

## **Cause-Related Marketing: Do Managers Understand and Use This Tool?**

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**Abstract.** *Design - We relied on data obtained from in-depth interviews with managers. Data categorization allowed the application of the main constructs of the UTAUT model and the unveiling of the level of acceptance of Cause-Related Marketing (CrM) campaigns by managers and its use as a marketing strategy. Purpose – Most of the research on CrM emphasizes the benefits of these campaigns for charities and donors. The purpose of this study is to decode what managers think about CrM campaigns and try to discern and understand the principal motivations, benefits, and inherent risks to implement these campaigns. Findings - Managers recognize CrM benefits mainly relating them with an increase in reputation and image of the company, making it possible to differentiate and increase its notoriety. However, the social nature of this tool is what weights in the most on the decision of managers, since they recognize that being socially responsible is a competitive factor. The greatest constraints identified have to do with the effort on the implementation of the campaign and with the consumer's scepticism, especially in transactional campaigns. Originality - With this research we were able to realize that there is a misunderstanding between the CrM concept and purely philanthropic marketing, which can somehow inhibit managers from recognizing the potential of this tool. Regarding CrM use, the position of managers shows a clear concern about the importance of harmonizing values between the company and the cause, betting on long-term campaigns with transparent communication and investing in the process of planning, implementing, and monitoring campaigns to improve their performance. This needs to be taken into account in future assessments of CrM campaigns.*

**Keywords:** cause-related Marketing, UTAUT model, performance expectancy, social influence

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## Introduction

Since the 1980s, Cause-Related Marketing (CrM) has become one of the most useful tools in marketing programs and it is commonly known as “the practice of advocating corporate social responsibility in the marketing communications activities” (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001, p.214).

In terms of research, most of the studies conducted around CrM are related to consumer behaviour (Runté, Basil & Deshpande, 2009). The choice of causes for CrM campaigns, the dynamics between the profit and non-profit organizations (Natarajan, Balasubramaniam & Jublee, 2016), the importance of brand cause fit (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004), and how this may or may not affect the success of the campaign and the perception it will have in consumers (Chéron, Kohlbacher, & Kusuma, 2012) are also pointed out as some of the most studied elements in the area. Nevertheless, there is limited research in corporate attitudes toward CrM (Bennett, 2002).

Therefore, there is an opportunity to deepen the investigation of this topic from both the managers and non-profit organizations (NPOs)’ perspective. This study aims at exploring the vision that managers have on CrM campaigns, its strategic use as a marketing tool, and try to understand what they think about its CrM, namely the main motivations to implement CrM campaigns and the benefits and inherent risks.

## Literature Review

### *Cause-related marketing in the managers’ perspective*

Contemporary companies are born with an innate sense of social responsibility, while older and existing ones have to adapt to this new reality. According to McIntosh et al. (1998) and Brønn & Vrioni (2001), company social awareness is a principal concern. Brønn & Vrioni (2001) also believe that pursuing this strategy is more a rational decision than an altruistic one, given that companies face an extremely competitive market where the value of social concerns is escalating and gaining great importance.

Cause-Related Marketing (CrM) is a strategy that emerged from Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS). It was originally defined by Varadarajan & Menon (1988, p.60) as “the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when consumers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives”. In CRS, there is an altruistic will, associated with philanthropic behaviour. It implies a contribution to society beyond company obligations, without expecting anything in return (Enderle & Tavis, 1998; Austin, 2003). However, in CrM there is a direct interest in gaining something with theses campaigns, commonly known as a representation of a transactional alliance with direct or intangible benefits for the company (Runt, Basil & Deshpande, 2009). CrM can result in campaigns that can be essentially transactional, message promotion, or licensing programs. The transactional campaign is the most used and refers to campaigns where there is a purchase and part of the money reverts to the cause. The message promotion campaign aims at addressing the communication of a cause by the company. Finally, the licensing program is related to a situation in which the cause grants its name/logo to be used in a product/service and, consequently, receives a royalty based on a percentage of the sales.

CrM is beneficial for all agents involved since the gains that come from these type of campaigns are sizeable (Adkins, 2000), both for the company, the client and the cause, making this tool preferential in a win-win-win scenario (Kim & Lee, 2009; Silva & Martins, 2017). From the consumers' perspective, CrM is a good way to support causes (Ross, Patterson & Stutts, 1992) since it is a way for fulfilling personal needs and helping a cause that it was chosen by the company (Elving, 2013). Non-profit organizations (NPO's) can benefit more than companies, especially from consumers' side (Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Hult, 2004), particularly when it comes to the purchase of the product itself since consumers can donate directly to the cause (Lichtenstein, Drumwright & Braig, 2004). For NPOs' partners, CrM provides an opportunity for them to reach their target audience via joint marketing communications, thereby enhancing awareness (Kim & Lee, 2009). NPOs can also profit from the volunteer-desire of the company employees.

Perspectives about the motivations and benefits that lead companies to initiate CrM campaigns are varied (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Adkins, 2000). Nevertheless, "little research has been carried out to empirically examine the contribution of CrM to a company" (Jeong & Kim, 2020, p. 2), and those existing do not have a unanimous opinion regarding the results. Therefore, there is a need for more research concerning the confirmation of CrM as an effective marketing tool, promoting "win-win-win" for all agents involved: charities, firms, and individuals (Silva & Martins, 2017).

### ***The UTAUT model***

The UTAUT model (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis, 2003) presents itself as an interesting alternative to investigate the acceptance of CrM by managers. The UTAUT model is "based on conceptual and empirical similarities across models" (Venkatesh et al, 2003, p.426). The model was created to explain the acceptance and usage of information technology (IT) and developed from several models or theories all trying to understand the acceptance of a certain behaviour (e.g., Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Motivational Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), combined TAM and TPB, of Personal Computer Utilization, the Innovation Diffusion Theory and the Social Cognitive Theory). The UTAUT model is based on four different constructs: performance expectations, effort expectation, social influence, and facilitating conditions. These constructs influence the validation of the theory in terms of acceptance and use (see figure 1). Each construct has the possibility of being influenced by different moderators (e.g., gender, age, experience, voluntariness, and use) also present in the eight base models and theories used to develop the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al, 2003). Despite the fact that this model was built to explain the acceptance of IT, it can also be used in other fields. Gonzalez et al. (2018) show that UTAUT has been widely used in the areas of education and trade.

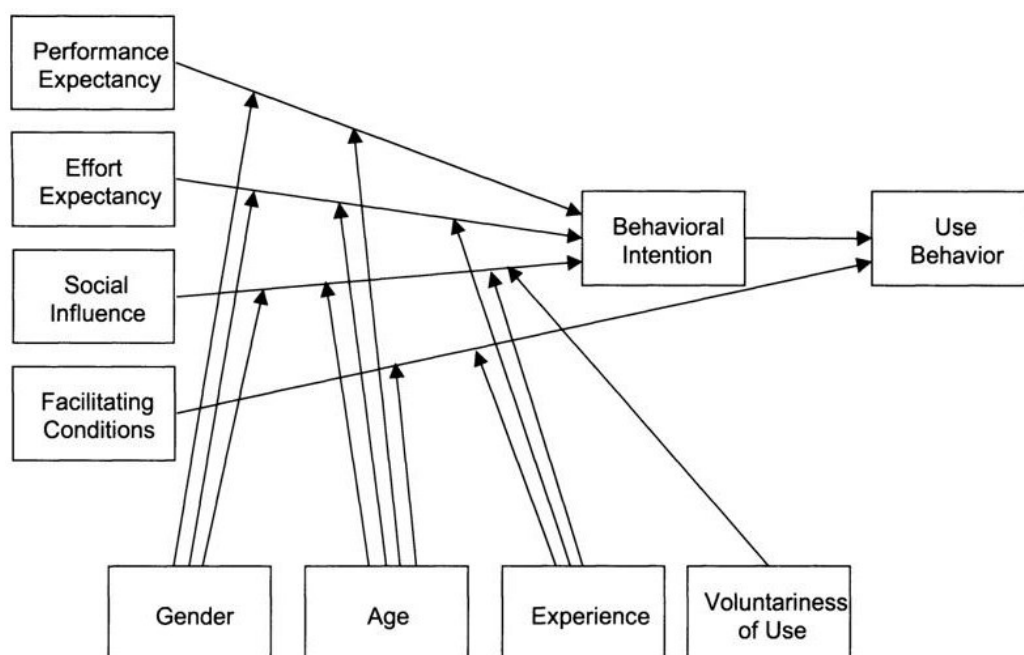


Figure 1: UTAUT model

Source: Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis, 2003.

### **Performance Expectancy**

Performance expectancy “is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance” (Venkatesh et al, 2003, p.447). In this study, performance expectancy addresses all possible issues related to what managers expect from CrM campaigns, such as benefits, costs, and risks.

There is a wide range of marketing objectives that a company expects to achieve through campaigns supporting social causes. Increasing sales is the most basic objective managers strive to achieve (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). But CrM also helps to build customer loyalty (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001) since customers positively perceive the companies that support social causes (Adkins, 2000). There is also an increase in customers’ willingness to switch brands (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001) and an opportunity to reach new segments (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Plus, the implementation of a CrM campaign helps to pursue customer relations and pacify irate patrons (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). From an intangible perspective, CrM augments the already existing value and reputation of the company, allowing them to charge premium prices (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001).

In a very competitive business environment, CrM enhances increased competitive advantage (Hunjra et al., 2011), enhances corporate statute, facilitates market entry (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988) and provides product/service differentiation (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; Nelson, Kanso & Levitt, 2007). CrM also helps to increase competitive advantage, and, therefore, the intention to use it and taps a need that companies feel to be more engaged with society (Stroup, Neubert & Anderson, 1987).

Despite the number of favourable factors associated with CrM use, there are financial risks associated in this strategy, providing a potential negative to the reputation of the firm (Adkins, 2000; Shell & Adam, 1989; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). The financial risk is frequently related to the low marketing budget for other marketing activities (Ross, Stutts, and

Patterson, 1992) as well as the possibility of being a waste of funds by partnering with a cause that offers no synergism (Meyer, 1999 et Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Based on this, we make the following proposition:

P1: Performance Expectancy positively influences the acceptance and use of CrM by managers.

### ***Effort Expectancy***

Effort expectancy “is defined as the degree of ease associated with the use of the system” (Venkatesh et al, 2003, p.450). In this study, this variable covers all issues related to the effort required to implement a campaign. It ranges from the cost of opportunity compared to other marketing activities, to the barrier that consumers can put on pursuing this campaign. The effort can also be measured considering all resources, human and financial, that a company needs to mobilize to set up the partnership. Effort expectancy covers operationalization effort and other difficulties managers may have to face when trying to implement a CrM campaign. For example, the measure of return on investment (ROI) for a CrM campaign is considered a problem by many managers when implementing such a program (Adkins, 2000), even though CrM is a simple social marketing tool to measure (Silva & Martins, 2017). Based on the above, we make the following proposition.

P2: Effort Expectancy negatively influences the acceptance and use of CrM by managers.

### ***Social Influence***

Social influence “is defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system” (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p.451). The social influence variable intends to analyse the influence that can come from consumers, shareholders, and co-workers. If in the beginning CrM was used to counter negative reputation (Natarajan, Balasubramaniam & Jublee, 2016; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988), more recently companies use it to increase their reputation and to show social concerns, as well as a means to communicate their core values and mission (Adkins, 2000). CrM can decrease employee turnover since nine out of ten employees of firms that participate in social causes feel satisfied with their companies and 87% feel a strong sense of loyalty (Myers, Kwon, & Forsythe, 2012). Furthermore, CrM can motivate and keep on attributing meaning to the company and its employees in such a way that they keep on contributing to the cause, even when the campaign is over (Varadarajan & Menon, 1998; Adkins, 2000).

Besides all advantages associated with CrM, this tool presents some risks. The risk of reputation (Adkins, 2000; Shell & Adam, 1989; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006) is associated with the possibility of something going wrong and/or if consumers perceive the campaign as being commercial rather than altruistic. This risk is related to consumer scepticism (Barone, Norman & Miyazaki, 2007) and it “arises when consumers think that a company is acting in self-interest rather than for the benefit of the society” (Elving, 2013, p. 278). High levels of scepticism and cynicism can prevent implementation and hindering the company to follow through with what was promised (Ween & Mohr, 1998). Therefore, we propose the following:

P3: Social Influence positively affects the acceptance and use of CrM by managers.

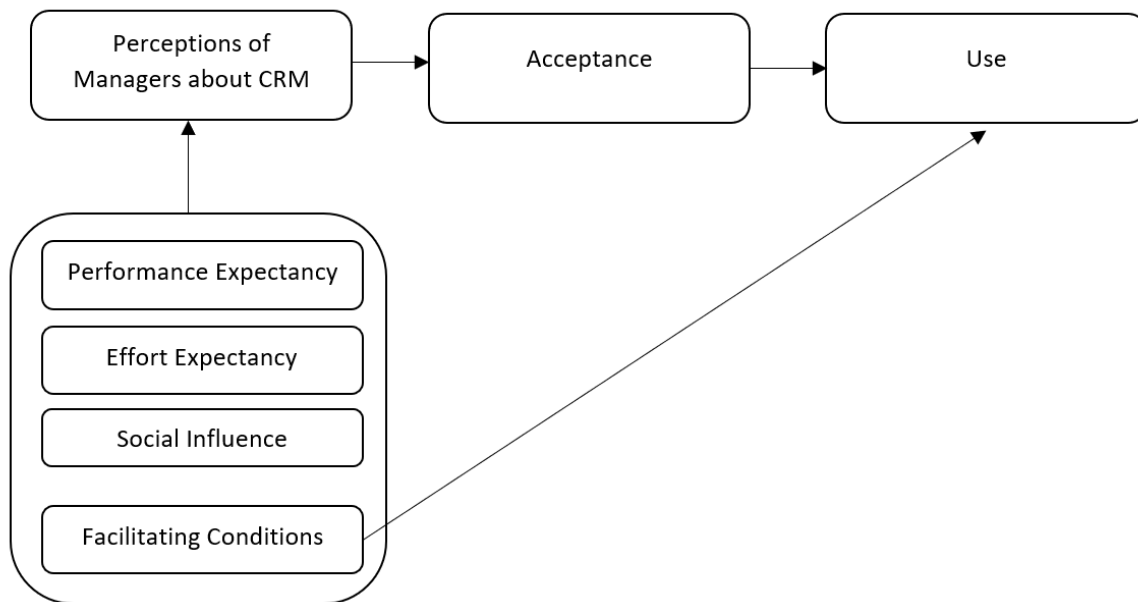
### **Facilitating Conditions**

Facilitating conditions are defined as “the degree to which an individual believes that an organization technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system” (Venkatesh et al, 2003, p.453). Facilitating conditions reflect what managers believe as being factors that ease the implementation of CrM campaigns. To achieve gains during a CrM campaign, several studies point out conditions that can facilitate this process, namely, investing in long-term campaigns (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001), setting goals and objectives for the campaign (Adkins, 2000), communicating the objectives internally and externally (Natarajan et al., 2016), and collaborate with a cause whose values are close to those of the company (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). Having said this, we make the following proposition:

P4: Facilitating Conditions positively affect the use of CrM.

### **Proposed Model**

To understand the acceptance of CrM as a marketing strategy by managers, the UTAUT model variables can be considered even though some changes to the original model (Venkatesh et al, 2003) may be required. The model proposed is depicted in the next figure (see Figure 2).



*Figure 2: Proposed model*

Source: Authors' own research

## Methodology

A qualitative exploratory approach was chosen for the current study as it is appropriate when there is not much knowledge about the object of study (Jamshed, 2014). The structure interview instrument (available upon request) is based on the UTAUT model. Two additional questions assessed managers' perceptions about the CrM concept, intended to understand if managers were aware of its true meaning, and did not confuse CrM with philanthropic marketing. The second question relates to the three proposed forms of CrM - transactional, message promotion, and licensing - and to which they associate more risks and benefits.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews with seven Portuguese marketing directors from different sized companies that have implemented CrM Campaigns. Five interviews were conducted by telephone while two were face-to-face between December 2019 and January 2020. Each interview lasted between 26 minutes and 52 minutes. The identity of the interviewed managers, as well as the companies, cannot be disclosed due to participants' requests. Nonetheless, details on the interviewees' age, gender, size of the company, and job position are provided in Table 1.

The structure of the interviews included understanding managers' perceptions about the expected performance of CrM (Questions 2 to 6). Questions 7, 7.1, 7.2, and 8 were used to evaluate the expected effort needed to implement a CrM campaign. Questions 9 and 10 addressed the understanding of social impact, while questions 11 and 12 focus on the issues facilitating the process of implementing a CrM campaign. Finally, to understand the extent to which managers are familiar with the concept of CrM and what type of CrM they consider riskier, questions 1 and 13 were used.

Qualitative studies are considered important for exploratory analysis, despite being considered subjective. To have a more accurate approach to data assessment, the MaxQDA 2020 Pro6 software was used to transcribe the interviews, add codes, analyse keywords, and perceive the number of times those keywords were mentioned.

*Table 1: Sociodemographic and professional information about the interviewees*

Interviewees	Age	Gender	Size of the company	Job Position
1	57	Male	Large	Marketing Manager
2	36	Male	Large	Marketing Manager
3	54	Male	Large	Marketing Manager
4	52	Male	Small and medium	CEO
5	52	Male	Small and medium	CEO
6	31	Male	Large	Marketing Manager
7	47	Female	Micro	CEO

Source: Authors' own research

## Results

### *The Concept*

Although an academic definition of CrM was not expected from any of the managers, it was at least expected that they would distinguish between CrM and philanthropic marketing. Out of the seven interviewees, only five recognize this distinction. Interviewee 1 states that it “is a way for companies to obtain benefits, whether related to image, sales, or others, through the support for social causes”. Some interviewees had difficulty in making this differentiation, as was the case of interviewee 6 that defined the concept as being “based on the social cause, in what involves a marketing tool from all of us to all of us”. Interviewee 5 considers CrM as “a communication tool, which matters today and will become more important in the future”.

### *Performance Expectancy*

All interviewees demonstrated that their greatest motivation to get involved in a CrM was to show that their company was socially aware.

*Table 2: Performance Expectancy*

Variable	Root Construct	Quotes
<b>Performance Expectancy</b>	Increase Brand-Loyalty	7
	Show social concern	7
	Increase Brand Reputation	7
	Increase Notoriety	7
	Gain positioning	7
	Potential tool	7
	Stimulate Differentiation	4
	Increase sales	4
	Financial risk	2
	Decrease sales/customers	1
	Difficult to measure	1

Source: Authors' own research

Interviewee 4 mentioned that “when I thought about implementing a campaign, I thought much more about the social perspective than properly in marketing”. To justify his position, interviewee 3 recognized the importance of coherence that should characterize all actions of companies by adding that ‘what new generations or what the new digital media bring is the acceleration of the demand for coherence’, this is competition at a level that matters, which has real importance and a real impact at the end of the day’. This coherence is directly related

to what goes on internally and externally, referring to all problems of the social environment and the companies' environment. Within the other variants that foster performance expectancy, the results show how this marketing tool can be used as leverage to increase corporate notoriety, positioning, brand loyalty, and reputation. The perspective of increasing the number of sales is recognized by all as one of the objectives or results of a CrM campaign as it boosts sales values, although there were different perspectives. Interviewee 1 said that "this is a direct objective", while interviewee 2 recognized that it "is an indirect result of the campaign effort" and interviewee 7 argued that "if on the one hand there can be an increase in sales, on the other hand, there may be a decrease in sales if the consumer fails to identify and connect with the chosen cause". The financial risk that may come from a CrM campaign was not a factor mentioned by all interviewees. For those who mentioned the financial risk, they didn't share the same perspective of that risk. Interviewee 3 assumed that "one cannot make the mistake of thinking that many financial resources are needed to implement these kinds of initiatives (...) the best ideas are the least costly, especially they leverage workers and consumers' spirit". On another note, interviewee 7 assumed that financial risk is one of the constraints of CrM campaigns either due to the investment necessary to implement it or even when something goes wrong with sales volume level or with customer loss, stating that "one of the biggest risks is associating the brand with an opinion, whether it is social or political. This can cause some customers to stop identifying and relating with the brand, resulting in a loss of these customers and, consequently, in the loss of sales". The difficulty in measuring the actual return of a campaign was only mentioned by one of the interviewees, who pointed out this characteristic as transversal to all marketing activities. "Many of the marketing initiatives have unmeasurable results, in the traditional bottom line of the company, not even the data-mining will bring this possibility", said interviewee 3.

### ***Effort Expectancy***

Regarding the expected effort needed to create a CrM campaign in planning, implementation, and monitoring, only two managers acknowledged that they are not aware of the overall effort necessary to accomplish such a campaign (Table 3).

*Table 3: Variable Effort Expectancy answers*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Root Construct</b>	<b>Number of quotes</b>
<b>Effort Expectancy</b>	Knows what it takes to plan, implement and monitor	5
	Doesn't know what it takes to plan, implement and monitor	2
	Little effort to implement	2
	Much effort to implement	4

Source: Authors' own research

Interviewee 4 said that, despite having utilized it, he was not aware of how it is done “by the book”. Interviewee 5 explained that the communication part is still “not harmonized” and “there is a need to make an effort in this sense”. Interviewee 3 stated that “it can be extraordinarily difficult or easy, depending on the path, culture, and appetite of the company. Each case is a case, and it may be necessary to give it a push, in certain situations”, thus advocating that is something that depends on the type and environment of the company. Nevertheless, in his case too, the implementation effort was reduced because it was a strategy his company had been using for a long time. Interviewee 2 also recognized that after having implemented this tool several times, it became part of the core strategy of the company and, therefore, future implementations were easily made and with little effort. Still, within the implementation effort, other managers recognized that it requires some sacrifice, like interviewee 5 who stated that it is necessary to consider that such a campaign demands a very serious involvement of the whole company, being a commitment for all despite being a large or small company. Despite acknowledging that the implementation effort is reduced, interviewee 2 assumed that it is important to pay attention and monitor everything closely because this is how companies can predict consumer’s reactions. For him, the monitoring was also a way to improve future campaigns. For interviewee 7 there is an effort regarding the choice of the cause: “it is important to choose a cause that makes sense and that is different. I feel that companies that use CrM always choose the same causes”.

### ***Social Influence***

Social influence was one of the variables that proved to have more influence on managers’ decisions. Everyone considers that this type of initiative has a very positive impact on consumers, shareholders, and co-workers (Table 4).

*Table 4: Variable Social Influence answers*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Root Construct</b>	<b>Number of quotes</b>
<b>Social Influence</b>	Shareholders’ positive behaviour	7
	Shareholders’ willing to contribute during and after	7
	Consumers’ positive attitude	7
	Consumers scepticism	4

Source: Authors’ own research

Interviewee 2 stated that “consumers look closely for these initiatives, especially now with many environmental concerns. Consumers turn to these actions”. Interviewee 3 highlighted that it is important to pay attention and that the campaign “has to be in tune with the values and mission of the company and be cross-cutting. It can’t just be a marketing action and it can’t happen if it isn’t reflected in the workers. It is important to induce this premise in everyone”. Interviewee 5 acknowledged that it increases consumer recognition, but argued that “in transactional CrM campaigns, there may be some scepticism because consumers think we are taking advantage of it”. This parallelism of opinion - believing it has a positive

impact but at the same time can create scepticism - is a common opinion among four of the interviewees. As an example, interviewees 4 and 7 recognized that they do not carry out CrM campaigns anymore, because of this factor. Given the positive impact on shareholders and co-workers, interviewee 1 stated that everyone feels good and likes to help. Interviewee 3 affirmed that there was also a very positive effect, and continually investing in this tool was already expected by all. Interviewee 4 expressed that the positive impact of CrM campaigns was something that took some time to determine and conclude. Interviewee 7 argued that the impact generated on shareholders and co-workers “depends on who is at the head of the company, the attitude he/she has, and how the project is looked at”. For interviewee 6, one of the most positive results was that “there is a great involvement of all the company’s areas and many volunteers continue to contribute after the campaign is over. Our partners want to embrace these causes. They voluntarily share information on their social networks. It is curious, because there are partners who are also partners of our competitors”.

### ***Facilitating Conditions***

Only three managers recognized that it is not necessary to dispense financial resources to achieve a CrM campaign (Table 5).

*Table 5: Variable Facilitating Conditions answers*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Root Construct</b>	<b>Number of quotes</b>
<b>Facilitating Conditions</b>	Executable with few financial resources	3
	The need for a high financial investment	4
	Brand-cause fit plays an important rule	7
	Transparency	7
	Long-term campaigns	3

Source: Authors’ own research

As mentioned by interviewee 3, sometimes the best ideas are the cheapest. Interviewees 2 and 5 assumed that when it comes to transactional CrM campaigns, the financial effort is higher and that there is always a risk of ending up with too much product in stock. The selection of the cause is fundamental for all interviewees, mainly because it must relate to the values and identity of the company. Only then, it can be well understood by the community as a valued and honest campaign. Interviewee 6 added that in order to achieve harmony between the brand and the cause, in terms of fit, it is important that companies also “be attentive to what it is happening in their community. It is important to help everyone, but we should identify which causes are closer to problems that can affect our business”. In the case of interviewee 4, representing a company in the field of health care, the choice of the cause is one of the most relevant details, “because we work in a sensitive field and we have to be very careful with what or whom we associate ourselves”. It is essential for all managers that the campaign is fully transparent. On this topic, interviewees 2, 3, 5, and 6 agreed that a

communication effort is always made regarding this topic of transparency and that it plays a crucial role in future campaigns. Interviewee 5 also argued that transparency can already be achieved through communication. He also stated that younger consumers are more prone to be receptive to these communications because they are part of a generation that is more sensitive to this type of initiative. Having longer campaigns helps facilitate the process of implementing CrM campaigns. Interviewee 2 believes that “companies should create a constant line where people review and have long-term communicator elements. If it is short-term, it does not work”. Regarding this aspect, the same manager stated that a strategy much used is the adoption or investment in a mascot, which can act as a long-term communicator element. Interviewees 2, 3, and 5 recognized that their consumers, shareholders, and co-workers are waiting for their companies to frequently implement these types of campaigns, which brings credibility. The continuity of long-term campaign implementation is a work still in progress for interviewee 7, who assumed that the main intention is to create a standard of social behaviours and initiatives because only that “can leave a true mark on society”. Also, interviewee 4 assumed that there wasn’t much continuity of the campaigns he has made but believed that if there would be a more continuous approach, it would be easier to get more recognition from consumers, shareholders, and co-workers.

### ***Types of CrM campaigns***

When asked about the three types of CrM campaigns, all managers recognized that the one with the highest risks was the transactional campaign (Table 6).

*Table 6: Types of CrM campaign responses*

	<b>Transactional</b>	<b>Message Promotion</b>	<b>Licensing</b>
Riskier	7		1
Less risky		7	6

Source: Authors’ own research

Interviewee 5 assumed that, even though transactional is the most used one in his company, it is also the one that needs to be better planned and thought through. Firstly because of the tendency “of customers thinking that we are taking advantage of the situation” and secondly because it is more profitable for the company if the chosen cause is “a famous one”. These two ideas end-up clashing, hence the planning and careful preparation. Interviewee 2 argued that the highest risk associated with the transactional CrM is related to financial issues, namely the investment that is made either in communication or stock preparation issues. For the interviewee 4, it is out of the question to use transactional CrM, as he is sceptical. The licensing type of CrM was considered by interviewee 7 as the riskiest as “licensing can be riskier thanks to brand [image] association to a specific cause”. The message promotion type of CrM was unanimously regarded as the least risky as well as the easiest to put into practice. In the words of the interviewee 4, “it is, perhaps, the least risky, maybe because of the little effort and commitment it requires”.

## Discussion

Cause-Related Marketing is undoubtedly a marketing tool that managers consider in their companies. As reviewed in the literature, CrM is one of the tools within social marketing most taken into account by managers over the past few decades (Stroup et al., 1987). The motivations vary, as well as the perception of the associated risk. Even though all managers had already used this strategy, it can also be concluded that for some of the interviewees, there is a misinterpretation between CrM and philanthropic marketing strategy. This may be responsible for the weakness of the tool and not its poor results. Managers are not fully aware of everything that involves this tool and might not know how to take advantage of it. In the UTAUT model, performance expectancy and social influence were the most positively impacted variables on acceptance and use of CrM.

Several different motivations lead managers to implement a CrM strategy. However, this study concludes that what motivates managers to use CrM is the social issue, as mentioned by Varadarajan & Menon (1988). It was noted by the interviewee 3 that being a socially responsible company means being coherent with what is happening in society. There is a pattern presented by larger companies where social corporatism is already part of the core activities. Therefore, the recognized risks are lower and there is more confidence throughout the implementation process. Differently, smaller and micro enterprises show more reluctance on the use of this tool due to the difficulty in perceiving the impact on the return or results to the company and the obstacles in implementation and planning.

Increased reputation, positioning, differentiation, notoriety, brand-loyalty were benefits mentioned by all managers interviewed. There is, therefore, the parallelism with what is mentioned by several authors as motivations for the usage of this tool (Adkins 2000; Lafferty, 2001; Ross, Patterson & Stutts, 1992; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). As mentioned by Kotler & Lee (2005), the increase in sales has proven to be one of the most direct objectives of the CrM. However, this study concludes that this may not be the initial motivation, even if a CrM campaign effectively increases sales volume, as defended by Adkins (2000).

The financial risk can also be associated with this tool (Adkins, 2000; Shell & Adams, 1989 et Gupta & Pirsch, 2006). In fact, interviewees 4, 6, and 7 believed that it is only possible to carry out a CrM campaign with heavy capital investment. But interviewees 1, 3, and 5 considered that substantial financial investment for carrying out a campaign was not necessary.

All marketing strategies are difficult to be monitored, both in the sense of performance and return. Still, as advocated in the LR, CrM is considered as one as the easiest to measures within the social marketing types (Silva & Martins, 2017). Only one of the managers mentioned the measurement difficulties as something to be expected from a CrM campaign. For Adkins (2000), knowing how to measure and evaluate a campaign is key because only then one can be fully aware of the benefits and make the necessary improvements. Probably if the monitoring, measurement, and evaluation were not seen as an obstacle for managers, the CrM would be more used, as direct benefits would be more perceptive and attractive.

In terms of the expected effort to conduct a campaign, it is noticed that in companies where CrM has been practiced for longer, the process of planning, implementation, and monitoring is not considered as obstacle. The choice of a social cause is pointed out as crucial by all managers, who believe it is essential to have a causal association that relates and connects with the values of the company. This also plays the role of an important factor, as it

is a way for consumers to identify themselves with the cause and thus be more receptive to the campaign.

Communication and transparency is a challenge for managers, even though they are aware of how important this practice is. Notably, everyone agrees that it is important for consumers to be aware from start to finish of the entire campaign process. Adkins (2000) shows the importance of communicating a campaign in all its phases. The communication efforts are smaller when the campaign is longer. It is said that long-term campaigns are more beneficial in the long run because the consumer is already waiting for this behaviour from the company, becoming more receptive. Besides, the company is more prepared to implement a campaign due to past occurrences. Choosing communication channels and keeping in mind the message and the targeted audience proves to be challenging for some of the interviewees. They assumed that the more diverse the target of the company is, the harder it is. One of the interviewees demonstrated that communication was one of the advantages he recognized with this strategy, as the company showed the consumers its social consciousness.

There are multiple literature references about consumer response content clarifying that there may be two types of response, those who value and those who are sceptical. Managers are aware of the positive impact on consumers. However, a sceptic attitude remains, especially in transactional campaigns. Scepticism may be lower when the knowledge from the consumer's side increases. This knowledge is acquired through communication and monitoring efforts that companies should bet on and commit to achieving better results.

The positive reaction of shareholders and co-workers was proven in this study, although it has not been tested whether the use of CrM affects employee turnover as mentioned in the LR. However, CrM motivates the entire company, which in the opinion of some managers is fundamental. Only then it can be a successful campaign.

The transactional CrM is considered the riskiest and the type of campaign least practiced, explained by the scepticism of consumers. Managers believe that when there is money involved, the levels of disbelief of consumers increase. But on the other hand, managers also believe that this would not preclude the making of CrM campaigns like interviewee 3 said, as "it does not take much money to make a good Campaign of CrM".

## Findings

Cause-Related Marketing is a strategy used by managers. In larger companies, it is more recurrent and is already part of its core which relies on social causes to extend its value. Being and showing that it is a socially responsible company is the main motivation that managers indicate when they think about implementing a CrM campaign. When it comes to social issues, companies want to improve their image.

One of the most relevant conclusions of this study is related to how the CrM concept is understood and its misinterpretation with philanthropic marketing. There is no clear distinction for some of the interviewees and this factor may influence the perception that managers have of CrM, which can inhibit acknowledgment of this tool.

The results that can come from a CrM campaign in terms of performance expectancy have a great impact on the manager's decision. The attitude that comes from the social sphere is also one of the reasons that facilitate acceptance by consumers, co-workers, and shareholders. The greatest uncertainties associated with this tool relate to planning,

implementation, and monitor efforts. It is implicit to all managers the importance of being transparent and communicative. Although, it is also one of the highest challenges mentioned. This difficulty may be associated with the lack of objectivity in planning and monitoring the entire campaign. The greater the effort needed to plan, implement, measure, and monitor a campaign, the greater the difficulty in communicating it.

There is widespread knowledge of potential benefits and risks. There is also the reference that some of the constructs presented in the literature, such as market entry, trade merchandising, switch brands as performance expectancy, and reduction in employee turnover as a social influence, were not mentioned by any of the managers as motivations or constraints to the application of CrM. Campaigns involving direct money transactions, known as transactional marketing, are avoided in most cases to avoid being associated with consumers' scepticism.

Impressively one of the outcomes that this study concluded is related to the size of the company versus acceptance and use of CrM. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises recognize this strategy as positive and beneficial, even if they show more constraints in their use. The size of the company may affect the motivation to go through with a CrM campaign, but small companies show less interest in implementing this tool.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

The UTAUT model proved to be effective in determining the acceptance and use of CrM by managers. Through the application of the model, it was possible to frame the contents of the data collected under each of the constructs. Showing that performance expectancy and social influence have a positive impact on the use of CrM, effort expectancy reduces the intention to use. Managers also recognize the facilitation conditions as a motivation to use CrM. Through the performance expectancy, it was possible to verify the benefits and risks. Regarding the expected benefits described in the literature, some were not mentioned by managers. namely market entry, trade merchandising, reduction in employee turnover and switching brands. This can be justified either by managers not being aware of these benefits or because these are not the objectives they consider in their campaigns.

The risks mentioned are mostly related to scepticism and cynicism from consumers and related to reputational issues. Transactional CrM campaigns are the riskiest from the perspective of managers because they involve direct monetary transactions and therefore call for consumer scepticism. In whatever type of CrM campaign, managers corroborate the idea that it is crucial that a cause associated with the company's values exists, in order to have greater congruence. The interviewees also mention the importance of transposing the entire intention of a CrM campaign to other cross-cutting activities of the company to incorporate social corporatism into the core of the company, with the aim of a social activity being well received by consumers, co-workers, and shareholders.

## ***Managerial contributions***

If the knowledge about this tool were superior, managers would know better how to differentiate the altruistic behaviours between philanthropic marketing and CrM. There are two reasons why companies should focus on increasing their knowledge about marketing strategies and especially about CrM. The first reason relates to the growing competitive environment of these topics. Companies are looking to be socially responsible so they should educate themselves by gaining knowledge about it to weaken risks and take advantage of the

benefits. The second reason relates to the two generations, Generation X and Millennials, companies will face very shortly, which will have a buying behaviour determined by environmental and social concerns. They are the new consumers and they expect companies to be characterized by socially responsible behaviour. There is also the scenario of companies only doing CrM because others do to compete directly with them. These behaviours are not well accepted by consumers because they easily recognize the genuineness of campaigns. On the other hand, there has to be a society effort to carry out CrM campaigns. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, it is also time for causes to look for collaboration and to go knocking on the doors of companies.

CrM is full of promising results, and managers don't know how to take full advantage of this. As already mentioned, there will be a need to increase knowledge, but the question remains on how to do it. Initially, it could be possibly done through investment in scientific knowledge or by a direct approach to customers to reduce scepticism. At a later stage, the increase in knowledge should be used to better plan, implement, and monitor the entire campaign.

Communication plays a crucial role in the success of this tool. CrM campaigns require cohesive and transparent communication. It is through communication that the objectives are communicated internally and externally. It is through communication that efforts are made to mitigate consumer scepticism and consequently attract new supporters to future causes. Companies doing long-term CrM will realize at a certain point that these campaigns are easier to communicate and require less effort and investment to assure their longevity even if initially it looked like a lot of effort. CrM is perhaps more a reflection of investment in communication and not a campaign that has to pay for itself.

## **Limitations and Further Research**

Since this is an exploratory study, the investigation may lack external validity. The findings lack the ability to generalize to a larger extent. Data collection through interviews further enhances the subjectivity of the study for two reasons. The first one relates to the nature of content because data gathered opinions and personal views. The second reason is associated with the reduced number of interviewees. Another limitation is inherent to the activity of the companies and their sizes which could have influenced the results. Future research could focus on the difference between CrM and philanthropic marketing in order to understand which is more attractive and why. It would also be interesting to explore under which conditions a campaign is planned, implemented, and evaluated in companies of differing sizes. Making a comparative study between countries is also a possible suggestion for further research.

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