

# Study on The Effect of Cause-Related Marketing Perception on Customers' Out-of-Role Behavior Based on A Moderated Mediation Model

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**Keywords:** Cause-Related Marketing Perception, Customers' Out-of-Role Behavior, Brand Trust, Moral Identity.

**Abstract:** Cause-related marketing, as a new marketing method, has attracted wide attention of scholars. A total of 156 Chinese adults were recruited in this study, and multiple regression equations were used to test the model. Results suggested that cause-related marketing perception were related to customers' out-of-role behavior. Results also supported the mediating role of brand trust and the moderating role of moral identity. This study reveals the significance of cause-related marketing for corporate.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Cause-related marketing refers to the process in which enterprises donate a certain amount of their product sales revenue to specific nonprofit organizations and use it to support related public welfare undertakings. (Wang, 2019) Cause-related marketing, as a type of corporate social responsibility, has been widely concerned by the academic community and the Chinese business community.

The customer's out-of-role behavior refers to the enhancement behavior that is positive and beneficial to the organization's role, and the behavior that is not within the scope of responsibility but outside the scope of work that is conducive to the development of the organization, but it has a significant positive impact on the organization. Customers' out-of-role behavior is of great significance to enterprises.

Previous studies (Zhao, 2007) have shown that consumers, as the main body of modern marketing concepts, influence how enterprises implement cause-cause marketing and its effect. However, there are few studies on how cause-related marketing perception affects consumer behavior, especially customer's out-of-role behavior. Therefore, we study the relationship between enterprises' perception of good cause marketing and customers' out-of-role behavior, and clarify the relationship between the two.

## 2 HYPOTHESIS

### 2.1 Cause-Related Marketing Perception and Customers' Out-of-Role Behavior

In the practice of cause-cause marketing, enterprises can choose to donate a specific amount or a certain proportion of their product sales revenue to public welfare undertakings. Cause marketing in the form of a percentage donation produces better results than in the absolute form, because the abstract amount of giving leads consumers to overestimate the level of corporate giving. This study speculates that cause-cause marketing can lead to a series of positive out-of-role behaviors of customers.

Hypothesis 1: Cause-related marketing perception has a significant positive impact on customers' out-of-role behaviors.

### 2.2 Mediating Role of Brand Trust

Brand trust reveals consumers' evaluation of the products provided by the enterprise. It is believed that customers' trust in brands and enterprises promotes the formation of value perception. Another view holds that the higher consumers' perception of brand value, the higher their trust in the brand will be. Brand trust reflects a kind of reliability, which means that a brand should have enough strength to influence consumer demand. When analyzing the influence of customer's

perception of cause marketing on customer's out-of-role behavior, taking brand trust as a mediating variable can help us reveal the influence of cause marketing on customer's out-of-role behavior more accurately.

Hypothesis 2: Brand trust plays a mediating role between cause-related marketing perception and customer's out-of-role behavior.

### 2.3 The Moderating Effect of Moral Identity

Moral identity refers to customers' perception of the relationship between an enterprise and the public welfare it supports in cause-cause marketing. Moral identity is through a series of individual moral qualities associated with moral behavior combining self-concept, and under the constant collaboration between social norms, and own a stable moral qualities, its essence is a kind of self adjusting mechanism, request individual behavior consistent with the social moral quality, thus enabling individual prosocial behavior. According to social cognitive theory, moral identity is a key psychological mechanism for transforming moral cognition into moral behavior, which is activated by external situational factors. Individuals with different moral identities will have different degrees of activation, which will affect other psychological factors of individuals and show different individual behavioral intentions. In conclusion, we predict that moral identity positively moderates the relationship between customer perception of cause-related marketing and brand trust, and further influences customer's out-of-role behavior through the mediating role of brand trust.

Hypothesis 3: Moral identity plays a moderating role between Cause-related marketing perception and brand trust. The higher the moral identity is, the higher the level of brand trust will be triggered by the perceived cause-related marketing, which will have a positive impact on the customers' out-of-role behavior.

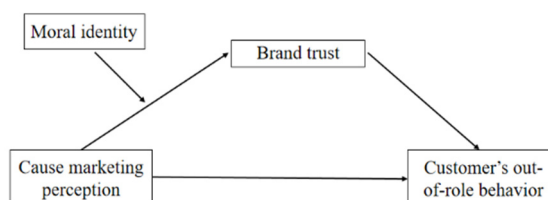


Figure 1: Research Model.

## 3 METHOD

### 3.1 Participants

Based on the form of online questionnaires, 156 questionnaires were collected, and 140 valid questionnaires were left after eliminating invalid samples with many missing values and obvious regularity, with an effective rate of 89.74%. According to the characteristics of the sample, males accounted for 28.6%, and the sample age was concentrated between 18 and 29 years old, accounting for 87.1%. In terms of education level, only 0.7% had a junior high school degree or below, 2.9% had a senior high school degree, 3.6% had a junior college degree, 4.3% had a graduate degree or above, and 88.6% had an undergraduate degree. In terms of monthly consumption expenditure, the proportion of less than 1000 yuan is 8.6%, the proportion of 1000-2000 yuan is 57.9%, the proportion of 2000-3000 yuan is 15.7%, the proportion of 3000-4000 yuan is 5.7%, and the proportion of above 4000 yuan is 12.1%.

### 3.2 Measures

The measurement of cause-related marketing perception is measured by the scale developed in this study, which is divided into two dimensions, namely, self-interested perception and altruistic perception. Each dimension has three items, and the total score is obtained by the reverse scoring of self-interested motivation and the average of altruistic motivation. On a five-point Likert scale, "1" means "strongly disagree" and "5" means "strongly agree." For the self-interested subscale, items such as "I think the enterprise carries out this activity solely for the purpose of enhancing its brand image", and for the altruistic subscale, items such as "I think the enterprise carries out this activity for the sincere purpose of promoting the development of social public welfare undertakings". In this study, the internal consistency coefficients of the egoistic and altruistic subscales were 0.824 and 0.872, respectively.

Brand trust is measured directly by the phrase "more trust in the brand". The 5-point Likert scoring method was used.

Customer's out-of-role behavior scale (Lv, 2012) compiled by Lv Ying and Wei Haiying is used to measure the customer's out-of-role behavior, which contains 14 questions and is divided into three dimensions: "customer voice behavior", "customer recommendation" and "customer help". Items on the

customer behavior subscale are as follows: "I will remind relevant personnel of some inappropriate things in the store, such as out of stock"; items on the customer recommendation subscale are as follows: "I will recommend the store to my relatives and friends"; and items on customer help are as follows: "I will help customers in difficulty". In this study, the internal consistency coefficients of the three subscales were 0.858, 0.780 and 0.880, respectively, indicating that the internal consistency of the measurement tool was high.

The measurement of moral identity was adjusted on the existing moral identity scale and reduced to 5 items. Some qualities is listed, items such as "it is important to me to have these qualities". The reliability analysis shows that the internal consistency coefficient of moral identity is 0.725, and the reliability is good.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Processing

Data was collected online. The study followed the principle of informed consent, and the concept and explanation of "cause-related marketing" were given at the top of the questionnaire. In this paper, SPSS software was used to analyze the data characteristics, multiple regression analysis method was used to verify the relationship between variables proposed by the hypothesis.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Common Method Deviation Test

The results may be affected by the common method bias because the study variables were all self-reported and filled out in a fixed period of time. Harman single factor test is used to judge the common method bias

problem. The variance interpretation percentage of the first common factor is 39.91%, less than 40%, which can be considered that there is no serious common method bias.

### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

The table shows the mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and correlation coefficient of each variable. According to the results in the table, cause-related marketing perception is significantly positively correlated with brand trust ( $r=0.262, p < 0.01$ ), but has no significant correlation with customer voice ( $R = 0.125, p > 0.05$ ), while customer recommendation and customer help are significantly positively correlated ( $R = 0.206, p < 0.05$ ;  $R = 0.232, p < 0.01$ ); Brand trust was positively correlated with customer voice behavior, customer recommendation and customer help ( $r=0.498, p < 0.01$ ;  $R = 0.602, p < 0.01$ ;  $R = 0.596, p < 0.01$ ).

### 4.3 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

In this paper, hierarchical regression model is used to test assumptions. Firstly, the mediating role of brand trust is tested. M2 and M5 shows that cause-related marketing perception had a significant impact on brand trust ( $\beta=0.204, p < 0.05$ ) and customer voice ( $\beta=0.137, p < 0.05$ ), while M6 showed that after brand trust was included in M6, cause-related marketing perception had a small impact on customer voice ( $\beta=-0.0001, p > 0.05$ ), and the influence of brand trust on customer voice was particularly significant ( $\beta=0.484, p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, brand trust plays a full mediating role between cause-related marketing perception and customer voice. In addition, with the Bootstrap, consistent results were obtained (95% confidence interval [0.095, 0.401] of the mediating effect did not include 0). Similarly, brand trust plays a full

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficient of Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Gender	1.71	0.453									
2.Age	2.15	0.522	0.061								
3.Education level	3.93	0.504	0.004	0.014							
4.Monthly consumer expenditure	2.55	1.130	0.042	0.629**	-0.133						
5.Cause-related marketing perception	3.17	0.605	0.182	0.098	0.241**	-0.030					
6.Moral identity	3.31	0.639	-0.045	0.144	0.141	0.157	0.106				
7.Brand trust	3.74	0.843	0.013	0.170*	0.278**	0.104	0.262**	0.507**			
8.Customer voice	3.67	0.841	-0.028	0.302**	0.058	0.163	0.125	0.618**	0.498**		
9.Customer recommendation	3.59	0.828	0.040	0.189*	0.067	0.125	0.206*	0.650**	0.602**	0.707**	
10.Customer help	3.80	0.754	0.048	0.306**	0.132	0.158	0.232**	0.601**	0.596**	0.778**	0.761**

Table 2: Results of Regression Analysis 1.

Variable	Brand Trust			Customer voice			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
<b>Control variables</b>							
Gender	0.002	-0.34	0.009	-0.086	-0.118	-0.087	-0.0166
Age	0.127	0.97	0.095	0.525**	0.501**	0.426**	0.2724
Education level	0.285**	0.239*	0.202**	0.083	0.046	-0.148	-0.0927*
Monthly consumer expenditure	0.063	0.083	0.000	-0.025	-0.018	-0.048	-0.1259*
<b>Independent variable</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception		0.204*	0.25*		0.137*	-0.001	0.0062
<b>Mediator</b>							
Brand trust						0.484**	0.2480
<b>Moderator</b>							
Moral identity			0.621**				0.4867
<b>Interactive item</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception * moral identity							0.0268
R <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.145	0.315	0.097	0.106	0.307	0.6928
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.037	0.17	0.097	0.009	0.201	0.3858
F	4.062	4.536	10.201	3.626	3.168	9.827	15.1167

Table 3: Results of Mediating Effect Analysis 1.

Acting path	Direct effect			Indirect effect		
	Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval	Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval
Cause-related marketing perception - brand trust - customer voice			Lower limit Upper limit			Lower limit Upper limit
	0.0062	0.0680	-0.1283 0.1407	0.248**	0.0776	0.0945 0.4014

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis 2.

Variable	Brand trust			Customer recommendation			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
<b>Control variables</b>							
Gender	0.003	-0.063	0.009	0.052	-0.008	0.029	0.041
Age	0.025	0.156	0.095	0.271	0.227	0.134	0.088
Education level	0.477**	0.400**	0.202**	0.111	0.042	-0.196	-0.130*
Monthly consumer expenditure	0.047	0.062*	0.000	0.019	0.033	-0.004	-0.060
<b>Independent variable</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception		0.284	-0.250		0.257*	0.088	0.072
<b>Mediator</b>							
Brand trust						0.594**	0.372**
<b>Moderator</b>							
Moral identity							
<b>Interactive item</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception * moral identity			0.209*				-0.0003
R <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.145	0.561	0.041	0.073	0.385	0.740
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.037	0.170	0.041	0.032	0.313	0.355
F	4.062	4.536	10.201	1.446	2.100	13.891	19.766

mediating role between cause-related marketing perception and customer recommendation, customer help.

Secondly, the moderating effect of moral identity is examined. As shown in Table 2, the product coefficient ( $\beta=0.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) of cause-related marketing perception and moral identity in M3 was

significant. In addition, as shown in Table 8, the moderating effect was significant at both high and low levels of moral identity (95% confidence interval excluding 0).

Table 5: Results of Mediating Effect Analysis 2.

Acting path	Direct effect				Indirect effect			
	Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit			Lower limit	Upper limit
Cause-related marketing perception - brand trust - customer recommendation	0.0715	0.0635	-0.0541	0.1971	0.3715**	0.0724	0.2283	0.5148

Table 6: Results of Regression Analysis 3.

Variable	Brand trust			Customer help			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
<b>Control variables</b>							
Gender	0.003	-0.063	0.052	0.048	-0.006	0.026	0.039
Age	0.205	0.156	0.290**	0.461**	0.422**	0.345**	0.244**
Education level	0.477**	0.400**	0.034	0.185	0.123	-0.076	-0.056
Monthly consumer expenditure	0.047	0.062	-0.116	-0.018	-0.006	-0.037	-0.105
<b>Independent variable</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception		0.284*	-0.402**		0.229*	0.087	0.076
<b>Mediator</b>							
Brand trust						0.498**	0.359**
<b>Moderator</b>							
Moral identity							0.403**
<b>Interactive item</b>							
Cause-related marketing perception * moral identity			0.269**				0.014
R <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.145	0.424	0.111	0.141	0.406	0.584
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.037	0.283	0.111	0.030	0.265	0.178
F	4.062	4.536	16.330	4.212	4.407	15.171	9.736

Table 7: Results of Mediating Effect Analysis 3.

Acting path	Direct effect				Indirect effect			
	Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval		Effect of value	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
			Lower limit	Upper limit			Lower limit	Upper limit
Cause-related marketing perception - brand trust - customer help	0.0759	0.0650	-0.0527	0.2045	0.3592**	0.0742	0.2125	0.5060

Table 8: Results of Regulatory Effect Analysis.

Moderator	Level of moderator	Effect value of cause-related marketing perception-brand trust	Standard error	95% confidence interval	
				Lower limit	Upper limit
Moral identity	High level	0.0246	0.0257	0.0279	0.0765
	Low level	0.0577	0.0341	0.0032	0.1343

## 5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based on the above data analysis, we find that cause-related marketing perception can fully mediate the role of brand trust in influencing customers' out-of-role behaviors. Meanwhile, the impact of cause-related marketing perception on brand trust is moderated by customers' moral identity. In other

words, Moral identity moderates the first half of the path of "cause-related marketing perception - brand trust - customer's out-of-role behavior". Our hypothesis test was validated.

### 5.1 Theoretical Significance

Cause-related marketing perception has a significant positive impact on customers' out-of-role behaviors through brand trust. As a new marketing method, the



relationship between corporate cause-induced marketing perception and customers' out-of-role behaviors has not been paid much attention by scholars. This study responds to the call to strengthen the research on cause-related marketing perception and customers' out-of-role behavior in the future.

## 5.2 Practical Significance

Study found that cause-related marketing perception has a positive effect on customers' out-of-role behavior, so the enterprise should pay attention to launch the marketing of the good karma, cooperate with public welfare institutions to take more social responsibility. It will not only improve the customers' perception of enterprise, enhance the customers' trust and loyalty, it will also encourage the growth of customers' out-of-role behavior, including customer help to create a good marketing environment for enterprises, customer voice for enterprises to provide more constructive suggestions, customer recommendation for enterprises to bring more customers and thus bring higher profits. By revealing the positive impact of cause-related marketing perception on brand trust and customers' out-of-role behavior, this paper calls on enterprises to carry out cause-related marketing, encourage more enterprises to take social responsibility, and realize the coordination and consistency of corporate goals and social goals.

## 5.3 Limitations

Firstly, the number of questionnaires collected in this study is small, the results are prone to deviation, and the data is not representative. More samples can be collected in future studies to continue to verify the correctness of the conclusions in this paper. Secondly, the research method adopted in this survey is questionnaire, and the source of the survey design is all self-assessment results, and it has strong relevance to the context of the questionnaire items, which is highly subjective. In addition, all the data are self-reported and collected at the same time. Therefore, common method differences may be a problem, and causal inference is not guaranteed. In order to avoid common method bias, future research should consider using other people's data (e.g., family and friends' evaluation of their customers' external behavior, i.e. whether or not they recommend companies that implement cause-cause marketing to them) as external validation, rather than relying solely on the sample's own self-assessment.

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