

Impact of Cause-related Marketing on Purchase Behavior in India

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Abstract: An increasing number of companies are using cause-related marketing (CRM) as a communications tool. Though many research studies have explored the impact of such advertising, these studies have explored only a few aspects of purchase behavior. In light of the fragmented findings in the literature, this study was conducted in the city of Mumbai in India using experimental research design. A questionnaire covering purchase intention, brand loyalty, attitude towards brand, emotional connection, commitment to a brand and brand equity was administered to two groups, one group which was shown a CRM advertisement and the other one which was shown a non-CRM advertisement of the same brand. The data obtained, when analyzed using single-factor ANOVA, showed that CRM positively impacts purchase intention, brand loyalty, attitude towards the brand, emotional connection and brand equity. This finding indicates that CRM can drive increased revenues for companies and thus makes a significant contribution to the theory of CRM. Replicating this experimental study using other brands and in other geographies can help further validate this finding.

Keywords — *cause-related marketing, purchase intention, emotional connection, brand loyalty, brand attitude, brand equity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's marketplace offers great diversity in terms of products, services, and their prices, and the discerning customer has a wide number of options to choose from. This nature of the marketplace gives the customer a lot of power, hence putting the onus of differentiating their product or service on the brands that wish to attract more customers. Reference [1] defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as "a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society." Some of the common CSR initiatives deployed by companies include corporate philanthropy, cause-related marketing, minority support programs, socially responsible employment and manufacturing practices.

Due to this ever-increasing need to differentiate themselves and their product, many businesses are opting to use cause-related marketing (CRM) as a communications tool. Using this strategy, they can communicate their support for causes through their advertising, promotions or packaging [2].

An early, well-cited definition of cause-related marketing is "the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by the offer from the firm to contribute to a specified amount to a designated cause when consumer engage in revenue-providing exchanges" [3].

In India, some companies have started to use CRM as a vehicle to drive brand equity and purchase intention of consumers. Though many research studies have explored the impact of such advertising, these studies have explored only one or two aspects of consumer attitude. The present study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of CRM on several aspects such as attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty to the brand, brand equity and commitment to the brand. The study has made use of an experimental research design.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Literature Survey

Cause-related Marketing (CRM) is seen as a model of business support for charity [4]. It allows companies to benefit from their philanthropic investments by combining charitable contributions with innovative marketing techniques. There are three primary parties in a CRM exchange, namely the company, the cause, and the consumer. The firm offers to donate to the cause if the consumer buys a certain offering from the firm, hence increasing the perceived value of the exchange at no additional perceived cost for the consumer [5]-[6]. This offer is generally communicated via advertisements. Many studies have shown the importance of a good brand-cause fit for the success of a cause-related marketing campaign and the positive impact of a good fit on the effectiveness of

the campaign [7]-[8]. There also exists the importance of the fit between the organization and the nature of the cause in influencing corporate image, as well as the influence of a connection between the cause and consumer preferences on brand attitudes and brand choice [9].

There can be many potential benefits involved with CRM, as shown from previous studies. CRM can have a positive influence on consumer purchase intention and loyalty [10]. It can also help to create stronger relationships between firms and stakeholders [11]. Additionally, CRM helps in generating a brand image, greater brand awareness, better attitudes towards the brand and greater purchase intent [12].

Reference [2] states that it is commonly accepted that cause-related marketing is a communications tool for increasing customer loyalty and building a reputation. Along with abiding by policies, if CSR improves the social value of a brand which may further push customers towards the purchase, to study the effect of social value on the customer buying decision becomes very vital to its operations. By understanding consumer reactions to CSR, firms can develop CSR strategies that are optimal from not only a normative perspective but also a business one [13].

The theory of reasoned action can be used to explain consumer behavior, including for purchases from companies indulging in CRM efforts. It was found that CRM can directly influence consumer attitudes, including trust, which may convert to a positive intent [14]. The normative theories of choice such as utility theory and expected utility theory assume that people will use all relevant information available and make trade-offs between attributes in the process of selecting an alternative [15]-[16]. If consumers do make such trade-offs, research indicates that brands with positive CRM associations may be selected despite having competitors with better product-based dimensions. Hence, consumers may be more willing to accept lower performance and/or higher price for a brand due to its perceived motivation for CRM [17].

While literature talks about potential benefits attached with cause-related marketing, as far as pinpointing a link between CRM and purchase decision is concerned, a conflicting perspective is obtained after reviewing the available literature on the subject. Reference [18] investigated a complex process that explains why CSR is hardly ever of prime importance in consumer decision-making. Concurrently, according to [1], most people do not use CSR as a criterion for purchasing a product. This is mainly because they believe that it compromises the traditional criteria of price, quality, and convenience, and possess a low level of knowledge on the social responsibility records of companies. The expected change in a company's image because of CRM campaigns appears to depend a great deal upon how customers perceive the

reasons for a company's involvement in cause-related programs and the amount of help given to the cause through a company's involvement.

The influence of CSR on consumer product purchase intentions is more complex than its straightforward positive effect on their company evaluations [13] and there may be numerous factors that affect whether a firm's CSR activities translate into consumer purchases [19]. There is a social desirability bias amongst the consumers where they show concern and motivation to consider cause-related marketing, but when it comes to considering real consumption only a few consider it. Hence, there is a noticeable gap between the recorded intentions and actual behavior of the consumers [18].

Talking about using CRM as a part of the brand communication or advertising activities, there are campaigns that appeal to consumer rationality as well as campaigns that appeal to the emotions [20]. Consumers' advertisement perceptions can be significant drivers of ad attitudes, persuasion, and finally behavioral outcomes [21].

Literature shows that advertisements with a cause-related marketing (CRM) message, compared with a similar one without a CRM message, leads to a more favorable consumer attitude toward the company [22]. However, it is to be investigated whether CRM advertisements would impact purchase decisions.

B. Analysis of survey

Engaging and communicating social responsibility initiatives remains a dilemma for marketers, since it is still not clear whether CRM activities could bring an actual benefit in terms of consumer responses and purchase decisions. The above arguments demonstrate the importance of investigating the influence of CRM on purchase decisions of consumers, and to check whether companies can actually reap the reported benefits.

Advertising remains an indispensable tool used by companies to promote their CRM initiatives. In recent times, a lot of companies in India have been promoting social causes as a part of their advertisement campaigns. We have seen many advertisements with social messages from brands such as BIBA (Make A Change), Brookebond (Dwarfism Awareness) and Comfort (Chota Step, Badi Baat). It is important for companies to extensively investigate if such campaigns have any substantial impact, and to differentiate themselves from other brands in a crowded market. The above arguments prove the merit for conducting this research.

III. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

A. Attitude towards the brand

Brand attitude has been defined as a consumers' overall evaluation of a brand, which could either be positive or

negative and could last for a long time. It could be changed if the consumer is exposed to new experiences or reflections [23]. Reference [22] has indicated that an advertisement with a cause-related marketing message elicits a favorable attitude towards the company as compared to an ad without one. Reference [24] and [25] have also concluded that CRM affects consumer attitude towards the brand. Based on this support from the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: CRM advertisements improve attitude towards the brand.

B. Purchase Intention

It has been shown that CRM campaigns have an impact on consumer purchase intention, such that when consumers are exposed to an advertisement with a CRM message, they exhibit greater intention of buying the product displayed [24]. Similarly, [26] and [27] have found that CRM initiative affects purchase intention. These findings have led to the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: CRM advertisements have a positive impact on purchase intention.

C. Emotional connection

The emotional brand attachment has been shown to moderate the relationship between CRM and consumer behavioral response [28]. Following hypothesis is proposed to investigate the direct impact between these two constructs:

H3: CRM advertisements increase emotional connection with a brand.

D. Loyalty for a brand

It has been demonstrated that consumers perceive a significantly enhanced level of brand loyalty as a result of strategic cause-related marketing as long as the firm has a long-term commitment to this campaign and the campaign is related to a low involvement product [29]. This finding has led to the following hypothesis:

H4: CRM advertisements positively affect loyalty for a brand.

E. Brand equity

Building brand equity is one of the objectives of CRM-related communication, and consistent and believable contribution to a cause is shown to lead to an increase in brand equity [25],[30]. Based on this support from the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H5: CRM advertisements affect brand equity.

F. Commitment to a brand

Reference [31] has found that when consumers, who are highly involved with the social cause, identify with the

socially responsible brand, their brand commitment is strengthened. Based on this finding, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H6: CRM advertisements improve commitment to a brand

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present research study has used experimental research design to test the hypotheses. We used the CRM advertisements of Whisper, which is a brand of sanitary napkins in India by Procter and Gamble (P&G).

A. Data collection

A questionnaire was administered to two groups of the respondents, the experimental group and control group. The members of the control group were shown a neutral Whisper advertisement, and the experimental group members were shown a Whisper advertisement associated with P&G’s Shiksha campaign. Due to the nature of the product i.e. sanitary napkins, the respondents were selected to be all females. The convenience sampling method was used to have 50 females in the control group and 50 females in the experimental group. The respondents were asked to fill in the online questionnaire after showing the advertisement. The profile of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Profile

Demographic	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	18-25	78	78
	26-40	10	10
	41-60	12	12
Marital Status	Married	14	14
	Single	86	86
Education Level	Matriculation	1	1
	High School	4	4
	Graduation	68	68
	Post-graduation	25	25
Occupation	Doctoral	2	2
	Housewife	5	5
	Self-employed	10	10
	Service	8	8
	Student	76	76
	Teacher	1	1

The advertisements shown to the respondents were obtained from Youtube.com. The advertisement titled “New Whisper Ultra Clean XL+” was shown to members of the control group. The advertisement depicts a girl at a concert claiming that she does not need to give up her spot at the concert to go to the bathroom during her period. This is because she uses Whisper’s new offering, Whisper Ultra Clean XL+. The advertisement does not talk about the Shiksha campaign, rather, it talks about a newly introduced product of the Whisper brand.

The advertisement titled “Shiksha TVC” was shown to members of the experimental group. This advertisement

shows a couple at the supermarket, with the wife telling her husband that now “Vidya” can go to school without worry and can educate herself well. While speaking the above, she is shown picking up two prominent brands of P&G, Whisper and Ariel. On being asked by her husband about who “Vidya” is, she says that Vidya is one among the lakhs of children that have benefited via P&G’s Shiksha campaign. The ad concludes with Mr. Anupam Kher, the ambassador for Shiksha, urging viewers to buy P&G products, whose percentage of profits go towards the Shiksha campaign. Both advertisements were 30-second long television advertisements.

B. Instrument Development

The instrument contained items for six constructs viz. attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty of a brand, commitment to a brand, and brand equity. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 – Highly disagree ... 7 – Highly agree). The scale for the construct of attitude towards the brand was adapted from the scale used by [32], which reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for the scale. The scale for purchase intention was adapted from [33]. This scale was used in the English and Polish languages and was reported to have Cronbach's alpha of 0.9 and 0.89 respectively.

The scale for emotional connection has been adapted from [34]. In their research, the scale was administered in “pick any,” or “free choice,” format; participants were asked to check – that is, “pick” – only those descriptions that, in their mind, apply to the brand. Consumers had to pick them absolutely, not rate them relatively or by degree. However, in the present study, the scale has been modified to 7-point Likert type responses. Alphas for the scale have not been reported by the authors for this scale.

The scale for loyalty for a brand was adapted from [35], in which the composite reliability was reported to be 0.90. The scale for commitment to the brand was adapted from [36], which has reported the Cronbach's alpha of 0.62 for this scale. Finally, the scale for brand equity was adapted from [37], which has reported the scale to have a composite reliability of 0.93.

C. Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the scale used for assessing all six constructs was tested by finding the Cronbach's alpha using SPSS software. The results are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability analysis results

Sr. No.	Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Attitude Toward the Brand (Trustworthiness)	5	0.929
2	Purchase Intention for Product in the Ad	3	0.962
3	Emotional Connection	5	0.913

4	Loyalty (Brand)	3	0.849
5	Brand Equity	4	0.903
6	Commitment to the Brand	3	0.273

While Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.8 indicates the good reliability of the scale, the value below 0.5 is unacceptable. Since the scales for attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty and brand equity, all have a Cronbach’s Alpha value greater than 0.8, they were all accepted for further analysis. As the scale for commitment to the brand is found to have Cronbach's alpha of less than 0.5, the hypothesis numbered H7 was dropped from further analysis.

D. ANOVA Analysis

To test the remaining five core hypotheses after dropping commitment to the brand, a series of independent ANOVA tests were conducted for each variable to establish whether there was any significant difference between the responses for CRM and non-CRM advertisements. All ANOVA tests were evaluated at 95% confidence. Single factor ANOVA was performed using Microsoft Excel software for these constructs. The results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: ANOVA Analysis results

Sr. No.	Constructs	F-tabular	F-critical
1	Attitude Toward the Brand	1.301881	3.860199
2	Purchase Intention for Product in the Ad	0.497667	3.872853
3	Emotional Connection	2.583187	3.860199
4	Loyalty to the Brand	1.654868	3.872853
5	Brand Equity	0.026125	3.864929

For all the five constructs, F-critical is greater than F-tabular, hence there is a significant difference between the responses for a non-CRM advertisement as compared to that for a CRM advertisement. This means that CRM leads to more positive effects in viewers of the CRM advertisement as compared to the advertisement without CRM. Hence, it can be concluded that CRM affects attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty, and brand equity, thus providing support for hypotheses numbered H1 through H5.

V. DISCUSSION

For all five constructs, F-critical is greater than F-tabular, hence there is a significant difference between the responses for a non-CRM advertisement as compared to that for a CRM advertisement. Hence it can be concluded that CRM affects attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty, and brand equity, thus providing support for hypotheses numbered H1 through H5.

A. Interpretation of findings

CRM advertisements have found to have an impact on attitude towards the brand. Attitude towards the brand indicates the overall evaluation of the brand by the consumer. It could be positive or negative and could last for a long time. The finding from this study shows that CRM advertisements can create a positive evaluation of brand in consumer's mind. This finding is in line with the findings by [22],[24],[25] and confirms the positive role of CRM advertisements in building a positive attitude towards the brand.

CRM advertisements have found to affect the purchase intention of consumers. This is an important finding as purchase intention is said to lead to an actual purchase. There are conflicting observations about this relationship in the literature. While [24],[26],[27] have found support for the impact of CRM advertisements on purchase intention, [1],[19] have reported opposing results. As this study has been conducted in the Indian context, similar to the one by [26], one may conclude that there is support for this relationship in the Indian context.

Reference [28] has found the moderating role of emotional connection on the relationship between CRM and consumer behavioral response. This study explored the direct relationship between CRM advertisements and emotional connection and found support for the same. The finding indicates that CRM advertisements can increase the emotional connection of the consumer with the brand.

Reference [29] has found that consumers perceive a significantly enhanced level of brand loyalty as a result of strategic cause-related marketing. The study further confirms this finding. The CRM advertisements have found to have an impact on brand loyalty.

Finally, brand equity too has been found to be affected by the CRM advertisements. This is in line with [25],[30]. This finding indicates that companies planning to invest in building brand equity for their brands should consider spending on CRM advertisements.

B. Theoretical contribution

This study has made a theoretical contribution by examining and validating the impact of CRM advertisements on attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty to the brand, and brand equity. The findings from this study are important in assessing the benefits of cause-related marketing and its role in driving higher revenues for the companies.

C. Recommendations

In today's fiercely competitive market, cause-related marketing can be a powerful tool, can create a differentiation in the market and may give a competitive edge to the company. It is also important for companies to

create awareness about its CRM activities since the consumer response depends on their knowledge of such activities. Based on the findings from the study, we recommend that companies can invest in cause-related marketing to improve attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty to a brand, and brand equity. CRM advertisements can prove to be an important aspect of marketing communication. While CRM can be perceived to be a good-to-have tool in overall marketing strategy, findings from this study clearly indicate that it can also lead to increased revenues by affecting purchase intention. It is recommended that companies should consider using CRM advertisements since it can have a significant impact on revenues beyond just being a feel-good factor.

D. Limitations

The study suffers from certain limitations. The first limitation arises due to the fact that all respondents belonged to Mumbai city only. The females staying in Mumbai may not be a representative sample of the female population in India. Another limitation arises due to the non-probabilistic nature of sampling. Lastly, one cannot rule out the possibility of the biased perception of Whisper brand among the minds of respondents due to their earlier encounters with this well-known brand. In particular, it is very much possible that some of the members of the control group might have seen the CSR advertisement before the experiment and would have formed the brand perception accordingly.

E. Scope for further research

Further research is needed to explore the moderating role of demographic variables such as age, income, and employment status. Selection of another brand would further help investigate the moderating effect of gender. A bigger and more representative sample can help further validate the findings of future research studies. Extensive studies involving more than one brands can also help.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has used experimental research design to investigate the impact of CRM advertisements on attitude towards the brand, purchase intention, emotional connection, loyalty, and brand equity. The data analysis using ANOVA supported the hypotheses that CRM advertisements leads to positive effects on purchase behavior as compared to the advertisement without CRM. This finding, while contributing to the theory of CRM, also provides an insight that CRM advertisements can indeed drive purchase intention and thereby higher revenues.

APPENDIX

Table 4 below shows the original sources from where the

scales used in this study were adapted.

Table 4: Sources for scales

No.	Construct (original source)	Items
1	Attitude Toward the Brand (Erdem & Swait, 2004)	1. Whisper delivers what it promises. 2. Whisper’s product claims are believable. 3. Over time, my experiences with Whisper have led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less. 4. Whisper has a name you can trust. 5. Whisper doesn’t pretend to be something it isn’t.
2	Purchase Intention Toward the Product in the Ad (Lepkowska-White, Brashear & Weinberger, 2003).	1. If I were looking for sanitary napkins my likelihood of purchasing a Whisper product would be high. 2. If I were to buy sanitary napkins, the probability that I would consider buying a Whisper product would be high. 3. If had to buy sanitary napkins, my willingness to buy a Whisper product would be high.
3	Emotional Connection (Rossiter & Bellman, 2012)	1. I trust Whisper. 2. I regard Whisper as ‘my’ brand. 3. I use Whisper because it fits my ‘self-image’. 4. Whisper is like a ‘companion’ to me. 5. I would say that I feel deep affection, like ‘love,’ for Whisper and would be really upset if I couldn’t have it.
4	Loyalty towards a brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005)	1. I intend to buy Whisper in the near future. 2. I would actively search for Whisper in order to buy it. 3. I intend to buy other products of Whisper.
5	Commitment to the Brand (Ahluwalia, 2000)	1. If Whisper was not available at the store, it would make little difference to me if I had to choose another brand. 2. I consider myself to be highly loyal to Whisper. 3. When another brand is on sale, I will generally purchase it rather than Whisper.
6	Brand Equity (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000)	1. It makes sense to buy Whisper instead of any other brand, even if they are the same. 2. Even if another brand has the same features as Whisper, I would prefer to buy Whisper. 3. If there is another brand as good as Whisper, I prefer to buy Whisper. 4. If another brand is not different from Whisper in any way, it seems smarter to purchase Whisper.

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