

Is Cause Related Marketing an effective CSR strategy for the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority? If so is it about time to try it?

Authors:

Dr. Marlen Demetriou, Marketing Department, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Ave., P.O.Box 24005, 1700, Nicosia, demetriou.m@unic.ac.cy

Dr. Ioanna Papasolomou, Marketing Department, School of Business, University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Ave., P.O.Box 24005, 1700, Nicosia, papasolomou.i@unic.ac.cy

ABSTRACT

Corporations have long realized the benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and every year they spend an enormous amount of money on multidimensional CSR programs. Cause Related Marketing seems to be a popular CSR program which enables companies to show their “Socially Responsible Face” by forming social partnerships with social organizations. Corporations which have adopted Cause CRM as a marketing tool for achieving their marketing objectives by demonstrating a commitment to improve the quality of life in the communities in which they operate have gained social recognitions and acknowledgement. This research offers a longitudinal comparative analysis of data derived from a three phase research on the corporate image of Cypriot organizations given their CSR and CRM programs. The research methodology focuses primarily on surveys in 2004, 2007 and 2009/10 with a sample size of 740, 504 and 616 respectively. The research indicates that the majority of consumers recognizes and acknowledges CSR efforts for those corporations which have established long term alliances with non-profit organizations. The research findings indicated that Cause Related Marketing Strategies continue to be highly appreciated by the Cypriot Consumers and the organizations and two banks which have successfully adopted them have been ranked as the most reputable organizations in terms of corporate responsibility. The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority (CYTA) has been ranked third in the list of Socially responsible Corporation below the Bank of Cyprus and the Marfin Popular Bank. Nevertheless the percentage of Cypriots who named CYTA as socially Responsible is by far lower than the one of the two banks despite the fact that CYTA has adopted a very expensive CSR programs. What can be concluded from the outcome of this longitudinal research is the need for the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority to adopt a successful CRM strategy forming a social partnership with a Social organization/ cause of great impact in the Cyprus Society. The nature of the cause that CYTA can choose to deal with in a long term strategic alliance can be chosen from a list of causes Cypriots have named important in the same research.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Cause Related Marketing (CRM), Non-Profit Organizations, Corporate Image, Branding, Cyprus Telecommunication Authority (CYTA).

Introduction:

CSR is an issue that encompasses business decision making related to “ethical values, legal requirements, as well as respect for people, communities, and the environment.” (Kotler and Lee, 2005: 3). CSR is also about the dedication in improving community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources (Kotler and Lee, 2005: 3) and furthermore it is an issue that runs through much of what an organization does, since a business wishes to be viewed as a good neighbor and a responsible employer (Donovan, 2004: 14-15) An effective CSR plan should be primarily based on the shareholders’ needs. “The concept of different groups influencing an organization and in turn being influenced is an important element in the development of integrated marketing communication.” (Chris Fill, 2005:204) “Organizations in developed economies are today influenced by public opinion, shareholders...and the political process. Consequently, organizations that ignore their operational environment are susceptible to restrictive legislation and regulation.” (Ralph Tench and Liz Yeomans, 2006:100)

According to Jane E. Salk and Bindu Arya (2005), effective and efficient CSR capabilities cannot be developed on a pop. What is vital is that there has to be a change in an organizations system which will be able to manage evolution and built a basis for public social capital and effective teaming. Being socially responsible by meeting the public’s continually changing expectations requires wise leadership at the top of the corporation. Companies with the ability to recognize profound social changes and anticipate how they will affect operations have proven to be survivors” (Anne T Lawrence and James Weber, 2008:55-56).

“...An effective business case can be presented as one that shows CSR activities as reducing business risk, protecting reputation, or increasing bottom line. ...While it may not be difficult in any one instance for a leader to push through a CSR project or short term initiative, those organizations that achieve an outstanding reputation for CSR and leave a true legacy are those in which CSR leaders have been able to foster real longer term commitment.” (Nada K. Kakabadse et al 2007).

The need for “longer term commitment” as mentioned above have driven many corporations to examine and adopt the concept and philosophy of Cause Related Marketing (CRM)

CRM is an expression of the social conscience of an organization (CSR) by aligning social problems and organizational goals. CRM is all about achieving synergies and forming alliances with stakeholder groups. It focuses on ‘marrying’ the corporate strategy of community involvement with social issues related to business. In doing that it enables

businesses to actively contribute to the growth and sustainability of the societies in which they operate whilst enhancing the long-term benefits for their brands. The critical words according to Sue Adkins (2005) in the definition are: commercial, partnership, or relationship and mutual benefit. These words clarify that CRM is not philanthropy or altruism. Parties such as businesses, charities or causes engage in CRM in order to meet their objectives and receive a return on their investment. CRM provides a commercial advantage that justifies the willingness of all parties to come together from the outset.

Over the last decade or so the number of enterprises embracing and implementing CRM is increasing and CRM is gaining in popularity as a marketers' and fundraisers' toolkit.

Some argue that CRM is simply a cynical exploitation of public sympathy for profitability. Critical voices will always exist. Undoubtedly, firms need to approach the communication and promotion of their CSR related activities with caution and at the same time reflect on the criticisms targeted at them.

Cyprus Telecommunication Authority.: Its CSR strategy

The Cyprus Telecommunication authority has applied a very dynamic CSR and Socially sustainable program. It is by no accident that in the latest CSR Digest on September the 5th 2011 it has been reported that "Organizations such as The World Business for Sustainable Development, Oracle, Baxter, Sara Lee, CYTA, Mercedes Benz, Baker Hughes, Whole Foods, The North Face, Vanity Fair, and Entrepreneur, BP, Lloyds Banking Group, Dubai Customs are now implementing the most advanced Sustainability Strategies within their organizations" (<http://www.csrdigest.com/2011/03/csr-practitioner-training-designing-implementing-effective-csr-strategies-reports>)

CYTA is applying CSR in various fields; such as environment, Health, Education, Technology and Research, Sports and Culture.
(<http://www.cyta.com.cy/pr/annualreport/anreport2009/SocialResponsibility.htm>)

1. Health and Welfare

CYTA contributes every year to the Radiomarathon as an official sponsor, through activities such as our participation in the "Love Fairs" and the participation of Cyta's mascot 'Telly' in the mobile cash boxes touring schools for fundraising.

Regarding health, CYTA sponsored the Centre for Preventive Paediatrics for three successive years. In 2006 CYTA delivered to the Cyprus Anti-Anaemia Association cardiac equipment for monitoring patients with Thalassaemia for the needs of the Thalassaemia Centre.

CYTA's policy also focuses on the development of road safety awareness among young people who are about the 25% of the victims of traffic accidents in Cyprus. Specifically CYTA organises road safety seminars for National Guard conscripts and Secondary School leavers. This Cyta initiative verifies CYTA's commitment to the European Road Safety Charter (which the Organisation signed in Dublin in 2004) and to the common European goal of halving the number of road fatalities by 2010.

Every year CYTA issues and distributes free of charge "Camouflage" telecards to soldiers and prisoners. CYTA also supports many other charity fundraising events, for example during the Christmas holidays, CYTA's representatives visit hospitals and children's homes with gifts for the children, and providing the free Charity Direct service which enables people to make donations by telephone to charitable organisations.

2. Education

CYTA is sponsoring every year the island wide 'Technology in Education' competition and the Cyprus Mathematical Society. CYTA is also providing every year ten scholarships to non-Cyta employees to study at the University of Nicosia for diploma in Telecommunications & Information Technology. On the subject of activities CYTANET has sponsored "JOTA-JOTI" (Jamboree on the Air and on the Internet), the annual online event of the Cyprus Scouts Association. CYTA has connected all the island's schools to the Internet free of charge. They pay a special low monthly subscription fee and, among other things, receive free web hosting of school and teachers' websites (of educational content). Additionally every year Cyta publishes an activity book for children entitled "Playing, having fun and learning with Telly" which is distributed to all pre-school and primary school children throughout Cyprus. Since 2001 CYTANET has been making presentations to junior, secondary and technical schools with the purpose of informing and educating students about electronic communications and promoting Internet usage in schools. Additionally, the "soeasy" prepaid mobile telephone service supports the health and correct diet programme that is implemented in junior schools across Cyprus, by getting a MENTOR mobile education unit.

3. Environment

CYTA is developing parks in almost every district in Cyprus, this is done in collaboration with the respective Municipalities. CYMEPA is a well-established institution, that CYTA sponsors its activities. This institution, among other things, offers environmental education programmes to schoolchildren.

4. Culture

CYTA often organizes various concerts with well known singers and musicians for the awareness of Road Safety issues. They have also sponsored two exceptional concerts in Cyprus by the world-famous Vienna Mozart Orchestra and the internationally renowned Cypriot baritone Kyros Patsalides.

5. Sports

CYTA is a major sponsor of football since 2005. The sponsorship programme covers the Cyprus Football Association, the Cyprus national team, the Cyprus Referees Association and the Cyprus Sportswriters Association. CYTA also supports the Cyprus international Rally, by providing technical support, including broadband services and Internet access via CYTANET as well as mobile phone services through Cytamobile-Vodafone.

6. Technology and Research

CYTA sponsored a Symposium on “Electromagnetic Fields - Sources, Health Effects and Regulations”, organised by the Cyprus International Institute for the Environment and Public Health in collaboration with the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber (ETEK). The Symposium was addressed by internationally renowned scientists.

Adding to the field of technology CYTA organises seminars, to mark World Telecommunications Day (17 May), for “Safe Internet for our Children”, enabling parents, teachers, pupils and all interested parties to learn about the topic from experts, free of charge.

Research Questions:

- 1. Do Cypriots recognize and remember all the above mentioned CSR activities of the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority.**
- 2. Do they rate the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority given its big CSR budgets as the “Top Corporate Giver” in Cyprus?**
- 3. Or do Cypriots rate at higher levels corporations with successful long-term Cause Related Marketing Strategies?**
- 4. What are the Social Problems /Causes Cypriots would expect the profit Organizations to form Social partnerships with?**

Research Methodology

In an effort to answer the research questions a longitudinal three phase primary research was adopted

Research Aim:

To identify the value of CRM in terms of influencing consumers’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in relation to local businesses and their brands associated with local charities/causes as compared to corporations with “fat” CSR budgets but not CRM programs.

Research Objectives:

- a) To reveal consumers’ perceptions and feelings in relation to corporate involvement in activities related to social responsibility and cause-related marketing.
- b) To examine consumers’ attitudes and preferences towards firms and products associated with socially responsible activities.
- c) To identify the factors Cypriots take into consideration when ranking the Cyprus Organizations as “Top Corporate Givers”
- d) To identify the nature of CSR programs adopted by corporations ranked by Cypriot consumers as the best corporations in terms of CSR programs

e) To uncover consumers' beliefs in terms of the charities/social causes with which they would like local businesses to form social partnerships.

The research plan

The researchers used a survey approach in order to gather descriptive information in relation to the people's perceptions, attitudes and level of knowledge in terms of corporate involvement in CRM activities, as well as people's preferences in terms of the causes with which they would like organisations to be associated. The study is divided in three phases. The first phase of this action research took place in the year 2004 with a sample of 740 Greek-Cypriots. The same survey was repeated in year 2007 (phase 2) with a sample of 505 and the third phase took place on December 2009/January- February 2010 with a sample of 616 Cypriot consumers.

A total of 1,861 (740 for year 2004 and 505 for year 2007 and 616 for years 2009/2010) questionnaires were prepared and distributed to Cypriot Citizens throughout the three phases of the research. A combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The sampling method was the stratified random sampling approach according to which the population was divided in three mutually exclusive age groups (20-35, 36-50, 51 and above). From each group random samples were drawn in the ratio 3:2:2. The decision for this sampling method was based on the main objective of the survey which was to identify a cause that Cypriots and especially young to middle age people would like to see corporations to be associated with. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face and telephone interviews. The data analysis was carried out with the use of the SPSS and Excel packages.

Research Findings

The data analysis on the surveys of the year 2004, 2007 and 2009/10 revealed that consumers expect corporations to be socially responsible. Irrespective of the age of the respondents, the majority (84%) agreed that it is important that businesses need to demonstrate that they are socially responsible. Consumers' product choice and purchase behavior is directly linked to the firm's involvement in CSR related activities. When the Cypriots were asked to reveal their brand preference in terms of selecting between two brands (A & B) where quality and price

are equal the majority (86%) chose the brand that was associated with a good cause. At the same time, consumers classified a business as a 'socially responsible corporation' when it formed a partnership with a charity or a cause which has a high impact on society. Respondents were asked to name up to four profit-making organizations in Cyprus which, according to the respondents' opinion, are engaged in socially responsible activities. Marfin Laiki Bank was ranked in the first place (63%) and the Bank of Cyprus in the second place (62%). The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority was ranked in the third place with only 18%. Both banks have launched CRM programs. Marfin Laiki Bank has formed a partnership with "Radiomarathon"- a charitable organization in aid of children with special needs since 1992 and is responsible for a number of fundraising activities. The Bank of Cyprus has formed a partnership with the Anti-Cancer Society since 1992 and covered all the construction costs of the biggest Oncology center in Cyprus. An interesting finding was that the corporations which are involved in corporate philanthropy rather than CRM are not regarded as corporate givers by the great majority of responders according to Demetriou et al (2010).

Comparative Analysis of the three phases of the research

In an effort to compare and contrast as well as to summarize the research finding of these longitudinal survey tables 1 to 4 have been prepared.

The data of those tables can provide the reader with an insight of the value of CRM as compared to CSR as well as the value for a corporation to identify a cause and to form a social partnership for the mutual benefit of the profit and non-profit organization.

In the first table we can see how Cypriots reacted on the statement that all corporations need to prove their social responsibility. Cypriots were asked if they expect corporations to be socially responsible. The reader can see that in all three phases of the research the great majority of Cypriots are strong supporters of the idea that corporations need to be socially responsible and prove to the public their social responsibility. The percentage of the responders who agree to the question is almost the same in every phase of survey.

Table1: Are corporations expected to prove their Social Responsibility?

	2004	2007	2009/10
Agree	88%	87%	87%
Disagree	6%	6%	4%
Indifferent	6%	7%	9%

In an effort to identify the consumers' purchasing intentions on products represented by companies with CSR orientation as opposed to brands with no known CSR practice the responders were asked to choose among two similar brands in terms of price and quality. Table 2 presents the study's findings in relation to whether customers are likely to select a brand which is marketed by a corporation which practices CSR (brand B) rather than one which is promoted by a company that is not engaged in CSR (brand A) given that the brands are similar and have the same price. The majority of respondents claimed that they would endorse the company that practices CSR. The 2009/2010 findings corroborate the findings that emerged in 2004 and 2007. The study's findings corroborate the findings that emerged from the existent literature which showed that CSR has the potential to encourage consumers to switch between products when price, product and quality are equal (Business in the Community 2004). The importance of CSR behaviour is also highlighted by the findings of the MORI (Market and Opinion Research International) survey which took place on September 2000. MORI on behalf of CSR Europe interviewed 12,000 consumers across 12 European countries on their attitudes towards the role of businesses in today's society. The

survey also revealed that the majority of the European public feel that a company’s commitment to social responsibility is an important consideration when buying a product or service (70%), and 1 in 5 (20%) would be very willing to pay more for products that are socially and environmentally responsible. In addition, 1 in 7 (14%) of the European public actively seeks information on ethical activities. All above findings in combination to the findings of our research project constitute a proof that consumers highly appreciate CSR programs and are willing to reward corporations which prove their social responsibility by choosing their brands and sometimes (MORI survey) are willing to pay more.

Table 2: Brand preference given the corporate involvement in CSR programs

	2004	2007	2009/10
Product "A"	3%	6%	6%
Product "B"	88%	83%	85%
Any of the two	9%	11%	9%

The third objective of the research was to identify the names of corporations Cypriots believe that they have proved their CSR orientation. Table three presents the list of local corporations Cypriots consider as very active in CSR programs. At this stage it needs to be underlined that there was no list of names provided to responders and thus the responders were free to name up to any four corporations they believed were acting in a socially responsible way. In the first two places are the two leading retail banking organizations, which are in fact the most reputable businesses in terms of corporate citizenship on the island. The reason for this reputation is the fact that both organizations have built a long lasting social partnership with

very reputable social organizations. For example, the Marfin Laiki Bank has formed a social alliance with “Radiomathon”, a charity that supports children with special needs and their families. The Bank of Cyprus on the other hand has built the Cyprus Oncology center and financially supports its running expenses. At the same time the Bank of Cyprus has formed an alliance with the Cyprus Anti-Cancer Society. The end result of this alliance is the “Arodaphnousa” Hospice which provides palliative care to all Cypriots suffering from Cancer.

The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority (CYTA) was the third organization in the list but only 1 in 5 responders mentioned its name in year 2004, 1 in 10 in year 2007 and less than 1 in 5 for the year 2009/2010. CYTA, despite the multidimensional activities in which the corporation is involved the last ten years with care and concern to different Social groups and Causes, has not been recognized as the corporate giver by the majority of responders.

This is a fact that CYTA needs to take into consideration and need to try to change.

Another important finding is that Hellenic Bank was named by 20% of the responders in the survey of year 2004 as a Socially Responsible Corporation and later on none of the responders ever mentioned its name in the second and third phase of the research. The explanation of this paradox is based on the fact that the Bank had a long-lasting Social partnership with the “Cyprus Institute for Muscular Dystrophy”. This partnership ended in 2004 and Cypriots have “forgotten” to include the bank in the list of “Corporate Givers” despite its multifaceted CSR orientation

(<https://www.hellenicbank.com/easyconsole.cfm/id/126>).

All the other corporations in the list are involved in different CSR programs and some of them are spending a lot of money on philanthropic activities BUT none of them has formed a social alliance with any social Organization. Undoubtedly, the study suggests that Cypriots have named as the most socially responsible corporations two organizations which apply Cause Related Marketing Strategies.

Comparing the findings of this research study to a similar surveys abroad one can easily understand the similarity of research findings and the value of the Cause Related Marketing in building a strong reputation to corporations which apply it. For example a study conducted by Harris Interactive Inc. and the Reputation Institute as reported by Ronald Alsop, “The Best Corporate Reputations in America” in September 1999 found that Johnson & Johnson was America’s most respected company at the end of the 20th century, thanks primarily to the reputation it gained in handling the Tylenol murders as part of its CRM campaign.

Table 3: The local businesses with the strongest corporate reputation in terms of CSR activities

	2004	2007	2009/10
Marfin Popular Bank	58%	33%	39%
Bank of Cyprus	57%	36%	33%
Cyta	20%	10%	18%
Hellenic bank	20%	2%	0%
Lanitis	16%	5%	6%
TV channels	16%	4%	5%
J&P	19%	5%	13%
AHK	11%	5%	7%
Mc Donalds	0%	0%	18%
Other	44%	26%	43%

In an effort to identify the different social problems and causes Cypriots would like the profit organizations to form social partnerships with, the researchers provided an open-end question according to which the responders were asked to list up to four causes. Table four provides a list of Social Causes Cypriots would like the profit organizations to form social partnerships

with in order to contribute to the minimization of the problem. According to all three phases of the research, Cypriots feel that profit organizations can get actively involved in the effort to minimize the problem of cancer through early detection programs or to support programs which provide health and palliative care to people with cancer. In the case of the second cause in the list (protections of Child's rights) in the survey of 2007 the number of responders who named this cause was very small while in the third phase of the survey (2009/10) the number increased to 21%. When this case was examined in depth by the researchers it was found that in the year 2004 there were too many incidents with the violation of children's rights covered by the local press but later on only few incidents were reported. Environment seems to be a cause Cypriots are always interested to see corporations fighting for and "demand" its protection.

Something new in the survey of 2009/10 is the fact that for the first time Cypriots refer to "poverty" as a social problem and they expect corporations to contribute to its solution. The reason that Cypriots referred to this problem as they explained to the researchers is the fact that the unemployment level has increased to almost 8% from the very low level of 3% before the Economic Crisis. According to European Commission (2010) the poverty rate in Cyprus has increased the last decade and reached levels that need be taken seriously into consideration. (www.2010againstpoverty.eu/homepage.html?langid=en)

Table 4: The Social Causes/Problems Cypriots expect the profit organizations to get involved into.

	2004	2007	2009/10
Anti-Cancer	47%	33%	35%
Protection of child's Rights	43%	5%	21%
Anti-drug campaigns	38%	32%	13%
Environment	21%	25%	26%
Anti-Leukaemia	18%	2%	0%
Health	17%	19%	21%
Violence in the family	14%	3%	3%
Poverty	0%	0%	17.20%
Education/Culture	1%	5%	11.60%

Conclusion

The study revealed that Cypriots expect businesses to play an active role in dealing with social problems in Cyprus. The country's two leading banks were identified by the consumers surveyed, in all three phases of the research, as the top corporate givers largely due to their CRM practices which are linked to children and cancer. The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority which has an expensive multifaceted CSR program is ranked third in the list of "Corporate Givers" with a low percentage rate of responders referring to it. The conclusion that can be drawn is that CYTA's CSR program is not well known because CYTA is not concentrating in one specific ethical action. It adopts different CSR campaigns spending big budgets on different causes and Social Activities which Cypriots "Tend to Forget"!". Unlike CYTA, the two commercial banks (Bank of Cyprus and Marfin Laiki concentrate on good causes for a long period of time forming long lasting partnerships with important Non-Profit Organizations in Cyprus like the Cyprus Anti-Cancer Society and the Radiomarathon respectively. Cypriots seem to acknowledge the effort of the two Banks to solve or at least to minimize specific Social Problems rating the two banks at the top of the list of Socially Responsible Corporations in Cyprus. The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority may need to reconsider its CSR strategy and build a long lasting alliance with a Social Organization with great impact in the Cyprus Society. Problems like Cancer and Environment seem to be among the important Social issues in the Cyprus Society given the research findings. CYTA can examine the possibility to ally with organizations that work for those causes for their mutual benefit.

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Biography: Dr Marlen Martoudi Demetriou

Dr. Marlen Martoudi Demetriou is an Assistant Professor in Marketing. She holds a BSc. degree in Business Administration, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management, an MBA degree in Marketing and a Doctorate in Professional Studies degree in Societal Marketing. Her Research Interests are on Societal Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Philanthropy and Cause Related Marketing. Her research work has been published in International Conference Proceedings and Journals. She is actively involved in many charitable organizations in Cyprus and she is a board member of the Cyprus Anticancer Society.

Biography: Dr Ioanna Papasolomou

Dr. Ioanna Papasolomou is an Associate Professor and the Head of the Department of Marketing, School of Business Administration, at the University of Nicosia in Cyprus. She has teaching and research experience in the UK. She holds a PhD in Marketing from Keele University as well as an MBA, an MPhil in Marketing Public Relations, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Dr Papasolomou has contributed papers to a number of international conferences and journals such as the Journal of Marketing Management, Marketing Intelligence and Planning, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Product and Brand Management, and the Journal of Marketing Communications. She has also contributed chapters and case studies to several academic books.