



The role of cause involvement, attitude toward cause-related marketing and perceived motivations in predicting consumers' intentions to participate in a CRM campaign

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Although cause-related marketing (CRM) campaigns can result in positive responses from consumers and increased purchase intentions (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006), in recent years there has been a backlash towards these campaigns. Critics of CRM question the transparency of the alliance and whether the firm is partnering with the cause to help it (other-serving motivations) or to simply increase their profits (self-serving motivations). As consumers are exposed to CRM on store shelves and in the media, they form their attitude toward CRM. The current study suggests that both perceived motivations and attitude toward CRM influence consumer's attitude toward a given CRM campaign (campaign attitude), which influences their intentions to participate in that campaign (participation intentions). Furthermore, Gupta & Pirsch (2006) found that consumers' involvement with the cause influences their participation intentions, but this study investigates whether the effect is through their perceived motivations and campaign attitude. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to propose and test a conceptual model that depicts structural relationships between key antecedents of consumers' campaign attitude and participation intentions upon exposure to a CRM campaign. The model is based on current literature, attribution theory and the theory of reasoned action. Attribution theory supports the notion that upon exposure to a campaign, consumers may attribute a reason to explain why the brand partnered with the cause (other-serving versus self-serving motivations) (Kelley, 1980). The theory of reasoned action supports the notion that consumer's campaign attitude may influence their participation intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Based on this framework, it was hypothesized: (H1) Brand motivations will be perceived as a) more other-serving and b) less self-serving when attitude toward CRM is high than when it is low. (H2) Brand motivations will be perceived as a) more other-serving and b) less self-serving when cause involvement is high than when it is low. (H3) Campaign attitude will be more favorable when the perceived brand motivations are a) more other-serving and b) less self-serving. (H4) Perceived a) other-serving and b) self-serving motivations mediate the effect of attitude toward CRM on campaign attitude. (H5) Perceived a) other-serving and b) self-serving motivations mediate the effect of cause involvement on campaign attitude. (H6) Participation intentions will be more favorable when campaign attitude is high than when it is low.

An online survey was administered to test the relationships between the variables in the hypothesized model. The sample consisted of 745 participants ranging in age from 18-76. A fictitious advertisement was created by the researcher describing a hypothetical CRM campaign between Eddie Bauer and The Nature Conservancy. Cause involvement was measured by a scale from Zaichkowsky (1994). Attitude toward CRM was measured by a scale created by the researcher. Perceived brand motivations were measured by a scale adapted from Rifon, Choi,

Trimble, and Li (2004). Participation intentions were measured by a scale from Folse, Niedrich, and Grau, 2010).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation was employed to test the fit of the proposed model and the relationships between the variables. Although the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 2313$, $df = 423$, $p < .001$) did not support a good fit of the model, the incremental fit indices met or exceeded .90 (CFI = .91, TLI = .90, IFI = .91), and the RMSEA (.077) suggested an acceptable fit of the model. Higher attitude toward CRM resulted in more perceived other-serving motivations ($\beta^* = .66$) and less self-serving motivations ($\beta^* = -.19$), supporting H1. H2 was rejected. Higher cause involvement resulted in more self-serving motivations ($\beta^* = .1$, $p < .05$) rather than less, and cause involvement had no significant influence on perceived other-serving motivations ($\beta^* = .05$, $p = .17$). H3 was partially supported. Campaign attitude was significantly impacted by other-serving motivations ($\beta^* = .67$), but was not influenced by self-serving motivations ($\beta^* = .03$, $p = .29$). A more favorable campaign attitude led to greater intentions to participate in the campaign ($\beta^* = .75$), supporting H6. The Sobel (1982) test measured the mediation of perceived motivations on attitude toward CRM and campaign attitude (H5). Results supported (H5a) mediation of other-serving motivations between attitude toward CRM and campaign attitude ($z = 9.68$, $p < .001$). Due to the non-significant effects of self-serving motivations on campaign attitude and of cause involvement on other-serving motivations, H4b, H5b and H4a, respectively were rejected without further analysis.

Attitude toward CRM and cause involvement influence self-serving motivations, but these motivations do not impact campaign attitude. Thus, if consumers perceive self-serving motives it is unlikely to affect their views of the campaign or participation intentions. Results demonstrate the importance of attitude toward CRM in the success of a CRM campaign. When consumers have a more favorable attitude toward CRM they tend to perceive that the brand had more other-serving motivations, resulting in a more favorable campaign attitude and higher participation intentions. Consumers' attitude toward CRM is formed not just from one campaign but from all campaigns they encounter. Therefore, all firms practicing CRM can contribute to consumers' favorable attitudes toward CRM by being transparent about policies of the campaign.

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