marketing relationship not necessarily based on a donation.

Cause related marketing are more than buzz words today. While the issue of obligation and commitment to society beyond business has risen to prominence among management circles as well as the wider public, it is still a nascent subject among stakeholders

Companies need to be responsible and accountable to other "stakeholders" in society such as their local communities, their employees, or nonprofit organizations. The term corporate social responsibility or cause related marketing is generally used to express the idea that companies have obligations that extend beyond shareholders.

In recent times, corporate social responsibility has gained lot of importance among companies because of its long-term benefits. Companies should be responsible to the society for their activities and owe to the environment in which they operate. But it takes more than supporting the most happening subject to get mileage. Identifying the right cause based on inner values and common goals can bring about the best results both internally with employees and also externally with stakeholders.

BRAND IMAGE

A brand is a name, sign, symbol, slogan or anything that is used to identify and distinguish a specific product, service, or business. A legally protected brand name is called a proprietary name. The complete bundle of thoughts a customer has in his or her mind about a company, product or service developed through communications and experience, including the distinguishing "human" characteristics of a brand personality (eg, warm and friendly, strong and reliable).

CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS

In philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information. In simple words customer perceptions means how customers views products/services or organizations.

CAUSE RELATED MARKETING AND BRAND IMAGE OF THE COMPANY

Effective cause programs can enhance a company's reputation and brand image and increase the credibility of its marketing effort while giving customers a convenient way to contribute to nonprofit organizations through their purchasing decisions. A brand's value is a function of the customer's perception, his/her attitude towards it, and the emotional value that the customer attaches to the brand. It's not only about whether the customers are able to relate, understand and finally appreciate the company's vision, but also whether the employees are able to pass on the company's culture to the customers. The essence here is that every product is keen to occupy the single bit of mind space of the customer. All competitors vie for the same space and all positioning platforms are already taken up.

Cause-related marketing has become a part of strategic marketing plans. Cause-related marketing is an activity where businesses and charities form a partnership with each other to market an image, product or service for mutual benefit. Embracing a cause does make good business sense. A business's genuine commitment to a worthy cause enhances a company's image and helps build brand loyalty.



Cause-related marketing is a strategic way to highlight a business's reputation within their target market. Cause-related marketing has the power to be a very positive differentiator from competitors and to realize many benefits. These benefits include increased visibility; increased customer loyalty; enhanced company image; positive media coverage; increased good will; and increased sales. Cause-related marketing also provides an emotional engagement of your client and other stakeholders.

If business or brand doesn't stand for a cause, consumers may turn to competitors. The number of consumers who say they would switch from one brand to another if the other brand were associated with a good cause has climbed to 87 percent, a dramatic increase in recent years, according to a Cone Cause Evolution Survey. Even niche markets, such as the nation's college students, now show a striking preference for brands they believe to be socially responsible. According to a newly released College Explorer study from Alloy Media, nearly 95 percent of students say they are less likely to ignore an ad that promotes a brand's partnership with a cause.

By choosing a cause organization is passionate about, cause-related marketing is emotionally fulfilling. It's a way to merge profit center with "passion center" and build a business that mirrors personal values, beliefs and integrity. If your cause also resonates with your target market, your activities will generate tremendous goodwill and media attention can be its side effect.

Corporate identity is referred to as the self-presentation of a company that consists of the cues offered by an organization through its behavior, communication and symbols. These signals are received by various groups, both internal and external, and are formed into perceptions of and attitudes toward the organization that, in essence a positive corporate image is the foundation for corporate success, which can be an incentive for the sale of products, recruitment of the best employees and attraction of investors, and can act as a competitive advantage.

CONSUMERS PERCEPTION TOWARDS CAUSE RELATED MARKETING

Consumers more likely to select brands offered by companies that engage in cause-related marketing (CRM). Somewhat surprisingly, little evidence exists that directly addresses this issue. Accordingly, the present examination investigates whether and when CRM efforts influence consumer choice. The results from several studies indicate that information regarding a company's support of social causes can affect choice. However, CRM's influence on choice is found to depend on the perceived motivation underlying the company's CRM efforts as well as whether consumers must trade off company sponsorship of causes for lower performance or higher price. The results also indicate that CRM cues affect choice primarily through compensatory strategies involving trade-offs rather than through no compensatory strategies. Implications of the current findings for existing theory are discussed along with directions for future research.

When consumers are presented with competing choices that appear equal in price, benefits and quality, one sure way to stand out from competition and gain customer loyalty is to support a charitable cause that your customers care about.

Now more than ever, customers are being bombarded with messages from competitors demanding their attention and motivating them to open their wallets. Consumer research has found that consumers are influenced positively towards purchasing products and services due to a company's alignment with a cause. Key findings from Business in the Community's 'Brand Benefits of cause related marketing' 2003/04 research study identified the following impacts that CRM has on brand affinity, brand equity and on actual consumer perception, loyalty and buying behavior:

- 98% of consumers in the UK and the USA were aware of at least one CRM programme, as compared with 88% in 2000,
- 83% of consumers had participated in at least one CRM programme, compared with 68% in 2000 and 73% in the USA,
- 7 out of 10 consumers who had participated in a Cause Related Marketing programme reported a positive impact on their behavior or perceptions,
- 48% of consumers showed an actual change in behavior, saying that they switched brands, increased usage or tried or enquired about new products,
- Three quarters (75%) of all participants in Cause Related Marketing programmes feel that it would also affect their future behavior and attitudes,
- 50% of consumers have said that they would feel more positively towards the company, brand, product or service in the future if they were involved in a Cause Related Marketing program, an increase from 31% in 2000.
- One out of every three consumers said they would be more likely to buy a product or service if they knew that a certain amount of the purchase price was being donated directly to a cause or campaign.
- Young people age 18-24 and women are most likely to buy a product or service connected to cause-related marketing.
- 40% of women versus 30% of men were more likely to buy a product or service if they knew that a certain amount of the purchase price was being donated directly to a cause or campaign.
- 46% of respondents age 18-24 versus 31% of respondents 45-64 were more likely to buy a product or service if they knew that a certain amount of the purchase price was being donated directly to a cause or campaign.

A UNIQUELY POWERFUL POSITION

Eighty percent of Edelman's respondents agreed that "corporations are in a uniquely powerful position to make a positive impact on good causes." Consumers will also reward a company that makes engagement with good causes an integral part of the way it does business: 72 percent in the Edelman polling said they're "more likely to purchase a product from a company that supports good causes and has fair prices than a company that simply offers deep discounts."

While willingness to pay a premium for cause-supporting products is less than universal, 34 percent said that, in the past six months, they've "purchased a brand that supports a good cause even if it was not the cheapest." That dovetails with the findings of recent polling by BBMG in which 81 percent of respondents said they bought more "socially and environmentally friendly products and services" in the past year than they'd done in the preceding year. The impulse to reward good corporate deeds seems more common than the inclination to punish bad ones. If a company failed to engage with worthy causes, 34 percent "would criticize it to others" and 36 percent would "refuse to buy its products/services."

ADVANTAGES OF CAUSE RELATED MARKETING

There are advantages for both nonprofit and business. For business, cause-related marketing proves that it is socially responsible, and provides great public awareness of its values and willingness to support good causes.

Cause marketing aims at helping both – the companies as well as the charities. The companies with deep pockets can act as sponsors for the charity events conducted by the non-profit organizations. In such a way, they will be able to make their products and brands more popular amongst the common people. The word of mouth in these cases will be so strong that the companies will see a phenomenal growth in their sales turnover and net profits. This can be the best way of targeting young customers who are the biggest consumers of most of the products introduced in the market

Cause marketing can provide positive and creative publicity for the companies. The print and electronic media attention, which they will receive, will be helpful for them in chalking out business expansion policies in the years to come. A company having collaboration with a charity shows that it is concerned about its corporate social responsibility.



BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES

- **Attracting and Retaining Customers:** Long-term efforts help attract and build long-term relationships with customers (Cone/Roper Executive Study, 2000). There are expectations for companies to go beyond their call of duty (Millennium Poll on CSR, 1999). Propensity of consumers to switch is far higher when they find that a company supports a social cause (Cone/Roper Cause-Related Marketing Trends Report 1999).
- **Market Differentiation:** CRM helps to create an alternative and distinctive approach to brand advertising.
- **Outreach to Niche Markets:** Partnering with nonprofit organizations can help a company to connect with specific demographic or geographic markets.
- **Motivated and Loyal Employees:** Companies can attract and retain quality employees (2000 Cone/Roper Executive Study).
- **Reinforced Company Mission:** CRM efforts can help communicate to employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders a company's commitment to CRM.

HOW CAUSE RELATED MARKETING WORKS?

Cause-related marketing is essentially collaboration between a business organization and a nonprofit to promote a specific cause and raise funds for it. There are several versions of cause-related marketing to suit the needs of different businesses and nonprofit organization some of the popular ways of cause related marketing are:

PRODUCT SALES

Some companies like to bring out various products that highlight the cause, and sell them through various marketing and retail channels. It could be T-Shirts, Caps, Badges, Bags, Watches, and other such products that have mass selling potential. People like to associate themselves with the cause and make their own statement by buying and using those products. The nonprofit organizations receive a portion of the sale proceeds generated through such sales campaign.

POINT OF PURCHASE SCHEMES

In this strategy, the non-profit partners with a renowned store chain to raise funds for a particular cause. The people who make purchases at the store are asked if they would like to add a certain percentage of their bill as a donation amount for the cause. The amount is kept low in order to generate maximum positive response from the people. The funds raised in this manner can add up to a substantive amount over a period of time.

LICENCING THE NON PROFIT BRAND

Well-known nonprofit organizations can leverage their own logo and brand power for raising funds. They may allow various gift and souvenir product manufacturers to use their logo or brand on their products. This promotes the nonprofit's cause, and generates funds for it at the same time. The manufacturer benefits from it because customers are willing to buy the product because of its association with the nonprofit.

COBRANDING

The nonprofit organization may engage in co-branded events and programs along with various corporate and other organizations and institutions. The ticket revenues and other funds generated from such events or programs contribute towards the causes promoted by the nonprofit organization.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Some corporate houses like to create marketing campaigns that promote a social cause in association with a non-profit organization. For instance, a pharmaceutical company may associate itself with a cancer research foundation to raise funds for the nonprofit. It helps to promote the goals of both the business entity and the nonprofit

STEPS HELPFUL IN CREATING CAUSE RELATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN

- 1) Choose a charity or good cause that you are interested in and is related to your company or the time of your campaign. For instance, if you are a restaurant you can conduct a food drive for the homeless. Or if you are a jewelry store you may still provide a food drive during Thanksgiving.
- 2) Contact the charity or good cause that you are going to collaborate with to make sure you have their permission and fulfill any requirements they may have.
- 3) Check with your local government to research any restrictions, laws or permits you may need to conduct your charity marketing. The city of Orlando had a restriction where you could not feed more than 25 homeless people. Thank goodness, the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.
- 4) As all marketing campaigns, prepare, prepare, prepare. Have a well planned out campaign and treat it as you do all you're marketing campaigns.
- 5) Contact the media. The media love Cause Related Marketing activities. What is better than a feel-good news story? With the right actions on your part, you can get lots of free media exposure.
- 6) Track and Analyze. Just like all marketing campaigns, you have to track and analyze your efforts. If it is not working out then you may need to stop. Giving is great but you need to have a thriving business to be able to afford to give. If you go out of business, you will not be helping anyone. Make sure it is a win-win situation.

7) Pat yourself on the back for being a good person. Doesn't it feel good to give? Here is a link to the The Cause Related Marketing Halo Awards. See there are people that appreciate your efforts to help the community. Now go and help your community. God knows it needs all the help it can get! Use all different ways to implement this type of marketing. Be creative, have fun and remember it is a good thing what you are doing.

BARRIERS IN CAUSE RELATED MARKETING

The statistics out there clearly show that cause marketing is marketing that works. But if it were that easy to do, everyone would be doing it. Even among the folks that are trying, some are not doing it well. So what goes wrong in the process? Here are a few of the biggies:

Lack of Commitment: Your Company gets geared up to launch the new cause marketing strategy, but inevitably, there are bumps in the road. Without a deeper commitment to the "cause" in the cause marketing equation, your business won't have the stamina to work to get it right. Make sure that your cause is one that your business is passionate about.

Lack of Direction: Once you've found your passion, you must have a clear plan regarding what you are actually doing. Are you giving a percentage of each sale, giving a flat donation, or doing something else? Make sure you know what your plan is before you get started. It's not enough to market that you are partnering with X charity and then not know what the framework is.

Lack of Clarity about Expectations: You'll want to have clear expectations and open communication with the non-profit, with your employees, and with yourself. If no one, including you knows what to expect, how will you know when you've gotten there or when you've failed? How will you know when you are getting off track and need to make corrections along the way?

Lack of Authenticity: If your company doesn't care about the cause it has chosen, if there is a perception that it doesn't care, or it is incongruous with your business for some reason, your campaign won't work. There's no getting around this one, and there are no tricks. If there's no heart, forget it.

CONCLUSION

CRM is gaining popularity because it not only reaches the customer's heart but also targets their brain. It helps to build a brand image and increases profitability in the long run. Innovations in these areas help in gaining leadership and association with customers. Today, consumers also prefer brands associated with good causes and charity and have a better perception towards the organization.

When cause marketing was launched over initially, it was viewed as a raw and new idea. Over the last decade, Cause Related Marketing (CRM) has played an increasingly vital role in the marketers and fundraisers toolkit. Whether the focus is the provision of school equipment, the relief of poverty, public health or international aid, the links between commercial brands and good causes continue to grow stronger. Cause Related Marketing is not philanthropy as it is based on recognition by businesses that link with charities or good causes can be mutually beneficial.

It is a way of addressing current social issues by providing resources and funding, while addressing business marketing objectives. Today, cause marketing is a global phenomenon that has developed into the new way for businesses and nonprofit causes to joint venture to achieve mutual benefits. Cause-marketing partners a nonprofit cause's brand and assets with the power of a corporation's brand, marketing, and people to achieve social and shareholder value while communicating values. Cause marketing has come a long way from its early days, as it has become increasingly advanced, and now includes everything from one-off cause sale promotional activities to wider, longer term marketing relationships to companies that make long-term commitments to causes that eventually become part of their corporate identity, culture, and corporate social responsibility. Today, cause marketing can include product sales, promotions, and program-driven partnerships between companies and nonprofit causes.

Cause marketing is increasing traditional corporate philanthropic support and becoming the new way corporations and nonprofits organizations are working together. Different from philanthropy or sponsorship, cause marketing combines the two—the community benefit associated with philanthropy and the business value tied to sponsorship—self-interest combined with un-selfish ambitions.

Cause marketing's time has come for many companies to continue to find more money and resources in their budgets for cause marketing. This segment of corporate giving and corporate social responsibility is a growing phenomenon and an important new marketing and corporate citizenship tool to create profitability and a new fundraising and marketing tool for nonprofits to generate revenue as well as achieving critical mission or goals.. Hence, organizations should concentrate on innovative ideas to connect with a good cause through their products and services. Along with brand image, the creation and retention of high equity for the brand is also assured. This can help as a tool for differentiating the company and its brand from those of its competitors. Care and concern for the society has already become a successful mantra for a company valuing corporate citizenry. Thus, corporate philanthropy and its social responsibility has now become the focal point for all the companies while designing their products and marketing campaigns. Public perception and opinion along with their expectations can be fundamental in designing communication and campaigns. Along term orientation of social causes and commitment towards such value addition as shown by Tata is essential for the campaign to maintain its trustworthiness and for garnering favorable plebiscite

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