

A Comparison Between Brand Level and Donation Proximity toward Consumer Evaluation on CRM Online Campaign: An Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

Cause-related marketing (CRM), a widely used marketing strategy, is becoming increasingly popular as social media growth enables the business to communicate information and marketing content to numerous target audiences. CRM is a form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that assists a particular cause when customers purchase products through the CRM campaign. Successful implementation of CRM benefits the company in a favorable attitude and reputation while also the helping cause and the consumers themselves. CRM implementation is becoming more competitive amongst brands; thus, marketers need to consider strategies when developing an efficient CRM program. This research examines how luxury brands and non-luxury brands conduct strategies in performing CRM, including the proximity of donations to consumer assessments in the context of brand attitude, willingness to publish, and intention to refer. The research approach used is an experiment with a factorial design of 2x2, involving brand level (luxury vs. non-luxury) x proximity to donation (national vs. international). It also measures the effect on customer responses of perceived quality and brand familiarity. ANCOVA and MANCOVA were used to measure the differences in responses between 4 stimulus combinations. The results revealed that there were variations in the effects of applying proximity strategies to donations and brand level to customer evaluations. The results found that a stimulus combination of luxury brand strategy and national donation generates the highest value of brand attitude, willingness to publish, and referral intention.

Keywords: CRM, Luxury Brand, Non-luxury, Donation Proximity, Brand Attitude, Willingness to Publish, Referral Intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the strategies used by the luxury industry in facing competition and achieving marketing objectives is to carry out cause-related marketing (CRM) [1]. CRM is defined as a strategic partnership between brands and non-profit organizations through marketing and promotion activities by joint campaigns, a scheme or agreement related to a certain proportion of profits obtained from the sale of company products or services that will be donated to specific causes [2]. Moreover, CRM is in the realm of corporate social responsibility programs [3] and contributes to establishing good business relationships between non-profit organizations, companies, and consumers to support the desired social goals or campaigns [4]. In its development, the

application of CRM is more related to the luxury industry, where many campaigns are carried out by luxury brands [5].

This promotion strategy can enhance and maintain a favorable image and reputation, and build a favorable attitude so that it will increase purchase intentions [6,7]. All of these benefits can positively influence consumer attitudes through buying behavior. As companies worldwide are deemed necessary to define their role in society and apply social, ethical, and responsibility standards as a brand management strategy [8], CRM strategy of luxury brands becomes very relevant to be applied in various other industries, namely non-luxury, including finance, retail, and packaged goods.

The type of CRM that is implemented, especially the cause or charity, is one of the essential factors in determining the effectiveness of implementing CRM to enhance brand and company reputation. The CRM campaign program is deemed effective when consumers are motivated to share or show compassion to others through consumption or purchase [5, 9]. Motivation to show that intention is very prevalent in the context of social media. This allows consumers to visually show their compassion through purchasing CRM products to their friends [9, 10, 11]. When CRM online campaigns are visible to others (conspicuous), consumers' willingness to spread participation in purchasing CRM products (willingness to publish) and the intention to invite others to participate in CRM (referral intention) campaigns through their social media is higher for luxury brands than non-luxury [8]. However their study focuses on the same beneficiaries. Previous studies have shown that consumers prefer donations aimed to local communities over global donations [12, 13]. This preference is because they consider donations to local targets or those closer to them as more appropriate, and they can assist more quickly. This finding is interesting to study further in the context of the luxury and non-luxury industries that implement CRM programs, considering (1) luxury brands are global brands that operate worldwide, hence (2) they targeted donation beneficiaries worldwide as well.

Indonesia has the most significant number of social media users in the world [14]. Either in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social media, users from Indonesia occupy a sizable portion of social media users [14]. Interestingly, social networking applications are platforms that are often used by Indonesians because they offer free services [14]. The Internet and social media add more extensive marketing space for companies to develop their businesses and products. The development of various platforms raises opportunities to promote products through this platform, which is believed to have a significant influence on marketing. CRM campaigns conducted by luxury and non-luxury brands can also be done online to be promoted through social media Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

Referring to [12] concerning the location of community in conspicuous situation and focus on online CRM [8], the aim of this study is to exhibit whether there are differences in consumer responses to CRM activities that developed by type of brand (luxury vs non luxury) with beneficiaries in different locations (national vs. international).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Previous studies have shown some interesting findings and discussions about CRM programs: (1)

Consumer purchase intentions will increase when participating brands are in the luxury category compared to brands with lower or non-luxury positions, when consumers participate for justifying hedonism or frivolous consumption [15]. (2) Luxury brands that are classified as upper class can produce more positive brand attitude compared to non-luxury brands; this is based on several factors such as perceived product value [16], symbolic benefits [17] and premium quality [18], but this brand also gives guilt or guilt from purchasing luxury goods [19].

Another factor that will influence customers' responses is (3) the location of beneficiaries (near or far from the donor), known as donation proximity. Donation proximity will affect consumers psychologically through a higher preference for target recipients of donations in the same geographic area as donors than recipients with far geographical distances [12]. An example of the application of donation proximity can be local, regional, national and international [20], of which previous studies have identified several attributes, namely consumer preferences for local donations compared to international [21].

Moreover, (4) perceived quality can affect brand attitude [22], by providing reasons why to buy a brand compared to other brands [23]. In addition, perceived quality is used as covariates in research [8] because the perception of the brand is considered to influence the willingness to publish and referral intention. In other words, the perceived quality was found to affect consumer responses to brands and marketing programs.

(5) Brand familiarity is a number of experiences between consumers and brands both, directly and indirectly, that can increase positive affect on the brand and motivate behavior [24]. (6) Differences in consumer responses in the form of brand attitude, willingness to publish and referral intention are assessed not only influenced by each of the two categories of brand levels and proximity donation but also influenced by covariates perceived quality and brand familiarity that can motivate favorable effect, cognition, and behaviors. Referring to the conceptual research framework, it becomes interesting to know the comparison combination effect of brand levels and donation proximity after testing and eliminating the influence of perceived quality and brand familiarity on consumer responses.

2.1. Consumer Response to Brand Level in CRM Online Campaign

High-end goods or luxury products can function as essential indicators of one's status because they have high quality and limited availability [18]. Beyond the main functional benefits, products of luxury brands can

express a person's high social status more effectively. Consumers can recognize the characteristics and symbols of luxury products that are of high quality and consistent [25].

Moreover, purchase of luxury brands is seen as a symbol of wealth and prestige in today's social strata. This is because luxury products are offered at high prices according to usual standards, causing only a few people to be able and want to buy them, thus ultimately increasing the social value of consumers who can make these purchases. The leading cause of the high selling prices of luxury products is due to high production costs, and this shows that the resources in production are scarce. This scarcity of production resources then increases the value of the commodity because the quantity of the product is considered limited [16], thereby increasing the symbolic profit of consumers who succeed in having the limited product [17]. As a result, when consumers are confronted with luxury brands with the high value from high prices and competitive scarcity, their perceptions and attitudes towards brands will be more positive. On the other hand, it is less likely for consumers to get the same social benefits from purchasing non-luxury products. This is because the majority of products from this class function fulfill the utilitarian needs of consumers at lower prices, are mass-produced and less prominent in the eyes of the wider community [26].

H₁. CRM campaign of luxury brands will deliver more positive brand attitude than non-luxury brands

Further, because online charity campaigns are more conspicuous, it is likely to disseminate the campaign to others to fulfil consumers' needs for self-presentation and ego-enhancement [8]. Hence, this situation will motivate them to support charity programs to reflect their status higher by supporting luxury brands compared to non-luxury brands.

H₂. CRM campaign of luxury brands will deliver higher willingness to share than non-luxury brands

H₃. CRM campaign of luxury brands will deliver higher referral intention than non-luxury brands

2.2. Consumer Response To Donation Proximity in CRM Online Campaign

Several previous studies have shown that donation proximity is an essential factor affecting consumer participation in donation programs for specific causes [27]. Consumers are more likely to donate to local rather than national communities because consumers feel that local campaigns drive direct impact [28]. This is supported by [29] who proposes the metaphor of "closeness equals the strength of the effect," where people tend to attach importance to closeness with the recipient when evaluating the impact of their donations.

In other words, people expect their actions to have an impact, if spatially closer than those farther away from them so that it can lead to a higher level of donations.

When a company succeeds in fulfilling consumer desires, consumers tend to develop more favorable attitudes toward brands, are more loyal to brands, and the desire to buy products from those brands will also increase [30, 31]. Therefore, it can be said that the CRM program will be more influential in building brand attitude, willingness to publish and referral intention of consumers when the intended target is a recipient that is near compared to those far from consumers. Since consumers expect a more significant impact on donations aimed at local targets, framing like this will help justify the company's efforts to meet the needs and desires of consumers

H₄. CRM campaigns in the form of national donations will deliver more positive brand attitude than international donations

H₅. CRM campaign in the form of national donations will deliver higher willingness to publish than international donations

H₆. CRM campaign in form of national donations will deliver higher referral intention than international donations

2.3. Consumer Response to Brand Level and Donation Proximity in CRM Online Campaign

Relationships that are specifically built between companies and non-profit organizations can produce better consumer responses for luxury brands [15]. Furthermore, consumers' desire to buy luxury brand products will increase compared to non-luxury products, because consumers try to explain the consumption behavior of luxury products which is often considered excessive through donations that will be channeled through the CRM program. In the online context, a study by [9] demonstrated luxury brands that actively promote CRM campaigns on social media will get more positive consumer response than non-luxury brands [9]. This can occur due to the motivation to distribute charities and assistance prominently while buying and displaying ownership of luxury products. Consumers are willing to donate because they want to have positive feelings for themselves and feel the need for self-presentation and self-improvement [32].

On the other hand, as donation reflects prosocial behavior, a study by [12] demonstrated people lead to higher levels of donation intention on closer targets than farther to them. Thus, we argue that CRM online campaigns with a combination of brand level and donation proximity will generate different customer responses.

H₇. CRM campaign of luxury brand will deliver the most positive brand attitude if it is in the form of national community compare to others campaign

H₈. CRM campaign of luxury brand will deliver the highest willingness to publish if it is in the form of national donation compare to others campaign

H₉. CRM campaign of luxury brand will deliver the highest referral intention if it is in the form of national donation compare to others campaign

3. METHOD

An experimental research design was conducted to determine the causality relationship between CRM online campaign and consumer response. The research design is depicted with a factorial design: brand level (luxury vs non-luxury), and donation proximity (national vs international) to test 9 hypotheses.

3.1. Stimulus Development

In developing stimulus, we conducted 3 pilot test, (1) to identify the luxury product (46.7% shoes), (2) to identify luxury (10 brands) vs non luxury brands (10 brands); the results exhibit Adidas (42.9%) as a luxury brand, and Reebok (50%) as a non luxury brand, (3) to identify the fictitious CRM campaign (65% Covid-19 outbreak), and to identify the non profit organization (33.9% United Nation).

Based on the pilot test we developed 4 stimulus of CRM online campaign as the cause, The campaign delivered the following message: "A portion of sales XXXX (luxury vs non luxury) shoes will be donated in the form of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support programs to prevent the spread and protect the XXX (national vs international) population from Covid-19".

3.2. Experiment Procedure

Experiments were carried out online by distributing questionnaires along with two web pages that show CRM campaigns from luxury and non-luxury brands, namely the product page and transaction page. The product page presents the independent variables with the manipulation of the luxury and non-luxury brands. The transaction page was created to highlight the social cause based on brand level and donation proximity.

Participants were first asked to observe the two pages of the website and be given information to imagine that the participant wanted to buy a shoe and enter the website of the luxury brand or non-luxury brand with the product page displayed. Then they found that the brand runs a donation program from each sale of products to be donated to the cause in Indonesia for the national donation strategy and the world's

population on the international donation strategy through the United Nations non-profit organization. Participants were motivated to make purchases and were given a website display in the form of a transaction page that shows thanks for the purchases and donations given by participants to the cause. Furthermore, this page is given the visibility of an online campaign in the form of a social media share feature to allow participants to forward information on the company's CRM campaign to their audience on their respective social media.

The four types of stimuli (CRM online campaign) that were developed and tested in the third stage were randomly distributed to 136 participants using non-probability sampling (purposive) techniques. Research participants are required to fill out a questionnaire consisting of several parts, namely: (1) manipulation check, (2) assessment of the dependent variable, and (3) profile. The answers of participants who did not pass the manipulation check stage were included in the study because they are considered unable to capture the stimulus provided.

Furthermore, the target participants in the study were Indonesian residents over the age of 21 years and actively using social media for the past three months. This is based on the existence of a donation proximity strategy that distinguishes between target recipients of donations who are close (in Indonesia) and target recipients located far from participants, namely international scale donations. Therefore, to differentiate the donation proximity strategy, participants in the study must be homogeneous, that is, the population of Indonesia. Besides that, participants must have a social media account and actively use it within the past 3 months. This requirement is because the response to be tested is the participant's desire to forward and share the company's CRM information to the audience on their respective social media. Meanwhile, the target age characteristics of participants are expected to be over 21 years because they are considered to be mature enough to decide to purchase products, especially luxury products.

3.3. Manipulation Checks

Manipulation checks were performed to ensure that participants accurately perceived the manipulated variables. To check the brand level manipulation, participants answered whether they perceived the brand as inexpensive/expensive or low-end/high-end on a 7-point semantic differential scale [15]. Independent sample t-test results confirmed that respondents perceived the high-end brand to be positioned higher ($n = 70$, $M = 5.63$) than the low-end brand ($n = 66$, $M = 2.15$) ($t = 22.184$, $p = 0,000$). Referring to [12] to check the donation proximity manipulation, participants were asked whether they felt the CRM campaign targeted recipients of donations from Indonesians or World

residents were measured on 7-point Likert scales. Results indicated that participants perceived the target population of Indonesia as a close strategy or national proximity (n = 67, M = 5.59) compared to international proximity (n = 69, M = 2,415) (t = 24,839, p = 0,000). Thus, respondents perceived both manipulated variables as the researchers intended. Then, we conduct ANCOVA and MANCOVA to test all hypotheses.

3.4. Measurement

There are 19 items in questionnaires to measure 3 participant responses (brand attitude, willingness to publish, and referral intention) and 2 covariates (product quality and brand familiarity). All items was measured by 7-point likert scale, refer to previous studies: 4 items of brand attitude [33], 6 items of willingness to publish [8], 3 items of referral intention [34], 4 items of product quality [22], and 3 items of brand familiarity [23].

4. RESULT

All items are valid (loading factor range: 0.652 - 0.966) and reliable (Cronbach's alpha: 0.804-0.952). Results from univariate ANCOVA test indicated that brand attitudes are different across brand level (Mluxury = 5.68, Mnon-luxury = 4.30, p = 0,000), willingness to publish are different across brand level (Mluxury = 5.57, Mnon-luxury = 4.42, p = 0,000), and referral intention are different across brand level (Mluxury = 5.08, Mnon-luxury = 4.37, p = 0,000). Thus, H1 - H3 were supported. To assess the possible bias that can occur from participants' pre-perception of product quality and brand familiarity, we tested these two covariate effects on brand attitude, willingness to publish, and referral intention. Perceived quality has no effect on all three participants' responses (p > 0.05). Brand familiarity has no impact on brand attitude, but could enhance willingness to publish and referral intention (p < 0.05)

ANCOVA with Bonferroni test also conducted to test whether consumers' brand attitudes, willingness to publish and referral intention are significantly higher for the national proximity campaign than the international donation campaign. Results showed that brand attitudes (Mnational =5.27, Minternational = 4.70, p = 0.002), willingness to publish (Mnational = 5.18, Minternational = 4.86, p = 0.04), referral intention (Mnational = 5.32, Minternational = 4.17, p = 0.000). Brand familiarity affects all three responses (p < 0.05), but product quality has no effect on all three responses (p > 0.05). Thus, H4-H6 were supported after removing the effect of linear brand familiarity on brand attitude, willingness to publish and referral intention.

Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used to examine interaction of brand level (luxury vs. non-luxury) and donation proximity (national vs.

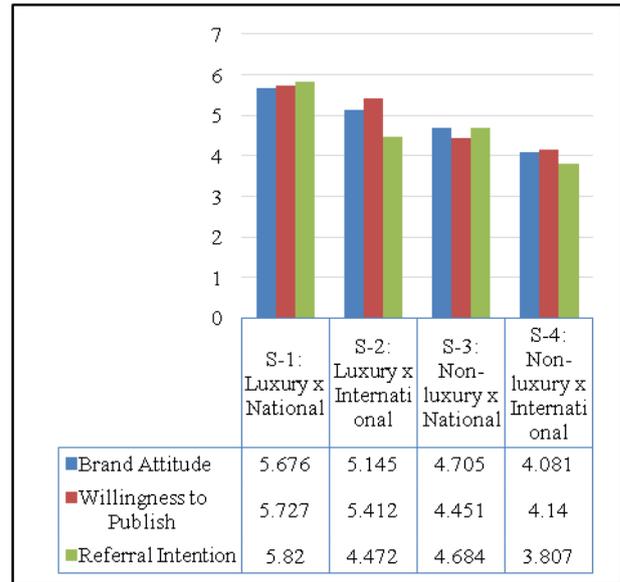


Figure 1. Interaction between brand level and donation proximity on dependent variables

international), and covariates on each dependent variable. As Figure 1 shows, planned contrast results showed that the stimulus 1 or when a CRM campaign is carried out by luxury brands with national donation targets, participants revealed more favorable attitudes (Mstimulus 1 = 5.676, Mstimulus 2 = 5.145, Mstimulus 3 = 4.705, Mstimulus 4 = 4.081, p = <0.05). But, the results also revealed that there were not significantly differences between stimulus 1 and stimulus 2. Accordingly, H7 was not supported. For the willingness to publish, the results showed that consumers' willingness to share is higher for stimulus 1 than other stimuli, however not differ significantly (Mstimulus 1 = 5.727, Mstimulus 2 = 5.412, Mstimulus 3 = 4.451, Mstimulus 4 = 4.140, p = <0.05) . Thus H8 was not supported. Regarding referral intention, a planned comparison analysis results showed that campaign with stimulus 1 gave consumers' highest referral intention (Mstimulus 1 = 5.820) compare for other stimuli (Mstimulus 2 = 4.472, Mstimulus 3 = 4.684, Mstimulus 4 = 3.807) with p < 0.05. Therefore H9 was supported.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings on H1-H3 show that participating in a CRM online campaign program can produce more benefits for luxury brands than non-luxury brands. When a company participates in CRM, brand attitude, willingness to publish, and referral intention are higher for luxury brands than non-luxury brands after controlling for brand familiarity. Consumers can assess luxury brands more positively because of the premium quality that can serve as a better symbol and status [18]. Luxury brands offer social benefits to its target consumers that make them recognize the premium quality of luxury brands [35], and high prices of luxury

brands indicate only certain individuals can obtain limited products, so that it will increase the symbolic benefits for consumers [17]. The popularity of CRM is currently widely applied in marketing activities among brands at all levels. Thus, this research identifies the impact of brand positioning. Specifically, luxury brands can benefit the most from CRM online campaign programs.

Moreover, the results of the H4-H6 test show that participants assessed national and international donation targets differently in the CRM online campaign program. Participants' responses were more positive on the national donation target than the international donation target. It demonstrated that companies which run CRM programs with national donation targets will benefit more in terms of brand attitude, willingness to publish, and referral intention after controlling for brand familiarity variables. This finding is in line with several previous studies [12, ; 26, 28], which show that donation proximity is an essential factor affecting individual donations, where consumers tend to like local donations or close range because it is considered to have more direct impact. This study uses local or near classification in a national form while distant classification in an international form. Participants are Indonesian citizens, thus the national context can be understood that the respondents and donors are in the same geographical location. Targeting Indonesian people as recipients of donations will therefore drive higher positive responses.

Rejection of H7 and H8 was because stimulus 1 was found to not produce the highest brand attitude and willingness to publish significantly than all other stimulus applications in the study. Stimulus 1 only has the highest average compared to 3 and 4, but has no difference with stimulus 2. In luxury brands, participants exhibit a similar attitude and willingness to publish regardless of the location of beneficiaries. In other words, positive brand attitude and high willingness to publish can still be generated when luxury brands run conspicuous online CRM program promotions to target recipients of donations both nationally and internationally. Consumers are willing to donate because they want to have positive feelings for themselves and feel the need for self-presentation and self-improvement [32]. Therefore in this study, participants still exhibit positive brand attitude and high willingness to publish although the program supports international communities. On the other side, this similar response could be driven by status seeking behavior [36]. When participants know about the luxury CRM campaign, they will publish the campaign to others in an attempt to develop their status as a luxury brand consumer and how they are concerned about social issues globally.

Lastly, H9 shows that respondents rated referral intention differently on each stimulus with stimulus 1, resulting in the highest mean referral intention compared to other stimulus applications. The mean difference in respondents' ratings was significant in the ANCOVA test, which produced a sig value. ($p < 0,000 < 0.05$) after controlling the familiarity brand. The combination of luxury brands and national donations is proven to be a combination of strategies that produce the highest consumer referral intention. Combined with status seeking behavior, this result also reflects pro social behavior. This result could describe the collectivism of Indonesian culture. In a donation proximity context, collectivistic in-groups can affect consumer attitudes and focus on the importance to the welfare of their own group [37]. Thus, consumers in a collectivist culture tend to feel a greater obligation towards their own communities [38].

6. CONCLUSION

The results show that there are differences in the application of each combination of brand level, and donation proximity to responses. The combination of the strategy of luxury brand and national donation targets has the highest referral intention. Considering donation, respondents prefer to support cause in Indonesia compare to global recipient. Therefore, global brand in Indonesia must focus on their social activities to support local citizen. The scope of this research is limited to one brand of each levels and one product type, and not consider how respondents attribute to the CRM motives of luxury brand. Future study might consider these issues to enhance robustness.

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