Building Brand Identification Through Cause-Brand Alliances: The Role of Perceived Cause Controversy: An Abstract

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Abstract Companies are increasingly implementing cause-brand alliance strategies to signal corporate social responsibility. In a cause-brand alliance, the name of a brand is linked with the name of a nonprofit organization or a cause. Cause-brand alliances have been shown to greatly benefit both the brand and the cause.

An important managerial dimension of any strategic alliance is the selection of the right partner. Breaking with historical precedence, marketers and company CEOs have increasingly begun to speak out on controversial issues. Taking sides on controversial issues is not always a plus and sometimes leads to a backlash. Given this, it is important to understand under what conditions allying with a controversial cause positively influences customer's evaluations.

Our findings indicate that when there is no significant public disagreement concerning the cause, that known findings regarding cause-brand alliances are still valid. That is, customers will have more positive attitudes and identification with the focal brand, if only one of the partners is reputable. However, when there is substantial public disagreement concerning the cause, managers need to be aware that only combinations of highly reputable brands and highly reputable nonprofits will have positive effects on customer attitudes and brand identification. These findings provide theoretical and managerial insights that will be further discussed.

References Available Upon Request

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