The Impact of Cause-Related Marketing on Brand Image, Perceived Quality, Brand Awareness, and Purchase Intention: The Moderate Role of Customers Skepticism

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Abstract: Over the past years, the relationship between companies and non-governmental organizations has witnessed remarkable cooperation and growth. Many businesses in Lebanon are taking advantage of the present economic and social situation to address social concerns and market their brand in a humanitarian manner. This study investigates the influence of cause-related marketing campaigns performed by companies on brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness, and purchase intention. In addition, the current study addresses the moderate impact of customer's skepticism on the relationship between the examined variables. By employing shareholder value theory, the conceptual framework was developed to explain the outcomes of cause-related marketing on cognitive, perceptual and behavioral outcomes of customers. A quantitative method was used, and data was collected from 212 respondents in order to achieve the current research objectives. The findings of the present study reveal a positive relationship between cause-related marketing and brand image, perceived quality, customer's purchase intentions. Moreover, the findings stated that customer's skepticism negatively moderate the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image. This study enhances marketing literature regarding the fundamental effect of cause-related marketing. Moreover, this study provides both marketers and companies' managers with a better understanding of cause-related marketing outcomes and guides them to comprehend the effect customer's skepticism on the outcomes of cause-related marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Cause-Related Marketing, Brand Image, Perceived Quality, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Issues of social responsibility and sustainability are becoming increasingly important in today's economic and social circumstances, particularly in the business sector (Macaron 2019). The companies' focus switched from profit maximization to more pressing challenges such as corporate survival and meeting societal demands (Hildebrand et al., 2011). Thus, the relationship between companies and non-profit organizations has witnessed remarkable cooperation and growth (Boenigk & Schuchardt, 2015). One of the most important form of cooperation is the relationship and the interconnection between the brands and social organization that has a purpose to handle social issue (Kim & Lee, 2009). This cooperation allows increasing the profit and revenue of the company, which at the same time works to contribute to the welfare of society (Nan & Heo 2007). This cooperation is called cause-related marketing (Nan & Heo 2007; Kim & Lee, 2009).

Previous studies have concluded that cause-related marketing campaigns have a positive effect of brand image (Shabbir et al., 2009; Qamar, 2013), brand awareness (Saberi & Karsalari, 2014), perceived quality (Heidarian & Bijandi, 2015), consumers' attitude (Elhajjar & Alemail, 2019), brand attractiveness (Qamar, 2013; Elhajjar & Alemail, 2019), consumer purchase intention (Elhajjar & Alemail, 2019), brand credibility (Elhajjar & Alesmail, 2019), social responsibility (Heidarian & Bijandi, 2015), customers' Switching intentions (Abdelraheem et al., 2021). Moreover, previous studies investigate the influences of customer's skepticism toward the cause-related marketing strategies and found that consumer's skepticism towards cause-related marketing negatively affects the company (Rathod et al., 2014; Amawate & Deb, 2019).

Nowadays, the economic crises and the epidemic have seriously hurt the book sector in Lebanon (Ramadan 2022). In addition, organizations and companies in Lebanon are attempting to raise awareness and stand out from rivals in order to boost sales and profit through cause-related marketing campaigns and linking their brands to humanitarian issues (Elhajjar & Alesmail 2019). However, most of the consumers who are related to the company on the basis of its association with the social issue are skeptics and think that the use of cause-related marketing is only to improve their image, so consumers begin to question the company's motives for linking their brand to a social issue (Elving, 2013). Thus, the current research objectives is to realize the effect of cause related marketing campaigns on brand image, brand awareness, perceived quality and purchase intention. Further, the current study investigates the moderate impact customer's skepticism plays on the relationship among the examined variables.

After reviewing the literature, the current study closes the gaps and enhances the marketing literature by developing a conceptual framework that helps explain the concept of cause-related marketing. Furthermore, this study is considered one of the few empirical studies in Lebanon, which contributes to better understanding the outcomes of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness, and purchase intention. Moreover, this study contributes to a better grasp of cause-related marketing campaigns by examining the moderating role played by perceived skepticism on the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image, perceived quality brand awareness, and purchase intention. Besides, the present study adopts the shareholder value theory to develop a research model. In this context, this study provides empirical support to revalidate the mentioned theory.

Likewise, the findings of this study support marketers and company managers. First, the outcome of this study will provide Lebanese marketers with a better understanding of the factors that influence purchase intention with regards to the effect of cause-related marketing campaigns. Second, the findings of this study will help marketers and companies' managers to gain better understanding of customer attitudes against the outcomes of cause-related marketing. Furthermore, the findings of this study provide marketers and companies managers full insight about the moderates effect of customers skepticism on the relationship between the examined variables.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development
Cause related marketing

Cause-related marketing is a process of close cooperation or association between a non-profit organization and a profit company. The process aims to promote a specific product or service linked to a social cause in order to raise funds for the company and non-profit organization at the same time (Varandarajan & Menon, 1988). Varandarajan & Menon (1988) defined cause-related marketing as 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. One example of cause-related marketing campaigns dates back to the early 1980s, when the American Express insurance company donated one cent for each insurance card that was sold to preserve the Statue of Liberty, which led to an increase in the percentage of insurance cards sold (Kim & Lee 2009).

The shareholder value theory

The shareholder value theory was proposed by Friedman (1970). This theory states that the social responsibility of companies come only to maximize shareholder value, therefore companies do some social work aimed at social development to increase their sales and value. In the 1980s and 1990s, shareholder value theory gained popularity. According to shareholder theory, shareholders are the ultimate owners of a corporation's assets; hence, managers and boards must prioritize protecting and growing these assets for the benefit of shareholders. The current study employs shareholder value theory to explain the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and purchase intention.

Cause related marketing and corporate image

Keller (2002) refers to brand image as the sum of brand associations in a customer's memory that promotes customers' affinity for brand associations that include brand benefit, attributes, and attitude. Kotler (2006) defined brand image as personal feeling and thoughts about particular product or service. Qamar (2013) showed that cause-related marketing positively influences brand image in Pakistan. Rathod & Shukla (2014) found a positive relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image in India. Saberi & Karsalari (2014) demonstrated a positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand image. Heidarian & Bijandi (2015) concluded a positive relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image in Iran. Therefore, companies use cause-related marketing to create a positive image of the brand in the minds of customers that

improves the company's competitiveness within the market. Thus, based on the above literature, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H1: Cause related marketing campaigns positively influence brand image.

Cause related marketing campaigns and perceived quality

According to Desai et al. (2008), perceived quality is a consumer's awareness of what he or she sees and feels while looking at and/or handling a product of a specific brand. Saberi & Karsalari (2014) investigated the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on perceived quality based on quantitative survey data collected from about 384 consumers studying in different purchase centers in Esfahan. Saberi & Karsalari's study found that cause-related marketing campaigns positively influence perceived quality. Heidarian & Bijandi (2015) studied the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and perceived quality among consumers in fivefold of Mashhad. Heidarian & Bijandi's study found a positive relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and perceived quality. As a result, firms utilize cause-related marketing to boost customer impressions of the product, which enhances the company's market position. Thus, based on the preceding debates, it is suggested that:

H2: Cause related marketing campaigns positively influence perceived quality.

Cause related marketing campaigns and brand Awareness

Brand awareness could be characterized as the fundamental degree of information that a buyer would have on a specific brand (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). Nedungad (1990) asserted that customers' propensity to buy a brand in the marketplace depended on their level of familiarity with it. Shabbir et al. (2009) revealed a positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand awareness in different universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Saberi & Karsalari, (2014) found that cause-related marketing campaigns positively affect brand awareness in Esfahan, Iran. Abdelreheem et al. (2021) revealed a positive relationship between cause-related marketing strategies and brand awareness in Egypt. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Cause related marketing campaigns positively influence brand awareness.

Cause related marketing campaigns and purchase intention

Purchase intention refers to the probability and willingness of customers to purchase something (Dodd et al., 1991). Shah et al. (2012) argued that purchase intention is a type of decision-making that studies the causes and factors that lead customers to buy a particular brand (Shah et al., 2012). Researchers have agreed that the basic goal of cause-related marketing activities is to enhance sales, performance and purchase intention (Varadarajan et al., 1988; Kotler et al., 2005). Previous studies have shown that cause-related marketing campaigns have a direct effect on customer's purchase intention (Shabbir et al., 2009; Qamar, 2013; Saberi & Karsalari, 2014; Rathod & Shukla, 2014). Thus, firms conducted cause-related marketing campaigns in order to increase sales and profits. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Cause related marketing campaigns positively influence purchase intentions.

Customer's skepticism as a moderator

According to Mohr et al. (1998), skepticism toward cause-related marketing campaigns refers to the consumers' questions or propensity to distrust or disbelieve cause-related marketing that is conducted by a company. According to Bronn & Vrioni (2001), cause-related marketing responses by consumers are influenced by the consumer's skepticism. The level of consumers' skepticism regarding cause-related marketing campaigns could affect the interpretation of these campaigns, where consumers' skepticism occurs as a result of their distrust of the company and the questions they ask regarding the goal of the company in participating in these charity activities (Webb & Mohr 1998). For Varadarajan & Menon (1988), the relationship between attitude and behavior is moderated by consumers' skepticism about the product or service purchase decision. In this context, consumers think about the cause or benefit of these activities. Rathod & Shukla (2014) found that consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and corporate image and between cause-related marketing campaigns and purchase intention. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5a: Customer's skepticism negatively moderates the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand image.

H5b: Customer's skepticism negatively moderates the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on perceived quality.

H5c: Customer's skepticism negatively moderates the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand awareness.

H5d: Customer's skepticism negatively moderates the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on purchase intention.

Conceptual framework

This study investigates the impact of cause-related marketing on brand image, brand awareness, perceived quality and purchase intention.
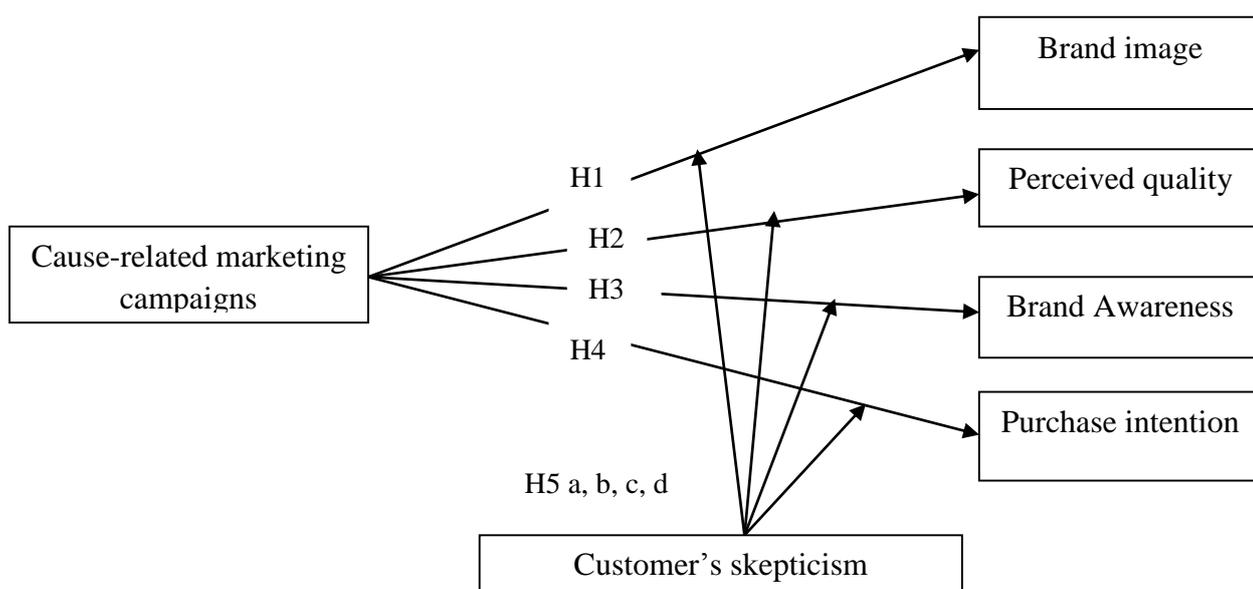

Figure 1: Conceptual model

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design and sampling

This study investigates the impact of cause related marketing on brand image, brand awareness, perceived quality and purchase intention in Lebanon. In addition, this study addresses the role customer's skepticism plays in moderating the relationship. To achieve the current research objectives and empirically analyze the effectiveness of cause-related marketing campaigns, data were collected from Lebanese respondents based on online and offline data collection methods. Structured questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of 212 respondents who purchase books from specific companies that have made strategic alliance with some of social organizations that handles social, educational, and health issues in large malls in Beirut.

2.2 Measurement instrument

The research measurement instrument scale was adapted from previous studies based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." First of all, this instrument was distributed to several experts to take their opinion about its validity, then the research instrument scales was modified based on their recommendations. Cause-related marketing campaigns were based on four items and adapted from Shabbir et al. (2010). The brand image construct measures were based on three items and adapted from Nguyen & Leblanc (2001). Perceived quality measures were based on five items and adapted from Yoo & Donthu, (2001). The brand awareness measures were based on five items and adapted from Shah (2012). Purchase intention was measured by five items and adapted from Baker & Churchill (1977). Lastly, the four measurement items for the customer's skepticism construct were adapted from Amawate & Deb (2019).

Data Analysis
Measurement model evaluation

To assess the results of the measuring model, this study tests Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin, factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for the variables.

Table 1 Result of measurement model

Latent Variable	Latent items	Factor loading	N	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	CR
CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING CAMPAIGN	CRM-1	0.785	4	0.851	0.655	0.883
	CRM-2	0.698				
	CRM-3	0.869				
	CRM-4	0.874				
BRAND IMAGE	BI-1	0.984	3	0.818	0.795	0.92
	BI-2	0.896				
	BI-3	0.785				
PERCEIVED QUALITY	PQ-1	0.785	5	0.876	0.71	0.924
	PQ-2	0.865				

	PQ-3	0.832				
	PQ-4	0.756				
	PQ-5	0.962				
BRAND AWARENESS	BA-1	0.786	5	0.852	0.751	0.937
	BA-2	0.956				
	BA-3	0.865				
	BA-4	0.855				
	BA-5	0.864				
PURCHASE INTENTION	PI-1	0.786	5	0.788	0.687	0.916
	PI-2	0.857				
	PI-3	0.865				
	PI-4	0.784				
	PI-5	0.849				
CUSTOMERS' SKEPTICISM	SKPT-1	0.759	4	0.812	0.808	0.9
	SKPT-2	0.741				
	SKPT-3	0.872				
	SKPT-4	0.765				
	SKPT-5	0.873				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	0.925					

As shown in Table 1, the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was 0.925, which is acceptable for guaranteeing the sampling adequacy of data as stated by Kaiser (1971). The factor loading of all the items was above 0.5, which means that all the items were appropriate for analysis. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliable values of all the variables were larger than 0.7, which are higher than Hair et al (2017) recommended threshold value of 0.7. Besides, the AVE value of all variables exceeds the permissible limit of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). As a consequence, the findings verify the study's constructs' internal consistency and convergent validity.

Hypotheses testing, results and discussions

The objectives of this study are to investigate the impact of cause-related marketing campaign on brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness and purchase intention. Moreover, this study examines the moderate's impact of customer's skepticism on the relationship between cause-related marketing campaign and brand image, perceived quality, brand awareness, purchase intention. To achieve the current research objectives, data were collected from 212 respondents who purchases from book sectors that linked their brands with social organizations in Lebanon. The direct relationships among the variables and the moderate impact between the relationships are provided in Table 2. The structural model assessment estimates that cause-related marketing campaigns positively influence brand image, perceived quality, and purchase intention. Moreover, the assessment indicates that customer's skepticism moderates the relationship between the cause-related marketing campaign and brand image negatively.

Table 2 Structural relationships and hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	t-values	P	Results
H1	CRM→BI	0.541	2.23	0.001	Supported
H2	CRM→PQ	0.14	1.95	0.012	Supported
H3	CRM→BA	0.095	0.991	0.214	Not supported
H4	CRM→PI	0.65	2.32	0.035	Supported
H5 a	Moderating Effect 1: CRM (SKPT) →BI	0.324	2.74	0.000	Supported
H5 b	Moderating Effect 2: CRM (SKPT) →PQ	-0.0533	0.84	0.419	Not supported
H5 c	Moderating Effect 3: CRM (SKPT) →BA	-0.070	-1.486	0.392	Not supported
H5 d	Moderating Effect 4: CRM (SKPT) →PI	-0.022	0.965	0.169	Not supported

The results indicate that cause-related marketing campaigns have a positive effect on brand image ($\beta=0.541$; $p= 0.001$); therefore, H1 is supported. The positive impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand image is in line with previous studies by (Shabbir et al., 2009; Qamar, 2013; Rathod et al., 2014; Saberi & Karsalari, 2014; Heidarian & Bijandi, 2015) that argued cause-related marketing campaigns positively influence brand image. This seems to suggest that businesses who join hands with charities improve the perceptions and impression of individuals towards them. Likewise, the current study's findings indicated a positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on perceived quality ($\beta= 0.14$; $p= 0.012$), supporting H2. The positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on perceived quality supports previous studies (Saberi & Karsalari, 2014; Heidarian & Bijandi, 2015) that found a positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on perceived quality. This result indicated that as companies link their products or services with social organizations, customers' expectations decrease. Thus, an individual's perceived quality increases.

The study's findings also reveal that there is a negative relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand awareness ($\beta= 0.095$; $p= 0.214$); therefore, H3 is rejected. The negative effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on brand awareness contradicts with previous studies by (Saberi & Karsalari, 2014; Heidarian & Bijandi, 2015) that indicated cause-related marketing positively influences brand awareness. This seems to indicate that cause-related marketing campaigns in the books sector are widely spread, which limits individuals' ability to differentiate the business. Further, the findings of this study reveal a positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on purchase intentions ($\beta= 0.65$; $p= 0.035$), supporting H3. The positive effect of cause-related marketing campaigns on purchase intentions confirms a previous study (Qamar, 2013; Rathod et al., 2014; Saberi & Karsalari, 2014; Elhajjar & Alemail, 2019) that indicated a positive effect of cause-related marketing on purchase intentions. This result indicates that individuals mainly like to

participate in charity activities. Likewise, Lebanon currently is facing economic difficulties and most individuals might prefer to purchase from a business where part of its profit supports organizations that aim to protect society or handle social issues through the corporation of business with humanitarian's organizations.

Besides, the study's findings state that customer's skepticism negatively moderate the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image (β= 0.324; p= 0.000), supporting H5 a. This finding is consistent with a previous study by Rathod et al. (2014) that argued customers' skepticism moderates the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand image. This seems to be suggests that the negative thoughts of individuals towards the cause-related marketing campaigns negatively affecting their perceptions against the company's objectives. In return, these campaigns could harmfully affect the business's wellbeing. Moreover, the current study's findings indicate that customer's skepticism has no moderate effect on the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and perceived quality (β= -0.0533; p= 0.419). Therefore, H5B is rejected. This means that customers differentiate the quality of products or services by their features, and their perceived quality will not be affected or changed as a result of their negative beliefs about business campaigns. Accordingly, whether individual's belief that the campaigns is honest or not, their perceived quality against the product or service remain same.

In addition, the study's results state that there is no moderate impact of customer's skepticism on the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand awareness (β= -0.070; p= 0.392). Thus, H5c is rejected. This means that customer's awareness might not be influenced by the individual's doubt against cause-marketing campaigns. Surprisingly, in this study, there is no relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and brand awareness. Finally, the study's findings reveal that there is no moderate impact of customer's skepticism on the relationship between cause-related marketing campaigns and purchase intentions (β= -0.022; p = 0.169). Thus, H5d is rejected. This result means that regardless of the store's true intention, customers might have no choice but to purchase from other book stores, unless the store fulfills the customer's needs and wants.

3. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Cause-related marketing is an effective strategy in today's competitive market, given the current economic situation in Lebanon. There is a need to investigate the outcomes of cause-related marketing in the books sector because this sector has recently suffered a severe blow due to the economic crises and previous pandemic outbreaks. Thus, this study attempts to analyze the consequences of cause-related marketing campaigns in the Lebanese books sector. The current study enhances the literature of cause-related marketing in Lebanon, which is still lacking. Besides, the current study is based on the shareholder value theory, which states that social responsibility is performed by companies to maximize shareholder value. The findings of this study provide empirical support to revalidates the Friedman (1970) shareholder value theory. In addition, the current study contributes to better understanding the impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on consumer behaviors and attitudes. Further, the current study contributes to better understand the moderate's impact of cause-related marketing's skepticism on behavioral outcomes of customers.

Likewise, the findings of this study guide both marketers and companies' managers to fully comprehend the effect of cause-related marketing. Marketers and companies' managers are recommended to implement cause-related marketing campaigns in order to improve brand image, perceived quality, and purchase intention, especially during these difficult economic circumstances in Lebanon. Finally, marketers should take into consideration the customer's skepticism toward their cause-related marketing campaigns because the customer's skepticism negatively moderates the relationship between cause-related marketing and brand image, as indicated in the current study's findings.

This study, like any other research, has limitations. First, because this study was done in Lebanon, its generalizability is limited. A future study might test the present study's conceptual framework in another country. Second, this study used convenience sampling, which limits its generalizability. Another sampling strategy might be used in a future study to better evaluate the relationship between the variables. Third, this study focuses on the book sector, which limits the generalizability of its findings to other sectors. Future studies should investigate the impact of cause-related marketing in other types of sectors to fully comprehend the outcomes of cause-related marketing.

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