

Abstract As part of their corporate social responsibility, many organizations practice cause-related marketing, in which organizations donate to a chosen cause with every consumer purchase. The extant literature has identified the importance of the fit between the organization and the nature of the cause in influencing corporate image, as well as the influence of a connection between the cause and consumer preferences on brand attitudes and brand choice. However, prior research has not addressed which cause composition most appeals to consumers or the impact of cause choice on corporate image. A between-subjects field experiment in the Netherlands examines the influence of three core cause attributes—cause type, cause scope, and cause acuteness—on consumers' perceptions of corporate image. Furthermore, this experiment examines the extent to which consumer identification with the cause mediates the influence of the cause attributes on corporate image. The findings indicate that identification with the cause leads to more positive evaluations of marketing campaigns for cause type and cause scope. Also, however, our results uncover a negative direct relationship between cause scope and corporate image. Cause acuteness is only marginally influential in corporate image perceptions. By proposing and testing a comprehensive model of the influence of cause attributes on corporate image in cause-related marketing, this article provides important implications and suggests avenues for further research.

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