

Behavioural intentions for cause-related marketing: Role of gender and attitude towards helping others

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Abstract

Cause-related marketing has been the choice of marketers among all MARCOM elements across all the industries. Marketers are increasingly allocated higher spending on this form of promotion and therefore return on marketing investment should not be ignored. For that, it is required to understand how cause-related impacts the formations of attitudes and purchase intention specifically among males and females. It also seeks to understand how this stated relationship varies if consumers take cares of others. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship among attitude towards helping others, attitude towards brand/product, attitude towards company and purchase intention among male and female. Conveniently selected 212 respondents were contacted and structured questionnaire was presented to them with an advertisement having cause-related marketing offer. Results showed that females have higher purchase intention for cause endorsed products than males. Therefore, marketers take caution while developing their interventions targeting these segments.

Key words:

Cause-related marketing, attitude, purchase intention, attitude towards helping others, regression, gender



Introduction

In developing countries, consumers' consumption pattern has been changed due to their attachment to social aspects of human life. It is well accepted by companies that consumers really favors those companies which are actively involved in social issues (Sheikh and Zee, 2011). The pressure of attracting more consumers forced companies to focus on corporate responsibility in a broad way. In a recent times,

corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been main stream of focus for each corporate to cope up the need of ever changing scenario of society. A company might need to explain what they stand for, how corporate responsibility is carried out, and how people benefit from such actions. Thus, a common vehicle to communicate the CrM effort of a firm is the financial or non- financial support of a specific cause. Supporting a specific cause for promotional purposes or cause-related marketing (CrM) is, nowadays, widely practiced (Brink et al., 2006).

As a part of CSR, many corporate have started to associate society by the way of charitable donation, community participation and 'Cause-related marketing (CrM)'. Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) has evolved as an area of social responsibility that allows firms to link their philanthropic activities with the strategic marketing goals of the firm. It has been argued that CrM deals with corporate commitment to donate certain amount to social cause if consumer purchase particular product (Nan and Heo, 2007). Globally accepted definition of CrM stated by Varadarajan and Menon (1988, pp. 60–61) 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 and satisfy organizational and individual objectives”.

In past decades, CrM has been used widely by companies as a popular promotional tool to generate sales and gather fund for social cause. With growing consumer association with social cause forced corporate to communicate effectively the effort of donate for cause. Successful delivery of cause message can act as linkage between product sales to the support of a charity to create and maintain favorable brand images (Brønn and Vrioni, 2001) and by doing so company can get advantage of favorability among society. There are chances that Cause-related marketing enables consumers to express their concerns about environmental and social issues such as environmental conservation, hunger, poverty, education for poor children and support for disabled people through their purchases (Nan and Heo, 2007).

Consumers feel better and hold positive feeling at the time of buying product with cause which reflects feeling of helping others. Helping others is an impulse, recognized worldwide (Benapudi et al., 1996). Generally people who are self-confident tend to have favorable attitude towards helping others and they products tied to social cause as a part of helping others (Youn and Kim, 2008). Even research suggests that there is an influence of CrM on favorable purchase intention of brand (Deshpande and Hitchon, 2002). Presumably, CRM should be more effective than ordinary marketing in terms of creating positive brand attitudes and purchase intentions. The success of CRM reflects, at least in part, consumer favorable response to a company's support of a cause. If a cause is personally relevant to a consumer, it becomes more important to the consumer and this may drive consumer behavior through increased elaboration about the offer to a determination about their ultimate attitude about the product and firm and their behavioral intentions.

Practitioners and researchers have tried to concentrate demographic variables in explaining consumer advocacy for cause-related marketing (Cui, Trent, Sullivan, and Matiru, 2003; Cone, Feldman and DaSilva, 2003). In demographics, increasing need to investigate link between the influences of gender on consumer response to CrM made researchers think about address the issue in a broad manner (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010; Ross et al., 1991). It is argued that females are more socially involved and therefore aptly connect with CrM campaign compared to males and expected to react unfavorably to the company not associated with cause through negative preference (Sheikh and Zee, 2011).

Majority work related to CrM campaign has been acted as a common strategic tool in western countries (Samu and Wymer, 2009) but it is void in Asian context. Even there is an evidence of CrM campaign with respect to Asia (Shabbir, et al., 2009; Subrahmanyam, 2004), still need to investigate how CrM impacts consumers decision making extensively in India.

The present study aims to investigate the relationship of attitude towards helping others, attitude towards CrM offer, attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the ad and company with purchase intention across gender. The next section of the study consists related literature on interplay among attitude towards brand, a company, a cause related marketing offer, advertisement, attitude towards helping others and purchase intention across gender, followed by research methodology. Next, regressions were performed for male and female for purchase intention, followed by implications and limitations of the study.

Literature Review

Scholars (Moosmaver and Fuljahn, 2010; Green and Peloza, 2011) showed that buying decisions of consumers are influenced positively by cause-related marketing which improve the consumers' perception towards company. Furthermore, Webb and Mohr (1998) outlined that companies supporting cause are responded favorably by consumers than companies not supporting such philanthropic activities. When exposed to cause related marketing ads, consumers responded differently and thus better understanding of factors that drive different responsiveness among consumers was very much required.

Consumer attitudes

Previous literature supported that CrM results in positive consumer attitude toward the company/firm (Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992; Berger, Cunningham, and Kozinets 1996), and its products (Berger, Cunningham, and Kozinets 1996). Consumer attitudes are more favorable toward companies and their brands that partner with causes (Nan and Heo 2007; Ross et al., 1992; Webb and Mohr, 1998). However, there was mix of results indicating little impact of CrM on decision making (Smith and Stodghill, 1994) demanding focused research on understanding how CrM influence consumer attitudes and behaviours.

Literature supports a positive relationship between attitudes toward an advertisement and attitudes toward a brand (Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie et al., 1986; Mehta and Purvis, 1995). Attitude towards a brand referred as the overall evaluation of the brand (Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Folse et al. 2010). Moreover, CrM messages in the form of advertisement when presented to the consumers have been processed in order to gain the satisfactory level of understanding (Steenbergen and Lodge, 1998), and elaboration that affects consumers' evaluation towards the advertisement. Consumer viewed positively the advertisements of the companies supporting cause actively which foster their attitudes towards the ad positively.

Research demonstrated that consumers when finds companies advertisements associated with popular cause, consumers liked the advertisement which were extended to favourable attitude towards a brand (Till and Nowak, 2000) and a company too. Consumers tend to believe that companies sponsoring CrM are socially responsible (Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992) and have positive attitude towards a company. Kim and Kim (2001) investigated that CrM impacts attitude towards a brand and a company. Indeed consumers who have social orientation and favourable emotions towards any cause are supporting cause related marketing and therefore attitude towards cause related marketing offer is positively held among them.

Understanding the reasoning behind consumers' attitudes toward cause-related marketing would be insightful for designing effective programs that shape, reinforce and alter those attitudes (Murry, Lastovicka, and Austin, 1997). Furthermore, consumers who have sense of connectedness with the social cause are more inclined towards supporting companies practicing CrM due to their reasoning of one's sense of self (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig 2004). Therefore, consumers normally engaged in pro-social behaviours to showcase their attitudes by protecting their ego (Basil and Weber, 2006). This state of attitude does form a value expressing ego which is manifested through the sense of helping others. The attitude towards helping others is the "extent to which consumers themselves engage in philanthropic activities can positively influence their perceptions of CrM (Chang, 2008).

Linking attitude and purchase intention

Previous literature tested that attitude was positively related to purchase intention and CrM unarguably increased purchase intentions (Hajjat, 2003). In fact, Smith and Alcorn (1991) proved that company's CrM activities influence consumer willingness to purchase a product endorsing CrM. The past cause related marketing research suggests that presence of such promotions influences consumer purchase intentions (Smith and Alcorn, 1991; Webb and Mohr, 1998; Berger *et al.*, 1999; Chaney and Dolli, 2001; Han and Ryu, 2003). Based on this discussion, following hypotheses were developed:

H₁: attitude towards helping others is positively related to consumer purchase intention

H₂: attitude towards CrM offer is positively related to consumer purchase intention.

H₃: attitude towards company is positively related to consumer purchase intention.

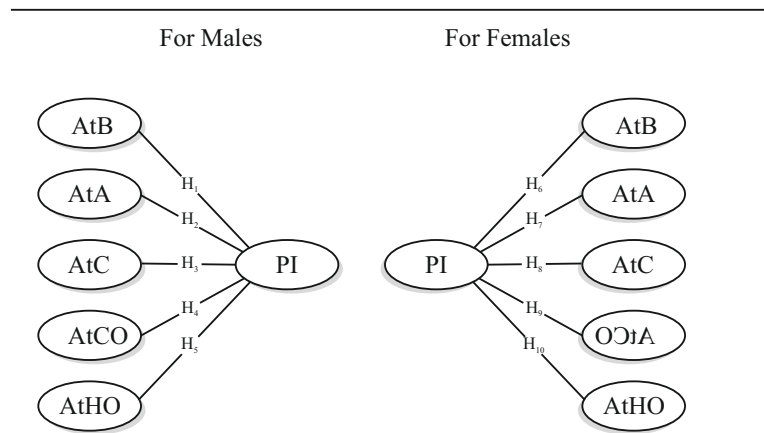
H₄: attitude towards an ad is positively related to consumer purchase intention.

H₅: attitude towards the brand is positively related to consumer purchase intention.

Gender differences

The influence of gender on consumer response to CRM has been discussed in the past literature (Barnes, 1992; Ross *et al.*, 1992; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010). A difference in responses to CrM strategies by gender has been noted in previous research. Many scholars showed that women are more positive towards CrM messages than men (Ross *et al.*, 1992; Berger *et al.*, 1999) due to their nurturing personalities or a need to assuage guilt (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998). Attitudes formed could differ by gender and therefore as reported women have more positive attitude towards company and brand supporting CrM than men.

Figure 1: conceptual model for purchase intention for cause related marketing



Note: AtB-attitude towards brand; AtA-attitude towards an ad; AtC-attitude towards company; AtCO- attitude towards cause related marketing offer; AtHO- attitude towards helping others; PI-Purchase intention

The difference in response toward CrM is not biologically rooted but is attributed to the gender roles. For instance, Bar-Tal(1976) noted that perceived sex roles determine why one individual helps the other individual. Past studies on sex roles suggest that females are more favorable toward self and other oriented appeals compared to males' (Meyers- Levy, 1988). In addition, it was investigated that women participate more in CrM than men (Ross, 1992; Moosmayer and Fuljahn, 2010) and have more favourable attitude

towards company than men. Based on the theories mentioned and review of relevant literature the following hypothesis is therefore suggested: H_6 : Female as compared to male will have higher purchase intention for a company endorsing CrM

Based on this aforementioned discussion, following conceptual model (figure I) is used:

Overview

This present study test the effectiveness of cause related marketing on consumer attitude and their purchase intentions and also investigate the role of gender and attitude towards helping other as moderators in cause related marketing context. Sample was taken from UG and PG students of universities of Ahmedabad and Mehsana, Gujarat (considering high level of diversity of students). Use of such participants has been studied in prior CrM research (Dean, 2004; Grau and Folse, 2007). 212 participants were selected from a convenience sample as found consistent in previous CrM research (Cheron et al., 2012). Moreover, data collection was done during March-May 2013. Of participants, approximately 55.7% were male and 44.3% were female indicating balanced sample. Majority of the participants (n=163, 76.9%) fall into age category of 21-30 years, 17.0% (n=36) of the participants in the age group of 31-40 years and 5.7% (n=12) in the age group of 40+. Moreover, 67.0% of participants (n=142) were graduates and 23.1% were post graduates (n=49).

Stimuli

An extensive review of previous literature was carried out to select a brand practicing cause related marketing. During the period of study, P&G was the company practicing CrM and thus selected for this study. Participants were exposed to the advertisement containing the CrM offer.

Figure I: stimulus for participants



The stimuli were in the form of brand name, the product portfolio and the ad itself in the questionnaire (figure I). The ad contains the message “buy any P&G product to help build schools” of “Shiksha” campaign supported by various brands of P&G (e.g. Olay, Pantene, Oral-B, Head & Shoulder, Pampers, Whisper, Gillete).

Measures

Questionnaires was divided in two sections: first, demographics and second, study variables divided in three categories: a) independent variables (e.g. consumer attitude towards the ad, attitude towards brand, attitude towards company attitude towards CRM offer and attitude towards helping others) dependent variables (e.g. purchase intention) and c) moderating variables (e.g. gender). These measures were taken from previous studies and minor modifications were made such as P&G was added in each item of attitude towards company/brand and negative statements were reversed. Moreover, one item was deleted in the

scale of attitude towards helping others. All the scales meet satisfactory reliabilities ranging from 0.689 to 0.851, well above than the threshold of 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978). Coefficient alpha was used to establish internal consistency of the items on the scale. Table I refers to all constructs, source, specific items and Cronbach alpha for reliability.

Table 1: Scale measures and reliability statistics

Variable	Specification	Items	Adapted from study	Cronbach Alpha
Attitude towards brand	Five-item, seven point semantic differential scale	unpleasant/pleasant (R), unappealing/appealing (R), bad/good (R), unfavorable/favorable (R), not likeable/likeable (R)	Spears and Singh (2004), Myers and Kwon (2013)	0.851
Attitude towards Company	Three-item, seven point semantic differential scale	good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, satisfactory/unsatisfactory	(MacKenzie and Lutz, 1986). And Barbara A. Lafferty (2007)	0.752
Attitudes toward the CRM offer/Message	Eight-item, seven point semantic differential scale	favorable/unfavorable, 2.bad/good, harmful/beneficial, attractive/unattractive, poor/excellent, disadvantageous/advantageous* worthless/ valuable* I liked the offer/I didn't like the offer	Lichtenstein and Bearden (1989) And Carrie La Ferle* , Gayatri Kuber , Steven M. Edwards (2011)	0.839
Attitude towards the ad	Five-item, seven point semantic differential scale	bad/good (R), unconvincing/convincing R), unappealing/appealing (R), not likeable/likeable (R), unfavorable/favorable (R)	Holbrook and Batra (1987), Krishnamurthy and Sujana (1999), Ferle et al. (2013)	0.850
Purchase Intention	Three-item, five point likert type scale	I will try the brand. I will consider purchasing the brand next time. It is very likely that I will buy the brands.	Putrevu and Lord (1994), Lii and Lee (2012)	0.780
Attitude towards helping others	Four-item, five point likert type scale	People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate. Helping troubled people with their problems is very important to me. People should be more charitable toward others in society. People in need should receive support from others.	Webb, Green, and Brashear (2000), Koschate-Fischer, Stefan and Hoyer (2012)	0.689

Note: *One statement is deleted from the original scale due to unsatisfactory item to total correlation.

Hypotheses tests

In accordance with study's objectives, regression is an appropriate statistical analysis considering the fact that purchase intention (dependent variable) was measured on metric scale and all attitudes were also

measured on metric scale. Two separate multiple regressions conducted for both males and females and considering each as moderating variables. In order to identify significant predictors of purchase intentions for the company supporting CrM among males, simultaneous multiple regression was conducted. The model containing all five dimensions was significant, $R^2 = 0.192$, $p < 0.05$. Among these five dimensions, the results suggest that attitude towards brand ($p=0.165$) and attitude towards advertisement ($p=0.613$) found to be non-significant and suggest that do not have much impact on purchase intention. Even another two variables named attitude towards company ($p=0.925$) and attitude towards CrM ($p=0.679$) also found to be non-significant.

Table 2: Regression analysis for purchase intention among males

Variables	B	t	Sig.	VIF
Attitude towards brand	0.104	1.399	0.165	1.553
Attitude towards advertisement	0.041	0.508	0.613	1.133
Attitude towards company	0.006	0.094	0.925	3.180
Attitude towards CrM	0.029	0.415	0.679	3.204
Attitude towards helping others	0.355	4.328	.000**	1.738

Notes: $F=5.280^{**}$; $dfs=5, 116$; $R^2=0.192$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Interestingly, attitude towards helping others ($p=0.000$) found to be significant predictors of purchase intentions for the company supporting CrM among males (thus, H_5 is supported). No issues of multicollinearity were evident as all displayed VIF (variance inflation factor) statistics were not more than 10 (Myer, 1990). No variables indicated the problem of multicollinearity (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). (Refer Table 2).

Table 3: Regression analysis for purchase intention among females

Variables	B	t	Sig.	VIF
Attitude towards brand	0.273	2.404	0.018*	2.178
Attitude towards advertisement	0.200	1.604	0.112	1.355
Attitude towards company	0.061	0.681	0.498	3.022
Attitude towards CrM	0.255	2.672	0.009**	3.300
Attitude towards helping others	0.494	5.224	0.000**	2.165

Notes: $F=11.227^{**}$; $dfs=5, 93$; $R^2=0.389$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

The model for females, purchase intention is made up of five independent variables and was found to be significant ($F = 11.227$, $p < 0.05$). The purchase intention for the company supporting CrM was explained up to 38.9 per cent of variance. The findings from the regression analysis suggested that the model provides sufficient support for predicted relationships. Out of five variables, three variables namely attitude towards brand ($p=0.018$), attitude towards CrM ($p=0.009$) and attitude towards helping others ($p=0.000$) found to be significant predictors of purchase intention among females (thus, H_6 , H_9 and H_{10} is supported respectively).

The predictability of each three variables is in following order: attitude towards helping others ($\beta=0.494$), attitude towards brand ($\beta=0.273$), attitude towards CrM ($\beta=0.255$). On the other hand, variables like attitude towards advertisement ($p=0.112$) and attitude towards company ($p=0.498$) were found to be insignificant predictors of purchase intention for the company supporting CrM among females. No issues of multicollinearity were evident as all displayed VIF (variance inflation factor) statistics were not more than 10 (Myer, 1990). No variables indicated the problem of multicollinearity (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). (Refer Table II).

Discussion and Implications of the Study

The study aimed to understand the formation of purchase intention and its relationship with attitude across gender. More specifically, study seek to understand the impact of attitude towards helping others on attitude and purchase intentions across gender to offer a new marketing tactic for assessing female and male consumers. Among males, the purchase intention model was found to be significant. Findings from multiple regressions indicated that positive relationship between purchase intention and attitude towards helping others among male consumers. It can be viewed to the fact that male consumers perceive helping others as a social cause to satisfy their inner pro-social feelings.

Further results indicated non-significant relationship between rest of four variables namely attitude towards brand, attitude towards advertisement, attitude towards company and attitude towards helping others among male consumers. A possible explanation for this result could be the nature of the respondents that can be very rational in terms of brand, advertisement and CrM itself. Study suggests that males are not receptive to their attitude towards company at all. The possible explanation could be P&G being a FMCG brand whose purchase decisions are strongly decided by females. This implies that companies need to redesign their marketing strategy for CrM especially keeping males on a center point. However it can be said that men are likely to be as receptive to that cause when explained in terms of helping others (Ross et al., 1992). So companies should concentrate helping others as important criteria while targeting males.

Considering purchase intentions among females, model found to be significant. It is interesting to note that relationship between attitude towards brand and purchase intention are having positive relationship. This notion suggest that females are more choosy in terms of brands and if is associated with cause, it can result into positive purchase intention towards brand. Result also demonstrates that attitude towards CrM and attitude towards helping others were found to be significant in explaining purchase intention for the company supporting CrM among females. So when targeting female with previous participation in philanthropic activities, a company engaging in a CrM program should be of attitude towards brand, attitude towards CrM and attitude towards helping others. In sum, the predictability of each three significant variables is in following order: attitude towards helping others ($\beta=0.494$), attitude towards brand ($\beta=0.273$), attitude towards CrM ($\beta=0.255$).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that neither attitude towards company nor attitude towards campaign has significant influences on consumer purchase intentions. The results are contradictory from the previous research (Cheron et al., 2012) which suggested positive relationship between females' purchase intention and CrM campaign. Generally females are not more concern about company and campaign so the company should focus more on campaign of helping others with concentration to brand with cause. On the other side as in terms of purchase intention among females, company should develop interesting advertisement so that the attitude towards advertisement can be improved.

For business marketers, study supported an idea to the literature that there is a potential segment of consumers that behaviourally responses to CrM. In order to successfully design CrM campaigns, managers need to have a good knowledge of inner side of their potential customers. Companies may wish to examine further the qualitative ways in which females assess the emotional relevance of a given cause,

which may influence purchase decisions (Broderick et al., 2003). Companies should prepare such a CrM marketing campaign in which emotional notion can be touched. CrM programs targeting women with positive attitude towards CrM advertisement with social cause for such products as female accessories, cosmetics and clothing might more worthwhile for companies.

Limitations and Future Scope of the Study

The study has following limitations: First, it should be noted that the factor of familiarity or contact with the brands' was not considered in this study. Therefore, it might have had an impact on customers' attitudes toward the company and response rate. Second, the present sample dominated by college students, a particularly well-educated subset of consumers and not the full range of this consumer cohort. Thus the possibility exists that the participants' interest in and responses to social causes may be informed by exposure to a specific campus culture, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings. Third, the study utilize convenience sample and therefore generalization of the findings to other populations is difficult. Forth, inconsistent with most experimental advertising research, these studies used high familiar brands so that respondents had high previous experience or biases that would influence the effects of manipulated

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