International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management (IJAEM)
Volume 7, Issue 05 May 2025, pp: 621-626 www.ijaem.net ISSN: 2395-5252

Cause Based Branding Strategies and Implications towards Socially Responsible Performance of Generation Z

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Date of Submission: 20-05-2025 Date of Acceptance: 30-05-2025

ABSTRACT: Cause based brand strategies operate when an organization builds a strategic relation with a social cause or causes which are mutually beneficial to the parties involved. Numerous research works exist in the field of cause related marketing and few are published pertaining to the issues which influence consumers buying behavior for CrM Brands. In this research study the researcher has made an attempt to understand the dynamics of the cause related marketing and its implications towards consumer socially responsible performance. In this research study the researcher has takensimple random sampling and with a sample of 390 respondents across Tamilnadu. Necessary recommendations were made to the findings that will provide a base for the corporate which are following cause marketing strategies for their brand development.

KEY WORDS: Cause Marketing**,** CrM, Brand, Social Cause, Social responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Cause-related Marketing (CrM) is a promoting technique that includes the coordinated effort between a business or a brand and a not-for-profit association typically a charity. The essential objective of cause-related promoting is to make a partnership between the organization and the charity where both the business and the not-for-profit can accomplish their targets while likewise contributing to society.The business selects a social or ecological reason that meets with its core values of the business, brand character and the target audiences. This cause could be pertaining to emerging issues like environmental preservation, health, education to the under privileged, alleviating the poverty or other social causes.

The organizations join hands with a not for profit organizations that works on the selected cause. This organization can change in degree and nature, going from transient missions to longer span commitments. Despite the term's use, "cause marketing" is not the same as "cause-related marketing." The term "cause marketing" refers to marketing campaigns run by nonprofit organizations with the main goal of supporting the cause; nevertheless, a for-profit company may support a cause without taking financial advantage into account. Because of this, the primary objective of cause marketing is to influence a target audience to alter their behavior or possibly to directly support the cause rather than to profit on a client's excitement for a cause.

A business may utilize a number of promotional strategies to aid in the promotion of a deserving cause. The original concept of cause-related advertising was a company's promise to donate money to a specified charity for each unit of a good or service sold (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). But cause-related marketing also includes a variety of monetary contributions, like supporting media campaigns to draw attention to a problem, giving your time or talents to a good cause, or organizing a fundraising event.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Lafferty and Edmondson (2014), the four categories of charitable causes may have varying effects on people's views and purchase intentions. The category of health causes

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and human services causes has a greater impact than the group of animals or environmental causes when brand familiarity and relevance are high. The alliance's mindset was even more influenced by the human rights category at a time when brand recognition and relevance were both high and both low. There were no differences among the factors influencing brand attitudes and intentions for the buying.

In the year 2020, Das, McNeil, Pouder, and Daly looked at the commercial benefits of investing in CrM. After two trading days, the analysis of 127 advertising with cause based theme from the years 1991 to 2011 produced a remarkable return of 74%. This has demonstrated that there is a very strong overall investment in CrM programs. According to a cross-sectional return study, anomalous returns are more likely to occur when a cause is associated with a specific product and when businesses also make additional contributions at the same time. The returns were, however, quite low when a corporation was flush with cash.

Calabrese Hur, W., Kim, H., & Jang, J, Jones, R., Reilly, T., Cox, M., & Cole, B. (2017) stated that Research constantly finds that gender plays a role influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Women generally exhibit higher expectations and more positive attitudes towards CSR compared to men, with the gap in attitudes and behaviors being notably smaller among female consumers. This suggests that women are more likely to align their purchasing decisions with their CSR values, making them more responsive to companies that engage in socially responsible practice such as, hiring people with disabilities, helping the needy, supporting local schools for the education and donating to medical research.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- To examine the association between gender and consumers' willingness to buy from companies that helps the needy.
- To analyze the relationship between gender and consumers' preference for purchasing from companies that hire people with disabilities.
- To investigate whether gender influences consumers' likelihood to switch to retailers that support local schools.
- To explore the association between gender and consumers' inclination to buy from companies that make donations to medical research.
- To assess the impact of gender on consumers' behavior when given a chance to switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity.
- To identify gender-based differences in attitudes towards various corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

An examination configuration is the strategy for gathering and analyzing information in a way that combines relevance to the research purpose with efficiency in methodology." In fact, the exploration configuration serves as a guided structure for exploration. It included the diagram for data collection, estimate, and analysis.

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

The information was gathered utilizing organized survey through meeting to the client in the on the web and direct interviews with the respondents. 390 respondents were the primary focus of this study due to the time constraints imposed at the end of the investigation. Information from those individuals is gathered using the simple random sample approach for this assessment. The samples collected from students born between 1997 and 2012 (demographic cohort) from various parts of state of Tamilnadu.

INFORMATION ANALYSIS

The researchers directed very much organized survey to gather information. The researcher has utilized SPSS Package 21.0 for the analysis.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

All the investigations are prevented in their smooth stream by some unexpected issues. The responses may not be valid as some of them not completely filling the survey. The study restricted to Tamilnadu only. The time duration is also a factor acting as a limitation for this study.

HYPOTHESES FRAMED FOR THE STUDY

The study formulated five hypotheses to examine the association between gender and ethical consumer behavior. The hypotheses are as follows:

$H_{0\ 1}$: There is no association between gender and customers buying from companies that help the needy.

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$H_{0\ 2}$: There is no association between gender and customers buying from companies that hire people with disabilities.
$H_{0\ 3}$: There is no association between gender and customers switching to a retailer that supports local schools when given a chance.
$H_{0\ 4}$: There is no association between gender and customers trying to buy from companies that donate to medical research.
$H_{0\ 5}$: There is no association between gender and customers switching to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis No.	Statement	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	df	p-value	Significance
1	Buying from Companies That Help the Needy	122.184	2	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
2	Buying from Companies That Hire People with Disabilities	115.279	3	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
3	Switching to Retailers Supporting Local Schools	110.892	3	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
4	Buying from Companies Donating to Medical Research	96.783	4	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
5	Switching to Brands Donating a Portion to Charity	47.012	4	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)

The study explored the association between gender and ethical consumer behavior across five cause-related marketing contexts. Each hypothesis tested whether gender had a significant influence on how consumers responded to specific social initiatives taken by companies. The results of the Chi-Square tests were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), allowing for the rejection of all null hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS 1: BUYING FROM COMPANIES THAT HELP THE NEEDY

A clear association exists between gender and willingness to support brands that help the needy. Males (over 87%) were far more likely to agree or strongly agree, while a majority of females (around 56%) selected moderate agreement or lower levels of support.
Men appear more driven by visible altruistic efforts, such as companies aiding the underprivileged. Marketers should emphasize strong humanitarian impact when targeting male audiences.

HYPOTHESIS 2: BUYING FROM COMPANIES THAT HIRE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Males overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed with supporting inclusive hiring practices, while a notable number of females (10%) disagreed, and over 60% agreed but with less intensity.
While both genders support inclusion, males express it more strongly. Communication about inclusive employment can be gender-tailored — factual and outcome-oriented for males, empathy-driven and narrative-focused for females.

HYPOTHESIS 3: SWITCHING TO RETAILERS SUPPORTING LOCAL SCHOOLS

Males were significantly more willing to switch to retailers supporting schools (84% agree or strongly agree) than females, who leaned towards moderate or neutral responses.
Community-based causes, such as education, appear to resonate more with male consumers in this study. Marketers should showcase direct community impact and school support projects when targeting male demographics.

HYPOTHESIS 4: BUYING FROM COMPANIES DONATING TO MEDICAL RESEARCH

A strong gender gap exists - males again show high levels of strong agreement, while females mostly chose moderate

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agreement. Only a small number of females selected strong agreement, showing caution or neutrality.

Medical research causes may benefit from dual messaging — emphasize breakthroughs and data for males; emphasize stories of recovery, health impact, and trust-building for females.

HYPOTHESIS 5: SWITCHING TO BRANDS DONATING A PORTION TO CHARITY

This scenario showed the least difference, but still significant. Males leaned more toward strong agreement, while females showed moderate support or uncertainty.

While both genders are responsive to charitable contributions, females might require more transparency or emotional context to be fully convinced. Males are more responsive to bold, impact-driven cause messages.

All hypotheses showed p-values of 0.000, confirming that gender and ethical buying behavior are not independent. Gender plays a crucial role in determining consumer responsiveness to social causes.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The following are the major findings of the study.

Across all five hypotheses, chi-square test results revealed a statistically significant association between gender and consumer responses. This confirms that men and women respond differently to companies engaged in social causes.

In most cases, male respondents expressed higher levels of agreement or strong agreement with purchasing from or switching to brands that support charitable or community-focused initiatives, such as helping the needy or donating to medical research.

Female respondents tended to show moderate support across the causes presented, particularly in categories like hiring people with disabilities and switching to brands that donate a portion of profits to charity.

A notable divergence was seen in the case of inclusive employment practices, where men strongly supported such initiatives, while a significant portion of female respondents disagreed or were neutral.

Male consumers were more willing to switch to retailers that support local educational institutions or invest in medical research. Female responses were more cautious or moderate in tone.

While both genders support brands that donate a portion of the price to charity, men expressed stronger enthusiasm, suggesting that messaging around charitable impact may need to be gender-tailored.

The study confirms that brands practicing cause-related marketing (CrM) can influence consumer behavior effectively, but customization based on gender is critical to maximize the strategy's effectiveness.

III. SUGGESTIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since male and female consumers show different levels of engagement with various causes, companies should develop gender-specific marketing messages. For example: Use impact-driven, data-oriented appeals (e.g., number of people helped, donation amounts) for male audiences. Use emotional, story-based content that emphasizes community and human connection for female audiences.

Businesses should clearly showcase their CSR efforts—such as hiring people with disabilities, supporting schools, or funding medical research—on product packaging, advertising, and digital platforms. This increases transparency and builds trust among ethically minded consumers. Different social causes resonate differently with men and women. For example: Campaigns around local school support and medical donations may attract more male consumers. Campaigns that emphasize community involvement or inclusion (e.g., disability hiring) can be tailored more toward female audiences with the right messaging.

Cause-related marketing can be a strong competitive advantage, especially in saturated or value-driven markets. Emphasizing a brand's social mission can help attract younger and socially conscious consumers across both genders. While targeting by gender is effective in messaging, CSR programs themselves should remain inclusive and broad in scope, ensuring that they appeal to a wider base and reflect true organizational values. Use platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube to share real stories of impact, employee experiences, and community outreach. Encourage interactive engagement, such as user-generated content or charitable challenges.

Brands should partner with credible NGOs, schools, or hospitals to support real-

world causes that their target demographic values. These partnerships should be authentic and consistently communicated to the public. As social attitudes evolve, it's important for brands to regularly assess consumer values and perceptions. This allows for the refinement of marketing strategies and ensures continued alignment with target audience priorities.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study clearly established a significant association between gender and cause-related consumer behavior. The findings indicate that male and female consumers respond differently to brands engaged in socially responsible activities such as helping the needy, supporting local schools, hiring individuals with disabilities, contributing to medical research, and donating a portion of sales to charity.

Through the application of Chi-square tests, it was found that gender plays a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing decisions in relation to ethical marketing practices. Males generally showed stronger agreement and active support for cause-driven brands, whereas females exhibited more moderate engagement, reflecting nuanced perspectives and potentially different value priorities.

These insights highlight the importance of targeted and gender-sensitive cause marketing strategies. Businesses aiming to enhance brand equity and consumer loyalty through corporate social responsibility (CSR) must tailor their messaging to resonate effectively with different gender segments. Cause-related marketing, when executed with authenticity and demographic sensitivity, not only improves brand image but also contributes meaningfully to social good. In conclusion, aligning marketing strategies with consumer values through socially conscious efforts, while being mindful of gender dynamics, can serve as a powerful tool for both commercial success and social impact.

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