The Model of Consumer Response to Cause Marketing Campaigns: A Tool for Attracting People's Participation through Companies

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: As social and environmental problems is rapidly increasing, social responsibility is increasingly being more important. Now, worldwide profit and nonprofit organizations such as Red Cross Society are paying more attention to differentiate or improve their brands as well as the level of participations by cause marketing campaigns. This study aimed to explore comprehensive factors that can influence consumer response in cause marketing campaigns in Iran context.

METHODS: Using a qualitative grounded theory approach, consumer experiences about real cases of related campaigns in Iran market were addressed through deep interviews with 18 Iranian consumers. The analysis of data was done by NVivo software through a reciprocating process and principles of grounded theory.

FINDINGS: The suggested inductive model advocated that cause marketing campaigns (including structural-related campaign factors from corporate side, structural-related campaign factors from cause side, implementation-related campaign factors, and consumer-related factors) could affect consumer response pyramid.

CONCLUSION: In addition to structural factors, which often examined in past research, our findings suggest that implementation- and consumer-related factors can influence consumer's response, and in planning cause-marketing campaigns, these vital factors must be notice.

Keywords: Cause Marketing Campaigns; Consumer Response; Grounded Theory Approach

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Introduction

In a market full of brands that are very close and comparable to each other in terms of price and quality, marketers try to differentiate their brands from those of their competitors. In addition, increased ethical sensitivity among consumers on the one hand and the enormous efforts of the media and environmental groups on the other hand have led to a demand for the citizen-oriented corporates, in such a way that their ethical actions are essential for differentiation. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not a new phenomenon; rather it has undergone major changes over the past decade. This term is now redefined and directly linked to corporate strategies and is viewed as a long-term competitive element in comparison to short-term image makers or sales producers (1).

Moreover, attracting participation of more individuals has always been one of the goals of non-profit organizations such as the Red Crescent Society. In this regard, one of the popular collaboration strategies among the nonprofit organizations and corporations in Western

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societies is known as cause-related marketing (CRM) in which the nonprofit organizations collaborate with the corporations through access to new sources of fundraising and increasing social participation to benefit from the cooperation advantages. The popularity of this marketing tool is nowadays evident in the level of the involvement of corporates in social causes as it grew by 3.6% in the United States in 2017 and a total of 2.06 billion dollars has been dedicated for it (2). The term CRM was first coined in the 1980s and refers to campaigns where a corporate works with a nonprofit organization to help a particular social cause, whether through product sales or product use (3). In fact, CRM is a marketing tool that can be used to achieve a wide range of goals (4). Numerous studies have indicated that the emergence of CRM has increased the scope and breadth of the organization's beneficiaries beyond consumers and by integrating it with the nonprofit sectors (Figure 1), especially the sectors with knowledge and progress dealing with the social field for the improvement of social causes, such as human rights or sustainable development (5).



Figure 1. Scope of cause-related marketing (CRM) beneficiaries

Despite the popularity of this marketing tool, consumers usually have some degree of scepticism through the corporates which using these campaigns, leading to a rejection of the company's claims of a CRM campaign and affecting their purchase behavior (6). Therefore, organizations that intend to use this type of marketing must not only be genuine and honest in their behavior, but also have a good level of consumer knowledge of how they perceive and respond to CRM stimuli.

Previous studies have adopted different theories to explain the consumers' responses to CRM. For example, based on the attribution theory, for explaining why a company collaborates with a social cause, the consumer attributes it to a cause. Therefore, positive motivational attribution to the brand (altruistic motivations) leads to a positive response from the consumer and assures the recommended brand marketer that the consumer's perception of the brand participating in the charitable activity has more to do with altruism rather than selfishness (7). Consumer perceptions and behaviors about corporate the charitable activities can result from various factors in the consumer, corporate, and nonprofit domains (8). Investigations have selectively focused on a number of important factors to examine the consumer response, with some investigating the role of the company-related variables (9,10), some examining the characteristics of social causes (11,12), some exploring factors related to the campaign structure (13,14), some examining the characteristics associated with the participating nonprofit (15), and others examining consumer-related characteristics (16,17) regarding CRM, with some recommendations to improve this marketing tool.

On the other hand, the results of studies conducted on consumer response to CRM are in some cases inconsistent (4, 18, 19).

Besides, given the investigations carried out in the cross-cultural field of CRM, the findings suggest that the consumers' attitudes towards CRM and the variables influencing their attitudes vary in different countries (20,21). Therefore, given the application of the ethical and humanitarian issues in the CRM concepts, the nature of CRM is such that the cultural values and attitudes of societies can influence it and examining this issue in the social context of Iran seems necessary.

In general, taking into account the current global trends in CRM and the increasing attention to this tool of social responsibility, there is a lack of a credible model in the Iranian consumer market that can explain the factors affecting the consumers' response to CRM. Moreover, planners rely more on intuition in decision making than on strategic thinking to plan and execute this type of marketing. Furthermore, with regard to the Islamic-Iranian culture, one cannot explain the Iranian consumer's response to CRM stimuli based on the studies conducted in a context other than such culture. In this study, a framework has been proposed on how companies and nonprofit organizations can influence the Iranian consumer's response through CRM stimuli.

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Methods

Due to the lack of research background in Iran in this area and examining all aspects, the qualitative research method on the basis of the grounded theory strategy was identified as the best choice for achieving the study objective. The aim of the grounded theory is usually to develop a new theory, however it is also used to modify or develop existing theories (22).

Sampling and data collection: The grounded theory process in this study was based on the classical Glaser method. The data collection tool in the present study included the semi-structured interview, and the statistical population of the study consisted of all consumers who had at least one experience of purchasing and participating in CRM campaigns. The sample consisted of 18 individuals who were selected by the targeted sampling method. Given the small number of CRM campaigns in Iran, access to people with a product purchase experience was very difficult and scattered. Thus, creating a social network in the virtual space and introducing various CRM campaigns in recent years, the researcher gathered information from individuals with similar experience until achieving the desired goal, in addition, the page respondents were also employed to validate the study. Since the main objective of the present study was to identify the factors influencing the Iranian consumer's response to CRM, the study protocol included a set of questions raised to examine the dimensions of the Iranian consumer's response to the issue of CRM and the factors that could affect them.

The data collection method was based on a reciprocal process. As the researcher began to collect data through open-ended interviews with consumers, then he performed the open coding and axial coding in the next steps. In the following, as the interviews progressed, the relationship among the categories of the interview codes was partially identified and during a continuous comparison, this process was repeated, and the selective coding was performed in the last step. In this study, the researcher utilized techniques such as constant comparison, interview process, annotations, and noting with the aim of more accurate coding based on the Glaser method, the overall process of which can be observed in figure 2 in accordance with the model proposed by Fernandez. After interviewing participant number 14, no new concept was extracted, however the interview was continued until number 18 to ensure this issue, after which the data collection was stopped and it was concluded that there was a theoretical saturation. Furthermore, for more systematic review of the data, all interviews and data were implemented in NVivo software and the coding operations were performed with this software.

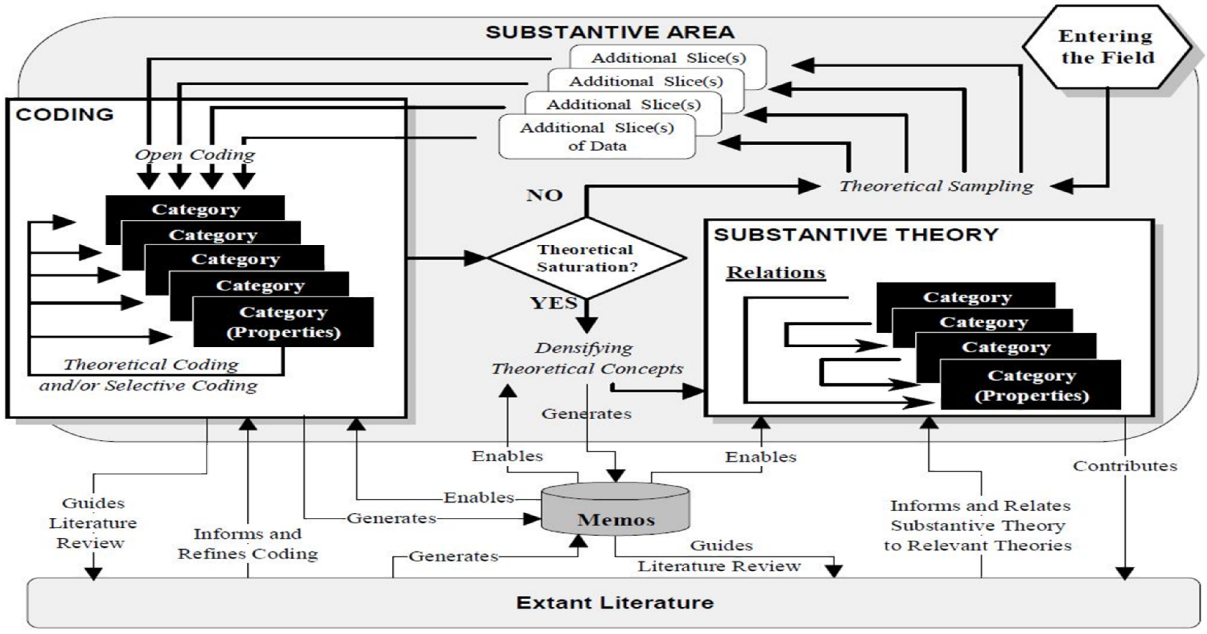


Figure 2. Process of developing the grounded theory based on the Glaser strategy, extended Lyman model (23)

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Study validation: The qualitative research validation criteria specified by Mayring were utilized in this study. He outlines six criteria that must be taken into account to ensure the accuracy of the "study process", including: 1. Detailed documentation of the study process, 2. Using conclusive arguments to validate interpretations, 3. Adherence to systematic analysis methods, 4. Proximity to the study objective, 5. Discussing the participants' findings, and 6. Triangulation. In addition to the study process, "study findings" also had to be evaluated to ensure high quality (25). For a grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss emphasized the assumption that the quality of the theory must be assessed prominently in the way it is created. However, they defined four criteria of fit, understanding, generality, and control to evaluate the quality of the theory (26). Furthermore, the study by Flint et al. (25) examined five criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and integrity of the study findings.

Various actions and measurements were taken during data collection, data analysis, and theory development related to the validation of the study process. Table 1 lists these measures along with the Mayring criteria.

Additionally, several measures were taken to ensure the high quality of the study findings. Table 2 presents these measures in accordance with the criteria presented by Flint et al. (25).

Findings

During the open coding phase, a total of 598 items were converted to 67 primary codes. Table 3 displays a sample open coding during the study.

In the axial coding stage, comparing different concepts, more common contexts could be discovered among them that would allow the classification of similar concepts in the same categories. Using the stable comparison technique allowed for introducing common dimensions of concepts as the axial coding. The outcome of this stage of the study process was the formation of (components). Table 4 demonstrates the sample coding to extract the components from the concepts.

Moreover, in the selective coding stage as the last stage, the common aspects of the components derived from the previous stages were identified and organized according to their commonalities in a more general and narrower categorization, as represented in Table 5.

In a grounded theory, researchers present their theory in three possible forms: a visual coding pattern, a set of theories (or hypotheses), and a narrative-written story (26). In the current study, after the theoretical coding, it was decided to develop a visual coding model of the study.

Table 1. Measures taken to ensure the validity of the study process

Criteria	Measures
Detailed documentation of the research process	✓ Protocols and preconditions available were documented in detail. ✓ The entire process of data collection, data analysis, and theory building was documented in this study. ✓ The research process can be traced through NVivo software.
Validity of reasoning of interpretations	✓ The interpretations emerged were documented in the study. ✓ Tangible evidence for the interpretations was provided through strong documents of the quotes presented in the interviews.
Adherence to systematic analysis methods	✓ The analysis tools and methods presented by the grounded theory were applied: theoretical sampling, continuous comparison, note taking, and various coding steps.
Proximity to the study objective	✓ Prior to the interview, the interviewees mostly got acquainted with the subject through the social networking page specifically designed for the study. ✓ The interviews were conducted on-site if possible. ✓ Some interviewees provided other examples of campaigns. ✓ More data sources, such as comments from social network users, were used in the analyses. ✓ Semi-structured interviewing allowed for new aspects to be incorporated during the interview.
Discussion on the participants' findings	✓ The emerging concepts and mediating findings were discussed with the participants who were available after the interview.
Triangulation	✓ The findings were matched with more publicly available data sources (e.g., studies and journals). ✓ Data triangulation was performed to conduct some parts of the data collection, data analysis, and theory building.

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Table 2. Measures taken to ensure the high quality of the study process

Criteria	Measures
Credibility (i.e., the study findings should represent acceptable data)	✓ The interviews were conducted over a 12-month period that allowed for the detailed analysis as well as the theory construction. ✓ Data triangulation was performed to conduct some parts of data collection, data analysis, and theory building. ✓ A summary of the interpretations and feedback collected were presented for the available number of interviewees and confirmed.
Transferability (i.e. study findings in one particular context should be applicable to other contexts)	✓ Theoretical sampling was adopted. ✓ Only saturated themes were transformed into a theory. ✓ The findings were matched with two types of contributors who had experience of using and running such campaigns.
Dependability (i.e., explanations must be of high stability and coherence)	✓ The participants were asked to fully reflect their past and recent experiences. ✓ The long-term 12-month data collection time ensured avoiding improvised results.
Conformability (i.e. the interpretations must be based on the results of the participants and phenomena rather than the researcher bias)	✓ Sample triangulation was performed to perform some parts of data collection, data analysis, and theory building. ✓ A summary of the interpretations and feedback collected was provided for the available number of interviewees.
Integrity (i.e. interpretations should not be influenced by false information or misalignment by the participants)	✓ The anonymity of the participants was assured. ✓ The interviews were not threatening in nature so that the respondent take a defensive guard. ✓ The data triangulation was carried out with publicly available data sources (such as journal articles and reports).
Fit (i.e. the findings must be consistent with the basic scope of the study)	✓ Credibility, dependability, and conformability of the study were determined by the acceptable criteria. ✓ The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for important issues to be considered for the interviewees.
Understanding (i.e., as the representatives of their community, the participants must demand the research findings)	✓ A summary of the interpretations and feedback collected was provided for the available number of interviewees and approved.
Generality (that is, the findings should reveal multiple aspects of the phenomenon)	✓ The interviews were long enough and structured in such a way to discuss the subject of CRM campaigns from different perspectives.
Control (i.e., the organizations must influence various aspects of the theory)	✓ The interviewees were mostly individuals who had experience of purchasing and were free to buy or not buy the product. There were also other interviewees who had a decision-making role in some campaigns.

CRM: Cause-related marketing

After completing the open and axial coding, the researcher obtained 17 components related to CRM and divided them into 5 main categories according to the subject literature related to the components and the interpretation obtained from the respondents' responses. Then, the categories were examined and finally the final model was introduced on the basis of the components. Given the relationships emerged from the interview data, the extracted inferential model associated with the consumer response to CRM in the dimensions in Iran was developed as illustrated in Figure 3.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted in Iran with different cultural context from that of western countries and since few studies have examined the reaction of consumers to CRM campaigns in Iran, this study provided a good insight into how the consumers respond to and participate in the CRM campaigns. In this study, the qualitative research method was employed to investigate the viewpoints of consumers in order to reveal the views that might be hidden from the viewpoint of the researcher and to provide a general theoretical framework on the response of the Iranian consumer in the face of CRM. In fact, this study identified categories that had not been coherently covered by any of the previous studies, and were generally overlooked in some cases.

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Table 3. A sample open coding

Item	Initial code	Participant code
... I think I do a good job for children when I go to events like the theater of a director or the concert of a singer the money of which is spent on children.	Imagination of doing a good job by participating in campaigns	M-1
... As the famous saying, keep his promise.	Acting on promises	M-7
This shopping was funny for me, because I did both shopping and participated in a charitable job.	Shopping motivation, helping others	M-9
In a time when you have a lack of time to be able to contribute to social issues, you can easily have a role in the community through these campaigns without having to spend extra time and money.	Participation in charity without a loss of time	M-12
... In my opinion, the amount allocated to this job is also important... so the percentage that the companies donate to this charity is important.	Amount directly allocated by the company	M-5
In general, I try to participate in campaigns that concern children's problems. I have a young child myself, and realizing that a child cannot reach his or her expectations and desires upsets me when I think about it.	Social cause Personal concern	M-9
... This product also works for children with irresponsible caretakers, which can somehow have an effect on my life and the community I live in in the future. Therefore, I should not be indifferent to this.	Direct impact on personal life	M-3
And I have done a lot of volunteer work for organizations like Mahak charity organization....	Consumer background	M-12
In addition, the price of the product should not be so much expensive so that someone think that they want to compensate for the charity money in this way. So the price announced and the services that are offered for that money are also important.	Justice in pricing	M-11
On the other hand, seeing my peers doing the same thing makes me feel good and would love to follow them.	Paying attention to peers of the same idea	M-1
People think it is good; this person is working for others. So they will look at you in a good way. This can prove again that yes I am a good person who was able to do something that was not just for his own benefit.	Reason to buy, attracting attention	M-6

The dimensions of the consumer response to CRM can be considered in the three cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension of the consumer response includes consumer perception of the corporate motivation, perceived fairness of price, and perceived credibility of the campaign. Investigations have shown that the perceived altruistic motivations can improve consumer appraisal of the CRM campaigns.

Table 4. Sample coding to extract the components from the concepts

Concepts	Components
Using the campaign instead of donating for charity Preference to buy campaign-related goods Imagination of doing good by participating in campaigns Buying to participate in a charitable job Good mindset towards corporate CRM campaigns Agonizing commitment of charities	Attitude toward CRM campaign
Thinking differently about a campaign-related producer Ensuring activities Fulfillment of promises Trust in campaign	Perceived campaign credibility
Doing valuable work for society Promoting good works Goodwill of the corporate manager Focusing on goals other than corporate financial ones Corporate participation in charitable works A means to pay the company's share to the community	Perceived corporate charitable incentives
Shopping to present a gift Attracting attention as the reason to purchase Showing others the way you think	Personal benefits motivations (Attracting attention)

CRM: Cause-related marketing

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Table 5. Extracting dimensions from components

Component	Categories
Word of mouth Intent to buy/participate Attitude towards a CRM campaign Perceived credibility of the campaign Corporate perceived intrinsic motivations Perceived price fairness	Consumer response
Cause-brand fit Importance of social cause	Structural factors of the campaign from the social cause perspective
Corporate reputation and expertise Corporate donation amount	Structural factors of the campaign from the corporate side
Consumer motivations (altruism/egoism) Type of purchase Type of consume Being influenced by reference groups Past consumer experiences	Consumer-related factors
Access to campaign Transparency and accountability	Implementation campaign factors

CRM: Cause-related marketing

However, the perceived selfish motivations can lead to consumer suspicion, lack of support, and word of mouth negative advertising. In line with the attribution theory, the consumer approval of a CRM campaign depends on the evidence to which they attribute the company's motivations to participate in such a campaign. For instance, according to Koschate-Fischer et al., the extent to which the consumer feels good about buying a product related to social causes is associated with the evidence they attribute to the company's motivations for participating in a CRM campaign.

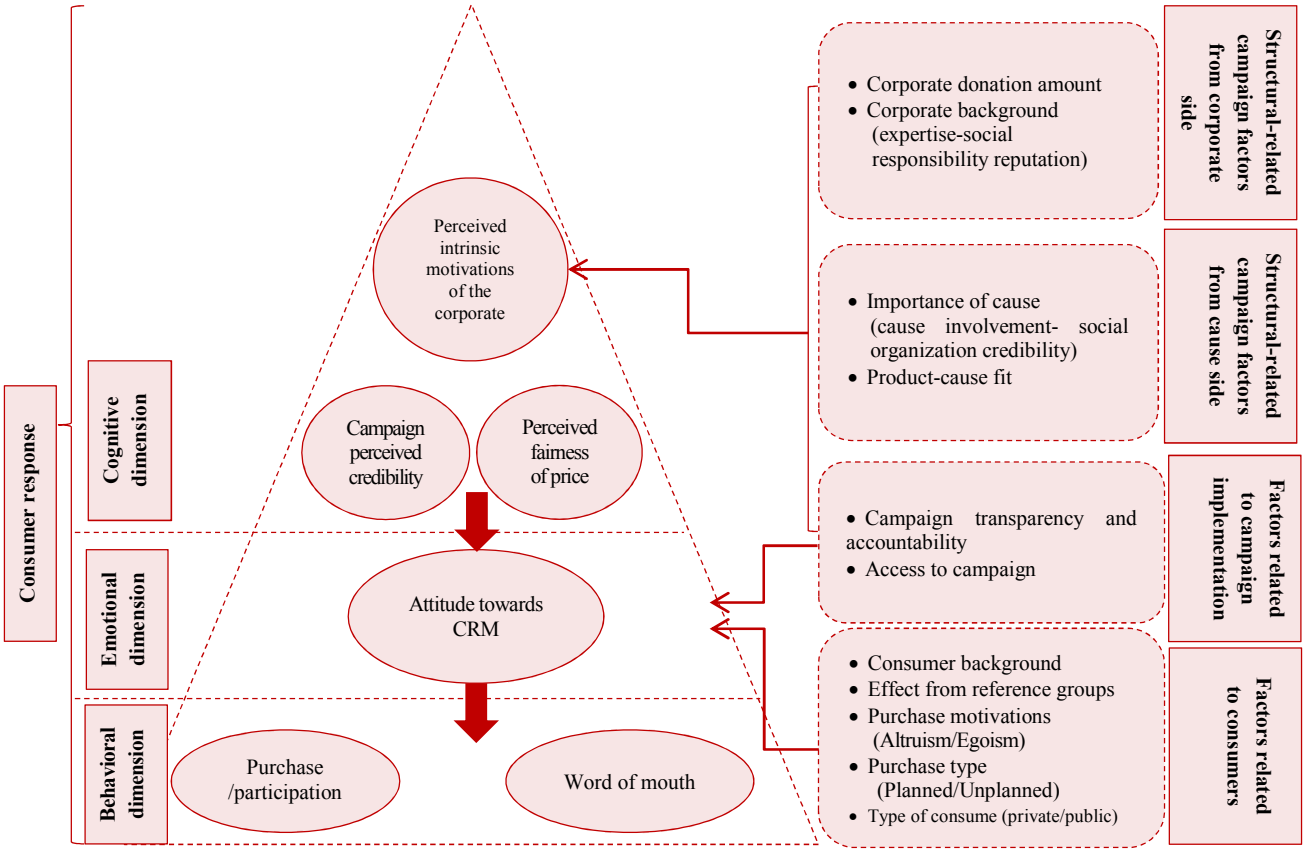


Figure 3. Conceptual model of consumer response to cause-related marketing (CRM)

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Moreover, on the basis of the attribution theory, a company's motivation to participate in a CRM campaign can influence the perceived fairness of price. This theory argues that the perception of fairness or generally, the concept of fairness is essentially based on attribution of causes and responsibilities. Given the previous studies, the CSR incentives can affect different categories, one of which is the consumer perception of the fairness of the price intended by the corporate. When a company implements social responsibility, it shows that it cares about its surrounding, including its consumers, so that the consumers consider its product price to be reasonable (27). It can also be considered in CRM in this way so that the consumers perceive the corporate price to be reasonable and equitable when they consider the corporate participation motivation to be beyond the selfish and on the basis of the charitable motivations. Extensive studies have been conducted on CRM regarding the *role of attitudes in consumer intention of purchase and the set of factors that influence the individuals' attitudes*, confirming the positive relationship between CRM and purchase intention (3,13,18,20).

Regarding the consumer-related components, altruism represents a kind of self-sacrifice that does not generate any personal reward for the individual (28). There is an ongoing debate about the sense of altruism and the possibility of arousal of individuals only for the others' well-being. Some claim that the belief that individuals are completely guided by a sense of altruism is unrealistic, while others have come to a different conclusion. Regardless of whether there is an entirely altruistic motivation, the researchers have established a link between altruism and consumer behavior. In addition to being motivated by altruism, studies have revealed that consumers are also led by selfish motivations (personal interests). Personal interests state the willingness of the consumers of helping others is to obtain personal benefits (28). Seeing one as a generous person in the eyes of others creates a sense of respect for them, and consumers are often willing to show their "goodness" to themselves and others (29).

Previous studies also suggest that consumers who show higher levels of participation in socially relevant behaviors have a higher level of positive attitude towards CRM and are more likely to purchase products that have a CRM label (30,31). Thus, CRM seems to be another good option for doing a good job, especially for current consumers who are involved in social activities.

There have been no studies on the type of purchase of products regarding the applicability versus non-applicability of the product and its impact on consumer response. This study suggest planned purchase leads to favorable response regardless of product type but most studies have emphasized the product type aspect from a pleasurableness perspective versus the functionality perspective (5,32,33).

About the components related to the company-campaign structure, since the component of the CSR reputation is formed as a result of its past behavior (which may be consistent or inconsistent with the current behavior). The temporal consistency (stability) principle provides useful guidance. In addition, based on the discounting principle, when the recipient does not have a complete set of data, he/she should rely on one or a limited number of observations and hypotheses related to the cause-effect relationships. In such cases, the attribution cause is heavily based on the assumptions using the perceiver's past knowledge to create a causal schema. Simply put, explaining the causation of a behavior or event depends on the data or observations received by the perceiver (7). Thus, based on the study findings, the reputation of social responsibility, which reflects its past activities, influences the consumer perceptions of the corporate motivations.

Investigations have also shown that the amount of donation has been influential in CRM (18,32) and is regarded as a determining factor of the consumer response to CRM campaigns with the potential impact on his perception of the campaign and purchase intention (34), as the most important factor in the success of CRM (15), as well as an important factor in perceiving the company's motivations for participation and subsequent product purchase intentions (13). When a cause is more important to the consumers, they have a more positive attitude toward it (35). Higher levels encourage consumers to form a more stable attitude and to behave accordingly. For example, Cui et al. found that when a disaster emerges, consumers place more importance on it than on a continuing social cause because they view it personally to be more related (30). Therefore, in line with the studies on participation and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of

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persuasion theories, the individuals who are more concerned with the social cause of the campaign are more likely to perceive the company's motivations of the charitable participation and participate in the campaign.

The product-cause fit can be described as the "perceived overall relationship between brand and social cause" (36). This can be assessed in accordance with the associative learning theory in the form of whether the organizational goals complete each other and that how this participation is perceived by the consumer. Various researchers have concluded that a high level of the corporate-cause fit leads to a more positive consumer response (29,36,37).

From the components related to the campaign implementation, one of the factors that has been discussed in various ways in terms of the donation behavior and charities is the level of the convenient access to the donation service site. Recently, the impact of geographic location on the pattern of assistance has been systematically investigated (38). Past studies on helping behavior of individuals has shown that access to the helping site has a significant effect on their intention to help (38-40). From the consumer's point of view, accessibility can be seen as the extent of the consumer's effort to participate in social activities. From this perspective, in line with the findings of the present study, Howie et al. showed that the more effort the consumer needs to participate in the campaign, the more the consumer justifies their non-participation in the campaign through a defensive denial technique (41).

Transparency is in fact the effort of organizations to clearly present information and respond to their activities. Besides, it is a means to prevent corruption or abuse of their resources. Bourassa and Stang examined transparency in nonprofit organizations. A telephone survey was conducted among about 4,000 Canadians, with the results showing that transparency was important in determining the size of help (42). Indeed, the importance of corporate transparency and accountability can be seen in the idea of "perceived consumer effectiveness". This idea refers to the degree to which individuals feel that their efforts have led to a change, and this has affected their performance in certain prosocial behaviors (5). Hence, in line with the findings of the current study, increasing transparency and accountability of corporate social activities with regard to the perceived consumer effectiveness leads to an increase in their perception of the corporate social motivations.

The results show that the consumer response acts as a pyramid from top to bottom, so that the consumer perceptions lead to his cognition and ultimately to his behavior. Meanwhile, the perceived motivations of the company to participate in the campaign can be considered the starting point of his response, which influences other components of the consumer response. The results of this study indicated that the accountability and transparency factors of the campaign are crucial when running the campaign. Furthermore, it was found that transparency and accountability had a positive effect on the attribution motivation of the corporate.

Additionally, the importance of social cause should also be regarded as an important factor; Iranian consumers, like other consumers, are interested in issues that are important to them. Moreover, working with a reputable nonprofit organization leads to the positive attribution motivation of the corporate, ultimately increasing the purchase/participation intentions, so given the mission of the Red Crescent Society, CRM campaigns can be a good tool for participation of the individuals through corporates in times of crisis. It is recommended that nonprofits establish CRM alliances with corporates that have a good background of social activities.

The findings of this study suggested that Iranian consumers tend to consume applied products in CRM campaigns. What seems most important to the Iranian consumers is the product's usability at the time of purchase, meaning that regardless of the product pleasurableness or usability, it is the nature of the purchase that can influence his response rather than the nature of the product. It should be noted that the consumer does not buy only with the altruism motives, but also with the motives of attracting attention.

Generally, when planning and executing CRM campaigns, managers must focus on all three cognitive (perceived corporate motivations, perceived fairness of the price, and perceived credibility of the campaign), emotional (attitude toward campaign), and behavioral aspects (intention to buy/participate and offer to others) of the consumer. Therefore, the layout of the structure and execution of the campaign should be

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such that it positively affect all three aspects of the consumer response.

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Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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