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Cause-related marketing for disaster risk reduction in the tourism industry: A comparative analysis of prevention- and recovery-related campaigns

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ABSTRACT

An increasing number of companies are using Cause-related Marketing (CrM) to fund-raise in support of disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities. This study presents a comparative analysis of two CrM campaigns promoted by a tourism firm in order to improve disaster prevention and recovery of the destination. The results highlight that European tourists belonging to generation Y process prevention- and recovery-related stimuli in different ways. Prevention-related campaigns appear to be generally more effective than recovery-related campaigns. Interestingly, taking in consideration only less-involved to the cause consumers, the intention to participate to the campaign slightly increases in the presence of recovery-related instead of prevention-related cause suggesting further investigation focused on this trend. Theoretical contributions refer to the increased understanding of how tourists elaborate the concept of prevention and recovery from a message framing theory perspective. The paper concludes with managerial implications and opportunities to leverage disaster-oriented CrM campaigns in order to protect hazard-exposed communities.

1. Introduction

Climate change has led to an increasing number of natural hazards (Maon, Lindgreen, & Vanhamme, 2009) resulting in numerous disasters occurring in vulnerable destinations (Oosterhof, Heuvelman, & Peters, 2009), especially in developing nations which are typically remote and not well prepared to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. The interaction of hazards, such as droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, extreme temperatures, floods, insect infestations, mudslides, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and wild fires (Hood & Jackson, 1992; Oh & Oetzel, 2011) and the vulnerability of exposed elements, such as people, infrastructure, ecosystems, etc. (IPCC, 2014) facilitate disaster occurrence. These disasters are typically accompanied by extreme levels of human suffering (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Skitka, 1999). The victims of disasters need help and it is fundamental to identify the factors that lead people to donate to support the affected communities and facilitate recovery operations (Oosterhof et al., 2009). Cause related Marketing (CrM) campaigns are a type of fundraising that may contribute to these causes.

CrM is a common type of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative (Nan & Heo, 2007) and is today commonly a part of corporate marketing strategies also in the tourism industry (Doster & Tyrrell, 2011). CrM has been identified as one of the CSR initiatives that "Do Better by Doing Good" (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988), as it not only increases a company's revenues but also contributes to societal welfare (Nan & Heo, 2007). CrM practices fall into three main categories: "transactional programs", "message promotions programs" and "licensing programs" (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). The first is the typical form of CrM and consists of a promise to donate a certain amount of money to a non-profit organization or a social cause when customers purchase a company's products or services (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005; Nan & Heo, 2007; Pracejus, Olsen, & Brown, 2003; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). In "message promotion programs" firms promote a cause and give donations. However, the activity is not tied to a transaction and the donations are not necessarily monetary (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). In "licensing programs" non-profit organizations license their names and logos to a company and "a percentage of every transaction is then given to the non-profit" (Berglind & Nakata, 2005).

From the classic American Express campaign launched in 1983 in support of the renovation of the Statue of Liberty (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988) to the more recent and ethically relevant Yoplait "Save Lids to Save Life" program, thousands of companies have engaged in CrM (Nan & Heo, 2007). An increasing number of tourism companies are currently promoting CrM campaigns, and many are based on disaster-related causes (e.g. Hilton Responds, 2015; IHG Shelter in a Storm, 2015; Marriott, 2015; etc.). These companies attempt to engage consumers in disaster-related causes with the aim of fundraising money to support hazard-exposed communities. At the same time, this consumer engagement can improve the brand image and better persuade

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consumers to buy the services offered, as this will result in a donation. Campaigns based on disaster-related causes and focused on the post-disaster stage have been found to be more efficient (Ellen et al., 2000) than those based on on-going causes (i.e., a donation to a charitable group that supports a cause in the mid-long term) (see Ellen et al., 2000). However, losses can not only be reduced in the post-disaster phase. The grade of resilience of a society is based on the capacity to anticipate disasters, cope during them and recover after them (Birkmann et al., 2013), so pre-disaster mitigation is also fundamental (He & Zhuang, 2016) and crucial disaster-mitigation interventions need to be realized during the so-called pre-event stage (Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004). To increase resilience, interventions are needed in all three components identified by Birkmann et al. (2013), with their relevant consequences in terms of resources, including monetary funds.

Academic research on CrM mainly focuses on two areas: the general response of consumers to CrM and the related effects of different types of CrM (Nan & Heo, 2007). However, it has been suggested that research should further explore the factors that encourage favorable CrM evaluations among consumers (Grau & Folse, 2007) and our study provides additional evidence in this direction through proposing one experiment to compare consumer's behaviors in the presence of disaster-prevention versus disaster-recovery messages. To the best of our knowledge, no research has compared the efficacy of CrM campaigns developed to support a community after a disaster has occurred with those developed to avoid disaster occurrence. This research addresses this issue by identifying the most effective communication strategies that could be adopted by tourism-related firms actively involved in supporting hazard-exposed communities.

The tourism industry has been selected as the study's context as an increasing number of tourism firms promotes disaster-related CrM campaigns and academic studies are needed in order to support these activities through providing insights and suggestions able to maximize the effectiveness of these marketing campaigns (Aliperti, Rizzi, & Frey, 2018). The few contributions focusing on disaster-related CrM (Ellen et al., 2000) are not investigating the opportunities that may emerge by targeting different aged groups. Considering that it is not possible to investigate all the generations in a single study, our aims at contributing in that sense through proposing an analysis of Millennials' behaviors (Gen Y). Consumers born between 1980 and 2000 (Gurău, 2012) correspond to the most significant emerging market (Chhabra, 2010). Millennials have a larger disposable income and spend more than older generations (Gurău, 2012). From this perspective, a good understanding of Millennials' planned behavior represents a good opportunity for designing and implementing successful CrM campaigns.

We developed two fictitious campaigns in the hospitality sector that refer to a real event that had a low media coverage in Europe: the Madagascar floods between the end of February and the beginning of March 2015 that led to 19 deaths and 37,000 displaced people (European Investment Bank, 2016; FloodList, 2015). The cause of the campaign was selected because, even if Madagascar is constantly prone to flood-related disasters, the information regarding the vulnerability of this area has limited visibility in those countries (as for instance European countries) that, having better economic condition and an increasing awareness regarding the importance of disaster prevention (European Parliament, 2013), may contribute to provide resources and funds to facilitate a disaster risk reduction. Therefore, the study is focused on European tourists, which are exemplar for their donation potential and for their relative lack of awareness on Madagascar priorities. A comparative analysis has been developed to test the moderating effect of different consumer involvement on consumers' attitude and intention to participate to the CRM campaign. Finally, we analyse corporate social responsibility as a mediating variable.

In section 2, we offer a conceptual background to the link between CrM and disaster-related causes. In section 3, we explain the process of creating the two fictitious campaigns and the questionnaire. We then describe the sample, the data collection process and the statistical analyses. Later, we report (section 4) and discuss (section 5) the emerging results. After highlighting managerial implications and limitations of the study, we conclude the paper in section 6.

2. Conceptual background

The success of CrM campaigns tends to be influenced by the consumers' involvement to the cause, which can be defined “as the degree to which consumers find the cause personally relevant” (Grau & Folse, 2007). In this study, we consider the concept of cause-involvement described by Grau and Folse (2007). In particular, personal relevance is described as “*the level of perceived personal importance and/or interest evoked by a stimulus within a specific situation* (Antil, 1984)*, and is based on inherent needs, values, and interests* (Zaichkowsky, 1985)” (Grau & Folse, 2007). Literature on CrM suggests that consumers involvement depends on several psychological (Moratis, 2016), motivational (Chaudhry & Gupta, 2015), socio-demographic (Arnold, Landry, & Wood, 2010; Corbishley & Mason, 2011; Demetriou, Papasolomou, & Vrontis, 2010; Hyllegard, Ogle, Yan, & Attmann, 2010; Jacobs, 1995; Vaidayanathan, Aggarwal, & Kozłowski, 2013; Winterich & Barone, 2011), geographical (Corbishley, 2014; Gupta, Kamal, & Chaudhry, 2015; La Ferle, Kuber, & Edwards, 2013; Lavack & Kropp, 2003; Thakur, 2014) and cultural (Kim & Johnson, 2013) factors. Their involvement also depends on levels of moral judgment and guilt (Baghi, Rubaltelli, & Tedeschi, 2009; Chang, 2011), compassion and pride (Staton, Paharia, & Oveis, 2012), religiosity (Hammad, El-Bassiouny, Paul, & Mukhopadhyay, 2014; Paquier, 2015), altruism (Bigné-Alcañiz, Currás-Pérez, & Sánchez-García, 2009; Guerreiro, Rita, & Trigueiros, 2015; Nguyen, 2015), the firm's perceived altruism (Myers, Kwon, & Forsythe, 2012; Pérez & Bosque, 2013; Tsai, 2009) and skepticism (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; Elving, 2013; Kim & Lee, 2009; Manuel, Youn, & Yoon, 2014; Singh, Kristensen, & Villaseñor, 2009; Thakur, 2014).

More in general, the level of perceived importance tends to be influenced by past experience with the cause or by their self-concept (Grau & Folse, 2007). Taking in consideration a disaster-related cause, past experience may refer to the fact that the consumer has personally experienced a disaster; instead, the self-concept may be described as an increased awareness on the importance of disaster preparedness based on personal beliefs. Consumers may not use cognitive pathways during the decision-making process (Hoek & Gendall, 2008) and, particularly referring to disasters (Ellen et al., 2000), people tend to abandon their typical self-interest behavior due to the presence of situational needs (Skitka, 1999) and consumers are more likely to be altruist (Ellen et al., 2000). The situational needs include the precipitating event, the degree of devastation, the needs of the victims, and the geographical proximity of the victims; all these elements will influence the grade of consumer involvement (Ellen et al., 2000).

The inclusion of prevention- or recovery-related messages may influence the manner in which the message is processed and, in turn, influence consumer's behavior (Grau & Folse, 2007). Current literature on involvement and message faming suggests that these two dimensions are logically connected (Grau & Folse, 2007). The framing theory explains that gain- and loss-framed messages generate different outcomes (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), which gives useful directions also for the design of CrM campaigns (Grau & Folse, 2007). Previous contributions have examined the role of various factors in influencing the creation or modification of frames (Scheufele, 1999), providing sometimes opposing results. In terms of persuasion, for example, some studies state that positive framing tends to be more effective (Levin & Gaeth, 1988), while other investigations suggest that negative framing performs better (Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987). This theory has been developed following two main research streams, one sociological (Entman, 1991; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Gitlin, 1980; Goffman, 1974) and the other one psychological (Domke, Shah, & Wackman, 1998; Iyengar, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) (Borah, 2011). Borah (2011) notes that, over the years, research has focused on the psychological process

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