

# **How does brand-cause fit influence the success of CrM campaigns?**

Inês Padilha Campelos, Susana Costa e Silva and Joana César Machado

## **Abstract**

Investment in Cause-Related Marketing (CrM) is growing, as consumers are becoming more socially concerned and demanding in terms of corporate socially responsible practices. Furthermore, the use of CrM can result in several benefits for the company, the cause supported and consumers. Since brand-cause fit is a key determinant of the success of CrM, this study will analyse the underlying factors that affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumer response to CrM. A qualitative research strategy was employed, using a case study methodology with a sample of five CrM campaigns. Findings suggest that the impact of brand-cause fit on purchase intention is often affected by factors, such as consumer-cause involvement and corporate image, which decrease the effect of consumers' evaluations of fit. A favourable corporate image, positive track record of CrM initiatives, high consumer-cause engagement and cause relevance increase consumer trust in the company/brand and affect the success of CrM.

**Keywords:** Cause-Related Marketing; brand-cause fit; corporate image; consumer-cause involvement; consumer response

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly interested in corporate issues that may affect them and society in general (Devinney, 2009; Margolis & Walsh, 2003), and they are pressuring brands to embrace genuinely sustainable social practices (Iglesias, Markovic, Bagherzadeh & Singh, 2018). Furthermore, the increasing use of social media has contributed to the development of a more transparent environment, and made consumers more aware of the effects of companies' marketing activities on the environment or on society as a whole (Markovic, Iglesias, Singh & Sierra, 2018). Research suggests that consumers value

companies' social development initiatives because they believe that every company action and every purchase they make has implications for the wider society (Mohr et al., 2001), and they try to reward or punish brands based on their perceptions of how environmentally and socially responsible they are (Fereira & Ribeiro, 2017; Gupta, 2015; Lerro, et al., 2018). Since consumers are more aware of companies' behaviours and place an increasing value on social sustainability (Choi et al., 2016), it is advisable for companies to communicate clearly their efforts to be more socially responsible. One such way is through a cause-related marketing (CrM) strategy. CrM involves the funding of charities that support health, environmental protection or other relevant causes linked to sustainability, by donating part of the business profit (Grolleau et al., 2016). Hence, when consumers purchase a "cause-related" product, they trigger a donation by the company to an environmental or socio-economic cause (Grolleau et al., 2016). This allows consumers to feel better about their purchase decisions and about themselves (Laroche, 2017). According to the Cone Communications CSR Study (Komornicki & Komornicki, 2017), when choosing between two brands of equal quality and price, 88% of consumers are likely to switch to a cause-related brand.

CrM involves a collaborative relationship or alliance between the corporate (or product) brand and the cause supported. When two brands are presented jointly, or in the context of one another, it is likely to elicit evaluations of both brands (Broziarczyk & Alba, 1994). If the consistency between the images of the two partners in the alliance is weak, consumers might question why the brand and the cause are associated, and this can trigger undesirable judgments (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). When a company is searching for a cause to support, fit between the corporate (or product) brand and the cause is crucial, as it might influence consumers' evaluation of the CrM campaign and their intention to purchase the cause-related product (Zasuwa, 2017). Despite the relevance of brand-cause fit in the evaluation of CrM campaigns, there is a paucity of studies assessing the influence of brand-cause fit on consumer responses

to CrM (Kim, Cheong & Lim, 2015). In this study, we intend to contribute to the fulfilment of this research gap, by analysing how brand-cause fit affects the evaluation of CrM campaigns, and thus, their success. According to the findings of Zeynali & Golkar (2013), which support the premise that a “key feature of CrM is that the firm’s contribution is linked to consumers’ engagement in revenue-producing transactions with the firm” (p.3225), and Barone et al., (2007), who suggest that consumer cause involvement moderates consumer affinity towards a specific cause and, thus, influences his/her willingness to engage in cause-supporting activities, it is also relevant to analyse how consumer-cause involvement and corporate brand image affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumers’ purchase intention in a CrM campaign.

In order to accomplish these goals, a qualitative study will be developed using a case study strategy with a sample of CrM campaigns that fulfil the following criteria: the campaigns should have been conducted in Portugal in the last ten years; brand-cause fit should range between a low and high level; and the campaigns should have been supported by a well-known brand. Based on these criteria, we have selected a Portuguese multinational, SONAE, and studied in detail multiple CrM campaigns conducted by this company through different brands belonging to its portfolio — namely, Worten, Zippy and Continente.

Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the brand managers responsible for the CrM campaigns chosen. The interviews will allow researchers to identify the campaigns’ objectives and the motives behind the selection of the causes supported, but also to ascertain all the relevant distinctive characteristics of the five campaigns studied, and to obtain essential data regarding the outcomes in terms of social sustainability of the different campaigns.

## **2. Literature Review and Research Model**

### **2.1. CrM success and effectiveness**

CrM involves the business's commitment towards a cause, as well as the cause's commitment towards the business (Kotler & Lee, 2005). This mutual commitment is expected to generate bilateral benefits for the parties involved (Adkins, 2003) and can result in consumer engagement with the brand and the product traded (Silva & Martins, 2017). This research focuses on CrM initiatives with transactional characteristics, meaning that the company's donations to a social cause are contingent upon consumers' participation in the campaign. This approach supports Varadarajan & Menon's (1988) CrM definition and highlights that a distinctive feature of CrM is the involvement of the consumer through revenue-producing transactions and donations to the cause. Within the scope of transactional CrM, different types of campaigns can be implemented, namely: purchase-triggering donation, where the company commits to donating a portion of the profits resulting from the sale of a product or service by donating a specified amount for each product sold; buy-one-give-one, where the company matches consumers' contributions to a specific cause for each unit sold, and checkout charity, in which the company encourages consumers to make a donation at the moment of payment (Kotler and Lee, 2005; Stole, 2006; Kinard & Pardo, 2017).

The success of a CrM campaign may depend on consumers' perceptions of fit between the corporate (or product) brand and the cause supported, as brand-cause can impact consumers' evaluation of the CrM campaign and their intention to purchase the cause-related product (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Zasuwa, 2017). Fit can be defined as the global and abstract evaluation that consumers make regarding the connections between both brands' images (Kim and John, 2008); it may be based on the sharing of relevant associations, or on the "complementarities

between the brand-unique associations that consumers have with both brands” (Bouten et al., 2011, p. 457). Brand-cause fit “refers to the extent to which the alliance between the company and the cause is logical and makes sense” (Hassan & Abouaish, 2018, p. 245) or “the overall perceived relatedness of the brand and the cause with multiple cognitive bases” (Nan & Heo, 2007, p.65). According to Trimble & Holmes (2013), a high brand-cause fit is present when a close relationship between the company and the cause is established.

Some studies suggest that companies should strive to support causes that reflect a high degree of brand-cause fit (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Zasuwa, 2017). However, other studies indicate that companies can embrace causes that have a lesser degree of brand-cause fit (Barone, Norman & Miyazaki, 2007). Lafferty (2007), for example, found that consumers’ evaluation of brand-cause fit does not always influence their intention to purchase the product promoted, highlighting that consumers’ relationship with the cause might affect their willingness to contribute to the CrM campaign more than their evaluations of fit. In the same way, Nan & Heo (2007) added that brand-cause fit does not significantly influence the effectiveness of CrM messages, since campaigns involving cause-supporting initiatives generate more positive responses towards the company than campaigns that do not support causes, and this positive effect is not contingent on brand-cause evaluations. On the other hand, Pracejus & Olsen (2004) found that brand-cause fit favourably influences consumer response CrM campaigns, and, in particular, significantly improves consumer purchase intention. Lans, Bergh & Dieleman (2014) also found that a high brand-cause fit enhances the consumer’s attitude towards the company or the brand and positively affects the image of the company. These different perspectives regarding the relevance of brand-cause fit to CrM campaigns suggest that there is a lack of consensus among researchers, with respect to the impact of brand-cause fit on consumer responses to CrM.

Studies suggest that a higher level of consumer-cause involvement can lead to more positive consumer responses to CrM initiatives. Indeed, consumer-cause involvement might affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumers' purchase intention in a CrM campaign (Barone et al., 2007; Zeynali & Golkar, 2013; Bui, 2017). The concept of consumer-cause involvement was introduced by Grau & Folse (2007) and is defined as "the degree to which consumers find the cause to be personally relevant to them" (p. 20). Previous research suggests that the likelihood of consumers purchasing a brand that supports causes that have a direct influence on their community is higher than the likelihood of them purchasing a brand that supports causes that do not directly affect their community (Zeynali & Golkar, 2013; Bui, 2017).

As CrM is a marketing tool, CrM success and effectiveness should be judged according to the degree of achievement of the marketing objectives of the campaign (Christofi, Leonidou, Vrontis, Kitchen & Papasolomou, 2015). Varadarajan & Menon (1998) suggested that companies should use three different types of metrics to evaluate CrM success, namely: financial measures, consumer measures and image measures. Financial measures include sales volume, market share, purchase quantity and frequency and average purchase size; consumer measures encompass brand switching, brand loyalty and repeat purchase and image measures, such as corporate image, brand image and media coverage. Moreover, Silva & Martins (2017) stated that "CrM does not suffer from the problem normally associated with other corporate social marketing campaigns in which the impact on sales is difficult to measure" (p.480); the financial impact is easier to measure, since in transactional CrM campaigns, the consumer is required to purchase a specific product which is associated with the campaigns.

## ***2.2 Research model and research questions***

The main objective of this research is to evaluate how brand-cause fit influences the success of a CrM campaign. Moreover, we aim to understand how consumer-cause involvement and

corporate brand image affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumers' purchase intention in a CrM campaign, and, consequently, CrM success. In order to evaluate the success of a CrM campaign, we need to confirm whether the company was able to achieve the objectives defined for the campaign (Christofi et al., 2015).

Considering the findings of prior studies, the level of fit between the corporate (or product) brand and the supported cause should favourably influence consumers' willingness to participate in the CrM campaigns. Indeed, authors such as Gwinner & Bennett (2008), Alav & Zeynali (2013) and Pracejus & Olsen (2004) concluded that a high brand-cause fit will generate more favourable attitudes towards the campaign and the brand that conducts the campaign, and this should also increase the success of the CrM campaign. However, as previously explained, there is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the impact of brand-cause fit on CrM's success. Therefore, we formulate the following research question:

*Q1: Will brand-cause fit have a positive impact on the success of a CrM campaign?*

Regarding the evaluation of the success of CrM initiatives, organisations tend to follow different criteria (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). When conducting an analysis of how successful a CrM campaign has been, we should consider which initial objectives were set by the company when it decided to engage in the campaign. Silva & Martins (2017) note that, in transactional CrM campaigns, the financial impacts are easier to measure, since the consumer is required to purchase a specific product which is associated with the campaign. In the scope of our research, purchase intention is understood as consumers' intention to choose and purchase a product associated with a specific CrM campaign (Bui, 2017). In this study, we consider that a positive purchase intention is an appropriate measure of the success of CrM campaigns. Moreover, as previously highlighted, consumers' intention to purchase the cause-related product might be positively affected by their brand-cause fit perceptions (Zasuwa, 2017). Hence, we formulate the following research questions:

*Q2: Will brand-cause fit have a positive effect on consumers' intention to purchase the product associated with the CrM campaign?*

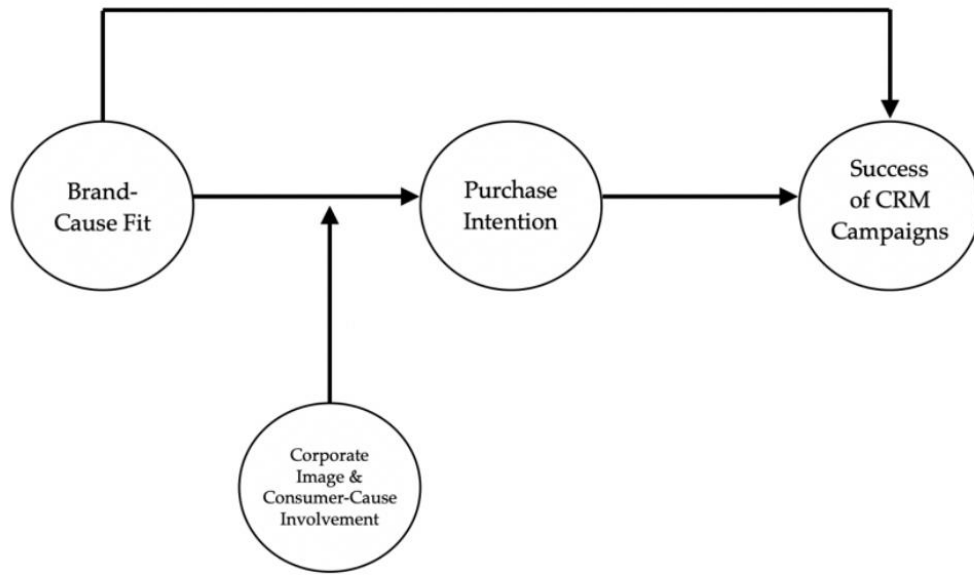
*Q3: Will purchase intention have a positive effect on the success of the CrM campaign?*

Zasuwa (2017) suggested that corporate/brand image and reputation are strong moderators of the influence of a consumer's evaluation of brand-cause fit on their purchase intention of the product associated with the CrM campaign. The author found that a negative corporate image weakens the positive effect of brand-cause on consumer purchase intention. Furthermore, Barone et al. (2007) concluded that consumer-cause involvement — which is defined as a consumer's affinity with a specific cause — acts as a moderator in the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumer response to CrM initiatives. Therefore, taking into consideration the findings of prior studies, we assume that a positive evaluation of the corporate brand and a strong consumer-cause involvement will favourably affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumers' purchase intention during the CrM campaign. Indeed, a favourable corporate brand image should reduce consumer scepticism, leading to more confidence in the company and in the campaign. Moreover, when consumers find the cause to have personal relevance, their likelihood of purchasing a brand that supports that cause will tend to be higher (Zeynali & Golkar, 2013; Bui, 2017). Ultimately, a favourable corporate brand image and strong consumer-cause involvement should also positively affect the campaign's success, since consumers' willingness to engage in commercial trades in the form of CrM campaigns will be higher. Thus, we will try to answer the following research question:

*Q4: Will corporate image and consumer-cause involvement moderate the influence of brand-cause fit on consumers' purchase intention of the product associated with the CrM campaign?*

This research will be guided by the research model presented in Figure 1.





*Figure 1 - Research Model and Research Questions*

The research model assumes that, even though brand-cause fit plays an important role in the success of CrM campaigns, the influence of brand-cause fit is moderated by corporate/brand image and consumer-cause involvement. Thus, these moderating factors will be studied to understand how they affect the influence of consumer evaluations of brand-cause fit. Indeed, prior studies underline that these variables should be also considered when analysing the impact of brand-cause fit on consumers' purchase intention and on their response to CrM campaigns (Guerreiro, et al., 2015; Steffen & Günther, 2013; Melero & Montaner, 2016).

### **3. Research Design**

In order to investigate the research problem, we have chosen a descriptive and qualitative study, based on a case study methodology — specifically, a multiple case study design. By following a multiple case study design, we will be able to replicate findings across cases. We will focus on a reduced number of CrM campaigns and try to establish comparisons between

the cases studied, identifying the similarities and differences between them. The case study will allow us to draw conclusions about CrM campaigns that have actually been implemented.

To conduct our analysis, we gathered information using different data collection procedures, including semi-structured in-depth interviews with brand managers involved in the CrM campaigns studied, and the analysis of documents relating to these campaigns. The interviews consisted of three groups of questions, containing both closed and open questions.

In the first section, respondents were asked to describe the campaign and identify the main criteria used to select the social cause supported. These questions should allow us to: understand the motivations behind the choice of cause; identify the main objectives of the CrM campaign; characterise the campaign's target consumers; identify the alignment between the cause and the consumer and the cause and the brand; identify the duration of the campaign and characterise the type of donation made. The second group of questions relate mainly to the marketing mix of the campaign. This group of questions will allow us to identify similarities and differences between the CrM campaigns studied, and to analyse the relevance of these structural elements in the success of the CrM campaigns. The third group of questions is focused mainly on the campaign's performance. The answers to this section provide managers' opinions regarding the campaigns' outcomes in terms of the impact of the campaign on consumers' purchase intention, on brand image and brand market share.

As secondary data, we used the different communication instruments used to support the CrM campaigns and the company financial reports. These financial reports were developed by the company during the time frame in which the CrM campaigns were implemented. The secondary data provided us with both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing a deeper knowledge of the impact that the CrM campaigns had on the company's performance. They are essential to support managers' answers regarding the success of the campaigns studied.

In our case study, the sample analysis will consist of a range of five CrM campaigns that fulfil the following criteria: the campaigns have been conducted in Portugal in the last ten years, they involve a brand-cause fit that ranges between a low and high brand-cause fit, they have relevant social sustainability impacts and have been supported by a well-known organisation. We have chosen campaigns that were conducted in Portugal, since our objective is to generate inferences concerning the Portuguese market, allowing marketers to better understand Portuguese consumers' motivations to engage in CrM campaigns and to adapt their CrM strategies accordingly.

In this case study we have chosen to analyse CrM campaigns developed by brands belonging to SONAE. SONAE is a multinational corporation that manages a wide portfolio of companies in retail, financial services, technology, shopping centres and telecommunications (including the retail brands Continente, Zippy, Wells, Mo, Note and Worten), operating in 90 countries. It was founded in 1959 to operate in the wood agglomerate sector. The group is one of the 20 firms listed on the Euronext PSI-20, in Lisbon. In the first semester of 2018, the company registered profits of almost 100 million euros, a value that is 34.5% larger than for the first semester of 2017. At the time of our study, it was the largest employer in Portugal, with 50,000 employees. Besides its reputation as the largest employer, SONAE is also known for its presence in a wide range of sectors and for the close relationship it has tried to establish with its customers.

The choice of SONAE and its brands — Worten, Zippy and Continente — to conduct the present case study was based on several factors. SONAE is a company with a strong presence in the national market and the brands chosen are easily recognised by consumers. Additionally, SONAE consistently invests in sustainability initiatives, and sustainability is strongly rooted in its way of operating in the market. Indeed, since 1995, the company has consistently engaged in numerous activities linked to sustainable development and community support. Within its

CSR policy the multinational sets several scopes to be addressed in the areas of climate change, nature and biodiversity, plastics, inequalities and inclusive development and community support. As CrM is part of the CSR SONAE policy, the company has undertaken several actions through the years that support its desire to contribute to the community — not only through CrM campaigns, which are the scope of our study, but also through the sponsoring of numerous institutions and projects and volunteering actions.

The choice of the three brands — Worten, Zippy and Continente — was influenced by online information about the brands' performance that was available when this exploratory research was conducted. Moreover, these three brands were chosen because they are associated with several CrM activities in the last ten years and follow different types of CrM strategies. It is important to underline that for this study we decided to analyse only transactional CrM campaigns.

In order to conduct the interviews, we contacted the brand managers of the brands studied. The following table identifies each respondent, the department he/she belongs to and the campaigns involved.

|                         | Respondents' characterisation   |                              |                          |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                         | Name  |                              |                          |
|                         | Dra. Alexandra Balão  | Dra. Regina Guerner          | Dra. Andreia Sousa       |
|                         | SONAE   | SONAE                        | SONAE                    |
|                         | Worten  | Zippy                        | Continente               |
|                         | Marketing   | Marketing                    | Marketing                |
| Campaign Identification | Worten & CVP (2012)<br>Worten & Terra dos Sonhos (2014);<br>Worten & CVP (2017) | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018) | Missão Continente (2018) |

*Table 1- Respondents' Characterisation*

#### **4. Case Studies**

We will begin our analysis by briefly describing the brands chosen, namely the core business of the brand and the target market, followed by a description of the CrM campaign that will be analysed.

##### ***Zippy***

Zippy is a Portuguese brand that has been operating in the retail area since 2004. The brand has a wide range of clothing and accessories, childcare products, furniture and toys, with a focus on the children's market (babies and children). In line with SONAE's desire for expansion, the brand is present in 20 countries, and has more than 100 stores.

The campaign chosen for analysis — “Zippy and Make-a-Wish Foundation Gloves” — was developed by Zippy in association with the “Make-a-Wish” Foundation during 2018/2019. The purpose of the campaign was to support an institution whose mission it is to help children accomplish their dreams. The similarity between the mission of the cause and Zippy’s mission was the main reason for the development of this campaign, which led to the sale of a pair of "solidarity" gloves. This pair of gloves accommodated two hands simultaneously, ideally an adult’s and a child’s hand, allowing them to “walk together, hand in hand, while protecting themselves from the cold”. The selling price of the pair of gloves was 9.99€, and for each pair sold the brand donated 1€ to the “Make-a-Wish” cause. The campaign took place between December 2018 and February 2019, covering the entire national territory.

##### ***Worten***

Worten runs a chain of retail stores in the areas of home appliances, consumer electronics and entertainment. The brand has been operating in the domestic market since 1996 and offers a wide range of products and brands. Following the group's objectives, the brand pursued an expansion strategy, setting up about 180 stores in the national market. The brand has embraced

an *omnichannel* strategy. Since 2016 it has been chosen as a "Trusted Brand" ("*Marca de Confiança*") by Portuguese consumers.

Worten has consistently developed several CrM campaigns throughout the years; thus, we decided to choose three of the campaigns conducted by the brand. The first campaign chosen is a campaign named "*Dê a mão por um Portugal + Feliz*" (or "Lend a Hand for a Happier Portugal"), which was developed in the years 2012/2013 in partnership with the Portuguese Red Cross. The brand has committed itself to supporting the project "*Portugal + Feliz*" ("Happier Portugal"), a programme that has been developed since 2009 as a response to the negative social consequences of the global financial and economic crisis. This programme aimed to support poor families and help them fight poverty and social exclusion. The campaign included the sale of "Christmas Wraps" at a price of 1€. For each product sold, Worten donated 0,80€ to the project it was supporting. In addition to the sales of the product in Worten stores, the brand developed activities on its Facebook page and created a telephone line to support the campaign. Both initiatives aimed to collect donations to the cause. The campaign took place between the 16th of November, 2012 and the 6th of January, 2013, covering the entire national territory from north to south.

The second campaign by Worten was developed in partnership with the institution "*Terra dos Sonhos*" ("Land of Dreams"). The goal of this campaign was to fulfil the dreams of seriously ill children, through the "*Código DáVinte*" (or "Code Give20") project. The brand committed to donating to the institution the value raised during the campaign period, plus an additional 20% of the total amount raised. The year 2013 marked the launch of "*Código DáVinte*". In this project, the decision to contribute to the campaign was not associated with the purchase of any specific product, but rather with the "act of donation". The consumer could choose, at the time of payment, how much to donate to the supported cause, as long as it was

a multiple of 0,20€ (minimum donation value). The campaign took place between the 15th of November 2013 and the 6th of January 2014, covering the entire national territory.

The third and last campaign was developed by Worten in partnership with the Portuguese Red Cross in 2017, with the aim of responding to the severe consequences of the fires that caused a great deal of destruction throughout the country. The objective was to raise as much money as possible, to be distributed to families to help rebuild homes and minimise the damage resulting from the fires. Once again, this CrM campaign was associated with the “*Código DaVinte*” project. The donation format was the same as that adopted in 2014: the decision to contribute to the campaign was associated with the "act of donation", and the consumer decided how much to donate to the supported cause, as long as it was a multiple of 0,20€ (minimum donation value). The campaign took place between the 16th of November 2017 and the 6th of January 2018, covering the entire national territory.

### ***Continente***

Continente is a chain of hypermarkets, which has operated in the Portuguese market since 1985, and aims to fulfil a wide range of consumer needs. The brand is considered a benchmark in terms of retail in Portugal, and in polls of Portuguese consumers it has been voted a “Trusted Brand” (“*Marca de Confiança*”) 11 times. Continente’s marketing strategy is marked by several social initiatives with a strong impact in terms of sustainability and innovation.

In this case study, we decided to focus on the CrM initiative, “*Missão Continente*” (“*Continente Mission*”). This campaign was developed in 2018 with the goal of supporting projects based around the theme of food — namely healthy food, food waste and social inclusion. The campaign consisted of the sale of “solidarity mugs” with a selling price of 3€. For each product (mug) sold, *Missão Continente* committed to donating 1€ to the social institutions that it was supporting.

## 5. Data Analysis

Having described the brands and the campaigns selected for this study, we will next present the analysis of the data gathered through the interviews (primary data), and of the information gathered as secondary data, which will be essential to help us answer the research questions.

In the interviews, we asked respondents whether the product being promoted was developed specifically for the campaign, or if it was already part of the brand's portfolio (see Table 2). Additionally, in the cases where the brand developed a specific product for the CrM campaign, we asked respondents to identify the main motives and benefits of this approach. One of the main aims of these questions was to understand whether the CrM campaigns were attached to products of a hedonic nature, as suggested in the literature (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998; Silva & Martins, 2017).

|  | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)  | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018)   | Missão Continente (2018)  |
|--|-------------|--|--|---|
| Product  | f)          | Gift box   | Pair of Gloves   | Mug   |
| Motives for developing a specific product for the campaign | e1)         | <i>"The intention was to increase customer support, by promoting a product, Gift box", allied to the holiday season, where the product tends to be useful"</i> | <i>"To increase the perception of the emotional attributes that the product incorporates, as well as benefit from the consumption season (Christmas) which is focused on articles with a symbolic and emotional character"</i> | <i>"The creation of a specific product, it's important for the product to stand out and people associate it specifically with the campaign"</i> |

Table 2- Product Promoted

This data allowed us to conclude that, in the case of Worten in 2012, Zippy in 2018 and Missão Continente in 2018, the CrM campaigns were associated with specific offerings which were deliberately developed for these initiatives. Regarding Worten's 2014 and 2017 campaigns, the brand decided not to create a product, as the "product" was represented by a "barcode". In terms of product classification, the products promoted in the three campaigns fit



in the utilitarian category, as these are products related to satisfying functional needs. However, prior studies suggest that CrM campaigns tend to be more successful when the product promoted is of a hedonic nature (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998; Silva & Martins, 2017). Since none of the campaigns analysed was attached to hedonic products, further research is required to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the different type of products promoted in CrM campaigns.

In the interviews, we asked brand managers about the campaign's donation structure, as this might also affect the success of CrM (see Table 3). Regarding the campaigns of Worten in 2012, Zippy in 2018 and Missão Continente in 2018, the company donation to the cause occurred when the product associated with the campaign was purchased by the consumer. Regarding Worten's 2014 and 2017 campaigns, the donation to the cause was not contingent upon the purchasing of a product.

|                    | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)       | Worten & "Terra dos Sonhos" (2014)                         | Worten & CVP (2017)  | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018) | Missão Continente (2018)  |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Type of Donation   | e)          | Fixed Donation            | Variable Donation  | Variable Donation  | Fixed Donation               | Fixed Donation            |
| Donation Structure | Sec. Data   | Purchase-trigger donation | Check-out charity  | Check-out charity  | Purchase-trigger donation    | Purchase-trigger donation |
| Product Price      | j)          | 1 €                       | "Act of donation"  | "Act of donation"  | 9,99 €                       | 3 €                       |
| Amount Donated     | j)          | 0,80 €                    | Minimum value of the donation 0,20€ or multiples of 0,20€. | Minimum value of the donation 0,20€ or multiples of 0,20€. | 1 €                          | 1 €                       |

*Table 3- Donation Structure*

Our findings demonstrate that in all the campaigns carried by Worten, Zippy and Missão Continente, the brands chose to embrace transactional CrM, since they engaged the consumer in the campaign through commercial trade (purchase) or donation. In our case study, we can identify two different forms of transactional CrM campaigns. First, we have the “purchase-triggered donation” (Stole, 2006), illustrated by the cases of Worten 2012, Zippy 2018 and Missão Continente 2018, in which the company's donation to the cause is contingent on the consumer purchasing the item promoted in the CrM campaigns. Secondly, we also identify cases in which a “check-out charity” approach was followed (Kinard & Pardo, 2017). There

are two campaigns, Worten 2014 and Worten 2017, which represent this form of transactional CrM. In these two campaigns, the company supports consumers' donations to a social cause, by encouraging consumers to donate an amount during the payment process.

In terms of the communication strategy, since our sample is composed of brands that are part of the same company, we expected that the pattern of communication would be similar across all the campaigns. In the interviews, we asked specific questions related to the communication strategy adopted (see Table 4), to identify the different approaches followed and understand the influence of that communication method in the success of the CrM campaigns analysed.

|   | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)                                      | Worten & "Terra dos Sonhos" (2014)   | Worten & CVP (2017)  | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018)  | Missão Continente (2018)  |
|---|-------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Media Coverage</b>                               | g) & h)     | Television; Radio; Written press                         | Television; Radio  | Television; Radio  | Radio; Event presentation   | Television; Radio   |
| <b>Other Coverage</b>                               | g) & h)     | Outdoors; Social networks; Online store; Points of sale  | Outdoors; Social networks; Online store; Points of sale                                      | Outdoors; Social networks; Online store; Points of sale                                      | Outdoors; Social networks; Online store; Points of sale; Newsletter to consumer data base | Outdoors; Social networks; Online store; Points of sale                       |
| <b>Communication Strategy - During the Campaign</b> | h1)         | Communication in store; Media propagation of CRM message | Communication in store; Media propagation of CRM message                                     | Communication in store; Media propagation of CRM message                                     | Communication in store; Media propagation of CRM message                                  | Communication in store; Media propagation of CRM message                      |
| <b>Communication Strategy - After the campaign</b>  | h1)         | Public disclosure of campaign results                    | Public disclosure of campaign results (through the media partner SIC, POS and written press) | Public disclosure of campaign results (through the media partner SIC, POS and written press) | Public disclosure of campaign results (Zippy social network)                              | Public disclosure of campaign results (value raised and winning institutions) |

*Table 4 - Communication Strategy*

Regarding the communication programme, in the five campaigns analysed, there were two distinct communication moments, namely before/during the implementation of the CrM campaign, and after it.

All the campaigns had extensive media coverage before and during the campaign, mainly through television and radio. However, in some of the campaigns studied, the brands involved other media partners. This was the case for Worten's 2014 CrM campaign, as the brand partnered with several media partners (e.g., Grupo Impresa (owner of well-known magazines and newspapers, such as Visão and Expresso), and for Zippy's CrM campaign, which involved

the organisation of an event for the presentation of the campaign to a selected group of media and influencers. Besides these partnerships, the brands actively promoted the campaigns through outdoor advertising', social networking services (e.g., the brands' pages on Facebook), online stores, newsletters and point-of-purchase communication. In stores, the sales staff were responsible for informing consumers by means of a short briefing of the campaign's objectives.

When the campaigns were concluded, the brands actively communicated their outcomes and the amounts raised to their target audiences, using their media partners, but also through outdoor advertising', point-of-purchase communication and press releases on the brands' websites. In this respect, we should highlight the case of Worten's 2014 and 2017 campaigns, where the brand used a live interview on a famous television show (namely, "Querida Julia") to communicate the results achieved by the campaign.

In the interviews, we also asked the brand managers details about the campaign's duration (see Table 5). According to the information provided, the brands followed a short-term strategy, except for Missão Continente 2018, a CrM campaign that lasted for three months (nevertheless, this can still be considered short-term). However, in the case of this campaign, the first month was used to set up an application and to conduct a poll of consumers to select the institution that should receive the funds gathered through the campaign.

|                   | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)    | Worten & "Terra dos Sonhos" (2014) | Worten & CVP (2017)    | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018) | Missão Continente (2018) |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Time Frame</b> | d)          | 16/11/2012 - 6/01/2013 | 15/11/2013 - 6/01/2014             | 16/11/2017 - 6/01/2018 | 5/12/ 2018 - 12/02/ 2019     | 11/2018 - 02/2019        |
| <b>Duration</b>   | d)          | 2 months               | 2 months                           | 2 months               | 2 months                     | 3 months                 |

*Table 5 – Campaign Duration*

Regarding the geographic area, all the campaigns analysed were carried in Continental Portugal. The causes supported can be identified as foundations or organisations which target the Portuguese population.

Considering the importance of the alignment between the brand, the cause's target market and the overall campaign in terms of cause-related bundle, in the interviews, we asked questions regarding the consistency between the brand, the brand's target market and the cause supported (see Table 6). Additionally, we asked the brand managers to rate the relation between the brand's target consumers and the cause on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not at all related and 5 is completely related).

|   | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)   | Worten & "Terra dos Sonhos" (2014)   | Worten & CVP (2017)   | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018)  | Missão Continente (2018)  |
|---|-------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| Cause supported   | a)          | Cruz Vermelha Portugal  | Association Terra dos Sonhos   | Cruz Vermelha Portugal  | Make-a-Wish Foundation  | Undefined   |
| Criteria to support the chosen cause in the CrM campaign                    | a1)         | Choice of an institution that was easily recognised by the Portuguese and with evidence of ground work. | Institution suggested by the advertising agency - whose goal is the realisation of the dreams of critically ill children. The choice lies in the ability to help an association whose main mission is to materialise dreams. | Due to the severity of the events of the summer of 2017. It seemed a more natural and pressing issue to support in partnership with CVP as an intermediary. | Similarity between the cause and the target audience and the brand's mission (ZIPPY). | Trends and areas with social impact, namely the food theme in the areas of healthy eating, food waste and social inclusion. |
| Target of the campaign  | c)          | All Portuguese without exception.   | All Portuguese without exception.  | All Portuguese without exception.   | Adults who deal with children up to 9 years old and adults without children.          | All Portuguese without exception.   |
| Brand-Cause-Consumer Alignment - level of alignment in the managers opinion | c2)         | 5 - Completely related  | 5 - Completely related   | 5 - Completely related  | 5 - Completely related  | 5 - Completely related  |

*Table 6 - Brand-Cause-Consumer Alignment*

The congruence between the three key elements — consumer, cause and brand — is critical, because the more connected the consumer feels to the campaign, the higher the likelihood that he/she will engage in the campaign. Thus, it is fundamental that the company identifies causes and problems that are relevant to the brand's target consumers (Grau & Folse, 2007; Guerreiro et al., 2015). Moreover, Steffen & Günther (2013) pointed out that consumers' willingness to participate in CrM campaigns increases with their proximity and involvement with the cause.

Considering the importance of the alignment between these three elements, we can conclude that, in the campaigns conducted by Worten, Zippy and Missão Continente, the brands chose

to support social causes that were relevant to their target consumers. Worten's target market is quite wide, since it encompasses all Portuguese consumers or potential purchasers of household appliances. In terms of social causes, we can distinguish three situations where Worten strived to establish a connection between the brand's target market and the issues relevant to the community. In 2012, Worten supported the Portuguese Red Cross, through a project that aimed to help families in need to fight poverty and social exclusion, during the time of a severe global crisis that had a very negative impact on the Portuguese population. The choice of this project as the target of the CrM campaign demonstrates the brand's desire to find relevant social problems in the community in which the brand operates, as well as to address problems that all consumers are aware of and actively involved with.

Regarding Worten's 2014 campaign, the brand chose to support "Land of Dreams", an institution that operates in Portugal and aims to accomplish the dreams of ill children. Even though the target market of the cause is confined to children with severe illness, which is not as comprehensive a target as that of the causes supported in previous years, the cause linked to this CrM campaign is still of great relevance for the general public, especially for those people whose families have faced illness. We can conclude that this cause can be considered to be less aligned with the brand's target market, but does demonstrate the brand's efforts to raise awareness of a relevant social issue. In 2017, Worten engaged again in a partnership with the Portuguese Red Cross, with the aim of raising as much funding as possible for the Portuguese population affected by the destruction that resulted from the fires that plagued Portugal in that year. The goal of this campaign was to contribute to the rebuilding of infrastructure and to minimise the serious damage resulting from the fires. Thus, the company addressed a cause that was especially relevant to Portuguese people, which demonstrates the company's desire to support issues that are pertinent to its community. Therefore, we can conclude that by choosing these causes, the brand tried to approach those segments of society which required more help,

or to contribute towards improving the well-being of relevant groups in society, and embraced causes that were very relevant for most of its target consumers.

Regarding Zippy's 2018 campaign, even though the brand's end users are children, the adults are the buyers and they are part of the brand's target market — specifically, adults who deal with children up to 9 years of age. In 2018, the brand partnered with the "Make-a-Wish" Foundation, a social organisation whose mission is to make children's dreams materialise. Hence, we may conclude there is a significant consistency between the consumer, the cause and the brand. Moreover, this CrM campaign demonstrates the brand's concern to support a social cause that is relevant to its target consumers. Consequently, the brand was able to develop an appropriate cause-related bundle (Guerreiro et al., 2015).

In its 2018 campaign, Missão Continente chose to support a social cause themed around food — namely healthy food, food waste and social inclusion. These themes have become increasingly relevant to the community over recent years. Continente targets the whole Portuguese market of retail consumers. Since one of the brand's core businesses is the food trade, we can conclude that there is a high congruence between the topics promoted and the general message conveyed by this CrM campaign, the brand's positioning and the brand's target market. Furthermore, this CrM campaign highlighted the brand's concern with supporting relevant and up-to-date issues.

In the interviews, we questioned the brand managers about the campaign's main objectives and about its general performance in terms of financial and image measures, as these are relevant evaluation metrics of the success of a CrM campaign (see Table 7). The questions relating to the company's performance were divided into two sets, since our intention was to obtain quantitative and qualitative data to support the answers. Unfortunately, regarding quantitative data, no information was disclosed, and for that reason we will use the qualitative and quantitative secondary data to support our analyses.

|  | Question ID | Worten & CVP (2012)   | Worten & "Terra dos Sonhos" (2014)   | Worten & CVP (2017)  | Zippy & "Make-a-Wish" (2018)   | Missão Continente (2018)  |
|--|-------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Objectives of the campaign             | b)          | To support a project that had an impact on Portuguese society at a time when Portugal faced a generalised period of crisis. Involve the Portuguese and the sales teams in a meritorious cause. Position Worten as a brand that is jointly responsible and with an active role in society. | To raise the highest possible value for the institution. Involve the Portuguese and the sales teams in a meritorious cause. The campaign allowed to Worten position itself on the axis of social responsible and with an active role in society. | To raise the highest possible value for the institution. Involve the Portuguese and the sales teams in a meritorious cause. The campaign allowed to Worten position itself on the axis of social responsible and with an active role in society. | Reinforce the concept of togetherness - to reinforce the sense of unity between parents and children; Encourage the client to create a positive impact on society. Celebrate the Christmas spirit. | Reinforce the retailer's position as a socially responsible brand; Enhance the relevance of eating habits and food (healthy food, food waste and social inclusion); Increase consumer awareness about these topics. |
| Purchase Intention - Quantitative Data | k1)         | Undisclosed   | Undisclosed  | Undisclosed  | No significant changes in the brand's sales volume.  | Undisclosed   |
| Purchase Intention - Qualitative Data  | k2)         | Very positive impact - the objective was not to boost sales but rather to raise the highest amount of donations for the cause.  | Very positive impact. The campaign allowed to position Worten in the axis of social responsibility, in a consolidated way and with a project in its own name (Código DaVinte).   | Very positive impact. The campaign allowed to position Worten in the axis of social responsibility, in a consolidated way and with a project in its own name (Código DaVinte).   | Positive feedback from the store teams and in the brand's digital channels, which showed a very positive response from consumers.  | Considered to be very effective   |
| Corporate Image - Quantitative Data    | l1)         | Undisclosed   | Undisclosed  | Undisclosed  | No significant changes were identified.  | Undisclosed   |
| Corporate Image - Qualitative Data     | l2)         | Cemented the brand's position as a leading brand and an influencer within the Portuguese society.   | Positive impact in position Worten as a socially responsible brand.  | Positive impact in position Worten as a socially responsible brand.  | Positive impact allowed to materialise the concept of togetherness and establish greater emotional and effective connection between the brand and the  | Put Missão Continente's project at the forefront of consumers' minds, to reinforce their image of the brand as socially responsible.  |
| Market Share Implications              | m)          | Undisclosed   | Undisclosed  | Undisclosed  | It is not possible to directly associate the campaign with the growth in market share, and it is not expected that this would happen in a significant way.   | Undisclosed   |
| Amounts Collected                      | Sec. Data   | 175.000€ <sup>1</sup>   | 120.000€ <sup>1</sup>  | 150.000€ <sup>2</sup>  | 6.000€ <sup>3</sup>  | 240.000€ <sup>4</sup>   |

*Table 7- Campaign's Objectives and Performance*

In the context of CrM, purchase intention can be understood as the consumer's choice and intention to buy and participate in CrM campaigns (Bui, 2017), which can be influenced by a number of factors, considered as moderating factors. Regarding purchase intention, Worten's 2012 campaign objective was not to boost sales but rather to engage Portuguese consumers with the causes through altruistic behaviour, and to raise the highest possible amount for the causes. The campaigns analysed were conducted during the Christmas season, which is a season of high consumption, thus consumers' willingness to be involved in this type of initiative is also amplified. In Worten's 2012 campaign, the brand was able to collect a total of 175.000€ for the cause, which indicates a high level of consumer purchase intention. In terms of the amount raised by the campaigns, we were able to compare the campaigns of Worten in 2014 and 2017 (both were part of the project "Código DaVinte" which was launched in 2014). Through the data gathered, we can observe an increase in the amounts collected in 2017 as compared to 2014, which can be explained by an increase in consumers' awareness of the brand's project, and also by the fact that the campaign was supported by an effective communication strategy.

In terms of consumer purchase intention of the brand's products in general, the manager of Zippy's 2018 campaign stated that during the campaign there was no significant change in the brand's sales volume. Thus, we can assume that the campaign probably did not have any relevant influence on consumers' buying intention. However, in terms of consumer engagement with the campaign, the objectives were met, since according to the secondary data collected, all items placed on sale (6.000 pair of gloves) were sold.

Missão Continente's 2018 campaign was able to deliver 240.000€ to the winning institution; this amount reveals that there was positive engagement by consumers with this CrM initiative, since 240.000 mugs were sold across Continente stores in Portugal. Regarding the image measures, in all campaigns analysed, the managers stated that one of the campaign's objectives was to position the brands as socially responsible and sustainable brands that try to effectively help the communities in which they operate. Thus, the main goal was to create a socially responsible brand image in the minds of the target consumers. Our findings show that the campaigns enhanced the position of the different brands analysed as socially responsible brands that are actively committed to their communities. Therefore, we can conclude that the objectives defined in terms of brand image were accomplished. In the case of the campaigns carried out by Worten in 2014 and 2017, besides reinforcing the brand's positioning as a socially responsible brand, this campaign raised awareness for the project "Código DáVinte".

## **6. Discussion**

After presenting the data gathered in the interviews, we will now discuss the main findings of this study and analyse whether the questions identified in our framework are answered.

Considering the results of two of the brands analysed, and their campaigns, Zippy and Missão Continente, we can provide positive answers to three of the four questions identified in



our research model. Indeed, findings indicate that: brand-cause fit has a significant impact on the campaign's success (Q1), brand-cause fit will favourably influence consumers' purchase intention (Q2) and, in turn, purchase intention will have a positive effect on the success of the campaign (Q3).

In the case of Zippy, there is a high brand-cause fit, as the brand's core business is children's clothes and the brand image is strongly related to children, as well as the target and image of the cause supported. The intention of this CrM campaign, as previously explained, was to fulfil the dreams of critically-ill children. Hence, there is a strong relationship between the brand's image and the image of the cause supported. Indeed, the high brand-cause-consumer fit was a fundamental criteria for the choice of the cause, as the brand manager highlights when she says that "the similarity between the cause and the target audience and the brand's mission" was a key concern (Regina Guerner, CMO Zippy).

With respect to Missão Continente, the brand's campaign addressed several relevant issues relating to healthy and sustainable eating habits. Hence, we can conclude that there is a high brand-cause fit, since the brand's core business is food retail, and, therefore, the brand image shares several associations with the topics supported in this CrM campaign. This conclusion is supported by the brand manager, as she points out that the decision to choose this cause was related to the fact that it concerns "trends and areas with social impact, namely the food theme in the areas of healthy eating, food waste and social inclusion" (Andreia Sousa, CMO Continente).

However, regarding Worten's campaign, we were not able reach similar conclusions. Even though the brand's target market includes the majority of the Portuguese population and the issue addressed in the three campaigns reveals the brand's concern with supporting issues that impact the community in which it operates, we cannot conclude there is a direct congruence between the brand's core business and the cause supported. Therefore, we cannot answer

positively to Q1, since, even in a low brand-cause fit situation, the CrM campaigns' objectives were successfully attained. Following the same line of thought, Q2 and Q3 cannot be answered positively either, since, despite the low fit between the brand and the cause, the CrM campaign seems to have had a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions. The brand was able to successfully engage consumers and fulfil the campaign's objectives, as consumers actively purchased the product promoted or contributed to the cause through the "act of donation".

Regarding Q4, which aims to understand whether corporate image and consumer-cause involvement moderate the influence of brand-cause fit on consumers' purchase intention, the results obtained seem to confirm the relevance of brand image as a moderating factor in this relationship, and are thus indicative of a positive answer to this question. In the case of Worten's campaigns, findings indicate that a strong and favourable brand image can contribute to a greater willingness by consumers to engage in the CrM initiatives developed by the brand, and can moderate the impact of consumers' perception of brand-cause fit. The brand presented in all its campaigns a low brand-cause fit situation. The fact that the brand was able to address issues relevant to the community — as highlighted by the manager when he said that the motive for supporting this cause was related to "the severity of the events of the summer of 2017, which seemed a more natural and pressing issue to support in partnership with the Portuguese Red Cross as an intermediary" — helped to moderate the effect of brand-cause fit on consumers' purchase intention. Thus, consumer-cause involvement positively influenced consumers' evaluation of the campaign and increased their willingness to engage in the CrM campaign in the form of purchase intention. The increase in the amounts collected by Worten in 2014 and 2017 under the project "Código DáVinte", allow us to support our findings regarding Q4 with respect to the moderating impact of brand image on the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumer purchase intention. In this respect, it is important to highlight that this cause is linked to a three-year project. In the brand manager's opinion, the "Código

DáVinte” project allowed the brand “to reinforce Worten’s position as a socially responsible brand and at the same time to enhance the awareness of the DáVinte Code project” (Alexandra Balão, CMO, Worten). Thus, we can conclude that this project resulted in an improvement in the brand’s image, increasing consumers’ trust in the brand. Moreover, the communication strategy employed in this project allowed Worten to create a stronger bond with its target consumers and to strengthen its position as a sustainable brand.

We can also support our findings regarding Q4 for both the Missão Continente and Zippy campaigns, since the decision to create a specific product for the campaign was motivated by the goal "to help the product stand out and make people associate it specifically with the campaign" (Andreia Sousa, CMO, Continente). This strategy was aimed at increasing awareness of the campaign and positively influencing consumer purchase intention.

## **7. Conclusion**

The main contribution of this research is linked to the study of the effects of brand-cause fit in the success of CrM campaigns, considering CrM initiatives which involve consumer participation. The impact of brand-cause fit on CrM campaigns continues to raise several discussions between academics and is a relevant research topic. Pracejus & Olsen (2004), Lans et al. (2014) and Trimble & Rifon (2006) suggested that brand-cause fit is able to generate positive consumer responses to CrM initiatives, by influencing consumer motivation to engage in cause-supporting initiatives. However, our findings highlight that this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, our findings are consistent with the conclusions of Lafferty (2007) and Nan & Heo (2007), who stated that brand-cause fit does not always determine the effectiveness of CrM. The five CrM campaigns analysed in our research were considered successful, despite

the fact that some of them presented a situation of high brand-cause fit (Zippy and Contiente) and others of low brand-cause fit (Worten's campaigns of 2012, 2014 and 2017).

Going deeper into the analysis of the impact of brand-cause fit, Alav & Zeynali (2013) and Lans et al. (2014) concluded that CrM campaigns benefit when there is high perceived congruence between the brand and the cause in terms of brand awareness, positive attitudes towards the brand and increased brand credibility. In turn, CrM campaigns with a low brand-cause fit can result in consumer scepticism towards both the campaign and the brand, which can lead to less positive consumer responses to CrM campaigns and raise questions about the company's motivations for carrying out the campaign (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004).

Our findings suggest that even in CrM campaigns in which there is a lower brand-cause fit, successful outcomes can be achieved. Also, our findings highlight that even though brand-cause fit has a relevant influence on consumers' evaluation of the CrM campaign, it might not be strong enough to trigger engagement in CrM initiatives. Therefore, other factors should be considered when evaluating consumer attitudes towards CrM initiatives.

The concept of consumer-cause involvement introduced by Grau & Folse (2007) can significantly influence consumer engagement behaviour in CrM campaigns, since consumers are more willing to engage in CrM campaigns that support causes that have a relevant impact on their lives and communities. This idea is in line with the conclusions of Gupta & Pirsch (2006) and Guerreiro et al. (2015), who suggested that brands should address in their CrM campaigns issues that are relevant to the brand's target audience as well as for the community in which the brand operates. These conclusions are in line with our findings, particularly in the cases of Worten's 2012, 2014 and 2017 campaigns. Worten was able to address issues that were relevant to the community at the time, and, hence stimulate a high consumer-cause involvement, which ended up significantly influencing the success of the CrM initiatives and mitigating the negative effects of a lower brand-cause fit.

Taking into account the need to address issues that matter to the brand's target market, CrM communication strategies should reflect the brand's mission, vision and core values, and the brand's target audience. Our results suggest that in all the campaigns analysed, communication was aimed at increasing consumer trust in the CrM initiatives, since the brand developed communication activities throughout the CrM campaign and after its conclusion, seeking to clearly express the campaign outcomes. Moreover, we concluded that this strategy positively influenced consumer trust in the brands' intentions, and favourably affected the image of the brands involved. For example, the increase in the amounts collected by Worten's campaigns from 2014 to 2017 can be justified by the increase in consumer awareness about the project "Código DáVinte" and in consumer brand trust. Thus, we may conclude that an appropriate communication strategy is essential for the success of CrM initiatives. Indeed, this will reinforce consumer trust and positively influence their perception of the brand, which will stimulate consumer engagement in the CrM initiatives, make the campaign more successful and, consequently, increase its impact in terms of sustainability.

Considering our main research question, we were not able to find evidence that brand-cause fit contributed to the success of CRM campaigns. Our findings suggest that a positive brand evaluation encourages positive consumer feelings towards the brand. Thus, it increases consumers' ability to trust in the cause supported by the brand, which will in turn influence consumer engagement in CrM campaigns. This conclusion is also applicable when there is not a high perceived fit between the brand and the cause supported. Moreover, we find that CrM campaigns that address issues that are relevant to the brand's target consumers tend to be more successful. Therefore, we conclude that this factor could moderate the impact of consumer brand-cause fit perceptions on consumers' purchase intention. In Worten's case, there is a low brand-cause fit, however the campaign was a success and the outcome was not negatively affected by the low level of fit between the brand and the cause. This suggests that the social

cause supported can have an important effect on the evaluation of the CrM campaign and influence consumer participation. Findings also suggest that brands that regularly engage in CrM initiatives, by demonstrating a long-term commitment to society, stimulate positive consumer feelings towards the brand and the campaigns supported, which induces positive purchase intention in the different CrM campaigns and, thus, influences their success.

In conclusion, how does brand-cause fit influence CrM success? The success of CrM initiatives is not always directly linked to brand-cause fit. The evaluation of a CrM campaign should be measured taking into consideration several aspects and should be analysed case by case, since several moderating variables may affect the relationship between brand-cause fit and consumer responses. A high brand-cause fit can undoubtedly leverage the chances of success, however, a low brand-cause fit can also lead to success if the relevant moderating variables are present. Hence, findings are not supportive of a strong and positive relationship between brand-cause fit and the success of CrM campaigns, as we concluded that a successful CrM campaign can be achieved with both a high or low fit and that the relationship between brand-cause fit and the success of a CrM campaign is affected by several variables. When considering the development and implementation of CrM initiatives, companies should consider the effects of brand-cause fit and choose, whenever possible, causes that reveal a high congruence both with the brand and the brand target audience. Additionally, the cause or social problem supported should address issues that matter to the target consumers, to induce a higher level of consumer-cause involvement. Thus, brands should embrace causes with a national or regional geographic scope, and which have a relevant impact in terms of sustainability (social, environmental or economic) for their target consumers. Moreover, although brands should pursue a high brand-cause fit, when they have long history of CrM initiatives, they may choose relevant causes which are not perceived as highly congruent with the brand image.

Communication plays an important role in the success of CrM campaigns, with respect to consumer awareness of the campaign objectives and outcomes. A strong and well-designed communication strategy will lead to more favourable consumer behaviour, increasing the chances of success and the benefits of CrM for the brand or the corporate image in the future. Favourable corporate and brand images have been noted as positive outcomes of CrM campaigns, as companies with track records of supporting social sustainable causes are perceived as more trustworthy, which increases consumer willingness to engage in the CrM initiatives developed by these corporate or product brands. Thus, it is important that companies consider CrM initiatives as a fundamental element of their marketing strategy and consistently communicate these initiatives, so that they can build an image of a sustainable institution, which is actively engaged with relevant social, environmental or economic issues.

Like any other academic research, this study is not without limitations. The fact that the company studied did not disclose information regarding the campaign's performance was one of the main difficulties, since the impacts the campaigns we analysed had on consumer purchase intention — and their implications in terms of image and market share — were not disclosed by the managers. Thus, our analysis relies mainly on managers' subjective opinions regarding the effectiveness of each campaign. The research is based on the analysis of the responses provided by the campaign managers and of the brands' financial reports. Thus, the findings may be biased by the subjective opinions of the brand managers. However, these findings were completed with quantitative data regarding the campaigns' outcomes. Since all the campaigns chosen for this study were developed by the same company, this may also limit the relevance of the findings. Finally, given the limited sample used in this research, and its focus on one country, the results do not allow us to draw conclusions regarding consumer response to CrM initiatives, in general. These limitations could present interesting opportunities for further quantitative research that provides a deeper understanding of the

relationship between brand-cause fit and consumer purchase intention in CrM initiatives, by analysing the impact of relevant moderating variables.



## 8. References

- Adkins, S. (2003). Cause-related marketing: Who cares wins. In *The Marketing Book* 5th Ed. 669–693.
- Alav, S. & Zeynali, S. (2013). The impact of brand/cause fit and cause's participation on consumers' purchasing intention: A case study among customers of Iranian Chain stores. *Advances in Environmental Biology*, 7(11), 3224–3233.
- Barone, M. J., Norman, A. T., & Miyazaki, A. D. (2007). Consumer response to retailer use of cause-related marketing: Is more fit better? *Journal of Retailing*, 83(4), 437–445.
- Berggren, J., & Stark, C. (2010). *Cause-related marketing, win-win-win? A qualitative study of the pink ribbon in Swedish partner companies' CRM campaign*. Master Dissertation - Umeå Universitat.
- Broniarczyk, S. & Alba, J. M. (1994). The importance of the brand in the brand extension. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(5), 214–228.
- Bui, T. (2017). *The effect of brand-cause fit on consumers' responses to cause-related marketing: a study on young Vietnamese consumers*. Master Dissertation - Aalto University School of Business.
- Christofi, M., Leonidou, E., Vrontis, D., Kitchen, P. & Papasolomou, I. (2015). Innovation and Cause-related Marketing Success: A Conceptual Framework and Propositions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(5), 354–366.
- Devinney, T. M. (2009). Is the socially responsible corporation a myth? The good, the bad, and the ugly of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 23(2), 44–56.
- Enderle, G., & Tavis, L. A. (1998). A balanced concept of the firm and the measurement of its long-term planning and performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17, 1129–1144.
- Fereira, A & Ribeiro, I. (2017). Are you willing to pay the price? The impact of corporate social (ir) responsibility on consumer behavior towards national and foreign brands. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 16, 63–71.
- Golkar, H., & Sina, Z. (2013). Cause-Related Marketing and Brand Differentiation in Iran. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research In Business*, 5(2), 186–191.
- Grau, S., & Folse, J. (2007). Cause-related marketing (CRM): The influence of donation proximity and message-framing cues on the less-involved consumer. *Journal of Advertising*, 36(4), 19–33.
- Grau, S., Garretson, J., & Pirsch, J. (2007). Cause-Related Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Campaign Donation Structures Issues. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 18(2), 69–91.
- Guerreiro, J., Rita, P., & Trigueiros, D. (2015). Attention, emotions and cause-related marketing effectiveness. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(11/12), 1728–1750.
- Guerreiro, J., Rita, P., & Trigueiros, D. (2016). A text mining-based review of cause-related marketing literature. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 139(1), 111–128.
- Grolleau, G., Ibanez, L. & Lavoie, N. (2016). Cause-related marketing of products with a negative externality. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(10), 4321–4330.

- Gupta, S., & Pirsch, J. (2006). The company-cause-customer fit decision in cause-related marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 23(6), 314–326.
- Hassan, S. O., & Abouaish, E. M. (2018). The impact of strategic vs. tactical cause-related marketing on switching intention. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 15(3), 253–314.
- Iglesias, O., Markovic, S., Bagherzadeh, M., & Singh, J. J. (2018). Co-creation: A key link between corporate social responsibility, customer trust, and customer loyalty. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(1), 1-16.
- Kim, H. & John, D. R. (2008). Consumer response to brand extensions: Construal level as moderator of the importance of perceived fit. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 20, 1-11.
- Kim, K., Cheong, Y., & Lim, J. S. (2015). Choosing the right message for the right cause in social cause advertising: type of social cause message, perceived company–cause fit and the persuasiveness of communication, *International Journal of Advertising*, 34(3), 473-494.
- Kinard, B. R., & Pardo, M. L., (2017). Cause-related marketing: The effect of checkout charity requests on consumer donation behavior. *Atlantic Marketing Journal*, 6(2), 77-91.
- Komornicki, S., & Komornicki, S. (2017). *2017 Cone Communications CSR Study*. Retrieved from <http://www.conecomm.com/research-blog/2017-csr-study>
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2005). *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause*. Wiley. USA.
- Lafferty, B. A. (2007). The relevance of fit in a cause-brand alliance when consumers evaluate corporate credibility. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(5), 447–453.
- Lans, R., Bergh, B., & Dieleman, E. (2014). Partner selection in brand alliances: An empirical investigation of the drivers of brand fit. *Marketing Science*, 33(4), 551–566.
- Laroche, S. (2017). *Cause-related marketing in five unique culture*. Master Dissertation. Texas Christian University, USA.
- Lerro, M., Vecchio, R., Caracciolo, F., Pascucci, S. & Cembalo, L. (2018). Consumers' heterogeneous preferences for corporate social responsibility in the food industry. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(6), 1050-1061
- Margolis, J. & Walsh, J. (2003). Misery loves companies: Rethinking social initiatives by business. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 48(2), 268-305.
- Markovic, S., Iglesias, O., Singh, J. J. & Sierra, V. (2018). How does the perceived ethicality of corporate services brands influence loyalty and positive word-of-mouth? Analyzing the roles of empathy, affective commitment, and perceived quality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(4), 721–740.
- Melero, I., & Montaner, T. (2016). Cause-related marketing: An experimental study about how the product type and the perceived fit may influence the consumer response. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 25(3), 161–167.
- Nan, X., & Heo, K. (2007). Consumer responses to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives: Examining the Role of Brand-Cause Fit in Cause-Related Marketing. *Journal of Advertising*, 36(2), 63-74.

- Pracejus, J. W., & Olsen, G. D. (2004). The role of brand/cause fit in the effectiveness of cause-related marketing campaigns. *Journal of Business Research*, 57(6), 635-640.
- Pringle, H. & Thompson, M., (1999). *Brand spirit: How cause related marketing builds brands*. Wiley, Chichester, New York.
- Silva, S. C. & Martins, C. C. (2017). The relevance of cause-related marketing to post-purchase guilt alleviation. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 14(4), 475–494.
- Simonin, B. L. & Ruth, J. A. (1998). Is a company known by the company it keeps? Assessing the spillover effects of brands alliances on consumer brand attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35(1), 30-42.
- Strahilevitz, M., & Myers, J. G. (1998). Donations to charity as purchase incentives: How well they work may depend on what you are trying to sell. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 434-446.
- Steffen, A. & Günther, S. (2013). Success factors of cause-related marketing – What developing countries can Learn from a German sweets campaign. *The MENA Journal of Business Case Studies*, 13, 1-15.
- Stole I., (2006). *Cause-Related Marketing: Why Social Change and Corporate Profits Don't Mix*. Center for Media and Democracy. Retrieved from <http://www.prwatch.org/node/4965>
- Trimble, C., & Holmes, G. (2013). New thinking on antecedents to successful CRM campaigns: Consumer acceptance of an alliance. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 19(3), 352-372.
- Trimble, C. S., & Rifon, N. J. (2006). Consumer perceptions of compatibility in cause-related marketing messages. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 11(1), 472-484.
- Varadarajan, P. R., & Menon, A. (1988). Cause-related marketing: A coalignment of marketing strategy and corporate philanthropy. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(2), 61-73.
- Zasuwa, G. (2017). The role of company-cause fit and company involvement in consumer responses to CSR initiatives: A meta-analytic review. *Sustainability*, 9(6), 1-16.
- Zeynali, S., & Golkar, H. (2013). The impact of cause importance and gender on consumers' purchasing intention in cause-related marketing: A case study among customers of Iranian chain stores. *Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 2(2), 299–308.