

THE ROLE OF BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND LOVE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED CAUSE-RELATED MARKETING AND REPURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the relationship between perceived cause-related marketing (CrM) and repurchase intention through brand image and brand love. A total of 478 questionnaires were collected using the convenience sampling method from consumers in four major cities in Vietnam. The study utilizes a partial regression approach for data analysis. The scales are evaluated through the measurement model analysis and linear structural model using the SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results reveal that the other direct hypotheses are supported except for the insignificant direct effect of perceived CrM on brand love. Additionally, this study identifies the sequential mediating roles of brand image and brand love. Both mediators significantly contribute to the relationship between perceived CrM and repurchase intention. The study also has implications for marketing managers in Vietnam's fast-moving consumer goods industry, providing insights into consumers' perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes towards CrM activities, particularly in the context of market competition and information turbulence. This study contributes to the theoretical basis by examining the mediating role of brand image and brand love in the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention in the consumer goods industry, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context.

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic market landscape nowadays, consumers have higher expectations for the value they receive from products (Machin, 2016). In addition to traditional factors like quality and price, consumers now consider social responsibility an important value (Spreng, Mackoy, & Droge, 1998). Facing similar quality and price options, consumers tend to choose brands that demonstrate practical support for society (Bavik, 2019). The pressure on businesses to be socially responsible has led to the adoption of cause-related marketing (CrM) strategies worldwide (Tikoo et al., 2016). CrM is defined as “the contribution to a designated cause by a firm, in which the specified contribution is conditional on ‘customers’ engaging in revenue providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives” (Patel, Gadhavi, & Shukla, 2017). Numerous companies implement CRM strategies with the aim of cultivating a favorable corporate perception among consumers, resulting in increased sales of the company's offerings (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988), along with boosted profits. Therefore, the CrM strategy is considered an essential trend in the competitive environment. CrM is a concept that has been approached from different perspectives. Howie, Yang, Vitell, Bush, and Vorhies (2018) argued that CrM is a form of

corporate philanthropy that enables organizations to generate profits while making practical contributions to specific social issues. Christofi, Leonidou, and Vrontis (2015) considered CrM as a balance between the interests of enterprises, consumers, and society. Research by Santoro, Bresciani, Bertoldi, and Liu (2019) evaluates the relationship between CrM and brand loyalty. The study found that consumer perception of CrM positively influences brand loyalty, especially since sustainable practices are integrated into core business operations. In addition, consumers care about businesses supporting social issues, which leads to brand affection, and is positively associated with the brand's products, and a willingness to support the marketing activities and business. This contributes to the success of CrM operations (Suriyanto, Setiawan, Sumiati, & Sudjatno, 2020). Moreover, studies by Srivastava (2020) indicated that CrM has a positive impact on purchase intention, intention to recommend products to others, customer attitudes, and brand awareness that are associated with the relationship between CrM, brand preference, and repurchase intention.

CrM is implemented by many companies worldwide with the aim of improving brand image and building a positive company image in the minds of consumers, ultimately improving sales and profitability. However, achieving success in CrM requires businesses to understand consumers in terms of awareness, attitudes, and behavior. Additionally, Littrell, Anderson, and Brown (1993) indicated that economic and cultural contexts could influence consumers' attitudes and behavior towards CrM. Therefore, differences in economic and cultural contexts can be important variables affecting CrM performance (Emslie, Bent, & Seaman, 2007). This suggests that CrM efforts in different contexts can yield different results.

However, despite society's growing interest and real-life examples, scholars and researchers have conducted fragmented studies on the various factors that enhance the efficiency of CrM. Specifically, there is a focus on factors that impact the specific relationship between CrM, purchase intent, and repurchase intention. Suriyanto et al. (2020) indicate that CrM campaigns do not directly affect repeat purchase intention but rather indirectly through mediation by brand awareness, consumer attitudes, and company image. Brand awareness, consumer attitudes, and corporate image are proven to be perfect mediators in the relationship between CrM and repeat purchase intention. In contrast, Srivastava (2020) found that CrM has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention and the intention to recommend the company's product to others. Simultaneously, the study by Srivastava (2020) also explores two mediators in this relationship: brand experience and brand image. Ferraris, Giudice, Grandhi, and Cillo (2020) also obtained similar results concerning the direct relationship between CrM and repurchase intention when studied in different contexts, namely Italy and Brazil. This relationship is moderated by the Perception of CrM's goal achievement and the brand compatibility with the social issues CrM targets. Based on previous research, several potential research gaps regarding the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention emerge.

First, while many studies have focused on the direct impact between CrM and repurchase intention, the results remain inconsistent. This inconsistency could arise from the influence of mediating variables or the study's context. Second and connected to the first research gap, several mediators have been used to examine the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention, such as brand awareness, consumer attitudes, company image, brand experience, Perception of CrM's goal achievement, and brand compatibility with the social issues CrM targets. Although brand image has been thoroughly studied, previous research has not addressed the concept of brand love. Brand love nurtured through cause-related marketing establishes a profound emotional connection between customers and the brand's values. This emotional resonance enhances customer loyalty

and strengthens the bond, making customers more likely to remain engaged and committed over time. Therefore, brand love could serve as a suitable mediator alongside the brand image, potentially yielding intriguing insights into the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention. Third, context can significantly influence the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention, necessitating additional evidence, particularly within the context of the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. The FMCG industry is currently one of the fastest-growing markets in the ASEAN region. It demands continuous innovation to meet evolving consumer preferences and faces intense competition from domestic and imported products. With positive economic growth prospects, evolving consumer preferences, and an increased emphasis on quality and health, consumer awareness of corporate social responsibility has grown. Additionally, consumers compare factors such as promotions, convenience, delivery methods, and corporate social responsibility when selecting products, especially commodities. Therefore, conducting a study on the influence of CrM on repurchase intention within the Vietnamese market context is not only necessary but also timely.

Based on these foundations, this study aims to investigate the impact of CrM on repurchase intention from the consumer's perspective, considering the sequentially mediating mechanisms of brand image and brand love in the FMCG industry in Vietnam in the post-COVID-19 context. The research findings will contribute to the theoretical framework and serve as a basis for further testing the economic reality of businesses operating in Vietnam's FMCG industry. This will help businesses, particularly marketing managers, understand CrM from the consumer's perspective and its impact on key metrics related to customer engagement, enabling them to thrive and develop sustainably.

THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH MODEL

According to the theory of planned behavior, intention is the immediate determinant of behavior (Icek Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes towards a brand are intertwined with the intent to engage in behaviors linked to that brand. Favorable brand perceptions arising from previous experiences or media exposure can magnify positive societal brand attitudes (Mohd Suki, Ramayah, & Mohd Suki, 2011). These favorable perceptions, cultivated through past experiences or brand communication, enhance brand alliances through positive attitudes (Mohd Suki et al., 2011). In connections between cause-related or socially oriented brand partnerships, a consumer's positive perception of the alliance augments the likelihood of engagement through purchases of related products. This implies that persuasive communication reshapes attitudes in line with the tenets of the "congruity theory". Based on the role of congruity theory, a group garners favorable assessments when its attributes align with its established societal role. This notion is relevant for brand partnerships associated with social or cause-related marketing strategies, as both entail persuasive communication. In accordance with the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion, individuals displaying a strong affinity for cause-related marketing (CrM) offers or products are predisposed to engage in more profound cognitive elaboration (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979). This heightened involvement with the cause springs from prior interactions with CrM products, imbuing these offerings with personal significance and relevance. Consequently, the theory postulates that consumers interacting with such CrM products might exhibit distinct perceptions (Bridges, Briesch, & Yim, 2006) that influence brand impact, brand love, and repurchase intention.

Perceived Cause-Related Marketing (pCrM)

According to Fiandrino, Busso, and Vrontis (2019), CrM can be seen as a social responsibility strategy that connects social values with corporate marketing objectives. Accordingly, businesses aim to achieve short-term and long-term financial and non-financial goals. Consumers can satisfy their product needs and improve their spiritual values by creating positive emotions by supporting society with their consumption behavior (Wright, Larsen, & Higgs, 1995). Simultaneously, society's problems will receive support through this approach. Successful CrM initiatives not only influence consumer behavior but also enhance the brand image (Dean, 2003). Perceived CrM refers to consumers' perceptions and understanding of a company's CrM activities. This perception encompasses the business's motives, the alignment between the brand and product with the social issue being supported, and the practical significance of the CrM initiative. In a competitive market, Chatterjee, Adhikary, Sen, and Kar (2018) indicated that many companies strive to launch CrM initiatives to capture consumers' attention, enhance brand and product awareness, and shape consumer perceptions of the FMCG industry. However, the success of CrM depends on consumers perceiving the genuine meaning and motivation behind the CrM program, having access to complete product information, and finding compelling reasons to choose the associated brand (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000). In the research context, successful CrM efforts contribute to improving brand image, enhancing customer satisfaction, fostering brand love, and ultimately increasing repurchase intention rates for consumer goods businesses in the rapidly evolving Vietnamese market.

Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention refers to the “willingness of customers to rebuy certain products, services, or information in the future” (D. Choi, Chung, & Young, 2019). Repurchase is defined as the actual consumer behavior that leads to the purchase of the same product or service on more than one occasion (Akhter, 2010; Aron, 2006). Repurchase behavior is when customers buy the same products repeatedly from similar sellers. While repurchase is the actual act, repurchase intention is defined as the consumer’s subjective probability of repurchasing the same product or service from the same supplier in the future (Davidow & Leigh, 1998; Halstead, 1989). Retaining customers is more economical than finding new customers. Therefore, businesses must build a loyal and stable customer base to succeed. These customers will tend to repeatedly buy the same product and be less sensitive to the price offers of rival companies.

Brand Image

Brand image refers to consumer perceptions and associations about a brand. It encompasses people's various images and ideas, synthesizes their knowledge and enhances the brand (Levy, 1999). The brand image reflects how consumers remember and perceive a brand (Saleem & Raja, 2014). It plays a crucial role in the success of a business as it can influence consumers' perceptions of the brand's products and services, as well as their purchase intentions and behaviors (Suhartanto & Noor, 2012). A successful brand image is characterized by its recognizability and distinctiveness, offering consumers a clear understanding of what the brand represents and setting it apart from competitors (Hsieh, Pan, & Setiono, 2004). In the context of this research, brand image is built based on consumers' perceptions of the brand, which are formed through active engagement with information and personal experiences.

Brand Love

Brand love is a concept Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) introduced to describe consumers' intense emotional attachment towards a brand. It is evident that brand love represents a deep and affectionate connection between individuals and the brand in terms of positive affect (Madadi, Torres, Zúñiga, & Behavior, 2021). Brand love has been studied both conceptually and has been shown to be related to consumers' willingness to pay higher prices (Thomson, MacInnis, & Whan Park, 2005), positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Noel Albert & Merunka, 2013), and brand loyalty (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Therefore, building brand love requires more than just delivering quality and durability. It necessitates a comprehensive branding effort to evoke positive emotions towards the brand. Brand promotion, consumer experiences, and improved relationships between consumers and the brand establish brand preference, leading to higher-level emotions such as loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and a willingness to pay premium prices (Gumparthi, Srivastava, & Chatterjee, 2021). Current studies have identified positive brand emotions, positive brand evaluations, passion, and preference as psychological dimensions of brand love (Karani, 2021). Ahuvia, Batra, and Bagozzi (2008) conceptualized brand love as comprising three dimensions: cognitive brand love (related to brand-related beliefs), emotional brand love (related to brand-related emotions), and intrinsic brand love (related to the willingness to spend on the brand and desire to use the brand).

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Perceived Cause-related Marketing and repurchase intention

Perceived CrM and repurchase intention are two important factors for business success metrics, but the direct relationship between them is less explored in the previous studies. According to Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran (2012), successful CrM leads to many advantages for businesses, including shaping consumer behavior such as purchase intention, brand choice, willingness to pay, improving brand image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty intentions (Dean, 2003). Additionally, Santoro et al. (2019) argued that CrM drives purchasing decisions and enhances brand loyalty, especially in businesses integrating sustainability practices and processes into their core business. Further, consumers care about businesses that support social issues that foster a favorable relationship with the brand, positive product associations, and willingness to support the marketing activities and the business itself.

H1: *Perceived cause-related marketing positively impacts a business's repurchase intention.*

Perceived CrM, Brand Image, and Brand Love

Global brands increasingly recognize the value of CrM strategies as they can bring short-term and long-term effects to businesses, including improving brand loyalty and brand image (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Consumers are increasingly interested in social issues in the volatile social context, making businesses that implement CrM initiatives more appealing and appreciated by consumers, consequently enhancing brand image (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010). Van den Brink, Odekerken-Schröder, and Pauwels (2006) suggested that CrM initiatives can impact brand image as customers perceive their involvement in societal issues. Previous studies by Dean (2003) also indicated a positive relationship between consumer perception of CrM and brand image.

H2: *Perceived cause-related marketing has a positive impact on brand image.*

Numerous empirical studies support the idea that consumers form impressions of a brand based on external forms of communication, both controlled (company-sponsored) and uncontrolled (word-of-mouth) (Garg, Mukherjee, Biswas, & Kataria, 2015). In other words, these external communications act as signals for consumers to develop certain perceptions and attach meaning to the brand, even without direct experience. CrM is considered one of these external communication activities; therefore, it is likely to have certain effects on brand love. According to social exchange theory, relationships are formed and maintained based on a balance between the rewards and costs of exchange between two individuals. Successful social exchange relationships are characterized by a high degree of loyalty and trust between the parties involved (Gould-Williams, 2007). Thus, it is more likely to evoke consumer love for its brand if a business commits to society and the environment.

H3: *Perceived cause-related marketing has a positive impact on brand love.*

Brand Image, Brand Love, and Repurchase intention

Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer (2012) argued that global brands increasingly recognize the value of CrM strategies, emphasizing that these strategies bring short-term and long-term benefits to customers, therefore improving brand loyalty and overall performance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Previous studies also consider brand image a prerequisite for brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Consequently, brand image and brand love are closely related. Study by Fournier (1998) have found a positive and significant impact of brand image on brand love.

H4: *Brand image has a positive effect on brand love.*

When customers engage with a brand, they actively cooperate and bypass competitors, which maintains the company's long-term profitability (Hur, Ahn, & Kim, 2011). According to Mirzaee, Rad, and Molavi (2013), a good brand image positively affects consumer perception of product value, leading to loyalty intention and overall improved business results. Previous studies have also verified the relationship between brand image and repurchase intention. The majority of findings determined that brand image has a positive and significant relationship with repurchase intention (Ricadonna, Saifullah, & Prasetyoningrum, 2021). Additionally, Nguyen and LeBlanc (1998) suggested that brand image can influence decisions by customers to stay with a business. A strong brand image is closely related to repurchase intention and promotes repeat purchase behavior

H5: *Brand image has a positive impact on repurchase intention.*

Brand Love and Repurchase Intention

Brand love refers to the willingness to love a brand and indicates a positive attitude or brand satisfaction (Karjaluoto, Munnukka, & Kiuru, 2016). Customers who love a brand tend to be loyal and maintain a long-term relationship with it. Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) revealed that brand love is the foundation of brand loyalty and increases repurchase intention rates. Brand preference plays an important role in reducing customer churn, and emotionally connected

customers are less likely to switch to competing brands (Zhang et al., 2020). These customers perceive brands as an integral part of their lives, making it harder for competitors to entice them.

H6: *Brand love has a positive impact on repurchase intention.*

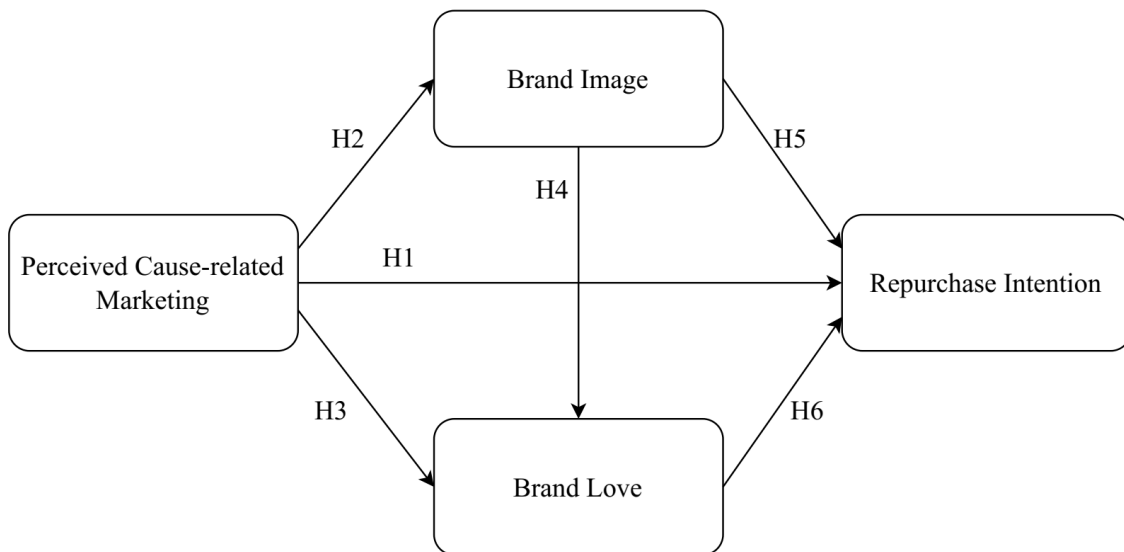
Mediating Roles of Brand Love and Brand Image

This study examines the impact of CrM on brand image and brand love (H2 and H3). Additionally, the relationship between brand image and brand love and its impact on repurchase intention (H4, H5, and H6) are also explored. These hypotheses suggest that brand image and brand love act as sequential mediators in the links from CrM to repurchase intention. Repurchase intention is strengthened when consumers are aware of brand image and brand love. Furthermore, businesses that implement CrM are more likely to be of interest and appreciated by consumers, enhancing brand image (Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2010) and brand loyalty as customers perceive their involvement in addressing societal issues. Additionally, CrM is seen as a signal for consumers to develop certain perceptions and meaningful associations with the brand, thus potentially affecting brand love (Garg et al., 2015). Therefore, the following intermediate hypothesis is proposed:

H7: *Brand love and brand image sequentially mediate the effect of perceived CrM on repurchase intention.*

Figure 1 presents the proposed research framework.

Figure 1
Research model



Source: The authors

METHODS

Data Collection

The original English language questionnaire was compiled based on previous studies. The questionnaire was adapted via back-translation from English to Vietnamese and from Vietnamese to English. Then, the authors conducted a questionnaire pretest using 20 individuals who are customers and marketing researchers to assess its logical consistency, ease of understanding, sequence of items, and contextual relevance. The survey participants were consumers who had used FMCG products in Vietnam within the past six months, specifically in four major cities: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho. Based on a list of the 10 largest supermarkets in each city, the authors randomly selected two supermarkets in each city. The data was collected directly from shoppers at these supermarkets. The authors conducted a convenience sampling survey with 60 participants at each supermarket. The authors chose a convenience sampling method for several reasons. Firstly, convenience sampling allowed for the selection of participants based on their accessibility, availability, and geographic proximity to the chosen supermarkets. This approach facilitated efficient data collection within the specified time and budget constraints. Moreover, convenience sampling was practical given the large target population of consumers using FMCG products in the selected cities. Gifts of 2 to 5 USD were randomly distributed to participants to encourage participation in the survey. The first part of the questionnaire explained the purpose of the study and collected demographic information from the respondents. The remaining questions were related to CrM, brand image, brand love, and repurchase intention. A total of 500 consumers participated in the survey, with 478 valid responses, equating to 95.6%. The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using the regression of Partial Least Square - PLS.

Measurement of the Constructs

The scales used in this study were developed based on previous research and modified to fit the context of this study. Each scale item utilized a five-point Likert-type response format, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The perceived CrM scale consisted of four items derived from studies by Lafferty (2007). The four-item repurchase intention scale was adapted from Trasorras, Weinstein, and Abratt (2009). The five-item brand image scale was based on previous research by Lahap, Ramli, Said, Radzi, and Zain (2016). The brand love scale was adapted from Joshi and Garg (2021) (see Table 1). Descriptive statistics for the demographic variables are presented in Table 2.

Common Method Bias

As a self-reported survey method is adopted in this study, Common Method Bias (CMB) can be considered a serious concern that causes measurement errors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, the authors conducted two statistical tests to examine the seriousness of CMB. First, based on the study of Podsakoff et al. (2003), the authors performed Harman's one-factor test by loading all items into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis. The first (largest) factor derived from principal components factor analysis accounted for 35.71%, less than 50%. Therefore, no evidence of CMB was observed. Next, the second method used to further test for CMB was that proposed by Liang, Saraf, Hu, and Xue (2007). This test included a common method factor with the items of all constructs in the PLS model. The average substantive variance and the average method variance of all indicators are 0.721 and 0.005, respectively, equal to the ratio of

145:1. Additionally, most of the factor loadings of the common method factor are not significant. In summary, CMB was unlikely to be a serious concern in this study.

Table 1
Measurement Instrument

<p>Perceived Cause-related marketing (pCrM)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The company's marketing program is in line with a pressing issue in society.2. This marketing program is very helpful to society.3. The company's marketing program clearly supports charity donations.4. I love this form of charitable giving.
<p>Brand Image</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The brand I chose has a clean image.2. The brand I chose represents high-quality products.3. The brand I chose is socially responsible.4. The brand I chose is very honest.5. The brand I chose gives me a special feeling.
<p>Brand love</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I am passionate about this brand2. This brand is pure delight3. I am very attracted to this brand
<p>Repurchase intention</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Next time, I will continue to buy products from my current supplier.2. In the near future, I will consider my current provider as part of my choice.3. I plan to continue purchasing from this supplier.4. I am happy using this product.

Table 2
Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristics	Frequency	(%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	163	34
Female	315	66
<i>Age</i>		
18 – 22	105	22
23 – 30	124	26
31 – 40	119	25
41 - 50	85	18
> 50	45	9
<i>Occupation</i>		
Student	105	22
Unskilled Labor	127	27
Office staff	120	25
Self-employed	89	18
Retired	29	6
Other	8	2

RESULTS

Validation of Measures: Reliability and Validity

To assess the quality of the measurement model, each construct's convergent validity and discriminant validity were evaluated. As a result, Cronbach's Alpha of variables are between 0.785 and 0.811, so all values are well above the threshold of 0.7, and the Composite Reliability (CR) values, again, are much greater than 0.7. Cumulatively, the construct reliability is supported. Next, the AVEs (Average Variance Extracted) of all variables are within the range of 0.607 and 0.641, which are higher than the recommended cut-off of 0.50. Thus, it indicated that the convergent validity of measurements is sufficient in this study (Hair et al., 2016).

Table 3
Cronbach’s alpha (CA), Composite reliability (CR), AVE,
Square roots of AVE and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Value

	CA	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. Repurchase intention	0.876	0.81	0.641	0.800	0.754	0.569	0.515
2. Brand Image	0.86	0.79	0.607	0.617	0.779	0.383	0.383
3. CrM	0.875	0.81	0.636	0.472	0.333	0.797	0.306
4. Brand Love	0.863	0.79	0.613	0.419	0.376	0.254	0.783

Note: Correlations and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio are at the diagonal's lower and upper ends, respectively; AVE's square roots are highlighted in bold.

Next, the discriminant validity can be estimated by the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and HTMT_{.85}. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE of each latent variable ranges between 0.779 and 0.800, which are greater than the correlations between pairs of latent variables. It fulfils Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. Moreover, all constructs' HTMT correlation ratios are less than 0.85, supporting discriminant validity. Consequently, discriminant validity is sufficient for this study's measurement model.

Structural Model

In assessing the PLS model, R² values and the Stone-Geisser Q² are used to measure the model's explanatory power and predictive relevance (Hair Jr et al., 2016). The results show that the R² ranges between 0.111 (Brand Image) and 0.487 (repurchase intention), which is greater than the threshold value of 0.25, indicating that the variance explained by these endogenous variables is relatively high and significant. In comparison, all endogenous constructs presented cross-validated redundancy Q² values superior to zero, which supports the model's predictive relevance.

A t-test was performed using the bootstrapping process of 5,000 samples to test the hypotheses, as shown in Table 4. The results indicate the direct impacts of perceived CrM on repurchase intention and brand image, thus supporting H1 and H2. The relationship between perceived CrM and brand love is insignificant; hence, H3 is unsupported. Brand image is also positively associated with brand love and repurchase intention, supporting H4 and H5. In addition, the results indicate the direct impacts of brand love on repurchase intention, thus supporting H6. The authors used the Hayes process (Hayes, 2013) to test the mediation on a sample of 478 responses with parameter estimates based on the 5,000 bootstrap samples. The direct effect (perceived CrM - repurchase intention) is significant ($\beta=0.159$, $p=0.000$). The specific indirect effect of perceived CrM on repurchase intention by brand image and brand love as mediators is also found to be significant (perceived CrM - brand image - brand love - repurchase intention = 0.035, $p=0.001$, 90% CI: 0.001 - 0.223, and excluded zero in the lower and upper confidence limits), hence providing support for H7.

Table 4
Research results

Hypotheses		Path	p-value	t-value	Supported
H1	Perceived CrM → Repurchase intention	0.159	0.000	4.226	Yes
H2	Perceived CrM → Brand Image	0.519	0.000	14.818	Yes
H3	Perceived CrM → Brand Love	0.073	0.201	1.280	No
H4	Brand Image → Brand Love	0.350	0.000	6.678	Yes
H5	Brand Image → Repurchase intention	0.506	0.000	14.147	Yes
H6	Brand Love → Repurchase intention	0.182	0.000	5.169	Yes

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that perceived CrM has a direct and significant positive impact on repurchase intention. In the post-COVID-19 business landscape, customers have become more aware of the social impact of brands and tend to favor companies that align with their values, so marketing makes social sense and positively impacts repurchase intention in the fast-moving consumer goods industry in Vietnam. Further, CrM, such as supporting local communities, promoting sustainable practices, or addressing social issues, can help build customer trust. In challenging times like the post-Covid-19 pandemic era, consumers are more likely to connect with brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to CrM. In addition, customers perceive a brand to be socially responsible and are more likely to continue buying from that brand, resulting in higher repurchase intention rates.

Furthermore, the research results show that the relationship between perceived CrM and brand image has a direct and significant positive effect, consistent with the study of Surianto et al. (2020). This can be explained by the fact that consumers are increasingly interested in social issues, so businesses implementing CrM will be more appreciated and sought after, enhancing the organization’s brand image. Moreover, implementing CrM helps the business's image emerge along with the specific social phenomena. This can create a positive corporate image in the target customer segment, helping the business succeed.

The research results also show a positive effect between brand image and repurchase intention, consistent with previous research (Indarto et al., 2018). In the post-COVID-19 era, brand image continues to play an important role in repurchase intention in Vietnam's FMCG industry. A

positive brand image can have several advantages in terms of repurchase intention. Trust, credibility, emotional connection, perceived quality and safety, differentiation, competitive advantage, and word-of-mouth are key factors contributing to repurchase intention. Brands prioritizing maintaining a positive brand image are more likely to succeed in repurchase intention in Vietnam's highly competitive and developed market.

Research results show that socially significant marketing is perceived to have no direct, meaningful impact on brand love. This can be explained by the fact that socially meaningful marketing is primarily about creating a positive brand image by associating the company with a worthy cause and demonstrating social responsibility. While this approach may seem appealing, it is not always effective in driving customer love for the brand. The lack of direct impact on customer brand preference can be attributed to several common factors. Firstly, customers may be skeptical about the tactics used in marketing activities. This skepticism can arise due to inadequate CrM programmes, leading to criticism and doubt from consumers who may question the real motivation behind the business's implementation of CrM (Santoro et al., 2019). Additionally, criticism and skepticism may arise when products participating in CrM have high prices, leading consumers to suspect that the company is exploiting social problems to increase revenue.

Furthermore, if the amount of donations is perceived as small or undeserved, or if the messages of these activities solely focus on urging consumers to buy (Grau et al., 2007), it can lead to negative perceptions. If socially significant marketing is seen as dishonest or merely a marketing ploy, customers may view it as a superficial attempt to capitalize on social issues. This skepticism can lead to a lack of trust in the brand, ultimately undermining the development of genuine brand love. Secondly, consumer expectations are evolving. Customers now expect brands to demonstrate a genuine commitment to social and environmental causes as a standard practice. Socially meaningful marketing alone may no longer be enough to differentiate a brand or foster strong emotional connections with customers. Instead, customers increasingly seek brands that integrate social responsibility into their core business values and demonstrate ongoing commitment beyond just marketing campaigns. In summary, cause-related marketing may not positively affect customer brand preference due to a perceived lack of authenticity, inappropriate cause association, lack of transparency, excessive emphasis on profit, and changing consumer expectations.

Furthermore, the research results show that brand love positively affects repurchase intention. This result is consistent with previous studies). Brand love plays an important role in influencing repurchase intention for the FMCG industry, which includes products such as food, beverages, toiletries, and home appliances. The competition is fierce, especially in Vietnam; brand preference can be a powerful motivator to retain customers.

Research results show that brand image and brand love have a positive relationship, consistent with previous studies (Cuong, 2020; Fournier, 1998). In the FMCG sector, brand image and brand preference have a positive relationship, especially in the post-COVID-19 context. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected consumer behavior and preferences in Vietnam. Consumers are more cautious and concerned about health and safety and have turned to online shopping and home consumption. This behavior change has made the brand image more important to FMCG companies as they must reassure consumers about their products' quality, safety, and reliability. In the post-COVID-19 era, FMCG companies that have established a positive brand image are more likely to be trusted by consumers.

Further, consumers trust a brand; they perceive its products as safe, reliable, and high quality. This trust helps create a positive emotional connection with the brand and fosters brand

love among consumers. Brand love is especially relevant in FMCG because consumers often make frequent and habitual purchases. In particular, the results of this study also demonstrate the simultaneous positive mediating role of brand image and brand love in the relationship between socially meaningful marketing activities and repurchase intention. In the post-COVID-19 landscape, consumers increasingly seek brands that exhibit a genuine commitment to social responsibility, making socially meaningful marketing more relevant and effective. In the FMCG industry, where competition is high, and customers have numerous choices, repurchase intention becomes critical for sustainable business growth. Repurchase intention stems from various factors, including customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and positive brand experiences. The research findings reveal that brand image and brand love act as simultaneous mediators in the positive relationship between socially meaningful marketing and repurchase intention. Firstly, brand image mediates this relationship by effectively communicating the brand's social initiatives and creating a positive perception among customers. It helps customers perceive the brand as socially responsible, trustworthy, and aligned with their values, thereby increasing customers' emotional attachment and positive perception of the brand. Subsequently, when customers perceive the brand image as socially responsible, it triggers positive emotions and deepens their love and loyalty to the brand. This emotional connection leads to increased brand love, which, in turn, strengthens repurchase intention, as customers are more likely to repurchase, recommend, and remain loyal to brands they truly love.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Firstly, this study provides valuable insights into how perceived CrM can drive repurchase intention, particularly in the FMCG market in Vietnam. The contribution of this study lies in offering a novel approach to understanding the perceived influence of CrM on repurchase intention, with separate and simultaneous mediating effects of brand image and brand affection elements integrated into a conceptual model. The study aligns with the theory of planned behavior (I. Ajzen, 1991) by asserting that well-founded perceptions, subjective norms, and social norms guide consumer behavior toward CrM activities. Accordingly, the perception of socially meaningful marketing is influenced by consumers' attitudes and perceptions of the brand through the company's socially significant marketing activities. This helps customers perceive the brand as socially responsible, trustworthy, and aligned with their values, triggering positive emotions and deepening their love and loyalty for the brand, resulting in increased repurchase intention rates.

Additionally, the theory of planned behavior suggests that beliefs and attitudes toward behavior influence behavioral intentions and actual behavior. In the context of this study, repurchase intention behavior with businesses is influenced by consumers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes toward brands, products, and businesses. Furthermore, this study supports the theory of pro-social behavior by asserting that CrM activities demonstrate the pro-social behavior of businesses when they voluntarily contribute a portion of their income to social issues. Similarly, repurchase intention demonstrates the pro-social behavior of consumers when they voluntarily choose socially meaningful products/brands to support social issues instead of opting for other products and brands in the market. In this study, when CrM activities are perceived as authentic and relevant to the context of social issues that matter to consumers, they respond with positive behavior, such as repeat purchase behavior, to further support those social issues. Secondly, this study stands out as one of the earliest investigations into the simultaneous mediating role of brand image and brand love in the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention in the FMCG industry in Vietnam, especially in the post-COVID-19 context. Lastly, exploring the effect of

perceived CrM on repurchase intention in the FMCG industry in Vietnam, an emerging economy, underscores the urgency and importance of this study.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide businesses with more evidence about the impact of CrM activities on customer behavior. Firstly, it helps businesses, especially marketing managers, gain a consumer-oriented understanding of socially meaningful marketing and its influence on key metrics related to repurchase intention and sustainable business growth in the face of increasing competition. Secondly, the study's findings will supplement, strengthen, and deepen businesses' knowledge in the FMCG industry in Vietnam, particularly for marketing managers, regarding consumer perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes towards socially significant marketing activities, especially in the context of competitive markets, skepticism, and consumer activities. In the post-COVID-19 reality for the FMCG industry in Vietnam, perceived socially meaningful marketing can positively impact repurchase intention through the mediating role of brand image and brand love. Due to socially meaningful marketing activities, consumer attitudes and awareness about the business's brand image increase. This helps customers perceive the brand as socially responsible, trustworthy, and aligned with their values. When customers perceive the brand as socially significant, it triggers positive emotions and deepens their love for the brand, which, in turn, leads to increased repurchase intention rates. Brand image depends on trust and differentiation, while brand love strengthens emotional attachment and loyalty. Effectively implementing a socially meaningful marketing strategy, FMCG companies in Vietnam can enhance their brand image and customers' brand love for the company, thereby increasing repurchase intention and driving sustainable business growth. This is vital for marketing managers in planning appropriate CrM strategies for businesses to improve the performance and effectiveness of CrM campaigns and develop businesses sustainably while balancing the interests of the business, consumers, and society. FMCG companies should prioritize investing in implementing a socially meaningful marketing strategy that will help increase brand image and promote brand love, leading to greater success in capturing the hearts and minds of consumers and ultimately increasing repurchase intention rates for consumer products in Vietnam.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This current study has some limitations. First, this current study focuses on FMCG. However, it has not classified these items, so future studies should focus on specific items, from dairy and household appliances to packaged foods and foodstuffs. Second, this study examines the mediating role of brand image and love in the relationship between CrM and repurchase intention. Further research through the perspective of brand equity or the role of status consumption can be a new approach in the current context of the FMCG industry. This study focuses on the Vietnamese context, so other cultures can be considered to re-examine the research model and the relationships. In addition, other notable methods such as crowdsourcing and machine learning of sentiments to strengthen CrM, brand love, brand image, and repurchase intention relationships could also be used to deliver new perspectives and confirm the relationships in this study.

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