

Description for the general public

Helping others is more and more commercialized in contemporary society. We can observe the growth of a number of organizations where the purpose of their existence is helping others, like voluntary organizations, NGOs, and charities concerned with solving social problems. Moreover, helping others is more often also a part of business – companies are engaging in prosocial activities by building *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)* programs or *Cause Related Marketing (CRM)* campaigns. However, the majority of those business programs directed to helping others are only conducted from a companies' perspective (what type of engagement is beneficial for the company?), without proper regard to the consumer, who in most cases of a CRM campaigns is the actual giver of help (by buying the product they are involved in helping). Very often CRM campaigns are constructed based on the intuition of their creators. The consequence of this is that many CRM campaigns conducted in Poland don't reach their expected effectiveness and sometimes, instead of helping, they can harm the brand image and be ineffective in solving social problems.

The goal of this research project is to investigate universal factors that influence a CRM campaign's effectiveness, which is understood as building a positive perception of socially engaged products/brands/companies and to increase a willingness to buy the product. General assumption for the project is that there is an essential difference between classical ways of helping, where funds delivered by giver go directly to the help recipient and CRM way of helping, where help is indirect, as commercial firm serves as intermediary between giver and recipient. More direct way of helping might be influenced only by characteristics of the *recipient* (some recipients might be more easy to help than others, e.g. depending on whether they are guilty of their own problem situation) and the *giver* (e.g. his motivation to help others), whereas in CRM campaigns also *sender's* of help (company's) specifics will count.

Ten experimental studies will be conducted in this research project, which will test the different aspects of the CRM's effectiveness. The first 3 experiments will be aimed at testing the general rules of prosocial behaviour depending on the different types of recipients of help: more easy to help (arousing positive emotions, not guilty for his own situation, less distant to the giver, e.g. sick child belonging to the same ethnic group as the giver) vs. more difficult to help (e.g. homeless, refugee, drug-addict). After establishing some general rules for the role of the recipient in activating helping behaviour, studies 4-6 will investigate them in the particular context of CRM, where help depends on the sale of the product. We assume that general rules of prosocial behaviour cannot be directly transferred into the situation of help through a CRM campaign. The second factor tested in this stage of research will be the type of company (e.g. small, local vs. big, international): how a fit between the type of company and the type of recipient of help will influence the CRM campaign's effectiveness. We assume that a willingness to buy the product engaged in a prosocial cause (CRM) will differ depending on those two factors. In the last stage (experiments 7-10) the role of individual differences in consumers' reaction towards a CRM campaign with respect to exo- vs. endocentric prosocial motivation, will be explored. *Exocentric* prosocial motivation is when the helping person is concerned only with the profit of the receiver of help (wanting to change his/her bad situation). In the case of *endocentric* prosocial motivation also the psychological profit of the helper is involved (e.g. satisfaction of being a good person or not feeling guilty when the action is taken). In general we expect that people with a higher exocentric motivation will be more open to help independently of the type of recipient, the type of the company and the fit between them. People with a higher endocentric prosocial motivation will be more malleable to different types of recipient (more open to help the easier recipient) and to the fit with a company's type.

The research will have great significance for the science helping to understand universal mechanisms underlying consumers' reactions toward relatively new phenomenon in society which is Cause Related Marketing. Its contribution to science is that it will explore differences between more classical and direct ways of helping and CRM, as well as the role of individual differences in engaging in helping more difficult recipients. Understanding those mechanisms should allow to conduct successful CRM campaigns in the future which will not only be directed to help "easy" recipients (e.g. sick children), but also other, more difficult groups. Now thanks to that, businesses in the future will be able to help to solve not only the "easy sell" social problems, but also the more difficult ones, which do not receive support so often or so easily.