

# CAUSE RELATED MARKETING: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CONGURENCE WITH REFERENCE TO ITC

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## **Abstract:**

*Cause related marketing is been given more importance in arena of marketing as a strategy. This paper objective is to study the effectiveness of the campaign in the light of the relationship between brand, cause and customer fit and its influence on the attitude towards company – cause alliance and on purchase intention, brand. The study was conducted among the PG students of Andhra Pradesh region in India. The study (Students of 252, among boys of 148 and girls of 104) demonstrate that company – Cause fit improves the attitude towards the company – cause alliance and increase purchase intent. The effect is enhanced under conditions of customer – company and customer – cause congruence, and the customers overall attitude toward the sponsoring company.*

*Key words:* cause, marketing, customers.

## **Introduction:**

The cause related marketing used by P&G India is a perfect example. The company is collecting the money from each purchase of its product to the building of schools for the children in rural area. ITC Company collects the money from the product sale of its classmate product (Note Book) to enhance the child welfare. This type of corporate charitable donation is known as cause related marketing. The programme designed to create a partnership between a sponsoring firm and a non – profit cause to raise money through product sales (Varadarajan and Menon 1988).

The increasing strategic importance and consumer relevance of such socially responsible marketing initiatives is evidenced in the results of

a Cone and Roper consumer survey (Cone Inc., 2004). Approximately 80 percent of consumers surveyed stated corporations who support a cause generate greater trust, 86 percent said they would switch brands to a cause-supporting product when faced with a choice of equal product price and quality, and 85 percent said the company's commitment to a social cause was important when deciding whom to do business with in their local community.

These results suggest that while marketing in general is focused on the process of selling, influencing and persuading the end user to purchase a product, companies feel compelled to serve and satisfy the human needs of their customers (Kotler and Levy, 1969) and of their other internal and external publics (Kotler, 1972), both out of obligation to society, and to achieve positive consumer rewards. Cause related marketing allows the marketer to reach these publics and help consumers differentiate one company from the other by tying a company's "economic activity to a higher social purpose". (Kotler and levy, 1969, p.15).

But how do companies ensure the success of such corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, specifically in the case of using Cause related marketing campaigns? Research in marketing addressing this question generally falls into two categories:

1. The effect of company- cause fit on purchase intention.
2. The degree of congruence between the customers and the company, as perceived by the customer.

This paper examines the impact of the exchange between the customer, company and the cause in cause related marketing by utilizing the knowledge from these two principle literature streams. The framework proposed here suggests that two keys factors play an instrumental role in predicting the success of a Cause related marketing campaign in terms of generating purchase intent for the sponsored product: company- cause fit and customer identification with both the company and the cause. The study of PG students ( 252 students) from different parts of Andhra Pradesh provide empirical evidence for the importance of the these two components of successful Cause related marketing campaign.

### Research Methodology:

The research is conducted through an experimental design. The print advertisement is shown to group of respondents (252 students) and administered questionnaire to measure the variables Company-Cause fit, Company-Customer fit, Cause-Customer attitude and Purchase Intention. The questionnaire is designed with likert 7-point rating scale. Company-cause, Cause-Customer and Company-Cause variables are measured with five items, Company Attitude and Purchase Intention are measured through four items each.

The sampling method followed for the study is Snowball sampling (Non Probabilistic). The collected data has been analyzed using F-test (hypothesis testing) and ANOVA.

### Conceptual frame work:

In a paper on cause related marketing Varadarajan and Menon (1988, p. 60) offer the more comprehensive definition of Cause related marketing conceptualization.

*“ Cause related marketing<sup>1</sup> is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy*

*organizational and individual objectives” – by Varadarajan and Menon (1988).*

Among the other benefits to the sponsoring company, cause related marketing programme can generate favorable purchase intent or product choice among the sponsoring firm customers (shell 1989; Lawrence 1993; Mohr 2001) and favorable customer attitudes towards the brand (Ross., 1990-1991, 1992; Brown and Dacin, 1997). For the charity make relationship through the Cause related marketing program can benefit more funds and public awareness. (Caesar, 1986; Varadarajan and Menon 1988).Customer benefit by gaining a sense of additional perceived value to their purchase and satisfying their altruistic needs of the self by helping society (Polonsky and wood, 2001)

It is proposed that to maximize these benefits, sponsoring firm should carefully consider several important variables

- The degree of company – cause fit in the minds of customer
- The level of customer identification with the company; and
- The level of customer identification with the selected cause.

### Company cause fit

The company cause fit is explained through example of ITC were the company sponsors the child welfare through the sale of its stationary brand class mate were the company is in stationary business is having perfect fit with the education of children in rural area. This condition argues for the importance of fit between the company and the sponsored cause in a cause-related marketing alliance. Fit is defined as the perceived link between the company's image, positioning and target market and the cause's image and constituency (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; Ellen et al., 2000). Sponsorship researchers have highlighted the importance of fit between the sponsor and the event (Speed and Thompson, 2000), while results from the popular press suggest that to maximize cause-related marketing results, the sponsoring firm should select a cause that is compatible with its identity

and is compelling to the firm's target market (e.g. Higgins, 1986; Shell, 1989; Larson, 1994). Therefore, greater fit between company and cause in the cause-related marketing alliance should lead to a more favorable response to the alliance in the form of a favorable evaluation, either through the process of positive associations developed as a result of partnering with a cause, or through elaboration of the company's public identity based on this association:

*H1. Consumer attitude towards the company-cause fit will be more positive when company-cause fit will be high.*

In the case of cause-related marketing initiatives, having a positive attitude towards the fit should correspond to a positive evaluation of the sponsored product, leading eventually to an increased intent to purchase. This follows reports from consumers demonstrating that supporting a cause that the customer finds meaningful makes customers more likely to purchase a product associated with the cause (Cone Inc, 2004).

*H2. When consumer attitude toward the company-cause fit is high, intent to purchase the sponsored product will be positive.*

### **Customer congruence with company and cause:**

This paper studies that the customer intent to purchase the product and to develop positive attitude towards the company and its brand depends upon the congruence of the customer in respect of the company and as well as the cause to which the company is promoting its product. The support for this hypothesis is seen in the literature stated by the authors. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003, p. 228) explains the organizational identification literature developed within the context of the work organization to explain customer identification with companies, arguing that "as consumers learn more about and develop relationships with not just products but also the producing organizations, they may identify with some such organizations even in the absence of formal membership". It is also suggested that CSR actions, such as cause-related

marketing initiatives, rather than corporate ability (CA) attributes, enhance the organizational identification process between companies and their customers by helping to communicate the company's identity to the targeted customers. By matching with a particular cause, companies can verbally and non-verbally symbolize their values (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and communicate their identity (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001) to customers, building a cognitive and affective component (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000) of identity in the minds of targeted customers. This allows customers to see the cause association choice the company makes, and through this choice, evaluate at least one aspect of the company's identity in the marketplace. This identification translates, in many cases, to behaviors such as donating (Bhattacharya et al., 1995) or other actions that offer no reward to the individual but benefit the larger organization, (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Based on this research, it is proposed that:

*H3a. The positive influence of high attitude toward the company cause fit on consumer purchase intent will be stronger when company – customer congruence is high.*

*H3b. The positive influence of high attitude toward the company cause fit on consumer purchase intent will be stronger when cause – customer congruence is high.*

### **Results**

The survey has been done among the students of total 252, among boys of 148 (58%) and girls of 104(42%) with an average age of 21 years. The survey measured the following variables: company-cause fit, customer-company congruence, customer-cause congruence, attitude toward the company cause fit, and purchase intent.

Respondents were given the brief description of the Cause of building schools for rural poor children as it is related to the student population and was considered to be non controversial with respect to the issue it supported. ITC as a provider of stationery items

was a stimulus company used. Company description is given in the perspective of its corporate social responsibility attributes were been given, the respondents were limited with the above information without discussing its contribution done to the cause. Respondents saw only that a sale of a book will contribute one rupee to construct a school for poor and rural children.

Responses for the assessment of company-cause fit between ITC and cause were split into two categories based on mean response to company-cause fit ( $M = 3.214$ ). A means test assessing the company cause fit responses between the high fit condition and the low fit condition showed a significant difference between the two conditions ( $M_{\text{High-fit}} = 3.87$  and  $M_{\text{low-fit}} = 2.2$ ,  $1 = \text{low company cause fit}$  and  $5 = \text{high company cause fit}$ ,  $t = -21.32$ ,  $df = 250$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ).

H1 stated when company cause fit is high, consumer attitude toward the fit will be positive. Analysis of variance showed this is supported ( $F(1,249) = 20.34$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ,  $M_{\text{High-fit}} = 4.12$  and  $M_{\text{low-fit}} = 3.97$ ). Results for all the hypotheses are summarized in Table I.

H2 stated that when consumer attitude toward the company cause fit is high, intent to purchase the sponsored product will be high. The Responses for the attitude toward company-cause fit were split into two categories based on mean response to attitude towards the fit ( $M = 4.36$ ). A means test comparing the high attitude toward the fit condition and low attitude toward fit condition showed a significant difference between the two conditions ( $M_{\text{High-attitude toward fit}} = 4.67$  and  $M_{\text{low-attitude toward fit}} = 4.32$ ,  $1 = \text{low company cause fit}$  and  $5 = \text{high company cause fit}$ ,  $t = 9.932$ ,  $df = 250$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). Analysis of variance showed this is supported ( $F(1,249) = 9.87$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.004$ ,  $M_{\text{High-fit}} = 4.56$  and  $M_{\text{low-fit}} = 3.45$ ). Indicating the more positive attitude toward the company- cause fit, the more likely the customer is to purchase the sponsored product.

H3a examined the moderating influence of company customer congruence, stating that the

positive influence of a high attitude toward company-cause fit on purchase intent is stronger when company-customer congruence is high than when it is low. In order to explore this hypothesis, the responses to company-customer congruence were split into thirds, with the top third representing those respondents who assessed a high level of company-customer congruence ( $n = 91$ ), and the bottom third representing those who assessed a low level of company-customer congruence ( $n = 88$ ). As the data were normally distributed, this technique was used to generate the maximum contrast between high and low fit conditions. T-test results between the high and low company-customer congruence conditions demonstrated a significant difference between these two conditions ( $M_{\text{High company - customer congruence}} = 4.214$ ,  $M_{\text{Low company - customer congruence}} = 2.216$ ,  $t = 28.107$ ,  $df = 167$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). ANOVA results examining the influence of the moderating variable, company-customer congruence, on the effect of attitude toward the company cause fit on purchase intent showed a non-significant interaction ( $F(1, 167) = 0.879$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.467$ ) between attitude toward the company-cause fit and company customer congruence. There was no difference in purchase intent for the high company-customer congruence condition ( $M_{\text{High attitude toward the company - cause fit}} = 4.347$ ,  $M_{\text{Low attitude toward the company - cause fit}} = 4.268$ ) versus for the low company-customer congruence condition ( $M_{\text{High attitude toward the company - cause fit}} = 4.167$ ,  $M_{\text{Low attitude toward the company - cause fit}} = 3.92$ ), indicating no support for H3a.

H3b examined the moderating influence of customer-cause congruence, stating that the positive influence of high attitude toward the company-cause fit on purchase intent is stronger when the customer-cause congruence is high. This hypothesis was also not supported. Following the same technique used for H2a, the sample was split into thirds based on the respondent's answers assessing the level of congruence between themselves and construction of school for poor and rural children. T-test results showed significant differences between

these conditions ( $M_{\text{High customer - Company Congruence}} = 3.89$ ,  $M_{\text{Low customer - Company Congruence}} = 1.923$ ,  $t = 27.819$ ,  $df = 167$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). ANOVA results showed a non-significant interaction ( $F(1, 167) = 0.576$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.434$ ) between company-cause congruence and company-cause fit. There was no difference in attitude toward the company-cause fit for the high customer-cause fit

### Inference

Results from the study offer a variety of interesting findings for managers pursuing a cause-related marketing promotional strategy as part of their product's overall promotional plan. First, the results provide empirical evidence that company cause fit is important, as consumer attitude toward the fit and purchase intent are more positive when company-cause fit is high. This confirms the results of the study conducted by Lafferty et al. (2004) and indicates that consumers prefer that the company-cause connection in a cause-related marketing campaign "make sense" to them as they are making purchasing decisions. Contrary to our expectations, the moderating influence of customer-company congruence was not supported. These results could be related to several factors. First, the student sample almost unanimously indicated their intent to support the cause-related marketing alliance through a positive intent to purchase the sponsored product, as purchase responses from both the high and low attitude toward the fit conditions means were above the midpoint of 3.5. Second, despite the fact that there was a significant difference between low and high company customer congruence conditions, it is possible that both categories of subjects felt a strong emotional connection to ITC (classmate) as a brand, and thus were willing to purchase the product equally under both conditions. Third, subjects were presented with a single company stimulus, and were exposed to the company-cause fit information in a quick and specific sequence. In the marketplace, consumers are more likely to be exposed to be to such information in a varied order and over multiple time periods, or might be exposed to a wide variety of cause-related

marketing campaign information offered by different companies simultaneously.

A potential explanation for the lack of significant findings for the degree of customer-cause congruence may be that in general, consumers view most causes positively, and therefore are very willing to support these organizations, regardless of their affiliation with a particular company. It is possible that even if the cause is not one that the consumer identifies with or feels strongly about, a more "negative" assessment (less company-cause fit) will not affect purchase intent, as the customer will always reward a company's intended good works. Additionally, the nature of the cause selected for the study could also have influenced the results. Therefore, it may have been difficult for the respondent to have a negative attitude toward the alliance because of the nature of the cause

Finally, this study showed that consumer intention to purchase the sponsored product was stronger under the condition of more positive attitude toward the company-cause fit than in the condition of a more negative attitude toward the fit. From the manager's perspective, this suggests that the closer the fit between the company and the cause the more favorable the consumer attitude toward the fit and subsequent participation via purchase of the sponsored product. Fit matters, then, and must be considered when selecting a cause related marketing partner.

### Conclusion

In summary, this paper started with the idea that consumers tend to spend a reasonable amount of cognitive effort considering and comparing their own identity and how it relates to the sponsoring company and related cause in a cause-related marketing campaign. Results show that consumers rely not only on these cognitive processes, but also on the affective perceptions of the sponsoring company, and on the general fit between the company and the sponsored cause. The strength of the consumer sample used in the second study of this research lends credence to these findings, and suggests that marketing

managers should focus on the basics when developing a cause-related marketing campaign: build a general positive feeling toward their brand, pick a cause that makes sense to the consumer to be a partner in the alliance, and make sure that the consumer does not think that your company is exploiting the alliance through too much promotion.

TABLE 1:

Hypothesis	F value	df	p-value	Results
H1	20.34	(1,249)	0.000	Supported
H2	9.87	(1,249)	0.004	Supported
H3a	0.879	(1.167)	0.467	Not Supported
H3b	0.567	(1.167)	0.434	Not Supported

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