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Role of Altruistic Attitudes in Cause-Related Marketing

Rola postaw altruistycznych w cause-related marketing

Key words: cause-related marketing; purchase intentions; altruism

Slowa kluczowe: marketing ważnej sprawy; intencje zakupowe; altruizm

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Introduction

This article belongs to a series of publications focusing on the theoretical and empirical aspects of cause-related marketing (CrM). It is an initiative related to societal marketing in line with the concept of a socially responsible organization. CrM, placing itself between commercial marketing in its strict sense and social marketing, is a specific type of partnership between a company and a charity or non-profit organization. Through marketing programmes of various types, it tries to affect the purchasing decisions of consumers regarding the products of companies participating in the campaign, with the intention of pursuing business and social objectives. This study presents the last results of research carried out in 2015.

1. Altruistic attitude as a determinant of CrM efficiency

Due to the growing popularity of the *cause-related marketing*, companies ought to have an awareness of the potential determinants of its efficiency. Despite the abundance of empirical studies in this regard [Kozłowski 2016a, 2016b; Natarajan et al. 2016], there is relatively little known about the effect of personal traits of the consumer on purchase intentions concerning products through which funds are gathered for the support of social issues¹. Particular importance is attached to consumer attitudes, which are the key to understanding consumer behaviour. Assael [1999, p. 274] stated that an attitude, referring to what the consumer thinks, feels and how he reacts, is “a learned predisposition to respond consistently favourably or unfavourably to a particular object or class of objects”. In this regard, an interesting issue in marketing policy is an evaluation of the differences related to the intention to purchase a CrM product between persons with a sceptical attitude and people with an altruistic attitude towards helping others (the cause).

Altruism is perceived as a key personality feature, which reorients the consumer from an egoistic (hedonistic) to a socially-oriented behaviour [Kozłowski and Rutkowska, 2015, p. 1521]. Contrary to egoistic behaviour, it is an activity towards helping others, which consists in voluntarily incurring certain costs by the entity for the benefit of another entity or a group [Poleszczuk 2004, p. 116] and being guided in their behaviour by the welfare of others, which involves readiness to sacrifice [*Slownik Języka Polskiego* 2017]. It should be noted that on the basis of research dedicated to the relationship between altruism and CrM efficiency, persons approving such altruistic values as for instance, universalism, kindliness or common good demonstrate more favourable attitudes towards CrM campaigns and companies undertaking responsible initiatives, which is reflected by a willingness to purchase products with cause-related attributes, compared to people behaving in a less altruistic manner [Adomaviciute et al. 2016, p. 582; Collins et al. 2007, pp. 566–597; Weeb et al. 2000, p. 300].

2. Research methods

The experiment was based on scheme 2 (donation amount: small vs. large) \times 2 (product-cause fit: low vs. high) \times 2 (product type: utilitarian vs. hedonic) control variables. The results of literature studies provided a basis to establish the amount of the donation, selection of causes and products for the experiment and their matching [Kozłowski 2016a, p. 155]. Considering the control conditions of the experiment,

¹ In 1988–2016, 485 articles in the field of CrM were published in journals of international impact, of which 95% were in the last 14 years. Most publications concerned the markets in the USA (100), Australia (17), the United Kingdom and Taiwan (16 each), Canada and China (13 each). However, only two studies referred to Poland [Natarajan et al. 2016].

eight scenarios of the advertisement were prepared, stimuli differing in the combination of “donation – cause – product”. Study participants were students of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn². They represent Generation Y (often referred to as Millennials) and have one feature in common. It is important from the point of view of the object of the study undertaken. As indicated by Beckmann and Noll [2015, p. 70], Millennials tend to behave altruistically. In other words, they require social involvement from companies and reward them by purchasing products (services) from companies that are not focused only on achieving their own business objectives. Each of the respondents, selected in a targeted manner received, at random, a questionnaire with a single CrM advertisement and a set of questions.

Cause-related marketing research referred to the scientific problem included in the question: What factors determine the effects of CrM? In the light of the study issues contained in the title of paper, specific objective of the research outline above was however to determine the correlation between the consumer willingness to support others/causes (altruism) and the intention to purchase products with a “supporting social cause” attribute and their attitudes towards CrM campaigns. In addition, the effect of altruistic attitudes on the purchase intention (willingness to purchase) was evaluated by considering the type of product and the functional compliance between the product and a selected cause (Table 1).

Table 1. Variables used in the analyses

Social cause	Product type	Product-cause fit
– support for hungry children (<i>a programme for preventing childhood malnutrition in Poland</i>)	– hedonic (<i>pistachio-flavoured ice-cream “Symfonia Smaku”</i>)	– low a) Help for ill-treated animals and “ <i>Symfonia Smaku</i> ”
– help for ill-treated animals (<i>a programme for counteracting violence against animals</i>)	– utilitarian (<i>environmentally friendly washing liquid “Zielony Przyjaciel”</i>)	b) Help for diabetics and “ <i>Zielony Przyjaciel</i> ”
– care about natural environment (<i>a programme for protecting the natural environment in Poland</i>)		– high a) Support for hungry children and “ <i>Symfonia Smaku</i> ”
– help for diabetics (<i>a programme for prevention of diabetes in Poland</i>)		b) Care about natural environment and “ <i>Zielony Przyjaciel</i> ”
Consumer attitude towards helping others		
– less altruistic – more altruistic		
Consumer attitude towards CrM campaign		
– less favourable – more favourable		
Intention to purchase a socially responsible product		

Source: Authors' own study.

² In view of the theory application, the use of a sample composed of students in CrM research is a common practice [Goldsmith and Yimin 2014, p. 83].

The measurement of the willingness to purchase an advertised product was carried out using three 7-point semantic scales [Vaidyanathan et al. 2013, p. 57]. However, altruistic behaviours and attitudes towards CrM were evaluated using the scale applied by Webb et al. [2000, p. 203] and Kropp et al. [1998, pp. 6–7], respectively. Respondents indicated the level of their agreement regarding four statements on the 7-point Likert scale, ranking the answers from “I strongly disagree” = 1 to “I strongly agree” = 7. These scales were considered highly reliable, science estimated values of the alpha coefficient resulting from Cronbach’s test, revealing the consistency of the positions in relation to the scale, amounted to 0.925 (purchase intention), 0.90 (altruistic attitude) and 0.845 (attitude towards CrM).

In the first stage of the research, a tertile division of the examined population was carried out [Grau and Folse 2007, pp. 22–23]. It was done based on the altruistic attitude demonstrated to identify and compare two extreme groups of consumers on the 7-point scale and eliminate the medium group (consumers positioned close to the median) from further analyses. As a result, from the initial sample of 309 respondents, further analyses included the responses of 217 participants of the experiment (of which 125 made up a sample, of less altruistic attitudes and 92 of more altruistic attitudes, assuming their normal distribution³). Further on, using variance methods, estimating the value and significance of the Wilks coefficient, the strength of the correlations between altruistic attitude and the intention to purchase a socially responsible product and between attitudes towards helping others and attitudes towards CrM campaign were evaluated.

Finally, research issue was to examine the effects of CrM through an evaluation of the behaviour of research participants when faced with a specific choice. This involved the possibility of donating some money to support a social cause (an altruistic stimulus) or increasing the economic value of a purchase resulting from receiving a specific sum of money in return for a donation in the form of a price discount or cash-back received at the purchase of the product (monetary impulse). Such a choice was evaluated using an χ^2 test.

The following hypotheses were subject to statistical verification:

1. The intention to purchase a socially responsible product will be higher for those persons who demonstrate more altruistic attitudes compared to persons with less altruistic attitudes.
2. The more altruistic attitudes a person has, the more favourable their attitude towards the CrM campaign.
3. The positive effect of altruism on the intention to purchase the product will not be reinforced by the type of the product or the degree to product-cause fit.
4. An altruistic stimulus will be more effective in stimulating purchases than a monetary stimulus (price discount, cash-back) when consumers are rather more than less willing to help others.

³ The Shapiro–Wilk test confirmed the homogeneity of experimental groups.

3. The effect of altruistic attitudes on the intention to purchase a cause-related product and attitudes towards the CrM campaign

The graphical illustration of CrM effects in combination with the nature of consumer attitudes shows that the research participants had a higher tendency to purchase a socially responsible product when their attitude towards helping others was altruistic than sceptical (Figure 1). Such a nature of relations between variables is supported by the results of the variance analysis.

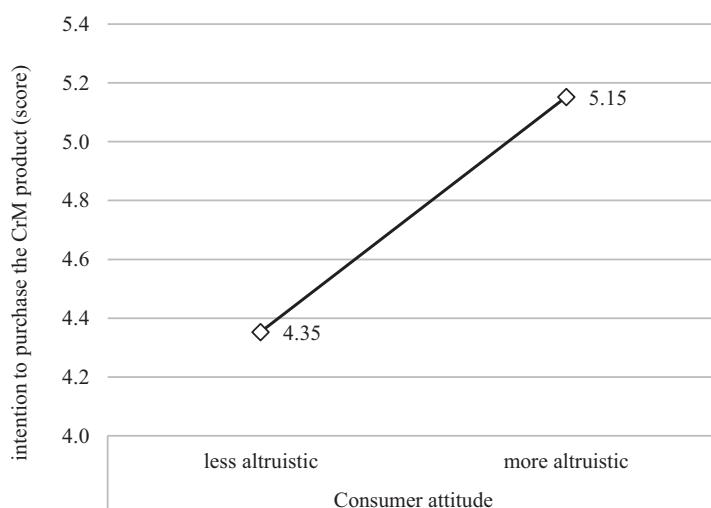


Figure 1. Altruistic attitude and purchase intention of CrM products

Source: Authors' own study.

In testing the first hypothesis, the resulting differences in purchase intentions caused by the difference in consumer attitudes (less vs. more altruistic) proved statistically significant. Interpreting the interaction of variables presented in Table 2, it should be noted that the positive effect of altruistic attitudes on the purchase intention is not supported by either the type of the product nor the degree of product-cause fit (hypothesis 3). The level of altruism influences not only the effects of CrM as expressed by the willingness to purchase the product, but also attitudes towards the CrM campaign (Figure 2). A statistical analysis confirmed the relation demonstrated by the fact, that the more we are willing to help others, the more favourable our attitude is towards the CrM campaign (Wilks' lambda=0.6549; F=29.398; p=0.000).

Table 2. Results of the analysis of variance of the effect of an altruistic attitude on the purchase intention of a CrM product

Specification	Wilks' lambda	df	F
1.			
Main effects:			
altruistic attitude (less vs. more): AA	.912	3,217	6.96*
product type (hedonic vs. utilitarian): PT	.989	3,217	.811
product-cause fit (low vs. high): PCF	.972	3,217	2.079
Interactions:			
AA x PT	.991	3,217	.679
AA x PCF	.992	3,217	.601
AA x PT x PCF	.999	3,217	.920

* p<.01, ** p<.025, *** p<.001

Source: Authors' own study.

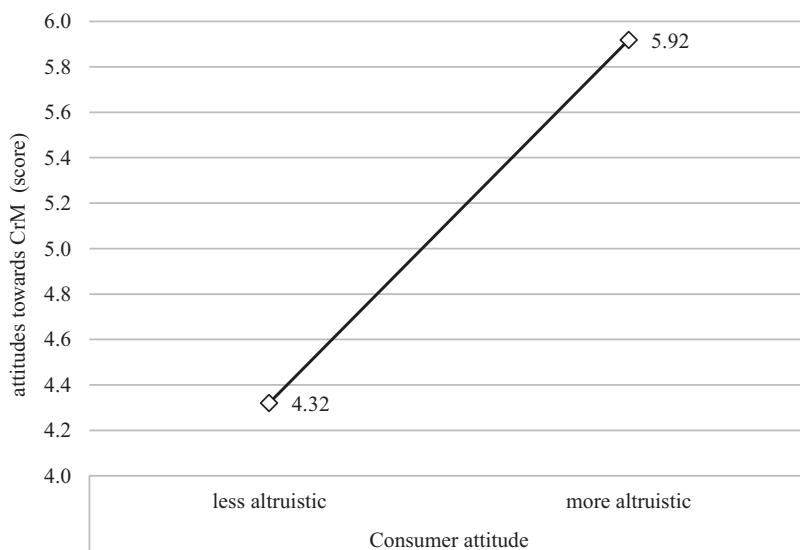


Figure 2. Willingness to help others and the attitude towards CrM campaign

Source: Authors' own study.

The results of the next analysis, using a Chi-square test, also confirmed the significant role of altruistic attitudes in CrM. Combining the nature of the attitude demonstrated by the research participant towards helping others when choosing between a price discount and cash-back and donating at the moment of purchase, it is not surprising that more persons revealing more altruistic attitudes decided in favour of transferring a part of the amount to a social cause (76% vs. 56%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Altruistic attitude and willingness to provide financial support of CrM initiatives

Choice alternatives		Less altruistic attitudes	More altruistic attitudes
Monetary stimulus	cash-back at the purchase	8.9%	6.5%
	price discount	35.6%	14.1%
Altruistic stimulus	donation	55.6%	76.3%

Source: Authors' own study.

The relation between the stimuli (altruistic vs. monetary) and the consumer approach expressed in the willingness to help others is statistically significant ($\chi^2=40.796$; $p<0.01$). Therefore, the hypothesis that marketing initiatives based on a donation are more effective when they are addressed to potential buyers of more altruistic attitudes was confirmed.

Conclusions

The results of the study confirm the significant role of altruistic attitudes in CrM. With respect to its application, it appears that organizations need to recognise that the degree of altruism is a driving force resulting in differences in consumer behaviour regarding willingness to buy cause-related products and their attitude towards CrM campaign. Consequently, socially oriented customers should be the key target of CrM activities, the acceptance of which is an important factor determining the effects of CrM.

Moreover, it should be remembered that implementation of societal marketing is hindered. As Kozłowski and Rutkowska [2016] stated, the source of this situation lies, among others, in the dominance of global consumerism, which is more attractive for profit-oriented organizations than the idea of sustained consumption and the long-term, complex process of developing civic culture in a community. In this context, a role of enterprises in developing social attitudes of their customers is perceived. They should educate customers around their CrM and important social issues in the context of creating a common good, whose solution requires active involvement of both the company and its customers.

The main limitation of the research were their primary character and small territorial coverage. As a result, verification of the formulated conclusions requires further study and carried out on a larger sample with consideration of the broader geographic context. In addition, the extension of the scope of the research could be valuable. Certainly, an assessment of the societal marketing of value theory and of customer satisfaction and loyalty resulting from the purchase cause-related products is an interesting issue.

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Role of Altruistic Attitudes in Cause-Related Marketing

This study identified factors affecting the effects of cause-related marketing (CrM). An empirical verification of the hypotheses confirmed that an altruistic attitude, evaluated through the willingness to help others, is a differentiating factor in purchase intentions of product supporting a social cause. It was assumed that a positive correlation between variables would not be amplified by either the type of the product or the product-cause fit. The research also shows that the more altruistic attitudes, the more favourable

attitude towards the CrM campaign and that marketing initiatives based on donation are more effective in stimulating a purchase than initiatives based on financial compensation (price discount, cash-back) when consumers are more, rather than less willing to help a social cause.

Rola postaw altruistycznych w *cause-related marketing*

Głównym celem eksperymentu była identyfikacja czynników wpływających na efekty marketingu ważnej sprawy (CrM: *cause-related marketing*). Empiryczna weryfikacja hipotez potwierdziła, że altruistyczna postawa – oceniana przez pryzmat skłonności do pomagania innym – różnicuje intencję zakupu produktu wspierającego sprawę społeczną. Zgodnie z założeniem pozytywny związek między zmiennymi nie był wzmacniany ani typem produktu, ani stopniem dostosowania sprawy do produktu. Z badań wynika również, że w im większym stopniu przyjmujemy altruistyczne wartości, tym przychylniej jesteśmy nastawieni do kampanii CrM, a w stymulowaniu zakupów bardziej skuteczne okazują się inicjatywy marketingowe oparte na darowiznie niż na rekompensacie finansowej (jak rabat cenowy, zwrot w gotówce), kiedy konsumenci są raczej bardziej niż mniej chętni pomagać sprawie społecznej.