

Cause-Related Marketing and Its Effect on the Purchase Behaviour of Indian Millennials'

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ABSTRACT

The consumer's of today's era are more aware and concerned about environmental deterioration. They are eager to embrace brands that stand for something crucial be it diversity, eco-friendly business practices or various charity related contributions. The demand for eco-friendly products has also taken a rise in the market. The organizations understand this and to meet this demand they are integrating cause marketing in their brand awareness efforts. The biggest marketing trends for 2019 are also showing an inclination towards cause marketing. Recent reports also support the importance of cause-driven campaigns in modern marketing. A recent survey done in 2018 on young people revealed that nearly half of consumers believe it's important for brands to have social change initiatives that they can support. The present study tries to identify how cause related marketing programs influence the purchase behaviour of millennials. To achieve this objective, 220 millennials' were surveyed on their purchasing behaviour. The findings show that cause-related marketing influences significantly the attitudes of the millennials. Also, this affects their purchase behaviour for a brand. The study also highlights the major factors that affect the purchase behaviour of the millennials in the Indian context.

Keywords: Cause Related Marketing, Consumers, Millennials', Purchase Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

With the increase in competition in the market, organizations have started to adopt innovative ways to attract consumers. To differentiate the products from competitors and to create a long lasting impact on the consumers' mind, the companies are associating themselves with social causes (Lauer, 2010; Berger et.al, 2004). The millennials' have emerged as one of the Indian generations that are racially and culturally diverse. They are one of the major market segments that spend a significant amount of money. They are very much engaged with the society at large and refuse to be bound by the traditional ideological boxes. The millennials' are the children born between the early 1980s and 2000s and constitute a major population. The age group between 18 and 35 years constitute a major consumer market segment which greatly affects the consumption pattern. They are much different from their parents in their ideology and lifestyles. They are desperate and eager to make a difference and want to see real change in their lives and communities. The millennials' prefer to purchase from brands that support a cause and also their population is greater in comparison to the Generation X. This makes them a huge target market for companies and brands (Belleau & Summers et al., 2007). As a response to the changing environment, organizations have designed special strategies also known as cause-related marketing (CRM) strategies, to increase their image and reputation and thus have a competitive advantage. This strategy helps an organization to link its brands with a social cause (Polonsky & Speed, 2001; Barone et al., 2000; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). The millennials' have become more sensitive and

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perturbed with the social responsibility programs of the organization. The perception of the millennials' about a product/ brand influences their attitudes and response towards the company. Also, the support of the consumers to the corporate social responsibility programs has persuaded the companies to boost CRM as a marketing strategy. The millennials' as individuals are a combination of their demographics, values, life experiences, and buying behaviours' (Leung, 2003).

A large number of business houses have shown support to social/cause-related marketing programs. The main role of CRM is to make a firm's social or environmental commitment visible to its customers. It simultaneously enhances the brand image and also affects the sales of the brand by differentiating it with competitors on the basis of a social element. Very recent research on the opinion of the public towards CRM programs also shows that the consumers are sympathetic towards the organizations that support the social causes (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997). The previous researches also highlight that if products are available at the same price and are of similar quality then they don't hesitate to switch the brands. CRM is a promotional strategy which involves a contribution by a company through the transactions done by the customers. The more specific benefits of engaging in CRM to companies is generating publicity, breaking advertising clutter and affecting the preference of the consumer for the particular brand (Gupta & Pirsch, 2004; Barone et. al., 2000; Brown & Dacin, 1997).

The association with a cause also helps in differentiating from the competitor brands and increases the purchase intentions of the millennials'. The millennials' willingly reward and support the companies affiliated with social causes and reject and punish the companies that don't. The importance of ascertaining the distinct factors that affect the millennials' purchase attitudes and pattern has increased immensely and has become a major focus of consumer research. The key research is on their spending capacity, ability to trust new brands, be trendsetters and their potential for becoming

a loyal customer (Martin & Bush, 2000). Although CRM is said to have a huge acceptance and seen as a strategy to deliver the crucial benefits, various recent researches have focused primarily on the extent to which it affects the millennials' as consumers and also does it has any impact on their perceptions about the brand and their buying behaviour.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The ever growing concern about the environment and the recent updates in the corporate world and the government norms about the responsibilities of the business towards the society have made the organizations more responsible and accountable. The expectance of society from companies has also grown widely. The society wants the business to behave ethically and have sustainable conduct (Nazarro, C.; et.al; 2018). Cause related marketing (CRM) is one such strategy used by the companies to market and communicate directly their involvement in the social policies. It also helps them to improve their image and differentiate their products and helps them to make more profits. The millennials are of significant value to the marketers because of their potential purchasing power (Cui, Y et. al., 2003) and also because they exhibit more responsible behaviour in comparison to previous generations (Pringle, H.; Thompson, M., 1999). Several studies done on the millennials' show that they want good compensation and benefits, career advancement, challenging and interesting work, work/life balance, stress-free life and at the same time contribute to the society in which they live (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010).

The alliance with a social cause is not new and has progressed gradually from small sales promotion techniques to large scale marketing and advertising strategies. It has increased the expectations of business organizations to contribute to social causes (Davidson, 1994). The growing popularity of corporate social responsibility has also contributed in shaping millennials' viewpoint towards business organizations. Millennials feel CRM activity to be a valuable method for the organizations to

contribute their part in the development of society. The millennials act as an important factor by turning into loyal customers and giving a positive word of mouth for the company (Basu & Dick, 1994). The organizations see the CRM activities to be profitable for them as these prove to be cost effective on their pocket to achieve the business objectives (Till & Nowak, 2000). Connecting with a social cause creates emotional bondage and affects the consumers' assessment of the products and services (Brown & Dacin, 1997). It helps the company in gaining customer loyalty by matching with the consumers' self-image and thereby increasing their reputation (Adkins, 2005; Schiffman et. al., 2007).

The millennials' are more committed to supporting the humanitarian causes through their choices which indicate that this generation is the prime target of the CRM campaigns. As consumers' they know their power to purchase goods and they spend mostly on personal services and consumer goods. The millennials' are different from Generation X, in terms of their purchase behaviour. They usually select and purchase products that define their ideologies and personality. Also, the product should add some benefit to the society and stand by the ethical norms and values (Noble et al., 2009). They use their knowledge and experience to make decisions in regards to purchase. They tend to associate themselves with various social causes and therefore cause related marketing has got great acceptance among the millennials. The collaboration between the company and the non-profit organization is created with an intention to benefit the society by raising fund; thereby supporting a cause. Several types of research have pointed towards the dual approach of the CRM. The first or the direct approach links the size of donation to the sales of the products whereas, the second or indirect approach provides no clear link between the size of a donation and the revenue achieved.

The business organizations that engage themselves in Cause-related marketing mostly adapt it as a differentiating factor and try to gain publicity and enhance their brand image

(Graham, 1994). Although many academic and non-academic research studies have highlighted strong consumer support of the millennial generation towards CRM, the effectiveness of this strategy still needs to be tested. There has been a question mark whether this CRM actually changes the attitude towards a brand and influences purchase intention. A recent report released by a consulting firm Deloitte India and lobby group Retailers Association of India in 2018 titled "Trend-setting millennials: Redefining the consumer story", also focused on the millennials' as an important consumer segment. They are the working class in India and have a share of 47% in the population. In India, the millennials' are the largest demographic group having huge spending capacity. They are social media friendly and therefore affect the different consumer segments through their social posts. In comparison to the previous generation, they are much slower to get married and begin their families. Since 75% of this generation is still single, it can be said that perhaps other goals and priorities have out-shined the focus of older generations on the family and home.

If we observe, globally also India is leading in terms of millennials' population. In India, millennials' are 34% (at 440 million) of the country's total population and account for nearly half of the working age population. Globally, recently they are 27% of the whole world's population i.e.7.4 billion. Their values, ethics, beliefs, and expectations have a distinct role in the marketing world (Jackson et al., 2011).

Due to the huge population size of the millennials' their power to purchase also plays an important role in the marketing world. Hence, their reaction to the firms' that are practicing CRM has gained great importance. Various studies have indicated that applying the CRM in an effective manner can affect the perceptions of millennials positively and also induce buying intention in them (Nan & Heo, 2007; Barone et.al., 2000; Webb & Mohr, 1998). On the other hand, some of the studies have also highlighted that CRM requires more advertisement and promotional campaigns in

order to create an everlasting impact on the minds of the millennials and to create the recall and brand recognition (Kotler & Lee, 2000). CRM is marketed as an act of philanthropy by a company and is also known to be an extension of the corporate social responsibility (Bonn & Vrioni, 2001). It also reaches the consumer's who normally do not donate in charities but prefer to associate themselves with a cause (Mason, 2002). An experimental study done by Lafferty and Goldsmith (2005) found that post exposure attitude of the consumers towards a brand involved in social causes was more positive than the pre exposure attitude.

Till date, very few and scant researches have focused on the alignment and effectiveness of the CRM activities with the millennial generation. Today for any retailer who wants to stay relevant, the millennials are an important customer segment. Therefore, it is extremely vital to understand their psychology, behavioral patterns, and purchasing habits.

The above research studies motivated the researchers, to conduct a study on CRM and its effect on the purchase behaviour of Indian millennials'.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

To understand millennials' attitude towards cause-related marketing programs.

To explore whether the shopping/purchase habits of the millennials' are influenced by cause-related marketing.

To determine whether the involvement of millennials' with cause-related marketing affects their brand perception, preference, and attitude.

To indicate the issues and social causes that influence purchase behaviour.

To find the reasons that discourage the millennials' to respond positively against cause-related marketing.

Research Hypotheses

Previous researches and secondary literatures have helped in the formulation of the following alternative hypotheses:

- Ha₁:** There is a significant influence of Cause-related marketing on the attitudes of millennials' for a brand.
- Ha₂:** Awareness about cause-related marketing programs will influence millennials' purchase intentions.
- Ha₃:** Millennials' show their support towards the brand & causes which are related to them personally or socially.
- Ha₄:** The positive attitude of the millennials towards cause-related marketing reflects their inclination towards the charitable activity.
- Ha₅:** Overall the millennials' derive satisfaction from the cause-related marketing strategies of the companies.
- Ha₆:** Millennials' usually supports the local and national causes rather than the international.
- Ha₇:** There is a significant relationship between age of millennials' and their support for cause-related marketing activities.
- Ha₈:** There is a significant relationship between gender of millennials' and their support for cause-related marketing activities.
- Ha₉:** There is a significant relationship between education of millennials' and their support for cause-related marketing activities.

Primary data has been collected for the study by means of questionnaires (Malhotra, 2005). The questionnaire contains items for gathering information regarding millennials' preference for the brand, their purchasing attitude, and their perception. The Likert type scale has been used to gather the data in which numeral 1 is for 'strongly disagree' and numeral

5 is for 'strongly agree' (Elbeck, 1987; Steiber, 1989).

Since the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.723 hence the scale was considered to be reliable. The sample size is of 220 millennials of Delhi region. The sample has been determined through Non-Probabilistic Sampling technique (Zikmund, 2004). Their opinion was collected by means of a

questionnaire in the month of January 2019. For the analysis of data, both the descriptive and inferential statistics have been used. The different dimensions of cause-related marketing in India have been measured by using statistical techniques such as correlation and one sample t-test. Also to add more depth to the paper various secondary sources such as text books, journals, reports, magazines and previous research studies have been referred and consulted extensively.

Table 1 : Variables of the Research

| S.No. | Variables/Statements for measuring the effect of cause-related marketing on Indian Millennials' |
|-------|--|
| 1. | If a brand is affiliated with cause-related marketing, I will adopt it. |
| 2. | A brand that supports a social cause gives me more satisfaction. |
| 3. | A brand that supports a social cause gives me more satisfaction. |
| 4. | I will purchase a new brand also if it supports a cause. |
| 5. | The involvement of a brand or company with cause effects or changes my perception. |
| 6. | Brands involved in cause carry the best benefit. |
| 7. | I can bear an additional cost in order to support a cause. |
| 8. | I sometimes give preference to the product quality to support a cause. |
| 9. | To show support for a cause, I sometimes buy products not necessary for me. |
| 10. | I support the brands or causes with which I can affiliate myself. |
| 11. | I expect that there is coordination between the cause supported and brand. |
| 12. | To get the millennials' support the image and the cause must be highlighted. |
| 13. | The cause-related marketing program which is not related to the company is most effective. |
| 14. | The inclination of a person towards cause-related marketing campaigns affects his tendency to donate to charitable organizations and causes. |
| 15. | I prefer or like to support the causes which are similar to the individuals who prefer to donate directly. |
| 16. | I think that each company should support social causes. |
| 17. | I recommend others to affiliate themselves with social causes. |
| 18. | I prefer the Local/National causes in comparison to the international causes. |

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

One sample t-test has been used for testing hypotheses 1 to 6, while correlation is used to test hypotheses 7 to 9.

Table 2: Effect of Cause-related Marketing on Millennials' Attitude towards the Promoted Brand.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| If a brand is affiliated with cause-related marketing, I will change it | 41.962 | 219 | .000 | 3.933 | 3.747 | 4.118 |
| If a brand is affiliated with cause-related marketing, I will adopt it | 34.133 | 219 | .000 | 3.825 | 3.603 | 4.046 |
| A brand that supports a social cause gives me more satisfaction | 49.170 | 219 | .000 | 4.283 | 4.110 | 4.455 |
| I will purchase a new brand also if it supports a cause | 55.649 | 219 | .000 | 4.308 | 4.155 | 4.461 |
| The involvement of a brand or company with a cause affects or changes my perception | 51.609 | 219 | .000 | 4.283 | 4.219 | 4.447 |
| Brands involved in cause carry the best benefit | 64.356 | 219 | .000 | 4.341 | 4.208 | 4.475 |

From the above table, it can be analyzed that the cause-related marketing strategies of the business organizations affect and can also change the attitude of the millennials' towards a particular brand. Since the calculated value

(.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) therefore we accept the hypothesis and come to a conclusion that cause-related marketing can bring a positive change in the attitude of the millennials'.

Table 3: Awareness about Cause-related Marketing Programs and its Influence on Millennials Purchase Intentions.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| I can bear additional cost in order to support a cause | 64.720 | 219 | .000 | 4.291 | 4.160 | 4.423 |
| I sometimes consider the quality of the product to support cause | 53.942 | 219 | .000 | 4.258 | 4.102 | 4.414 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sometimes I buy products not necessary for me but do so to show my support for a cause | 38.612 | 219 | .000 | 3.858 | 3.660 | 4.056 |
|--|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|

Since the calculated value (.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) therefore we accept the second hypothesis. It can be concluded from the

above table that if a company designs and communicate its cause-related marketing strategies effectively then it can also affect the purchase intentions of millennials.

Table 4: Millennials' Show Their Support Towards the Brand & Causes which are Related to them Personally or Socially.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| I support the brands or causes with which I can affiliate myself | 58.906 | 219 | .000 | 4.141 | 4.002 | 4.280 |
| I expect that there is coordination between the cause supported and brand | 58.126 | 219 | .000 | 4.183 | 4.040 | 4.325 |
| In order to get support from the millennials,' the image and the cause must be well supported | 41.397 | 219 | .000 | 3.875 | 3.689 | 4.060 |
| The cause-related marketing campaign which is not associated with the organization's interest is most effective | 53.230 | 219 | .000 | 3.983 | 3.835 | 4.131 |

Since the calculated value (.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) at 5% level of significance, therefore, we accept the hypothesis. The finding

from the table 4 shows that the millennials' support those causes which have an impact on their personal and social lives.

Table 5: The Positive Attitude of the Millennials towards Cause-Related Marketing Reflects their Inclination Towards the Charitable Activity.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| The inclination of a person towards cause-related marketing campaigns affects his tendency to donate to charitable organizations and causes | 27.562 | 219 | .000 | 3.541 | 3.287 | 3.796 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| The respondents prefer or like to support the causes which are similar to the individuals who prefer to donate directly | 39.667 | 219 | .000 | 3.725 | 3.539 | 3.910 |
|---|--------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|

From the above table, we can see that the calculated value (.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) at 5% level of significance, therefore, we accept the fourth hypothesis.

Hence, it can be concluded that the millennials' view that their support for cause-related marketing strategies is a way to take part in charitable activities and social development work.

Table 6: Overall the Millennials' Derive Satisfaction from the Cause-Related Marketing Strategies of the Companies.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| I think that each company should be involved in supporting social causes | 53.217 | 219 | .000 | 4.191 | 4.035 | 4.347 |
| I will also recommend others to affiliate themselves with the social causes | 31.148 | 219 | .000 | 3.658 | 3.425 | 3.890 |

From the above table, we can see that the calculated value (.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) at 5% level of significance, therefore, we accept the fifth hypothesis. It can

be inferred that the millennials' appreciate the efforts of the business organizations to focus on the social and environmental issues through their campaigns.

Table 7: Millennials' Usually Supports the Local and National Causes Rather than the International.

| | Test Value = 3 | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| The Local/National causes get more preference by the millennials' in comparison to the international causes | 33.029 | 219 | .000 | 3.700 | 3.478 | 3.921 |

From the table 7, it is noticed that the calculated value (.000) is less than the critical value (0.05) at 5% level of significance, therefore, we accept

the sixth hypothesis and conclude that the millennials' show their preference towards local and national causes.

Table 8: Correlation Between Age of Millennials' and their Support for Cause-Related Marketing Activities (N=220)

| | | Support for cause-related marketing activities | Age of millennials |
|---------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | Support for cause-related marketing activities | 1.000 | .363 |
| | Age of millennials | .363 | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | Support for cause-related marketing activities | | .000 |
| | Age of millennials | .000 | |

The table 8 shows a positive correlation between the millennials' age and their support for the cause-related marketing activities. With

$r = 0.363$ the hypothesis is also accepted. It shows that as the age of the respondent increases, the support for the causes also increases.

Table 9: Correlation Between Gender of Millennials' and their Support for Cause-Related Marketing Activities (N=220)

| | | Support for cause-related marketing activities | Gender of millennials |
|---------------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | Support for cause-related marketing activities | 1.000 | .098* |
| | Gender of millennials | .098* | 1.000 |
| Sig. (1-tailed) | Support for cause-related marketing activities | | .289 |
| | Gender of millennials | .289 | |

*Correlation is not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The table 9 shows that 0.298 (calculated value) is higher than 0.05 (critical value) though it shows a positive correlation ($r=0.098$).

Therefore we reject the hypothesis and conclude that the support towards a cause does not differ whether the millennial is a male or female.

Table 10: Correlation Between the Education of Millennials' and their Support for Cause-Related Marketing (N=220)

| | | Support for cause-related marketing activities | Education of millennials |
|---------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Pearson Correlation | Support for cause-related marketing activities | 1.000 | .144* |
| | Education of millennials | .144* | 1.000 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|------|------|
| Sig. (1-tailed) | Support for cause-related marketing activities | | |
| | Education of millennials | .117 | .117 |

*Correlation is not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The table 10 shows that the correlation is not significant at 0.05 level (0.117) though the correlation is positive (r=0.144). Therefore we reject the hypothesis and conclude that the educational background of the millennials' does not affect their support for the cause-related marketing activities.

The hypothesis related to the demographics doesn't infer on the relation between the millennials' demographics and their support for cause-related marketing programs.

5. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study shows the millennials' awareness and support towards the companies' cause related marketing activities. It acts as a stimulator in increasing the awareness of the CRM activities. It was found that most of the millennials' were aware of the term corporate social responsibility but a few were not familiar with the term CRM. Some of the consumers feel that the organizations are not serious about the social causes and these CRM activities are merely a few attempts to increase their popularity. However, it is expected that as the awareness of millennials' increases, their support for the social and environmental issues will also grow. The cause related marketing campaigns will also simultaneously affect the preference of the millennials' towards a brand or towards the company that supports social causes.

The present study shows that if the millennials' are having knowledge of the cause related marketing campaigns by a company, it affects their mindset and they eagerly support and purchase from such companies and brands. A majority of millennials' agree that the companies should associate themselves with social issues but they should not use these social causes/issues to make more profit. These campaigns affect the awareness, perception, and views of the millennials and also inspires them.

So the companies should initiate more such activities which can increase the awareness level of the customers. The companies should try to give priority to important and current issues while choosing social causes.

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