

## **Cause-Related Marketing Communications in the Indian Context: A Historical Research**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has emerged as a prominent strategy employed by companies worldwide to enhance their brand image and engage consumers by aligning with social causes. While extensive research on CRM exists in a global context, there is a paucity of studies that specifically explore its historical development and impact in the Indian market. This historical research analysis aims to fill this gap by examining the evolution of cause-related marketing communications in the Indian context.

The study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing archival research, content analysis, and interviews with key industry experts to uncover the historical trajectory of CRM in India. It traces the roots of CRM campaigns in the country, starting from their nascent stages to their current prominence in the marketing landscape. Additionally, the study investigates the factors that have influenced the growth and adoption of CRM in India, such as socio-cultural dynamics, economic factors, and regulatory frameworks.

Findings from the analysis indicate that cause-related marketing communications in India have experienced significant transformations over the years. Initially, CRM campaigns were sporadic and primarily driven by corporate philanthropy. However, as corporate social responsibility gained prominence, companies began integrating cause-related initiatives into their marketing strategies more systematically.

Moreover, the study reveals that Indian consumers are increasingly responsive to CRM campaigns, with a growing recognition of the role they play in addressing

societal issues. Factors such as heightened awareness, changing consumer values, and a desire for social impact have contributed to the success of CRM initiatives in India.

The implications of this research extend to both academia and industry. By examining the historical development of CRM in the Indian context, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that have shaped its trajectory. This knowledge can assist marketers in formulating effective cause-related marketing strategies in the Indian market and contribute to the academic discourse on CRM by providing a unique perspective from an emerging economy.

**Keywords:** cause-related marketing, Indian context, historical research, marketing communications, consumer behaviour

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a strategic approach in marketing that focuses on the alignment of a company's products or services with a social cause or issue. This marketing strategy has gained significant attention worldwide due to its potential to benefit both businesses and society. In the Indian context, cause-related marketing communications have evolved over the years, reflecting the changing dynamics of the country's socio-cultural and economic landscape.

India, with its vast population and diverse social challenges, offers a unique environment for cause-related marketing initiatives. Over time, companies operating in India have recognized the importance of incorporating social responsibility into their business strategies to enhance brand image, increase consumer loyalty, and contribute to the welfare of society. As a result, cause-related marketing communications have emerged as an effective tool to address social issues while meeting business objectives.

Benefits of CRM for companies in India:

- Increased brand awareness: CRM campaigns can help to raise awareness of a company's brand and its commitment to social responsibility.
- Improved customer relationships: CRM campaigns can help to build stronger relationships with customers by showing them that the company cares about more than just making a profit.

- Increased sales: CRM campaigns can help to increase sales by encouraging customers to buy from companies that they believe are making a positive impact on society.
- Reduced costs: CRM campaigns can help to reduce costs by offsetting the cost of marketing and advertising with donations to charity.

Challenges associated with CRM in India:

- Lack of awareness: Many Indian consumers are not aware of CRM or its benefits.
- Lack of trust: Some Indian consumers are not comfortable with the idea of companies using social causes to sell products.
- Lack of regulation: There is no clear regulation of CRM in India, which can lead to confusion and abuse.

This historical research analysis aims to provide insights into the evolution of cause-related marketing communications in the Indian context. By examining the development of this marketing strategy over time, we can understand its impact on Indian consumers, society, and businesses. Additionally, this analysis will shed light on the factors that have influenced the adoption and implementation of cause-related marketing in India.

To conduct this research analysis, a comprehensive study of relevant literature, case studies, and empirical data are undertaken. The historical perspective is crucial in understanding the progression of cause-related marketing in India, starting from its early stages to its current state. Furthermore, this analysis delves into the key campaigns, partnerships, and initiatives that have shaped the cause-related marketing landscape in India.

By exploring the historical development of cause-related marketing communications in India, this research analysis aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of marketing and corporate social responsibility. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for businesses, marketers, and policymakers seeking to understand the effectiveness of cause-related marketing in the Indian context and devise strategies to create meaningful social impact while achieving business goals.

In the following sections, we will delve into the historical context of cause-related marketing in India, examining its early stages and tracing its evolution over time. By analyzing the key trends, challenges, and successes in cause-related marketing communications, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of its significance and potential in the Indian market.

### **Evolution of Cause-Related Marketing in India:**

Cause-related marketing (CRM) campaigns in India are typically focused on social causes that are relevant to the Indian audience. Some of the most common causes that are supported by CRM campaigns in India include:

- Education
- Health
- Poverty
- Environment
- Gender equality
- Disability
- Animal welfare

CRM campaigns in India can take a variety of forms, including:

- **Donation-based campaigns:** In these campaigns, customers are encouraged to donate money to a charity in exchange for a product or service.
- **Awareness-raising campaigns:** In these campaigns, the focus is on raising awareness about a social cause. This can be done through advertising, social media, or other forms of communication.
- **Product-based campaigns:** In these campaigns, a company donates a portion of the proceeds from the sale of a product to a charity.

CRM campaigns in India have been successful in raising money and awareness for a variety of social causes. They have also helped to build brand awareness and goodwill for the companies that participate in them.

**Early Stages (Pre-2000s):** Prior to the 2000s, cause-related marketing was relatively limited in India, with only a few isolated instances of collaboration between businesses and nonprofit organizations. Companies primarily focused on corporate

social responsibility (CSR) activities, such as philanthropy and community development, rather than incorporating cause-related marketing into their marketing strategies. Emergence and Growth (2000s): In the early 2000s, CRM started gaining momentum in India as businesses recognized the potential benefits of aligning with social causes.

The increasing consumer awareness of social issues and demand for socially responsible businesses contributed to the growth of CRM. Several campaigns emerged during this period, focusing on issues like education, healthcare, women empowerment, and environmental conservation.

**Key Cause-Related Marketing Campaigns in India:**

**Project Shakti by Hindustan Unilever Limited (2001):**

- Hindustan Unilever launched Project Shakti, a rural entrepreneurship initiative, in partnership with women's self-help groups.
- The campaign aimed to empower rural women by providing them with training, micro-credit, and products to sell in their communities.
- This campaign demonstrated how a business could create social impact while also expanding its market reach.

**Tata Tea's "Jaago Re" Campaign (2008):**

- Tata Tea launched the "Jaago Re" campaign, focusing on awakening civic consciousness among Indian citizens.
- The campaign highlighted various social issues, including corruption, voting rights, and gender equality, encouraging citizens to take action.
- It successfully engaged consumers by blending social messages with the brand's identity and received widespread recognition.

**Lifebuoy's "Help a Child Reach 5" Campaign (2012):**

- Lifebuoy, a hygiene and skincare brand, initiated the "Help a Child Reach 5" campaign to raise awareness about handwashing and reduce child mortality due to preventable diseases.
- The campaign involved educating communities about proper handwashing techniques and providing soap to schools and children in need.

- It effectively combined a social cause with the brand's core mission, resulting in increased brand loyalty and positive societal impact.

#### P&G "Shiksha" - 2013-present:

- Procter & Gamble's "P&G Shiksha" initiative aims to provide education to underprivileged children in India.
- Through this campaign, P&G partners with NGOs and encourages consumers to support the cause by purchasing P&G products.
- A portion of the sales proceeds is allocated to building schools and supporting educational infrastructure.

#### Google - Internet Saathi (2015):

- Google's Internet Saathi campaign aimed to bridge the digital divide in rural India by training women to become digital literacy educators.
- Google partnered with NGOs to provide bicycles equipped with internet-enabled devices to these women, enabling them to impart digital skills and knowledge to their communities.
- The campaign focused on empowering women and promoting digital inclusion.

#### Vicks - Touch of Care (2017):

- Vicks, a Procter & Gamble brand, launched the Touch of Care campaign to challenge social stigmas and promote inclusivity.
- The campaign featured the story of a transgender mother and her adopted daughter and aimed to raise awareness about transgender rights and acceptance in society.
- It received widespread recognition and appreciation for its powerful messaging.

#### HUL -Start a Little Good (2018):

- The campaign aims to promote sustainability, social responsibility, and positive impact on society through various initiatives.

- The key objective of the "Start a Little Good" campaign is to encourage individuals to contribute towards building a better and more sustainable future by making small yet meaningful changes in their everyday lives.
- The "Start a Little Good" campaign may encompass a range of cause-related initiatives, such as promoting water conservation, waste management, sustainable sourcing, hygiene and sanitation, empowering women, education, and healthcare.

P&G - Pampers - Thumbs Up for Birthdays (2019):

- Pampers, a brand of Procter & Gamble, launched the Thumbs Up for Birthdays campaign to tackle the issue of high infant mortality rates in India.
- For every Pampers product purchased, a portion of the proceeds went towards supporting UNICEF's efforts to provide life-saving vaccines to newborns.
- The campaign aimed to reduce infant mortality and improve access to healthcare for underprivileged children.

### **RESEARCH GAP:**

Several studies have examined the role of cause related marketing, the impact on consumer behaviour related to attitudes, involvement, perception and motivation. However, a focused research in Indian context is limited. This study aims at consolidating the research findings of various studies in Indian context and provide directions for future scope of research under cause-related marketing communications.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

The effectiveness of any marketing communications campaign is crucial in developing greater affinity for the company, brand and cause. Yet, a huge lacuna in this area of research is very evident in the context of Indian market.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To explore the nature of cause related marketing activities in India
2. To examine the perception towards cause related marketing communications
3. To assess the cause-brand alliance effect on consumer attitudes

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Pandey et al. (2022) examined differences in attitude, intention to participate in CRM and customer loyalty based on key variables such as skepticism, perceived novelty, global connectedness and long-term orientation. The research was conducted in India and Philippines examining the national preferences for cause related marketing campaigns with respect to the duration of the campaign and the type of company (local versus multinational). Marketers were provided with significant recommendations on the cause related marketing campaign strategies for national, international and non-profit organizations.

Amawate & Deb (2021) studied the causes and effects of consumer skepticism towards cause-related marketing and established that attitude toward brand and gender mediate and moderate the relationship between skepticism and purchasing intention to cause related products..

Thomas & Kureshi (2020) inspected the skepticism and awareness suggesting that higher awareness could lead to higher skepticism; while the level of skepticism to be on the lower side among females and young consumers.

Patel, Gadhavi, & Shukla (2017) investigated the moderating effects of cause involvement and skepticism (as variables with covariants) on the attitude-intention rationale in addition to the effect of CRM on attitudes and purchase intention. It demonstrates how CRM improves the attitude towards brand, attitude towards an ad and purchase intention.

Gupta, & Pirsch (2006) established that company-cause fit enhances attitude toward the company-cause alliance and boosts purchase intent in two investigations (study 1=232 students, study 2=531 consumers). Additionally, this effect is strengthened by the consumer's general perception of the sponsoring business as well as customer-company and customer-cause congruence. Consumer purchase decisions were unaffected by skepticism regarding the company's motivations for taking part in a cause-related marketing activity

Thomas et al. (2021) adopted the theory of reasoned action to investigate attitude towards brand and purchase intention for a pharmacy product; the extent of involvement, donation magnitude, revealing the positive impact towards cause related marketing and providing insights about cause related marketing promotion strategies for pharmacy corporates.



Choi et al. ((2016) explored the basis for forming attributions and attitudes about cause related marketing activities of domestic and foreign firms among the individualistic (the United States and Canada) and collectivistic (South Korea and India) cultures; and confirmed that the collectivistic cultures form altruistic attributions and lead to positive attitude towards the firm.

Gandhi & Kaushik (2016) studied the factors contributing to socially responsible consumption behaviour (SRCB) and identified that personal contribution is the most important factor that governs socially responsible consumption. Interestingly, the research revealed the positive intentions of young people from middle-income exhibiting higher inclination to SRCB.

Kumar et. al. (2020) conducted research on cause-related marketing (CRM) skills that support service innovation while taking service flexibility (SF) into account in the healthcare industry. According to the study, there is a positive moderating effect of service climate on the relationship between CRM capacity and SF.

Kureshi & Thomas (2020) studied how the framing of the contribution message, the amount donated, and the product category interacted, indicating that design components of CRM communication do affect how consumers react to the campaign.

Shree, Gupta & Sagar (2017) examined the effectiveness of cause related marketing campaigns in brand development leading to customer trial and distinct positioning; thus enabling the new launched products for customer interaction.

Agrawal, Mangla & Sagar (2016) identified factors that influence customers' perception by using Grounded Theory approach and the inter-relations among them. Further indicated cause-centric variables like type of cause and customers' proximity to cause (local/national/global) as the most rooted factors in customers' cognition.

Baghi & Gabrielli (2013) analysed the possibility of a co-branding strategy in cause-related marketing campaigns to determine which brand is most significant to consumers in order to change customers' perceptions and intentions to use a cause-related product. The value of co-branding in cause-related marketing

initiatives is demonstrated, and non-profit brand managers would be well to recognize the significance of developing powerful brands.

Chowdhury & Khare (2011) examined the influence of a match between a customer's self-schema and the cause that a brand supports on a consumer's choice for the cause-supporting brand. These researchers looked at the moderating effects of consumer brand participation type and product type. The authors demonstrate that a schema-cause match increases consumer preference for a brand through cause-related marketing when (1) consumers' involvement with the brand is impression-relevant (as opposed to outcome-relevant) and (2) when the branded product is functional (as opposed to hedonistic).

Bloom, Hussein, and Szykman (2018) suggested that despite the fact that firms may gain from such initiatives (such as more sales or a better reputation), these programs can be categorized as social marketing campaigns. The benefits and cons of firms participating in social marketing initiatives are examined, and numerous case studies are provided to highlight the qualities of effective corporate social marketing initiatives.

Hawkins (2015) investigated the rising usage of CRM in India, where it is utilized to market to customers in the middle class, and proposed a paradigm for conceiving ethical consumption in developing nations as both location- and context-specific and integrated into larger power dynamics and global processes.

Guerreiro, Rita, and Trigueiros (2016) conducted a comprehensive analysis, identifying and summarizing the most discussed subjects using an advanced Text Mining methodology (a Bayesian contextual analysis algorithm known as Correlated Topic Model, CTM).

Gupta, Pirsch, and colleagues (2006) addressed the advantages and risks of this kind of cooperation for the firm and the cause, as well as the advantages and disadvantages for the customers who are invited to engage in these initiatives by purchasing the sponsored good or service.

Kulshreshtha, Bajpai, Tripathi, and Sharma (2019), confirmed the relevance hedonistic items—i.e., products with hedonic features—are relevant for luring customers who exhibit both cognitive and affective responses.

Robinson, Irmak & Jayachandran (2012) demonstrated the conditions in which cause marketing campaigns that allow consumers to choose the cause that receives the donation lead to greater consumer support than those in which the company determines the cause. This approach is more likely to enhance perceived personal role and, thus, purchase intentions (1) for those consumers who are high (vs. low) in collectivism and (2) when the company and causes have low (vs. high) perceptual fit.

Sen, Du, and Bhattacharya (2016) reviewed the extensive body of work on corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is capable of engendering a variety of company-favoring perceptions and behaviors, driven by both consumers' CSR-related motivations (for example, consumer-company identification, affective motives) and their CSR-guided product perceptions. They also documented the myriad of CSR initiative-specific, company-specific, and consumer-specific factors that modulate consumer perceptions.

La Ferle, Kuber, and Edwards (2013) investigated perceptions of cause-related marketing initiatives in India and the United States, two countries with varying levels of development. One of the fundamental differences between views toward such efforts and perceptions of a company's intentions, according to the research, is novelty. Comparatively to their American counterparts, Indian consumers find cause-related marketing initiatives more novel and give enterprises using this strategy a higher level of altruistic motivation. When campaigns are run by an Indian company rather than a global corporation, Indian customers are also more favorable.

Natarajan et al. (2018) analysed various CRM advertisements, to explore major changes in characteristics including customer attitude toward the cause, attitude toward the brand, cause brand fit, and purchase intention between various advertising that are based on various social themes.. Consumers' intentions to make purchases were found to be significantly influenced by their attitudes toward CRM advertisements.

Handa & Gupta (2020), indicated that respondents perceive a high extent of brand-cause fit. It has been discovered that consumer participation intentions and word-of-mouth intentions are favorably related to intents to purchase the campaign-

related brand. Congruence between the cause and the brand is frequently seen by consumers, which affects their behavioural responses. The study offers insight into the variables that affect how well non-purchase-based online CRM initiatives connect consumers with the campaign and the brand.

Choudhary&Ghai (2014) noted that for many marketers, "doing well" has been significantly influenced by a worthwhile cause. Some businesses in India have taken the initiative to link their brands to a cause.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The study adopts a descriptive method by analysing the literature available in the public domain on academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Directory of Open Access Journals and Google Scholar. A systematic analysis of the literature lead to the identification of nature of cause related marketing campaigns, the factors affecting consumers affiliation, attribution, attitude, skepticism and purchase intention behaviour in the Indian market.

### **DISCUSSION:**

CRM has been around for decades, but it has only recently gained popularity in India. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the Indian economy is growing rapidly, and there is a growing middle class with disposable income. This means that there is a larger market for consumer goods, and companies are looking for new ways to reach this market. Second, there is a growing awareness of social issues in India, and consumers are increasingly looking for brands that are aligned with their values.

The benefits associated with using CRM are many. First, it can help to improve brand image. Indian consumers are increasingly interested in supporting companies that are committed to social responsibility. Second, CRM can help to increase sales. Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to buy from companies that are involved in CSR initiatives. Third, CRM can help to build relationships with customers. When customers feel that a company is doing good for society, they are more likely to be loyal to that company.

There are also some challenges associated with using CRM in India. One challenge is that Indian consumers may not be familiar with the concept of CSR. Another

challenge is that Indian companies may not have the resources to implement a comprehensive CRM program.

Despite the challenges, CRM is a powerful marketing tool that can be used to achieve a number of business goals. Companies that are looking to improve their brand image, increase sales, and build relationships with customers should consider using CRM in India. CRM can be a powerful tool for social change in India. By partnering with NGOs and other organizations, companies can help to address some of the most pressing social issues facing the country, such as poverty, education, and healthcare. CRM can also help to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) in India. By making a public commitment to social causes, companies can help to raise awareness of CSR and encourage other businesses to get involved.

However, it is important to note that CRM is not a magic bullet. It is not a substitute for good corporate governance or responsible business practices. However, when done well, CRM can be a valuable tool for making a positive impact on society.

### **FINDINGS:**

Findings of the conceptual study are listed under various categories as follows.

#### Definition and Conceptual Frameworks:

- Cause-related marketing (CRM) is defined as a strategic alliance between a for-profit company and a non-profit organization, where both parties benefit through the association of a cause with a product or service.
- Conceptual frameworks such as the Fit between the Company and Cause, Credibility, and Consumer-Company Identification models have been developed to understand the mechanisms behind effective CRM communications.

#### Motivations and Benefits:

- Companies engage in CRM communications to achieve various goals, including enhancing brand image, improving corporate reputation, differentiating from competitors, increasing consumer loyalty, and driving sales.

- CRM can lead to positive outcomes for the cause by raising awareness, attracting donations, mobilizing volunteers, and creating long-term partnerships.

#### Factors Influencing CRM Effectiveness:

- **Fit between the company and cause:** The alignment between the cause and the company's values, products, and target audience plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of CRM communications.
- **Credibility and trustworthiness:** Consumers evaluate the authenticity and sincerity of the company's commitment to the cause, which significantly affects their attitudes and behaviors.
- **Message content and framing:** The way the CRM message is crafted and presented can influence consumer responses. Emotional appeals, personal relevance, and specific action-oriented calls-to-action tend to be effective.
- **Communication channels:** The choice of communication channels (e.g., advertising, social media, public relations) should align with the target audience and their media consumption habits.

#### Consumer Responses and Attitudes:

- **Positive effects:** CRM communications can enhance brand attitude, increase purchase intention, foster consumer-company identification, and generate positive word-of-mouth.
- **Negative effects:** Some studies suggest that consumers may perceive CRM as manipulative or insincere, leading to skepticism or negative reactions if they perceive the company's motives as primarily profit-driven.

#### Moderating and Mediating Factors:

- **Individual differences:** Consumer characteristics, such as empathy, cause involvement, and skepticism, can moderate the effectiveness of CRM communications.
- **Message factors:** Factors like vividness, message clarity, and argument quality can mediate the impact of CRM messages on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

- Contextual factors: External factors, such as cultural, social, and economic contexts, can influence the effectiveness of CRM communications.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS:**

- Expanding beyond monetary donations: Research should explore the effectiveness of CRM communications that encourage non-financial actions, such as volunteering or social activism.
- Multi-stakeholder perspectives: Further investigation into the perspectives of nonprofit organizations, employees, and other stakeholders involved in CRM partnerships.
- Cross-cultural studies: Exploring how cultural variations influence consumer responses to CRM communications in different regions and societies.
- Long-term effects: Investigating the sustainability and long-term impact of CRM partnerships on both the company and the cause.

### **CONCLUSION:**

It is important to note that the nature of cause-related marketing activities in India can vary significantly across industries, company sizes, and regions. Some businesses integrate CRM into their core values and long-term strategies, while others may engage in occasional campaigns. The ultimate goal is to make a positive social impact while building a strong brand image and customer loyalty. Some common types of cause-related marketing activities in India are: Donations and Fundraising, Product-based Campaigns, Awareness Campaigns, Employee Engagement, Cause Sponsorships, Skill Development Initiatives, Environmental Sustainability.

Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to buy from companies that are involved in CRM initiatives, and they are also more likely to have a positive attitude towards those companies. There are a number of reasons why consumers may have a positive perception of CRM. First, consumers appreciate the fact that companies are using their profits to do good for society. Second, consumers believe that CRM can help to make a positive impact on the world. Third, consumers feel that CRM is a sign that a company is socially responsible. Not all consumers have a positive perception of CRM. Some consumers may feel that CRM is a marketing gimmick, and they may not believe that companies are actually donating the money that they say they are.

Additionally, some consumers may feel that CRM is a way for companies to avoid paying taxes.

Despite these concerns, the overall perception of CRM is positive. Consumers appreciate the fact that companies are using their profits to do good for society, and they believe that CRM can help to make a positive impact on the world.

In the Indian context, cause-brand alliances have a significant impact on consumer attitudes. Based on the available research and analysis, it can be concluded that cause-brand alliances positively influence consumer attitudes and behavior in India.

It is important to note that the effectiveness of cause-brand alliances may vary depending on the specific cause, the authenticity of the brand's commitment, and the alignment with the target audience's values. However, overall, cause-brand alliances have a favorable effect on consumer attitudes in the Indian context. The alliance positively influences consumer attitudes by enhancing brand perception, creating emotional connections, increasing purchase intentions, and generating word-of-mouth advocacy. Brands that align themselves with meaningful causes have the opportunity to establish stronger relationships with Indian consumers, gain a competitive edge, and contribute to social welfare simultaneously.

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