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Cause-related marketing in the digital era: how enterprises can deal with international campaigns in individualist versus collectivist countries

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to (i) analyze how different users of social media (Twitter) interact and spread cause-related communication and (ii) explore how people search for cause-related marketing campaigns online, allowing a comparison between individualist and collectivist cultures. A social network analysis was used to map the different types of networks created by online users. A second in-depth study on how online users search for cause-related marketing campaigns used a 5-year analysis. Online users in individualist countries are more engaged with a broader community than those in collectivist countries who focus their attention on a narrower set of CRM messages. These findings are useful insights for companies and charities, which should adopt different strategies depending on the culture.

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

This article does not contain any experiments with human participants performed by any of the authors.

This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

Conflict of Interest:

Author A declares that he/she has no conflict of interest.

Author B declares that he/she has no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent: (not applicable)

Keywords: Cause-related marketing, social network, brand management, cultural differences, digital era

Introduction

Cause-related marketing (CRM) emerged in the late 1970s as a form of corporate philanthropy based on the rationale of profit-motivated giving (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2018). CRM can stimulate businesses to fund charities that encourage health and human services support, environmental protection and other causes by donating part of their profits (Grolleau et al., 2016).

Past research within this field has been dedicated to analyzing the behavior of consumers toward CRM initiatives, the performance of CRM, or the perspective of CRM as viewed from non-profit organizations (e.g., Andrews et al., 2014; Chen and Huang, 2016; Grolleau et al., 2016; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016; Nelson and Vilela, 2017). However, research exploring CRM's broader relationships in different countries or regarding different consumer behaviors among different cultures in the digital context have been scarce (Kull and Heath, 2016; Eteokleous, Leonidou, and Katsikeas, 2016; Mora and Vila, 2018). Indeed, in this international business and market context cultural differences play an important role (Bent et al., 2007; Choi et al., 2016; Laroche, 2017; Chebbi et al., 2017).

Drawing from the dimensions of Hofstede et al. (2010), individualism versus collectivism (IDV) represents the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. In individualistic nations, the ties between individuals are loose and so people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. In collectivist countries we find cultures in which people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups from birth onwards, often in extended families that continue protecting them in

exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Social care is embedded in the society and works without the need for special campaigns. Given these differences, social media managers wanting to develop and organize charity campaigns online need to understand how cultural differences between individualistic countries and collectivistic countries may affect users' behavior.

Embedded in the culture of nations we find how culture tends to see capitalism and religion. According to Weber (2002), religion determines life conduct and has a strong impact on the social and economic ethics of people in a geographical area. Thus, the religion rooted in the culture could identify some social, political and economic outcomes. The Protestant ethic (based on Calvinism) is at the foundations of the culture of the North of Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world. These more individualistic societies tend to create and maintain organized philanthropy causes. People in these countries have a positive psychological force to join social causes, like CRM campaigns. On the other hand, in countries where Calvinism is not so strong, such as in collectivist nations as suggested by Hofstede et al. (2010), individuals tend not to be organized in terms of public support for social causes and tend to help others without expecting to be recognized for this. In these countries, people are less keen to comment on such topics and to commit themselves to social causes that are not so close to them.

The current study intends to contribute to the discussion on how consumers from different national cultures engage with international charities and CRM campaigns on digital platforms. More specifically, will consumers from collectivist nations have a different behavior from those from individualistic nations in communicating and interacting through social media about CRM campaigns?

The goals of the current research are (i) to analyze how different users of social media (Twitter) interact and spread cause-related communication and (ii) to explore

how people search for CRM campaigns online in eight counties, allowing us to compare between individualist and collectivist cultures.

The findings of this research will contribute to extending the theories on international CRM in the digital era, giving insights into how the Hofstede et al. (2010) dimension of individualism operates in online campaigns of CRM and extend knowledge about the behavior of citizens in different countries toward CRM campaigns.

The current paper is structured as follows: the next section presents the literature review. After the literature review, two studies are reported. Next, we discuss the findings and end with the conclusions, where implications and further research are suggested.

Literature review

Cause-related marketing

Cause-related marketing (CRM) has been employed to engage consumers in exchange relationships with firms or as part of the marketing communications mix (Hoeffler, Bloom and Keller, 2010; Christofi, Vrontis, and Leonidou, 2014). As a definition, “cause-related marketing is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives” (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988, p. 60). The American Express Company was the first to use CRM to get funds for art groups in San Francisco and then in supporting the renovation of the Statue of Liberty (e.g., Andreasen, 1996; Welsh, 1999). However, CRM can also be viewed as the “public association of a profit company with a non-profit organization, with the intention of increasing the interests of both parties” (Wu and Hung, 2008, p.321), which

clearly introduces the possibility of cooperation between profit and non-profit organizations, involving complex benefits for causes and not only generating additional revenue.

Previous studies on CRM can be clustered into three groups: (i) studies exploring consumers' attitude to, and perspectives of CRM initiatives (e.g., Krishna, 2011; Chen and Huang, 2016; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016), (ii) research around CRM performance from for-profit organizations' viewpoint (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Andrews et al., 2014), (iii) analyzing the effects of CRM from non-profit organizations' perspective (e.g., Nelson and Vilela, 2017; Loureiro et al., 2018).

The first deals with the causes that could engage consumers in revenue-producing trade with the firm, encouraging consumers to buy the firm's product (Nelson, Kanso, and Levitt 2007). CRM programs contribute to providing additional information about firms (not directly presented in advertising tools), allowing consumers to decide whether or not they want to be with that firm/brand (Webb and Mohr 1998). Emotions like guilt and pride influence consumers' judgment and behavior (Arnett, German, and Hunt 2003; Kim and Johnson, 2013) and supporting social causes reduces the sense of guilt when buying superfluous products and instills pride in supporting worthy causes. Consumers are even willing to shift to brands that embrace social causes, particularly when they relate to the cause (Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Hult 2004). However, the opposite may also occur, as consumers become more skeptical about the real social effect and the firm's real motive for its action (Singh et al., 2009; Anuar and Mohamad 2012; Guerreiro, Rita, and Trigueiros, 2016).

From the firm's point of view, CRM is a strategic tool that combines social responsibility and fundraising for social causes. CRM may bring several benefits for the firm, such as improved performance, corporate reputation, brand image and firm

credibility (Rifon et al., 2004; Krishna, 2011). Regarding non-profit organizations - organizations financing only the production of the service that they were formed to provide, a non-profit social group (Hansmann, 1980) - CRM can lead them to a loss of flexibility. For-profit organizations may impose restrictions or high dependency on non-profit organizations or even use the glow of non-profit organizations for their own benefit (Andreasen, 1996; Wu and Hung, 2008). In certain situations, for-profit organizations can force non-profit organizations to have a particular behavior, such as restrictions in dealing with the company's competitors. For-profit companies may also use non-profit organizations to create strong associations with social and environmental concerns in consumers' minds.

Cultural differences in cause-related marketing

Cultural aspects are often studied to compare how consumers in different countries may behave differently. Hofstede (1980) defines cultural variability based on six dimensions, namely power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long vs. short-term orientation and indulge vs. restrain.

Regarding power distance, countries may differ in how their population accepts and expects power to be unequally distributed. High power distance countries (e.g., Russia) accept inequality is something embedded in society, while countries with low power distance (such as Denmark) often demand justifications for the lack of a balanced society. However, low power distance countries generally present high individualism. People in individualistic countries (such as the United States of America) have a more closed social network and usually focus their care on themselves or close relatives, while in more collectivist countries (e.g., Japan) people are more open to help others. More feminine countries also frequently exhibit behavior aligned with cooperation and

caring for their social networks. The last three dimensions of Hofstede's model of cultural differences differentiate countries by their ability to deal with ambiguity (low uncertainty avoidance), their normative or pragmatic approaches to cultural changes (long-term vs short-term orientation), and by being stricter in following social rules (restraint countries) or more emotional in how they enjoy life (indulgent countries).

The decision to support a charity through a CRM campaign is known to affect purchase intention and brand reputation (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Demetriou, Pappasolomou, and Vrontis, 2010). However, studies also highlight the moderating effect of cultural differences on such altruistic behavior (Kim and Johnson, 2013; LaFerle et al., 2013). In fact, one of the most relevant factors that impacts on responses to CRM campaigns is how geographically close such charities operate, which suggests that consumers are concerned about making a real impact on their social network. Local CRM campaigns are usually more successful than national CRM campaigns (Grau and Folse, 2007; Ross et al., 1992). This cultural attachment is also a factor at the country level. Cross-cultural studies show that some drivers of CRM - such as pride - are different between countries that are more individualistic or more collectivist (Kim and Johnson, 2013). Indeed, in more individualist countries (e.g., UK) people often associate positive feelings with the fact of being independent, while in collectivist countries, people have a negative attitude towards feeling independent (Nezlek, Kafetsios, and Smith, 2008).

Consumers buy products and services aligned with their self-image, which differs greatly from culture to culture (Solomon, 2006; de Moji and Hofstede, 2011). While consumers in individualistic and low power distance countries prefer products that may increase their self-esteem, in other countries, purchase is often motivated by more altruistic behaviors (de Moji and Hofstede, 2011; Grolleau et al., 2016). Therefore,

relationships are very important in more collectivist and low power distance countries, where people are more focused on maintaining harmonious relationships rather than focused exclusively on themselves (Beck, Chapman, and Palmatier, 2015).

Cause-related marketing on social media

The different cultural values around the world require brands to align their communication with these cultural differences in order to thrive in each market.

Although some companies have more standard communication, many are now engaging in bi-directional communication which embraces cultural differences around the world, specially through their web sites and social media (Moura, Singh, and Chun, 2016; Chang, 2011). Studies show that in individualistic countries, users use social media information to maximize personal utility, while in collectivist countries, social media users are more active in sharing ideas and opinions. The former also use social media information more actively as an important source for their purchase decision (Goodrich and de Moji, 2013). For example, Chinese consumers often engage more on social media to connect with peers that share their views, while US consumers use social media opportunistically in order to obtain economic value from the exchange (Tsai and Men, 2017).

Communicating CRM campaigns on social media is a way for companies to increase the reach of their corporate social responsibility efforts. Communicating corporate social responsibility through social media is known to increase consumers' engagement with the company's social network due to the two-way dialog (McMillan, 2006). This attachment leads to an increase in brand identification and promotes brand-consumer relationship bonds (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Thorson and Rodgers, 2006), which increases corporate reputation (Eberle, Berens and Li, 2013). Not only are

companies able to engage with consumers in their social network and communicate CRM initiatives that are in line with their cultural traits, but they also receive a valuable response from their consumers through eWOM. These responses may come as user comments on specific campaigns or from users sharing a comment with their peers. Although studies connecting CRM or corporate social responsibility and their social media impact are scarce (Reimer and Benkenstein, 2016; Vo, Xiao and Ho, 2019), long-term CRM campaigns are known to drive positive eWOM when their success is perceived by the end consumer and when there is a good match between the brand and the cause (Thomas, Mullen and Fraedrich, 2011). eWOM is also heightened when consumers identify with the company engaging in CRM and when the campaign is perceived as highly credible (Lii and Lee, 2012). Companies with better CSR engagement also received more positive word of mouth on social media than negative word of mouth, through a halo effect which influences each person's evaluation of a social campaign based on the overall perception of the event (Vo, Xiao and Ho, 2019).

eWOM plays a powerful role in increasing brands and charities' reputation. However, when consumers engage in eWOM, either by commenting on a specific CRM campaign or by sharing the details of a campaign with others, they establish social bonds that may be represented by a network of connections between peers. Communication on social media is not only bi-directional but also a set of ties between consumers (Leskovec, Huttenlocher, and Kleinberg, 2010). These online social networks are powerful ways for brands to disseminate their campaigns through viral communication tactics (Dăniasă, Tomița, Stuparu and Stanciu, 2010) and may be studied using social network analysis techniques.

In the current paper we posit that individualistic countries - based on a more Protestant ethic background and more organized in their philanthropy causes - maintain

this organization on social media (Suddaby, 2019). Thus, we may expect that on social media, individuals in more collectivist countries will extend their social support to other members of society beyond the close family and neighbors and not be as open to organized charity campaigns, with a narrower focus than citizens in more individualistic nations.

Methodology

Social network analysis (SNA)

Social network analysis (SNA) allows researchers to study network morphology and has been applied to understand how a network of connections (such as social media) may differ in terms of its communities, cohesion and interconnectivity (Litterio, Nates, Larrosa and Gómez, 2017; Smith et al., 2014). SNA is a set of mathematical methods and measures that map and explain graph-like structures in which nodes (which in social media are represented by users) are connected by edges (e.g., relationships of friendship, sharing of posts). SNA studies on management issues have been increasing in recent years to explain social media dynamics (Borgatti, Everet and Johnson, 2013, Yang et al., 2016), organization dynamics (Li, Wu, Zhu, and Xu, 2018), destination management (Gajdošík, Gajdošíková, Maráková and Flagestad, 2017; Czernek-Marszałek, 2018) and marketing research in general (Litterio et al., 2017). However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies using social network analysis have been used to study CSR or CRM, especially how countries' different cultural traits may affect online network dynamics.

A network structure (graph) might represent all the nodes and relations between the nodes over time or a sub-set of such relationships, called a sub-graph (Chakrabarti and Faloutsos, 2006). Such structures are usually analyzed by mapping the nodes and

edges of the network and by calculating measures that describe the network characteristics, such as betweenness centrality, closeness centrality and eigenvector centrality, to analyze interconnectivity and cohesion, or modularity to access communities in the network (Zafarani, Abbasi and Liu, 2014). Betweenness centrality is a measure that assesses the status of each member in the network regarding their ability to create bridges between other members' communities (Hoppe and Reinelt, 2010). Closeness centrality, although similar to betweenness centrality, measures how close one member is to the rest of the network (Hanneman and Riddle, 2005). Finally, eigenvector centrality considers not only how distant one member is from their peers, but also how close they are to other members that are also important in the network (Prell, 2012). Eigenvector centrality is, therefore, a more refined measure of centrality. Members with high values of eigenvector centrality are not only leaders in terms of connectivity in the network, but are also well connected to other leaders (Hristov, Scott and Minocha, 2018). Another measure used to assess network characteristics is its modularity, which shows how a specific network is divided into different communities or sub-groups (Blondel, Guillaume, Lambiotte and Lefebvre, 2008). The higher the modularity, the better the cohesion between groups and the greater the distance between the different communities in the network, which suggests better defined communities that comment or share inside the sub-network as opposed to sparse participation in the overall network.

The current studies use social network analysis to reveal (1) how online users spread cause-related content in different cultures and (2) how different cultures can affect online interaction with specific CRM campaigns.

Study 1: How UK and Japanese users of Twitter interact with cause-related communications

Methodology of study 1

Non-profit organizations have been using social media to disseminate information and engage with their online community (Lam & Nie, 2020; Tian *et al.*, 2019; Zhou & Pan, 2016). Therefore, cultural differences in terms of how different social media users interact with CRM were assessed using the Twitter pages of well-known charities. Three charities were selected based on their presence in world causes. Red Cross (RC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and UNICEF were selected due to being some of the most followed charities worldwide (Charity Navigator, 2018) and because they are present in many countries.

Two countries were selected to analyze how different cultural traits may affect users' responses to cause-related campaigns. The United Kingdom (UK) was selected as the individualist country (individualism=89) while Japan was selected as the more collectivist country (individualism=46)(Hofstede, 2018). Those countries were selected due to the popularity of Twitter. After the U.S., Japan has most Twitter users worldwide (50,9 million) followed by the UK with a total of 18,6 million users (Statista, 2018). Although other countries were also considered for comparison, such as the US as a highly individualist country (individualism=91) or South Korea as a highly collectivist country (individualism=18), those countries either did not have a relevant presence of all three charities on Twitter (South Korea) or their pages usually present a more standardized view of each charity campaign and are not so linked to local programs (US).

The dataset for testing cultural differences between social media response to charities in different countries was obtained during a seven-day period of comments and

retweets on Twitter. Red Cross data from Japan was obtained from its @jracs_pr account with 16,700 followers and from its UK account (@britishredcross) with 242,400 followers on Twitter. WWF in Japan (@wwfjapan) had 77,700 followers, while WWF in the UK (@wwf_uk) had 215,400. Finally, UNICEF Japan (@unicefinjapan) had 69,100 followers while in the UK (@unicef_uk) 229,700 people followed the charity.

While in the UK the charities have many more followers than in Japan, the sub-graph collected for the seven-day period showed more balanced activity. During the period, the Red Cross had 4,281 tweets (comments or retweets) in Japan and 2,000 tweets in the UK, the WWF had 2,778 tweets in Japan and 2,500 tweets in the UK, while UNICEF had a total of 8,113 tweets in Japan and 2,598 tweets in the UK.

Social network analysis was then performed to map the different types of graphs and calculate network and node degrees of centrality and community. A final analysis was done to compare the differences between the countries.

A directed graph $G(V, E)$ with V nodes and E edges (connections) was formed for (1) comments and (2) retweets. For the comments, the edges of the graphs represented the mentions each tweet had in its text (explicitly directing a comment to a specific user), while in the retweets graph, the edges were formed by connecting users who retweeted the comment with the receivers of these retweets.

Results of Study 1

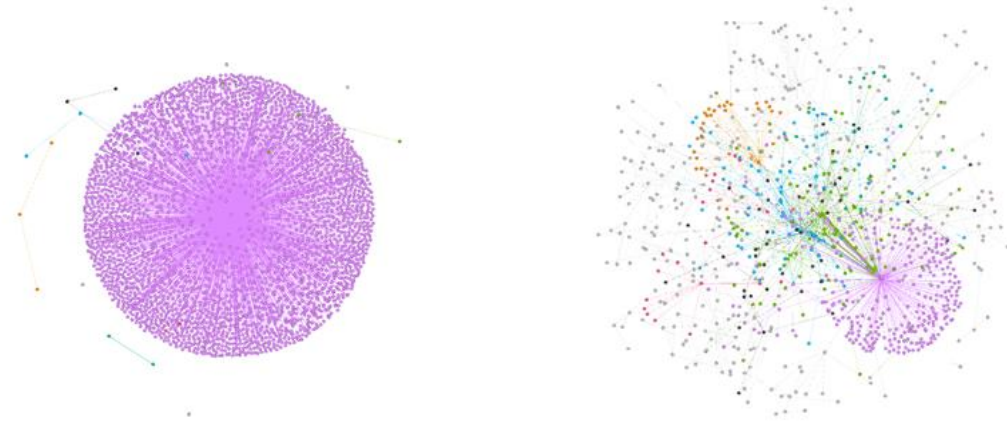
The overall results of the datasets show that the more collectivist country (Japan) has a higher number of retweets than the more individualist country (UK). To account for the differences in terms of the number of tweets between Japan and the UK, a ratio was used to measure the difference between retweets and total number of tweets during the seven-day period. The results show that for Japan, 99.1% of the activity in the period

was formed of retweets/RC tweets, 97.1% of retweets/tweet of WWF comments and 99.3% of retweets/tweet of UNICEF comments. Regarding the UK, only 67.7% of the total posts on those days were retweets/RC tweet, while for WWF comments, only 79.4% were retweets/tweet and 79.8% of the activity in the UNICEF account had retweets/tweet in the UK. A more detailed perspective was also calculated using the number of times each retweet in that period had been retweeted before. A t-test shows that the average of past retweets is much greater for charities in Japanese accounts ($M=3,396.93$ retweets) than for charities in UK accounts ($M=189.63$ retweets) ($t(15,559)=50.69$, $p < .05$). These results show that although the UK has a larger number of followers than Japan, Japan is much more active in retweets/tweet (sharing).

Due to the small number of comments (mentions) versus retweets, especially in Japan, cultural differences were measured using a social network analysis based on retweets.

Regarding the social network of retweets, the directed graph of Japanese retweets of RC revealed a total of 2,909 nodes and 4,243 edges. The directed graph of UK retweets of RC revealed a total of 914 nodes and 1,066 edges. Figure 1 shows the graph for (a) Japan and (b) UK retweets between users. The modularity for each graph was calculated to check the differences between the countries regarding community cohesion. A graph with more clusters with high cohesion between the nodes in each cluster but far apart from each other such as the one for the UK (b) presents a higher modularity index (0.623), while a graph where most users belong to few big clusters such as Japan (a) has a lower modularity index (0.008). The results suggest that although Japan has a higher number of retweets than the UK, most Japanese retweets come from the same source, in this case the account of the charity (@jracs_pr). In the

UK, users retweet not only from the charity itself, but are also connecting with other users and sharing their own posts.



a)

b)

Figure 1. Social network of RC charity in (a) Japan and (b) UK

The directed graph of Japanese retweets of WWF revealed a total of 1,379 nodes and 1,424 edges. The directed graph of UK retweets of WWF revealed a total of 1,696 nodes and 1,711 edges. Figure 2 shows the directed graph for WWF in (a) Japan and (b) UK. Similarly to RC, followers of WWF have a different modularity index depending on the type of country. Japan's network modularity is smaller (0.136) than in the network of UK retweets (0.635).

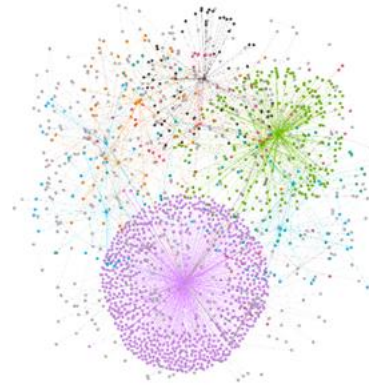
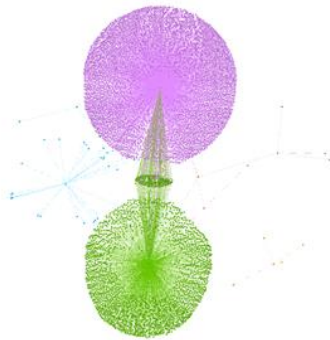


a)

b)

Figure 2. Social network of WWF charity in (a) Japan and (b) UK

Finally, the directed graph of Japanese UNICEF retweets revealed a total of 7,383 nodes and 7,700 edges and the directed graph of UK UNICEF retweets revealed a total of 1,771 nodes and 1,834 edges. UNICEF followers also differ in how they establish relationships. Japanese followers of UNICEF create a network with a smaller modularity (0.402) than UK followers (0.812). Figure 3 shows the directed graph of UNICEF in (a) Japan and (b) UK.



a)

b)

Figure 3. Social network of UNICEF charity in (a) Japan and (b) UK

In sum, the figures show that Japanese followers are more centered on retweeting the same sources while UK followers usually retweet other social initiatives from their peers in the charity's account.

Although the current findings give insights based on country-level data about how two culturally different nations interact and spread cause-related content online, this first study does not analyze how people search for CRM campaigns online. This limitation is considered by conducting Study 2.

Study 2: How users search for cause-related marketing campaigns online

Methodology of Study 2

A second study was performed in order to understand how users (citizens) search for CRM campaigns online. One of the most famous and successful CRM campaigns (PRODUCT(REDD)) was used to study this behavior longitudinally. (REDD) is a charity that partners with some of the most relevant brands worldwide to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, having generated more than \$500 million dollars to date (REDD, 2018). Some of their partners include Vespa, Coca-Cola and Apple. Such partners develop specific products for the CRM campaign and part of the selling price reverts to (REDD) global initiatives. For example, one of the most successful products of the REDD campaign is the Apple REDD iPhone.

The current study focused on the search patterns of online users in different countries regarding “product red” query, which represents a search for more information about that specific campaign. Eight countries were selected to represent more individualist or more collectivist countries. More individualist countries included the United Kingdom (individualism=89), Australia (individualism=90), Canada (individualism=80) and France (individualism=71), while more collectivist countries include Japan (individualism=46), Pakistan (individualism=14), South Korea (individualism=18) and Thailand (individualism=20)(Hofstede,2018). The data were collected using Google Trends (Google, 2020), a platform that provides information about how many times a given query was searched for in a specific period of time. Each number in the time series ranges from 0 to 100, showing how the search interest has changed over time. Google Trends has been used successfully in past research to forecast exchange rates and tourism variables (Bulut, 2018; Park, Lee, & Song, 2017).

However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to use Google Trends data to reveal search behavior for cause related marketing campaigns.

In order to understand the search behavior of consumers regarding "product red", the current study included a 5-year time series (from 2013-2018) of the searches around "product red" query made in each country.

Results of Study 2

The second study explored how online searching was performed in 8 different countries regarding their more individualist or collectivist behavior. Regarding individualist countries (UK, France, Australia and Canada), their search for the "product red" campaign during the last 5-years was displayed on a time series that showed the proportion of these searches in overall searches. Figure 4 shows the different time series for the 4 countries. A first observation shows that these countries have a lower search pattern during the 5-year period but show high peaks during specific events. Those events started in November 2014 when the partnership between Apple and RED started and a second peak occurred in the week starting March 19, 2017 when iPhone7 Red was first launched. A third peak occurred in the week starting April 08, 2018 when the most recent version of iPhone 8 Red was launched. France and Canada show a more stable search pattern, and especially Australia which in the last 5-years has seen its online users show continuous interest in the campaign.

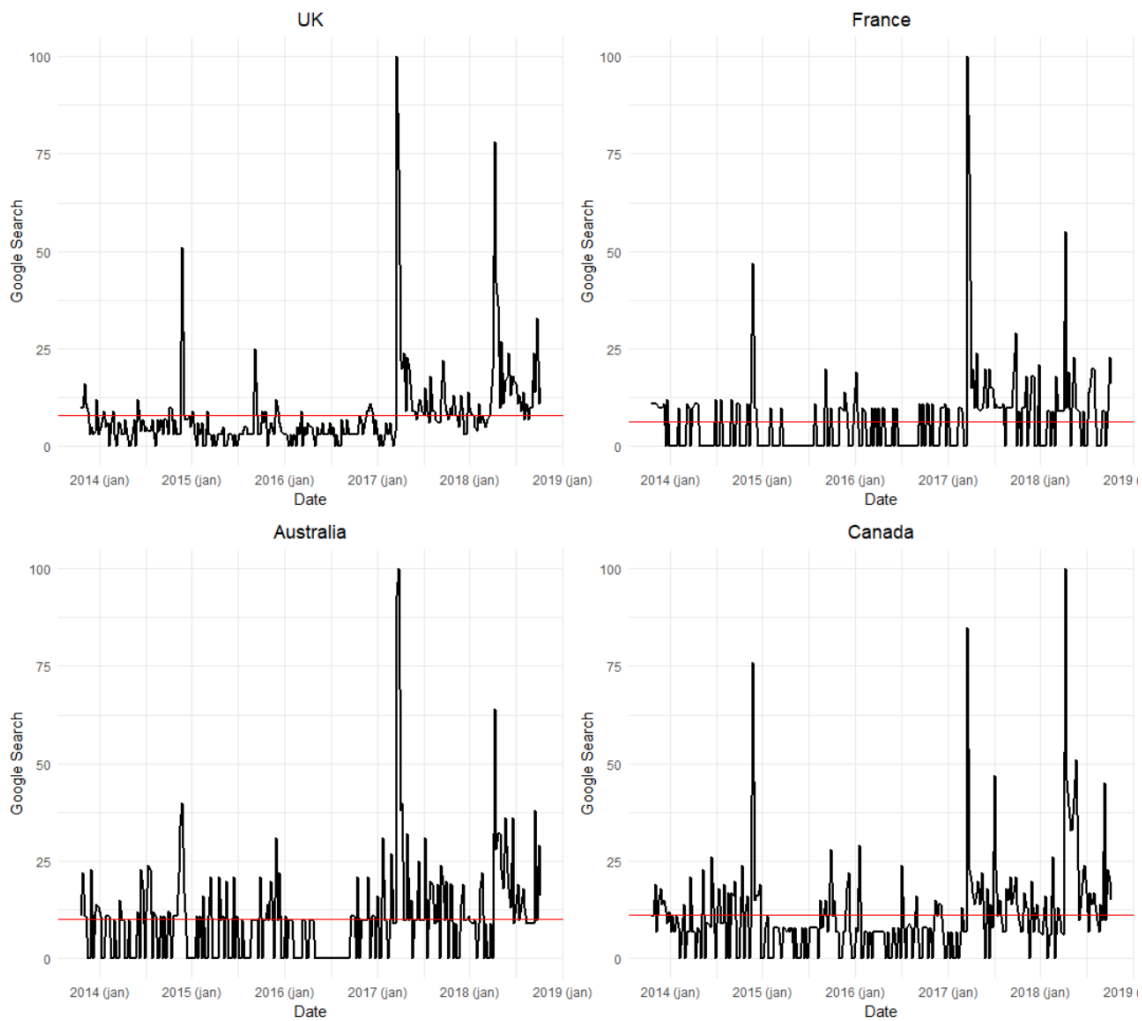


Figure 4. Individualist Countries

The countries with a higher level of collectivism (Japan, Pakistan, South Korea and Thailand) show more erratic commitment to the CRM campaign, with many periods showing no search behavior for the campaign. While Japan and Thailand also show similar patterns to the individualist countries in terms of peaks, Pakistan and South Korea have a more erratic search pattern over the five-year period, although online users in Pakistan only started to show interest in the campaign later in 2017. Figure 5 shows the collectivist countries' search patterns around the PRODUCT(RED) campaign.

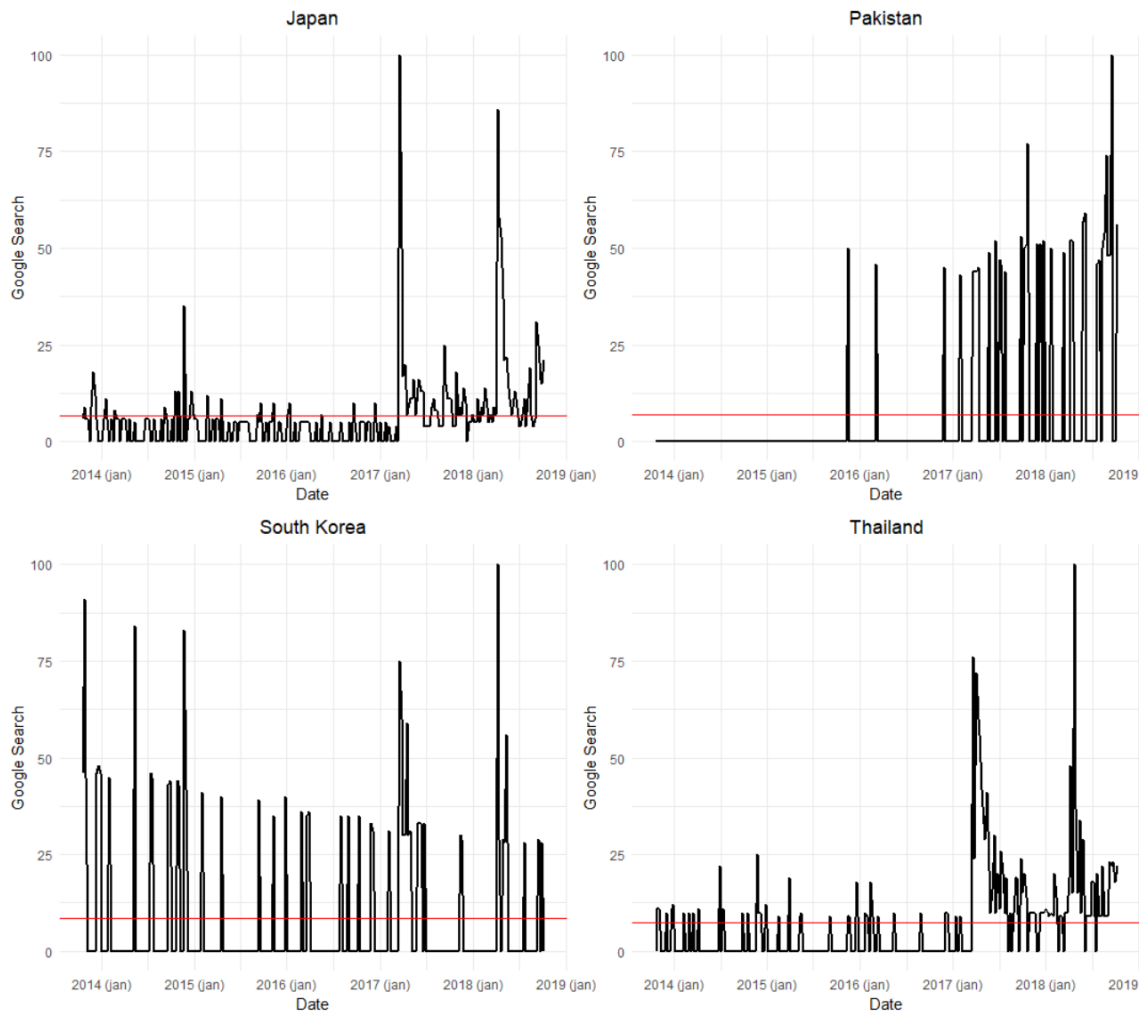


Figure 5. Collectivist Countries

Regarding the time series characteristics, the average search proportion around the campaign in each country and by country type are also different. The results show that individualist countries had statistically higher percentages in terms of online search patterns for the PRODUCT(RED) campaign ($M=8,98\%$) than collectivist countries ($M=7,39\%$), $t(1922.70)=2.648$, $p < 0.01$. Table 1 shows both the differences between the countries and the differences in the groups of individualist and collectivist countries.

TYPE OF COUNTRY	COUNTRY	AVERAGE ONLINE SEARCH PROPORTION
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	AUSTRALIA	10.26%	
INDIVIDUALIST	CANADA	11.16%	8.98%
	FRANCE	6.48%	
	UK	8.02%	
	JAPAN	6.76%	
COLLECTIVIST	PAKISTAN	7.02%	7.39%
	SOUTH KOREA	8.37%	
	THAILAND	7.40%	

Table 1. Average Online Search Proportion by Country and type of Country

Discussion

The current findings show how online users today are using digital platforms to engage with cause-related messages and particularly with CRM campaigns. Two studies examined this online engagement. The first study presented how online users in more individualist or collectivist countries share cause-related messages in their network of relations and the second went further to show how users become interested in CRM campaigns in different cultures.

Both studies share a common pattern. In the first study, individualist countries spread cause-related messages coming from their network of friends, while collectivist countries tend to rely more on sharing only information that comes from a single source, usually the main charity. In the second study, on average, individualist countries search more for CRM campaigns than collectivist countries. Therefore, individualist countries are more engaged with a wider community and are more active in searching for cause-related campaigns than collectivist countries, which focus their attention on a narrower set of CRM messages. These findings confirm that collectivist cultures rely more on in-

group than out-group tasks and that in-group attention is limited to social initiatives that are more restricted to a closed social circle (Conway, Ryder, Tweed, and Sokol, 2002; Koch and Koch, 2007). The findings also confirm that individualist countries have a more successful digital presence than collectivist countries, which may be due to individualist countries maintaining a set of more organized philanthropic causes (Hofstede et al., 2010). Although collectivist countries have lower engagement with their wider online network and search less for cause-related campaigns, they fully embrace social causes stemming from their narrow group of social ties and are much more active in sharing such messages than individualist cultures. This pattern of focusing on specific concerns, highlighted by their favorite causes and not on many social causes at the same time, confirms that unlike individualist countries, collectivist cultures are more centered on specific concerns that target specific individuals in their community (Weber, 2002; Parsons, 1937; Parker, 1998).

The knowledge gained from the current study may be important for for-profit companies to understand better how to engage with local communities with different cultures if they want to foster their corporate social responsibility programs. The results confirm that campaign performance depends on a culture-fit and better understanding of how each type of country spreads its cause-related messages online. While in individualist countries, online users are the most relevant promoters of cause-related messages, in collectivist countries, such messages are better spread through the non-profit partner's online channels. This finding is also important for the non-profit partners, as better management of their messages can increase donations. The results show that the same CRM campaign may work differently in different markets depending on cultural traits, performance characteristics and online network ties.

Conclusions and implications

The current study has important implications for brand managers and charities employing CRM campaigns. First, managers should develop their campaigns carefully, taking cultural differences as an important moderator of CRM effectiveness. Campaigns are spread differently in different cultures (individualist and collectivist). While in collectivist countries, managers should invest communication efforts about their CRM campaigns in institutional channels, in individualist countries, managers must rely on influential actors in the social network to help spread their CRM campaigns. In collectivist countries, messages should create a feeling of being a local cause, more connected to domestic or regional problems. On the other hand, citizens in individualistic countries identify themselves with big CRM campaigns, with problems that happen far away from their own countries or global causes. Overall, the current paper makes important contributions for both brand managers and charities. Brand managers should select charities that fit better with the brand identity and then carefully prepare a message to communicate the campaign. The message must depend on the culture of the countries where the campaign will be spread. Charities should also channel their messages differently depending on the culture. While in more collectivist countries a single channel (the charity account) may be enough to produce a spreading effect, in individualist countries, charities must use multiple communication channels and rely on the online community to share CRM messages.

Despite the important implications of the study, some limitations need to be addressed. The first limitation is that although we analyzed users' responses to cause-related marketing and how consumers spread such messages in the first study, the current paper only studied a partial network based on a seven-day period. Using the entire network since the first tweet posted on the charities' Twitter accounts could

present other network characteristics impossible to analyze in a short period of time. However, due to the limitations of data access in Twitter, we controlled for this effect by using not only one charity but comparing three similar charities (RC, WWF, UNICEF) across countries (Japan, UK). The study was also focused on only one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (individualist vs collectivist countries).

Future studies could use the current findings to check if other cultural dimensions (power distance, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long/short-term orientation, indulgence-restraint) can also affect responses to CRM campaigns. In the future, researchers should analyze other CRM campaigns worldwide, compare local CRM campaigns and global campaigns, or attempt to understand the different roles of online network actors in a longitudinal study.

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