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Using cause-related events to fulfil the strategic objectives of social partnerships

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This aim of this research is to investigate how and why cause-related events fulfil the strategic objectives of social partnerships, thereby creating value for stakeholders. Strategic collaboration between corporate and not-for-profit firms has received widespread practitioner and academic interest in recent years. These collaborations, termed ‘social partnerships’ are formed to achieve corporate and not-for-profit strategic objectives via the implementation of various cause-related marketing activities. Cause-related events can be implemented by a social partnership as part of a cause-related marketing campaign. Such events are becoming progressively common in social partnership practice, and have emerged as a versatile strategic marketing platform. Limited research has examined social partnerships in the context of cause-related events, and this research addresses this gap with an exploratory study. A qualitative study was conducted using case study and ethnographic methodologies. Two case studies were examined using multiple sources of evidence for data collection and analysis.

The findings from this research generate insight into the use of cause-related events as a strategic marketing platform for social partnership implementation. The findings suggest that sharing valuable experiences through cause-related events contributes to a sense of camaraderie and togetherness amongst partners, mutual understanding between partners, and a focus on the cause. It also demonstrates how the shared risks and rewards of cause-related events promote a focus on furthering the collective interests of the partnership. Finally, it considers how the tangible and transparent elements of cause-related events encourage firms to be selective when choosing a partner to collaborate with, and to pay close attention to detail. These findings highlight cause-related events as a versatile strategic marketing platform for promoting a more successful social partnership in terms of relationship building, organisational learning, passion and commitment towards the cause, mutual benefit, legitimacy, and the quality of collaborative outcomes.

Overall, this research contributes towards a better understanding of the dynamics of social partnerships, and the value of cause-related events in fulfilling the strategic objectives of social partnerships. This understanding can assist corporate and NFP partners to deepen their relationships with each other, and develop more influential CRM campaigns using the cause-related event as a strategic marketing platform.
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