

Chapter 1

Corporate Social Responsibility and Digital Tools: The Cause-Related Marketing Case

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ABSTRACT

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is one of the most relevant corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives nowadays and is being employed by numerous brands across product categories. The most important characteristics are (1) there is a link between a for-profit business and a non-profit organization (NPO) in order to support a social cause and (2) corporate donation is conditioned by sales, that is, CRM ultimately depends on consumer behavior. In this chapter, we focus on CRM programs carried out in a digital context. Thus, our aim is to understand their fundamental features and the main digital technologies used. Our findings show a massive use of digital technologies in CRM campaigns. Different digital tools are currently combined in the same program, complementing them with conventional mass media. The main advantages of this combination are a quick diffusion of the CRM programs, and a global impact.

INTRODUCTION

Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) is one of the most relevant Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives nowadays and is being employed by numerous brands across product categories (Galan et al, 2015). The most important characteristics are (Galan & Galera, 2017): (1) there is a link between a for-profit business and a non-profit organization (NPO) in order to support a social cause, and (2) corporate donation is conditioned by sales, that is, CRM ultimately depends on consumer behavior.

In this chapter, we focus on CRM programs carried out in a digital context. Thus, our aim is to understand their fundamental features and the main digital technologies used.

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Hence, the chapter is organized as follows. First, we review the conceptual framework in which the theoretical development of this work is based. Secondly, we observe the situation and analyze some CRM campaigns carried out the last years. This information was completed consulting each company's and NPO's websites, and with a general internet search. Finally, we summarize the most relevant conclusions, as well as the theoretical contribution and managerial implications. We also include possible limitations and further research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this part, we review the main concepts – Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Cause-Related Marketing (CRM), and digital tools –, and study their relations.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Currently, expectations on businesses go beyond obtaining good financial results for shareholders and what is strictly required by law (Carroll, 1991). There is an increasing environmental and social awareness (Galan et al, 2013), and companies must meet other stakeholders' demands, such as society in general, and consumers in particular. For this reason, CSR is becoming a key aspect for all kind of organizations and it has greater emphasis on business strategy (Nieto & Fernandez, 2004).

CSR is defined as "...the voluntary integration, by enterprises, of social and environmental concerns in their business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders..." (Commission of the European Communities 2001: 7) and it can provide a differential competitive advantage. CSR is a new way of thinking, a corporate culture based on ethical management and social responsibility as a channel to improve competitiveness and corporate reputation while covering society's demands on these issues (Foretica, 2002).

The first businesses that applied CSR gained an important competitive advantage because, at the beginning, CSR was considered an innovation. However, with its generalization, now it only serves to disqualify those who do not practice it (Córdoba, 2006). Companies are aware that social irresponsibility entails a high cost for their image and their positioning in the market.

To actually get a competitive advantage, CSR should be integrated into the corporate culture, strategy and mission (Galan et al, 2013). In short, it requires the involvement of the entire company and, for this, everyone's commitment in the organization is needed, at all levels (Arenas, 2006).

The increase in CSR initiatives (Lee et al, 2018) has been caused by companies (which increasingly recognize CSR as a key to success), NPOs (which have increasing needs for resources), and consumers (who are concerned about what types of companies are "behind" the products that they buy, if these businesses have ethical behavior with their employees, suppliers, society in general, and the natural environment, affecting such observation to their purchases). In this way, CSR is becoming an intangible resource, even more important than the other corporate assets (Galan et al, 2013).

Currently, there are a variety of issues that fall under the CSR "umbrella", but we can highlight 6 types of initiatives, according to Kotler and Lee (2005): cause promotions, cause-related marketing, corporate social marketing, corporate philanthropy, community volunteering, and socially responsible business practices. Examples for each initiative are collected in Table 1.

In this chapter, we are going to focus on one of these initiatives: Cause-Related Marketing.

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