

An Assessment of Cause-Related Marketing: What Does the Future Hold?

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Abstract

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is an important and frequently employed strategy for companies to market products and establish brands. Every business strategy has both supporters and challengers, and cause-related marketing is no exception. Supporters view cause-related marketing as not only acceptable, but also reasonable, effective, and perhaps even essential for business. These proponents see CRM as creating a win-win situation for both the sponsoring firms and the participating charities. They regard cause-related marketing as an example of businesses practicing corporate social responsibility, which transcends the simple concept of earning a profit. Opponents of CRM, however, view it as a controversial promotion tactic, and caution against potential abuses of the practice. This article examines cause marketing's history, influence and impact, and results of a pilot study. It explores CRM's influence on the company-customer relationship, customer behavior and the impact of moral identity. The pilot study investigates the impact of cause marketing on college students' purchases. These consumers' values and purchasing power are constantly evolving, so understanding what helps them reach a purchase decision to support a cause is important to companies wanting to use cause marketing. The questions posed are: What do college students value regarding purchases and cause marketing? What impacts their CRM purchase decisions?

Keywords: cause-related marketing, CRM, marketing strategy, millennials

An Assessment of Cause-Related Marketing (CRM)

Simply defined, “CRM is a commercial activity by which businesses and charities or causes form a partnership with each other to market an image, product or service for mutual benefit” (Chaabane & Parguel, 2016). Corporations and nonprofit organizations find a mutual interest and evolve the partnership to create a win-win situation. There are many different versions of cause-related marketing, with some of the most popular being product sales plus purchase, the licensing of a nonprofit’s logo, co-branded events and programs, and social or public service marketing programs (Chaabane & Parguel, 2016).

The strategy and execution of cause-related marketing has seen both expansion and improved effectiveness over time. Corporations are choosing to spend a significant amount of marketing budgets to support a social issue (typically charities) through cause-related marketing, rather than putting those funds into traditional advertising methods such as television, radio, and print advertising. This shift from traditional media has been accompanied by the improved accessibility to and use of the Internet. Consumers’ increasing use of technology and social media creates opportunities for companies and causes. Consumers can be targeted more easily, and often even at reduced costs as compared to the past. This technology can provide changeable, fluid, and trackable benefits, which traditional media did not. CRM has proved to reach very broad ranges of consumers, but with the ability to have a narrowly defined platform when necessary.

This article explores how cause-related marketing affects companies’ and consumers’ values, and, ultimately, consumer behavior. Issues discussed include the history of CRM, the impact of CRM on branding, the connection of moral identity to cause marketing, and the importance of alignment between the cause and the company for a campaign to be successful. The results of a pilot study regarding cause-related marketing and college students are included. The study explores what makes students purchase a cause-related product—in particular, how the cause and branding affect their decisions. This target market was chosen as it is comprised mostly of millennials. (Please note: different sources use different dates to segregate generations.) The importance of this generation’s values and purchasing power is currently

evolving and of significance to any company or cause hoping to connect with them. According to Hwang and Griffiths (2017), “Millennials tend to be empathetic toward social and communal causes and pragmatic about the environmental impact of their consumption choices” (p. 132). This article seeks to understand what attracts college students to certain brands and causes. Are they open to the concept of cause-related marketing? If so, what do they value regarding purchases of cause-related products? Does brand loyalty affect their decisions regarding causes?

Cause Marketing History

Beginning in the mid-1970s, cause marketing or cause-related marketing (CRM) began pairing corporations with nonprofit organizations. According to Waters (2015), the first notable coupling was that of Marriott and The March of Dimes. Marriott’s campaign to increase funding for the charity was a public relations success and set an example that other companies tried to follow. Not long after, American Express introduced a campaign to raise money for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty. The premise was the same--companies aligning themselves with nonprofit organizations as a way to have a positive impact on the nonprofit and on the company. The practice effectively directed billions of dollars in fundraising and consumer buying power toward social impact (Waters, 2015).

According to the website *Grantspace* (2016), “American Express first coined the term in 1983 to describe its campaign to raise money for the Statue of Liberty’s restoration. American Express donated one cent to the restoration every time someone used its charge card. As a result, the Restoration Fund raised over \$1.7 million and American Express card use rose 27%.” Cause-related marketing merged community development and business objectives, creating a strong relationship between the nonprofit organization and the business, while promoting and growing a following. The success of the campaign exceeded the efforts of previous traditional ad campaigns.

In more recent years, Uber utilized an effective cause-related strategy that brought the company notoriety as well as fulfilled the needs of communities. Initially, Uber launched many programs to give jobs, collect clothes, and find homes for cats and dogs through its mobile app and customer base. Then, Uber partnered with *Share Our Strength* in its most successful CRM project. This pairing was listed as the “Best Cause-Related Program of 2015” by Water’s blog

Selfishgiving. According to Waters (2015), “Uber’s latest program with *Share Our Strength* was a home run. Their initial goal was to provide #3MillionMeals for children in need by allowing riders to make a \$5 donation within the Uber app to support *No Kid Hungry*. Within four days, the Uber Community had donated enough money to provide a record #5MillionMeals.” Uber wanted to target a mass customer base by aligning with an issue that most people care about-- childhood hunger. The results benefited all involved, and created an easy, efficient way for Uber’s large customer base to donate money while waiting for their ride.

Like many other marketing strategies, one of cause-related marketing’s purposes is to attain and retain customers and, ultimately, earn more profit. This is accomplished by understanding what customers value. Cause-related marketing strategies are often based on feelings of obligation to help other people less fortunate. Some consumers feel less price sensitive when they are driven to make a purchase because of moral implications. Also, they are often inclined to donate their time if they feel passionate about a cause. Albert (2014) mentioned:

A study showed that consumers act upon moral emotions deriving from guilt or gratitude and that people are more willing to donate their time for volunteering because of the feeling of guilt for not being able to donate money and vice-versa (Kim & Johnson, 2013). A cause that usually pulls at the heartstrings of one person comes directly from what they value most. In return, this increases sales and boosts support for the charity. [In] addition to the increase in desire to buy more based off of moral obligation, a company generates more profit through a cause-related marketing strategy by an increase in customers’ willingness to pay. Essentially, ‘willingness to pay’ is the maximum amount that people are willing to spend to achieve a certain good. With a well-advertised cause-related product, customers’ willingness to pay is higher than the amount he or she would give for a similar non-cause-based product. Statistics have shown that if companies properly explain how the sale of their good would be positively contributing back to the community, then customers’ willingness to pay would increase (p. 2).

The success of early efforts with cause marketing over fifty years ago by Marriott and The March of Dimes and subsequent other campaigns resulted in the growth of this type of strategic alliance typically between a non-profit and a for profit organization. The practice persists having survived changes in media and entry into the marketplace of successive generations of consumers. Over the years, cause marketing has shown its ability to attain and retain customers who experience less price sensitivity when purchases are driven by underlying values of social responsibility. A proper coupling of an issue that appeals to a large consumer group's sense of moral obligation and altruism with a product or service having a positive reputation can lead to higher returns for both the organization promoting the issue and the parent firm of the product or service.

Moral Identity and Cause Marketing

Human behavior is often driven by morals, experience, and situations. According to Hardy and Carlo (2011), "Moral identity generally refers to the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual's identity" (p. 212). From a CRM perspective, understanding consumers' morals, motivations, and moral identity can serve as a basis for a campaign.

He, Zhu, Gouran, and Kolo (2016) expanded this thought by stating, "CRM enables consumers to enact certain social identities, such as moral identity (MI). Moral identity refers to a self-schema organized around a set of moral trait associations, including being caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest and kind" (p. 237).

When a brand has a strong social responsibility image, CRM may activate the regulation of MI centrality on consumer behavior (He et al., 2016). While the brand is somewhat a situational factor influencing behavior, emotions can impact consumer behavior as well. "Similarly, emotional brand attachment—emotionally laden bond between consumers and the brand—may not only have a direct effect on consumers' behavioral responses toward CRM, but also can strengthen the effect of MI on such responses. This is largely attributable to the fact that when consumers are exposed to a brand that activates positive emotions, they are more likely to assess the CRM information in a more positive light and have a broadened scope of attention" (p. 237).

Consumers' decisions are affected by their values. Barbaro (2016) found that consumer buying behavior is significantly influenced by a company's alignment to causes, with 75% of women and 55% of men being more inclined to purchase brands that support a charity. And, younger consumers have greater expectations of companies now than previous generations. Young consumers are prone to follow companies and brands, and often drive what information they receive, which impacts the benefit of having a relationship with a company.

Moral identity is relevant when addressing the question of this study, "What do college students value regarding purchases and cause marketing?" They want to be informed about relevant issues, and they are very concerned with their identity and outward image to others via social media. They begin somewhat branding themselves from an early age and are very aware of others' branding as well. As such, it is critical for companies to understand what these consumers value, as well as how and why they make decisions, if they are going to connect with them. Not understanding these consumers could be a very quick way to distance them. "Products and brands they purchase are viewed not just as utilitarian, but as reflections of their personalities and values" (Hwang & Griffiths, 2017.).

According to Acton (2017), "Millennials do not see themselves as fans. They see themselves as active participants, able to shape opinions and inform the conversation. Their parents were fans. They are players and see themselves as owners of the things they choose to engage with." As such, not only do they seek and expect information, but they also feel empowered to become engaged, make decisions, and, ultimately, have an impact.

Influence and Impact

The Impact of Cause-Related Marketing on Branding

According to the blog *Engage for Good* (2019), cause-related marketing is growing quickly because it works. Cause sponsorship is expected to reach over \$2.23 billion in 2019. The blog goes on to state:

- 64% of consumers choose, switch, avoid or boycott a brand based on its stand on societal issues;
- 86% of consumers believe that companies should take a stand for social issues and 64% of those who said it's 'extremely important' for a company to take a stand on a social issue said they were 'very likely' to purchase a product;

- Nearly 2/3 of millennials and Gen Z express a preference for brands that have a point of view and stand for something;
- 76% of young people said they have purchased (53%) or would consider purchasing (23%) a brand/product to show support for issues the brand supported;
- 67% of young people have stopped purchasing (40%) or would consider doing so (27%) if the company stood for something or behaved in a way that didn't align to their values.

Cause-related marketing creates an opportunity for companies to develop their brand by connecting with customers and causes; it taps into consumers' morals. "Not only does a cause-related marketing strategy mold a company's brand image, it also increases production sales through moral obligation" (Albert, 2014).

Consumers today want to be well-informed and are increasingly getting their news from social media (Maceli & Wachter, 2016). Because consumers expect companies to be good citizens, CRM and social media are viable platforms to create credibility as a caring, responsible, organization. The social responsibility activity of cause-related marketing attracts significant attention, as well as billions of dollars each year, because of the types of causes and the positive effect it has on consumers.

According to Chaabane and Parguel (2016), corporate social responsibility promotes the ideas of ethical values regarding people, the community, and the environment:

It draws its effectiveness from its warm-glow effect, the emotional benefit derived from helping a good cause through a cause-related marketing purchase. The size of the donation is a critical factor in this understanding for three reasons. First, donation size is important in producing the warm glow. Second, donation size is a key trigger for consumer participation in cause-related marketing campaigns, as sufficiently large donations are essential to concretely support the cause. Third, donation size is an execution feature that is easy to operationalize and directly controllable by managers (p. 608).

Branding plays an essential role in identifying and differentiating products and services. Brands become symbols to or signals of product positioning and help customers to choose (Alcañiz, Cacers, & Perez, 2010). Cause-related marketing is more than a single cause campaign; it is part of the brand personality. However, it is critical that the company's internal values be consistent with the supported cause to have a positive impact on the brand and cause.

An example of the impact of CRM to branding, and vice versa, is the success of Facebook's campaign in 2014-2015. At the end of 2014, Facebook announced plans to join in the fight against the Ebola virus. Facebook added a "donate" button at the top of its news feed for its "Stop Ebola" campaign. Facebook also launched an informational campaign and a donation of Internet and telecommunications infrastructure to support remote areas affected by the disease. Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg personally pledged \$25 million to the Ebola campaign (Waters, 2015). These efforts made Facebook a leader in CRM. The company also aligned itself with critical issues around the world and partnered with organizations such as UNICEF, NetHope, and the Red Cross. Facebook's alliances positively impacted its brand personality, consumers' perception of the brand, and perhaps, most importantly, the value of the company. Facebook stock finished 2015 about 35% higher than it began. Overall, the company's shares were up 230% since going public in 2012 (Sparks, 2015).

Facebook's success at this time was driven in part by its ability to grow its user base, grow profits, and develop platforms. These platforms shaped the company and the public's use of these platforms. *Messenger* and *Groups* were two of the company's most prominent platforms, with 700 million and 925 million monthly active users. Zuckerberg was able to build trust with his investors. "The CEO is proving how adept the social network is at monetizing platforms as he rolls out the first stages of business-to-consumer interactions that will eventually turn *Messenger* into a business in its own right. And the company's deployment of ad products on Instagram continues to look like a success" (Waters, 2015).

The Importance of Cause Fit/Alignment to the Company

Successful cause-related marketing campaigns require the marketing effort to appeal to the emotions of the target market. As such, CRM again comes back to understanding consumers' values and lifestyles. For example, someone who is buying dog or cat food most likely owns a dog or cat. Therefore, a cause-related marketing campaign to raise money for animal shelters is likely to appeal to the feelings of the same target market.

Some consumers are inherently skeptical of the intentions of the company for aligning with a cause. The company's values have to be consistent with the supported cause or the relationship may appear gimmicky--authenticity matters. There is also the possibility that one party will do something that hurts its reputation and, as a result, damages the other party's reputation as well. Overuse of causes in corporate promotions can cause backlash among

consumers. The website *Business in the Community* stated (2016), “So you have to be very careful about how you promote your CRM programs - shout too loud or too quietly you'll lose the audience. [You] need to use difference, not volume, to stand out.”

An example of a partnership that did not fit well was that of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and the *Susan G. Komen for a Cure* breast cancer nonprofit organization. According to Marie (2013), *Susan G. Komen* partnered with KFC in a campaign known as *Buckets for the Cure*. In this campaign, KFC would donate fifty cents per bucket ordered to research for breast cancer. However, the campaign was a misfit and an inauthentic relationship. The partnership was raising money for cancer research by selling meals that were not considered “healthy” by United States’ standards. The meals averaged 2400 calories and 160 grams of fat per chicken bucket. Not only did the campaign fail, but the *Susan G. Komen* organization was questioned regarding the amount of donations, which was about 20%, actually going toward medical research. At the same time, the organization’s CEO had a visibly high salary, which diluted the meaningfulness of the donations. The scandal hurt the reputation and morale of both parties. Consumers no longer trusted the nonprofit and questioned KFC’s motives for the partnership.

Another example of a failed CRM program was Starbucks’ *Race Together*, which attempted to bridge racial barriers in communities through awareness and discussion. Chairman and CEO Howard Schultz wrote, “*Race Together* is an initiative from Starbucks and USA Today to stimulate conversation, compassion and action around race in America” (Claveria, 2015).

The Starbuck’s initiative encouraged the company’s baristas to start a discussion with their customers about race relations by writing “#RaceTogether” on coffee cups. Consumer response was not positive. Shortly after beginning the campaign, complaints quickly followed via social media. There was no connection between race issues and coffee, and as a result, the campaign gave customers the feeling that Starbucks was using a social issue for financial gain. Once customer commented, “The problem with the campaign also goes a bit deeper with the perceived or, lack of, authenticity with it, when Starbucks themselves, have 19 ‘Leaders’ listed on their corporate website and of those, there's only 3 women and 4 minorities (1 woman covering both categories). Starbucks wants its customers to engage about Race, but they've failed to do so at the highest ranks of their company” (Claveria, 2015).

So how does a company go about being seen as authentic by consumers? Transparency is a key factor to credibility and can earn customers' trust and loyalty. According to Langen, Grebitus, and Hartmann (2010):

Credibility is vital for the success of a CRM campaign. If consumers mistrust the altruistic motives of the firm such a campaign can have a negative influence on the firm's and brand's reputation and might lead to a decline in sales. Especially, if the gap between the sum consumers expect to be contributed and the amount actually spent by the companies is too large this could lead to mistrust among consumers once they become aware of this. In the long run, this might decrease their willingness to pay for those products in general. Also, firms' reputation could be harmed (p. 367).

A perception by consumers of authenticity requires that a cause marketer's motives appear genuine with a credible link to the company's values. The marketer must be able to clearly show a capacity to raise the amount of funding projected and to ensure that a reasonable proportion of the funding goes to the cause.

Millennials—Their Values and Behaviors

According to Weber (2017), "Millennials are defined as individuals born between 1980 and 2000," (p. 517). There are currently about 80 million people falling into this category.

Millennials were the first generation to grow up using the Internet. As such, they have had more access to information than previous generations throughout their lives. This quick access to information, and the increasing dependence on social media, has impacted their values and behaviors (Solomon, Marshall, & Stuart, 2018). "This generation is more global in their perspectives and experiences through social media," (Weber, 2017, p. 520). Millennials are more ethnically diverse, and, subsequently, even more ethnically tolerant than past generations. Overall, their behavior is more impulsive than past generations, and they are focused on experiences and living in the moment. They are waiting to get married and have children, are willing to spend a significant amount of their disposable income on experiences, and are not as concerned as previous generations about owning a home and saving for retirement.

Because millennials comprise about 30% of the population and have values and behaviors different than previous generations, it is critical to understand what motivates them to make a purchase. This "free-spending" group is highly attractive (Solomon, et al.). They

currently have more purchasing power than Baby Boomers; and, they are coming into their prime spending years (Buxton, 2017). Millennials tend to be less inhibited and openly discuss personal matters; they want to express themselves, and even expect to be listened to (Espinoza, 2012). They are focused on the present, often more than the future. So how do you get them to connect to your brand and cause?

Millennials can be difficult to reach depending on the medium; they are resistant to traditional media, such as newspapers and magazines. They do not watch television as much as past generations, and when they do, they often stream and opt out of viewing commercials. “Better methods of reaching this group include social networking, email, online chat rooms, and other digital and social networking methods” (Solomon, et al., 2018, p. 207). Millennials love social media. They have grown up in a social media revolution and embraced it with arms wide open – 43% of Millennials have liked more than 43 brands on Facebook, 63% stay up-to-date on brands via social media and 44% are willing to promote brands on their social networks (Buxton, 2017).

Roughly 58% of millennials say they “love to shop” compared to 40% of adults overall; they spend 8% more on apparel than those aged 35-44 and Millennial women are 83% more likely to enjoy clothes shopping than other groups (Buxton, 2017). Especially relevant to CRM, millennials understand marketing. According to Acton (2017), “They grew up with it. They’re savvy, smart and know a lot of the old marketing tricks. And they don’t like it. They’re attuned to it and weary of it. You must respect their intelligence.”

Millennials’ constant access to information via social media is predicted to have impacted their value systems in a positive way. Meaning, they are expected to place greater value on social causes than past generations (Weber, 2017). “The bottom line is that the future will be defined by the millennial generation. They will be the force that drives the rejuvenation of the U.S. economy, challenges long-held traditions, pushes for increased productivity and demands innovation” (Buxton, 2017). Because of this, it is important to understand their values if one is trying to predict their future behavior. If they do have more information, and it is predicted to influence their behaviors, how will this impact the causes and companies they would like to support?

The Pilot Study

Focus groups and classroom discussions were conducted among college students to better understand how they felt about cause marketing. Then a search for current research papers regarding consumer behavior and social cause marketing was done. The results were combined to come up with a survey to be administered to college students. The survey included close-ended questions regarding their purchase behaviors and open-ended questions regarding what causes they would support.

The goal of the pilot study was to determine if and how cause-related marketing impacted college students' purchases. With millennials being the most "connected" generation to date, how does this knowledge of social issues impact behavior? Their focus on services and experiences differentiates them from previous generations whose main concerns often included security, saving money, and buying a home.

The hypotheses to be explored in the study were:

H1: College students are aware of products associated with social causes.

H2: Social cause products can impact college students' purchase behavior, and they are willing to make purchases to support causes.

H3: College students' purchases of social cause products can impact brand loyalty.

The sample included 146 students from a mid-western university with an annual enrollment of approximately 7,100. Surveys were administered in upper-level classes in the College of Business, with 135 students (92.5%) reporting themselves as 20-24 years of age, 10 students reporting as 25-29 (6.8%), and one student reporting as 30-39 years of age. The sample included 82 males (56.2%) and 64 females (43.8%). Data were only used on students reporting themselves at least 20 years old or older.

Students were asked about their feelings and behaviors regarding cause-related products. A five-point Likert scale was used for the following responses: *1: Never, 2: Not very often, 3: Sometimes, 4: Very often, and 5: Always.* Analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. Correlations were run on the data to determine the strength and direction of relationship variables had on purchasing habits of the college students. The relationships of making a purchase, why they

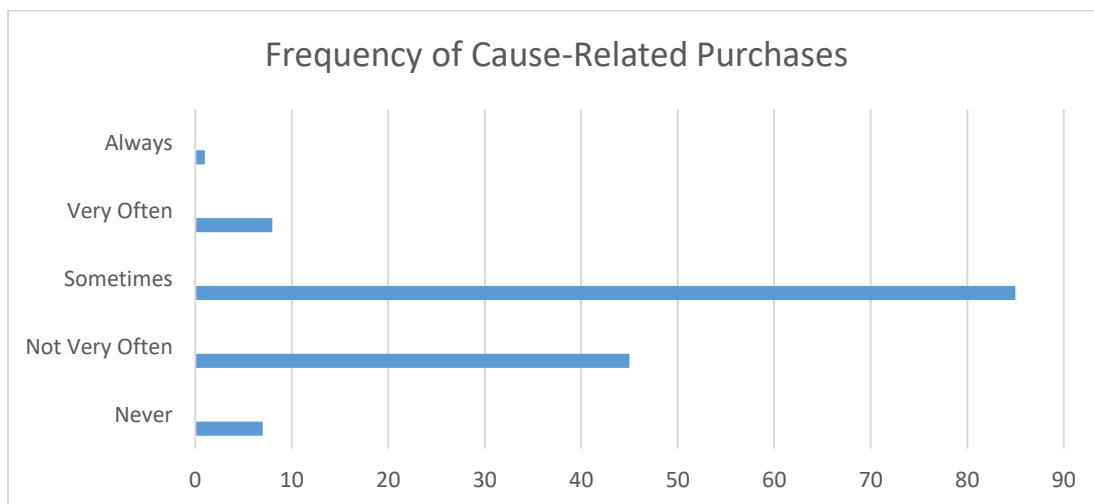
made a purchase, and how they felt about the purchase were explored. They were also asked to list companies or causes they would be likely to support and why.

The relationship of “*I purchase products that are related to some selected social cause*” to the following variables was investigated using a Pearson correlation coefficient:

- *I feel happy when I buy a social cause-related product.*
- *I am impulsive sometimes in buying social cause-related products.*
- *Marketing of a product with a social cause helps to remember that product*
- *It is difficult for another brand to replace a social cause related product/brand.*
- *The brands I purchase reflect my personality.*
- *With different brands of the same price and quality, it is more likely that I will choose the brand that I know is related to a social cause.*
- *I have strong emotions for the brand if it is related to a social cause.*
- *I am very loyal to a brand through good or bad times.*

Results

Frequency analyses indicated that 58.2% of the students purchase cause-related products “*Sometimes*.” Another 31% indicated that they would purchase cause-related products “*Not very often*.” Eight students indicated that they purchase the products “*Very often*” or “*Always*,” while only seven indicated “*Never*.”



Statistically significant correlations existed between *I buy cause-related products* and the variables: *I feel happy when I buy a cause-related product*; *I am impulsive sometimes when*

buying social cause-related products; Marketing of a product with a social cause helps to remember that product; I have strong emotions for a brand if it is related to a social cause; It is difficult for a brand to replace a social cause-related product/brand; With different brands of the same price and quality, it is more likely that I will choose the brand that I know is related to a social cause; and I am very loyal to a brand through good or bad times. (See Table 1. Pearson Product- Moment Correlations for Purchasing Cause-Related Products.) A statistically significant correlation did not exist for the variable: *The brands I purchase reflect my personality.*

Results indicated rejection of the null hypotheses. College students are aware of products associated with social causes. And, they are willing to make purchases to support social causes. These purchases make them happy and help them develop a relationship with a brand. As illustrated in the “Factors to Purchase” chart, happiness is found “Very Often” or “Sometimes” by most of the sample. Their feelings impact their behaviors. Students also indicated a loyalty to brands, even in good times and bad. It is difficult to get them to replace the brand with another once this relationship is formed. This creates an opportunity for many companies and brands. Connect with them, on their terms, with a cause they care about, and they are likely to loyally support the cause.

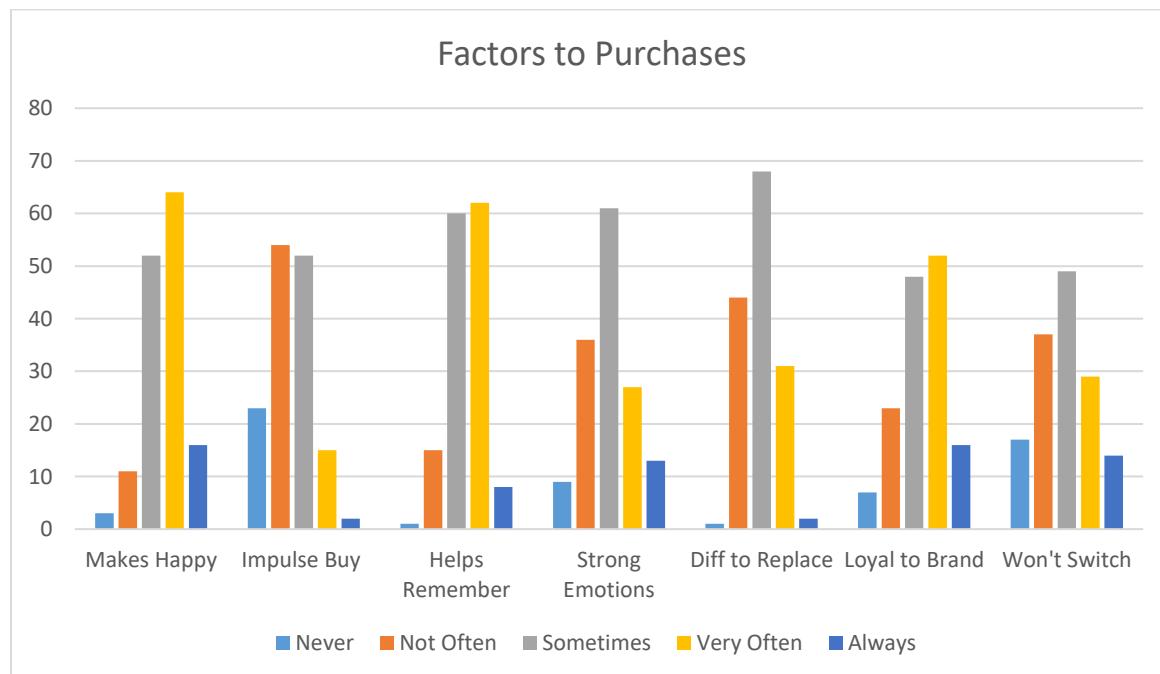


Table 1. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for Purchasing Social Cause Products

| | Strength of Relationship | Significance |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|
| I feel happy when I buy a social cause-related product. | .494 | .000 ** |
| I am impulsive sometimes when buying social cause-related products. | .486 | .000** |
| Marketing of a product with a social cause helps to remember that product | .432 | .000** |
| I have strong emotions for the brand if it is related to a social cause. | .341 | .000** |
| It is very difficult for another brand to replace a social cause-related product/brand. | .277 | .001** |
| I am very loyal to a brand through good times and bad. | .272 | .001** |
| I will not switch to another brand if the brand I use supports a nonprofit organization. | .205 | .013* |
| With different brands of the same price and quality, it is more likely that I will choose the brand that I know is related to social cause. | .204 | .013* |
| The brands I purchase reflect my personality. | .123 | .138 |

**p<.01 (2-tailed) *p<.05 (2-tailed)

In the qualitative section of the survey, students mentioned supporting brands or causes that were important to them personally. Their personal experiences (or that of someone close to them) and exposures to the brand and the cause message had an impact. Many mentioned causes related to health/medical, the environment, and animals. In particular, those who mentioned supporting medical causes discussed how a disease had impacted them and/or their family and why they would like to support the cause. Some students also mentioned that they would like to support more causes in the future when they finish school.

Discussion

The results of the survey were consistent with some parts of the literature review. Millennials are experience focused. As such, feeling happy when buying a social cause-related product is perhaps not surprising. This represents an opportunity for companies and causes. As previously discussed, happiness transforms into the warm glow effect, which helps the students feel good about their purchases long after the actual transaction. By connecting with these consumers at formative times in their lives, companies could develop relationships that continue to grow. Millennials' feelings often pour over to their social media use as well, as many young consumers feel the need to update others on activities, purchases, meals, etc. If buying a cause-related product makes them happy, they are likely to share this experience with others. As such, being able to reach them can greatly impact the success of a brand and cause.

Regarding moral identity, behavior is often driven by morals, experience, and situations. Millennials want to be involved with issues important to them. They also have a work/life balance, which represents an opportunity for companies and causes. They can reach out to these consumers to be involved in causes, not to just donate money. By indicating wanting to purchase more cause-related products after school was completed, the students were demonstrating how their values may impact future actions. And because the causes mentioned were important to them on a personal basis, they were demonstrating the importance of their values, and, consequently, moral identity, to their behavior.

Millennials are also more likely to act impulsively when purchasing cause-related products. The experience-based qualities of this generation lend themselves to the causes of these campaigns. The cause can help them make a purchase decision which they then feel good about. This reduction of cognitive dissonance may make the student more open to support future causes as well. So, even if behaviors indicate that they do not have the same concerns or values regarding the future in the way previous generations had, giving back matters to them, and perhaps being perceived as good citizens or making a difference is the needed incentive to make a purchase decision.

The other significant results were the relationship of *I buy social cause-related products* and *I have strong emotions for the brand if it is related to a social cause; It is very difficult for another brand to replace a social cause-related product/brand; I will not switch to another*

brand if the brand I use supports a nonprofit organization; With different brands of the same price and quality, it is more likely that I will choose the brand that I know is related to social cause.

These results answer some of the questions previously posed. The students value the causes they support and would like to support more in the future. They indicated having brand loyalty because of the causes. Brand loyalty among these consumers is something many companies are striving for, or should be striving for. As such, by understanding and aligning what products they want along with what causes they value, companies could gain more customer loyalty from this demographic. They have an opportunity through technology to identify these consumers and tailor messages to them. Millennials care about their public persona. It is likely that many millennials will become involved in causes, not just donate money. Social responsibility matters to these consumers and will impact their behavior.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the strength of result of *I feel happy when I buy a social cause-related product*, it would be worthwhile to investigate how these consumers assign value to a cause purchase. What is it about that cause that makes them feel good? Are certain products more or less likely to be successful with a cause-related effort? How are these purchases different by generation? Millennials are savvy consumers, focused on experiences, and have high expectations of companies. As such, they will expect more from companies before they become brand loyal.

The result of *"I am impulsive sometimes in buying social cause-related products"* opens up a new area to investigate. Does the social cause override any impulse purchase guilt a consumer may have if it is associated with a cause? How familiar with a brand must they be before making the purchase and supporting the cause? Literature assigns a warm glow effect as impactful to purchase. Do consumers continue to feel happy about purchases that were impulsive if they were related to a social cause? What factors post-purchase become important? Since impulse purchases can create cognitive dissonance in some consumers, how can that be overcome with cause marketing? Does there have to be a bigger reward for these purchases, or, perhaps, supporting the cause while getting a coveted product outweighs any negative feelings associated with the purchase?

One limitation to this study was that not all of the sample currently gave to causes. Though many expressed an interest to support causes in the future, this lack of experience could

impact how they responded to the questions. Another limitation to this study was the somewhat narrow age range of the sample. Because millennials span different decades, it is challenging to make implications about the entire generation. Society's technology and values have changed rapidly throughout their lives, perhaps even more so than with previous generations.

Conclusion

The potential of cause-related marketing, especially to millennials, is still waiting for marketers to explore. Companies can no longer reach customers through just the use of advertising, coupons, mass emails, and punch cards. To stay relevant, retain customers, and generate new business in today's market, companies need to rethink their strategies to engage consumers. The purchasing power of young generations cannot be ignored. The values and behaviors of these consumers are already impacting the marketplace. And, their use of social media makes the potential impact even greater.

Simply put, cause-related marketing should be a strategic goal. To be done effectively, CRM requires careful planning and execution, and must fit both the company and the nonprofit organization. The relationship of companies and causes must be authentic, but, most importantly, they must recognize what consumers value.

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