On the Moral Value of Cause Related Marketing

By Shamsey Oloko and Ingo Balderjahn

Cause related marketing (CrM) links the purchase of a product to a donation for a charitable cause and has proven itself to be effective in terms of sales promotion and brand building. However, while research on CrM has mainly focused on factors and effects, little is known about how and why CrM causes any impact on the consumer at all. This paper examines the additional value of CrM for the consumer by combining the theory of consumption values with evolutionary, cognitive, and affective theories of pro-social behaviour. Drawing on this combination, the concept of moral value of CrM is introduced and split into six subcomponents which deliver either emotional or social value to the consumer. The concept of moral value is useful to both, marketers and researchers as it provides a first holistic approach for a better understanding of the underlying mechanism of CrM.

This paper is based on the dissertation of the first author under the supervision of the second author. Correspondence on the manuscript should be sent to Shamsey Oloko.

1. Introduction

Cause related marketing (CrM) has evolved to become a popular marketing instrument worldwide. Ever since its inception in 1983, when American Express launched the first national CrM campaign and donated one cent for each use of its credit card and one dollar for every new card issued to the restoration of the Statue of Liberty, spending on CrM has greatly increased in the USA and is expected to amount to a total of $ 1.61 billion in 2010 (IEG 2010). Also, there has been a steady increase in consumer approval of CrM. According to a survey conducted by Cone (2010) in the USA, 88 % of the consumers in 2010 approve of CrM compared to 66 % in 1993.

Varadarajan and Menon (1988, p. 60) were the first to define CrM 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.” This definition refers to a transaction-based perspective and requires a consumer’s purchase for a donation to be triggered off. Other researchers such as Adkins (1999) draw on a broader definition which subsumes – next to the transaction-based donation – all other forms of collaboration between a profit organization and a non-profit organization (NPO). However, since this broader perspective lacks a specific focus and has not been widely accepted in literature on CrM, the definition of Varadarajan and Menon (1988) is applied.

A company may profit from CrM either through an increase of sales or through an enhancement of brand image. Whereas the first can be considered as a company’s major goal when utilizing CrM, the latter has recently gained more and more momentum (Ellen/Mohr/Webb 2000; Pringle/Thompson 1999). The benefits for a company however, rely on the assumption that consumers approve of CrM and are somehow stimulated to buy the product. Only if new consumers are convinced to buy the product and/or old consumers increase their purchase frequency or their purchase quantity, a company will be able to increase its sales. For this to happen CrM must deliver an additional value to the consumers which – all other things being equal – increases the total value of the product and turns it into a superior choice. This additional value is thus crucial for the success of every CrM campaign and has been denoted by other researchers as additional customer value (Polonsky/Wood 2001), increased perceived value (Ross/Patterson/Stats 1992), and direct utility benefit (Krishna/Rajan 2007). Yet, despite its relevance research on this additional value has been rather sparse and concluding the latest comprehensive literature review on CrM Fries (2010, p.156) states that: “it would be most interesting to know which motives prevail when consumers buy CM products, and in a second step, analyse how to address these motives in CM communication campaign.”
Whereas many researchers have not even mentioned the additional value of CrM at all (Barnes/Fitzgibbons 1991; Barone/Miyazaki/Taylor 2000; Barone/Norman/Miyazaki 2007; Broni/Vroni 2001; Hamlin/Wilson 2004; Larson et al. 2008; Olsen/Pracejus/Brown 2003; Till/Nowak 2000; van den Brink/Odekerken-Schroder/Pauwels 2006; Webb/Mohr 1998), others refer to it rather vaguely as a warm glow (Strahilevitz/Myers 1998), a feel good factor (Gohsh/Posa 2006), a positive feeling (Westberg 2004), or a good feeling (Holmes/Kilbane 1993). Others again not only stress an accumulation of positive feelings but also refer to a reduction of negative feelings which adds a second perspective to the additional value of CrM. Examples are guilt reduction (Strahilevitz/Myers 1998), relief at conforming to external social pressures and social norms (Landreth 2002), and easing of negative feelings about not contributing directly to the cause (Gwin 1997). However, only few researchers refer explicitly to pro-social behaviour as the theoretical base of the additional value of CrM (Gwin 1997; Landreth 2002; Strahilevitz/Myers 1998; Westberg 2004; Wymer/Samu 2009).

In summary, three aspects can be emphasized:

1. CrM delivers an additional value to the consumer.
2. This additional value is attached to both, an accumulation of positive feelings and a reduction of negative feelings.
3. The theoretical base of this additional value is rooted in theories of pro-social behaviour.

To date, none of these three aspects has been analysed in more detail. It still remains unexplored why CrM delivers any additional value, why this additional value is attached to positive and negative feelings, and how this additional value is derived from pro-social behaviour. The aim of this paper is therefore to fill this gap by pursuing a two-step approach: First, we draw on a comprehensive and coherent framework regarding the concept of perceived consumer value that is applicable to the intended conceptualization of the additional value of CrM. Second, we draw on theories of pro-social behaviour which illuminate why helping others delivers any value at all.

2. Theory of consumption values as framework

The concept of value is one of the most pivotal concepts of marketing (Holbrook 1999). Every transaction between two or more parties is based on the expectation that each party will be better off afterwards due to an increase of value. Departing from a rather ambiguous understanding of value among scholars, Woodall (2003) has conducted a meta-analysis on consumer value and concluded that there are five distinct meta-categories. One of them is labelled derived value which subsumes only those approaches that are able to describe different value dimensions perceived by the consumer.

Within the category of derived value the theory of consumption values by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991a; 1991b) has been widely accepted in literature. In the course of theory construction the authors have included a variety of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics, and marketing. They have distinguished five distinct value dimensions which they have labelled functional value (the ability of a product to perform its functional, utilitarian, or physical purposes), conditional value (the dependence on the situation faced by the consumer), social value (the ability of a product to convey an image congruent with the norms of the consumer’s friends), emotional value (the ability of a product to elicit either positive or negative feelings), and epistemic value (the ability of a product to satisfy the desire of curiosity, novelty-seeking, and knowledge-seeking). A bottle of coke can quench thirst (functional value), make happy due to its taste (emotional value), convey a desirable user image to the peer group (social value), elicit excitement when being drunk for the first time (epistemic value), and is especially useful after a hard work-out in summer (conditional value). Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991b) assert that every consumer choice is based on three axioms, namely that market choice is a function of multiple values, that these values make differential contributions in any given choice situation, and that they are independent.

Building on the theory of consumption values, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) advance the work of Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991b) by challenging the third axiom of independence. Furthermore, the authors state that price should represent a value dimension on its own and should be separated from functional value. They also discard the conditional and the epistemic value which eventually leads to four core value dimensions: functional value, economic value, social value, and emotional value. A measurement scale based on this conceptualization has proven itself to be valid and reliable (Orth et al. 2004; Sweeney/Soutar 2001).

In conclusion, the theory of consumption values by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991b) with its modifications by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) turns out to be an appropriate framework for describing different value dimensions. It implies that any additional value is built on the four core value dimensions. Consequently, the additional value of CrM must be some kind of composite of the functional, economic, social, and emotional value. This leads to the further conclusion that for any theory of pro-social behaviour to explain the additional value of CrM there must be a link to at least one of these four dimensions. As the functional and economic value do not have an apparent connection to pro-social behaviour, it is to be assumed that only the emotional and social value play an important role in this endeavour. The following section deals with those theories that explain pro-social behaviour, deliver either emotional or social value, and can be applied to the transaction-based donation of CrM.
3. Theories of pro-social behaviour as theoretical base

The theoretical base of the additional value of CrM lies within the theories of pro-social behaviour. Understanding why people help and support each other is of utmost relevance in explaining why CrM can lead to an accumulation of positive feelings and/or a relief of negative feelings. Eisenberg and Mussen (1989, p. 3) define pro-social behaviour as “voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals.” Voluntariness is thus a crucial feature as it excludes any action by professionals such as nurses, firemen, or teachers.

3.1. Relationship between donations and cause related marketing

Pro-social behaviour encompasses a broad spectrum of actions such as volunteering, first aid, moral courage, etc. The pro-social action that comes closest to the transaction-based donation of CrM is a regular donation. Donating money to charity is similar to choosing a product which automatically triggers off a donation. This is due to the fact that in both cases a charitable cause is being supported (goal) and the consumer triggers the donation (cause). However, there are some important differences that distinguish CrM from a regular donation:

1. The company is the donor of a transaction-based donation whereas a regular donation is paid by the consumer.
2. The type of donation cannot be influenced by the consumer. He has to comply with whatever the company is willing to donate – be it money or goods.
3. The amount of money being donated cannot be influenced by the consumer. He may only exert an indirect influence by buying more frequently or a larger quantity.
4. The recipient of a transaction-based donation can usually not be selected by the consumer, whereas a regular donation can be allocated to any preferred cause or NPO.

Nevertheless, in spite of the differences between CrM and a regular donation it can be concluded that the purchase of a product with a transaction-based donation may be perceived as a pro-social action by the consumer which is similar – yet not identical – to a regular donation (Ross/Patterson/Stutts 1992). Therefore, the theories of pro-social behaviour can be applied in order to explain how and why CrM leads to an additional value. According to Do vidio et al. (2006) pro-social behaviour can be separated into three categories: evolutionary theories, cognitive theories, and affective theories. This distinction is only made for analytical reasons as it is to be assumed that all three categories are connected interchangeably in practice. The following sections introduce the relevant theories of pro-social behaviour which can be applied on CrM and which explain the additional value of CrM.

3.2. Evolutionary theories

Evolutionary theories are based on the premise that humans possess some kind of genetic predispositions for pro-social behaviour which have led to an evolutionary advantage. These genetic predispositions do not exert a direct impact on pro-social behaviour but they represent individual prerequisites which are permanently influenced by one’s environment. In other words, the genetic pool of a human being provides the basis for pro-social behaviour and the environment is responsible for its development. Within this stream of research there are three relevant theories that aim to explain pro-social behaviour (Penner et al. 2005). These are kin selection, reciprocal altruism, and group selection. Since group selection explains pro-social behaviour on group level and thus excludes individual motives it does not contribute to the conceptualization of moral value and will be omitted.

Kin selection: This theory states that people are likely to help each other if they are kin to each other. Providing help to relatives ensures the survival of one’s own genetic pool. The concept of survival of the fittest is thus enlarged to the concept of survival of genetic pools (Burnstein/Crandall/Kitayama 1994). In terms of CrM this theory implies that a consumer is by nature more likely to buy a product that is linked to a donation that favours himself or his relatives. For example, if a transaction-based donation supports the fight against cancer and the consumer himself or one of his relatives suffers from this very disease, then there is some kind of individual value derived from the purchase of the respective product.

Reciprocal altruism: Whereas kin selection only explains why humans help their relatives, the theory of reciprocal altruism also explains why humans help friends as well. According to this theory people help each other because they expect to receive a favour in return (Trivers 1971). In terms of CrM this theory implies that a consumer is by nature more likely to buy a product that is linked to a donation that favours himself, his relatives, or his friends. For example, if a transaction-based donation supports a cause that fights against diabetes and the consumer himself, one of his relatives, or one of his friends suffers from diabetes, then there is some kind of individual value derived from the purchase of the product – if he can expect to receive a favour in return.

Despite these explanations it has to be concluded that the evolutionary theories alone are insufficient in explaining the additional value derived from the transaction-based donation of CrM. These theories cannot explain why total strangers without any chance of reciprocal actions help each other – as seen for example by the willingness to donate for Haiti in 2010 or general donations for hunger relief in Africa. According to the evolutionary theories there should also be a preference for social and local causes because any kind of value derived from pro-social behaviour will be maximized under these conditions. Yet, there is also a vast amount of donations for ecological and international causes which once more reveals the
limit of evolutionary theories. Nevertheless, even though these theories are not more than a first approach in explaining the additional value of CrM they are still essential for a better understanding of genetic-related pro-social behaviour.

### 3.3. Cognitive theories

Cognitive theories are based on cultural acceptance of pro-social behaviour that is reflected by general standards of which an individual is aware of. Pro-social behaviour is thus a way to act in accordance with social and personal expectations also labelled as norms and values. These internal and external standards constitute the purpose of social learning as they convey standards of how a person should behave in a particular situation and of how others expect them to behave. Expectations of others refer to social norms and the moment an individual develops its own standards and ideals, a once social norm turns into a personal norm (Schwartz 1973).

Pro-social norms can be split into norms of fairness and norms of helpfulness. The norms of fairness comprise the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), the norm of equity (Walster/Walster/Berscheid 1978), and the norm of justice (Lerner 1980). The norms of helpfulness comprise those norms that deal with social responsibility (Berkowitz 1972; Rushton 1982). These norms are rooted in many religious credos also called Golden Rule. Examples of this credo can be found in Christianity: “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31), Judaism: “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18), or Islam “none of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.” (Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi 13). In terms of CrM the norms of fairness imply that a consumer is willing to buy a product that is linked to a donation because he either expects a return of favour in the future or wants to make up for a favour he has received in the past (norm of reciprocity). He may also consider himself as being more privileged and wants to make equal with underprivileged others (norm of equity). Lastly, a consumer may also want to trigger the transaction-based donation in order to reinstall his world view of fairness and justice (norm of justice). As for the norms of helpfulness, the consumer is willing to buy the product in order to help underprivileged people which he considers to be his duty (norm of social responsibility). Acting in accordance with the norms leads to a reward system. On a personal level there is a reward of gaining positive emotions such as joy and happiness as well as a reward of reducing negative emotions such as guilt or sadness. On a social level there is a reward of social approval by the peer group as well as a reward of avoidance of punishment.

### 3.4. Affective theories

Acting according to cultural norms and values can produce, reduce, and prevent certain emotions. Schwartz (1973, p. 359) argues that “anticipation or actual violation of the norm result in guilt, self-depreciation, loss of self-esteem; conformity or its anticipation result in pride, enhanced self-esteem, security.” This statement indicates that pro-social behaviour is also based on affective theories. Three theories are related to this category: negative state relief model, arousal: cost-reward model, and empathy-altruism hypothesis.

**Negative state relief model:** The negative state relief model has been proposed by Cialdini and his colleagues (Cialdini/Kenrick/Baumann 1982; Cialdini et al. 1987). The authors consider pro-social behaviour as a source of positive emotions which is capable of providing relief to a negative state. No matter why an individual is in a negative state, once he acts pro-socially he receives positive emotions. In terms of CrM this theory implies that a consumer is willing to buy a product that is linked to a donation in order to gain positive emotions which provide relief for the negative state that he is in. The negative state may or may not be directly connected to the awareness of the plight of the supported cause.

**Arousal: cost reward model:** The arousal: cost-reward model has been proposed by Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (1969). Similar to the negative state relief model, the arousal: cost-reward model draws on emotional arousal to explain why people help each other. However, there are two main differences: First, according to the arousal: cost-reward model the negative state which is aimed to be offset by the individual is always directly connected to the awareness of the emergency situation. In regard to the negative state relief model however, the negative state can originate from other sources, for example an argument with a friend. Second, according to the arousal: cost-reward model the negative emotions caused by the emergency situation will be reduced by acting pro-socially. In regard to the negative state relief model the negative emotions will be compensated through positive emotions by acting pro-socially. In terms of CrM this theory implies that a consumer is willing to buy a product that is linked to a donation in order to reduce negative emotions which are caused by the awareness of a plight.

**Empathy-altruism hypothesis:** The empathy-altruism hypothesis has been proposed by Batson (1991). The author argues that an individual can feel the distress of person in need. By contrast to the negative state relief model and the arousal: cost-reward model, the empathy-altruism hypothesis asserts that an individual is not out for gaining positive emotion or reducing negative emotion but for reducing the distress of the person in need. In terms of CrM this theory implies that a consumer is willing to buy a product that is linked to a donation in order to relieve some other person’s distress – provided that the consumer can somewhat “feel” the distress of that very person. Therefore, this theory may only explain the sup-
port of social causes and does not account for the support of ecological causes.

3.5. Self-concept
Cognitive and affective theories attach the motivation for pro-social behaviour to a system of rewards and punishments. Irrespective of a particular theory it is to be observed that both research streams share a common base: the enhancement of self-concept. Self-concept is the composite of beliefs and feelings that is held about oneself at a given point of time. It is based on internal perceptions as well as perceptions of others’ reactions. Individuals strive for a positive self-concept and tend to behave in a manner which protects or enhances it (Dawson 1988; Staub 1984).

Self-concept can be separated into actual and ideal self-concept (Sirgy 1982). This dichotomy explains why people favour self-consistency (“I am a pro-social person therefore I’ll behave pro-socially”) and self-enhancement (“I want to be a pro-social person therefore I’ll behave pro-socially”). Drawing on the work of Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) a further distinction of the self-concept can be obtained. The authors split self-concept into a diffuse self (striving for hedonistic pleasures), a public self (sensitive to the evaluations of others and seeks to win the approval of significant audiences of parents, peers, and authorities), a private self (permits self-evaluation to proceed in the absence of others), and a collective self (the goals of groups with which the person is identified become internalized). Whereas the diffuse self is a rather primitive subsystem, the pursuit of enhancement of the remaining three subsystems is able to explain why pro-social behaviour causes either personal rewards (private self) or social rewards (public and collective self).

Fig. 1 illustrates the connection between the two value dimensions of the theory of consumption values and one’s pursuit of self-enhancement based on pro-social actions. The following section specifies this connection and introduces the concept of moral value of CrM.

4. Moral value of cause related marketing

4.1. Definition
Drawing on the research on CrM, the theory of consumption values, and the theories of pro-social behaviour, the following definition of the additional value of CrM is proposed and labelled henceforth as moral value:

1. The moral value results from the purchase of a product or service advertised with cause related marketing – provided that the transaction-based donation is perceived and accepted by the consumer.

2. The moral value is solely based on the positive social impact of the transaction-based donation and is independent of the consumer’s motivation.

3. The moral value does not represent a value dimension on its own but rather a composite of emotional and social value, which is obtained through the transaction-based donation as an act of pro-social behaviour.

Moral value of CrM can be classified by an either egotistic or altruistic motivation of the consumer and by an either social or emotional value it delivers. Both classifications are discussed in the following sections.

4.2. Types of motivations
Since people donate for either egoistic or altruistic reasons, the same dichotomy can be applied for the purchase of a product with a transaction-based donation. To date, it has been a complex task to differentiate altruism from egoism and there is still an on-going debate on this issue (Bierhoff 2002). Nevertheless, rather than focusing on the question whether or not an altruistic individual receives value for his behaviour, the debate is shifting to the question, whether or not his intentions were altruistic. Edison and German (1995, p. 4) assert that “for egoistic motivation the ultimate goal is to increase one’s own welfare; for altruistic motivation, increasing another’s welfare. Altruism does seem to exist and it is differentiated from egoism by one’s goal for performing the helping act.”

Batson (1991) uses these dichotomous motivations on the theories of pro-social behaviour and distinguishes
three paths which are also applicable to the purchase of a CrM product. The first path states that consumers act pro-socially in order to gain rewards or avoid punishment. This path is thus egoistically motivated. Especially the cognitive theories of pro-social behaviour correspond to this path. Moreover, also the negative state relief model corresponds to this path as according to this theory pro-social behaviour creates positive feelings as reward. The second path is also egoistically motivated but it focuses on the reduction of negative feelings. This path corresponds to the arousal: cost reward model which states that acting pro-socially reduces negative feelings. The third path is altruistically motivated and corresponds to the empathy-altruism hypothesis. An individual strives to reduce somebody else’s distress and is therefore prone to act pro-socially.

In terms of CrM the cause that is being supported through the transaction-based donation is crucial for the (unconscious) selection of a path. Depending on the cause different types and levels of feelings are aroused and a consumer is inclined to receive a positive feeling such as happiness (egoistic), rid himself from negative feelings such as guilt or sadness (egoistic), or to help a person in need (altruistic).

4.3. Subcomponents of value

Reykowski (1982) has been one of the first researchers to point out the connection between satisfaction of needs and pro-social behaviour. According to the author, four different needs regarding pro-social behaviour can be differentiated: ipsocentric (the expectation of social approval), endocentric (the conformity with personal norms), intrinsic (the elimination of a plight), and generalization of personal standards (the support of a person who is emotionally associated with the individual). Combining these four needs with the pursuit of enhancement of the private, public, and collective self and drawing on the theory of consumption values, six subcomponents of the moral value are proposed. They are labelled henceforth as:

1. Social approval
2. Social expectation
3. Reduction of negative feelings
4. Accumulation of positive feelings
5. Empathetic relief
6. (In-)direct reciprocity

The interplay of the theory of consumption values (section 2.), the theories of pro-social behaviour (section 3.), and the theory of self enhancement (section 3.5.) with respect to the moral value of CrM are summarized in Tab. 1. In practice it is to be assumed that the purchase of a CrM product will lead to different levels of value based on various combinations of the stated subcomponents. For example, the subcomponent of (in-)direct reciprocity is likely to be higher when the purchase of the product leads to a transaction-based donation that supports the fight against cancer and the consumer himself suffers from cancer.

4.4. Typology of moral value of CrM

Once the types of motivation are combined with the types of value a typology of moral value is obtained. The major part of the value components are rooted in an egoistically motivated behaviour and only empathetic relief is purely altruistically motivated. The share between social and emotional value components is rather equal.

Empirical findings with regard to the different subcomponents of moral value are summarized in Tab. 3:

**Social approval:** Acting in accordance with pro-social norms may lead to social approval from one’s peer group. In qualitative interviews Radley and Kennedy (1995) have found empirical support for the fact that participants adapted donation behaviour as a result of socialization. Furthermore, these participants stated that they had perceived some kind of social pressure to donate. In terms of CrM there is thus social value derived from acting in accordance with pro-social norms. It is to be assumed that the level of social exposure of the purchase or the consumption of the product influences the level of social value for the consumer. The more a product is either bought or consumed in a socially visible context the more likely an attached transaction-based donation may
lead to social value through social approval for the consumer.

Social expectation: Analogous to social approval, social value through social expectation is also dependent on the level of social exposure. In contrast to social approval however, a consumer does not gain reward but rather avoids punishment from his peer group for not acting according to their expectation. For example, Keating, Pitts, and Appel (1981) have shown that the high effectiveness of calls for donation at work is due to a list of donors which had circulated among all colleagues. Therefore it was highly visible whether and how much a colleague was willing to donate which caused social pressure. For the special context of consumption, Bur-
Table 3: Empirical findings on moral value of CrM

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nett and Lunsford (1994) have proposed the concept of consumer guilt and have separated four different guilt dimensions which they have labelled financial (e.g., spending money on luxury goods), health (e.g., spending money on fast food), moral (e.g., spending money on erotic toys), and social responsibility (e.g., spending money on clothes made by children). The authors further argue that each guilt dimension can be distinguished by state of guilt (anticipatory versus reactive), purchase decision (purchase versus no purchase) and focus of guilt (oneself versus others). In terms of CrM this implies that once a consumer perceives the plight of others this may lead to an anticipatory feeling of guilt (state) before the product is bought (purchase decision) which affects other people (focus). This anticipatory guilt may be fuelled by the consumer’s current situation: if he perceives himself to be privileged the plight of others may arouse a higher level of guilt (Hoffmann 2000).

Empirical evidence in regard to CrM has been provided by Proença and Pereira (2008). As a result of a qualitative interview the authors have pointed out that the majority of participants considered the purchase of a CrM product as a form of compensation for the own privileged situation. Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) call this affect-based complementarity and have presented findings which support the hypothesis that CrM is more effective combined with a hedonic product than combined with a practical product. The first elicits a higher level of anticipatory guilt which can be reduced through the transaction-based donation.

**Accumulation of positive feelings**: Donating money may cause positive feelings such as joy or happiness to arise. Taute and McQuitty (2004) have found empirical support of a positive correlation between the warm glow of giving and donation behaviour. Dunn, Akin, and Norten (2008) have also noticed a significantly positive correlation between donation behaviour and self-reported happiness. Crumpler and Grossmann (2008) have conducted an experimental design and have been able to successfully show the emergence of positive feelings in regard with donations. Harbaugh, Mayr, and Burghardt (2007) as well as Moll et al. (2006) have used a neurological design and have discovered that donations activate the mesolimbic reward system. Thus, in terms of CrM the purchase of a product that triggers a transaction-based promotion is able to raise feelings of joy and happiness as a reward within the consumer.

**Empathetic relief**: Next to the feeling of guilt, empathy is another very important emotional state to explain pro-social behaviour. A consumer who feels the distress of others and who considers the purchase of a CrM product...
as a veritable mean to reduce that distress may gain some kind of relief other than joy or happiness. Since this relief is neither an accumulation of positive feelings nor a reduction of negative feelings, it constitutes a subcomponent on its own. This emotional value is rooted entirely in the empathy-altruism hypothesis and only arises if social causes instead of ecological causes are supported through the transaction-based donation.

(In-)direct reciprocity: The sixth subcomponent of the moral value entails any kind of benefit which is directly linked to the cause itself and affects either the consumer himself or his friends and relatives. The purchase of a CrM product is thus an act of gratitude (e.g., the consumer used to suffer from cancer but has been cured), an act of survival (e.g., the consumer still suffers from cancer and needs science to find a cure), or an act of precaution (e.g., the consumer is healthy but fears that one day he might suffer from cancer). Analysing donor motives Dawson (1988) has come to the result that a past indirect reciprocity (a friend or relative) has caused the participants to donate money. Radley and Kennedy (1995) have come to similar results. The participants of a qualitative study reported that they often support those NPO which deal with a cause that is important to members of their peer group.

4.5. Conceptual model of cause related marketing

When utilizing CrM there are three factors that influence the level of moral value: consumer-oriented (e.g., demographic factors, psychographic factors, etc.), NPO-oriented (e.g., type of supported cause, range of supported cause, etc.), and company-oriented factors (e.g., type of product, size of donation, duration of CrM, etc.). Considering the ability to influence these factors, a further distinction between influenceable (e.g., size of donation) and non-influenceable factors (e.g., average age of target group) can be obtained. Fries (2010) provides a detailed summary of empirical findings with respect to these factors and their effect on relevant dependent variables.

5. Conclusions

CrM has evolved to become a popular marketing instrument which is used throughout the world. However, to date it has remained unexplored why and how consumers are stimulated by CrM to buy a product. This paper strove to define and conceptualize the moral value of CrM. Drawing on current research, it was discussed that CrM delivers value, is associated with an accumulation of positive and a reduction of negative feelings, and is rooted in the theories of pro-social behaviour. Departing from this starting point, the theory of consumption values was chosen to be an appropriate framework for describing different value dimensions. Since the transaction-based mechanism of CrM resembles a regular donation and since the latter is a form of pro-social behaviour, this stream of research was subsequently analysed for further insights. The relevant theories of pro-social behaviour were classified into evolutionary, cognitive, and affective theories. The accumulation of positive feelings, the reduction of negative feelings and the avoidance of punishment were then discussed as the main drivers for pro-social behaviour. By linking the theories of pro-social behaviour to the self-concept it was pointed out that individuals strive to protect and enhance their self-concept which can be achieved by acting pro-socially. Based on the combination of the theory of consumption values and the theories of pro-social behaviour, the concept of moral value of CrM was introduced. Following the proposed definition the underlying motivations for pro-social behaviour as well as the related dimensions of value were outlined before the six subcomponents of moral value were discussed in greater detail.

5.1. Managerial Implications

A marketer can use influenceable factors according to Fig. 3 to exert influence on the total level of moral value perceived by the consumers. He might for example choose to support a charitable cause (NPO-oriented, influenceable factor) which resonates well with his target group’s preferences (consumer-oriented, non-influenceable factor) in order to enlarge the (in-)direct reciprocity value as a subcomponent of the moral value. If the mar-
Another limitation of the concept of moral value of CrM refers to the fact that the consumer must think of his purchase as a pro-social act for any moral value to be derived. Once he considers the donating company to act pro-socially and perceives his purchase only as a necessary prerequisite, the consumer will not experience any moral value at all but rather expresses his approval and thus serves as a social reinforce for the pro-social behaviour of the company.

Despite the lack of empirical evidence, the concept of moral value provides a better understanding of what has been imprecisely called warm glow of CrM. The insights of this paper thus allow marketers to optimize their CrM campaign by influencing those factors that increase one or more of the six subcomponents. This optimization may increase the likelihood of winning new consumers as well as increasing purchase frequency and quantity. For researchers the concept of moral value offers a better theoretical starting point when the influence of factors such as size of donation, duration of CrM, choice of cause, etc. is being explored and explained.

References

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Cause related marketing, corporate social responsibility, moral value, perceived value, pro-social behaviour, warm glow
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