

## Cause-Related Marketing Success and Product Innovation: An Integrated Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

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**Abstract:** *This article accumulates the state of academic research on Cause-Related Marketing success through the identification of several success factors, based on a systematic review of the literature published in top tier scientific journals over the past 30 years. Moreover, to our knowledge, it introduces for the first time the concept of product innovation as a CRM success factor. As such, the authors develop an integrative framework and a propositional inventory that represents a consolidated foundation for the systematic development of a theory for successful CRM practices, along with the integration of product innovation within the field of CRM. Furthermore, this article appears to be the first of its kind to examine, from the theorist perspective, the dynamics implied by synthesizing these, so far, distinct concepts. Towards this direction, the objective of this study is theory construction rather than theory testing. Hence, much work remains to be done in terms of empirically testing our research propositions. In conclusion, this paper posits a set of research directions designed to enable scholars to further advance the integration of product innovation and CRM from both problem-driven theory development as well as theory-driven practice management perspectives.*

**Keywords:** *Corporate Social Responsibility, Cause-Related Marketing, Product innovation, success factors*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Corporate Social Responsibility, has been largely recognized as a vital element of corporate strategy in the global economy, thoroughly researched by scholars and extensively exploited by enterprises as a businesslike tool that cultivates sustainable competitive advantage (Becchetti et al., 2007; Larson et al., 2008; Vlachos et al., 2009; Demetriou et al., 2010). Furthermore, in recent years, CSR's significance on a global scale has become even greater, principally because of investors' losses, reputational damage to listed companies and the financial scandals such as Enron, Parmalat, etc. (Becchetti et al., 2007). From the aforementioned corporate lapses that violate societal expectations and damage brand-corporate image, the need for practical CSR initiatives accrued, mainly because it offers a global brand insurance and enhances positive corporate reputation (Werther, and Chandler, 2005). Besides that, it is evident that a strong corporate social responsibility generates and ameliorates the trusting relationship between the multinationals and their stakeholders, a fact that results in strengthening customer loyalty (Torres et al., 2012). Hence, the need for a successful CSR strategy from the Cause-Related marketing perspective, is even greater from the aforementioned changing social expectations, corporate lapses, and globalization (Werther, and Chandler, 2005).

Towards this direction, it is also significant for enterprises applying CRM practices to have a holistic understanding of the underline factors that cultivate CRM success, because even if the benefits that derive from CRM campaigns are well documented, unsuccessful CRM campaigns could cause negative results to the corporate reputation of both the for-profit organization and the partner charity (Demetriou et al., 2010; Tangari et al., 2010). However, despite this fact, factors leading to the success or failure of cause related marketing practices implemented by for profit organizations, haven't been documented or explored in a methodologically broader way (Grau and Folse, 2007; File & Prince, 1998; . Larson, et al., 2008; Moosmayer, and Fuljahn, 2010). Consequently, in order to fill this gap there is a need for research in order to identify those factors that have a direct impact on the success of cause-related marketing practices and how they could be applied so as to create a successful CRM index for marketing practitioners. Continuing, innovation is widely regarded as a dominant source of competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic environment (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010; Dess and Picken, 2000; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). According to management and marketing scholars, innovation prowess is the most significant coefficient of firm performance (Mone et al., 1998). However, from the thorough review of the CSR literature, there is no research study to conjoin innovation with CRM success.

The aim of this research is to develop an integrative conceptual framework for successful Cause-Related Marketing practices through a CRM success index, based on a systematic review of the existing literature. In addition, apart from

the existing factors that promote CRM success, the authors aim to introduce a new CRM success factor in terms of product innovation. In doing so, several research propositions will be generated in order for the framework to be tested in the future and then adjusted accordingly in order to create new knowledge and thus, to contribute both to marketing theory and practise.

Towards this aim, the authors consequently synthesize an integrative framework of 22 CRM success factors and divides them into five main categories, according to their area of influence: CRM design and structure, Innovation, Experience, Authenticity and Socio-demographic variables. The theory behind this framework is based on MacLnni's (2011) directions of framework development. In addition, within the caption of corporate social responsibility, the authors consider the potential effects of cause-related marketing as a measurement tool of its success in terms of three perspectives: Financial perspective, Corporate perspective, and Product perspective. Moreover, a propositional inventory has been developed and segregated into two stages, in order to determine the causal relationship between the five categories of CRM success factors with the three perspectives of CRM success on the one hand, and to assess if there is a relationship between each of the five categories on the other hand.

In conclusion, this article reports our analytic journey from our initial research design, through iterative analysis, to final theory building. Thus, the structure of this paper is as follows: First, the authors review the Cause-Related Marketing literature, and identify systematically the main factors for successful CRM campaigns. Second, we refer to the literature of Product innovation and develop the hypothesis regarding the effects of product innovation on the success of Cause-Related Marketing campaigns. Third, we introduce the baseline model, and develop fifteen research propositions in order to determine the causal relationship between the five categories of CRM success factors on the one hand, with the three perspectives of CRM success on the other hand, and twenty Null Hypothesis in order to assess if there is a relationship between each of the five categories. In the final section, we induce theoretical and practical implications and discuss wider directions for future research.

## **2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AND CAUSE RELATED MARKETING (CRM)**

In today's business society, Corporate Social Responsibility is an expeditiously expanding theme and is being recognized globally as a cardinal long term business strategy (Strahilevitz, & Myers, 1998; Hess, et. al., 2002; Lichtenstein, et. al., 2004; Barone, et. al., 2007; Vlachos, et. al., 2009; Lev, et. al., 2010; Winterich, and Barone, 2011). Towards this direction, a rapidly growing number of enterprises are expending millions of dollars in social responsibility gambits (Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998; Luo, & Bhattacharya, 2009). From 2007 to 2009, companies bestirring in the U.S.A, invested approximately \$15.7 billion per year in the non-profit sector, without regard to the economic crisis that characterizes the global economy. Furthermore, continued growth in this area is expected as a result of the fruitful outcomes experienced by major organizations in their Cause-Related Marketing practices (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2004; Vlachos, et. al., 2009; Lev, et. al., 2010; Winterich and Barone, 2011).

To start with, a thorough and systematic review of the literature on CSR revealed that researchers focused on two preponderant perspectives: on the one hand is the normative one which is characterized by the notion of doing good for the sake of doing good, and on the other hand is the enlightened self-interest perspective which is the business case in which companies are doing good as a tool for enhancing their profitability levels. The last perspective of CSR is also known as Cause-Related Marketing, which, according to Krishna and Rajan (2009), it focalizes on a specific cause that is linked with a company as a whole or with a specific product or service of the enterprise. Continuing, antecedent Cause Related Marketing literature has focused on two dimensions, corporate-level CRM and Product-level CRM research. This paper focuses on corporate Cause-Related Marketing, where the aim is to ameliorate business performance and co instantaneously support worthy causes (Varadarajan and Menon 1988; Barnett, 2007; Larson, et. al., 2008). The authors set out by discussing the CSR literature, followed by product-level Cause-Related Marketing research and then corporate-level CRM research.

The concept of CRM and its provenance can be traced back to 1983, when American Express supported the Statue of Liberty's restoration via donations based on card usage and uptake (Mescon and Tilson, 1987). From an academic view, CRM, was first stated by Varadarajan and Menon in 1988 as a joint-transaction framework resulting from the amalgamation of product and donation through the partnership between a remunerative company and a non-profit organization. This coalition promotes gains and interests for both parties. Furthermore, in their seminal research work on CRM, Varadarajan and Menon (1988, p. 60), provided a comprehensive conceptual examination of CRM and defined it "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 customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives". Later, Andreasen (1996), extended the purport of CRM using the condition that increasing product sale for the organization concomitances with fundraising for the non-profit organization. Any marketing activity promoted by the firm and the non-profit organization can be considered as a CRM activity as long as it has a direct or indirect impact on sales' boost (ibid.).

In a simple wording, Cause Related Marketing is a marketing strategy that conflates organizational charity, fundraising for a non-profit organization and social responsibility, for the purpose of furthering the profitability of an enterprise (Ross, et al., 1992; Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Walsh, 1999; Brønn, & Vrioni, 2001; Gourville and Rangan, 2004; Larson, et. al., 2008; Folse, et. al., 2010; Zdravkovic, et. al., 2010). However, unlike traditional corporate philanthropy, cause related marketing practices do not accrue from philanthropic budgets. On the contrary, marketing practitioners choose to participate in cause marketing campaigns rather than in other promotional strategies (Barone et al. 2000; Larson, et. al., 2008; Vlachos, et. al., 2009).

### 2.1 Product-Level CRM and Corporate-Level CRM

To start with the product-level CRM, the only authors that focused on that CRM perspective are Arora and Henderson (2007). They considered a cause-related marketing product as a strategy for sales promotion (or “embedded premium”) and contrasted CRM with traditional approximations such as discounts and rebates. In addition, they hold that, compared to low denominations such as low discounts, the enhanced product is more effectual for increasing sales. Furthermore, they illustrated that an enhanced product benefits more an unfamiliar brand than a known one (Krishna and Rajan, 2009). At this point, we move on from product-level CRM to corporate-level Cause-Related Marketing. Varadarajan and Menon (1988) enunciated that with the implementation of corporate level CRM, companies gain many substantial benefits, such as enhanced sales performance, strengthened corporate reputation and brand image and an expansion of the company's target market. Similarly, Cone et al. (2003), Barone et. al. (2007) and Wang and Qian (2011), stated that corporate CRM could act as a promotional contrivance for products and ameliorate brand image, as well as to extenuate the risks of reputational losses and thus, secure crucial resources from stakeholders. In addition, some scholars have argued that corporate philanthropy positively affects an organizations' financial performance because decisions associated with charitable contributions can be made strategically, so as to enhance, not only the firm's image and reputation, but also to raise the value of its moral capital (Cone, et. al., 2003; Godfrey, 2005). Towards this end, moral capital can purvey shareholders with insurance-like protection for a firm's relationship-based intangible assets, and thus, to cultivate shareholder wealth (Godfrey, 2005). Moreover, Barone et al. (2000) state that the results of several studies indicate that corporate philanthropy can positively affect consumer choice. Accordingly, Hoeffler and Keller (2002), and Keller (2003), have stated that CRM amends an organization's image and can lead to brand awareness. Concordantly, Bloom et al. (2006), stated that exposure to any type of a well-conceived CRM initiative for a brand would lead to more propitious feelings and judgments of the brand in a consumer's mind. However, according to Hoeffler and Keller (2002), this area of research needs further examination by scholars, in that many brands labor to create such effects among their consumers. Lastly, the end result of doing good is being measured by many firms in terms of how much it contributes to a firm's competitive prime (Cone, et al., 2003).

## 3. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 Perspectives of CRM success

An important aspect of the proposed theory development is the measurement of the level of success that the identified factors offer towards CRM practices. In an earlier review of the literature, the authors identified three perspectives that comprise the measurement tool of CRM success and they are further analyzed below:

*Financial perspective:* which refers to consumer purchase intentions and the impact on the financial performance of an enterprise that has applied CRM practices.

*Product perspective:* in terms of brand awareness amidst the consumers

*Corporate perspective:* which refers to the impact on the customers when an organization has applied CRM practices and it is translated in terms of the corporate image and reputation of the company among the consumers.

### 3.2 Identification of the CRM success factors

Continuing, from the systematic review of the literature, 21 factors that promote CRM success have been identified and further analyzed below. The selected studies that were included in this paper, are published in top tier journals worldwide, in order to ensure the highest level of quality, reliability and credibility. The level of validity of the studies has also been taken into consideration.

#### *Authenticity*

The first category that the authors introduce, relates to the perceived trustworthiness, honesty and ethical behaviour of the CRM campaign towards the consumers. Hence, Authenticity is consisted by factors that influence the above mentioned consumer values. The first factor that deals with perceived values is the ethical characterization of a company. To start with, Drumwright (1996), as cited in Strahilevitz (2003), has illustrated that a factor who affects the effectiveness of a CRM campaign is whether customers perceive the Cause-Related Marketing relationship to be beneficial or exploitative towards the charity. In his research paper, the author examined whether the effectiveness of a Cause-Related Marketing campaign is influenced by the ethics of the organization involved. In other words, he examined if the company is perceived as a “ethical,” “unethical,” or “neutral” and what is the outcome from these

perceptions upon the CRM campaign. The results showed that firms initially perceived as ethically neutral gained the most from a CRM campaign (ibid.). Second, a different success factor that belongs within this category, is brand credibility. Alcaniz et al., (2009), defined brand credibility in the context of CRM as the extent to which consumers perceive that the brand communicates honesty and goodwill in terms of trustworthiness and has the necessary skills and experience to colligate with the specified social cause. According to Varadarajan and Menon, (1988), and Webb and Mohr, (1998), as cited in Alcaniz et al., (2009), this reasoning suggests that altruistic attribution is a pointer which helps consumers to evaluate honesty, sincerity and good faith of the brand's social commitment, and will positively influence the CRM campaign. Broderick et al., (2003), seem to agree with Alcaniz et al., (2003), and they also highlight the significance of the brand/firm credibility to customers and their overall positive view in CRM campaigns.

Moreover, Tsai (2009), referred to one more key success factor for applying a CRM campaign, which has to do with the positive motivational attribution about the donor brand, and refers to the consumer's perception that the donor brand is motivated, hence it performs the CRM campaign with more altruism than egotism. In other words, the higher the level of perception of altruistic-orientation it is, the higher is the level of positive motivational attribution about the brand. Therefore, consumers feel stronger moral pleasure for taking part in the CRM campaign or stronger moral displeasure for their non participation. In addition, positive motivational attribution can be attained through the three dimensions of the causal attribution theory discovered by Weiner et al. (1991), as cited in Tsai (2009): 1.) Stability: the perceiver's belief that a behaviour or event happens either frequently or infrequently. 2.) Locus of causality: the perceiver's lealty that the cause of a behaviour or event comes from internal factors (within the actor) or external factors (in the external environment). 3.) Controllability: the perceiver's reliance that the actor can or cannot control the consequence of an event or behaviour. In the context of a CRM campaign, it is possible to conceptualize positive attribution of the donor brand's motivation through the three dimensions of charity behaviour: 1. Internal locus of campaign causality: driven by a veritable concern of the donor brand for the beneficiaries. 2. Stability of campaign efforts: not a single shot but a recurrence of charity that the donor brand has been performing or has already done for the society. 3. Controllability of campaign results: with a gratifying consequence within the donor brand's competence to succeed. Towards this direction, positive motivational attribution has direct repercussion on purchase intentions of consumers when they are dealing with a CRM offer (ibid.). These arguments suggest the following propositions:

*Proposition 1:* Authenticity is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the financial perspective.

*Proposition 2:* Authenticity is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the product perspective.

*Proposition 3:* Authenticity is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the corporate perspective.

### **CRM Design and Structure**

This category concentrates all the identified success factors that are relevant with the design methodology and the structure of a CRM campaign. First, Singh et al., (2009), through their research, found that repeating claims helps in overcoming consumer scepticism towards CRM offers and therefore, promote CRM success. Consumers often use simple buying heuristics in their decision-making process inasmuch they are not willing to go through all the alternatives the market has to offer. Hence, through repeating CRM claims a firm can gain familiarity among consumers and create positive attitudes by making the brand or the company a part of the customers' evoked set of alternatives (Chang, 2008). In other words, when customers become familiar with a CRM offer, they perceive the message as one they have knowledge of, and thus consider it more honest and truthful. Consequently, the knowledge a consumer has about a company or a brand, affect his or her attitude towards the company's products or services and help create positive feelings towards the organization (Brown and Dacin, 1997, as cited in Singh et al., 2009). Lafferty and Edmondson, (2009), agree with Singh et al., (2009), and they add that the greater the familiarity is, the more extensive the associations are in the brain, and thus the more easily that brand will be accessed from memory. In addition, the authors through their research findings introduce another CRM success factor, the use of the brand photo ad, that has a positive effect on attitude toward the CRM alliance.

Furthermore, Grau and Folse (2007), referred to the donation proximity of a CRM campaign which deals with the distance between the donation activity and the consumer, and can be divided as local, national, or regional (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). From the results, it is illustrated that when CRM campaigns emphasizing specific donations distributed to communities and implemented locally, have positive results. Furthermore, another CRM success factor found by the researchers has to do with the positive message framing which serves as effective message cues to produce favorable CRM outcomes, a success factor with which Tsai's (2009) research results seems to align. Moreover, another key success factor of CRM refers to the donation framing of the CRM offers, in the form of a dollar value per unit which are found more effective than those as a percentage of the sale price (Subrahmanyam, 2004; Chang, 2008). Hyllegard et al., (2011), came up with the same results and they suggested that consumers are more likely to form positive attitudes towards a CRM offer when the amount of the charity is clearly communicated.

Chang (2008), states another CRM success factor, related with the product type. Specifically, the CRM offers related with frivolous products are more effective than those bundled with practical products. Chang, and Sen, (2009), move in the same wave and state that a CRM campaign is more likely to be effective in promoting hedonic products than utilitarian ones. One more CRM success factor is the low donation magnitude. Chang (2008), states that consumers accept a CRM offer easily when the donation magnitude is perceived as low than when it is high. Furthermore, another CRM success factor identified in the literature review relates with the product price. Low-priced items have more success within a CRM campaign than high-priced items (ibid.). In parallel, Cui et al., (2003), came up with another success factor of CRM practice: the type of cause. Disaster can have more positive results on a CRM campaign than an ongoing cause. Hence, causes related with disasters or people in need as a result of a disaster have positive outcomes in the success of a CRM campaign. In addition, Brink et al., (2006), referred to another CRM success factor, the set up of a long-lasting CRM campaigns. Subrahmanyam (2004), states the same success factor and adds that frequent support leads to positive evaluation of the CRM campaign by the consumer.

Continuing, Kim et al., (2010), introduced a new CRM success factor, the company's commitment to CSR. Through the past research it is suggested that the amount of resources invested by an organization in its CRM program, including the duration of the CRM campaign, affects consumer perceptions of the organization's overall commitment to a social cause. The results shows that an organizations strong CSR commitment, leads consumers to ascribe more altruistic and less self serving motives to a company's CRM activity, and to hold more positive perceptions of and favorable attitudes than towards a weaker CSR activity of another company. Also, one of the most important CRM success factors is brand / cause fit that can cause positive impact on consumer choice (Pracejus et al., 2004). In CRM, brand/cause fit originates from multiple sources. A brand could fit with a social cause if both serve a similar consumer base, or fit could be high if a brand and a social cause share alike values. Regarding brand/cause fit, several scholars conducted research that confirm this success factor (Pracejus et al., 2007; Chun Chang, and Sen, 2009; Samu and Wymer, 2009). Lastly, cause dominance is also an important success factor, due to the fact that it leads to higher audience responses, suggesting that the ideal combination is high perceived fit and cause dominance. The research study conducted by Samu and Wymer, (2009), also confirm that cause dominance led to higher values of consumer positivism towards a CRM campaign than brand or equal dominance, showing thus the power of the cause. Consequently, the results of these studies affirm Authenticity that is analyzed in the next subsection, as a crucial category of CRM success. This discussion suggests the following propositions:

*Proposition 4:* CRM design and structure is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the financial perspective.

*Proposition 5:* CRM design and structure is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the product perspective.

*Proposition 6:* CRM design and structure is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the corporate perspective.

### ***Experience***

The third category involves experience and it consists by the single factor of prior brand experience. According to Tsai (2009), various scholars found that prior experience (confirmation bias), exert influence in a higher degree than a systematic processing of freshly availed evidence (diagnosticity). Furthermore, some other scholars, such as Nickerson (1998), Johnson (2001), Holbrook et al., (2005), Wiley (2005), and Pronin and Kugler (2007), as cited in Tsai (2009), conducted several experiments regarding on how prior experience retrieved from memory, creates impact on responses to persuasion attempts and they found that the power of mental antecedents created by prior experience, influences the rendition of newly availed evidence, which results to unfavourable or favourable responses. Hence, having regard to the concept of Cause-Related Marketing, prior brand experience has a greater impact on positive outcomes than a brand that has recently introduced in CRM activities. These arguments support the following proposition:

*Proposition 7:* Experience is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the financial perspective.

*Proposition 8:* Experience is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the product perspective.

*Proposition 9:* Experience is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the corporate perspective.

### ***Socio-Demographic Variables***

This category is comprised by factors that are related with the socio-demographic characteristics of consumers and they intend to identify those consumers who are more susceptible towards a CRM campaign so as to be targeted from practitioners in order to have successful CRM results. From the systematic review of the relevant wisdom it is found that gender plays a crucial role for CRM effectiveness. Moosmayer and Fuljahn, (2010), state that consumer response to corporate social marketing practices, are influenced by gender and it is based largely on differences in their socially attributed roles. In different wording, men and women have different role behaviours, values, and attitudes and through their research study, they found that women have more positive perceptions towards a CRM practice. Concordantly, the research conducted by Cui et al., (2003), came up with the same conclusion and underlined the fact that brands targeting

women have greater opportunities to undertake a successful CRM campaign. In addition, Cui et al., (2003), identified another three socio-demographic factors that lead towards a successful CRM campaign and are related with: the annual income, the academic background, and prior donation activities of the consumers. As regards to the academic background of the consumers, social sciences interact more positively towards a CRM campaign than consumers with natural science background. In terms of the annual income, families that have medium to high incomes are more positive with a CRM offer. Lastly, the same positive attitude occurs with consumers that made prior donation activities. Broderick et al., (2003), and Hyllegard et al., (2011), came up with the same results regarding consumers' prior donation activities. They argued that a key success factor of an individuals' participation in a CRM campaign is the consumer's level of psychological involvement with charitable organizations. Thus, consumers who support the act of giving to charities as personally relevant and important, are more likely to respond in cause related purchasing. These findings can be captured in the following propositions:

*Proposition 10:* Socio-Demographic Variables are positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the financial perspective.

*Proposition 11:* Socio-Demographic Variables are positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the product perspective.

*Proposition 12:* Socio-Demographic Variables are positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the corporate perspective.

### **3.3. Product Innovation and Cause-Related Marketing**

#### **The Evolution of Innovation - Product Innovation**

To start with, several scholars share the view that innovation is mainly concerned with technological advancements and they assume that technological knowledge is the central knowledge for any innovation (Frankelius, 2009). For instance, Garcia and Calanone (2002), define Innovation is a repeating process actuated by the perception of a new market and/or new service opportunity for a technological invention which leads to development, production, and marketing assignments striving for the catchpenny success of the invention. However, there is a significant distinction between these two terms, especially from the point of view of corporate strategy. The rationale behind this conclusion is based upon the following two observations: First, in order for product innovation to occur, technological innovation has to be preceded by concept innovation, and; second, concept innovation sparks off technological and marketing innovation (Orihata and Watanabe). The origins of innovation can be traced back to the era that Latin was not a dead language and it was called "res novae" (Frankelius, 2009). The more modern term "innovation", was firstly used by King Edward VI in 1548, and meant something newly introduced. Thus, from the etymological point of view, innovation refers to something new with a high degree of originality, in any area, and is introduced to consumers via the market (ibid.). Within the pooling of knowledge and management practice about innovation, two major schools of thought emerge: those who deal with product innovation and those who focus on process innovation (Bhoovaraghavan et al., 1996). A product innovation typically pertains to an assembled product ready to be sold to a customer, whereas a process innovation enables new products or improved cost / performance attributes in existing products, and is at least one step away from the purchase possibility by consumers (Maine, et al., 2012). This paper concentrates on product innovation.

To start with, Chen and Liu, (2005), define product innovation as the planning and realization processes that generate or reconstruct a new technological system and supply the needful functions to satisfy the customers' needs. The terminative goal is to provide a solution that can be exploited or accepted by consumers (ibid.). A more analytical definition of product innovation is given by Dougherty and Bowman, (1995), who describe it as a problem solving process in three domains of activity. The first domain deals with the conceptualization of the product design and then bringing it into existence. This domain also encompasses the interaction with consumers in order to understand performance requirements, development and implementation of new technological advancements for product manufacturing and design evaluation. The second domain concerns organization of work across functions. Furthermore, employees must work out problems between departments and operate in multi-disciplinary teams. The third domain has to do with the linkage between the product and the firm's structure, resources, and strategy. Lastly, Cormican, and O'Sullivan, (2004), describe product innovation as a continuous and cross-functional process involving and encompassing a growing number of various competencies inside and outside the organisational boundaries. Simply stated, it is the process of transfiguring business opportunities into tangible products and services (ibid.). For the requirements of this study, the definition of product innovation given by Cormican and O'Sullivan (2005).

As far as concerns the benefits of product innovation, every year organizations spend millions of dollars in research and development activities due to the fact that the reputation of those organizations is inexorably associated with product innovation (Henard and Dacin, 2010). In addition, due to the hyper-competition and turbulent environment in today's era, the pursuit of innovation is often vital to achieve competitive advantage, and the best perhaps "the only" way a business can hope to prosper is to innovate (Li, Su and Liu, 2010). Various studies argue that product innovation enables a company to gain the competitive advantage, establish a leadership position in the market, develop entry barriers, formulate new distribution channels, and gain new customers to advance market position. Therefore, product innovation has an important performance implication (ibid.).

### CSR and Innovation - The Category of Innovation

Moreover, through the review of the relevant literature, the relation between CSR and innovation was hardly investigated. A handful of authors identified a strong relationship between the implementation of CSR practices and resultant innovative and environmental performance (Zwetsloot, 2003; Hanke and Stark, 2009; Boehe and Cruz, 2010). In the same vein, Porter and Kramer (2006) argue that CSR can be a source of competitive advantage, opportunity and innovation. However, product innovation is only an aspect of the notion of innovation and, to our knowledge, there has not been a direct link between it and CSR in terms of Cause-Related Marketing. Thus, from the above discussion supports the following proposition:

*Proposition 13:* Product Innovation is positively related with Cause-Related Marketing practices.

Continuing, this factor cannot be embedded within the aforementioned categories, and thus, we create a new category, named *Innovation*, with which we induce the proposed success factor of CRM. In addition, as it happens with the other categories, we suggest the following propositions in order to examine the relationship of this category with the perspectives of CRM success:

*Proposition 14:* Innovation is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the financial perspective.

*Proposition 15:* Innovation is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the product perspective.

*Proposition 16:* Innovation is positively related with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices in terms of the corporate perspective.

### 3.4 Relationships between Categories

Furthermore, with a view to bridge the aforementioned identified literature with the research gaps and to directly assess the link between the various categories of CRM success discussed, the following propositions are suggested:

*Proposition 1a:* The category of Authenticity has a positive relationship with the category of Experience on CRM success.

*Proposition 1b:* The category of Authenticity has a positive relationship with the category of CRM Design and Structure on CRM success.

*Proposition 1c:* The category of Authenticity has a positive relationship with the category of Innovation on CRM success.

*Proposition 1d:* The category of Authenticity has a positive relationship with the category of Socio-demographic variables on CRM success.

*Proposition 2a:* The category of Experience has a positive relationship with the category of Authenticity on CRM success.

*Proposition 2b:* The category of Experience has a positive relationship with the category of Innovation on CRM success.

*Proposition 2c:* The category of Experience has a positive relationship with the category of CRM design and structure on CRM success.

*Proposition 2d:* The category of Experience has a positive relationship with the category of Socio-demographic variables on CRM success.

*Proposition 3a:* The category of Innovation has a positive relationship with the category of Experience on CRM success.

*Proposition 3b:* The category of Innovation has a positive relationship with the category of Authenticity on CRM success.

*Proposition 3c:* The category of Innovation has a positive relationship with the category of CRM design and structure on CRM success.

*Proposition 3d:* The category of Innovation has a positive relationship with the category of Socio-demographic variables on CRM success.

*Proposition 4a:* The category of CRM design and structure has a positive relationship with the category of Experience on CRM success.

*Proposition 4b:* The category of CRM design and Structure has a positive relationship with the category of Innovation on CRM success.

*Proposition 4c:* The category of CRM design and structure has a positive relationship with the category of Authenticity on CRM success.

*Proposition 4d:* The category of CRM design and structure has a positive relationship with the category of Socio-demographic variables on CRM success.

*Proposition 5a:* The category of Socio-demographic variables has a positive relationship with the category of Experience on CRM success.

*Proposition 5b:* The category of Socio-demographic variables has a positive relationship with the category of Innovation on CRM success.

*Proposition 5c:* The category of Socio-demographic variables has a positive relationship with the category of Authenticity on CRM success.

*Proposition 5d:* The category of Socio-demographic variables has a positive relationship with the category of CRM design and structure on CRM success.

#### **4. AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK**

At this point, the authors analyze the proposed framework for successful CRM practices. To begin with, the results from the literature review, along with the interrelation of product innovation with the concept of CRM, allow their elaboration and figural representation through an integrative framework illustrated in figure 1. Specifically, the framework lists 22 success factors that are divided according to their relevance into five main categories that are combined together in order to form the vehicle towards the CRM success.

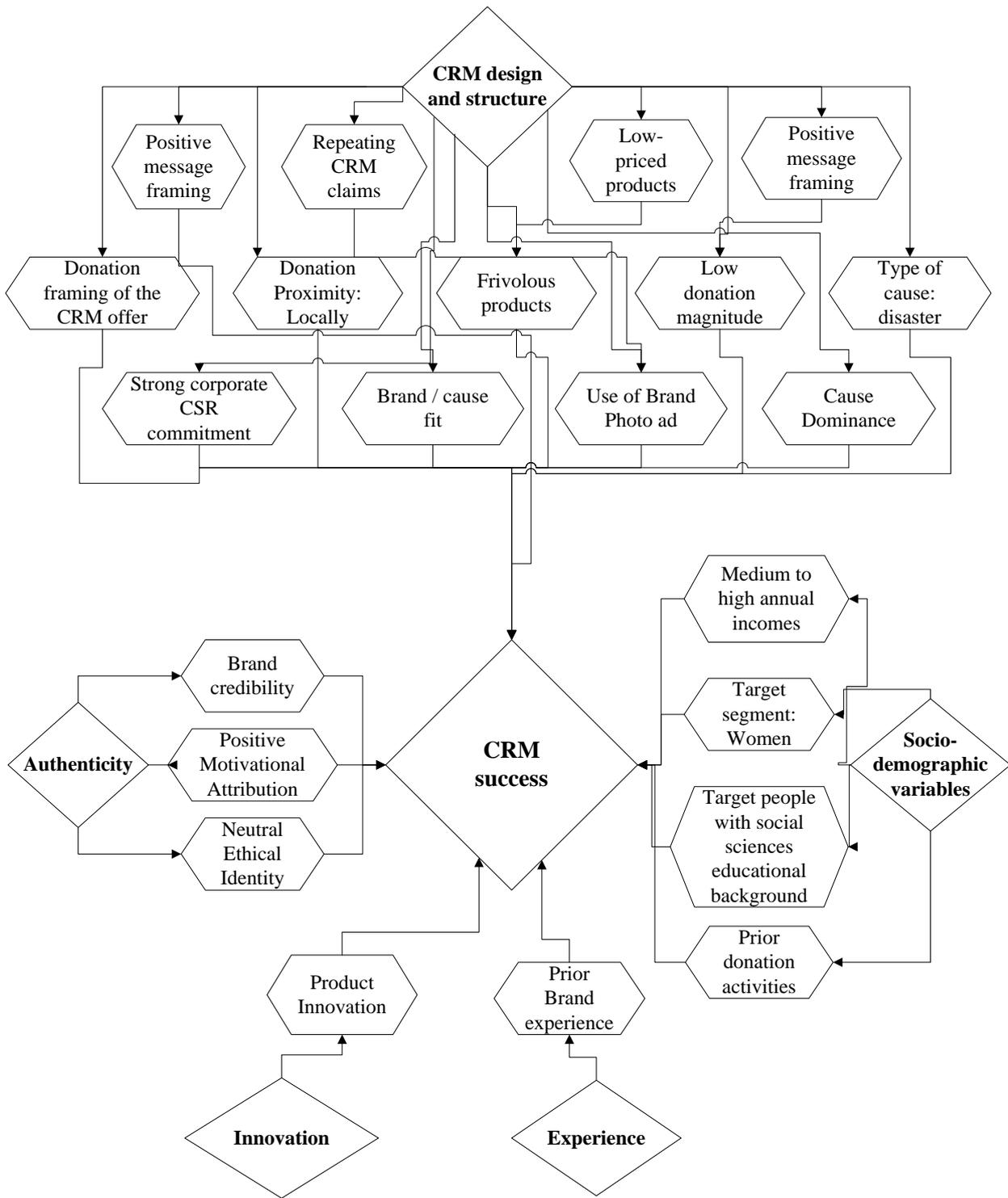


Figure 1: CRM success Index

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING PRACTISE

Even though this article seeks to tie each of the twenty-two aforementioned factors that promote CRM success together in order to create a holistic framework, it is important to analyze how practical this framework is. First, the present conceptual framework represents a standardization that offers marketing practitioners insights into the development and implementation of successful CRM practices. In terms of the financial perspective, money spending towards unsuccessful CRM campaigns will be minimized and companies will gain all the fruitful outcomes that the CRM practice has to offer. This becomes especially significant during the present global economic recession, when organizations reduce their marketing budgets. Furthermore, this conceptualization provides marketing practitioners with a structured and systematic way to think through the design of their Cause-Related Marketing campaigns. Second, the documentation of all the existing success factors of CRM along with the introduction of a new CRM success factor, and the examination of their causal relationship with each of the three perspectives of CRM success, will help marketers understand the weaknesses of their own enterprise in relation to each category and develop alternative solutions in order to raise the level of success in their CRM campaigns. Thus, for example, when a firm lacks experience, it could enhance its Innovation category in order to counterbalance this weakness. Moreover, by assessing a company's current marketing orientation, this CRM success index may also reveal certain disabling points along with the level of readiness of the firm for each of the categories included in the CRM index. Therefore, the proposed framework could act as a forecasting pattern, a guidance model, and such maladies and perhaps low levels of readiness on behalf of the organization can be corrected and improved before the implementation of a CRM campaign. Third, previous research argues that corporate philanthropy positively affects a company's financial performance because decisions associated with charitable contributions can be made strategically not only to enhance the firm's image and reputation, but also to raise the value of its moral capital (Cone, et. al., 2003; Godfrey, 2005). Towards this end, moral capital can purvey shareholders with insurance-like protection for a company's relationship-based intangible assets, and therefore, to enhance shareholder wealth (Godfrey, 2005). Thus, as CRM is part of CSR, with the development of the proposed CRM success index, the fear of failure by marketers when they are conducting a CRM campaign decreases and they are provided with a formula that actually provides the way of successful CRM practices and measures their percentage of success on the outcomes of the CRM campaign.

## 6. ADDITIVE THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper advances several streams of research. First, it adds to the growing body of theory on the field of Cause-Related Marketing. In addition, due to the growth of Corporate Social Responsibility and corporate alliances with non-profit organizations, the potential for further research on cause-related marketing is clear. However, factors leading to the success or failure of cause related marketing practices implemented by for profit organizations, haven't been documented or explored in a methodologically broader way until now (Grau and Folse, 2007; File & Prince, 1998; . Larson, et al., 2008; Moosmayer, and Fuljahn, 2010). To our knowledge, this research is the first that undertakes an extensive and systematic review of the literature, resulting to the identification and documentation of the key success factors of CRM practice. Furthermore, it is the first time that product innovation is hypothesized as a CRM success factor, and at the same time it appears to be the first of its kind to theoretically examine the dynamics implied by synthesizing these, so far, distinct concepts. Furthermore, the combination of the aforementioned success factors into a CRM success formula, comes to close the theoretical gap that was clearly identified by Sorribas (2007), when she stated that '*there is not a single formula that ensures the success of a CRM campaign*'. Even more importantly, the contribution of this research consists in providing an integrative framework for all variables that promote Cause-Related Marketing success. In prior research, these variables have been investigated but each in a separate study, leaving the resulting cumulative knowledge disjointed. By weaving these diverse variables together, the present framework gives a holistic picture of CRM success. In addition, these success factors by themselves do not promote CRM success. However, if they are combined together, as it happens in the proposed conceptual framework, the possibility of achieving CRM success increases and it is possible to determine the level of satiation of previous wisdom related with the discussed topic. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, the proposed framework is the first to discuss a categorization of those variables that promote CRM success and future scholars might find this classification approach utilitarian. In addition, broadly speaking, this paper enhances the research on the sales management literature by introducing guidelines for companies on how to increase their sales performance when they are using Cause-Related Marketing practices. As such, this work enriches prior knowledge by providing five categories of factors that increase purchase intentions of customers when companies promote products and services through Cause-Related Marketing practices. In conclusion, this article introduces a new CRM success framework to existing literature, which constitutes a trail-blazer platform for future research, as it is further analyzed in the next section.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper, as with any other paper, is not without any limitations that bring to light avenues for future research. First, this study developed a model for successful CRM practices based on the combination of antecedent papers and by focusing on the identification and documentation of CRM success factors. Thus, this study can be viewed as a starting point for additional research that needs to be done by the future scholar community, in order to identify other possible factors that

promote CRM success and that they could be added into the CRM success index. Second, the authors conjoined CRM literature and product innovation for the first time, by hypothesizing that the last operates as a success factor for the practice of CRM. However, the authors introduced only one aspect within the field of Innovation. Thus, future scholars could investigate the relation between organizational and process innovation with the success of Cause-Related Marketing practices. Furthermore, according to Stremersch and Van Dyck (2009), although marketing scholars and researchers often yearn to contribute new knowledge that is applicable to all industries, some of them have unique characteristics that yield specific challenges for marketers and thus, they require industry- specific knowledge development. In that respect, academic research could empirically test the proposed conceptual framework in several industries and adjust it according to the industry's characteristics. Another limitation discussed throughout the manuscript, is the fact that this article did not address issues concerning whether there are different relationships between the factors within each of the five categories that they have been divided. Therefore, causal modelling of the relationships between the factors of each category needs to be done in order to measure the impact level of each factor on the overall impact of the category that is linked with the CRM success. If such studies were conducted, practitioners will have a stronger and more accurate basis for conducting successful CRM campaigns. Moreover, the proposed model does not propose the time of action within the lifecycle of the product. Hereupon, further research should assume a longitudinal perspective and measure the outcomes of the CRM success index at different points in time over the life cycle of a product or service in order to investigate if it is influenced and identify the most suitable stage for CRM success index to be applied in order to generate the highest returns. In addition, by determining this relationship, it could offer to marketers insights of how to allocate their budget and resources across the various lifecycle stages of their products or services. Apart from the limitations that have been recognized until now, the current conceptual approach has another limitation when viewed from the cultural perspective. According to several scholars, (Malhotra et al., 1996; McSweeney, 2002; ), there is a vast amount of literature within each of the management disciplines, which assumes that each nation has a distinctive, describable and influential culture which shapes everything, thus, it is necessary to take into consideration the characteristics of individuals (customers), organizations and societies within a nation or region (Sekaran, 1983; Malhotra et al., 1996; McSweeney, 2002). Therefore, in order for the proposed conceptual framework to be cross-cultural, further research is encouraged to perform replications of this framework in several nations or culture groups, so as to culturally differentiate the proposed CRM success index. In addition, it would be especially interesting if future research could provide a framework that includes the adjustments that need to be done in order for the proposed CRM success index to be applicable in the markets of the countries at a specific geographical region or continent. Lastly, given that enterprises vary according to size and consequently have different levels of corporate abilities, it is possible that these realities could influence the way our integrative framework operates. In different wording, the size of a firm could influence the level of the relationship one success category has with the overall CRM success index. Hence, future research should thoroughly explore and determine if this relationship is influenced by the size and the corporate abilities of an organization, and to record possible changes that might occur on the relationship, so as to adjust the CRM success index in several categories of company-sizes and corporate abilities.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a thorough and systematic review of the existing literature on Cause Related Marketing has been conducted in order to identify the key factors that contribute to CRM success. From the review, 21 CRM success factors have been identified and documented into four main categories, according to their area of influence. In doing so, product innovation has been related with the notion of CRM and it was hypothesized as an additional CRM success factor. Furthermore, fifteen research propositions have been developed in order to assess the causal relationship between the five categories of CRM success factors on the one hand, with the three perspectives of CRM success on the other hand, and twenty Null Hypothesis in order to assess if there is a relationship between each of the five categories. Lastly, this paper provides a starting point for scholar research in a field that is deficient in theoretical and empirical research, and offers marketers a framework to implement successful CRM campaigns. Even more importantly, the authors hope that this research sheds light on the conceptual dimensions of CRM success and that further research should empirically validate, on a cross-cultural basis, the foundations laid in this article and accordingly adjust it.

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