

Cause-Related Marketing and Its Impact on Consumer Behaviour: An Investigation with FMCG Brands

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Abstract: The company's charitable endeavours were seen as more important to its long-term competitiveness than its short-term efforts to boost sales and build its reputation. When CSR and marketing are properly combined, an organisation can benefit greatly. CRM is a technique that integrates and endorses CSR with marketing tactics. CRM can influence organisational operations and contribute to developing a socially conscious and long-lasting company. As consumer-brand identification, or CBI for short, promotes customers to form enduring relationships with brands, the interest of consumer behaviour researchers in this endeavour is understandable. The foundational theories on which the notion of CBI is built are Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory. This research explores cause-related marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour with FMCG brands. There is a shortage of research available in the context of the Indian market. There is limited evidence of any research that has ever integrated and investigated CRM and CBI concepts together. The study's findings highlight that cause-related marketing strategies exhibit a beneficial impact on consumer behaviour. These findings hold valuable insights for marketers and can guide FMCG brands in crafting effective CRM strategies tailored to specific FMCG brands. Moreover, the study outlines future research prospects and further exploration.

Keywords: Cause-Related Marketing (CRM); Brand Warmth; Brand Prestige; Brand Experience; Consumer-Brand Identification; Brand Loyalty; Social Identity Theory; Self-Categorization Theory.

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1. Introduction

Over time, shifts in the social, cultural, and economic landscape have altered consumer expectations of companies, influencing how business is conducted. Bhatti et al., [8]. These transformations have given rise to new ideologies and concepts. There is anticipation that organizations will actively contribute to the well-being of both consumers and society. In response to evolving consumer demands for social responsibility, marketers are compelled to incorporate such considerations [1]. As a result, there is an increasing need to put marketing strategies into practice that maximize profits, satisfy customers, and fulfill a company's obligations to the nation, the environment, and society [4]. This has given rise to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A company's philanthropic endeavours are deemed vital for its long-term competitiveness, prioritizing enduring benefits over short-term efforts to enhance the image and boost sales Srivastava, [24]. When Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is

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effectively intertwined with marketing, it has the potential to yield substantial advantages for an organization. Cause-related marketing (CRM) represents an approach wherein CSR is embraced and integrated into the marketing strategy [10].

According to Varadarajan and Menon [20], CRM serves as a CSR initiative with the goal of “Doing Better by Doing Good,” simultaneously boosting organizational revenue and contributing to societal welfare. CRM involves the fusion of a business’s social responsibility and profit generation, encompassing contributions to a social cause, sales, and consumer engagement. By influencing organizational activities, CRM can foster sustainable and responsible business development. Existing literature Bhatti et al. [8] posit that brands play a crucial role in fulfilling consumers’ self-definitional needs and that the symbolic role of brands assists consumers in identifying with them. In recent decades, marketing and consumer behaviour researchers have increasingly explored how individuals, including employees, consumers, and professionals, establish connections with organizations and the subsequent impact of this identification on their behaviour [11].

Consumer behaviour researchers find justification in their focus on Consumer-Brand Identification (CBI) as it fosters enduring relationships between consumers and brands. Grounded in the underlying philosophies of Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, CBI is conceptualized. Santoro et al. [6] literature indicates that the evolution of the consumer-brand identification concept is rooted in Social Identity Theory. At the same time, Self-Categorization Theory is seen as the mental state of connection and proximity between consumers and brands, arising from evaluating consumers’ self-identification with an organization. In the contemporary landscape, Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) has emerged as a frequently employed strategy to cultivate brands with distinct personalities that cater to the self-definitional needs of consumers, thereby fostering Consumer-Brand Identification. The literature also suggests a connection between CRM and CBI [12].

Prior research by Singh & Pathak [2] indicates that Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) serves as a noteworthy aspect of a company’s image, automatically piquing consumer interest due to the inherent complexity of this construct. According to the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) report, as discussed in previous sections, the FMCG sector ranks as the fourth largest, displaying promising signs of growth. The FMCG industry, Soni et al., [30] being an early adopter of CRM strategy, has witnessed its widespread adoption by both national and multinational companies. Anticipations suggest that the utilization of this distinctive strategy will continue to rise in the future. Despite the increasing importance and acceptance of CRM strategy in India, there exists limited knowledge concerning customer reactions to the CRM strategy and their evaluation of the associated brand/company [25].

CRM yields various benefits for organizations, consumers, and charitable causes. Its widespread acceptance is attributed to consumer responses, such as improved attitudes, purchase intentions, prestige, overall experience, sales, and brand profitability [13]. However, it is not guaranteed that every company implementing a CRM strategy will positively impact consumer behaviour. Consumer Brand Identification represents the ultimate stage where consumers engage with a product/brand and align themselves with it, leading to positive attitudes, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth [15]. Marketers aspire to foster brand loyalty, and CRM can serve as a transformative strategy for achieving higher goal realizations. In the Indian market, there is a notable lack of information on this topic, highlighting the need to explore and propose a viable model for the effective implementation of CRM strategy [16].

One significant research gap identified is the limited exploration of CRM strategy’s various dimensions and outcomes, particularly in developed nations, making generalization challenging [26]. There is a shortage of literature on the Indian market, particularly regarding studies that combine and examine CRM and CBI principles [17]. It is imperative to investigate this link in light of the findings of the literature that CSR and CRM strengthen the bond between products and customers. Managers will be more equipped to apply this method to produce identification behaviour with the help of such exploration [22]. As a result, the study’s findings will add to the body of knowledge already in existence and provide insightful information for marketers looking to improve the way their CRM strategy is implemented. In addressing the research problem outlined earlier, the researcher has formulated key research questions to enhance comprehension and implementation of the CRM strategy within the FMCG sector [27]. These questions specifically target consumers of FMCG brands that have incorporated CRM strategies.

- Can a CRM strategy be transformative in the Indian FMCG landscape?
- What are the results and impacts of an FMCG company adopting a CRM strategy?
- Is CRM strategy a viable tool for fostering consumer brand identification?
- Does consumer brand identification have an impact on consumer loyalty?

This study aimed to investigate the influence of CRM strategy on consumer behaviour. To comprehend this influence, the study delved into CRM-based consumer brand identification and analysed its impact on brand loyalty. The specific objectives were as follows:

- To assess the impact of Cause-Related Marketing on outcomes such as Brand Warmth, Brand Prestige, and Brand Experience.
- To analyse the influence of Cause-Related Marketing outcomes on Consumer-Brand Identification.
- To examine the impact of Consumer-Brand Identification on Brand Loyalty.

2. Literature Review

2.1. CRM on Brand Warmth

According to Christian et al. [23], Consumers often associate emotions and sentiments with a brand, significantly influencing their behaviour. Customers seek a connection with brands boasting a strong reputation, as it positively impacts their social self-concept. Cause-related marketing (CRM) serves as a manifestation of an organization's commitment to societal values. Successful implementation of CRM strategies has empowered companies to enhance their corporate image and bolster brand reputation. Brand Warmth, representing consumers' perception of a brand's quality, becomes more favourable when CRM strategies are effectively executed, leading to increased profits and heightened employee loyalty.

Effective CRM implementation contributes to societal well-being, strengthens the brand, and elevates the overall company reputation. The advantages of CRM extend to generating trial opportunities, boosting sales, fostering consumer loyalty, and enhancing both company and brand warmth. Essentially, the charitable endeavours, CSR activities, and community investments undertaken by the organization offer avenues for establishing connections with stakeholders while simultaneously playing a pivotal role in elevating the company and brand reputation [29]. The strategic deployment of Cause-Related Marketing fosters goodwill within society, further fortifying and nurturing company and brand warmth.

H1: CRM has a direct and positive effect on Brand Warmth

2.2. CRM on Brand Prestige

According to Baek [28], Numerous studies highlight a positive and direct correlation between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and brand prestige. According to existing literature, consumers are more likely to be drawn to a company that demonstrates social responsibility and embodies desired qualities, such as pro-social values that align with their philanthropic inclinations. CSR imparts enduring pro-social associations to a brand, intuitively elevating its prestige. A company communicates its organizational culture through CSR activities, establishing a distinct image that resonates with customers and garners positive attention from the broader public. The influence of CSR on brand prestige contributes to an enhanced brand appeal, fostering a positive image for the brand.

H2: CRM has a direct and positive effect on Brand Prestige

2.3. CRM on Brand Experience

Brands carry symbolic significance, serving as a means for consumers to convey their values, beliefs, and desired identity to the external world. According to Khan & Fatma [9], consumers focus on their personal consumption and consider the broader impact on the community, leading them to align themselves with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. In consumers' eyes, a company's credibility and reputation are boosted through its CSR activities. Consumers perceive socially responsible organizations as providing a better overall experience.

Consequently, it becomes imperative for companies to develop Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) strategies that enhance their overall consumer experience and contribute to the positive development of consumer-brand identity. When companies actively engage in social causes through various CSR activities, they enhance their image and cultivate valuable assets such as experience and reputation. The impact of CSR activities extends far beyond the trustworthiness of the company, influencing the overall consumer experience positively.

H3: CRM has a direct and positive effect on Brand Experience

2.4. Brand Warmth on Consumer- Brand Identification (CBI)

As evident from the discussion, a brand holds a significant role in an individual's life. Consumers tend to gravitate towards brands with a strong market reputation, finding comfort in their association. A positive brand warmth still builds confidence in consumers and encourages them to connect with the organization. Stokburger-Sauer et al., [18]. This positive warmth contributes to Consumer-Brand Identification (CBI) development, particularly for buyers seeking public acceptance. Satisfied

consumers exhibit a more favourable brand identification, emphasizing the importance of a reputable brand perception in fostering repeat purchases. Therefore, organizations that enhance the product and its warmth can anticipate a heightened level of brand identification. From the consumer’s perspective, aligning with a well-reputed brand fulfills their self-esteem needs and contributes to self-enhancement (Figure 1).

H4: Brand Warmth has a direct and positive effect on Consumer- Brand Identification

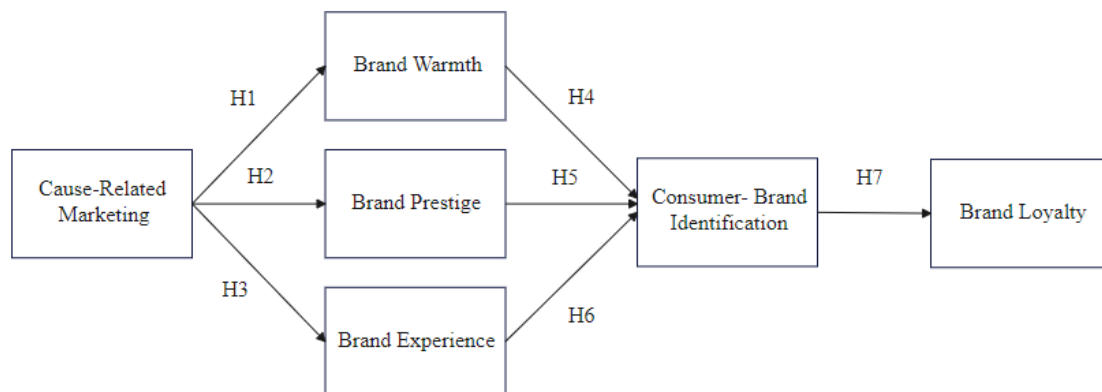


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

2.5. Brand Prestige on Consumer- Brand Identification (CBI)

According to Gilal et al. [5], multiple studies have explored the concept that a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-based identity provides consumers with a prestigious motive for choosing and establishing a connection with a particular organization. Brand prestige, defined as the extent consumers perceive a brand as distinct from others, plays a crucial role in fostering this connection. Consequently, consumers, perceiving uniqueness as indicative of superior value and higher quality, develop a connection with the brand.

To address the inherent tension between the desire to belong to a group and the aspiration to stand out, a theoretical framework emphasizes how individual identification can be enhanced within a group context. This theory recognizes the inherent conflict between the need for group affiliation to experience a sense of belonging and the simultaneous need for differentiation. The link between an individual and another brand’s consumer is termed communal brand connection, while the intensity of this connection is called personal brand connection.

H5: Brand Prestige has a direct and positive effect on Consumer- Brand Identification

2.6. Brand Experience on Consumer- Brand Identification (CBI)

The existing Coelho et al. [21] indicate that researchers have recognized trustworthiness and expertise as two crucial sub-dimensions of experience. Trustworthiness signifies the willingness to fulfill promises, while expertise suggests the capability to deliver. Brand experience encompasses the cumulative interactions between the brand and the consumer, evolving as consumers cultivate a relationship with the brand. The brand experience has the potential to foster increased consumer brand affiliation, regular purchases, and a sense of obligation. These affiliations mature over time and become integral components of consumers’ identities. Therefore, brand experience is instrumental in cultivating Consumer-Brand Identification.

H6: Brand Experience has a direct and positive effect on Consumer- Brand Identification

2.7. Consumer- Brand Identification on Brand Loyalty

Existing research indicates that Consumer-Brand Identification (CBI) plays a crucial role in fostering brand loyalty, significantly contributing to a company’s financial performance and long-term success. Brand identification serves as a pivotal

precursor to brand loyalty. Furthermore, CBI acts as a deterrent against customers switching brands. When consumers identify with a brand, it profoundly influences their purchasing behaviour, leading to brand loyalty. This loyalty is manifested in various ways, such as a willingness to try new products from the same company, repeated purchases, and positive word-of-mouth promotion.

The relationship between a consumer's long-term brand loyalty and identification is highlighted in the 2013 study on consumer behaviour by Mishra et al. [7]. Customer loyalty is significantly impacted by consumer-brand identification, especially consumer-company identification. As a result, the ability of Consumer Brand Identification to predict future brand loyalty also encompasses consumers' intention to remain loyal to the brand, whether through future purchases or ongoing support.

The accessible material has been methodically and logically arranged into discrete topics for this investigation. The main goal of this study is to examine how CRM strategy affects consumer behaviour in the context of FMCG brands. As a result, the literature analysis focuses on identifying CRM as a strategic strategy, analysing the consequences and relationship between CSR and CRM, and the interplay of CRM with various cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

H7: Consumer- Brand Identification has a direct and positive effect on brand loyalty

3. Research methodology

Understanding and analysing the impact of CRM strategy on consumer behaviour is the goal of this study, which focuses on consumer brand recognition, loyalty, and advocacy in the FMCG industry Soni et al., [30]. In order to accomplish this, two FMCG brands in the Indian market were carefully chosen, taking into account their extensive experience implementing CRM strategies. These brands were selected following discussions with professionals from the academic and business worlds. For respondents to choose the brand of their choosing to respond to questions about it, the questionnaire included a stimulus brand. It was discovered that to elicit consumer responses, a reputable and well-known brand is necessary.

Given the diverse socio-demographic backgrounds of the respondents, the chosen brands aimed to accommodate these variations, allowing respondents to relate and provide meaningful responses. Nestle's "Educate the Girl Child" campaign and ITC's "Classmate" stationery brand have been chosen for analysis along with their corresponding CRM campaigns. Both brands collaborate with schools to improve education for underprivileged girls, including early childhood programs and remedial classes. To this end, Nestle has collaborated with numerous non-governmental organizations. The biggest notebook brand in India is called ITC's Classmate. A donation of one Re is made with every ITC Classmate notebook purchase to support rural development and children's education. Every classmate's notebook has a social message written on it. ITC is holding a CRM push in which the business contributes Rs. 1 to various social causes, mostly those supporting the elementary education of poor youngsters, for every four notebooks sold. In 2009, this campaign got underway.

The survey method was employed for this investigation. For the survey method to be useful, a sample must represent the population for results to be generalized. A sample can be chosen in various ways, depending on the nature of the study and the analysis that will be conducted. The researcher can select a sample that accurately reflects the population's variability by employing a systematic approach to sample selection.

Most consumers of FMCG products were aware that respondents and sampling components may make up the CRM strategy. The elements of the judgmental sample were college students, individuals from the corporate sector, government workers, professionals, self-employed individuals, and homemakers over the age of twenty who resided in Chennai were the judgmental sampling elements for this research.

Chennai was selected as the sampling area for this study because it has a diverse population and fierce competition in the FMCG goods industry. With non-probability sampling, the researcher's judgment is crucial as the likelihood of selection is uncertain. In non-probability sampling, the distribution of population attributes is assumed to be uniform. After incomplete submissions were eliminated, 339 questions in total were included in the final analysis.

This study analysed the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique using the SMART-PLS software. SEM was essential for complex analyses and assessing latent components and variables. We first used the Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker criterion as part of the SEM procedure. After that, the structural model was evaluated using the SMART-PLS tool by the methodology.

Using the standards, the measurements' validity and reliability were analysed. This study employed seven distinct constructs: (a) Cause-related marketing, (b) Brand Warmth, (c) Brand Prestige, (d) Brand Experience, (e) Consumer brand Identification, and (f) Brand Loyalty. These constructs were adapted from previous studies with minor modifications.

4. Results

This study seeks to determine how cause-related marketing affects customer behaviour within the given context. Three hundred thirty-nine selected consumers included Chennai-based homemakers over 20, professionals, government workers, businesspeople, and college students. An overview of the polled consumers' demographic characteristics, the data which revealed that 59% of respondents were female and 41% of respondents were male, was collected using judgemental sampling. The age range of the majority of participants was 75%, 20 to 30 years old, and 61% had completed post-graduate studies. Furthermore, the majority of respondents, 42%, belonged to the upper middle-income level.

Table 1 shows how important it is to examine the construct validity and reliability of the study. It also gives an overview of how effective the assessing approach was. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha were used to evaluate the constructs' dependability. Scores from 0 to 1 are produced using Cronbach's alpha, with a value of more than 0.7 indicating strong internal consistency. Consistency within the range of 0.5 to 0.7 is regarded as intermediate. Factor analysis evaluates the study's convergent validity, i.e., whether the questionnaire replies are trustworthy enough to support the research findings. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE), a critical index for convergent validity analysis in Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), is employed to quantify the correlations between the components on a Likert scale.

Table 1: Construct Validity and Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Cause-related Marketing	0.894	0.745	0.578
Brand Warmth	0.821	0.849	0.546
Brand Prestige	0.880	0.914	0.558
Brand Experience	0.791	0.751	0.748
Consumer-Brand Identification	0.842	0.881	0.712
Brand Loyalty	0.864	0.795	0.570

Cronbach's alpha values exceed 0.5, suggesting that the evaluated items are sufficiently dependable to support the research. This degree of reliability is appropriate for assessing the validity of a construct, the acceptable range for each construct, which includes cause-related marketing (CA = 0.894, CR = 0.745, AVE = 0.578), Brand Warmth (CA = 0.821, CR = 0.849, AVE = 0.546), Brand Prestige (CA = 0.880, CR = 0.914, AVE = 0.558), Brand Experience (CA = 0.791, CR = 0.751, AVE = 0.748), Consumer-Brand Identification (CA = 0.842, CR = 0.881, AVE = 0.712) and Brand Loyalty (CA = 0.864, CR = 0.795, AVE = 0.570).

The Brand Experience values are below 0.7, yet they are still considered valid indicators for making inferences since they are not excessively low. To show convergent validity, each item loading for a latent concept must be at least 0.5 and statistically significant, as shown by a correlated p-value of 0.05 or below.

Table 2: Discriminant validity Fornell – Larcker criterion

Construct	CRM	BW	BP	BE	CBI	BL
CRM	0.876					
BW	0.471	0.814				
BP	0.464	0.794	0.745			
BE	0.557	0.741	0.712	0.789		
CBI	0.512	0.654	0.678	0.630	0.732	
BL	0.423	0.512	0.541	0.514	0.592	0.764

Among the Six latent constructs, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this criterion, the off-diagonal coefficients should be less than the square roots of the amount of variance extracted (AVEs). The values are smaller than 0.876. Furthermore, ratios ought to be less than 0.90. Table 2 shows that every construct exhibits discriminant validity based on the above criteria.

Table 3: Path Co-efficient

	Path Coefficient
Cause-related Marketing -> Brand Warmth	0.221
Cause-related Marketing -> Brand Prestige	0.215
Cause-related Marketing -> Brand Experience	0.462
Brand Warmth -> Consumer Brand Identification	0.410
Brand Prestige-> Consumer Brand Identification	0.494
Brand Experience -> Consumer Brand Identification	0.235
Consumer Brand Identification -> Brand Loyalty	0.424

The statistically significant association between cause-related marketing, brand warmth, brand prestige, brand experience, consumer brand identification, and brand loyalty, using path coefficients (Table 3). The findings indicate that positive cause-related marketing in the Brand warmth would raise the likelihood of a consumer brand experience. The findings show that the three elements of Cause-related marketing, Brand prestige, and consumer-brand identification have a statistically significant impact with a path coefficient above 0.25.

The findings show that cause-related marketing outcomes will play an important role when consumer-brand identification occurs. Additionally, the three components of a consumer attitude, Brand warmth, Brand Experience, and Brand loyalty, have a statistically significant impact on CRM purchase intention, with a path coefficient of 0.448. H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 and H7 are therefore supported. For every path coefficient (β), the positivity and statistical significance are both high ($p < 0.05$).

5. Discussion

This thorough study advanced knowledge of CRM strategy and offered insightful information about how CRM strategy affects customer behavior. In the Indian market, the payback of the CRM strategy's explanatory power has increased. Because most of the proposed hypotheses and correlations between the variables (CRM and its outcomes, outcomes of CRM and CBI, and CBI and Brand Loyalty) were supported by the previous study, the findings were more widely applicable, Moharam et al. [19] were supported for the Indian FMCG market. This study sheds light on a fresh perspective for academics who want to investigate CRM strategy within the context of customer behaviour. The success of the CRM strategy was the subject of earlier research, which was expanded upon in this study.

This study was also unique in that it offered an integrated CRM framework that causes brand identification in a way that empirically makes the model testable. Here, existing and novel characteristics were combined to give researchers a platform to assess how CRM affects consumers' behavior responses to FMCG products. An integrated framework of several unexamined variables for the Indian FMCG market was built in Kannaiah & Jayakumar's [3] study. Combining these variables, brand warmth, prestige and experience, CBI, and brand loyalty, discussed in separate studies, the researcher hopes to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding CRM and its possible significance on consumer behavior.

Most of the suggested links were supported in the Indian situation by empirically testing the assumptions. Understanding how CRM can lead to consumer-brand interactions through identification can be aided by investigating the suggested relationship between the selected factors. This study presents CBI as a desired and achievable result of CRM. The marketing literature has widely accepted CBI. Lastly, because there is a shortage of research in CRM and CBI, this model can assist other researchers with more complex tests.

6. Conclusion

Under the general heading of CSR, CRM is a newly developed tactic that is well-liked in developed and developing countries. CRM is useful for both new and established brands. A new brand may become more well-known when associated with a cause, and for well-known businesses, CRM can create an emotional connection between the brand and the cause. Additionally, the domains of psychology, consumer behaviour, and marketing have all been extensively discussed and reported on CBI. A small number of the investigations focused only on specific identification results. However, Lee & Johnson [14] have researched studies integrating CRM with consumer-brand identification and analyzing the effects of this integration on customer loyalty.

This study is one of the few conducted in India that has carefully examined how CRM affects FMCG brand consumers. The study's conclusions have implications for academia and management. It adds to the body of knowledge since it incorporates

ideas that have received less attention and does so to comprehend how they affect consumer behavior. This study hypothesized and empirically tested the existence of a relationship between CRM and its results, CRM results, and CBI, and CBI and loyalty. Additionally, this study offers several tactics marketers in the FMCG industry can use to improve brand identification and loyalty.

The study's conclusions advise marketers to use strategic CRM when management is highly and actively involved in the strategy, when the company's and brand's chosen cause is highly congruent, when the donation amount is substantial, and when the campaign's duration should be increased. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a CRM strategy might be an essential tool for building and strengthening the brand's warmth, experience, and prestige. Marketers aim to accomplish these crucial marketing results through efficient and creative marketing strategies. Warmth, prestige, and experience can offer tremendous advantages in the FMCG sector, particularly the competitive edge. It was proposed that the results, namely the CRM's brand experience and warmth, could also contribute to CBI. Long-term advantages, such as brand loyalty, may result from a consumer's ability to relate to the company.

Since it has been shown that CRM affects brand loyalty, it has been proposed that this tactic can benefit the FMCG sector, where winning over customers has never been easy. Ultimately, this study opens up new avenues for investigation because there is a shortage of empirical and theoretical research in this area. It also offers a framework for implementing CRM strategy and building relationships between brands and consumers. Additionally, this study can be repeated in other sectors and cultures with larger sample sizes and alternative approaches. In summary, CRM is a fantastic tactic that FMCG brand marketers can utilize to their advantage if they execute it well.

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Ethics and Consent Statement: This research adheres to ethical guidelines, obtaining informed consent from all participants.

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