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Back to the roots of cause-related marketing – A systematic literature review of cooperation motives

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Abstract
Based on a systematic literature review, this paper explores the motives for cooperation between nonprofit organizations (NPO) and companies as profit organizations (PO) in the context of cause-related marketing (CrM) partnerships. CrM is a marketing and fundraising tool which combines the purchase of products with a "good cause" and has already gained significant attention in theory and practice as a widespread practice of corporate social responsibility. However, research often focuses on specific aspects and primarily on the perspective of consumers (i.e., their purchase or support intentions), while only a few studies deal with the motives that NPO and PO pursue with such intersectoral collaboration. Overall, the findings indicate that research on the NPO's view is particularly limited and that CrM is generally based on a bundle of motives or (both financial and non-financial) goals, with the self-interested perspective of PO appearing to be dominant. The paper suggests several avenues for further research and advocates a stronger focus on fundamental questions that were raised decades ago but have not been adequately answered since the origins of CrM.

Keywords Cause-related marketing · Cooperation motives · Corporate philanthropy · Corporate social responsibility · Systematic literature review

1 Introduction

In line with the increasing relevance of corporate social responsibility (CSR), numerous profit organizations (PO) cooperate with NPO in cause-related marketing (CrM) projects or campaigns. CrM is a marketing and fundraising tool that

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combines the purchase of products with a "good cause". It is typical for such collaborations that companies (the PO) make a (time-limited) commitment to their customers to donate a certain amount of money (i.e., usually a contractually agreed portion of the proceeds from the sale of specific products) to a charitable organization (the NPO). The amount of the donation is thus linked to sales: typically, either a fixed amount per unit or a percentage of revenue flows to NPO in order to support their mission (i.e., the "good cause") (Andreasen, 1996; Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Bhatti et al., 2023; Helmig & Boenigk, 2020; Stumpf & Teufl, 2014; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Thus, CrM is a (usually transactional) variant of intersectoral cooperation, characterized by mutual resource exchange (Andreasen, 1996) and is typically defined in line with the seminal paper by Varadarajan and Menon (1988): "Cause-related marketing is 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" (p. 60).

CrM has long been an established practice in many countries (Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Meffert & Holzberg, 2009; Thomas et al., 2020) and can be regarded as an expression of social responsibility and as a practice for demonstrating CSR (Stumpf & Teufl, 2014). Bowen (1953) coined the term CSR in the mid-20th century and stated that corporate responsibility also implies an orientation towards the expectations and values of society (Kuttner & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018; Carroll, 1999). Today, a wide variety of conceptualizations can be found in literature and practice (for an overview see Carroll (1999) or Dahlsrud (2008)). CSR concepts often refer to the three pillars of sustainability as CSR dimensions and thus areas of responsibility for companies (Stumpf & Teufl, 2014). Against this background, the fundamental question arises what motives or goals are at the center of CrM. For PO sales growth is often stated as the primary goal of CrM (Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Stumpf & Teufl, 2014). Financial aspects are also occasionally mentioned by NPO representatives as the main motive (Andeßner et al., 2022), although there have been few studies exploring CrM from the nonprofits' perspective (cf. Helmig & Boenigk, 2020; Thomas et al., 2020; NPO-related studies are, e.g., Boenigk & Schuchardt, 2015; Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013; Andeßner et al., 2022). It is not clear, though, how important social and/or environmental concerns or value-based beliefs are in CrM projects, whether they are actually "lived" in practice and how they are balanced with (financial) performance objectives. On the one hand, more clarity about CrM motives is essential for the partners involved and their congruence of goals in order to promote the professionalism and success of joint CrM campaigns. On the other hand, it is also a vital aspect regarding ethical concerns and the credibility of such initiatives (and especially the company's commitment).

There is already an extensive body of literature on CrM, but many studies focus on specific aspects and/or on a singular perspective of one of the three main actors involved in such initiatives (i.e. charitable organizations as NPO, companies as PO, and their customers as consumers). Our SLR bundles the knowledge on CrM from 1988 up to (including) the year 2020 based on an analysis of 60 articles with regard to the (both financial and non-financial) motives of all three actors (NPO, PO, and consumers). Moreover, we take into account the results of other SLR that were published before, but also after our review was conducted (i.e. after the search phase), like the comprehensive systematic reviews by Thomas et al. (2020), Vrontis et al. (2020a), Zhang et al. (2020a), Bhatti et al. (2023) and Patil and Rahman (2023), to compare our findings with theirs. However, these reviews hardly deal with the motives of the partners involved. More systematic reviews are still needed (Bhatti et al., 2023), especially on fundamental questions like the objectives the actors involved follow. Therefore, this article – based on a systematic literature review (SLR) in line with the approach of Tranfield et al. (2003) – aims at integrating available knowledge into an overall picture of cooperation motives of the partners engaged in CSR. Thus, it deals with the question of why PO conduct CrM campaigns with NPO and what goals they pursue. The review examines this hitherto underexplored issue with a special focus on the importance of value-based reasons (as non-financial motives) for entering CrM partnerships. In particular, it examines inhowfar non-financial aspects play a role in such cooperations and to what extent such motives have been addressed in the scientific literature so far. Based on this analysis, our SLR identifies shortcomings in the literature and highlights several promising research avenues that are still underdeveloped in CrM research.

This paper is structured as follows: the next section outlines the materials and methods, followed by Chap. 3 which presents the review results in a compact manner. The final Chap. 4 discusses central findings and derives implications for further research.

2 Review methods

Systematic literature reviews allow to identify and analyze the state-of-the-art of a research field in a comprehensive, structured and transparent manner (usually based on a specific research question). By synthesizing the existing body of knowledge, such studies provide an overview of the field and enable the identification of research gaps and/or further research desiderata (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003). The SLR of this paper follows the approach of Tranfield et al. (2003) with the phases of planning, conducting, and reporting and dissemination of the review. Accordingly, we developed a review protocol and a corresponding search strategy. As Table 1 illustrates, this includes the identification and definition of databases, keywords as search terms and of inclusion and exclusion criteria.

We identified the literature sample in the selected databases by using the mentioned keywords (partly linked with the Boolean operators "and/or", if possible; otherwise, we did single queries). The systematic keyword search analyzed the titles, keywords and abstracts of scientific journal articles. Moreover, we also searched in Google Scholar. Then, we initially screened and narrowed the results. With regard to inclusion and exclusion criteria, we deliberately decided to focus on English-language scientific journal articles and not to make any restrictions regarding the content, research design, paper type or publication period in order to not exclude

Table 1 Overview of databases, search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria

Databases	Scopus, EBSCOhost, Springer Link, Science Direct, Sage Journals Online, Emerald Insight, Google Scholar
Keywords	cause* related* marketing, cause* marketing, affinity* marketing, mission* marketing, corporate*social* marketing[a]
Inclusion criteria	scientific journal articles (incl. practitioner-oriented journals); English-language articles; no time restrictions (the review period includes all years up to 2020); empirical & theoretical-conceptual work, literature reviews; content relates to CrM
Exclusion criteria	books, anthologies, working papers, conference papers, newspaper articles; any non-English language articles; publications after 2020; no restrictions regarding the research design; content on marketing, fundraising & CSR aspects without focus on CrM

[a]We used so-called wildcards (*) in the keyword search in order to include hits with a different spelling (e.g., with hyphens)

Source: own elaboration

"classics" on the topic per se[1] and to picture the characteristics of the previous literature as broadly as possible. Thus, all English content-related articles up to the original review period (5–12 December 2020) were included. This adds up to 48 articles. In order to update and complete the year 2020, we conducted an additional search in June 2021. This follow-up search identified 12 other relevant papers. Finally, this results in 60 articles for our analysis, which we carried out manually (i.e. without software support other than Microsoft Excel).

3 Findings

3.1 Overview of literature sample characteristics

Table 2 summarizes essential characteristics of the literature sample (listed alphabetically). Regarding the research design of the 60 publications, our analysis shows that most papers are empirical-quantitative (31 papers/51.67%) whereby experimental studies prevail (23/74.2%). Empirical-qualitative papers (7/11.67%) still represent a minority. Two other papers rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods: 2/3.33%). 16 publications (26.67%) are based on a theoretical-conceptual design. We also identified four SLR (4/6.67%) on CrM[2] which will be discussed in detail below.

Concerning the country focus, the empirical studies (40 in total) mostly refer to one country; sometimes to several countries. These countries are: USA (18 studies), UK (4), Taiwan (3), Germany (3), Portugal (3), France (2), and the Netherlands (2).

[1] This applies, e.g., to the often cited article by Varadarajan and Menon (1988).

[2] The study by Kulshreshtha et al. (2019) that combined an SLR with a quantitative study was classified as a quantitative paper because the scholars emphasized the quantitative findings. Similarly, the SLR by Thomas et al. (2020), Vrontis et al. (2020a), Zhang et al. (2020a) as well as a review by Bhatti et al. (2023) focus on quantitative research, particularly on experimental studies.

Table 2 Descriptive overview of the literature sample (The 14 publications highlighted in bold/italics represent those works that deal either directly or indirectly with the motives of PO and are therefore analyzed and discussed in detail in Section 3.3)

No.	Author(s)	Year	Countries	Research Design	Motives PO	Motives NPO	Motives Cons.
1	Aghakhani et al.	2020	USA	quantitative (⚗ experimental)	---	---	✓
2	Andreasen	1996	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
3	***Barone et al.***	***2000***	***USA***	***quantitative*** ⚗	*(✓)*	---	✓
4	***Barone et al.***	***2007***	***USA***	***quantitative*** ⚗	*(✓)*	---	✓
5	***Berglind & Nakata***	***2005***	---	***th.-conceptual***	✓	✓	---
6	Bianchi et al.	2020	Argentinia	quantitative	---	---	---
7	Boenigk & Schuchardt	2015	Germany	quantitative ⚗	---	---	---
8	Chaabane & Parguel	2016	France	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
9	Chang & Chu	2020	Taiwan	quantitative ⚗	---	---	(✓)
10	Chang & Liu	2012	Taiwan	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
11	Christofi et al.	2015	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
12	Christofi et al.	2020a	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
13	Christofi et al.	2020b	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	✓
14	***Cone et al.***	***2003***	---	***th.-conceptual***	✓	---	✓
15	Cosgrave & O´Dwyer	2020	Irland & ARE	qualitative	---	---	✓
16	Costa e Silva et al.	2020	Portugal	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
17	Das et al.	2019	USA	quantitative	---	---	---
18	Dean	2003	USA	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
19	Donahue	2020	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
20	***Elving***	***2013***	***Nether-lands***	***quantitative*** ⚗	*(✓)*	---	✓
21	Eng et al.	2020	UK	qualitative	---	---	---
22	Fazli-Salehi et al.	2019	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
23	***Gourville & Rangan***	***2004***	---	***th.-conceptual***	✓	✓	---
24	Grolleau et al.	2016	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
25	Guerreiro & Loureiro	2020	UK, Japan et al.	quantitative	---	---	(✓)
26	***Gupta & Pirsch***	***2006a***	---	***th.-conceptual***	✓	✓	✓
27	Gupta & Pirsch	2006b	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
28	He et al.	2019	China	quantitative ⚗	---	---	---
29	Jaber & Jaber	2020	USA	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
30	Jeong & Kim	2020	USA	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
31	***Kim et al.***	***2017***	***USA***	***quantitative*** ⚗	*(✓)*	---	✓
32	Kulshreshtha et al.	2019	India	SLR & quantitative	---	---	✓
33	Lafferty et al.	2004	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
34	Lee & Johnson	2019	USA	quantitative ⚗	---	---	✓
35	***Liston-Heyes & Liu***	***2013***	***UK***	***qualitative***	*(✓)*	*(✓)*	---

Table 2 (continued)

No.	Author(s)	Year	Countries	Research Design	Motives PO	Motives NPO	Motives Cons.
36	Mekonnen et al.	2008	UK	mixed methods	---	---	✓
37	Mendini et al.	2018	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
38	***Miranda et al.***	***2020***	***Portugal***	***qualitative***	✓	---	---
39	Moosmayer & Fuljahn	2010	Germany	quantitative	---	---	✓
40	***Moosmayer & Fuljahn***	***2013***	***Germany***	***quantitative***	(✓)	---	✓
41	Mutter	2019	---	SLR	---	---	✓
42	Nan & Heo	2007	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
43	Nelson & Vilela	2017	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
44	Polonsky & Wood	2001	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
45	Pracejus & Olsen	2004	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
46	Priporas et al.	2020	Greece	qualitative	---	---	✓
47	Proença & Pereira	2008	Portugal	qualitative	---	---	✓
48	Robinson et al.	2012	USA	quantitative	---	---	✓
49	Roggeveen & Beitel-spacher	2020	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
50	Runté et al.	2009	USA	mixed methods	---	✓	---
51	Sabri	2018	France	quantitative	---	---	(✓)
52	Sorribas	2007	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
53	Thomas et al.	2020	---	SLR	---	---	---
54	Vanhamme et al.	2012	Nether-lands	quantitative	---	---	(✓)
55	***Varadarajan & Menon***	***1988***	---	***th.-conceptual***	✓	---	---
56	Vrontis et al.	2020a	---	SLR	---	---	---
57	Vrontis et al.	2020b	---	th.-conceptual	---	---	---
58	***Webb & Mohr***	***1998***	***USA***	***qualitative***	(✓)	(✓)	✓
59	Zhang et al.	2020a	---	SLR	---	---	✓
60	***Zhang et al.***	***2020b***	***Taiwan***	***quantitative***	(✓)	---	✓
Σ 60					6 (+8)	5 (+1)	33 (+4)

Source: own elaboration

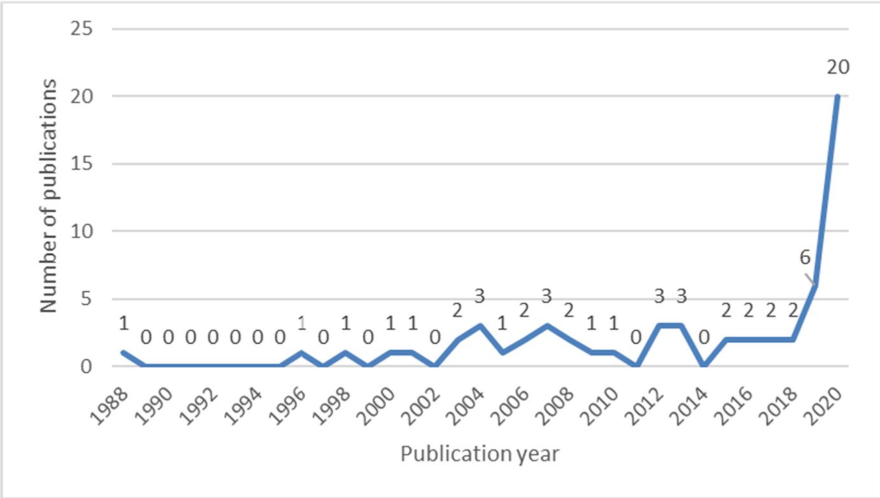

Fig. 1 Number of publications by year. Source: own elaboration

Thus, the publications with focus on North America (18) and Europe (17) dominate.[3] Furthermore, Asia is represented with six, South America as well as the Middle East with one paper. The US dominance is understandable given the origins of CrM with roots in the long tradition of philanthropic engagement (including corporate philanthropy) in the US (Berlind & Nakata, 2005). Additionally, the first CrM programs were developed in the US. The activities of American Express (Amex) from 1982 on are considered to be "perhaps the mother of all cause marketing campaigns" (Gourville & Rangan, 2004, p. 40). In particular, the second campaign in 1983, which focused on the restoration of the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island, was very successful. Amex could increase the number of transactions by 28% and the number of new cards by 45% based on the promise to donate 1 cent for every transaction in the US and 1 dollar for every new card for the Statue of Liberty Foundation as subject of the CrM campaign. In total, Amex generated about 1.7 million US dollars. This highly successful "pioneering campaign" also raised awareness for the significance of CrM followed by numerous imitations and thus enormous growth (Andreasen, 1996; Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Gourville & Rangan, 2004; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

The CrM papers included in this review have been published between 1988 and 2020. Figure 1 illustrates the number of publications by year. It shows that CrM-related research is not a new topic; it has been regularly researched since the early/mid-2000s. We also would like to emphasize the abrupt increase in publications in 2019 and 2020. 41 articles (about 68% of all analyzed papers) were published in the last decade (2010–2020) (excluding 2020, there are 21 articles (35%)). Thus,

[3] The three SLR published in 2020 as well as one newer SLR published in 2023 confirm the dominant role of North America and Europe. Asian researchers could catch up, though, in the recent past (cf. Bhatti et al., 2023).

research interest has strongly grown in the recent past. Similarly, Mutter (2019), Vrontis et al. (2020a), Thomas et al. (2020) and Bhatti et al. (2023) confirm in their SLR that research interest on CrM has increased in the last decade.

The 60 articles in our sample were published in 36 journals. Scholars mostly decided to publish their research in the International Marketing Review (7), Journal of Business Research (4), International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing (4), Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing (3), and in the Journal of Consumer Marketing (3). Eight other journals published two articles each: European Journal of Marketing, Harvard Business Review, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Communications, the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, and Sustainability. Thus, as expected, the marketing research community primarily devotes itself to the topic.

3.2 Preliminary conclusions regarding the content focus and motives

A first overall analysis allows to tentatively draw preliminary conclusions regarding the content focus (i.e., which actors' perspectives dominate research so far) and the motives of the three main actors in terms of the cooperative motives of NPO, PO and of the consumers' (cons.) support or purchase intentions. Table 2 illustrates that 17 articles (28.33%) do not address motives at all. It also shows that many articles deal with single motives (denoted by a tick in only one actor perspective column). The Sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.3 summarize the identified motives of customers/consumers, NPO, and PO in an aggregate manner. Section 3.3 then deals in more detail with the motives of PO.

3.2.1 Consumers

The customers' point of view is the most frequently and comprehensively discussed issue so far; 33 papers directly address their motives and four other papers indirectly. An explanation may be: "The key to successful CRM is the consumer purchasing the cause-related product, which is the prerequisite for corporate donation to the cause (…) Therefore, (…) managers and scholars paid much attention to how to elicit consumer positive reaction to CRM" (Zhang et al., 2020a, p. 2).[4] In addition, the broad reception of CrM by marketing researchers may also contribute to the strongly consumer-oriented focus.

We also found that these consumer-focused papers often deal with specific issues.[5] They provide evidence for single factors influencing purchase intentions or behaviors. According to a SLR on the "purchase intention of consumers", various factors are important, including the type of product and donation amount, attitude

[4] Zhang et al. (2020a) as well as Gupta and Pirsch (2006a) note that the perspective of consumers dominates in CrM research; the papers primarily address the responses of consumers to CrM.

[5] For example, the influence of pricing strategies such as using prices which end with "99" (Jaber & Jaber, 2020).

towards the company or brand, fit between the brand and the "good cause" (the so-called cause-brand fit), the nature of the purpose/cause and whether they can choose it, advertising appeal, gender or involvement (Mutter, 2019). Also, Proença and Pereira (2008) identify motives for purchasing "charity-linked products" (classified according to customer types). These are the availability of CrM-products, usefulness as gifts, impulsive behavior, moral guilt, self-interest, influences from peer groups, family members, and sales personnel, credibility of the involved PO and NPO, as well as information about the CrM program and its effects. Numerous studies also suggest that "warm glow" is crucial.[6] Besides, some articles emphasize the relevance of cultural differences as well as religious and ethical beliefs.[7] Overall, we can conclude that "product acquisition is driven by motivators that far exceed mere functionality and purpose; and which are adjacent to the customers' social, ideological and self-perceptions" (Christofi et al., 2020b, p. 621).

3.2.2 Nonprofit-organizations

So far, there is very limited research regarding the NPO perspective. Only five studies refer to it directly and one indirectly. "Indirectly" (denoted by a tick in brackets in Table 2) means that the scholars do not directly explore which motives underly CrM cooperations, but point out how individuals (mostly consumers) perceive these motives.[8] Webb and Mohr (1998), for instance, discuss such motives (of both NPO and PO) as perceived by consumers. They state: "What do consumers believe the reasons are for corporate and NPO participation in CRM campaigns? Do the motives consumers attribute to organizational behavior influence their attitudes toward participating forms or NPOs?" (p. 226). Based on 48 interviews, they assumed that NPO motives are mostly altruistic. NPO primarily aim at improving individuals' quality of life, but they also intend to raise money, public attention, and other CrM benefits. However, some interviewees stated that self-interest as well as self-enrichment are the decisive motives (Webb & Mohr, 1998).

Three theoretical-conceptual articles directly refer to NPO motives and consistently emphasize that financial goals (so-called first-order benefits) represent the most significant motives because NPO usually lack financial resources. Financial resources enable them to maintain or expand their mission-oriented service program. Furthermore, the following (second-order) benefits are considered as essential: increased public awareness or more attention to the cause through more effective (and cheap) communication (which can positively influence donations) and

[6] Cf. e.g., Chaabane and Parguel (2016) or Chang and Chu (2020) who observe: "(…) the act of purchasing CM products may provide consumers with a 'warm glow' feeling from being prosocial" (p. 203).

[7] Cf. e.g., Cosgrave and O'Dwyer (2020); Zhang et al. (2020b). Guerreiro and Loureiro (2020), for instance, point out that individuals living in Protestant countries are more prone to support social causes (such as CrM).

[8] Patil and Rahman (2023) also note that the attribution of motives has already attracted considerable attention in CrM scholarship and that consumers' tendency to attribute motives to a company differs based on their level of skepticism which represents not only a challenge to the success of CrM but also an underexplored area of the field; p. 498 and 506).

other non-financial resources (e.g., marketing know-how of the PO) (Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Gourville & Rangan, 2004; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006a).

Two empirical studies directly focus on CrM from a NPO perspective. First and foremost, the mixed-methods study by Runté et al. (2009), relying on Gourville and Rangan (2004), points out motives (and effects) from the perspective of NPO managers with CrM experience. According to this paper, NPO pursue both first-order goals (financial motives and event support) and second-order goals (i.e., less concrete, long-term support, e.g., to raise (public) awareness, expand networks or improve knowledge transfer). Overall, it shows that various goals, even such beyond immediate fundraising goals, play an important role.

Also, Liston-Heyes and Liu (2013) explore CrM experiences of NPO managers. Based on 160 interviews, the scholars deal with concerns about CrM (i.e., motives against it). Thus, they do not put a focus on the motives, they only briefly mention financial ones. Concerns of NPO managers relate, e.g., to transaction costs, crowding-out effects, value- or goal-based differences/conflicts of the partners, and the question of how cooperation affects the NPO-identity. Most interviewees mentioned that they feel moral obligations to various stakeholders and use ethical guidelines in CrM negotiations. Ethical principles are particularly important when choosing a (suitable) partner (Liston-Heyes & Liu, 2013). A thoughtful and deliberate choice of the partner is essential because the more complementary goals and interests are, the more successful is the cooperation (Andreasen, 1996). NPO should "(…) learn as much as they can about a potential partner's ethical standards, how strictly the company adheres to those standards, and whether the company extends its ethics to suppliers and to business partners" (Andreasen, 1996, p. 58).

3.2.3 Profit-organizations

Only a surprisingly small number of papers directly deals with the motives of PO (namely six papers). Eight other studies address them indirectly (see Table 2). According to the research question of this paper (why do PO engage in CrM collaborations and to what extent do value-based beliefs play a role beyond financially oriented motives), we will discuss these 14 publications (highlighted in bold/italic in Table 2) in Section 3.3.

In advance, we would like to briefly refer to the contributions of the identified SLR regarding our research question. In short, there are none or very few. Mutter (2019) and Zhang et al. (2020a) solely focus on the purchase intentions of customers and relating influencing factors. The SLR by Vrontis et al. (2020a) only rudimentarily deals with the motives of the three partners and focusses on the aspect of international marketing. Similarly, the very comprehensive SLR by Thomas et al. (2020) primarily aims at structuring the research field and at identifying corresponding research gaps. They only briefly mention (firm-related resp. marketing and cause-related) goals, but do not discuss them substantively. However, their note in a table on the distribution of articles by managerial dimensions (p. 503) that only 16 (out of 202; 8%) articles address objectives of the partners confirms our finding that there is still a need for research.

3.3 Content analysis of the cooperation motives of profit-organizations

Most of the papers do not refer to PO-motives, or only make a passing reference to motives, most commonly, that PO (or both partners) pursue several CrM goals without concretizing which ones. Occasionally, the papers differentiate between financial and non-financial goals (Polonsky & Wood, 2001). Provided that the papers refer to CrM motives, we identified two perspectives. On the one hand a normative perspective (in terms of the idea of doing good to do good as a value-based end in itself) and on the other hand the perspective of an "enlightened self-interest" where CrM is used to increase profitability (Christofi et al., 2015). Andreasen (1996) does not explicitly refer to PO-motives, but he states that CrM "is not philanthropy. In fact, funding for cause-related marketing programs usually comes out of a company's marketing budget, not its corporate giving or community relations budget" (p. 48). Other authors argue "that companies don't have to choose between altruism and self-interest" (Cone et al., 2003, p. 98).

3.3.1 Perceptions of PO motives by stakeholders

As mentioned above, eight of 60 papers indirectly discuss CrM motives of PO by illustrating the perceptions of their stakeholders. Table 3 summarizes key findings of these papers with a focus on perceived motives. We can conclude that numerous papers only contribute marginally to the research question of this paper because they do not focus on the identification of motives, but rather integrate single (often general) motives, mainly as moderating variables. Several findings are not really surprising, e.g., the finding that consumers do take a close look at PO's motives for CrM programs (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2013). Correspondingly, scholars recommend: "to consider CrM not just as a business case and marketing tool but that they need to convince the consumer of their serious interest in the issue. (…) this implies that companies communicate accordingly. In particular it may be wise to choose causes that are congruent to their own corporate philosophy and vision" (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2013, p. 204).

Due to the fact that CrM campaigns can result in increased sales revenues, consumers attribute self-interested motives to PO, even if PO also donate money (Dean, 2003). A relevant question is "whether consumers will perceive CRM as self-interest and exploitation of the charity rather than altruism. If so, this type of promotion could backfire and result in a loss of goodwill toward the company" (Dean, 2003, p. 91). In this context, Webb and Mohr (1998) offer again interesting insights. About half of their 48 interviewees were convinced that CrM campaigns are mainly based on self-interests, e.g., to increase sales, profit etc. or to create benevolence and positive publicity. The other half attributed diverse motives to PO, partly altruistic ones as well as the "attempt to create a win-win situation for both the company and the NPO" (p. 231).

Finally, we would like to re-emphasize the study by Liston-Heyes and Liu (2013), which highlights the differences between PO and NPO in terms of their goals, values, identity, stakeholder-orientation, management/leadership styles, risk appetite and of their possibilities of exerting influence. The interviewed NPO managers were

Table 3 Perceptions of PO motives by other CrM-actors

Authors & year	Focus	Perceived motives & findings
Barone et al. (2000)	consumer choice: influence of PO's motivations (that underlies their CrM activities) – as perceived by customers – on consumer choice	motivation: positive (support for the cause) or negative (exploit cause as a means of generating sales); if the cause is considered to be "appropriate", the PO benefits from an increased brand choice
Barone et al. (2007)	effects of the "retailer-cause fit" (congruence between the "good cause" and the retailer) on consumers' evaluations (moderating variable) of retailer-CrM-strategies	„perceived retailer motive": positive ("genuine" commitment) or negative (self-interest); a positive moderating effect (positive perception of PO motivations) results in stronger evaluation effects
Elving (2013)	effects of fit (high or low) and reputation (bad, unknown, good) on consumers' skepticism regarding PO motives & on consumers' attitudes	skepticism (as one of the dependent variables) includes items on motives (profit-oriented or social); skepticism regarding PO motives negatively affects purchase intentions & attitudes towards PO
Kim et al. (2017)	effects of congruence, PO credibility, NPO brand awareness & perceived (altruistic) motives on consumers' intention to disseminate a CrM campaign	cons.-view on PO-motives: socially responsible/philanthropic or purely profitable – perceived altruistic motives (moderating variable); highly perceived altruistic motives = > more positive behavioral intention
Liston-Heyes and Liu (2013)	experiences of NPO managers with CrM & concerns (and corresponding improvements); perceived PO motives from NPO perspective are discussed rudimentarily	PO want to improve image & legitimacy; PO insist on a result-oriented behavior of NPO & partly they do not understand the nature of NPO; partly there is an opportunistic PO behavior & "competitive and hierarchical values"
Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2013)	(perceived) PO motives & brand-cause-fit as determinants for successful CrM campaigns	motives: altruistic, neutral or profit-oriented; altruistic motives improve campaign evaluations of consumers
Webb and Mohr (1998)	(one of several questions:) What are the motives of PO (& NPO) regarding CrM from the consumers' point of view?	self-interest (e.g., increase in sales/profit); partly altruistic motives
Zhang et al. (2020b)	effects of the cause-brand-fit on consumers' attitudes, attributed PO motives (attributed company motives) & moderating role of PO reputation	value-driven & strategic motives (positive attributions); egoistic & stakeholder-driven motives (negative attributions); positive effects of value-driven & negative effects of egoistic motives on attitudes

Source: own elaboration

Table 4 Overview of corporate CrM motives

Motives	Authors
Increasing sales & profit	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Cone et al. (2003); Gourville and Rangan (2004); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Gaining attractiveness, positioning, differentiation & competitive advantages	Cone et al. (2003); Gourville and Rangan (2004); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Miranda et al. (2020); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Developing & managing brands	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Miranda et al. (2020); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Increasing loyalty, goodwill and/or motivation of diverse stakeholders (especially of customers & employees)	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Cone et al. (2003); Gourville and Rangan (2004); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Miranda et al. (2020)
Buildung new (business-) relationships & expanding to new markets or market segments	Cone et al. (2003); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a);Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Improving reputation/image	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Cone et al. (2003); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Miranda et al. (2020); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Demonstrating and communicating social responsibility	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Gupta and Pirsch (2006a); Miranda et al. (2020); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)
Creating awareness for the "good cause" (problems) and mobilizing support	Berglind and Nakata (2005); Cone et al. (2003); Varadarajan and Menon (1988)

Source: own elaboration

often concerned about the identity of their NPO; in particular, they were afraid of losing their supporters' acceptance. PO usually prioritize one group: their customers. Hence, they have a more instrumental point of view (in favor of (financial) performance). In this respect, the authors recommend that NPO should select PO partners "that have a more imbedded stakeholder orientation (i.e., treat the NPO as a legitimate stakeholder)" (p. 1969).

3.3.2 Motives of profit organizations for CrM programs

As mentioned above, we identified six publications which directly address motives of PO. These publications include one qualitative study and five theoretical-conceptual papers. Table 4 illustrates at a glance, which papers address which CrM motives. In this context, we would like to highlight the seminal paper by Varadarajan and Menon (1988), which is undoubtedly a "classic" in CrM literature. Although the authors list a wide range of (marketing) objectives, CrM concentrates on two goals: These are to improve corporate performance (primarily by increasing sales/profit and improving image) and to support charitable causes. Besides generating resources for the "good cause", the latter includes creating (more) awareness for the specific concern, mission and activities of the NPO as well as mobilizing stakeholder support. Concerning corporate or marketing goals these scholars name among others: increase sales, encourage repeat purchases, improve visibility and (corporate and brand) image, increase brand awareness and recognition, expand customer base, develop new markets and market segments, counteract negative publicity, appease consumer (protection) groups and to convey social responsibility, public spirit or even patriotism, etc. The analysis also shows that the other theoretical-conceptual papers point out similar motives. They likewise agree that performance goals (increase in sales, revenues and profit) are the primary motives of PO. Additionally, papers point out that a CrM commitment can create goodwill, loyalty and positive attitudes of stakeholders towards the PO, which is particularly important in times of crisis. Moreover, the papers highlight that an (improved) access to other stakeholders (or market segments) as well as an enhanced differentiation and attractiveness enable PO to differentiate themselves from their competitors, which is particularly important in saturated markets. Several times, scholars also highlight benefits regarding recruiting and retaining employees as CrM motives. CrM could increase their morale, motivation and satisfaction and reduce fluctuation (Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Cone et al., 2003; Gourville & Rangan, 2004; Gupta & Pirsch, 2006a). The following statement illustrates this aspect: "Supporting a social issue gives people a larger cause than the next monthly sales report… or the next quarter's profit statement. It makes people feel good about themselves. A company can't compete without great products, great advertising, great traditional marketing. But it has got to do something else on top of all those things" (Cone et al., 2003, p. 100).

Gourville and Rangan (2004) propose that PO should not only focus on first-order benefits (i.e., financial ones), but also on second-order benefits because this enables PO to fully exploit the collaboration benefits. In particular, they emphasize the relevance of maintaining long-term relations with existent and potential customers and various other stakeholders, such as employees, investors, business partners, governmental representatives as well as the general public, which all can be addressed in CrM campaigns. They stress that an increase in sales or profit „need not be the primary outcome of a cause marketing effort" (p. 42).

Finally, we would like to highlight the main findings of the only empirical study dealing directly with PO motives. The qualitative study by Miranda et al. (2020) analyzes PO managers' (three CEOs and four marketing managers from seven Portuguese companies of different sizes) views about CrM campaigns. The authors explore the acceptance, use, motivations, benefits and risks of CrM activities. Similarly, they conclude that CrM strategy is based on a bundle of motives.[9] However, social causes, particularly in terms of corporate social responsibility is the most significant motive for CrM ("showing that it is a socially responsible company"; p. 600). CSR is considered to be a crucial competitive advantage and PO want to improve their image. CrM initiatives positively affect (the motivation of) consumers, shareholders and employees.[10]

[9] Miranda et al. (2020) add that "there is a wide range of marketing objectives that a company expects to achieve through campaigns supporting social causes" (p. 590).

[10] Also, He et al. (2019) demonstrate that CrM can enhance the engagement and admiration of employees for their company.

Gupta and Pirsch (2006a) also explicitly refer to CrM as a tool for PO to demonstrate altruistic engagement or social responsibility. They state as follows: "(…) to establish or reinforce an altruistic public persona with respect to the firm, its brand, or both, in the eyes of its most important audience: the customer" (p. 28). The (common) focus on customers makes evident that stakeholder-orientation and -prioritization of a company are very important in this context and should not be neglected.

Miranda et al. (2020) likewise state that customers attach great importance to the social engagement of PO nowadays. All interviewees associated the following advantages of CrM: increased awareness, brand loyalty, improved reputation or image, and an enhanced positioning and differentiation. Furthermore, these scholars emphasize the choice of a social cause. The CrM cause should be related to the identity or values of the PO; they should be linked together in harmony. Scholars also attribute importance to the transparency of the CrM campaign because transparency enables stakeholders (e.g., employees) to understand the campaign and to regard it as credible instead of questioning its altruistic motives (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006a; Christofi et al., 2015). In this context, one interviewee noted: "It can't just be a marketing action and it can't happen if it isn't reflected in the workers (…)" (Miranda et al., 2020, p. 596).

4 Discussion and conclusions

Based on 60 research papers, this SLR maps the CrM research field with a focus on the motives of the three main actors involved (PO, NPO and consumers). There is already an extensive body of literature dealing with CrM in general, particularly promoted by the marketing community. Many scholars have investigated CrM, especially in the last decade, and since 2019 the number of publications has increased sharply. With regard to research designs and countries, we identified a strong focus on quantitative (and mainly experimental) studies, primarily conducted in North America and Europe, and increasingly also in Asian countries. Due to this US- and Eurocentrism there is a lack of knowledge about CrM in other regions of the world (such as South America, Australia and Oceania as well as Africa in particular). Hence, there is still a need for research in order to open this black box.

With regard to the perspectives addressed in previous CrM studies, we also identified an "imbalance" in their research foci (with a clear prevalence of consumer-related aspects). Most papers focus on questions relating to consumers (also with regard to their support motives and purchase intentions). So far, comparatively few papers explore the perspective of NPO or PO as CrM partners. For us it came as a surprise that there are also only a few papers shedding light on the motives for initiating CrM programs. About 28% of the papers in this review do not address cooperation motives at all. Thus, one can draw the conclusion that many of these papers are based on implicit assumptions regarding the motives of the actors. Very few articles deal with CrM motives of NPO (overall, the NPO perspective is only dealt with to a very limited extent in the CrM literature; cf. Patil & Rahman, 2023), which also pursue various (both financial and non-financial) goals with CrM and generally differ in various characteristics.

Even though CrM is often portrayed as a "win-win-win" situation for PO, NPO and the consumers or society (Bhatti et al., 2023, p. 30; Patil & Rahman, 2023, p. 492), we found some criticism in the literature. Critics refer to possible negative effects and/or ethical issues consisting of (potential) conflicting goals and value(s) (systems) of the partners, e.g., to strategically motivated donation activities of PO ("strategic giving"). Moreover, research points out negative CrM effects for NPO or society in general, like "crowding out" effects in terms of shifting/displacing support or identity issues ("mission drift"). CrM is also framed as a divisionary tactic of PO (Berglind & Nakata, 2005; Boenigk & Schuchardt, 2015; Polonsky & Wood, 2001; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). In this respect and in view of the increasing awareness and skepticism of some consumers towards CrM (Thomas & Kureshi, 2020), several issues seem crucial: "Is the CRM program a diversionary tactic, hiding a product problem through a public relations spin? (…) is the CRM campaign a clever manipulation to enrich a corporation's coffers (generating a buck), or is it a sincere way of assisting a charity (creating a bang or social impact)?" (Berglind & Nakata, 2005, p. 444). Accordingly, these questions are linked to the CrM-motives and goals of PO. Is the CrM campaign credible? Does the CrM campaign root in the goodwill and in non-selfish organizational and managerial behavior? Does the PO really pursue the signaled values in its everyday business live? Vice versa, does the CrM campaign and thus the support of the NPO only serves as "window dressing" or image enhancement? Do altruistic and philanthropic motives or values predominate, or does the CrM campaign rather have an instrumental, self-interested alignment?

Based on our SLR, we cannot definitely conclude, which perspective is predominant in practice; nor can we make any clear statement as to whether (and which) PO prioritize one or the other perspective under what circumstances. In sum, we do not really know. The content analysis of the PO motives reveals that a bundle of CrM motives as well as corporate and marketing goals (can) characterize CrM campaigns. Many papers emphasize financial motives (and thus self-interest), but also value-based aspects. Due to the fact that only the qualitative study of Miranda et al. (2020) explores PO motivations in Portugal, many questions remain open. Even though, Miranda et al. (2020) also point out that CrM is based on a bundle of motives; they particularly highlight competitive advantages and image as CrM motives. This suggests a predominance of self-interested motives. Overall, there is still a need for research regarding the cooperation motives of PO (and NPO). Interestingly, more than 30 years ago, Varadarajan and Menon (1988) already formulated motive-/goal-related questions: "What are some of the major corporate and marketing objectives firms strive to realize by participating in CRMPs? (…) Who within the organization participates in decisions pertaining to the major aspects of CRMPs such as program objectives, cause(s) (…)? How do firms evaluate and select from among alternative causes (…)?" (p. 71). These questions thus represent the roots or origins of the CrM research field and we advocate that scholars should place more emphasize on such fundamental questions.

Decades later, Gupta and Pirsch (2006a) also raised questions about CrM motives and how financial and value-based motives could be integrated: „(…) If stakeholders perceive that their (sponsoring) company is launching a cause-related initiative *only* to increase sales, improve brand image, or appear more ʿpolitically correctʾ, the net result to the company could far outweigh any positives gained from cause sponsorship. (…) But how do companies most effectively convey their sincerity of motivation to their publics, and balance their capitalistic motivations with their altruistic ones? This area remains ripe for study, and presents interesting ethical dilemmas for marketing managers on the company and cause side alike" (p. 39).

Hence, we would like to emphasize that these fundamental research desiderata have not yet been sufficiently considered and addressed. Qualitative as well as quantitative (but less experimental) research designs seem to be promising for this endeavor. It is important to explore the motives but also potential influencing factors on the motives of PO-managers. Relevant contingency factors could be, for example, the size of the PO, sector/field of activity as well as individual characteristics of managers or decision-makers (e.g., cultural background, religious or other value-based attitudes), and also whether the PO is a family business or not.[11] Besides, it would be interesting to explore the role of various internal and external stakeholders (and how they influence CrM) as well as to analyze the influence of legal, cultural and other conditions or circumstances. Under which conditions do PO pursue which CrM goals? How do they prioritize them and why? How can partners ensure that their value systems are compatible and that they pursue common, complementary goals in order to protect their identity or the goodwill of their key stakeholders? Moreover, how can stakeholders determine, whether a company is "really" and "sincerely" committed to CrM or only does "green washing" or CSR "window dressing"?

Finally, we would like to refer to the limitations associated with this SLR. Our review gives an informative and insightful overview, but it cannot draw a complete picture of the entire current state of knowledge on CrM (and CrM motives). The selection of databases, keywords, inclusion and exclusion criteria and the literature sample as well as the content analysis are influenced by the authors' subjective assessments (and by their literature access possibilities). Publications in other (unconsidered) publication media (such as monographs or conference papers) or published in other languages could provide further valuable insights. Moreover, the use of other databases can lead to different and possibly richer results. Overall, the other SLR (which we identified during this project and afterwards[12]) make it clear that numerous CrM papers are not considered in our review; therefore, a next step could be to conduct a broader review by synthesizing all their references. However, many of our findings are consistent with the results of these other (more comprehensive) SLR, which deal with interesting facets of CrM research and map the field (in form of overviews and/or bibliographic/bibliometric analyses), but they do not

[11] For example, another SLR could investigate whether family businesses enter into CrM cooperations more frequently than other businesses, or one could conduct an empirical study on this question. In the context of a study on CSR in Austrian family businesses, Kuttner et al. (2021) show that their main motives for a CSR-related commitment are to enhance image and trust as well as to strengthen regional embeddedness and employee-related improvements.

[12] During the review process we identified the four SLR included in our analysis (cf. Table 2). In addition, we also identified two newer SLR (Bhatti et al., 2023; Patil & Rahman, 2023) and compared our results with them.

(or only rudimentarily) address cooperation motives or objectives. Our review paper thus makes a valuable contribution to further illuminating this important aspect of CrM research. Overall, it seems essential that future research examines in detail the CrM motives of PO and the (so far largely neglected) perspective of NPO. In particular, more empirical-qualitative and quantitative studies should identify relevant conditions or influencing factors on CrM motives and investigate their importance and implications.

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* Contributions that are part of the SLR sample are marked with an asterisk.

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