

Unpacking Cause-Related Marketing: An In-Depth Literature Analysis and Call for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study explores the inception and evolution of Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) from 1988 to 2023, a strategy where businesses donate to a cause or nonprofit organization each time a customer makes a purchase. It aims to understand how CRM is defined, its empirical impact, the primary theories and variables studied, and future directions for research.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The paper adopts conceptual approach, systematically reviewing existing literature to address four key research questions related to the understanding, impact, theoretical foundations, and future prospects of CRM.

Findings: The study identifies CRM as a concept emerging from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and highlights its remarkable evolution over the years. Key theories explored in the CRM literature include the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Signaling Theory, Social Identity Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Attribution Theory. Frequently studied variables include altruism, skepticism, product type, donation size, brand–cause fit, cause involvement, and cause type. A significant research gap is also identified, indicating substantial potential for future investigations.

Originality/Value: This paper offers a comprehensive conceptual synthesis of over three decades of CRM research. By mapping the theoretical and empirical landscape, it provides valuable insights for scholars seeking to deepen understanding in this field and identifies underexplored areas that merit further scholarly attention.

Paper Type: Review of Literature

KEYWORDS: Cause-Related Marketing | Corporate Social Responsibility | Consumer Behavior | Theoretical Review

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Introduction

“Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a marketing strategy that benefits the company, the customer, and society simultaneously” (Zhang et al., 2020, p. 1). “It is a promotional strategy where a company pledges to contribute a set sum to a non-profit group or specific cause every time customers buy their product” (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988, p. 60). CRM represents a mutually beneficial scenario benefiting the company, customers, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and society at large” (Deng et al., 2023; Stötzer & Kaltenbrunner, 2024; Zhang et al., 2020). Advantages to the company include increasing sales and market share (Shanbhag et al., 2024; Terblanche et al., 2023; Woodroof et al., 2019), brand differentiation (Bhatti et al., 2023; Shree et al., 2017; Suryavanshi et al., 2023), and establishing long-term relationships with the company (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee et al., 2019). The customer experiences emotional satisfaction knowing that their purchase contributes positively to a cause (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010; Singh & Pathak, 2023). NPOs receive more funds for the cause and betterment of society (Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013).

According to the 2014 Nielsen survey, over half of the surveyed global participants expressed their readiness to pay higher prices for a company’s products that contribute to societal welfare (“Doing Well by Doing Good,” 2014). An identical investigation conducted by IBM Research revealed that, as of 2020, 40% of consumers now identify as ‘purpose-driven’, indicating their preference for companies that share their principles (Gilliland, 2021). Deloitte’s Global Millennial Survey 2021, found that Millennial and Generation Z consumers disregard companies that contradict or fail to align with their morals. All the above reports highlight the importance of CRM.

Over the past two decades, CRM has gained significant prominence as a marketing strategy embraced by numerous Indian enterprises (Thomas & Jadeja, 2021). Positioned within the broader Corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework, CRM stands out as a prominent marketing initiative widely embraced by Indian companies (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020). Companies are increasingly acknowledging the significant impact of CRM on consumer purchasing decisions in the contemporary and socially aware market landscape.

Past literature has indicated that CRM can favourably influence consumers’ intent to make purchases (Ferraris et al., 2020; Schamp et al., 2023; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Terblanche et al., 2023). Customers show high inclination to purchase products linked to a social cause (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Niharika & Yadav, 2023; Singh & Pathak, 2023). This phenomenon can be attributed to the heightened emotional connection consumers feel with the brand, as they believe their purchases are contributing positively to society (Yadav &

Kishor, 2023; Woodroof et al., 2019). This emotional bond, in turn, fosters a higher probability of repeat purchases and brand loyalty (Dholakia & Pandya, 2023).

The importance of understanding the impact of CRM on purchase intention and building a brand cannot be overstated. Consumer behaviour is shaped not only by economic considerations but also by ethical and emotional factors (Kotler & Lee, 2005; Yadav, 2023). CRM plays a pivotal role in the strategic management of a brand because in an evolving market, building a brand is no longer primarily about product characteristics; it’s about establishing genuine, personal connections with consumers. This shift spans from functional to emotional engagement, from mere consumption to fostering a passionate belief in the company (He et al., 2016).

CRM represents a facet of CSR where a company collaborates with a non-profit organization to promote a social cause and raise finance for it (Lopes et al., 2023). CRM is a part of CSR, there is a basic difference between the two, CRM is CSR clubbed with the sale of products or services and the involvement of monetary transactions. CRM is a communication strategy of CSR (Singh & Pathak, 2023).

This study is significant as it explores the evolution of CRM, various findings from past studies, the main variables and theories studied in this domain, the Research Gap and Scope for future studies.

The present study reviewed the existing literature with four Research Questions in mind:

RQ 1: How is CRM understood and defined within the existing Literature?

RQ 2: What are the impact of CRM as revealed in existing empirical studies?

RQ 3: What are the various theories, and variables studied in CRM Literature?

RQ 4: What is the future of CRM Research?

Literature Review

In this segment, the author aims to conduct a comprehensive assessment of previous research on several key aspects related to CRM. These elements comprise the development and interpretations of CRM, its impact on businesses and individuals, its historical roots, theories regarding consumer behavior within CRM, the central factors explored in CRM research, and the prospective directions of CRM research. This study uses Scopus, Emerald, and Web of Science databases to search papers on CRM.

How is CRM Understood and Defined within the Existing Literature?

The CRM campaign was launched by American Express in 1983. In order to support the Statue of Liberty's renovation, the company started a CRM campaign during that year. During fourth quarter of 1983, the company donated one penny for each charge card transaction and one dollar for each new card issued in the US. This project resulted in a 28% rise in card usage over the same period in 1982 as well as a considerable increase in the number of new cards issued. Also, the campaign raised \$1.7 million to restore the Statue of Liberty (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

Varadarajan & Menon (1988) articulated that a CRM campaign has dual aims : first, to champion a social cause, and second, to enhance marketing effectiveness. CRM serves as a means to enact CSR (p.60). In their words, "CRM is the process of developing and executing marketing initiatives in which the company commits to donating a defined sum to a specified cause when customers engage in revenue-generating transactions that fulfill both organizational and individual goals". This particular definition spurred substantial research efforts aimed at expanding upon it. The subsequent interpretation of CRM was introduced by Mullen (1997), who described CRM as follows: "CRM involves the creation and execution of marketing strategies that involve making a predetermined contribution to a designated non-profit initiative, thereby encouraging consumers to participate in revenue-generating transactions"(p.42).

Adkins (1999) highlights that "CRM constitutes a tripartite relationship aimed at achieving a mutually beneficial outcome for the company, non-profit organization (NPO), and the customer" (p.9). He emphasises how crucial it is to include this element in the explanation. Consequently, he defined "CRM is a collaborative endeavour in which businesses and charitable organizations or causes establish a partnership to promote an image, product, or service, all for the sake of mutual advantage". As per Pringle and Thompson (2001) "CRM is a strategic positioning and marketing tool which links a company or brand to a relevant social cause or issue, for mutual benefit".

Subsequently, the definition of CRM also emphasises the significance of NPO. Cui et al. (2003, p. 310) explained "CRM as a broad partnership between businesses and non-profit organizations aimed at pooling resources and financial support to tackle societal problems while also fulfilling business marketing goals" (p.310). According to Marconi (2002), "CRM is the action through which a company, a non-

profit organization, or a similar entity markets an image, a product, a service, or a message for mutual benefit".

Kotler & Lee (2005) defined CRM as "Giving a portion of the earnings generated from the sale of particular products throughout a designated period of assistance". "When a company backs a particular cause for promotional reasons, it is referred to as CRM" (Kulshreshtha et al., 2019).

What are the Impact of CRM as Revealed in Existing Empirical Studies?

Companies are using CRM to promote their product. One of the prime objectives of a company doing CRM is to increase sales (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). There is a positive correlation between trust in CRM efforts and business image, subsequently business image positively influences intent to purchase (Ferraris et al., 2020; Schamp et al., 2023; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Terblanche et al., 2023). Le et al. (2022) discovered that the perception of CRM positively impacts consumer repurchase intention. Research conducted by Hajikarimi & Omeyr (2014) found positive correlation between CRM and brand image. Mobarak et al., (2022) also found CRM improves brand image and customer loyalty. However, Kureshi & Thomas (2020) revealed that the design of CRM communication affects how customers react to CRM campaigns.

Terblanche et al. (2023) in their study concluded that consumers are more likely to respond favourably to products that are part of CRM campaigns when it comes to their purchase intentions. Ferraris et al. (2020) study found favourable relationship between perceived CRM, brand image, and customer satisfaction additionally it also shows that the perceived impact of CRM has a positive and significant influence on repurchase intention. A study by Aggarwal & Singh (2019) discovered that 67 percent of consumers favour supporting start-up brands over larger organizations when those start-ups are engaged in a CRM campaign. CRM also influence Non-Brand user, a study by Nelson & Vilela (2017) found that Individuals who do not typically use the brand showed a rise in their intent to make purchases following exposure to the CRM message, with a particular emphasis on the male demographic.

According to the above mentioned studies, CRM not only improves brand perception but also encourages customers to consider and express intent to buy products associated with CRM. Table 1 shows the findings of existing studies on CRM.



Table:1 Findings of Existing Studies on CRM

Authors	Findings
Lopes et al., 2023	An online survey of 463 respondents in Brazil and Portugal found that consumer-cause identification, brand-cause fit, and trust in CRM campaigns positively influence corporate image. corporate image positively influences purchase intention, life satisfaction, and brand attitude. Altruism may be affected by different levels of perception.
Terblanche et al., 2023	Using focus group interviews and experimentation studies it was found that consumer has positive responses regarding CRM campaigns for a low-involvement product and actual donation amounts with significant amounts.
Shanbhag et al., 2023	The study through focus group discussion and open-ended-questionnaire developed and validated a scale for the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) that consumer purchase intention regarding CRM product.
Thomas et al., 2022	By using the theory of reasoned action (TRA) in the pharmaceutical industry, the study found that perceptions towards a brand are positively impacted by a company’s goals, magnitude of donations, and involvement in a cause. Additionally, the study showed intent to purchase and brand attitude are positively correlated.
Le et al., 2022	The study found a favourable relationship between repurchase intention and perceived CRM based on a survey of 395 Vietnamese millennials. Additionally, the study showed that the association between perceived CRM and repurchase intention is partially mediated by consumer satisfaction and brand image. Furthermore, the study discovered that the influence of perceived CRM on brand image and customer satisfaction is moderated by perceived CSR.
Christian et al., 2022	Perceived team success functions as a moderator, and warmth and brand attitude work as serial mediators between independent variable CRM exposure and dependent variable purchase intention, according to an experimental study conducted in the USA on CRM purchase intention in the context of sports themes.
Chetioui & Lebdaoui, 2022	Based on a survey of 561 consumers from Morocco, the research revealed that cause identification, donation amount, emotional engagement, and subjective norms all have a positive impact on attitudes toward COVID-19 cause-related campaigns. Furthermore, attitudes toward COVID-19 cause-related campaigns significantly influence purchase intention. Additionally, the study confirms that religiosity serves as a moderator in the relationship between attitudes toward COVID-19 cause-related campaigns and brand attitudes as well as purchase intention.
Pandey et al., 2022	Using an experiment study in the Philippines and India found that consumers from countries having a culture of Long-term orientation prefer long-term CRM campaigns. Also, the study found that a company performs better in a country with low exposure to CRM Perceptions. The study also stressed the importance of skepticism in shaping consumer perception.
Amawate & Deb, 2021	Surveys conducted in India’s metropolitan cities validates that gender and attitude towards brand image play as moderators and mediators respectively between the dependent variable patronage intention, and the independent variable, skepticism. Additionally, psychographic traits like collectivism and individualism serve as antecedent of consumer scepticism.
Sen Gupta & Wadera, 2021	An online survey of 1251 consumer found that Indian consumer does not show skepticism towards CSR. Also, Indian consumers show great concern for environmental protection.
Duarte & Silva, 2020	The study discovered a strong positive correlation between consumer cause identification and consumer attitude through an online survey of 156 Portuguese people. Purchase intention is also determined by attitude.

Source: The Author (s)

What are the Various Theories and Variables Studied in CRM Literature?

Numerous theories have emerged to explain how consumers react to companies’ efforts in CRM. The

principal theories that underpin and validate CRM include the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Persuasion, Signalling Theory, Social Identity Theory, TPB, and Attribution Theory.

Elaboration likelihood Model (ELM) of Persuasion:

Persuasion's dual-process theory of ELM focuses on altering the attitudes. Introduced by Petty & Cacioppo (1979) this model tells that there are two ways of processing information central route and peripheral route. Regarding CRM highly involved individuals carefully scrutinize the message, focusing on its content and arguments using a central route on the other hand less involved consumers rely on peripheral cues, such as emotional appeals or celebrity endorsements, rather than in-depth analysis of the message content.

Signaling theory: It offers a framework for comprehending how consumers utilize cues to assess an object. According to this theory, the information conveyed through signals can influence individuals' decision-making, particularly when the cues provide essential information for evaluating unobservable factors (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012; Spence 1973). The information provided in the cause-related campaign can act as cues for the target audience, helping them to evaluate the cause related product in accordance with CRM (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012; Le et al., 2022).

Social Identity Theory: It represents the connection between individuals and specific segments of society, characterized by ongoing and diverse actions carried out by its members (Choi et al., 2018). According to Trepte & Loy (2017) CRM case study, purchasing CRM items can lead to a positive self-perception when a consumer's consumption decisions are assessed and supported by their peers. A different but related study, (White & Peloza, 2009) discovered that one significant motivator for charitable donations is the desire to meet the social expectations of the community. According to Choi et al. (2018) customers experience pressure from society to select CRM products over non-CRM alternatives in extremely visible contexts.

Theory of Planned Behaviour: "According to the TPB, anticipating a person's propensity to engage in a behaviour improves when the person has a positive attitude towards the behaviour, feels confident in their capacity to carry out the behaviour, and receives social reinforcement" (Ajzen, 2020). Shanbhag et al. (2023) discovered that buying intentions and purchasing behaviour for products related to CRM initiatives are strongly influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (PBC). A similar finding by Kim et al. (2019) found that it is irrelevant whether a company has good CSR or bad CSR attitude, subjective norms and PBC has a positive relationship with consumer intent to purchase a CRM product. However, the research of CRM has barely made advantage of this well accepted theory. However, this popular theory has been used very little in the study of CRM (Shanbhag et al., 2023).

Attribution Theory: Through Attribution theory one can make causal inferences about the other behavior (Aghakhani et al., 2020; Folkes, 1984). This is the most popular theory in the domain of CRM (Thomas et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). In CRM, this theory holds relevance for comprehending how consumers' inherent traits, including their values and preferences, in conjunction with external elements such as the attributes of CRM campaigns and marketing messages, impact their attitudes and reactions to CRM initiatives. When consumers make positive attributions, probably, their responses to CRM campaigns will also be positive (Thomas et al., 2020).

Important variables identified in the literature of CRM (refer table 2)

Table:2 Important Variables in CRM Literature

Variables	Findings
Altruism	(Taşdirek, 2015) defined " <i>Altruism</i> as the core human idea of prioritizing the welfare of others over one's self-interest, which contrasts with the inherent human inclination toward selfishness". Altruism and the intention to buy the cause-related product were found to have a positive association by (Adomaviciute et al., 2016). Erdoğan et al. (2014) discovered the moderating effect of altruism in the relationship between CRM and purchase intention. According to Mimouni Chaabane & Parguel, (2016), respondents with low altruism and strong with knowledge of CRM are more likely to be skeptical of large donations. Lopes et al. (2023) found consumer perception is affected by various levels of altruism.
Skepticism	" <i>Skepticism</i> is defined as the inclination of consumers to question the accuracy of advertising messages and the intentions behind those messages by marketers" (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Mohr et al., 1998). A study by Mohr et al. (1998) found that more skeptic consumers will not respond positively to a CRM message. Thus skeptic consumers less rely on CRM offered by a company. On the other hand study by Chang & Cheng (2015) and Patel et al. (2017) found that purchase intention is not affected by skepticism. The study by Amawate & Deb (2021) and Kuo & Rice (2015) revealed that when a company is transparent in its approach and its CRM initiative is inclined more towards social concerns rather than self-interest, then it can mitigate consumer skepticism. Amawate & Deb (2021) found that women exhibited lower levels of skepticism and displayed a more favorable inclination and attitude toward brands compared to men. The company's strategic motive rather than social purpose caused consumer skepticism also successful communication of CRM by the company makes people rely on the same and it reduces skepticism (Amawate & Deb, 2021).



<p>Product Type (Hedonic vs Utilitarian)</p>	<p>“Hedonic products are primarily associated with pleasure-seeking, driven by the desire for sensory enjoyment, on the other hand, utilitarian products are goal-oriented, primarily motivated by the need to fulfill basic requirements or accomplish functional tasks” (Strahilevitz, 1999). CRM for hedonic products, as opposed to utilitarian ones, can lessen guilt if fit is high (Baghi & Antonetti, 2017). Non-monetary contributions, regardless of the product type, are more effective than monetary ones when there is a significant fit between the product and the cause. On the other hand, non-monetary giving works better to promote utilitarian products when the product and the cause are not well aligned, while monetary giving works better to promote hedonic products (Chang et al., 2018). High fit levels, coupled with CRM for hedonic products, have been observed to reduce guilt (Baghi & Antonetti, 2017).</p> <p>In the context of hedonic products, customer choice is influenced by visual attention, pleasure, and emotional arousal toward cause-related items. However, in the case of utilitarian products, only visual attention and pleasure play a mediating role in customer choice, with emotional arousal not being a significant factor (Guerreiro et al., 2015)</p>
<p>Donation</p>	<p>Various factors related to donations that might impact Purchase Intentions have been examined by different studies. Yoo et al. (2018) in their study concluded that with a higher construal level buyer perceived the donation size as positively impacting their responses, while with a lower construal level they perceived it negatively. Eastman et al. (2019) determined that One-for-One CRM donations are more effective than traditional CRM donations. Respondents who exhibit low levels of altruism and high levels of experience with cause-related marketing are more likely to be sceptical of large donation (Mimouni Chaabane & Parguel, 2016). Product category involvement influence the intent to purchase cause related products (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020). Gratitude increases people more likely to buy things linked to donation-based marketing (Septianto & Garg, 2021). Chaabouni et al. (2021) reported that large donations can lead to skepticism. Zhang et al. (2022) observed that in cases of CRM with substantial donation amounts, cause-oriented advertisements result in a more positive company attitude and higher purchase intention among consumers. Conversely, in cases of CRM with small donation amounts, product-oriented advertisements lead to a more positive company attitude and higher purchase intention among consumers.</p>
<p>Brand-Cause Fit</p>	<p>Edmondson & Lafferty (2007) defined “<i>Brand-cause fit</i> as consumers’ perception of the extent of likeness and congruency between a social cause and a brand”. A study by Mendini et al. (2018), concluded that the right cause must be paired with the right company for the success of a CRM campaign. A study by Kim et al., (2019); Roosens & Dens, 2019) found that a seamless alignment between a cause and a brand has the potential to evoke a positive response from consumers. The effectiveness of a CRM campaign and its impact on the brand’s reputation largely depend on the coherence between the cause and the brand, as noted by (Guzmán & Davis, 2017; Kuo & Rice, 2015). When there is a weak fit between the brand and the cause, the effectiveness of the CRM message may be compromised. However, integrating an effective CRM component can enhance the company’s image (Nan & Heo, 2007).</p>
<p>Cause involvement</p>	<p>“It relates to the extent to which consumers view the cause as personally meaningful” (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Individuals who exhibit higher levels of cause engagement tend to display greater visual attention, thereby leading to an increased intent to purchase (Bae, 2016). Cause involvement has moderating effect on the relationship between individualism and purchase intention (Adomaviciute et al., 2016; Aggarwal & Singh, 2019). Furthermore, Patel et al. (2017) suggest that the influence of CRM on the relationship between attitude and purchase intention is more pronounced when consumers exhibit greater cause involvement, which acts as a moderating variable. The degree of a consumer’s cause involvement has a substantial impact on the effect of CRM ads on their purchase intentions (Aggarwal & Singh, 2019).</p>
<p>Cause- Type</p>	<p>According to the 2011 report by the American Institute of Philanthropy, CRM campaigns can be grouped into four primary categories: health, human services, animal, and environmental. The specific category of the cause doesn’t have a discernible impact on how consumers view the brand or their purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the level of favorability towards the cause and the partnership is higher for health and human services compared to animal and environmental causes. While health and human services are largely motivated by self-interest, broader concern about the environment and animals are typically linked to altruistic intentions (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2014)</p>

Source: The Author (s)

What is the Future of CRM Research?

In reviewing the literature on CRM, there are several gaps found in the literature. According to Miles, (2017) Research gaps are of seven types namely “Knowledge gap”, “Theoretical gap”, “Evidence gap”, “Methodological gap”, “Population gap”, “Practical knowledge gap”, and “Empirical gap”. The Research gaps found in the Literature on CRM are categorized into these gaps.

Knowledge Gaps

According to Miles (2017), a *Knowledge Gap* refers to a “Lack of research in a particular domain” Most studies on CRM are on large and known enterprises. Very few studies are on small and start-up companies. To the best of the knowledge, only one paper by Aggarwal & Singh, (2019) is on the influence of CRM on the purchase intention of products by start-ups. There is also a gap in the study of Digital CRM.

Theoretical Gaps

“It refers to deals with Gap in the theory with prior research” Miles (2017). Prior Study has mostly used theories like the ELM Model, Attribution Theory, Social identity theory, and Signalling theory. On the contrary, the most popular behavioral theory TPB and the TRA has been rarely used (Shanbhag et al., 2023)

Evidence Gaps

“Contradiction in the findings of the prior research is known as Evidence Gap” (Miles, 2017). An inconsistent result is found in the relationship between demographic factors and CRM. Studies show that women are more emotional than men as a result they show a stronger association with CRM (Cheron, Kohlbacher, and Kusuma 2012). But the study by Cosgrave & O’Dwyer (2020) concluded that there is no significant impact of Gender on CRM. The negative influence of Skepticism on CRM was found by many studies on the contrary studies by Patel et al. (2017); Sen Gupta & Wadera (2021) do not find the influence of Skepticism on purchase intention. So these contradictions in findings create a scope for future research.

Population Gaps

“It refers to lack of research on a particular population”(Miles, 2017). Most studies have been conducted in developed countries like the US. On the other hand, developing countries like India have been less studied (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020; Kureshi & Thomas, 2014; 2016). India has made mandatory CSR in the Company Act 2013, which justifies the study of CRM.

Gaps identified in past literature are mentioned in Table 3

Table: 3 Gaps Identified in Past Literature

Authors	Gaps Identified
Lopes et al., 2023	Various kinds of trust (Trust in the company, Trust in CRM in general) should be studied in future along with customer ethical behaviour.
Thomas et al., 2022	Online grocery stores online bus ticketing, AI, Indian luxury sector like new domains should be studied.
Pandey et al., 2022	Future studies should explore the geography of a cause, cause importance, donation, and perceived company motive in the context of CRM in India. Future studies should also consider High-Priced Products.
Amawate & Deb, 2021	In the Indian context excluding gender other demographic variables for example income and age should be studied in respect of CRM.
Dagyte-Kavoliune et al., 2021	The psychographic variable can be taken as a moderator between the dimension of fit and purchase intention.
Cosgrave & O’Dwyer, 2020	The influence of Religious belief should be studied on CRM Campaigns.
Ferraris et al., 2020	Donation-related variables for example amount of donation and donation proximity should be studied in the future.
Zhang et al., 2020	CRM information disclosure (e.g. transparency in amount spent) impact on consumer response should be studied in the Future.
Natarajan et al., 2018	Antecedents of CRM advertisement like personality, lifestyle, and motivation can be studied in the future.
Patel et al., 2017	Skepticism as a moderating variable can be studied in the future as the current study does not identify a significant connection between Skepticism and Purchase intention.

Source: The Author (s)



Conclusion

CRM is a favorable marketing strategy for the company, the customer, and the cause simultaneously. This paper answers three main Research Questions: (RQ1) How is Cause-Related Marketing understood and defined within the existing Literature? (RQ2) What are the impacts of Cause-Related Marketing as revealed in existing empirical Studies? (RQ3) What are the various theories, and variables studied in Cause Related Marketing Literature? (RQ4) What is the future of Cause Related Marketing Research?

The Study finds the inception and evolution of CRM and its definitions. CRM is derived from CSR and American Express was the first company that used CRM as a marketing tool. CRM as a marketing tool evolved phenomenally from 1988 to 2023.

After reviewing the past literature, the study identify the main theories used in CRM are ELM, signaling theory, Social identity theory, Theory of planned behavior, and Attribution theory. It was found that the Theory of planned behavior and the Theory of reasoned action have been very little used in the existing study (Shanbhag et al., 2023). The main Variables studied in CRM literature are altruism, Skepticism, Product type, Donation, Brand-cause fit, Cause involvement, and cause type.

From reviewing the past literature, it was concluded there is enough scope for future research in this area. CRM is less studied in developing countries like India (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020). There is scope to study the influence of Religion on CRM (Cosgrave & O'Dwyer, 2020).

Research implications and limitations

The Primary implication of undertaking this review study is as follows. First, to understand CRM and the way it is defined within existing studies. Second, to know the impact of CRM as revealed in existing empirical studies. Third, to find out major theories and variables studied in past. Fourth, to know the future of CRM research. This study has remarkable implication to marketer and academicians.

There is some sort of limitations that opened scope for future research. Future study can do bibliometric review to have more in-depth knowledge. Also in contrast to simple review conducted in this study, future research endeavours could adopt a systematic literature review approach.

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Annexure 16.4.9

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A-Satisfactory (0-10%)

B-Upgrade (11-40%)

C-Poor (41-60%)

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Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: The manuscript offers a well-organized and richly detailed overview of the evolution of Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) from its inception to the present day. The review captures both foundational theories and emerging trends in the field, providing an excellent starting point for scholars and practitioners alike. The four research questions are clearly framed, and the use of major databases (Scopus, Emerald, Web of Science) lends academic rigor to the literature review. One strength is the thematic division of findings which include definitions, empirical impacts, theories, and variables

Reviewer's Comment 2: This paper does a commendable job in summarizing key theories like ELM, TPB, and Signaling Theory and associating them with consumer responses to CRM. The identification of gaps using Miles' taxonomy is especially thoughtful and elevates the contribution of the review. The tables synthesizing study findings and key variables are helpful and informative. However a brief methodology section on how the 40+ articles were screened and selected could enhance transparency.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The manuscript is timely and adds to the understanding of CRM by combining conceptual synthesis with practical implications. Its discussion on the underrepresentation of CRM studies in developing countries like India and its recognition of newer domains such as digital CRM are particularly valuable. The paper also bridges the gap between CSR and CRM effectively. The paper could be more robust by adding bibliometric analysis with the review that provide the scope for future studies.

Editorial Excerpt



The article has 1% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Kanishk & Madhulika), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "Unpacking Cause-Related Marketing: An In-Depth Literature Analysis and Call for Future Research" both subject-wise and research-wise. This manuscript is a thorough and thoughtful literature review on Cause-Related Marketing that successfully integrates past definitions, theoretical underpinnings, and variable classifications while offering a clear roadmap for future research. Its structured format, supported by relevant citations and data synthesis, makes it a valuable academic resource. The author has successfully navigated through a vast array of literature to provide a comprehensive overview of current research on the subject. Overall, this paper constitutes a valuable contribution to the literature on cause related marketing. After comprehensive reviews and editorial board's remarks the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under "Review of Literature" category.

Acknowledgement



The acknowledgment section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by (Kanishk & Madhulika) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The authors are highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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