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Cause attributes in the formation of perception towards cause related Marketing

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Abstract---Today's business is growing up in a lightning speed. To cope up with that speed and not be out of the archive business are finding ways to build their empire in the minds of consumers. The roadmap to one such action leads the marketing managers to study the consumer perception. Companies are trying to be socially responsible by supporting social causes. The alignment between a brand and cause for the profit and societal benefits of both the parties is called the Cause Related Marketing. This study is an attempt to identify the role of cause attributes such as cause proximity, Cause Familiarity, Cause type and Company Cause Fit in the formation of perception towards Cause Related Marketing. This study also surveyed the most preferred cause by the respondents which they expect to be addressed importantly. To accomplish these, the researcher generated primary data using questionnaire as the research instrument. The questionnaires were administered to students of various colleges in Puducherry. Chi-square test was used to test the hypothesis. Percentage analysis and Garrett ranking were also carried out. After using these analyses with data generated, it was discovered that age, education qualification and monthly income of the respondents are significantly related to cause attributes in forming the perception towards CRM. To support poor children's education is the most preferred cause by the respondents.

Keywords---company-cause fit, cause familiarity, cause proximity, cause related marketing, cause type perception.

Introduction

“Consumer perception refers to the process by which a customer selects, organizes, and interprets information/stimuli inputs to create a meaningful picture of the brand, product, service or organization.” Kotler(1997). The difficulties with perception and related studies is that two individuals may be subject to the same stimuli under apparently the same conditions, but how they recognize, select, organize and interpret them is a highly individual process based on each person's own needs, values, expectations and the like (Schiffman et al, 1991). Major element of successful marketing is effective communication of the characteristics of a product or services to the customers. Such communication will result in a promising perception of the product by the target audience.

The customers' expectations have changed that they wait for companies from whom they purchase products / service to be more socially responsible rather than just being customer centered. Today's customers are becoming increasingly concerned over environmental and social issue. One of the ways these companies trying to present themselves as a socially responsible company is Cause Related Marketing hereinafter referred to as CRM. CRM addresses Social issues through the provision of funding for the cause and achieves marketing objectives of the firm supporting the cause. CRM has received the interest of many companies implies that it has gained an ever-growing popularity among Marketers. Over the last decade, the number of organizations embracing and implementing CRM in India has been increasing.

Barone et al (2007) suggest that retailers desiring a greater impact of cause-related marketing activities should first assess consumer perceptions of both the company and the candidate charities for engaging in cause-related marketing. Youn and Kim, (2008) Young consumers show more positive attitudes toward CRM than older ones. Laaksonen (1994) states that a Consumer's familiarity with the cause enhances the effectiveness of Cause Related Marketing campaigns. Ross et al. (2011) revealed that people are more likely to support causes which have a local or regional focus and fewer respondents were willing to provide support for causes with national or international scope. Joelle et al(2012) found that consumer identification with a cause to be greater when the events are sudden, dramatic, and easily imaginable. Samu and Wymer (2009) suggest that the company-cause fit improves the credibility of a company cause association, and it influences customer's attitude and purchasing likelihood. Francisca et al (2008) Corporations should select charities or good causes that are related to their business activities and with which their consumers can work. Higher affinity between business and non-profits will generate better results for both.

Methodology

This section elaborates the details relating to the methods employed by the researcher to carry out the research.

Research gap

The literature review reveals that only a handful of literatures are available regarding Cause Related Marketing from the Indian perspective. Even the available studies shows that they are carried out concentrating on particular element of Cause Related Marketing. Very few studies are carried out focusing on Cause attributes as well as on young respondents.

Scope of the study

The present study intends to understand the role of cause attributes such as cause proximity, cause type, cause familiarity and company cause fit. The study has put forward the cause attributes in order to have a deeper understanding. This study also focuses on finding the causes preferred by the consumers.

Research objectives

- To study the respondents perceptions towards CRM with regard to Cause Familiarity, Cause Proximity, Cause Type and Company Cause Fit
- To identify whether any relationship exists between the consumers' demographic variables (gender, age, education, income, area) and cause attributes (Cause Familiarity, Cause Proximity, Cause Type and Company Cause Fit)
- To find out which of the causes are perceived as most important by the respondents.

Hypothesis

Research Objective 2 is to study the relationship between consumers' demographic variables and various cause attributes, based on that the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₀₁: There is no association between respondent's demographic variables and cause attributes

Null Hypothesis H₀₁ is further split into following sub-hypotheses:

- H_{01a}: Cause attributes of CRM is not significantly associated with respondents' age.
- H_{01b}: Cause attributes of CRM is not significantly associated with respondents' gender.
- H_{01c}: Cause attributes of CRM is not significantly associated with respondents' education qualification.
- H_{01d}: Cause attributes of CRM is not significantly associated with respondents' monthly income.
- H_{01e}: Cause attributes of CRM is not significantly associated with respondents' area.

Sampling and data collection

The population of the study is unknown so the researcher has adopted Non-Probability Sampling method using Purposive Sampling. Sample size between 30 and 500 at 5% confidence level is generally sufficient for social science research (Altunışık et al., 2004, s. 125). Hence 500 questionnaires were distributed among student respondents of various colleges in Puducherry, in which 423 questionnaires were received and 25 questionnaires were found to be half-finished. Finally 398 questionnaires were valid and used in the analysis. To collect primary data from the respondents the researcher employed survey method. To record the responses in a standardized manner structured questionnaire was used.

Measurements and Scales used

The scales for measuring the dimensions in the study were adapted from various studies. The respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”

Measures	Source
Cause Proximity	Ross, J. K., Patterson, L. T., & Stutts, M. A. (1992)
Cause Type	Hou, J., Du, L., and Li, J., (2008)
Cause Familiarity	Simonin, B. L., & Ruth, J. A. (1998).
Company Cause Fit	Stacy Landreth Grau and Judith Anne Garretson Folse(2007)

Statistical tools applied for analysis

- Simple Percentage Analysis is used to distinguish the characteristic features of sample unit.
- Chi-square test is used to determine the relationship between Demographic characteristics and various cause attributes.
- Garrett Ranking Technique is used to find out the most preferred cause by the respondents.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

		Frequen cy	Percenta ge
Age	<18	13	3.3
	18-19	83	20.9
	20-21	205	51.5
	22-23	81	20.4
	>23	16	4.0
	Total	398	100.0
Gend er	Male	156	39.2
	Femal	242	60.8

	e		
	Total	398	100.0
Edu Qual	UG	160	40.2
	PG	218	54.8
	RS	20	5.0
	Total	398	100.0

Table 2
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

		Frequen cy	Percenta ge
Monthl y Income	<10,000	190	47.7
	11,000- 20,000	97	24.4
	21,000- 30,000	51	12.8
	31,000- 40,000	30	7.5
	>40,000	30	7.5
	Total	398	100.0
Area	Urban	64	16.1
	Semi Urban	123	30.9
	Rural	211	53.0
	Total	398	100.0

Inferences

From the above table majority of the respondents falls between the age group of 20-21years (i.e. 51.5%). Female respondents are high in number with 60.8%. Majority of the respondents are PG students (i.e. 54.8%). Most of the respondent's families monthly income is <10,000 (i.e. 47.7%). Rural students are high among the respondents (i.e. 53%).

Table 3
Chi Square Analysis: Cause Attributes * Demographic Profile

DEMOGR APHIC	Age		Gender		Education Qualificatio n		Area		Monthly Income	
CAUSE ATTRIBUT ES	Pear son Chi- Squa re valu e	Asy mp. Sig. (2- side d)	Pear son Chi- Squa re valu e	Asy mp. Sig. (2- side d)	Pear son Chi- Squa re valu e	Asy mp. Sig. (2- side d)	Pear son Chi- Squa re valu e	Asy mp. Sig. (2- side d)	Pear son Chi- Squa re valu e	Asy mp. Sig. (2- side d)
Cause Proximity										
I will support a	28.5 23 ^a	.027	7.63 0 ^a	.106	11.7 14 ^a	.034	26.8 21 ^a	.044	10.6 78 ^a	.021

local cause.										
I will support a national cause.	35.4 13 ^a	.003	3.61 0 ^a	.461	26.4 69 ^a	.001	27.6 96 ^a	.034	18.6 92 ^a	.017
I would prefer to buy a product which supports a local cause rather than a national cause.	49.5 28 ^a	.000	13.2 95 ^a	.010	34.8 20 ^a	.000	33.0 77 ^a	.007	19.0 68 ^a	.015
Cause Type										
I will support natural disaster relief campaign.	54.2 97 ^a	.000	8.77 1 ^a	.067	15.6 07 ^a	.048	15.7 36 ^a	.472	28.3 74 ^a	.000
I will support an ongoing cause	38.7 69 ^a	.001	3.67 8 ^a	.451	20.3 00 ^a	.009	33.3 62 ^a	.007	9.73 5 ^a	.034
I would prefer to buy a product which supports a disaster relief rather than an ongoing cause	49.4 58 ^a	.000	9.70 1 ^a	.046	24.8 14 ^a	.002	33.3 91 ^a	.007	17.1 82 ^a	.028
Cause Familiarity										
I am	47.9	.000	5.98	.201	8.92	.048	19.8	.226	15.6	.048

familiar with the causes.	14 ^a		1 ^a		7 ^a		71 ^a		43 ^a	
I recognize the causes.	46.2 44 ^a	.000	2.83 9 ^a	.585	9.39 0 ^a	.010	16.1 04 ^a	.446	17.9 84 ^a	.021
I had heard of the causes.	22.2 72 ^a	.035	8.33 4 ^a	.080	20.5 54 ^a	.008	31.8 17 ^a	.011	3.34 0 ^a	.011
Company Cause Fit										
I believe that the company endorses the cause it supports.	24.4 15 ^a	.041	1.94 0 ^a	.747	23.5 00 ^a	.003	31.8 45 ^a	.010	20.4 60 ^a	.009
The product should be relevant to the cause it supports.	31.8 55 ^a	.010	24.3 89 ^a	.000	36.3 02 ^a	.000	33.3 56 ^a	.007	20.3 67 ^a	.009
The donation to the cause serves as the seal of approval for the companies.	29.6 74 ^a	.020	8.16 1 ^a	.086	29.5 00 ^a	.000	21.7 54 ^a	.151	30.5 31 ^a	.000
The product should in no way have adverse effect to the cause.	138. 035	.000	17.5 69 ^a	.001	46.2 71 ^a	.000	46.2 38 ^a	.000	17.5 07 ^a	.025
The company should choose a cause	56.3 49 ^a	.000	1.98 2 ^a	.739	17.7 14 ^a	.023	42.3 16 ^a	.000	16.5 80 ^a	.035

that will also be beneficial to its consumer base.										
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Interpretation

Chi Square Analysis between *Cause Attributes and Age* shows that there is a significant association between Cause Attributes and Age of the respondents, *with all the p values* <.05 at degrees of freedom =16. Hence the Null Hypothesis (H_{01a}) is Rejected. Chi Square Analysis between *Cause Attributes and Gender* shows that there is no significant association between Cause Attributes and Gender of the respondents, *with most of the p values* >.05 at degrees of freedom =4. Hence we fail to reject the Null Hypothesis (H_{01b}). Chi Square Analysis between *Cause Attributes and Educational Qualification* shows that there is a significant association between Cause Attributes and Educational Qualification of the respondents, *with all the p values* <.05 at degrees of freedom 8. Hence the Null Hypothesis (H_{01c}) is Rejected.

Chi Square Analysis between *Cause Attributes and Monthly income* shows that there is no significant association between Cause Attributes and monthly income of the respondents, *with most of the p values* >.05 at degrees of freedom 16. Hence we fail to reject the Null Hypothesis (H_{01d}). Chi Square Analysis between *Cause Attributes and Area* shows that there is a significant association between Cause Attributes and Area of the respondents, *with all the p values* <.05 at degrees of freedom 16. Hence the Null Hypothesis (H_{01a}) is Rejected

Garrett ranking to find the most preferred Cause

To find out the most preferred cause based on the priority of the respondent, Garrett's ranking technique was used. In this method, respondents have been asked to assign the rank for all Causes.

Table 4
Garrett Ranking: Most Preferred Cause

S.No	Causes	Total Score	Garrett Mean Score	Mean Rank
1	To support poor children's Education	27,737	69.7	1
2	To support victims of deadly diseases	21595	54.2	3
3	To eradicate Child Labor	23840	59.8	2
4	To reduce Poverty	21069	52.9	4
5	To provide proper Sanitation	17902	44.9	5
6	To raise awareness against Pollution	16400	41.2	7

7	To support Afforestation and save tress	17262	43.3	6
8	To preserve wildlife from extinction	14155	35.5	8

From the above table it is clear that “To support poor Children’s Education” is the most preferred Cause followed by “To eradicate child labor” as the important causes to be addressed immediately. Thirdly respondents consider “To support victims of deadly diseases” followed by “To reduce Poverty”.

Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this study, it is understood that Age, education qualification and monthly income of the respondents are significantly related to cause attributes in forming the perception towards CRM. So companies involving in CRM can target young consumers as they are socially responsible and they prefer socially responsible brands. Since income affects the perception towards CRM companies should set the price of their products accordingly. The most preferred cause by the respondents is “To Support poor children’s education” followed by “To eradicate child labor” which shows that people think education to all as need of the hour and to put an end to child labor. Hence companies planning to support any cause in the future can choose to tie hands with NGO’s working towards these issues or they themselves can work towards these causes. In conclusion, it is understood that demographic variables has a significant relationship with cause attributes which plays a role in the formation of perception towards CRM.

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