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## **Cause Related Marketing and Its Impact on the Purchasing Behavior of the Customers of Bangladesh: An Empirical Study**

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**Abstract:** Marketing, now, is not merely about only the market. The focal point is getting wider day by day. The companies are devising different schemes to contribute to societal development activities along with their attainment of corporate goals and objectives. Cause related marketing is one of those tactics that enables the marketers to involve the customers directly into the process. This study tries to portray whether the customers purchasing behavior or brand preference are influence by such marketing program. The demographic variables have great influence on the purchasing decision making process of customer. Whether that is also being influenced by companies cause related marketing program is also explored here. The findings have showed that a customer is influenced by the companies' cause related marketing programs while adopting a new brand or executing its purchase intension and the customers prefer to support generally health and life saving issues.

### **Introduction:**

In the late fifties of the last decade Paul M. Mazoor termed marketing as the delivery of lifestyle to people. Philip Kotler, in agreement with that idea, coined that the *delivery* should be made for customers' satisfaction. Thus, with elapsing of time, focal points of marketing changed—obviously towards the benevolence of consumers, intermediaries and environment in the long run. Apart from behaving responsibly in terms of corporate governance an financial reporting, businesses engage in a number of practices designed to engender positive attitude and comment from major external publics that include their customer base (Potter and Adam, 2005). The current date marketing theory and application, conceiving the gist of the earlier ones, focus on building up association with the society in large scale because it is the relationship or feeling of bondage that thrusts a twenty first century conscious person to be a consumer of any organization. Customers and marketers consider relationship to be the most significant issue in case of business. Cause Related Marketing is a marketing program of business organizations in pursuit of their maintenance of multi faceted relationship with different parts of the society. Some other terms are used to describe such activities

of the companies but now a days cause related marketing is more commonly used (Adkins, 1999; Drumright 1996:). Through Cause Related Marketing companies bridge itself very integratedly with the members of the society by doing well to the society. There is growing evidence to suggest that consumers are willing to use their purchasing power to reward or punish companies based on their social responsibility (Creyer, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen and Morwitz, 1996). Cause-related marketing as a marketing strategy is developing in an environment of increasing consumer interest in corporate social responsibility (Cunningham, 1997; Ptacek and Salazar, 1997; Sen and Morwitz, 1996). In the early eighties of last century this concept got immense popularity after a successful innovation and implementation by American Express Bank. The companies in the third world countries like Bangladesh are also Springboarding this concept in order to present their inclination in contributing social issues and to involve the customers in the entire process.

### **Objective:**

This study has been endeavored to contribute to the achievement of the following objectives:

- To identify the level of the consumers understanding and attitudes towards cause-related marketing.
- To measure the proportion of consumers within the sample are/were influenced by cause-related marketing in their shopping habits.
- To identify whether the customers' perception, preference and attitude toward a brand and company is affected by the latter's involvement with cause related marketing.
- To identify the issues/charitable causes those are most likely to influence purchase behaviour.
- To identify reasons that might work as the deterrents for the consumers to respond against cause-related marketing.
- To identify whether there exist and relationship between the consumers' demographic variables (age, education, income etc.) and overall perception about/support for cause related marketing.

### **Background/ Review of Literature:**

Intense competition, both locally and internationally, has forced business to adopt new strategies to develop a sustainable competitive advantage, while becoming more accountable for business expenditures (Cunningham 1997; Kotler and Andreason, 1996; Polonsky and Macdonald, 2000). Finally, customers are becoming increasingly demanding, both in terms of price and quality, as well as the firm's social responsibility (Cunningham, 1997; Ptacek and Salazar, 1997; Sen and Morwitz, 1996). With the elapsing of time various factors rose in the society that pushed and pulled the private sectors to rethink their relationship to their communities. In the recent days, in the basket of the companies societal contributory programs cause related marketing has got great acceptance due to its two edged benefit. Cause related marketing is a mutually benefited commercial pact between a profit making company and a non profit organization with a view to assist the nonprofit organization in raising fund or to benefit the society by supporting a *cause*. P.R. Varadarajan and A. Menon (1988) have seen Cause Related Marketing in the early stages but absolutely in a projective way. They defined Cause Related Marketing 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. Kevin Keller and Philip Kotler (2006), in agreement with Varadarajan and Menon Cause related Marketing is that marketing activity that links the firm's contributions to a designated cause to customers' engaging directly or indirectly in revenue-producing transactions with the firm. On the other hand, "Cause marketing is the action through which a company, a nonprofit organization, or a similar entity markets an image, a product, a service, or a message for mutual benefit [of the entity and the cause]," writes Marconi in the first-chapter of the book *Cause Marketing*. Barone, Miyazaki and Taylor (2000) noted that there are actually two approaches to cause related marketing. The direct approach, described above by Varadarajan and Menon, links the size of donation to sales of particular products. An example of this is Panadol's current campaign to donate 10c to breast cancer research for every packet of pink Panafen tablets sold. The second approach is indirect, providing no clear link between revenue achieved and size of donation. An example of this is Telstra's support of the Childline charity. Adkins (1999) the pioneer writer to conceptualize the theme and application of Cause Related Marketing claimed that this tool puts the organization in a win-win situation in the society as it produces the organisation as a good corporate citizen.

Formally the world has seen the advent of Cause Related Marketing in the early 80s of the last century initiated by American Express Bank. It was actually the brainchild of *Jerry C. Welsh*, then the chief of worldwide marketing of American Express Company. He declared a plan that promised to a make 5 cent donation to the arts in San Francisco every time someone used an American Express card and \$2 every time American Express got a new number. Amazingly, within three months the campaign raised 108,000 US dollar. It was an actually a pilot approach which projected a great success ahead. Later the bank launched different cause related marketing projects in the upcoming years for the causes like restoration of Statue of Liberty, Charge against hunger etc. (Kotler, 2004). However, cause-related marketing remains complex and uncharted territory for most organizations. They have to not only weigh up whether the resources can be justified by measurable returns, but also make decisions about the nature of their commitment. One survey found that over 300 companies had associated themselves with breast cancer charities, the majority of whom became "lost in the sponsorship clutter" (Belch and Belch, 2001). The organizations lost their individual identity. In addition to this, several organizations had chosen causes in which their target markets had no interest and even consider off-putting (Belch and Belch, 2001).

From the consumers' point of view the trends that thrust the origin of Cause Related Marketing were growing level of education of consumers, skeptical role of business and people tend to respond "good hearted" firms (P. Kotler and A.R. Andreasen, 1995). From the business perspectives the trends that laid the foundation for Cause Related Marketing are differentiating factor, gain gratis publicity and enhancing the image (Graham, 1994). Other than these triggers that were hailed as the underpinnings of the origin of Cause related Marketing like internal marketing tool, flexibility and relationship enhancer (Kotler and Andreasen, 1995). As nonprofit organizations face decreased government funding and corporate philanthropy, the growth of this strategy presents new opportunities. Although both academic and practitioner research has indicated strong consumer support for the concept of cause-related marketing, there has been limited research to date regarding the effectiveness of this strategy in terms of actually changing brand attitude and influencing purchase intention (Westberg and Pope, 2005).

Several American studies suggest that cause-related marketing has a significant impact on consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour. Longitudinal research by Cone (2002) suggests that 78% of

Americans believe companies have a responsibility to support social issues, 92% have a more positive image of companies and products that support causes and 84% would be likely to switch brands to one associated with a good cause, if price and quality were similar. Research by Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) was less conclusive: 41% of respondents believed cause-related marketing had little impact on their consumption, however, 25% said that cause related marketing was a primary influence on their purchase decisions. This led the authors to conclude that: “a substantial, viable, and identifiable market segment exists that considers a company’s level of social responsibility in its purchase and investment decisions” (p.12). Research in Australia has also found strong consumer support for cause-related marketing. One study found that 49% of respondents were prepared to switch brands to one that supported a worthy cause, 40% would prefer to purchase a brand associated with a good cause, if price and quality were equal and 83% of respondents believed it was good for Australian companies to participate in it (Worthington Di Marzio, 2001, cited in Cavill & Co., 2001).

In New Zealand, Chaney and Dolli (2000) found that 57% of respondents remembered purchasing a product that involved a cause-related marketing campaign. In 15% of these cases, the respondents had switched brands because of the campaign. Carrigan and Attalla (1991, p. 570) have identified barriers to the success of cause-related marketing. The primary barrier is described as the “extended cognitive effort” required to participate in socially responsible consumption. This is supported by the work of Titus and Bradford (1996, cited in Carrigan and Attalla, 2001) who found that consumers’ access to information is increasing, but the pressures on their time are also increasing to the extent that they are unable to utilize this information. In view of current lifestyle trends, the time available for thoughtful purchasing behaviour may be limited.

If a brand’s association with a cause is to have an effect on consumer behaviour, the success of this strategy may rely on the existence of a socially conscious consumer. That is, it relies on a consumer whose purchase behaviour will be influenced by an opportunity to help others (Webster, 1975). With regard to the influence of individual characteristics on purchase behaviour, Beatty, Kahle, Homer and Misra (1985) suggest that, ‘...values underlie the consumption behavior and are thus more inherently useful than demographics in understanding attitudes and behaviors’ (p.184). Several attempts have been made to profile consumer segments most responsive to cause related marketing. Webb and Mohr (1998) identified four types of consumers in relation to their attitudes towards cause-related marketing. However, Australian research found little association between personality type and the influence of ethical issues on purchase behaviour (Auger, Burke, Devinne and Louviere, 2003). This study did report a strong association between ethical influences on purchase and several demographic variables, such as age and gender. The finding is supported by another Australian study (Kropp *et al.*, 1998, cited in Chaney and Dolli, 2000), which found that women were more favorable to cause-related marketing campaigns. In Summary, research in the US and Australia indicates that consumers are supportive of companies getting involved in social issues. Public opinion is increasing in strength on these issues with recent surveys reporting that 84% of consumers in the US and 40% of consumers in Australia would change purchase behaviour because of cause-related marketing, if price and quality were equal. However, experimental research illustrates that consumers have in the past rarely ‘walked the talk’. In Australia, an industry report on fundraising sources indicates that while donations by individuals have been increasing, philanthropic giving by corporations has been steadily declining (O’Keefe and Partners, 2000). Given the challenges that are currently faced by both business and nonprofit organizations, cause-related marketing may be an attractive strategy for both parties (Ptacek and Salazar, 1997).

## **Hypotheses drawn:**

The exploration of the secondary literature and interview with the company officials have contributed in the development of the following hypotheses.

### ***H1: Cause-related marketing will generate a positive change in consumers' attitude towards the promoted brand, if they are aware of that.***

- 1.1 I will change a brand if the company is not involved in any cause related marketing.
- 1.2 I will patronize that brand which has any involvement with cause related marketing.
- 1.3 I believe to obtain more satisfaction from a brand that supports a social cause.
- 1.4 In case of purchasing a new brand I will choose that which is involved any how in cause related marketing.
- 1.5 My perception toward the brand or the company changes if it is found to be involved in cause related marketing.
- 1.6 A brand affiliated with a cause can always carry the best benefit.

### ***H2: Consumers' purchase intention will be enhanced if they are well aware of the cause related marketing program of the company.***

- 2.1 In order to support a cause related marketing program I, as a customer, may incur additional costs.
- 2.2 I, as a customer, sometimes consider quality of the product to support cause related marketing program.
- 2.3 Sometimes I buy such products which are not necessary to me but do that only to support that cause.

### ***H3: Consumers support those causes spontaneously which are strategically fitted with the brand and are related to them personally or socially.***

- 3.1 I support that causes of any organization with which I, as a customer, can affiliate myself or any of my closed ones.
- 3.2 I expect that there will prevail a synergy between the cause and brand personality.
- 3.3 The image and the cause must be well supported in order to get support from the customers.
- 3.4 The most effective cause used in a cause-related marketing campaign is one which is not normally associated with the organization's interest.

### ***H4: Positive attitude toward cause related marketing is a reflection of positive attitude toward charitable activity.***

- 4.1 The more often a person donates to charitable organizations and causes, the more positive the attitude toward cause-related marketing activity.
- 4.2 Respondents preferences for the type of cause they would most like to see supported in cause related marketing activity are similar to causes to which individuals prefer to donate directly.

### ***H5: Overall the customers are satisfied with the cause related marketing strategy of the companies***

- 5.1 I think every company should be involved in supporting contemporary causes.
- 5.2 I will recommend others to patronize cause relating marketing programs.

### ***H6: People prefer to support local causes than international one***

**H7: *There is a strong relationship between customers' age and overall attitude toward cause related marketing.***

**H8: *Cause related marketing is strongly affected by the gender.***

**H9: *More educated customers tend to show greater support for cause related marketing***

**H10: *People with substantial income are more inclined to support cause related marketing***

### **Methodology of the study:**

The study has initially focused on qualitative research to conceptualize the issues of cause related marketing from the perspective of customers. Few hypotheses which were also developed tested through survey method under quantitative research. To conduct the study, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires (Malhotra, 2005). The questionnaire was designed to collect information about the brand preference, purchasing attitude and perception of respondents regarding cause related marketing devised by an organization. Prior to that quantitative approach, basic primary qualitative technique i.e. depth interview was conducted over the managers of different MNCs operating in Bangladesh to shed light onto this issue. In this study, to explore about the opinion, views, suggestions, contributions and variables emitting from mass people about the cause related marketing in Bangladesh, the level of scale was interval and the technique was five point Likert type scale anchored at the numeral 1 with the verbal statement 'strongly disagree' and at the numeral 5 with the verbal statement 'strongly agree' (Elbeck, 1987; Steiber, 1989). Multiple items were used to establish appropriate measurement properties (reliability and validity) of the selected constructs. The scale was reliable as the Cronbach's alpha was evidenced as 0.723. The questionnaire was pretested several times to ensure that the wording, format, length, and sequencing of questions were appropriate. Non Probabilistic Sampling technique (Zikmund, 2004) was used to determine the elements of the sample. A total of 120 people residing in Dhaka city were surveyed in the early January of 2008. To conduct data analysis both descriptive and inferential statistics have been executed. One sample t-test and correlation, under SPSS program have been applied to measure the different dimensions cause related marketing in Bangladesh. To shed more light on the issue a few in-depth interviews were conducted over the corporate officials of different organizations. Simultaneously, to make this paper more informative different published text books, related journals, reports, seminar papers, web pages, web blogs, magazines and research works have been consulted. Literatures were generally collected from said sources and the Internet. As a result, a through review of literatures enabled us to make a consistent presentation of the theme of study.

### **Findings and Result of Analysis:**

The following table analyzes that customers may change their attitude changed towards a particular brand which may instigated due to the companies' cause related marketing strategies. This hypothesis is dependant on six more other variables which were tested as separate hypotheses. All the hypotheses are significantly accepted according to our sample t-test as the calculated value

(.000), for all the six hypotheses (table 1), is less than critical value (0.05). So we can conclude that Cause related marketing can generate a positive change in the customers' attitude toward a promoted brand.

**Table 1: Cause-related marketing will generate a positive change in consumers' attitude towards the promoted brand, if they are aware of that.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I will change a brand if it is not involved in any cause related marketing.	41.962	119	.000	3.93333	3.7477	4.1189
I will adopt that which has any involvement with cause related marketing.	34.133	119	.000	3.82500	3.6031	4.0469
I believe to obtain more satisfaction from a brand that supports a social cause.	49.170	119	.000	4.28333	4.1108	4.4558
In case of purchasing a new brand I will choose that which is involved any how in cause related marketing.	55.649	119	.000	4.30833	4.1550	4.4616
My perception toward the brand or the company changes if it is found to be involved in cause related marketing.	51.609	119	.000	4.28333	4.1190	4.4477
A brand affiliated with a cause can always carry the best benefit.	64.356	119	.000	4.34167	4.2081	4.4752

The second hypothesis (table 2) is also getting acceptance at 5% significant level as all of its variables which were converted into different hypotheses are producing calculated value less than 5%. The actual value of all the hypotheses is 0.00. So we can conclude that company's well devised and well communicated cause related marketing strategy can enhance the customers' purchase intention significantly.

**Table 2: Consumers' purchase intention will be enhanced if they are well aware of the cause related marketing program of the company.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
In order to support a cause related marketing program I, as a customer, may incur additional costs.	64.720	119	.000	4.29167	4.1604	4.4230
I, as a customer, sometimes consider quality of the product to support cause related marketing program.	53.942	119	.000	4.25833	4.1020	4.4146
Sometimes I buy such products which are not necessary to me but do that only to support that cause	38.612	119	.000	3.85833	3.6605	4.0562

The twenty first century customers are very much knowledgeable and aware of the endeavors of the companies. Before patronization of any particular proposal of the companies the customers justify the relationship between the causes supported and company image & brand personality. Moreover the customers try to relate the probable impact of that factor on their personal and social lives. Our third hypothesis deals with this issue particularly (table 3). This hypothesis is later broken down



into four other hypotheses in order to test quantitatively. All the four other hypotheses are found to be accepted on a 5% significance level, as the calculated values for them are 0.00 whereas the critical value is 0.05. So we can infer that consumers render their support willingly to those causes which have been able to portray its significance in the consumers' personal and social lives by binding a good strategic fit with the brand personality and company image.

**Table 3: Consumers support those causes spontaneously which are strategically fitted with the brand and are related to them personally or socially.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I support that causes of any organization with which I, as a customer, can affiliate myself or any of my closed ones.	58.906	119	.000	4.14167	4.0024	4.2809
I expect that there will prevail a synergy between the cause supported and brand personality.	58.126	119	.000	4.18333	4.0408	4.3258
The image and the cause must be well supported in order to get support from the customers.	41.397	119	.000	3.87500	3.6896	4.0604
The most effective cause used in a cause-related marketing campaign is one which is not normally associated with the organization's interest.	53.230	119	.000	3.98333	3.8352	4.1315

**Table 4: Positive attitude toward cause related marketing is a reflection of positive attitude toward charitable activity.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
The more often a person donates to charitable organizations and causes, the more positive the attitude toward cause-related marketing activity.	27.562	119	.000	3.54167	3.2872	3.7961
Respondents preferences for the type of cause they would most like to see supported in cause related marketing activity are similar to causes to which individuals prefer to donate directly.	39.667	119	.000	3.72500	3.5391	3.9109

People view the cause related marketing strategy of the company as a scope for them to take part in social development work. People's attitude towards the charitable activity determines their attitude toward cause related marketing. This hypothesis (table 4) testifies whether the patronizers of cause related marketing possess the intention to donate in charitable works. With calculated value less than the critical value ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ), the broken down hypotheses are well accepted (table 4). So we can conclude that attitude towards the cause related marketing in a positive way is reflected by the attitude of the respondents' positive attitude toward charitable activity.

**Table 5: Overall the customers are satisfied with the cause related marketing strategy of the companies.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I think every company should be involved in supporting contemporary causes	53.217	119	.000	4.19167	4.0357	4.3476
I will recommend others to patronize cause relating marketing programs	31.148	119	.000	3.65833	3.4258	3.8909

The fifth hypothesis is dealing with the companies' role in addressing the social issues. This hypothesis (table 5) is accepted as H 5.1 (*I think every company should be involved in supporting contemporary causes*) and H 5.2 (*I will recommend others to patronize cause relating marketing programs*) have produced the calculated value less than the critical value ( $0.00 < 0.05$ ). People are quite satisfied with the strategy of the companies to address any social or environmental issues through the regular marketing activity.

**Table 6: People prefer to support local causes than international one.**

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Local/ National cause gets more preference by the respondents than an international one.	33.029	119	.000	3.70000	3.4782	3.9218

General people tend to prefer patronize any issue which is primarily related with local of national interest compared to any international one. The sixth hypothesis is accepted as the calculated score 0.00 is less than the critical value 0.05 (table 6). So we can infer that local and national causes get more preference than the international ones.

Table 8 delineates that there is a positive correlation between age of the respondents and the support towards Cause related marketing with  $r=0.363$  and it is significant at 5% level. (Calculated value is 0.00). So the hypothesis of having a strong correlation between the respondents' age and support for cause related marketing is accepted. The positive score indicates that as the age increases the tendency to support cause related marketing of the company increases. On the other hand, we can not conclude in the same way about the relationship between gender of the respondents and Support towards Cause related marketing of a company (table 8) as here the calculated value is 0.298 which is much higher than the critical value 0.05 though it delineates a positive correlation ( $r=0.098$ ). So we can say that the hypothesis is not accepted and can infer that support for cause related marketing programs of the company do not depend on whether the respondent is a male or female.

**Table 7: There is a strong relationship between customers' age and Support towards Cause related marketing**

		Support towards Cause related marketing	Age
Support towards Cause related marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.363**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<b>.000</b>
	N	120	120

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 8: Support toward cause related marketing is strongly affected by the gender.**

		Support towards Cause related marketing	Gender
Support towards Cause related marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.098**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<b>.289</b>
	N	120	120

\*\* Correlation is NOT significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

We have also observed that educational background also do not influence the support for any cause related marketing program of the company as the calculated value (table 9) is 0.117 whereas the critical value is 0.05 though the correlation is positive ( $r=0.144$ ). So the hypothesis of having a relationship between the respondents' educational background and support towards cause related marketing is not accepted.

**Table 9: More educated people tend to show greater support for cause related marketing**

		Support towards Cause related marketing	Education
Support towards Cause related marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.144**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<b>.117</b>
	N	120	120

\*\* Correlation is NOT significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The higher the income of the respondents, the greater the support for cause related marketing programs of a company—the last hypothesis of the study (table 10) deals with the relationship between the income of the respondents and support towards cause related marketing. The hypothesis is accepted at 5% significance level as the calculated value is 4.6% (sig. 0.046) and the level of correlation is positive, though not very substantial ( $r= 0.182$ ). So we can conclude that people of higher level of income has more tendency to share that with the society in the form of support for cause related marketing programs of the companies.

**Table 10: People with substantial income are more inclined to support cause related marketing**

		Support towards Cause related marketing	Level of income
Support towards Cause related marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.182*</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<b>.046</b>
	N	120	120

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In fact hypotheses H7, H8, H9 and H10 are related with the demographic variables of the respondents. Out of these four hypotheses two were accepted (H7 and H10) and two were rejected (H8 and H9) at 5% significance level. Depending on the rate of acceptance of hypotheses, we actually can not infer anything related to the level of correlation between the respondents' demographics and the support for cause related marketing programs of the company.

### **Recommendations and Concluding remarks:**

The respondents' level awareness about the companies such type of societal contributory activity, before participating in this study, was 70%. But only 29% of the respondents knew the actual term of this type of marketing program. As the companies' tendency to incline to involve the social issues in the business operations is increasing, the respondents' level of awareness and support are expected also to grow more. This study has, primarily, endeavored to explore the impact of cause related marketing activity over the customers' preference of brand and company. It has been found out that cause-related marketing significantly influences the consumers' attitude toward a company and any brand particularly, provided that the customers are well aware of such activity in conceptually. Not all the customers grow a supportive mindset towards such programs—68.8% of the respondents believe that each and every kind of initiative of a company is backed up by financial interest of the company. Yet companies should carry on such type of activity. 92.5% respondents (including those 68.8% respondents) agree that companies should patronize social issues even hankering after their own interest but that issue should be used as a weapon to reap more profit. In fact people's awareness about such program sometimes inspire them to participate more. So the companies should design its cause related marketing program in such a way so that it becomes promotable. Demographic variables of the consumers also command a strong consideration while designing cause related marketing programs. While selection of a cause the company officials must maintain a fit between the cause and the image of company & brand personality. Simply choosing a wrong cause might backfire the entire plan with huge investment. Moreover, it affects the company's image adversely. The respondents were also asked about their preferred causes to support. Amongst the issues provided support for disaster victims got the maximum support (32%) followed by health issues (26%), life saving issues (11.2%), education (10.4%), employment generation activity (13%). This result may be influenced by the vulnerable position of Bangladesh to the recent attack of cyclone. Companies should prioritize the contemporary issues while choosing a cause. To shed more light on this topic several in-depth interviews were conducted over a few of the officials of different organizations working in Bangladesh. The interviews revealed that the following criteria play a pivotal role in patronizing a *cause*.

- The cause must bear significant benevolent feature which will contribute entirely to social welfare.
- Customers favor that kind of causes with which they feel associated. Appealing cause will be that one which is recent and create great maladjustment in the society or which needs support in great extent. Customers feel proud and relieved to be a part of such contribution.
- Companies, to make the program a success, should patronize a little bit of different but significant causes which are overlooked by others or are focused by very few firms.
- Every company has a self concept so as every brand. The selected cause must be compatible with the company's present image. For example, the fast food companies should not patronize any medical services which deal with calorie reduction and obesity. Because it is proved that numerous high calorie items are the prime ingredients of fast foods.

- To have linkage with the company's existing and potential product line and its corporate image is very essential for a cause. It must not be highlighting any cause that will bring good fortune to the company at present or in near future.
- There is no hard line about the number of patronizations made by the company. But it is advised to keep that reduced to as many as possible otherwise stakeholders might surmise about the operating credibility of the firm.
- Preferences should be given more to local or national issues.

This study has not considered all the demographic variables that affect the purchasing decision of the customers. The size of the sample is not very big and it is confined to the capital city only. Further study can be conducted in these areas to shed more light over the people's view of the companies' societal contributory activities and influence of such programs on customers' decision making process.

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