

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG



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**THE IMPACT OF PERCEPTION OF CAUSE-RELATED
MARKETING ON POSITIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH AND
REPURCHASE INTENTION: A STUDY OF FAST-MOVING
CONSUMER GOODS IN VIETNAM**

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LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS

- 1. An, N. T.**, Quang, N. H., & Nga, L. P. (2024). Tiếp thị liên quan đến nguyên nhân: Đánh giá dựa trên kỹ thuật phân tích kết nối thư mục. *Tạp chí khoa học Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh - Kinh tế và Quản trị kinh doanh*, 19(10), 37-56. DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.econ.vi.19.10.3103.2024 (Tạp chí ACI, Điểm: 0 - 1.25)
- 2. Nguyen, A. T.**, Phan, L. T., & Nguyen, Q. H. (2024). The Role of Brand Image and Brand Love in the Relationship Between Perceived Cause-Related Marketing and Repurchase Intention. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 37(2), 188-207. (Scopus Q4, Điểm: 1.5)

CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Rationale for Choosing the Research Topic

Practical Context

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector plays a vital role in Vietnam's economy, not only meeting essential consumer needs but also serving as a key driver of national economic growth. It is one of the most dynamic sectors in Southeast Asia, encompassing low-value products with short consumption cycles that are purchased frequently, such as food, beverages, personal care, and household products (Kantar, 2023).

Amid significant global economic volatility, Vietnam recorded a GDP growth rate of 5.05 percent in 2023 (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2023). However, retail market growth reached only 9.6 percent, reflecting increasingly cautious consumer spending behavior, with greater emphasis on essential goods and higher value in each purchasing decision (Kantar, 2023). Although urban FMCG growth reached 7.1 percent, this growth was driven primarily by price increases, while actual consumption volume showed a declining trend (Kantar, 2023).

This trend poses substantial challenges for FMCG firms in sustaining sales performance and building customer loyalty. Consumers are becoming more concerned with corporate social responsibility and brand sustainability commitments, moving beyond traditional evaluation criteria such as price and product quality (Le, Tiwari, Behl & Pereira, 2022). In the post Covid-19 context, cause-related marketing has emerged as an important strategy enabling firms to build a positive brand image and strengthen emotional engagement with consumers, particularly as environmental and health issues receive increasing attention (Kantar, 2023).

Moreover, consumer behavior in Vietnam exhibits clear differences across generations and regions. Generation Z and Generation Y consumers tend to favor brands that demonstrate social responsibility, whereas Generation X and Baby Boomers place greater emphasis on product quality and economic value (Williams & Page, 2011; Ordun, 2015; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Cultural and geographical factors also significantly influence consumption patterns, as consumers in Northern Vietnam often prefer strong and reputable brands, while those in the South are more open to new brands offering good value (Nguyen & Cung, 2019; Deltail et al., 2021; Geiger-Oneto et al., 2023).

In a context of rapid market change and declining consumer loyalty, examining the effects of cause-related marketing, brand image, brand love, and positive word of mouth on repurchase intention, while considering the moderating roles of generation and region, is essential. This study is expected to provide important practical insights to help FMCG firms in

Vietnam optimize marketing strategies and move toward sustainable development.

Theoretical Context

Over the past two decades, social awareness among stakeholders, particularly consumers, has increased substantially, leading to growing expectations regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR). As social and environmental issues gain prominence, consumers expect firms not only to maximize profits but also to contribute positively to society. This trend has stimulated the rapid development of CSR and attracted significant academic attention, especially in examining its effects on brand image, customer loyalty, and business performance.

Although CSR research has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, the field still lacks consensus regarding conceptual approaches. According to Kotler, Hesekiel, and Lee (2012), CSR can be implemented through six main forms, among which cause-related marketing (CRM) is considered a key strategy that enables firms to fulfill social responsibility while simultaneously generating business value. CRM refers to marketing activities in which firms commit to donating a portion of revenue or profit from product or service sales to support a specific social cause, with the contribution mechanism directly triggered by customer transactions (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Kotler & Lee, 2005). Compared with the broader CSR concept encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities (Carroll, 1991), CRM is more market-oriented, sales-dependent, and strongly influences consumer perceptions and responses (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Mohr et al., 2001).

CRM originated in the 1980s with the well-known American Express campaign supporting the restoration of the Statue of Liberty. Since then, CRM has evolved into a widely adopted marketing strategy used by major brands to build a socially responsible corporate image and strengthen customer connections. Recent advances in digital technology and communication have significantly expanded the scope and forms of CRM implementation, particularly through social media and electronic commerce platforms.

Despite considerable academic interest, many aspects of CRM remain underexplored, especially the roles of consumer perceptions and emotions in the relationship between CRM and repurchase intention. Most studies focus on initial consumer reactions, the impact of CRM on brand image, and firm-level benefits, while long-term psychological mechanisms such as trust, empathy, emotional attachment, and brand love have received limited attention. These emotional factors are believed to play a critical role in building loyalty and encouraging repeat purchasing behavior.

A bibliometric literature review indicates a substantial increase in CRM-related research, particularly since 2018. Between 1997 and 2023, CRM has become an important research domain within marketing and CSR, with rapidly growing publication volumes in leading academic journals. Research data were collected from 55 countries, with the United States leading, followed by India, the United Kingdom, and China. Nevertheless, most studies remain concentrated in developed economies, while emerging markets have received comparatively limited attention.

Bibliographic coupling analysis identifies four major thematic clusters in CRM research, including CRM and social media, CRM in international business, CRM and consumer engagement, and CRM and purchase intention in multicultural contexts. These themes reflect the expansion of CRM beyond traditional marketing into consumer behavior, global business strategy, and digital technology applications.

Overall, bibliometric evidence suggests that CRM is a rapidly growing research field with substantial potential. However, significant research gaps remain, particularly concerning emerging markets, cultural influences, and the role of CRM in building sustainable competitive advantage.

1.2. Research Gaps

Based on the results of the systematic literature review, this dissertation identifies several important research gaps that warrant further investigation.

First, there is a lack of in-depth studies examining the relationship between consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing (CRM) and their purchasing behavior, particularly in multicultural contexts and in emerging markets such as Vietnam. Although CRM has been extensively studied in developed countries, it remains relatively new in Vietnam, and few studies have comprehensively assessed consumers' perceptions of CRM or examined how CRM influences repurchase intention and the related mediating mechanisms.

Second, most prior studies have focused primarily on brand image and brand loyalty, while consumers' emotional factors have received limited attention. In a cultural context that emphasizes community values and interpersonal relationships, such as Vietnam, emotional connections with brands, including brand love and natural forms of support such as word-of-mouth, particularly positive word-of-mouth, may play a crucial role in shaping and sustaining repurchase behavior. Clarifying the impact of CRM on these emotional and behavioral factors is important for developing marketing strategies that not only drive short-term sales but also strengthen long-term customer loyalty.

Third, in emerging markets, especially Vietnam, research on CRM perceptions and their effects on brand attitudes, brand-related emotions, and consumer purchasing behavior remains limited. Cultural differences, particularly those related to individualism and collectivism, may lead to substantial differences in how consumers perceive and respond to CRM initiatives. However, these issues have not been adequately addressed in existing studies.

Fourth, although CRM has been examined across various industries such as sports goods, fashion, telecommunications, tourism, and fast-moving consumer goods, this dissertation focuses specifically on the FMCG sector in Vietnam. This market has experienced significant changes in consumer habits and purchasing behavior, especially in the post Covid-19 period, creating a strong need for new empirical evidence to better understand the role of CRM in maintaining customer loyalty.

Finally, prior research has paid insufficient attention to the development of CRM strategies that are tailored to the cultural characteristics and consumption behaviors of different customer segments. Therefore, this dissertation analyzes generational differences based on age cohorts and controls for regional variations, with the aim of providing a scientific foundation for designing effective and context-appropriate CRM strategies for the Vietnamese market.

Based on these research gaps, conducting a study that examines the impact of consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing on repurchase intention, through the mediating roles of brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth, while also considering the moderating role of age groups and the controlling role of regional differences in the Vietnamese FMCG sector, is both timely and necessary.

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the role and underlying mechanisms through which consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing influence brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth, thereby promoting consumers' repurchase intention.

The study tests the moderating role of customer age groups based on generational differences (Gen Z and Gen Y versus Gen X and Baby Boomers) in the relationships among variables in the research model.

The study examines differences in repurchase intention among consumer groups residing in different regions (Northern Vietnam, Southern Vietnam, compared with Central Vietnam).

The study proposes managerial implications for firms and stakeholders in designing and implementing effective cause-related

marketing strategies to enhance consumer awareness and stimulate repurchase intention.

1.3. Research Questions

To achieve the above research objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

How does consumers' perception of cause-related marketing influence brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth in promoting repurchase intention?

How do generational age groups (younger cohorts including Gen Z and Gen Y, and older cohorts including Gen X and Baby Boomers) moderate the relationships among variables in the research model?

How does repurchase intention differ among consumers across Northern, Southern, and Central regions of Vietnam?

How can firms and stakeholders effectively design and implement cause-related marketing strategies to promote consumers' repurchase intention?

1.4. Research Object and Scope

Research Object

This study focuses on key factors including consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing, repurchase intention, brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth.

Survey Participants

The study surveys Vietnamese consumers belonging to Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X, and Baby Boomer cohorts who have awareness of cause-related marketing and have purchased and consumed fast-moving consumer goods products. Data were collected from four major cities: Hanoi, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City, and Can Tho. Respondents were classified based on place of residence and actual purchasing context. Accordingly, regions were categorized as Northern Vietnam (Hanoi), Central Vietnam (Da Nang), and Southern Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho).

Research Scope

Content scope: The dissertation focuses exclusively on factors related to perceptions of cause-related marketing, brand image, brand love, positive word-of-mouth, and repurchase intention.

Spatial and temporal scope: Data collection was conducted in supermarkets and shopping centers in Hanoi, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City, and Can Tho, where consumers frequently purchase FMCG products and where cause-related marketing activities are prevalent. The survey was conducted during the period 2024 to 2025.

1.5. Research Methodology

A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods is employed to achieve the research objectives.

(i) Qualitative Methods

This study integrates multiple methods to ensure the rigor and comprehensiveness of the theoretical framework and measurement scales. Bibliometric analysis, specifically bibliographic coupling, is used to identify research linkages, trends, and emerging directions in the field. A systematic literature review clarifies theoretical foundations, research constructs, and academic gaps related to repurchase intention. In addition, in-depth interviews are conducted to refine measurement scales and ensure their suitability to the Vietnamese context.

(ii) Quantitative Methods

Pilot quantitative study ($n = 150$): Measurement scales developed from the qualitative phase are preliminarily tested using convenience sampling. Cronbach's Alpha and exploratory factor analysis are applied to assess reliability and refine the measurement scales.

Main quantitative study ($n = 515$): Using SmartPLS software, the measurement and structural models are evaluated through the partial least squares structural equation modeling approach. After establishing the validity of the baseline model, measurement invariance of composite models and multi-group analysis are employed to examine the moderating role of generational age groups, comparing younger cohorts (Gen Z and Gen Y) with older cohorts (Gen X and Baby Boomers).

1.6. Research Contributions

Theoretical Contributions

The findings confirm that consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing have positive and statistically significant effects on brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth. These results not only reinforce prior research but also highlight distinctive features of the Vietnamese market.

First, the study demonstrates that CRM perceptions enhance brand image, consistent with prior studies such as Dean (2003), Nan and Heo (2007), and Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2010). A novel contribution lies in identifying the prominent role of community-oriented cultural values in Vietnam, where consumers particularly value CRM campaigns focused on collective benefits such as environmental protection and education, unlike Western contexts that emphasize direct financial benefits.

Second, CRM perceptions are shown to positively influence brand love, aligning with social exchange theory and empirical evidence from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010). The study further reveals that in Vietnam, brand love is strongly shaped by

social interaction and digital communication, especially on social media platforms, particularly among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers.

Third, CRM perceptions promote positive word-of-mouth, consistent with Karjaluoto et al. (2016) and Dam (2020). In Vietnam, positive word-of-mouth is significantly amplified through digital platforms, leading to faster diffusion than traditional interpersonal channels.

Regarding mediation, brand image is identified as a key mechanism transforming CRM perceptions into positive word-of-mouth and repurchase intention, consistent with Vanhamme et al. (2012). Brand image in Vietnam represents not only product quality but also firms' social commitments. Similarly, brand love functions as an effective mediator in promoting repurchase intention, extending findings by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Batra et al. (2012), particularly among younger generations.

The study also confirms that positive word-of-mouth serves as both an outcome and a mediating mechanism that strengthens repurchase intention, primarily through digital channels. Furthermore, the study extends the S-O-R framework by incorporating demographic factors such as age and region. Gen Z and Gen Y respond more positively to innovative and socially relevant CRM campaigns, while Gen X and Baby Boomers emphasize product quality and brand reliability. Regional differences are explained not only by cultural values but also by economic development and social characteristics across Vietnamese regions.

Practical Contributions

The dissertation provides actionable insights for FMCG firms seeking to optimize marketing strategies and enhance business performance.

First, empirical evidence demonstrates that CRM perceptions positively influence repurchase intention through brand image, brand love, and positive word-of-mouth, highlighting the importance of emotional engagement and social responsibility in building customer loyalty.

Second, the findings enable firms to tailor CRM strategies to different customer segments. Younger consumers favor transparent and socially engaged campaigns, while older consumers prioritize authenticity and tangible benefits.

Third, the study emphasizes the importance of trust, cause involvement, and perceived corporate motives, indicating that firms must ensure the authenticity of CRM initiatives to avoid consumer skepticism.

Fourth, the study encourages firms to adopt long-term CRM strategies aligned with core brand values to achieve sustainable impact. Finally, the findings offer useful references for policymakers and nonprofit organizations seeking effective collaboration with businesses in implementing sustainable CRM programs.

1.7. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters:

Chapter 1: Overview of the research problem

Chapter 2: Theoretical foundations and research model

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 4: Research findings and discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions and managerial implications

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH MODEL

2.1. Research Concepts

(1) Concept of Perception of Cause-Related Marketing

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has been developed since the 1980s and is understood as a strategy that integrates business objectives with support for social causes (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Christoffi et al., 2015; Fiandrino et al., 2019). Perception CRM (pCRM) reflects the extent to which consumers perceive firms' motives, the fit between the brand and the social cause, as well as the value and effectiveness of CRM programs (Barone et al., 2000; Le et al., 2022). In the FMCG sector, pCRM plays an important role in building brand image, trust, and stimulating positive word-of-mouth and repurchase intention (Dean, 2003; Nan & Heo, 2007).

(2) Concept of Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention refers to a psychological tendency that predicts a customer's likelihood of continuing to purchase products or services from the same brand in the future (Hellier et al., 2003), and is distinct from actual repurchasing behavior. This concept reflects consumers' emotional and cognitive states and plays a strategic role in customer retention and loyalty building. Le et al. (2022) extend this concept by suggesting that repurchase intention is also influenced by positive perceptions of CRM and can be measured across behavioral levels associated with social support. Therefore, this study adopts the definition of Le et al. (2022), which is consistent with the S-O-R theory and the FMCG context in Vietnam.

(3) Concept of Brand Image

Brand image is defined as the set of perceptions and associations that consumers attribute to a brand, reflecting how they remember, evaluate, and position the brand in their minds (Levy, 1999; Saleem & Raja, 2014). A strong brand image helps build trust and competitive advantage and serves as a mediating mechanism that transforms marketing efforts into positive behavioral responses (Hsieh et al., 2004; Le et al., 2022). In this study, brand image is approached within the S-O-R framework and measured using the scale developed by Le et al. (2022), emphasizing emotional attachment, engagement, and social value, which is appropriate for the FMCG context.

(4) Concept of Brand Love

Brand love reflects a deep and positive emotional relationship between consumers and a brand, going beyond mere satisfaction to form a lasting attachment (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). This concept is conceptualized as a multidimensional psychological state encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral commitment components (Ahuvia et al., 2008;

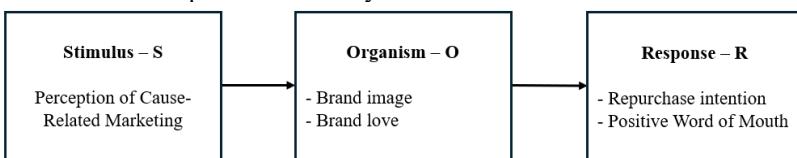
Huang, 2017). In this study, the three-dimensional model proposed by Huang (2017) is adopted, which is suitable for the Asian context and the S-O-R framework, where brand love acts as a mediator between cause-related marketing and positive consumer behaviors such as word-of-mouth and repurchase intention.

(5) Concept of Positive Word-of-Mouth

Positive word-of-mouth (pWOM) refers to consumers' voluntary behavior of sharing and recommending positive experiences and evaluations of a brand to others, characterized by high credibility and influence (Westbrook, 1987; Price & Arnould, 1999). In the digital context, pWOM is widely disseminated through online platforms (Karjaluoto et al., 2016). This study adopts the approach of Price and Arnould (1999), viewing pWOM as a behavioral response in the S-O-R model, triggered by cause-related marketing and mediated by psychological factors such as brand image and brand love, which is appropriate for the FMCG context.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of the Dissertation

To develop the theoretical framework and research hypotheses, this study is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory. The S-O-R theory explains how external stimuli influence individuals' psychological states, which in turn shape their behavioral responses. Originally proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in retail research, the theory has since been widely applied in marketing and other fields. It focuses on explaining the relationship between external environmental stimuli and the responses formed by individuals.



*Figure 2.2. Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory
(Source: Compiled by the author)*

In addition, the moderating role of generational age groups and the controlling role of regional factors on consumers' purchase intentions are explained by generational stratification theory (Mannheim, 2005) and regional and geographical space theory (Scott & Storper, 2003).

2.4. Research Hypotheses and Proposed Research Model

The S-O-R model is widely recognized as a prominent theory for explaining purchasing behavior. In marketing research, the S-O-R framework suggests that environmental attributes act as external stimuli that influence individuals' psychological states and subsequently guide their

behavioral responses (Koo & Lee, 2011). Vi, Thuong, and Nhan (2018) also applied the S-O-R model in their study of advertising in tourism. The S-O-R model allows for linking emotional and cognitive processes within the organism to behavioral responses, regardless of the specific nature of the stimulus. Accordingly, this study applies both the theoretical and empirical foundations of the S-O-R model to analyze cognitive and emotional mediators influencing customers' repurchase behavior.

Furthermore, the moderating role of generational age groups and the controlling role of regional factors are explained by generational stratification theory (Mannheim, 2005) and regional and geographical space theory (Scott & Storper, 2003). Generational stratification theory provides a fundamental framework for understanding how generations shape behavior, values, and social perspectives. It is widely applied in sociology, psychology, and consumer research, particularly in analyzing differences in purchasing behavior across Gen Z (1997 to 2012), Gen Y (1981 to 1996), Gen X (1965 to 1980), and Baby Boomers (1946 to 1964). Regional and geographical space theory focuses on the relationship between regional economic development, globalization, and spatial dynamics, emphasizing the interaction of economic, social, and cultural factors across geographical spaces. This theory is used to explain differences in consumer purchasing behavior across regions such as Northern, Central, and Southern Vietnam.

Based on the above theoretical foundations, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis H1: Perception CRM has a positive effect on brand image.

Hypothesis H2: Perception CRM has a positive effect on brand love.

Hypothesis H3: Brand image has a positive effect on brand love.

Hypothesis H4: Brand image has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Hypothesis H5: Brand love has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Hypothesis H6: Brand image has a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis H7: Brand love has a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis H8: Positive word-of-mouth has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Hypothesis H9: Perception CRM has a positive effect on positive word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis H10: Perception CRM has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Hypothesis H11: Age groups play a moderating role in the relationships among variables in the research model.

Hypothesis H12: Brand image and brand love simultaneously mediate the effect of Perception CRM on repurchase intention.

Hypothesis H13: Brand image and brand love simultaneously mediate the effect of Perception CRM on positive word-of-mouth.

Hypothesis H14: Consumers' repurchase intention differs across residential regions.

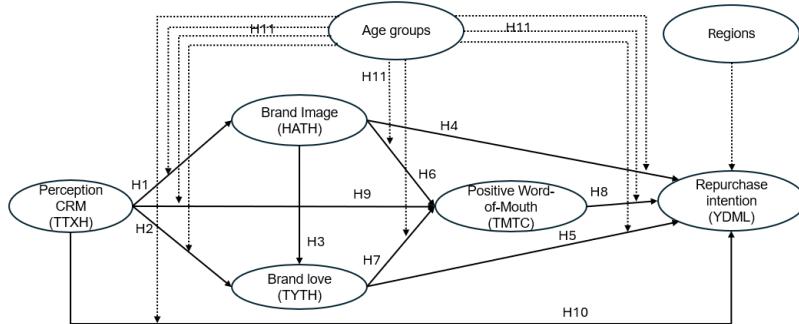


Figure 2.3. Proposed Research Model

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Research Process

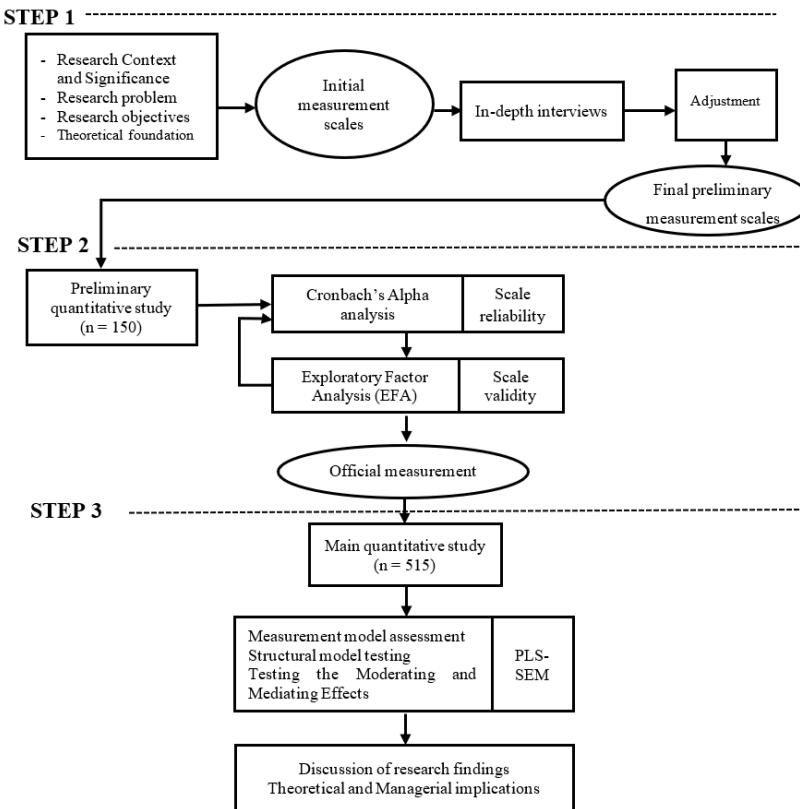


Figure 3.4. Overall Research Process

3.2. Qualitative Research

Building on measurement scales from prior studies, the author designed preliminary scales for the constructs in the research model. To obtain Vietnamese draft scales with adequate validity, the back-translation method was applied. Subsequently, the qualitative research method used was in-depth interviews to confirm the necessity of the study and to collect feedback for adding observed variables as well as adjusting wording to ensure suitability for the Vietnamese research context.

Concept	Scale Description	Source
Perception of Cause-Related Marketing	Comprises 4 observed items. Measures consumers' perceptions of cause-related marketing programs.	Le et al., 2022
Brand Image	Comprises 5 observed items. Measures consumers' perceptions of a brand, formed through active engagement with information and personal experiences.	Le et al., 2022
Brand Love	Comprises 4 observed items. Measures consumers' brand love, specifically the level of emotional attachment that a consumer has toward a brand.	Huang, 2017
Positive Word of Mouth	Comprises 4 observed items. Measures consumers' willingness to proactively share positive experiences, evaluations, and opinions about a product, service, or brand with others, typically friends, relatives, or colleagues.	Price & Arnould, 1999
Repurchase Intention	Comprises 4 observed items. Measures the tendency or likelihood that a customer intends to continue purchasing a specific product or service from the same brand or provider in the future.	Le et al., 2022

Source: Compiled by the author

3.3. Pilot Quantitative Study

After completing the draft measurement scales, a preliminary quantitative study was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the scales through the following steps: (i) reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha and (ii) exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The sample for the preliminary quantitative study consisted of 150 consumers. The results of this stage were used to refine and establish the official measurement scales.

3.4. Main Quantitative Study

3.4.1. Sample Selection

The dissertation employed convenience sampling for the main quantitative study. Survey participants were classified according to gender, region, age group, education level, and income.

Data were collected through direct questionnaire distribution at supermarkets and shopping malls in four major cities, namely Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho. In each city, three to five supermarkets or shopping malls were selected for questionnaire distribution. These locations were chosen based on convenience sampling from a compiled list of supermarkets and shopping malls in each city.

The data collection method involved direct consumer surveys using structured questionnaires. Participants were consumers who had purchased FMCG products and were aware of cause-related marketing campaigns. Surveys were administered at supermarkets and shopping malls in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho.

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed, and 564 responses were collected. After data cleaning, 49 responses were excluded. The final dataset consisted of 515 valid responses, which were used for analysis in the main study.

3.4.2. Main Data Analysis

To test the research hypotheses, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed, including the assessment of the measurement model, evaluation of the structural model, and examination of the effects of control variables. In addition, the measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM) procedure and multi-group analysis were used to assess the moderating role of generational age groups.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Summary of the Research Sample

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of the Survey Respondents

Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	290	56.3
	Male	225	43.7
Age	Generation Z (1997–2012)	139	27.0
	Generation Y (1996-1981)	119	23.1
	Generation X (1980-1965)	146	28.3
	Baby boomers (1964-1946)	111	21.6
Education	Below University	166	32.2
	University	210	40.8
	Postgraduate	62	12.0
	Other	77	15.0
Income	Below 10 million VND/month	120	23.3
	From 10 to 15 million VND/month	171	33.2
	From 15 to 20 million VND/month	156	30.3
	Above 20 million VND/month	68	13.2
Region	Northern	182	35.3
	Central	124	24.1
	Southern	209	40.6

Source: Compiled by the author

4.2. Assessment of Measurement Scales through Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement scales were assessed using the PLS-SEM measurement model evaluation to ensure the reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the observed variables in the research model.

The analysis results indicate that all measurement scales in the study exhibit high reliability and satisfactory convergent validity, and adequately meet the criteria for discriminant validity, thereby justifying their suitability for subsequent structural model analysis.

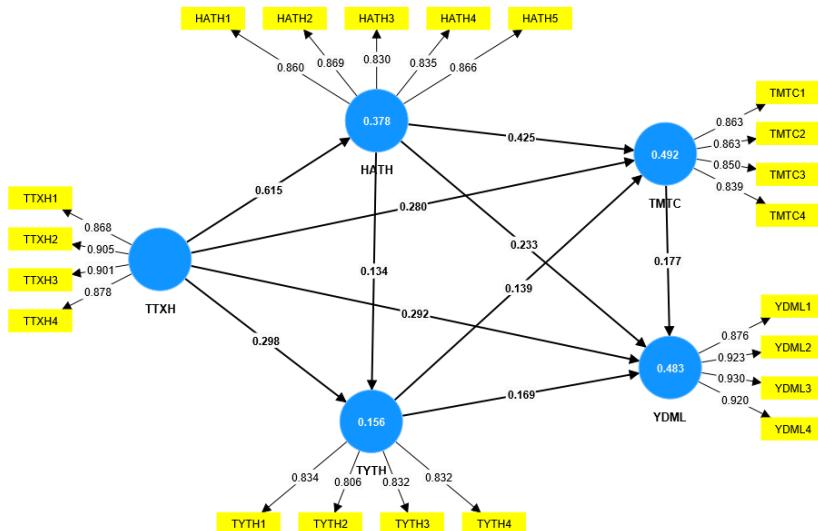


Figure 4.1: Results of the Measurement Model Assessment

Source: Compiled by the author

4.3. Hypothesis Testing through Structural Model Assessment

To evaluate the structural model, this study examines several key indicators, including the coefficient of determination (R^2), the predictive relevance (Q^2) obtained through the blindfolding procedure or the out-of-sample predictive power (Q^2_{predict}) assessed using PLSpredict, and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) to assess overall model fit (Hair et al., 2021; Sarstedt, Hair, Cheah, Becker, & Ringle, 2019). The results of these indices indicate that the model demonstrates an acceptable and statistically meaningful level of fit.

The testing of the direct hypotheses from H1 to H10 addresses the first research question concerning the role and underlying mechanisms through which CRM perceptions influence repeat purchase intention. Detailed hypothesis testing results are reported in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Summary of the Structural Model Assessment Results

Endogenous Variables		R2 Coefficient		Predictive Relevance Q ²			Q ² predict	
Brand Image (HATH)		0.378		0.271			0.373	
Positive Word of Mouth (TMTC)		0.492		0.353			0.349	
Brand Love (TYTH)		0.156		0.104			0.139	
Repurchase Intention (YDML)		0.483		0.398			0.362	
Model Fit Index (SRMR)		0.039						
Hypothesis	Paths	β	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Confidence Interval	VIF	f^2
H1: Accepted	TTXH -> HATH	0.615	0.033	18.41	0.000	[0.546; 0.676]	1	0.608
H2: Accepted	TTXH -> TYTH	0.298	0.053	5.663	0.000	[0.190; 0.396]	1.61	0.065
H3: Accepted	HATH -> TYTH	0.134	0.055	2.426	0.015	[0.024; 0.243]	1.61	0.013
H4: Accepted	HATH -> YDML	0.233	0.051	4.538	0.000	[0.131; 0.333]	1.99	0.053
H5: Accepted	TYTH -> YDML	0.169	0.041	4.157	0.000	[0.091; 0.250]	1.22	0.045
H6: Accepted	HATH -> TMTC	0.425	0.048	8.911	0.000	[0.330; 0.515]	1.63	0.218
H7: Accepted	TYTH -> TMTC	0.139	0.04	3.47	0.001	[0.060; 0.218]	1.19	0.032
H8: Accepted	TMTC -> YDML	0.177	0.047	3.801	0.000	[0.081; 0.264]	1.97	0.031
H9: Accepted	TTXH -> TMTC	0.28	0.042	6.599	0.000	[0.199; 0.363]	1.71	0.09
H10: Accepted	TTXH -> YDML	0.292	0.05	5.868	0.000	[0.191; 0.388]	1.87	0.088
Mediating Effects								
TTXH -> HATH -> TMTC								
TTXH -> TYTH -> YDML								
TTXH -> TMTC -> YDML								
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VAF								
TTXH -> HATH -> TMTC								
TTXH -> TYTH -> YDML								
TTXH -> TMTC -> YDML								
TTXH -> HATH -> YDML								
TTXH -> TYTH -> TMTC								
TTXH -> TYTH -> TMTC -> YDML								
TTXH -> HATH -> TYTH -> TMTC								
TTXH -> HATH -> TYTH -> TMTC -> YDML								

Source: Compiled by the author

4.4. Results of the Moderating Effect of Age Cohort (Generational Groups)

To address the second research question, namely how generational age groups (younger cohorts, Gen Z and Gen Y; older cohorts, Gen X and Baby Boomers) moderate the relationships among the factors in the research model, corresponding to Hypothesis H11, this study employs Partial Least Squares Multi-Group Analysis (PLS-MGA), as generational age group is treated as a categorical moderator.

The results of the Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) assessment indicate that the model is generally comparable across the two generational groups. However, several constructs, such as YDML, exhibit significant differences in variance between groups, which

may affect the stability of comparisons across generations. In addition, the moderation analysis shows that Gen Z and Gen Y are more strongly influenced by emotional factors (TYTH), whereas Gen X and Baby Boomers tend to place greater emphasis on more utilitarian factors, such as brand image and CRM-related attributes. These findings suggest that FMCG firms should tailor their marketing strategies according to generational segments, whereby Gen Z and Gen Y may be more effectively targeted through emotionally engaging campaigns, while Gen X and Baby Boomers may respond more favorably to strategies emphasizing brand credibility and corporate social responsibility commitments.

Table 4.12: Results of the Moderating Effect of Generational Group as a Categorical Moderator

Path		GEN Z and GEN Y		GEN X and BOOMERS		Difference in β between the two groups	P-value of the difference
		β	P-value	β	P-value		
H1	TTXH -> HATH	0.621	0.000	0.608	0.000	0.013	0.838
H2	TTXH -> TYTH	0.255	0.001	0.36	0.000	-0.105	0.296
H3	HATH -> TYTH	0.237	0.003	-0.007	0.912	0.244	0.021
H4	HATH -> YDML	0.236	0.002	0.203	0.004	0.033	0.744
H5	TYTH -> YDML	0.233	0.000	0.069	0.159	0.164	0.032
H6	HATH -> TMTC	0.494	0.000	0.329	0.000	0.164	0.087
H7	TYTH -> TMTC	0.153	0.014	0.101	0.038	0.052	0.512
H8	TMTC -> YDML	0.147	0.034	0.208	0.001	-0.06	0.517
H9	TTXH -> TMTC	0.235	0.000	0.349	0.000	-0.114	0.187
H10	TTXH -> YDML	0.251	0.000	0.387	0.000	-0.136	0.170

Source: Compiled by the author

4.5. Results of the Control Variable Analysis for Regional Differences

The third research question, which examines how repeat purchase intention differs between consumers in the Northern and Southern regions

compared with the Central region, is addressed through the inclusion of the control variable regional location. The analysis of this control variable indicates that regional location exerts differential effects on repeat purchase intention within the research model.

The results presented in Table 4.13 reveal statistically significant differences between the Northern and Central regions, as well as between the Southern and Central regions, in their effects on repeat purchase intention (YDML). However, the magnitude of the effects for the Northern and Southern regions is relatively similar. Specifically, consumers in both the Northern and Southern regions exhibit a higher tendency toward repeat purchase compared with consumers in the Central region. This pattern may reflect differences in factors such as levels of economic development, consumption habits, and brand availability across regions, which in turn influence purchasing behavior. Nevertheless, the overall impact of regional location is relatively modest, as indicated by the low f^2 values. This suggests that although regional differences in consumer behavior exist, factors such as brand image, positive word of mouth, and perceptions of socially responsible marketing play a more dominant role in driving repeat purchase intention. Consequently, FMCG firms in Vietnam may adopt a largely consistent nationwide marketing strategy, while implementing minor regional adjustments to enhance marketing effectiveness.

Table 4.13: Effects of the Regional Control Variable

Relationship	Beta Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Confidence Interval	f^2
MIENBAC → YDML	0.365	0.093	3.914	0.000	[0.176; 0.542]	0.038
MIENNAM → YDML	0.363	0.092	3.927	0.000	[0.180; 0.537]	0.039

Source: Compiled by the author

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

First, this study confirms that CRM perceptions have a positive and significant impact on brand image, brand love, and positive word of mouth. These findings not only reinforce the existing theoretical foundation but also illuminate several important aspects within the Vietnamese context.

First, the results indicate that CRM perceptions contribute to enhancing brand image. This finding is fully consistent with prior studies such as Dean (2003), Nan and Heo (2007), and Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2010), which emphasize that CRM can build a favorable brand image by associating brands with social values. However, a noteworthy contribution of this study is the evidence that, in Vietnam, cultural factors exert a strong influence on how consumers evaluate CRM initiatives. Specifically, Vietnamese consumers tend to prioritize CRM campaigns that focus on community-related issues, such as environmental protection or educational support. This contrasts markedly with findings from Western contexts, where direct financial benefits from CRM campaigns are often valued more highly (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the findings confirm that CRM perceptions positively affect brand love, in line with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017) and empirical studies by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) as well as Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010). These studies suggest that when consumers perceive firms as engaging in socially responsible activities, they are more likely to develop positive emotional attachments to the brand. This study adds an important nuance by showing that, in Vietnam, brand love is driven not only by core product values but also by social interaction and communication, particularly through social media platforms. This characteristic is especially pronounced among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, offering new insights that have received limited attention in prior research.

Next, the study highlights that CRM perceptions promote positive word of mouth, a finding consistent with the work of Karjaluoto et al. (2016) and Dam (2020). Positive word of mouth, widely regarded as a key outcome of CRM, facilitates the effective diffusion of brand messages. However, in the Vietnamese context, positive word of mouth occurs not only through direct interpersonal communication but is also strongly amplified via social media platforms. This differs from evidence in developed countries, where positive word of mouth tends to be more concentrated within direct personal relationships (Liu and Gal, 2011).

Regarding the mediating roles of brand image and brand love, the results confirm that brand image serves as a critical mediator, transforming

CRM perceptions into repeat purchase intention and positive word of mouth. This finding aligns with the study by Joëlle Vanhamme et al. (2012), which identifies a positive brand image as a key driver of trust and favorable consumer behavior. Notably, in the Vietnamese context, brand image reflects not only product quality but also the brand's social commitment to the community. This represents a valuable extension of existing theory, particularly for emerging markets.

In addition, brand love, considered a powerful emotional construct, is further confirmed as an effective conduit for promoting repeat purchase intention. This result is consistent with earlier studies by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Batra et al. (2012). However, this study extends prior work by demonstrating that, in Vietnam, brand love arises not only from product quality but also from the brand's social commitment. This emotional attachment is particularly strong among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, underscoring the importance of social emotions in building brand loyalty.

With respect to the role of positive word of mouth and repeat purchase intention, the study further emphasizes that positive word of mouth is not merely a behavioral outcome but also an important mediating mechanism for disseminating brand messages. This finding is consistent with classic studies by Arndt (1967) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), which regard positive word of mouth as an effective means of building trust and stimulating consumption. A distinctive contribution of this study is the observation that, in Vietnam, positive word of mouth predominantly occurs through social media channels, enabling faster and broader diffusion compared with traditional channels. Finally, the study demonstrates that repeat purchase intention is driven not only by product quality or price but also by the social commitment expressed by the brand. This result is consistent with prior research by Davidow and Leigh (1998) and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). However, the present study adds that, in Vietnam, repeat purchase intention represents not only a consumption behavior but also an expression of consumers' commitment to the social values embodied by the brand. This further clarifies the role of repeat purchase intention in markets where social values and emotions play a critical role.

Overall, the findings not only confirm the S-O-R model but also extend it by integrating demographic factors, specifically generational cohorts and regional differences. This constitutes an important theoretical contribution by clarifying how these factors moderate the relationships between stimuli (CRM), emotions (brand image and brand love), and behaviors (positive word of mouth and repeat purchase intention).

Regarding the moderating role of generational cohorts, the study shows that Gen Z and Gen Y consumers tend to respond more positively to

CRM campaigns, particularly those that are creative and address salient social issues such as environmental protection and social equality. This reflects the heightened sensitivity of younger generations to social responsibility and their expectations regarding the role of firms in improving communities. In contrast, Gen X and Baby Boomers tend to place greater emphasis on more traditional factors such as product quality and brand reliability. These findings contribute to demographic theory in consumer behavior and are consistent with studies by Solomon et al. (2012) and Hair Jr. et al. (2021). Importantly, this study highlights that technological advancement and social media have increased the sensitivity of these cohorts to social values, an aspect that has not been sufficiently explored in earlier research.

Moreover, the study reveals clear regional differences in consumer responses to CRM. This finding is consistent with cultural theories proposed by Hofstede (1984), but the study goes further by explaining that these differences are not solely cultural in nature. Instead, they also reflect varying levels of economic development and distinctive social characteristics across regions in Vietnam.

5.2. Contributions of the Study

Theoretical Contributions

First, this study confirms that CRM perceptions exert positive and significant effects on brand image, brand love, and positive word of mouth. These findings not only reinforce the existing theoretical foundation but also elucidate several important aspects within the Vietnamese context.

Specifically, the results indicate that CRM perceptions enhance brand image. This finding is fully consistent with prior studies such as Dean (2003), Nan and Heo (2007), and Moosmayer and Fuljahn (2010), which emphasize that CRM can build a favorable brand image by linking brands with social values. However, a noteworthy contribution of this study is the evidence that, in Vietnam, cultural factors strongly influence how consumers evaluate CRM initiatives. In particular, Vietnamese consumers tend to prioritize CRM campaigns that focus on community-related issues, such as environmental protection or educational support. This differs markedly from findings in Western contexts, where direct financial benefits from CRM campaigns are often valued more highly (Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer, 2012).

Moreover, the findings confirm that CRM perceptions positively affect brand love, in line with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017) and empirical studies by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) as well as Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010). These studies suggest that when consumers perceive firms as engaging in socially responsible activities, they are more likely to

develop positive emotional attachments to the brand. This study adds an important insight by demonstrating that, in Vietnam, brand love is driven not only by core product values but also by social interaction and communication, particularly through social media platforms. This characteristic is especially pronounced among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, providing a perspective that has received limited attention in prior research.

Next, the study highlights that CRM perceptions promote positive word of mouth, a finding consistent with Karjaluoto, Munnukka, and Kiuru (2016) and Dam (2020). Positive word of mouth, widely regarded as a key outcome of CRM, facilitates the effective diffusion of brand messages. However, in the Vietnamese context, positive word of mouth occurs not only through direct interpersonal communication but is also strongly amplified via social media platforms. This contrasts with evidence from developed countries, where positive word of mouth tends to be concentrated more within direct personal relationships (Liu and Gal, 2011).

Regarding the mediating roles of brand image and brand love, the results confirm that brand image plays a critical mediating role in transforming CRM perceptions into repeat purchase intention and positive word of mouth. This finding aligns with the study by Joëlle Vanhamme, Adam Lindgreen, Jon Reast, and Nathalie Van Popering (2012), which identifies a positive brand image as a key driver of trust and favorable consumer behavior. Notably, in the Vietnamese context, brand image reflects not only product quality but also the brand's social commitment to the community. This represents a valuable extension of existing theory, particularly in emerging markets.

In addition, brand love, regarded as a powerful emotional construct, is further confirmed as an effective conduit for promoting repeat purchase intention. This result is consistent with earlier studies by Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) and Batra et al. (2012). However, this study extends prior research by showing that, in Vietnam, brand love arises not only from product quality but also from the brand's social commitment. This emotional attachment is particularly strong among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers, underscoring the importance of social emotions in building brand loyalty.

With respect to the role of positive word of mouth and repeat purchase intention, the study further emphasizes that positive word of mouth is not merely a behavioral outcome but also an important mediating mechanism for disseminating brand messages. This finding is consistent with classic studies by Arndt (1967) and Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004), which regard positive word of mouth as an effective means of building trust and stimulating consumption. A distinctive contribution of this study is the observation that, in Vietnam, positive word

of mouth predominantly occurs through social media channels, enabling faster and broader diffusion than traditional channels. Finally, the study demonstrates that repeat purchase intention is driven not only by product quality or price but also by the social commitment expressed by the brand. This result aligns with prior research by Davidow and Leigh (1998) and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). The present study adds that, in Vietnam, repeat purchase intention represents not only a consumption behavior but also an expression of consumers' commitment to the social values embodied by the brand. This finding further clarifies the role of repeat purchase intention in markets where social values and emotions play a critical role.

Overall, the findings not only confirm the S-O-R model but also extend it by integrating demographic factors, specifically generational cohorts and regional differences. This constitutes an important theoretical contribution by clarifying how these factors moderate the relationships between stimuli (CRM), emotions (brand image and brand love), and behaviors (positive word of mouth and repeat purchase intention).

Regarding the moderating role of generational cohorts, the study shows that Gen Z and Gen Y consumers tend to respond more positively to CRM campaigns, particularly those that are creative and address salient social issues such as environmental protection and social equality. This reflects the heightened sensitivity of younger generations to social responsibility and their expectations regarding the role of firms in improving communities. In contrast, Gen X and Baby Boomers tend to place greater emphasis on traditional factors such as product quality and brand reliability. These findings contribute to demographic theory in consumer behavior and are consistent with studies by Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2012) as well as Hair Jr., Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021). Importantly, this study highlights that technological advancement and social media have increased the sensitivity of these cohorts to social values, an aspect that has not been sufficiently explored in earlier research.

Furthermore, the study reveals that consumer responses to CRM differ markedly across regions. This finding is consistent with cultural theories proposed by Hofstede (1984). However, the study goes further by explaining that these differences are not solely cultural in nature but also reflect variations in economic development and distinctive social characteristics across regions in Vietnam.

Practical Contributions

This dissertation not only provides a solid theoretical foundation for cause-related marketing (CRM) in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector but also offers several important practical contributions that

can assist firms in optimizing their marketing strategies and enhancing business performance.

First, the dissertation provides empirical evidence on the impact of CRM on consumer behavior, particularly with respect to brand perception, brand love, and purchase intention. The findings demonstrate that CRM can help firms enhance brand value, build stronger emotional bonds with customers, and foster customer loyalty. This is especially important in an increasingly competitive market environment, where consumers are concerned not only with product quality but also with the social responsibility demonstrated by brands.

Second, the study helps firms better understand the behavior of different customer segments in response to CRM campaigns. The results indicate that younger consumers (Gen Z and Gen Y) tend to support brands that implement clear and transparent CSR and CRM initiatives, whereas older consumers (Gen X and Baby Boomers) place greater emphasis on the authenticity of the campaign and the tangible benefits it delivers. Based on these insights, firms can personalize their marketing messages and design CRM campaigns tailored to specific customer segments in order to maximize consumer engagement and the effectiveness of CRM initiatives.

Third, the study clarifies the roles of mediating and moderating factors in the relationship between CRM and consumer behavior. Factors such as trust in the brand, the degree of personal involvement with the cause, and perceptions of corporate motives play a critical role in determining the effectiveness of CRM campaigns. This suggests that firms should not only invest in social marketing initiatives but also ensure their authenticity, thereby avoiding perceptions of CRM as merely a marketing tactic or as an opportunistic use of CSR for sales-driven purposes.

Fourth, the dissertation provides clear guidance for firms in developing long-term CRM strategies rather than focusing solely on short-term, attention-seeking campaigns. The findings indicate that CRM initiatives that are strongly aligned with a brand's core values generate more sustainable impacts, enabling firms not only to increase short-term sales but also to build long-term brand loyalty and enduring customer relationships.

Finally, the dissertation offers valuable insights for policymakers and non-profit organizations seeking to collaborate with firms in the implementation of more effective CRM programs. A deeper understanding of how consumers respond to CRM initiatives can help stakeholders design more appropriate partnership programs, optimize the social impact of campaigns, and simultaneously deliver sustainable business benefits for firms.

5.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study yields several important findings, certain limitations should be acknowledged to ensure an objective evaluation of the results and to guide future research.

First, the study focuses on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in Vietnam; therefore, the findings may have limited generalizability when applied to other sectors such as services, technology, or industrial manufacturing. Second, although the survey covers three geographical regions, the data were collected primarily from major urban areas, which may not fully capture consumer behavior in rural contexts. Third, the study adopts a cross-sectional research design, which does not allow for an examination of the long-term effects of CRM on consumer behavior and brand loyalty over time. Fourth, the research model does not incorporate several potentially important variables, such as customer satisfaction, brand trust, and the influence of social media. Finally, contextual factors such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic fluctuations, and policy changes were not included in the analysis, despite their potential influence on consumer perceptions and behavior.

To address these limitations and to extend the research on cause-related marketing (CRM), several promising directions for future research are proposed.

First, future studies may expand the scope of investigation by testing the proposed model in other industries, such as services (for example, restaurants and hotels), technology (for example, mobile devices and software), and industrial manufacturing, in order to assess its generalizability. In addition, cross-country or cross-regional comparisons, such as between Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries, the United States, or Germany, would help clarify the roles of cultural, social, and economic factors in shaping CRM effectiveness.

Second, methodological improvements are recommended. Longitudinal research designs could be employed to examine the long-term effects of CRM on consumer behavior and brand loyalty. Moreover, combining quantitative approaches with qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, would provide deeper insights into consumer motivations and perceptions.

Third, future research may enrich the model by incorporating additional variables. In particular, the role of social media, key opinion leaders, digital message diffusion, and online interaction should be examined, especially among Gen Z and Gen Y consumers. Furthermore, factors such as cultural values, socio-psychological characteristics, and

brand trust may serve as moderating variables in the relationship between CRM perceptions and consumer behavior.

Finally, future studies could explore CRM in crisis contexts, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or periods of economic downturn, to assess how CRM helps firms maintain customer loyalty under adverse conditions. In parallel, research on the application of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data, and blockchain, in CRM initiatives would offer valuable insights into how firms can optimize their marketing strategies in an increasingly digital environment.