

Cause-Related Marketing: Towards an Exploration of the Factors Favoring the Purchase Intention of the Tunisian Consumer

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Abstract. Cause-related marketing (CRM) is an important type of corporate social responsibility that offers engagement initiatives to consumers, brands and non-profit organizations. This study aims to explore the factors affecting Tunisian consumers' intention to participate in cause-related marketing campaigns. Building on the previous literature on CRM, the authors focused on the factors that predict consumer's intention to purchase products supporting social causes. Taking into consideration these determinants, a qualitative study was conducted with ten consumer-members of a Tunisian virtual community via individual semistructured interviews conducted online. The results show that the three types of fit (cause-brand fit; cause-consumer fit; brand-consumer fit), consumer-cause identification, the involvement in the product category, the attribution of altruistic motivations and the attitudes towards CRM are the factors favoring the purchase intention of the Tunisian consumer. These results corroborate prior research and provide more particular information on Tunisian customers. The present findings can help companies in Tunisia design stronger cause-related marketing initiatives.

Keywords: Cause-related marketing $(CRM) \cdot Consumer$ behavior $\cdot Cause$ -brand fit $\cdot Consumer$ -cause identification $\cdot Altruistic$ motivations $\cdot Purchase$ intention

1 Introduction

Nowadays, companies are increasingly obliged to respond to various consumer concerns and behave ethically in order to be more competitive and to penetrate markets in emerging economies. In this context, Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) has found its place in recent years as corporate social responsibility becomes a key strategic priority. Indeed, according to Cone communication's CSR report, 87% of US consumers buy products from companies engaged in social problem-solving initiatives, [1]. In fact, cause-related marketing is an important type of corporate social responsibility initiative, [2]. It is a

promising marketing strategy to improve the company's competitiveness and its economic and social conditions [3]. These cause campaigns allow the company to increase sales while strengthening its sense of social responsibility.

Indeed, "Cause-related marketing (CRM) is almost ubiquitous as brands of all price points participate in this marketing strategy in the United States and internationally, as well. The value that CRM brings to the firm, the consumer, and the nonprofit organization has made it a popular and valuable tool for marketers." [4]. Moreover, CRM is "a fundraising activity or marketing strategy consists of a contribution to a cause through a purchase of a product/service by consumers" [5]. This definition emphasizes the mutual benefit of this strategy for all three stakeholders.

It should be noted that academic research on cause-related marketing (CRM) has grown in recent years in emerging countries by addressing the effect of a cause-brand congruence on consumer behavior [6, 7].

Despite the effectiveness and success of CRM are amplified in the case of congruence (fit) between the cause and the brand, there is in the literature a controversy among researchers as to the results of the impact of congruence cause brand (cause-brand fit) on the intention to purchase.

In addition, little research has been suggested that when a consumer identifies with the cause, he or she will go to CRM programs and purchase products associated with them [7]. Despite all the studies developed, there is a gap in studies focused on identifying the consumer at the cause and its consequences.

Another factor that has been mentioned in the literature and which has a real impact on the intention to buy products supporting a social cause is «the attribution of altruistic motivations» while emphasizing the key role of the consumer attribution system in the processing of societal data [8].

However, it is time to fill the literature gap and shed light on the controversies mentioned about the factors favoring the intention to purchase products supporting social causes.

Therefore, a qualitative exploratory study among 10 consumers and members of a Tunisian association «DARNA» allows providing elements of response to the objectives of this research work. The choice of this community is justified by the knowledge of the concept "cause-related marketing" by the members of the latter, since this concept has not yet been sufficiently known in Tunisia.

In the following, we present in a first part the literature review, then a second part deals with the research methodology and the third part will be devoted to the presentation of the results.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Cause-Related Marketing

The first and most cited definition of CRM in the literature is that of Varadarajan & Menon, [9], which corresponds to "process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue providing exchanges that

satisfy organizational and individual objectives". CRM is the association of a brand with a cause by involving consumers: the brand's support for the cause is contingent on consumers purchasing the brand's products. It is a type of corporate social responsibility initiative, fundraising innovation, and interactive business mechanism. It is a form of association where a product or brand supports a cause over some time. Furthermore, CRM requires consumer participation via purchasing behaviors [5]. Companies regularly use CRM campaigns to change consumers' overall attitude towards the company and its brands [10]. Several studies have shown that approximately 85% of US consumers have preferred organizations or brands or products associated with a social cause or issue [4]. Thus, the majority of previous research on CRM has found that consumers generally have positive attitudes towards CRM, companies supporting social causes and charities sponsored by it [11-15]. These favorable attitudes can have an impact on consumer purchases and create awareness for a social cause [16, 17]. Other works such as Bergkvist [6], Durate [7], Shree [18], Christofi [19], Bigné [16] have worked on the effectiveness of cause marketing and the success of CRM campaigns and that this effect is amplified in the case of congruence between the cause and the brand.

2.2 Cause-Brand Congruence

Congruence or fit are related concepts expressing similarity or complementarity, it is the overall perceived fit between cause and brand, [20]. It is "the fact that two (or more) entities fit together well." [21]. A better congruence between the brand or company and the social cause will lead to a positive consumer attitude towards the brand or company hence a favorable consumer response.

The literature in consumer behavior or psychology shows that congruence positively affects judgment, while incongruence has a negative effect [22, 23].

Furthermore, according to Nan [14], Bigné [16], Chéron [12] and Pracejus [24], cause-brand congruence is a particularly critical factor for the success of CRM campaigns and they have shown that the impact of cause-brand fit on consumer responses has a significant effect.

2.3 Consumer-Cause Identification

Consumer-cause identification is the degree of overlap between consumers' self-concept and their perceptions of the cause [25].

Consumer-cause identification is the convergence of a consumer's self-concept and their perception of the cause [25, 26]. Therefore, when designing CRM campaigns, companies should choose a cause that could be recognized by customers [27]. Furthermore, being able to get customers to identify with the cause is an important indicator of an effective CRM campaign [28] and leads to its success [29]. Furthermore, this idea has been discussed by Zdravkovic [30], who state that when a consumer associates with a cause, there is a predisposition to patronize CRM programs and purchase the associated products.

2.4 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is one of the most important concepts in the study of consumer behavior. Purchase intention refers to the "disposition of a consumer who declares himself favorable to the purchase of a good or service" [31].

In the literature, purchase intention can be defined either according to the probabilistic dimension as "the subjective probability of buying a given product or brand" [32] or according to the planning dimension while integrating the planning character of the intention and is defined as "the result of a desire, or a need, processed cognitively which leads to purchase planning" [33, 34].

3 Methodology

The understanding and exploration of the factors impacting the purchase intention of the Tunisian consumer towards CRM, allowed us to fill the gap in the literature and shed light on concepts little studied in Tunisia.

A qualitative exploratory approach is adopted in this research. A semi-directive interview guide was developed, which is a written document that structures the interview, specifies the terms to be explored and the specific prompts for each theme in order to gather individual, differentiated and subjective points of view. We used individual interviews as a data collection method to validate the themes identified in the literature. Participants were interviewed around five main themes. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed in full and a thematic analysis of the discourse was carried out (Table 1).

Topic 1	Respondents' views on cause-related marketing strategy				
Topic 2	The relationship between cause-brand congruence, consumer-cause congruence, consumer-brand congruence and purchase intention				
Topic 3	The relationship between consumer cause identification et purchase intention				
Topic 4	Motivation of the purchase of products using cause related marketing by the respondents				
Topic 5	Attitude and Intention to buy products using cause related marketing				

Table 1. Topics of the interview guide

Ten semi-directive interviews were conducted with members of a Tunisian virtual community, the "Darna¹ Association", and we chose consumers who are part of a virtual community based on social networks, particularly Facebook, and who share the same interests. Thus, through Facebook, the present study had the opportunity to explore the perceptions of these consumers towards the cause-related marketing strategy. The choice of this community was based on CRM actions that it has published and also on the knowledge of consumers of these kinds of shares. This allowed us to collect a set of

¹ Tunisian non-profit association that helps children without family support, it was created in March 2014.

data, to have a sufficiently complete corpus. This allowed us to collect a set of data, to have a sufficiently complete corpus.

In order to determine the minimum sample size for satisfactory validity of the results, we used the theoretical saturation principle [35]. In this sense, the study stops when there is no additional information [36]. We reached thematic saturation at the end of the 10th interview; no new ideas emerged thereafter. We were, therefore, able to determine a sample of 10 people a posteriori. Our sample is fairly balanced according to several criteria (see Annex 1). We thus tried to respect the theoretical representativeness of the qualitative sample recommended by Miles and Huberman [37].

4 Research Results

The interviews thus conducted, recorded, and transcribed are processed using content analysis. The various results of our empirical investigations are identified from the analysis of the ten interviewees' speeches to interpret them. These results are to be deduced through thematic analysis, using the "QDA Miner" software, which enables us to draw up a vertical and horizontal analysis table (see Annex 2) and a horizontal analysis table. (See Annex 2) and on the other hand, the co-occurrence and similarity which are calculated from the Jaccard coefficient (see Annex 3: The dendrogram). The use of the QDA miner software facilitated the division of the corpus and allowed us to select the corresponding verbatim at the level of each paragraph and to assign them a code which is called a category.

At the end of our thematic analysis, we were able to identify 5 themes that could favor the Tunisian consumer's intention to purchase the CRM and which are presented in the table below (Table 2).

Catégories	Sources
Brand cause congruence	Qualitative study [12, 14, 16, 24]
Consumer cause congruence	Qualitative study [38]
Consumer brand congruence	Qualitative study [28, 39]
Consumer cause identification	Qualitative study [7]
Involvement in the product category	Qualitative study
The Attribution of Altruistic Motivations	Qualitative study [40]
Attitude towards CRM	Qualitative study [41]

Table 2. Factors favoring purchase intention identified in the literature and in qualitative studies

• Congruence (or Fit):

The importance of the theme of congruence is felt in the interviews with the participants where they mentioned that to participate more in the action there must be a congruence and this is in line with the literature which shows that perceived

congruence amounts to evaluating the extent to which a brand and another entity (another brand, event or cause) go well together [34] and this perceived congruence acts positively on the attitude of consumers towards CRM [30, 42].

Some respondents emphasized the importance of cause-brand congruence [43, 44], "the brand has to align with the cause, they have to have the same purpose, the same category e.g. Pampers, a brand aimed at children so it has to support a cause related to babies" (individual 1). And others mentioned the effectiveness of consumercause congruence [38] to participate in CRM action "I think it would be good to have a relationship and a fit between the consumer and the cause supported to participate" (individual 2). And even respondents spoke of brand-consumer congruence [39], "a beneficial relationship between the brand or company and the consumer does favor the intention to participate in these CRM actions, for example when there is a high-level connection with the company, commonalities this will indicate my intention to participate" (individual 4). These results are supported in the literature by Mandler's [45] congruence theory.

• Consumer- cause identification

All the interviewees clearly expressed the idea that there must be a degree of shared value and familiarity with the cause and that the consumer must feel a psychological link with the cause to be motivated to defend it. "When I identify with the cause i.e. I will live the cause, I share values, principles with it" "I feel that my values and objectives are met, I feel that it is an opportunity to participate in this action" (individual 4).

Returning to the related marketing cause literature, Durate [7] work confirmed the positive relationship between consumer identification with the cause and purchase intention while building on social identity theory.

• Involvement in the product category

Product category involvement according to Rothschild (1984, p. 217) in the work of Perrin-Martinenq, [46] corresponds to an "unobservable state of motivation, excitement, and interest in a product category".

Thirty percent of the interviews seek to be involved in the product category as a motivation for purchase intention from companies engaged in social initiatives [47, 48]. "When the company produces goods for a well-defined target so it has to support a cause that affects this target to influence them to participate because when I got involved in the product that will satisfy my need I will participate" (individual 10). "I participate in the action if the product concerns me, the product must be important for me I need it I consume it, it interests me this pushes me to buy it" (individual 6).

• Attribution of Altruistic Motivations

Three dimensions of motivations perceived by consumers on the company cited by Öberseder [49] and were evoked by the interviewees, the motives considered as a marketing tool where the company takes advantage of CRM practices to obtain more profit "It's a marketing used to maximize customers and inflate sales" (individual 6) or as an interconnected relationship estimating the beneficial effect on the whole society "I hope that these companies continue to make profit to carry out these actions and to develop their social commitment" (individual 8) and finally as a give-and-take relationship "I encourage these actions, I find that they have a mutual impact, it's a win-win relationship" (individual 9).

The attitude towards CRM

The success or failure of CRM engagement is determined by how customers perceive corporate motives [50].

Consumer perceptions of cause-related marketing have been studied in the literature [43, 51]. The data demonstrate that cause-related marketing methods can improve people's perceptions of a sponsored company's products or services [51]. This was mentioned by the interviewees "it makes a lot of sense to me to find a congruent action because the company is working in its field so it's going to be interested in its target and the causes of its target. I find it legitimate; I believe in this company more, it will raise the level of belief in this brand behavior. And this will generate a positive attitude towards the action and I value it more" (individual 3).

5 Discussion

This paper is a modest contribution to the ongoing discussions about the factors promoting purchase intention towards related marketing in developing countries such as Tunisia. Although our study is still in an exploratory phase, the findings can be used to suggest some theoretical and practical implications which will be presented below:

Theoretical implications: This study adds to the research agenda on consumer behavior towards cause-related marketing by addressing a theoretically important area of research that has been neglected by Tunisian marketing researchers: the factors favoring consumer purchase intention towards cause-related marketing actions.

Managerial implications: CrM is beneficial to the business, the cause, and even the customer in Tunisia. With a focus on the business side of CrM, this study can assist businesses better understand what makes customers more likely to participate in CrM campaigns, improving buy intent and increasing revenue.

Since the study was conducted with members of a non-profit association who already like to get involved in causes and like to be socially responsible, CRM might even be better applied to them. This research demonstrates the importance of designing CRM marketing efforts before launching them, as to how they are carried out has a significant impact on their success or failure.

This study adds to the list of suggestions for companies who want to support a good cause. Tunisian Companies should cherry-pick the cause that the brand wants to support, because this not only affects the consumer's perception of the firm's motivations, but it can also make the consumer more willing to buy the brand and indirectly have a better perception of the firm if the consumer identifies with the cause.

This study will help marketers to conduct cause-related marketing strategies. Thus, marketers should develop strategies where the cause is aligned with the brand and with the consumer. Also, managers should take into consideration the involvement of the consumer in the product category. We recommend supporting for example causes that touch their targets. And finally, managers should take seriously the importance of attributing altruistic motivation as a predictor of purchase intention, i.e. the more consumers believe

that a company is acting for purely altruistic reasons, the more they will participate in the action through their purchase behavior, which is in line with the CSR literature [52, 53]. Indeed, to improve consumer attitudes towards cause-related marketing, companies need to highlight their altruistic commitment to social causes and their commitment to the welfare of society.

6 Conclusion

There is a growing interest in finding how to use CRM more effectively, taking into consideration the perspective of customers, and how to use it to improve the success of these initiatives. This study aids in determining which factors have an impact on CRM and which are the most important. The study's key finding is that there are determinants that have an impact on the consumer's intention to acquire a CRM campaign product.

Like any other qualitative research, this study is limited by the sample size used for data collection and the results are not intended to be generalizable to the entire population. Despite all efforts to complete this study, a number of limitations need to be highlighted. Firstly, we have limited ourselves to a qualitative exploratory study using interviews, and a quantitative phase will be necessary. Secondly, the main limitation of the present study is the small sample size, thus, it seems necessary to duplicate this study with a larger sample in order to confirm the results.

Annex 1

Table 1. Profile of participants interviewed during the semi-structured interviewed							

Nature	Gender	Age	Professional category	Family situation	Duration of interview
Interview 1	Woman	28 years	Engineer	Unmarried	30 min
Interview 2	Woman	40 years	Teacher	Married	45 min
Interview 3	Man	36 years	Engineer	Married	43 min
Interview 4	Man	28 years	Businessman	Unmarried	35 min
Interview 5	Woman	35 years	Human resources manager	Married	1 h 15 min
Interview 6	Woman	32 years	Teacher	Married	55 min
Interview 7	Woman	25 years	PhD student	Unmarried	40 min
Interview 8	Woman	45 years	Housewife	Married	47 min
Interview 9	Man	34 years	Project Manager	Married	58 min
Interview 10	Woman	40 years	Administrative officer	Married	1 h 05 min

Annex 2

Category	Code	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Congruence	Cause brand congruence	28	13,70%
Congruence	Consumer cause congruence	22	10,80%
Congruence	Consumer company congruence	4	2,00%
Identification	Consumer cause identification	25	12,30%
Implication	Involvement in product category	9	4,40%
Attitude	Attitude toward CRM	6	2,90%
Purchase	Purchase intention	16	7,80%
Motivations	Attribution of Altruistic Motivations	9	4,40%

Table 2. Horizontal and vertical analysis table

Annex 3

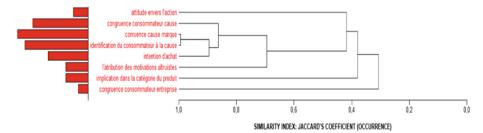


Fig. 1. Dendrogramme: Indice de similarité et de proximité entre codes

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