



Modeling strategic management for cause-related marketing

Modeling
strategic
management

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Abstract

Purpose – A number of research findings point to positive motivational attribution about the donor brand as an essential element of cause-related marketing (CRM) effectiveness. However, there still lacks sophisticated delineation to explicate the antecedents and consequences of positive motivational attribution. The purpose of this paper is to propose and test a strategic management model to address this issue.

Design/methodology/approach – The current study, integrating pertinent theories, develops the conceptual CRM strategic management model. A multi-phase investigation, alongside statistical technique of structural equation modelling, is used to estimate the causal path relationships among the latent constructs as hypothesised in the model.

Findings – Positive motivational attribution about the donor brand refers to the target consumer's perception that the donor brand is motivated with more altruism than egotism. Only when the consumer's prior experience of the donor brand reaches an acceptable level, such perception becomes possible to emerge. Then, the consumer feels stronger moral pleasure for participating or stronger moral displeasure for not participating in the campaign. Eventually, moral pleasure and moral displeasure exert immediate impact on purchase intention.

Originality/value – The empirically validated CRM strategic management model contributes to brand-marketing research and practice by providing more strategic clues for maximising CRM effectiveness.

Keywords Cause marketing, Brand management, Motivation (psychology), Buying behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

As Varadarajan and Menon (1988) define, cause-related marketing (CRM) is the marketing activities characterising donations offered by corporate organisations or product brands to a charity cause. It became a frequently used marketing approach in the early 1990s. Since then, CRM has gained ever-growing popularity among brand marketers, who believe this approach helps to enhance both brand attitude and purchase intention (Dean, 1999; Meenaghan and O'Sullivan, 2001; Hoeffler and Keller, 2002; Nan and Heo, 2007).

A number of relevant studies point to positive motivational attribution about the donor brand as an essential element of CRM effectiveness. The brand marketer is advised to ensure that the consumer perceives the donor brand as with more altruistic than egotistic motivation to contribute to a charity cause (Sargeant, 1999; Dean, 2002; Walliser, 2003; Maignan, 2004; Mohr, 2006; Youn and Kim, 2008). However, there still lacks sophisticated delineation to explicate the antecedents and consequences of positive motivational attribution. Without such delineation, the brand marketer may rely on intuition instead of strategic thinking when planning and implementing CRM.



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To address this issue, the current study proposes and tests the CRM strategic management model. It proves that positive motivational attribution about the donor brand is the strategic crux in generating purchase intention. Besides, successful management of prior brand experience plays a key role in bringing positive motivational attribution to emerge. The author hopes that the model may contribute to brand-marketing by providing more strategic clues for maximising CRM effectiveness.

In order to explore the main factors constituting positive motivational attribution about the donor brand, the current study integrates confirmation bias theory, moral judgement theory, moral emotion theory and attribution theory. A CRM strategic management model is developed as shown in Figure 1. It explicates the causal paths among antecedents and consequence of positive motivational attribution. The model's major theoretical premise is that performance of any marketing effort is contingent on prior brand experience, which lies in what the consumer has previously learned and retained about the brand. Only when the consumer's prior experience of the donor brand reaches an acceptable level, positive motivational attribution becomes more possible to emerge. It then leads to stronger moral pleasure for participating in the CRM campaign or stronger moral displeasure for not participating. Eventually, moral pleasure and moral displeasure exercise immediate impact on purchase intention of the product promoted with a charity cause.

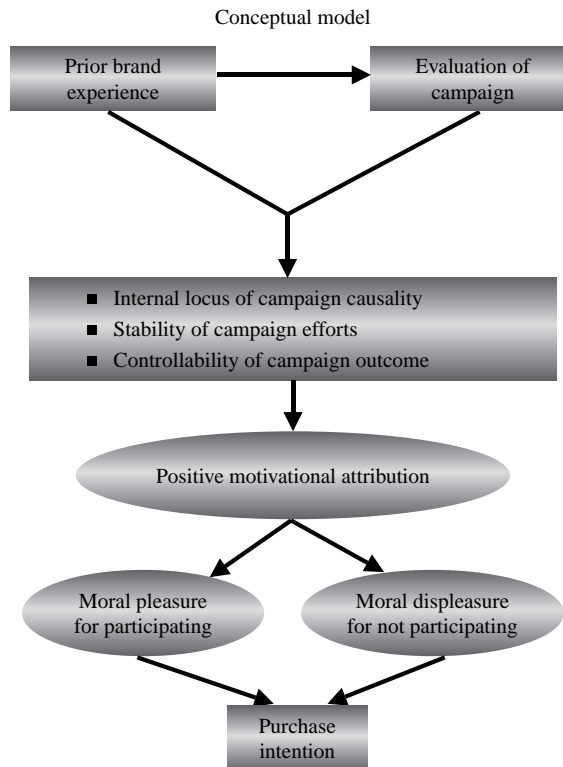


Figure 1.
Conceptual CRM strategic
management model

Theoretical analysis of the proposed conceptual model, coupled with empirical examinations of five hypotheses, unfolds in the following sections.

Moral judgement and emotion

The primary rationale to employ CRM is based on the assumption that making an appeal to the consumer's moral judgement may elicit favourable brand attitude and purchase intention (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Menon and Kahn, 2003, Luo, 2005; Wheale and Hinton, 2007). The consumer's moral judgement rivets on whether the consumer perceives the donor brand as more altruistic-oriented (do something good really for others) or egoistic-oriented (do something good only for self-interest). Perception of altruistic-orientation (egoistic-orientation) results in positive (negative) motivational attribution about the donor brand. Quite a few empirical evidences validate the importance of positive motivational attribution. In a series of tests, Barone *et al.* (2000) prove that simple support of a charity cause does not suffice to elicit favourable responses. The CRM effectiveness lies much in whether the positive motivational attribution can emerge. Marketing scholars, including Sargeant (1999), Dean (2002), Walliser (2003), Maignan (2004), Mohr (2006) and Youn and Kim (2008), report similar findings. They invariably point to the critical role of positive motivational attribution about the donor brand.

The theory of moral judgement has recently been linked with the notion of moral emotion. According to Eisenberg (2000), Greene *et al.* (2001), Haidt (2003), Moll *et al.* (2003), and Velez Garcia and Ostrosky-Solis (2006), moral emotion differs from basic emotion (sadness, joy, anger, fear, surprise) in that it is intrinsically correlated with the welfare and interests of other people instead of the self (gratitude, sympathy, compassion, guilt, disgust, contempt, indignation). In this way, moral emotion is induced when conformity to moral principles or violation of theirs is perceived. As the moral emotion theorists posit, behaviour conforming to moral principles (for example, helping other people with sincere motives) induces moral pleasure such as gratitude and elevation; behaviour violating moral principles (for example, helping other people out with hypocritical intentions) induces moral displeasure such as disgust and contempt. Empirically, favourable or unfavourable response to a morality-related behaviour is in considerable part explained by moral pleasure or moral displeasure (Moll *et al.*, 2003; Velez Garcia and Ostrosky-Solis, 2006).

Coalescing the moral judgement and moral emotion theories, we may theorise that consumers generally presume the donor brand is committing itself to a charity cause in a morally sincere way. They expect the brand really wants to do something good for others instead of merely pursuing its own profits. Specifically, when the perception of altruistic-orientation is higher, positive motivational attribution about the brand emerges; the consumer feels stronger moral pleasure for participating in the campaign or stronger moral displeasure for not participating. When the perception of egoistic-orientation is higher, negative motivational attribution about the brand emerges; the consumer feels weaker moral pleasure for participating in the campaign or weaker moral displeasure for not participating:

- H1a.* Positive motivational attribution about the donor brand induces moral pleasure for participation in the CRM campaign and moral displeasure for non-participation in the CRM campaign.

H1b. Moral pleasure and moral displeasure exercise direct impact on purchase intention.

Causal attribution of motivation

How can the brand marketer bring positive motivational attribution about the donor brand to emerge? The answer can be found in the causal attribution theory. When people try to figure out the reasons or motivations behind the behaviour they see, they engage in causal attribution (Jones *et al.*, 1972; Kelley, 1973, 1979; Friestad and Wright, 1994). According to Jones *et al.* (1972), attribution theory has three fundamental assumptions. First, people attempt to determine the causes of behaviour, so they look for information that may help them to find the answer. Second, people examine the co-variation between a given effect and possible causes. Third, the attributed cause has impact on the perceiver's own thoughts, feelings and actions in a particular situation.

Kelley (1979), using the three fundamental assumptions of attribution theory, proposes the principles of co-variation and discounting. The co-variation principle applies to situations in which the perceiver, having information from more than one observation, tries to see which effects co-vary with which causes. By combining various observations, the perceiver sees a pattern of causality. The discounting principle applies to situations in which the perceiver does not have a complete block of data to observe. He or she must rely on a single or a limited number of observations and hypothesise about cause-effect relationships. In such cases, the causal attribution is heavily based on assumptions drawn from past knowledge for the perceiver to form a causal schema. Simply put, causal attribution of a behaviour or event depends upon observed or assumed data held by individual perceivers. Data held by individual perceivers vary from one perceiver to another, which usually result in different interpretations regarding a behaviour or event. Thus, conclusions about a particular causal attribution can also vary from one another. This theoretical notion has received robust support in empirical studies by Weiner *et al.* (1991) who further discover there are three dimensions affecting the whole causal attribution process:

- (1) *Locus of causality*: the perceiver's belief that the cause of a behaviour or event originates from internal factors (within the actor) or external factors (in the outside environment).
- (2) *Stability*: the perceiver's belief that a behaviour or event occurs either frequently or infrequently.
- (3) *Controllability*: the perceiver's belief that the actor can or cannot control the consequence of a behaviour or event.

Scholars including McAuley *et al.* (1992), Spitzberg (2001) and Weiner (2004) use those dimensions to develop a causal dimension scale (CDS) for measuring causal attribution and empirically confirm that the three-dimension conceptualisation is a valid and reliable approach to understand the causal attribution process. Relevant research conducted by scholars including Taggar and Neubert (2004), Darcy (2005), White (2005) and McElroy *et al.* (2007) further validates the multiple-dimensionality approach. It helps to grasp the dynamism in the causal attribution of a behaviour or event. In the meantime, such an approach provides a useful framework for investigations on many attribution-related topics, ranging from criminology to consumer research. In investigating the effectiveness of CRM campaigns, we may

apply the CDS approach and conceptualise positive attribution of the donor brand's motivation in the CRM campaign as a construct determined by the three dimensions of charity behaviour:

- (1) Internal *locus* of campaign causality: driven by an actual concern of the donor brand for the beneficiaries.
- (2) Stability of campaign efforts: not a single shot but a repetition of charity that the donor brand has been doing or has already done for the public.
- (3) Controllability of campaign outcome: with a satisfactory consequence within the donor brand's ability to achieve.

H2. Internal *locus* of campaign causality, stability of campaign efforts and controllability of campaign outcome affect positive motivational attribution about the donor brand.

Conformation bias

Noteworthy, the above-mentioned three dimensions of the causal attribution process can be susceptible to the confirmation bias effect, particularly in such persuasion attempts as CRM. When exposed to persuasion messages, the audience evaluate the messages mostly according to their prior experience and tends to be biased towards the messages confirming that prior experience and discount the messages disconfirming it. Specifically, a person's cognitive mechanism operates in the continuum between two types of extremes: diagnosticity and confirmation bias (Friestad and Wright, 1994; Klayman, 1995; Garcia-Marques *et al.*, 2001). Diagnosticity describes a person's tendency to systematically process newly availed evidence without much influence by prior experience. Confirmation bias, in contrast, describes a person's tendency to seek the messages in newly availed evidence confirming prior experience while neglecting those disconfirming it. Generally, persuasion scholars find that prior experience (confirmation bias) exercises more influence than systematic processing of newly availed evidence (diagnosticity). For example, Nickerson (1998), Johnson (2001), Holbrook *et al.* (2005), Wiley (2005) and Pronin and Kugler (2007) conduct experiments or surveys, testing how prior experience retrieved from memory generates impact on responses to persuasion attempts. They all prove that the power of mental antecedents formed by prior experience significantly affects the interpretation of newly availed evidence, which in turn leads to favourable or unfavourable responses.

As for marketing communications, empirical findings also prove the greater weight of prior brand experience. For example, Kim and Sullivan (1998) find that consumers usually interpret newly availed information about a brand based on their expectations, which are formed by their experience and knowledge accumulated in the past behaviour of the brand. Prior brand experience differs from individual to individual, so evaluation about a same brand in a same situation can be quite different. More recently, Weilbacher (2003), Woodside and Uncles (2005) and Romaniuk and Winchester (2008) also report similar findings. They find that marketing information is nothing more than a net addition to everything the consumer has previously learned and retained about the brand. Consumers process all marketing information in a very complex yet instantaneous manner and prior brand experience wields non-negligible influence on the consumer's attitude towards marketing efforts. The challenge for the

marketing manager is to find ways and means to build an enduring perceptual representation of the brand through acceptable and desirable experience.

Management and consumer behaviour scholars such as Dube and Le bel (2003), Schmitt (2003), McCole (2004), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Tsai (2005a, b, 2006), and Brown (2007) emphasise consumer experience constitutes through all sorts of dynamic exchanges and contact points in sensory, affective, social and intellectual locations and occasions. Marketing communication efforts are only an increment to the prior brand experience already there. The confirmation bias effect of prior brand experience either strengthens or weakens the persuasiveness of marketing messages:

H3a. Prior brand experience affects evaluation of the CRM campaign.

H3b. Prior brand experience and evaluation of the CRM campaign in tandem affect internal *locus* of campaign causality, stability of campaign efforts and controllability of campaign outcome.

Pilot investigation

Product category choice

Prior to formal empirical testing of the proposed CRM strategic management model, the current study conducted a pilot investigation for three objectives:

- (1) choice of studied product categories;
- (2) survey stimuli production; and
- (3) measurement instrumentation.

The rationale of the first objective extends from the concern that CRM is unrelated to the intrinsic product attributes, so different levels of product involvement may cause variations in CRM effectiveness. According to the product involvement theory, marketing messages featuring extrinsic product attributes are usually less persuasive to the consumers with a high level of product involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1994; Bauer *et al.*, 2006). The main function of CRM is to create an association for the brand with a charity cause (extrinsic attribute), so the consumers with a high level of product involvement may respond less favourably to the CRM messages. It necessitates the current study to examine whether the level of product involvement varies the applicability of the proposed model.

To achieve the first objective, product involvement of 35 product categories were measured and three appropriate product categories were chosen. In comparing product involvement scores, the researcher picked out the categories of laptop computer (71 per cent consumers with high product involvement), health food (58 per cent consumers with high product involvement) and toilet tissue (31 per cent consumers with high product involvement).

Survey stimuli production

After choice of appropriate product categories, the researcher proceeded to stimuli production. A team composed of marketing communication academics and practitioners was responsible for producing the content of campaign messages, which was a portfolio of visual and verbal material about a fictitious CRM campaign. It is depicted as a joint fund-raising effort with a non-profit organisation providing

an educational fund for underprivileged students. The non-profit organisation relies on donations, so the donor brand may contribute to helping the organisation to take care of more students in need of financial support. The planning components of the campaign were set according to the ILPPD Model proposed by Larson (1992):

- *Identity*: a meaningful and memorable campaign theme as well as an identifiable campaign goal.
- *Legitimacy*: the campaign cause is in line with real social norms and needs.
- *Participation*: accessible for the public to take part in the campaign.
- *Penetration*: the campaign is communicated through adequate advertising, PR publicity and word of mouth.
- *Distribution*: the campaign distributes benefits to those in need in a responsible, fair and verifiable manner.

The gist of the campaign message included:

- explanation of the thematic implications and goal of the campaign;
- description of the campaign's main structure and content;
- credible third-party endorsement for the campaign;
- statements made by the campaign's beneficiaries;
- monitoring mechanism for the process;
- plans to encourage public participation;
- publicity for the campaign; and
- anticipated outcome of the campaign.

All the messages were presented in a way that they appear to be actual newspaper clips, magazine stories, television/radio programmes, and web news reports.

Measurement instrumentation

To develop indicators for measuring prior brand experience, the researcher considered the relevant theorisations and empirical findings presented by Dube and Le bel (2003), Blythe and Wright (2003), Schmitt (2003), McCole (2004), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Tsai (2005a, b, 2006), Bliss (2003) and Brown (2007). To develop measurement for other constructs in the proposed conceptual model, the researcher took into account the key concepts of the moral judgement theory, attribution theory and confirmation bias theory mentioned in the previous sections. Then, the researcher recruited 120 consumers representing the categories of laptop computers, health food and toilet tissue. They were asked to articulate their thoughts and feelings about CRM campaigns.

The researchers transferred the generated statements into declarative sentences on a series of cards, retaining the exact terminology and phrases used by the participants. Afterwards, the latter were asked to reconfirm that the declarative sentences reflected what they were thinking and feeling. For example:

CRM campaign should not be used for the donor brand only as a competition strategy; the donor is not supposed to treat CRM as a one-off marketing activity; contributing to public well-being is a responsibility for any brand.

All the cards were sorted by the participants according to the importance of each item.

Besides, the researcher conducted 25 rounds of in-depth interviews and 12 rounds of focus group discussions with the 120 consumers for more opinions. Following the development of initial measurement, the researcher exposed the 120 consumers to the previously described campaign messages and then asked them to fill in the measurement questionnaire. Data were analysed by exploratory factor analysis, examining whether the identified items produced proposed factors and loaded on these factors as intended. Cronbach's measure of reliability coefficient χ was calculated for the indicators of each construct and, with the cut-off level of 0.7, helped to eliminate the items of insignificant contribution, for parsimony purpose. The purified initial measurement was then used for field survey in the next stage of research.

Field survey

Procedure

Consumers representing a real laptop computer brand, health food brand and toilet tissue brand in the market were recruited through purposeful sampling to participate in the survey. The number of consumers representing each brand was set for 230 and the total participants amounted to 690. They were aged between 28 and 45, with college educational backgrounds and similar annual income level (ranging from US\$65,000 to US\$70,000). Besides, the participants were evenly distributed in gender. Aware of the objective and process of the survey, they were willing to cooperate. Except for 21 consumers who later declined to continue participation in the survey for personal reasons, the rest of the 669 participants completed their duties.

Three versions of the fictitious CRM campaign portfolio was so produced that they were identical in content but featured the three brands, respectively, as the donor brand. Couriers delivered the copies of the stimuli portfolio in a sequence of five days to the recruited consumers. The sequential order arrangement was meant to simulate the campaign communication programmes in an everyday context, so the participants could receive and process the campaign information beyond laboratory constraint. They could absorb and interpret the information in a natural setting. The participants, after exposure to the campaign messages, filled in the questionnaire measuring their responses.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of LISREL VIII was run on the measurement model, checking the construct reliability, average variance extracted, squared correlation, standardised loadings and items reliability. As the analysis shown in Table I, after deleting four question items in the scale, overall fit statistics of the measurement model containing 29 manifest indicators for nine latent constructs are quite acceptable illustrated by the indices of: $\chi^2 = 314$, $p < 0.05$; GFI = 0.958; AGFI = 0.931; CFI = 0.923; NFI = 0.912; RMSR = 0.042. In addition, the lambdas (λ) are all above 0.35, the composite reliabilities are greater than 0.7 and the average variances extracted are above 0.5 overall. Furthermore, the average variance extracted for each construct is greater than the squared correlation between a particular construct and any other construct. Judging by these results, the researcher confirms both convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scale.

To confirm measurement invariance across three sample groups, the researcher assessed three measurement models. Model 1 assumed an invariant factor pattern

Constructs/Items	Construct reliability/variance extracted/squared correlation	Standardized loadings	Items reliability
<i>Prior brand experience</i>	0.88/0.63/0.51		
The brand generally is relevant to my needs		0.92	0.85
The brand demonstrates expertise in its brand category		0.86	0.77
The brand is pleasant to use		0.81	0.74
I feels good about the design of the brand		0.76	0.73
I tend to share the experience of the brand with others		0.85	0.76
There is meaningful connection between me and the brand		0.78	0.72
I associate the brand with professional service		0.75	0.71
It is worthwhile to know more about the brand		0.82	0.74
<i>Evaluation of campaign</i>	0.82/0.58/0.47		
The campaign is sensible		0.87	0.78
The campaign is trustworthy		0.78	0.73
The campaign can convince me		0.76	0.71
The campaign is compelling to me		0.79	0.72
<i>Internal locus of causality</i>	0.79/0.54/0.42		
Even without the campaign, the brand will not suffer negative effects in the market		0.84	0.75
Competitors do not pose a threat to the brand if it does not launch the campaign		0.77	0.71
Consumers will not hold the brand in low regard if it does not launch the campaign		0.86	0.76
<i>Stability of efforts</i>	0.77/0.52/0.39		
The brand has engaged itself in charity		0.85	0.73
The brand has been contributing to public well-being		0.77	0.71
Comparing to competitors, the brand's regularity of charity behaviour is higher or, at least, not lower		0.76	0.71
<i>Controllability of outcome</i>	0.79/0.56/0.41		
The brand launches the campaign with a good plan		0.78	0.72
The campaign is well organized		0.81	0.74
The campaign can achieve good outcome		0.83	0.76
<i>Positive motivational attribution</i>	0.87/0.72/0.48		
The brand is motivated to launch the campaign more by philanthropic impetus than by desire of profit-generation		0.84	0.74
The brand brings more help to the beneficiaries than to itself		0.86	0.75

(continued)

Table I.
Confirmatory factor
analysis of measurement
model

Constructs/Items	Construct reliability/variance extracted/squared correlation	Standardized loadings	Items reliability
The campaign reflects the brand's emphasis on charity		0.88	0.79
<i>Moral pleasure for participation</i>	0.89/0.75/0.52		
It is pleasant to take part in the campaign		0.91	0.82
Taking part in the campaign induces pleasure in me		0.85	0.74
<i>Moral displeasure for non-participation</i>	0.86/0.71/0.49		
It is guilty not to take part in the campaign		0.89	0.77
Not taking part in the campaign induces guilt in me		0.83	0.72
Purchase intention (parameter is fixed in model estimation)			
It makes sense for me to buy the product that the brand promotes with a charity cause			

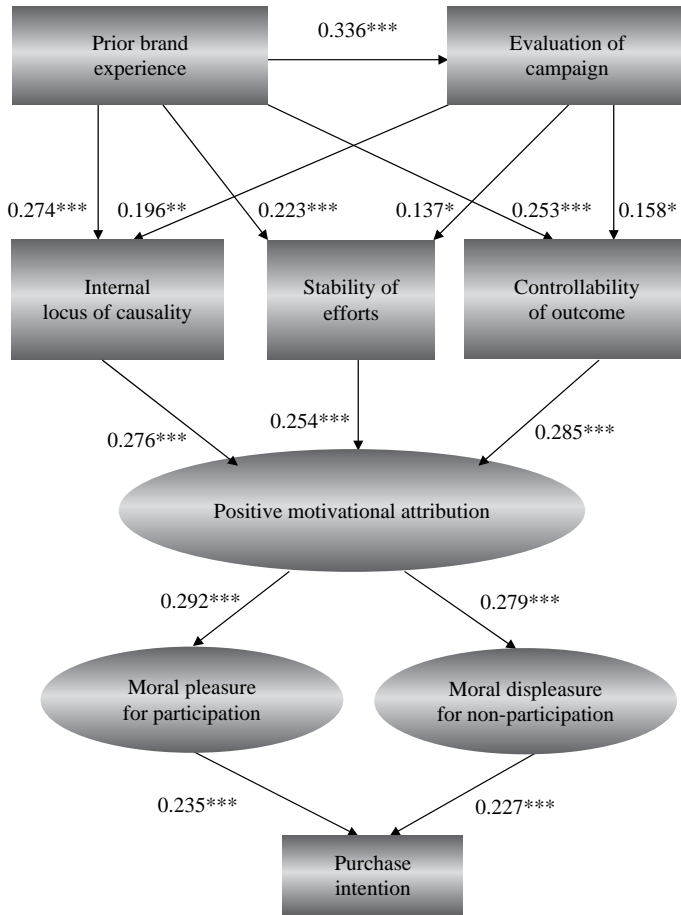
Table I.

across the three sample groups, including nine latent factors, and only one non-zero loading for each item (simple structure); this model served as the null model in the model comparison sequence. Model 2 assumed the factor loadings to be variant across sample groups. Model 3 assumed that the item intercepts t were variant across sample groups. All models were estimated by maximum likelihood using LISREL VIII, and only Model 1 was found to yield a satisfactory goodness-of-fit statistic (0.943), thus confirming measurement invariance across three sample groups representing three product brands.

Structural equation modelling

After confirming the fit in the measurement model, structural equation modelling (SEM) was run. It estimated the causal path relationships among the latent constructs in the conceptual CRM strategic management model. First, the researcher tested the causal path pattern in 12 alternative models by SEM: two full-mediation structural models with single exogenous construct (positive motivational attribution or evaluation of CRM campaign), eight partial-mediation models (varying the combinations of five mediators) and two non-mediation models (constraining mediation effect). The result showed that all of them failed to produce acceptable model fit.

The next step was to run SEM on the proposed conceptual model. Both fit index statistics and path parameters as shown in Figure 2 provided best fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 413$, $p < 0.05$; GFI = 0.938; AGFI = 0.924; CFI = 0.913; NFI = 0.905; RMSR = 0.057. Besides, the estimation result applies not only to the aggregate data but also to the data of each studied brand. In other words, the level of product involvement does not vary the applicability of the CRM Strategic Planning Model. It is suitable across the laptop computer brand (high involvement), health food brand (moderate involvement) and toilet tissue brand (low involvement). The causal path



Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2. Empirical CRM strategic management model

relationships among the latent constructs are evidenced exactly as hypothesised in the proposed model:

- Prior brand experience affects evaluation of the CRM campaign.
- Prior brand experience and evaluation of the CRM campaign in tandem affect internal *locus* of campaign causality, stability of campaign efforts and controllability of campaign outcome.
- Internal *locus* of campaign causality, stability of campaign efforts and controllability of campaign outcome affect positive motivational attribution (about the donor brand).
- Positive motivational attribution induces moral pleasure for participation in the CRM campaign and moral displeasure for non-participation.
- Moral pleasure and moral displeasure exercise direct impact on purchase intention.

Discussion*Prior brand experience*

A conventional view of CRM is that a charity cause prompts consumers to purchase the product of the donor brand. However, according to the CRM strategic management model, this is not necessarily always the case. Positive motivational attribution about donor brand serves as a strategic crux in generating purchase intention. Most importantly, the model proves that prior brand experience exerts significant influence on the whole formation process of positive motivational attribution. Hence, the confirmation bias theory proposed by Woodside and Uncles (2005), Pronin and Kugler (2007) and Romaniuk and Winchester (2008) among others receives further support. The CRM campaign as persuasion attempt is susceptible to the confirmation bias effect of prior brand experience. No matter how persuasive the messages of the CRM campaign may appear, consumers judge the real motivation of the donor brand largely by their prior experience of the brand. It is prior brand experience that determines whether positive motivational attribution can emerge.

In order to maximise CRM effectiveness, we have to attend to management of prior brand experience as a prerequisite. Management and consumer behaviour scholars have gone to great lengths in explaining how consumer experience is constituted through all sorts of dynamic exchanges and contact points in the sensory, affective, social and intellectual locations and occasions (Dube and Le bel, 2003; Schmitt, 2003; McCole, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Brown, 2007). In terms of brand marketing, schools of pragmatic utilitarianism, emotionalism and social symbolism complement each other in creating holistic consumer experience (Tsai, 2005a, b, 2006). Therefore, to manage brand experience the seamless integration of these schools is indispensable. Pragmatic utilitarianism stresses the objective attributes of products; emotionalism accentuates the aspects of emotional arousal and attachment to products; social symbolism emphasises the shared personalities and symbolic meaning of products.

Applying the above theorisations and empirical findings, alongside the specific indicators of prior brand experience explicated in the CRM strategic management model, the researcher recommends four avenues of brand experience management. Management of brand aesthetics is to generate sensory experience in sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Management of brand community is to foster social experience in interacting with family, peers and friends. Management of brand service is to enhance affective experience in comfort and delight. Management of brand knowledge is to create intellectual experience in appreciating novelty, complexity and subtlety. The immediate take-away from this discussion is that the brand marketer may set up a monitoring mechanism, measuring the outcome of brand experience management. Only when its performance reaches an acceptable level, CRM may function to add more favourable evaluation to what the consumer has already learned and retained about the brand. In other words, CRM in itself does not serve as an effective marketing tool. It has to go well with successful brand experience management.

Inducing moral emotion

Another important contribution of the current study is empirical verification on the notion that moral pleasure for participating in the campaign and moral displeasure for not participating exercise significant impact on purchase intention. This notion, held by the moral emotion theorists including Eisenberg (2000), Greene *et al.* (2001),

Haidt (2003), Moll *et al.* (2003) and Velez Garcia and Ostrosky-Solis (2006), did not put to stringent empirical test CRM studies in the past. Now the CRM strategic management model proves that moral pleasure and moral displeasure directly predict purchase intention. Aggregately, they explained 62 per cent of its variance. Such a finding illustrates moral emotion is the indispensable catalyst in triggering the purchase intention of consumers exposed to CRM messages. Simply put, we should regard CRM as a moral-emotion undertaking, which goes beyond mere cognitive assertion that something is good or bad in a moral sense. Rather, it should focus on inducing deep-seated moral emotion that can be universal across different segments of consumers. The estimation result of the CRM strategic management model applies to both the aggregate data and the data of each individual brand. Obviously, no matter whether a person is the consumer of the laptop computer brand, health food brand or toilet tissue brand, he or she is responsive to the “moral call” as long as positive motivational attribution about the donor brand induces it.

Also noteworthy, further statistical analyses exhibit that moral pleasure for participation and moral displeasure for non-participation exercise proportionally similar effects on eliciting purchase intention. As for the aggregate 62 per cent of variance explained in purchase intention, 32 per cent is accounted for by moral pleasure whereas 30 per cent by moral displeasure. Overall, the consumer feels both types of moral emotion. Therefore, it is not an issue for the brand manager to decide what type of moral emotion is more useful. The major concern has to revolve around making positive motivational attribution about the donor brand emerge in order to induce moral emotion.

CRM messages

Although the consumer’s evaluation of CRM campaign is susceptible to the confirmation bias effect of prior brand experience, the campaign messages still significantly affect the campaign effectiveness. Controlling for the impact generated by prior brand experience, the campaign messages explain aggregate variance of internal *locus* of campaign causality, stability of campaign efforts, and controllability of campaign outcome by 39 per cent. In other words, constructing persuasive messages is another main factor in bringing positive motivational attribution to emerge. According to the current study, the ILPPD Model proposed by Larson (1992) is proven very instrumental in enhancing the persuasiveness of CRM messages. Thus, it is advisable for the brand marketer to put the principles Larson’s model suggests into practice:

- *Identity*: The campaign has a theme that is meaningful and memorable and the campaign goal should be identifiable for the target audiences.
- *Legitimacy*: The campaign characterises a charity cause that aligns with real social norms and needs, particularly those requiring immediate actions to address.
- *Participation*: The campaign should be convenient for the interested public to participate, informing the potential participants about how to contribute to the designated charity cause.
- *Penetration*: Integrated marketing communications including advertising, PR publicity, special events and word of mouth help to penetrate the campaign messages.

- *Distribution*: The campaign manager has to present a tracking record to prove the campaign proceeds go to those in urgent need in a responsible, fair and verifiable manner, so the public may rest assured that the beneficiaries receive substantive help.

Conclusion

The current study, integrating theories relative to CRM and brand marketing, proposes and tests the CRM strategic management model. It delineates the antecedents and consequence of positive motivational attribution about the donor brand. Successful management of prior brand experience is evidenced as the key determinant for the emergence of positive motivational attribution, which in turn induces moral emotion for eliciting purchase intention. Specific indicators for each latent construct may help the brand marketer to set up an evaluation mechanism, monitoring the effectiveness of CRM planning and implementation.

To conclude, the researcher would like to call for attention to positive motivational attribution about the donor brand as a strategic crux, which stems from the perception that the donor brand has genuine concern for charity, the campaign is not a one-off effort and there will be beneficial outcome as the donor brand promises. Most importantly, the brand marketer should make every effort to enhance prior brand experience in the areas of brand aesthetics, brand community, brand service and brand knowledge. Successful management of prior brand experience incurs highly positive impact on brand marketing in general and CRM in particular. As for designing CRM messages, the principles of identity, legitimacy, participation, penetration and distribution may serve as the main components of message construction.

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