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Consumers' responses to cause related marketing: moderating influence of cause involvement and skepticism on attitude and purchase intention

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Abstract Cause related marketing (CrM) has been increasingly becoming a mainstream of corporate marketing plans. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of CrM on attitudes and purchase intention and also the moderating role of cause involvement and skepticism (as covariates) on attitude-intention rationale. The study utilizes experimental design, using a convenience sample of 424 participants in Gujarat. Two structured questionnaire each for experimental group and control group were developed. The stimulus provided is in the form of brand name, product portfolio and CrM ad itself in the questionnaire for experimental group. Using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), study demonstrates that CrM improves the attitude towards brand, attitude towards an ad and purchase intention. Additionally, effect of CrM on attitude-purchase intention link is more explained if consumers are more involved with cause. Skepticism is not relevant to attitudes and purchase intention. This study helps companies to rethink on selecting. It also provides the insights to marketers about how cause involvement influences attitudes and intention and thus adds some valuable theory to the CrM literature.

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1 Introduction

Corporate social responsibility has been propagating a change from idealism to realism (Vanhamme et al. 2012; Kotler and Lee 2005). In doing this, societal marketing has been a key promising tool for corporations to get differentiated from competitors by creating an emotional connects with consumers (Meyer 1999). In present scenario, many companies believe that the strategic alliances with non-for-profit organizations (NPOs) and supporting social causes can shape the perceptions of consumers as 'do well by doing well' and eventually results into market share hike and thus revenues.

Specifically, CrM is defined as "the contribution to a designated cause by a firm, in which the specified contribution is conditional on 'customers' engaging in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives' (Cheron et al. 2012, p. 357; Varadarajan and Menon 1988, p. 60). CrM is practiced by many companies to build a positive corporate image in the minds of consumers that enhance sales of a company's products (Varadarajan and Menon 1988) and profits as well (Adkins 2004). Recently, CrM has become a preferred choice over other forms of marketing communications (MARCOM) targeting to consumers (Hou et al. 2008). MARCOM is referred as "all the promotional elements of the marketing mix which involve the communications between the company and its target audiences on all matters that affects marketing performance (Picton and Broderick 2001)".

Today, CrM is emerging as a common form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and is gaining familiarity in strategic planning (McWilliams et al. 2006) in Asian context in general (Cheron et al. 2012) and India in specific. The arrival of sales concept from developed countries added to local commercial landscape in emerging market countries alters the consumption pattern, thus demands a justification for selection. In general, CrM results in favourable consumer attitude towards the company/brand and purchase intention as postulated in theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Azjen 1975). Furthermore in expressing attitudes, a cognitive, affective and conative aspect of attitude has been emphasized by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004). However, there remain several important facets related to maximizing the effectiveness of CrM that have not been explored with specificity (Cheron et al. 2012).

Due to widespread use of CrM, skepticism is on the rise. In real time, consumers question the validity of CrM offer that creates a consumer doubt and therefore they reject claims, donate less (Dahl and Lavack 1995) and also affect their purchasing behaviour (Rogers 1975). In addition, cause involvement increase the level of personal relevance and also increase the elaboration about the CrM offer that eventually affects the attitude and consumer behavioural intentions. In recent times, studies support that consumers involved with a cause will respond favourable towards CrM campaigns and thus have favourable attitudes and purchase intention (Grau and Folse 2007; Hajjat 2003; Lafferty 1996).

Although cause involvement and skepticism has not been specifically addressed in CrM research for increasing the effectiveness, a few studies have indirectly examined the concept, while some have mentioned its importance, and therefore need to be explored its effect on consumer perceptions of CrM practices in the Asian context with data from India.

1.1 Research gap and objectives

As coupled with intense competition and huge media spending, use of more targeted and accountable communication tools has been prevalent (Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal 2005). Over the past decade and a half, companies across the globe have increasingly adopted CrM due to its capacity to leverage company's social performance (Liu 2013) and their disagreement on effectiveness of traditional forms of MARCOM such as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotions etc. In relation to these tools, it is seen that more susceptibility is associated with CrM as companies' profiteering motive (i.e. sales) is linked to supporting cause (Barone et al. 2007). CrM is of growing interest among marketing practitioners and still it is at nascent stage in India (Ferle et al. 2013). Therefore, there is a deep-felt need to evaluate the return on investment of cause related marketing specifically to rationalize its accountability.

This study attempts to contribute to a developing body of research in CrM. Of particular interest is how attitude-intention rationale varies if companies support any cause. Moreover, consumers' emotional relevance may alter their responses to cause (Cone Inc. 2006) leading to the differential involvement to the cause (Hyllegard et al. 2011). Despite its connection to social causes, CrM has been perceived as "manipulative gimmicks" and "ethically doubtful" (Barone et al. 2000) that lead to the potential backlash (Chang and Cheng 2015). The insights regarding how involvement with cause and skepticism may stimulate attitude change and formation of purchase intentions to strengthen the position of the company in marketplace will be very handy for the managers who are practicing CrM. To fulfill this gap emerging in CrM research, study has devised following objectives:

- to investigate the effect of CrM on consumer attitude and purchase intention
- to determine the moderating effect of cause involvement on consumer attitude and purchase intention
- to determine the moderating effect of consumer skepticism on consumer attitude and purchase intention.

The remaining paper will begin with review of CrM studies concentrating on each construct such as attitude, intention, cause involvement and skepticism with a view to develop relevant hypotheses. After that, research methods and procedure will be presented, followed by test of hypotheses. Findings of the study will be presented and discussion on implications of study, with its limitations and future scope is put forward.

2 Conceptual framework

As postulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) in theory of reasoned action, intention or behaviour is directly influenced by individual's attitude towards behaviour or object. TRA is more parsimonious and intuitive social-psychological framework helps to explain consciously intended behaviours (Yousafzai et al. 2010). Considering exposure to advertising, responses elicited and how they are related to attitudes and purchase intentions, the most explanatory and widely used theory is cognitive response model (Belch and Belch 1998). In this context, response to cause advertising stimulus is in the

form of source oriented thoughts, product/message thoughts and advertising execution thoughts which will eventually stimulate brand attitudes and attitude towards advertisement (Fig. 1) and finally affect purchase intentions (Ambler and Burne 1999).

According to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion, consumers who are highly involved with CrM offers or products display higher cognitive elaboration (Petty and Cacioppo 1979). The involvement with the cause is resultant of the prior experience with CrM products and they find these CrM products personally very important and relevant. Therefore, theory argued that these consumers involved in CrM products may have differential cognition (Bridges et al. 2006). Considering this knowledge gap from involvement research and ELM, it is needed to understand how CrM elements will be assessed by involved consumers and uninvolved consumers, which poses a vital research arena.

3 Hypotheses development

3.1 Cause related marketing and attitudes

Attitude is a degree to which a person has favourable or unfavourable evaluations (Ajzen 1991). Many scholars (Brink et al. 2006; Drumwright 1996) believed that advertisement with socially appealing messages were more likely to be successful and ensure long term commitment. Previous CrM research suggests that the presence of such promotions can have a beneficial impact on the way consumers perceive advertisers (Ross et al. 1992). In fact, consumer responses and their evaluations are influenced more due to effects of CrM ad than a regular ad. Past literature also supports that attitudes was influenced by CrM (Galan-Ladero et al. 2013; Hajjat 2003; Chaney and Dolli 2001; Berger et al. 1999).

More specifically, Hajjat (2003) studied the effect of CrM on consumer attitudes and found that consumer have favourable attitude towards the ad if it contains CrM offer/ message. Similar results have been found in various studies (Ferle et al. 2013; Krishnamurthy and Sujan 1999; Holbrook and Batra 1987). Lafferty and Goldsmith
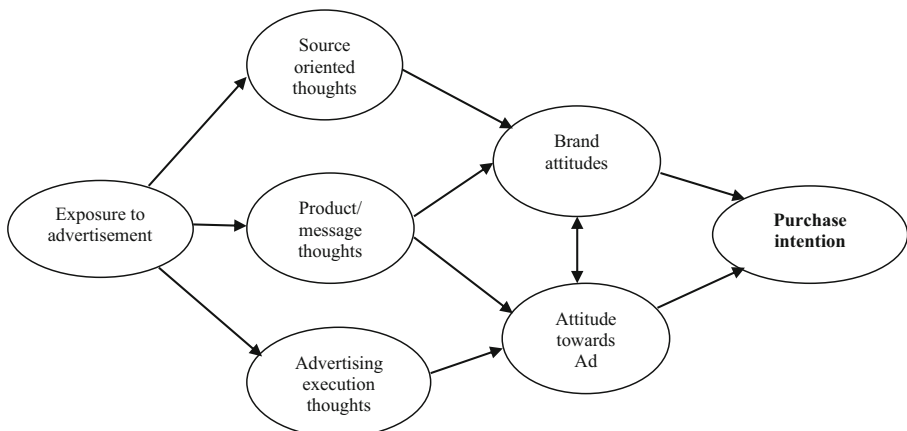

Fig. 1 Attitude response model

(2005) stated that cause brand alliances make an impact on consumer evaluation about brand attitudes. Furthermore, it was observed that consumers have favourable tendencies for attitude towards the brand and company if it practices CrM (Kim et al. 2005). Therefore, right use of CrM can lead to stronger attitudes to the CrM ad/offer through either elaboration of the company's public identity i.e. brand or positive associations formed related to cause advertisement (Gupta and Pirsch 2006).

Yavas et al. (2007) stated that favourable attitude towards the ad containing CrM message/offer influences brand attitude more favourably. Another study indicated that a positive impact of CrM occurs primarily on consumers' attitudes toward the company/brand and secondarily on attitudes toward the ad (Nan and Heo 2007). From the previous studies, it has been found that attitude towards an ad affects attitude towards a brand (Ferle et al. 2013; Mehta and Purvis 1995; MacKenzie et al. 1986; Lutz 1985). Based on this discussion, following hypotheses were formed:

H_1: Consumers will have more positive attitudes towards brand practicing CrM than if the brand were not associated with a cause.
H_2: Consumers will have more positive attitudes towards Ad for a brand practicing CrM than if the brand were not associated with a cause.

3.2 Cause related marketing and purchase intention

According to Bagozzi and Burnkrant (1999), an orientation that consumers may take for a product is called as purchase intention. From customers' perceived value perspective, consumer makes transactional deeds after evaluating a product that form perception related to brand (Hsu 1987). It was also noted that prior experience with CrM has a positive impact on consumer's purchase intentions of CrM endorsed products (Crommentuijn 2010). If choice is given to consumers for purchasing a product from a company supporting cause and from a company not supporting a cause, consumers become more persuasive and have positive feelings about the company supporting cause which affect their inferences that subsequently help to build positive purchase intentions (Hou et al. 2008).

Westberg and Pope (2005) studied the effect of cause related marketing on purchase intention consistent with Fries et al. (2009) study. In addition, scholars (Webb and Mohr 1998; Hajjat 2003; Anselmsson and Johansson 2007; Yang and Li 2007) argued that CrM stimulates customers' purchase intentions positively. Furthermore, Hyllegard et al. (2011) pointed those participants who were more involved in social causes tended to have more positive attitudes towards the brand and stronger purchase intentions among generation Y. They proved that consumers have more favourable purchase intentions towards the company which practicing cause related marketing. Moreover, Gupta and Pirsch (2006) noted that consumers show increased purchase intentions for the product associated with the cause–brand alliance when they feel that the cause is relevant to their lives. Going further, Galan-Ladero et al. (2013) showed that consumer responses are greatly influenced by CrM. Based on this discussion, following hypothesis was developed:

H_3: Consumers will have more positive purchase intention for a brand practicing CrM than if the brand were not associated with a cause.

3.3 Cause involvement

In general sense, personal relevance has been often conceptualized as cause involvement. Personal relevance basically includes the values, needs and interests (Zaichkowsky 1985) and specifically individual's perceived degree of interest and /or importance caused by situation specific stimulus (Antil 1984). Based on these thoughts, cause involvement is defined as, "the degree to which consumers find the cause to be personally relevant" to them resulting of "past experiences with a cause or part of their self-concept" (Grau and Folse 2007). More simply, Rothschild (1984) defined cause involvement as "the relevance that the consumer feels in response to cause exposure" (Myers and Kwon 2013).

As per ELM of persuasion, consumers who are highly involved with a cause have adequate ability and motivation for persuasive communication which will influence the attitude towards the brand compared to consumers with low cause involvement (Hajjat 2003). Consumers when involved with a cause would have high elaboration and thus demand substantial information for persuasion (Hajjat 2003). Trimble and Rifon (2006) stated that personal involvement with the cause positively influences attitude towards cause-brand alliance. On the same line, Myers and Kwon (2013) derived that cause-brand alliance attitude is positively influenced by cause involvement. On a specific note, Hajjat (2003) studied the effect of cause involvement on attitudes and purchase intentions and found that cause involvement moderates the attitude towards an ad, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention significantly.

Therefore, cause involvement do moderates the effect of CrM on attitudes and purchase intention consistent with previous studies (Bigne-Alcaniz et al. 2011; Grau and Folse 2007; Broderick et al. 2003; Ellen et al. 1996; Dahl and Lavack 1995; Ross et al. 1991; Smith and Alcorn 1991). However, it was suggested that individuals have low cause involvement and therefore the effect of CrM in these conditions must be examined. However, few instances have been recorded studying cause involvement indirectly, but more specific studies are void in CrM research.

Based on these arguments, following hypotheses were developed for testing:

H_{4a}: Consumer attitude towards brand will be greater for those more involved with the cause compared with those less involved with the cause.
H_{4b}: Consumer attitude towards the ad will be greater for those more involved with the cause compared with those less involved with the cause.
H_{4c}: Consumer purchase intention will be greater for those more involved with the cause compared with those less involved with the cause.

3.4 Skepticism of consumers

Admittedly, consumer responses to CrM are influenced by skepticism which is a consumer characteristic suggested in literature. The frequent exposure to CrM marketing shifts the cognitive awareness about CrM campaign and its offer and eventually enhances consumers' knowledge about persuasive motive. Such motives if not reflected correctly in the form marketing tactics, consumers can easily sense companies manipulative intent which results into negative persuasion (Folse et al. 2010).

Therefore, consumers usually doubt the company's real involvement in cause related marketing resulting into perceptions that ultimately convert into skepticism towards advertising or claim. Skepticism is referred as "consumer's tendencies to doubt the truthfulness of advertising message and marketers' motives for the messages" (Mohr et al. 1998; Webb and Mohr 1998; Friestad and Wright 1994).

Pioneer attempt was made by Mohr et al. (1998) to examine the effect of skepticism. Study revealed that consumers with a high level of skepticism will be less likely to respond positively to CrM campaigns as opposed to consumers with a low level of skepticism. Skeptic consumers are less likely to have persuasion about the company and its CrM offer and therefor does not comprehend the message offered and sometime perceptual blocking occurs which leads to negative evaluation towards the advertisement.

Conversely, company's motivation for the cause is more likely to be questioned among consumers who are not exposed to cause and thus skepticism may be activated easily among them (Chang and Liu 2012). Consumers who are skeptic about companies' motive would never perceive the brand credible and therefore evaluate the brand negatively. The perception is developed among consumers that companies are using CrM for their own benefits i.e. "self-seeking motives" (Hammad et al. 2014) rather than genuinely supporting the cause itself (Singh et al. 2009). In fact, consumers having mistrust in a company claim never believe their altruistic intentions of charitable buying (Brønn and Vrioni 2001). Therefore, consumers' attitude towards brand is perceived to be negative which fails to form positive purchase intentions. Indeed, Obermiller et al. (2005) reported lack of relationship between advertising, their attitudes and purchase intention with skepticism. Recently, Chang and Cheng (2015) studied the effect of skepticism on purchase intention and found significantly negative.

Thus, this study expects the following hypotheses:

H_{5a}: Consumers with a high level of advertising skepticism will have unfavourable attitude towards the brand practicing CrM.

H_{5b}: Consumers with a high level of advertising skepticism will have unfavourable attitude towards brand practicing CrM.

H_{5c}: Consumers with a high level of advertising skepticism will have unfavourable purchase intention for the brand practicing CrM.

4 Research method

4.1 Overview

This present study test the effectiveness of CrM on consumer attitude and their purchase intentions and also investigate the role of consumer skepticism and cause involvement as moderators in CrM 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 (Grau and Folse 2007; Dean 2004). Four hundred twenty-four participants were selected from a convenience sample as found consistent in previous CrM research (Cheron et al. 2012) and matched on their educational characteristics to control extraneous various and eventually that improves internal validity. The experimental

group and control group had 212 participants each. Moreover, data collection was done during March-May 2013. Of participants, approximately 57.4 % were male and 42.6 % were female indicating balanced sample. Majority of the participants ($n = 335$, 78.8 %) fall into age category of 21–30 years, 14.4 % ($n = 61$) of the participants in the age group of 31–40 years and 6.8 % ($n = 28$) in the age group of 40+. Moreover, 67.1 % of participants ($n = 285$) were graduates and 22.6 % were post graduates ($n = 96$).

4.2 Stimuli

An extensive review of previous literature was carried out to select a brand practicing CrM. During the period of study, Procter & Gamble Co. (P&G) was the company practicing CrM and thus selected for this study. In India, P&G is one of the largest and fastest growing consumer goods (FMCG) companies and operates from beauty and health to home and beyond (P&G 2015). Experimental group participants were exposed to the advertisement containing the CrM offer. The stimuli were in the form of brand name, the product portfolio and the ad itself in the questionnaire (Fig. 2). 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, and Gillette). For control group participants, the CrM offer was eliminated from the stimuli.

4.3 Measures

Both questionnaires were divided in two sections: first, demographics and second, study variables divided in three categories: a) independent variables (e.g.

(a) For experimental group

P & G Shiksha has made a cumulative donation more than RS. 22 crores and contributed in education of more than 280,000 childrens, building and supporting over 140+ schools across India in 435 communities.

(b) For control group

Fig. 2 Stimulus for participants

consumer attitude towards the ad and attitude towards brand b) dependent variables (e.g. purchase intention) and c) moderating variables (e.g. cause involvement and skepticism). These measures were identified from extensive review of literature and only validated measures were used in this study. Minor modifications were made such as P&G was added in each item of attitude towards company/brand and negative statements were reversed. Pilot testing was carried out on a sample of 20 respondents each to EG and CG and both questionnaires were modified. Moreover, one item having contextual undermining was deleted in the scale of skepticism. All the scales meet satisfactory reliabilities ranging from 0.737 to 0.889, well above than the threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally 1978). Coefficient alpha was used to establish internal consistency of the items on the scale (Cronbach 1951). Table 1 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	1. unpleasant/pleasant (R), 2. unappealing/appealing (R), 3. bad/good (R), 4. unfavorable/favorable (R), 5. not likeable/likeable (R)	Spears and Singh (2004), Myers and Kwon (2013)	0.881
Attitude towards the ad	Five-item, seven point semantic differential scale	1. bad/good (R), 2. unconvincing/convincing R), 3. unappealing/appealing (R), 4. not likeable/likeable (R), 5. unfavorable/favorable (R)	Holbrook and Batra (1987), Krishnamurthy and Sujan (1999), Ferle et al. (2013)	0.889
Purchase intention	Three-item, five point likert type scale	1. I will try the brand. 2. I will consider purchasing the brand next time. 3. It is very likely that I will buy the brands.	Putrevu and Lord (1994), Lii and Lee (2012)	0.780
Cause involvement	Five-item, seven point semantic differential scale	1. unimportant/important(R), 2. means nothing to me/means a lot to me (R), 3. personally relevant/irrelevant, 4. doesn't matter a great deal to me/a great deal to me (R), 5. no concern/great concern to me (R)	Maheswaran and Joan (1990) Grau and Folse (2007)	0.737
Skepticism[a]	Four-item, five-point likert type scale	1. Most claims made on package labels or in ad are true (R). 2. Because claims are exaggerated, consumers would be better off if such claims on package labels or in ad were eliminated. 3. Most claims on package labels or in ads are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers. 4. I do not believe most claims made on package labels or in ad.	Mohr et al. (1998), Brønn and Vrioni (2001)	0.768

[a] One statement is deleted from the original scale

4.4 Procedure

Post-test only control group design (true experimental) was used and therefore two groups were involved and no prior measurements were made (Malhotra 2007). Two questionnaires were prepared; one for experimental group and another for control group. The first page of both questionnaires contained a covering letter aiming to explain the purpose of the study and seeking their permission to participate in survey. Thus, respondents hereafter in this study were called as participants. A screening question "Have you seen the recent advertisement of P&G?" was asked to classify participants into two groups evidencing randomization. Those participants who have seen the ad were exposed to the questionnaire containing P&G ad with CrM message considering recall. Therefore, this group of participants was called as 'experimental group'. On the contrary, second questionnaire without ad was administered on participants who have not seen the recent ad having CrM message. At the same time, from both groups, data were collected.

5 Test of hypotheses

5.1 Manipulation checks

Before hypotheses testing, manipulation check was computed. The variables were expected to differ among CrM exposed participants and non-participants to CrM offer. One-way analysis (ANOVA) was performed to ensure the differential effect of CrM on study variables. Three separate ANOVAs test were performed concerning attitude towards brand, attitude towards the ad and purchase intention. The results shown in the Table 2 revealed that assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated for attitude towards brand/product, attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the company and purchase intention ($p < 0.05$; ideally must be $p > 0.05$).

  Therefore, Welch ANOVA was found appropriate in case of violation of assumption. It was found that CrM was significantly creating a difference in the means of attitude towards brand ($F = 79.108$; $p < 0.001$), thus hypothesis H_1 was supported. In addition, attitude towards the ad was also found to be significantly different ($F = 83.961$; $p < 0.001$) among those who were exposed to CrM message and those who were not exposed to CrM message (H_2 was supported). Purchase intention was also found to be significant ($F = 404.856$; $p < 0.001$) indicating a support to hypothesis H_3.

  From mean analysis depicted in Table 2, it was found that consumers who have exposed to CrM offer ($\bar{x} = 5.6887$) have more favourable attitude towards the brand than

Table 2 Welch ANOVA statistics for study variables

Study variables	Experimental group (mean)	Control group (mean)	Levene's statistics	p-value	F	Sig.
Attitude towards brand	5.6887	4.6972	7.952	0.005	79.108	0.000[a]
Attitude towards the ad	5.7038	4.7000	17.510	0.000	83.961	0.000[a]
Purchase intention	4.5503	3.3428	76.364	0.000	404.856	0.000[a]

[a] significant at 0.01 level

their counterparts ($\bar{x}=4.6972$). In fact, mean analysis also revealed that consumers who have exposed to CrM offer ($\bar{x}=5.7038$) have more favourable attitude towards the brand than their counterparts ($\bar{x}=4.700$). Purchase intention was also higher among those who have seen the CrM offer ($\bar{x}=4.5503$) than those who have not ($\bar{x}=3.3428$).

5.2 Testing the moderating effects of cause involvement

With a view to test the effect of cause involvement as well as the effect of cause related marketing on attitude towards brand, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) technique was used. ANCOVA was conducted to check the main effects of CrM and covariance effects of cause involvement. Cause involvement was measured on continuous data and thus was taken as covariate. It was viewed that people who are more involved with a cause would respond more favourable towards the cause related marketing offer than those who are less/not involved. Therefore, interaction effect between CrM offer and cause involvement was taken into consideration. Type III sums of squares were appropriate for computation.

The hypothesis predicted that participants exposed to CrM offer would have more positive attitude towards brand than participants exposed to no treatment. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 3 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F_{(1, 421)}=3.284$; $p<0.001$). It was also found that main effect of cause involvement was significant ($F_{(1, 421)}=14.757$; $p<0.001$) (H_{4a} was supported). Admittedly, the interaction effect between CrM offer and cause involvement was also found to be significant in affecting attitude towards brand ($F_{(1, 421)}=8.796$; $p<0.01$).

Similarly, ANCOVA was conducted for attitude towards the ad as a dependent measure, CrM offer as a factor and cause involvement as a covariate. Type III sums of squares were appropriate for computing main effects as well as interaction effects. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 4 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F_{(1, 421)}=27.336$; $p<0.001$). It was also found that main effect of cause involvement was significant ($F_{(1, 421)}=11.102$; $p<0.001$) (H_{4b} was supported).

ANCOVA was conducted for purchase intention as a dependent measure, CrM offer as a factor and cause involvement as a covariate. Type III sums of squares were appropriate for computing main effects as well as interaction effects. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 5 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F_{(1, 421)}=3.268$; $p<0.$). It was also found that main effect of cause involvement was non-significant ($F_{(1, 421)}=1.972$). Admittedly, the interaction effect between CrM offer and cause involvement was also found to be non-significant in affecting purchase intention ($F_{(1, 421)}=1.660$) (H_{4c} was not supported).

Table 3 ANCOVA results for cause involvement and attitude towards brand

Variable	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1, 421	4.128	3.284	0.000*
Cause involvement (S)	1. 421	18.554	14.757	0.000*
CrM offer * Cause Involvement (C * S)	1, 421	11.058	8.796	0.003**

$R^2 = 0.200$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.194$; *$p < 0.001$ level; $p < 0.01$ level

Table 4 ANCOVA results for cause involvement and attitude towards ad

Variable	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1	33.959	27.336	0.000*
Cause involvement (S)	1	13.792	11.102	0.000*

$R^2 = 0.187$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.184$; *$p < 0.001$ level

5.3 Testing the moderating effects of skepticism

A similar pattern for testing hypotheses is repeated for skepticism as a moderating variable. The hypothesis predicted that participants exposed to CrM offer would have more positive attitude towards brand than participants exposed to no treatment. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 6 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F_{(1, 421)} = 4.247$; $p < 0.05$). It was also found that main effect of skepticism was not significant ($F_{(1, 421)} = 0.656$; $p = 0.418$). Admittedly, the interaction effect between CrM offer and skepticism was also found to be not significant in affecting attitude towards brand ($F_{(1, 421)} = 0.020$, $p = 0.888$). Therefore, hypothesis H_{5a} was not supported.

Hypothesis predicted that skeptical consumers would have more negative attitude towards ad than non-skeptical consumers. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 7 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F = 5.756$; $p < 0.05$). It was also found that main effect of skepticism was not-significant ($F = 0.731$; $p = 0.393$). Admittedly, the interaction effect between CrM offer and skepticism was also found to be significant in affecting attitude towards brand ($F = 0.183$; $p = 0.669$).

Similarly, hypotheses related to skepticism and purchase intention was tested. As predicted, main effects were found to be significant as reflected in Table 8 containing ANCOVA results for CrM offer ($F = 6.351$; $p < 0.05$). It was also found that main effect of skepticism was not significant ($F = 0.771$; $p = 0.380$) indicating H_{5c} was not supported.

5.4 Discussion and implications

Findings indicate that consumers have favourable attitude toward the brand practicing CrM activities. This could be attributed to the fact that consumer view brand supporting a cause and feel more positive about the brand; consistent with previous studies (Hajjat

Table 5 ANCOVA results for cause involvement and purchase intention

Variable	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1, 421	3.855	3.268	0.071*
Cause involvement (S)	1. 421	2.326	1.972	0.161
CrM offer * Cause Involvement (C * S)	1, 421	1.958	1.660	0.198

$R^2 = 0.022$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.015$; *$p < 0.1$ level

Table 6 ANCOVA results for skepticism and attitude towards brand

Variable	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1, 421	5.612	4.247	0.04*
Skepticism (S)	1. 421	0.867	0.656	0.418
CrM offer * Skepticism (C * S)	1, 421	0.026	0.020	0.888

$R^2 = 0.159$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.153$; *$p < 0.05$ level

2003; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). This is especially noteworthy that companies not practicing CrM may have risk of backfires and have negative attitude towards brand compared to companies supporting causes. This implicates to the managers regarding the use of CrM to build a brand by stimulating consumers' attitude towards brand.

As the CrM strategy is in "honeymoon" stage in emerging nations and thus has had a lower interaction with this form of marketing results into low acquaintance with CrM (Ferle et al. 2013). Consumers in such economies find this concept novel and original and thus have better evaluation for the offer leads to the higher regard for the advertised brand. Therefore, this situation warrants marketers in emerging nations to take first move for reinforcing the attitude towards brand and get differentiated. For that, managers must ensure the reach of their CrM offer at least once through any media to their target audience. Oftentimes, companies are involved in more frequent exposures of CrM ads to strengthen the brand attitudes through maximizing market awareness (Hou et al. 2008).

Admittedly, study also revealed that consumers who are more involved with a cause have more favourable attitude towards brand. Therefore, brand managers are advised to communicate actual sum donated to cause and the results of their association with cause through various media for substantial processing of information for favourable persuasion (Hajjat 2003). When targeting consumers having high involvement with cause, brand managers must focus on the message elements shown in the advertisement. For example, they should highlight company's fulfilled commitment to the cause by donating the amount to the respective non-governmental organization. Such message cues in the ad will create positive impact on their attitude towards the ad.

Therefore, companies often focus on more-involved consumers but on the other side companies must not fall short on their commitment to cause facing a risk to brand attitudes. However, if consumers are less involved with a cause, their attitude towards brand will be not favourable regardless of their cause related marketing efforts. As

Table 7 ANCOVA results for skepticism and attitude towards an ad

Variable	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1	7.342	5.756	0.017*
Skepticism (S)	1	0.932	0.731	0.393
CrM offer * skepticism (C * S)	1	0.233	0.183	0.669

$R^2 = 0.168$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.162$; *$p < 0.05$ level

Table 8 ANCOVA results for skepticism and purchase intention

Variable	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
CrM offer (C)	1	7.52	6.351	0.012*
Skepticism (S)	1	0.913	0.771	0.380

$R^2 = 0.016$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.011$; *$p < 0.05$ level

argued in ELM (Petty et al. 1983), these consumers do lacks in motivation and ability and ignore the cause-oriented message elements, thus product- performance must be highlighted in message framing using central route of persuasion to enhance their attitude towards the brand and eventually help to develop impregnable brand equity.

Results show that consumers have favourable attitude toward the ad containing CrM message. The reason is that if consumers positively view company by its act of supporting a cause and having high involvement with a cause must have positive opinion for the advertisement and therefore positive attitude towards the ad will be formed. It is reasonable that the consumers in emerging nations have a limited exposure to CrM offer compared to developed nations and therefore have a limited elaboration and less counter arguments to the claims made in advertisement.

As theorized in elaboration likelihood, CrM can help marketers to generate positive evaluation for brand and advertisement in short run, but find difficult in a long run as the consumers' elaboration increases as they predominantly experience CrM campaigns. In this situation when this novel concept becomes common practice results into diminishing of positive effects (Ferle et al. 2013), advertisers must work on central routes for persuasion such as functionality of products the main motive for consumer purchase in emerging economies.

Study demonstrates that CrM does play a key role in creating positive effect on purchase intention which is a central construct in TRA. Purchase intentions would be more among participants who have been exposed to CrM ad compared to those who have been not (Grau and Folse 2007). As postulated in TRA, purchase behaviour for products endorsing cause will be predicted well from purchase intentions. Admittedly, cause involvement does not have any significant effect on purchase intentions and the fact that favourable attitudes may not be converted in purchase intentions in short run as this tactic is just started practicing in India. Therefore, brand markets are suggested to run the CrM campaign for reasonable time period so as carry over effect can be utilized by providing enough time to consumers to form positive purchase intentions.

In addition, study has investigated the effect of skepticism on attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the ad and purchase intention. Scholars believe that skeptical consumers have a doubt about company's true rationale for sponsoring a cause. Study's findings revealed that skepticism has no effect on attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the ad and purchase intention. The possible explanation as suggested by authors is that participants of this study felt strong emotional attachment to the P&G as a brand and therefore has high level of trust in the company and their commitments.

Moreover, skepticism is affected negatively if consumers possess knowledge (Szykman et al. 1997). Possibly participants would have excellent knowledge about P&G, its brands, and its already publicized commitments. And therefore, formation of low level of skepticism with respect to P&G among participants would result into no

effect on attitudes and intention. Furthermore, for consumers in emerging nations CrM is fresh and thus have no negative attributions due to any prior experience. Therefore, low level of skepticism is expected as compared to developed nations having clutter of CrM offers. This information, in fact help advertisers to take care right for beginning in advert design using the most credible and acceptable messages targeting emerging nations' consumers.

However, as number of campaigns increases and the concept enters in maturity stage in life cycle, marketers are advised to focus on skepticism reducing techniques (Singh et al. 2009) and to take caution that this skepticism may not be converted in cynicism. In sum, findings provide a theoretical framework for anticipating the conditions under which CrM would be more effective in generating favourable consumer responses toward the advertised brand.

6 Limitations and future scope of the study

Study offers some contributions have some serious limitations as well. First, the study has shown P&G as CrM supporting brand, and therefore participants who were already have positive attitude toward brand may create a response bias. Therefore, dummy ads containing fictitious brand can be used in study to overcome this response bias. Second, participants were selected from a convenience sample which is suitable to examine theoretical foundations, thus limitation of this method is invariably applicable to the results of the study.

Third, study has investigated attitudes and intentions as opposed to actual behaviour. Therefore, future research can be drawn by assessing the actual behaviour can provide better insights to the brand marketers. Forth, study utilized a sample collected only from North Gujarat region in India. Further research can be carried out in other regions of Gujarat to increase the generalisability of the results. Finally, the findings of this research may not relate specifically to any goods or services because this research focused only on few brands of P&G within FMCG sector. So future research is suggested to validate the findings of this research with specific sector or services settings to determine whether these results could be extended to other conditions.

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