

Students' perspectives on cause-related marketing: The case study of the book publishing industry

Mitra Pashootanzadeh^{1*} and Maryam Amini²

¹Department of Knowledge and Information Science,

Faculty of Education and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, IRAN

²Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran, Tehran, IRAN

e-mail: m.pashootanzade@edu.ui.ac.ir* (corresponding author);

maryamamini@ut.ac.ir

ORCID: M. Pashootanzadeh: 0000-0003-1973-3856

M. Amini: 0000-0002-8864-6919

ABSTRACT

The book publishing industry and its market in Iran are not very prosperous for various reasons, and activists in this situation need to apply some cause-related marketing (CRM) strategies to attract customers. For this reason, this study was conducted to determine the perspectives of university students on CRM in the book publishing industry. The survey research design was used to achieve the objective of the study. Literature and humanities university students from University of Tehran, Iran, were identified as the target group to gauge their perspectives on CRM by book publishers. This is due to the importance of books in humanities and studying literature. A total of 261 (81.5% response rate) students completed the survey questionnaire. The findings demonstrate that CRM by book publishers and bookstores influences on students purchasing decisions. In this regard, it was vital for students as customers to know where the book publishers or booksellers spent their money on. Findings on various charity's affairs practices on spending book purchase money showed that the top priority are related to books, education, and children. Since students tend to purchase textbooks, it is suggested that textbook publishers take the lead in CRM through mass media, online advertising, social web and messaging platforms to help introduce and institutionalize this marketing strategy. As this is the first study in Iran that reports students' perspectives in applying CRM strategies to attract customers in buying books, it has paved the way for further research. It would be useful to make more informed decisions about CRM strategies in the Iranian publishing and book industry and creating a positive effect on book purchase intention.

Keywords: Books; University students; Cause-related marketing; Publishing Industry; Book publishers; Booksellers.

INTRODUCTION

Books are one of the most important cultural goods in any society and one of the most predominant products in the publishing industry. There have been reports about average books read per year by country that indicate the time spent reading, with India, Thailand, China, the Philippines and Egypt rank in the top five. Paying attention to per capita reading can lead to the prosperity of the publishing industry. However, in Iran, the publishing industry has many problems. As Iranians' purchasing power decreases each

year and the price of books increases constantly, the decrease in book demands is obvious. Official statistics in the past five years (2018-2022) demonstrated a declining trend in the mean of books published (except for a slight increase in 2019) and an increase in the books price (Table 1).

Table 1: Book Publication Statistics for the Last Five Years (2018-2022) in Iran (Khaneheketab 2022)

Index	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Mean of book published*	1.367	1.386	1.319	1.137	1.053
Mean price of books (Toman)**	16,825	24,540	31,825	47,908	69,857

*The number books published in Iran / all titles

**One Toman is equal to 10 Iranian rials (IRR)

A comparative study on variety publishing indices between different countries concluded that the index of total book counts per capita in Iran is very low (1.95) (Afzali and Aboojafari 2018), which means that there may be many titles published in Iran, but this diversity of titles and topics addressed in books could not succeed in absorbing customers. Besides, the real household expenditures on books in Iran have been decreasing since 2013. In such a situation that the publishing economy in Iran should involve the entire supply chain and all processes to promote sales, from production to distribution to promote sales, including cause-related marketing (CRM).

CRM plays a key role in creating a positive effect on purchase intention (Brown and Dacin 1997; Patel, Gadhavi, and Shukla 2017; Pracejus, Olsen, and Brown 2003). Varadarajan and Menon (1988) defined CRM as the contribution to a designated cause by a corporate initiative that enable charities to profit from a revenue-providing exchange that fits both the customer and company objectives. CRM makes the link between sales and donation by promising to donate a certain amount of money to a non-profit organisation or social cause after consumers purchase products or services (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Another definition given by Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran (2012) is the marketing practice of donating a specified amount from product sales to designated charitable causes. As such, CRM is a chance for publishing companies to improve their business and provide the opportunity to make the publishing industry better. Westberg (2004) defined CRM as a marketing strategy whereby the company makes a contribution, financial or otherwise, to a charity organisation upon the consumer engaging in a revenue-providing exchange that satisfies the business and individual objectives. This CRM interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

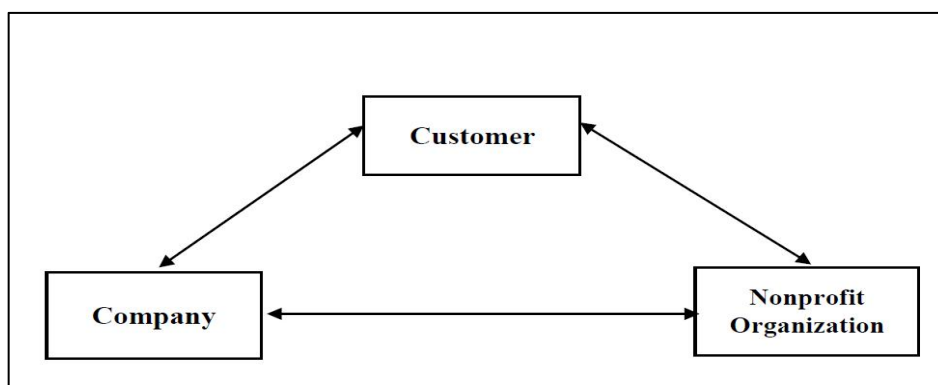


Figure 1: Cause-Related Marketing Interaction (Westberg 2004)

Companies need to differentiate themselves and their products through advertising, promotion, services, and corporate social responsibility, e.g., partnership with charity organisations or support a cause. This strategy is defined in terms of CRM as a communications tool (Brown and Dacin 1997). CRM has emerged as a new form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in recent years as an essential concept within several industries (Kotler and Lee 2008). It can be characterised as a strategic positioning and marketing tool which links a company or a brand to a relevant social cause or issue for mutual benefit (Stumpf and Teufel 2014).

CRM programmes offer different advantages for all the main parts as companies, non-profit organisations, and customers, consequently the society in general. Successful CRM would shape consumers' behaviours, such as purchase intention, brand choice, and willingness to pay (Chen and Huang 2016). It generates for them emotional, social, and functional value (Lucyna and Hanna 2016). According to Hawkins, Hoch, and Meyers-Levy (2001), CRM allows customers to contribute directly to solve the problem and express the core values or concerns. Adkins (1999) defines the relationship between the company, non-profit organisations, and consumers as a win-win-win situation. Kotler and Lee (2008) state that there are many different causes supported by the CRM efforts of the world's companies, but that there are some with more visibility, including children's needs (e.g., education, hunger), major health issues (e.g., AIDS, breast cancer), the environment (e.g., nature preserves) and basic needs (e.g., homelessness).

Nowadays CRM is being used by numerous companies as a factor that works on sales augment and that ultimately can also help to build a profitable brand and establish brand image (Riva, Uddin, and Rubel 2019). For this reason, it was quickly imitated by different companies all around the world (Galan-Ladero, Galera-Casquet, and Alves 2021). For example, Samsung donated 1 Euro to a breast cancer foundation for each sale of special pink accessories and the product campaign, in which firms such as Gap and Apple donated up to 50 percent of profits to support AIDS patients in Africa (Vrontis, Christofi and Katsikeas 2020). Different business organisations have used CRM, good examples are such as: (a) PepsiCo in Pakistan for improving the quality of life and solving energy poverty, running "Lighting Up Lives" project; (b) a group of restaurants in Spain that fought against hunger by offering "solidarity" dishes and menus in 2010; (c) TCHIBO, a German consumer goods and retail company has supported education in Tanzania for disadvantaged children since 2013; and (d) BIC Iberia (BIC's Spanish operating arm) and Red Cross Spain donated a pen to children in poverty in Spain for each pack of pens bought online by Spanish-based customers, in the summer of 2019 (Burguete 2022).

Hence, one of the strategies which might reduce challenges the Iranian publishing industry faces is applying CRM. Students are among the groups that need books in Iran, and it can even be said that they have to buy books. Despite all the economic or social challenges, students need to purchase various educational and supplementary books to ensure their educational accomplishment. Publication statistics in Iran also demonstrated that the circulation of books for education is one of the highest ones (Khaneheketab 2022). In an ideal situation, the book has the potential to answer the curiosity and mental concerns of this age group. Due to their age, intellectual and cultural conditions, these young people have a high potential for cooperation in charitable social affairs. Considering their particular need for books, students can be a powerful means for doing cause-related activities and saving Iran's publishing industry. In addition to being young, being Iranian can also increase their likelihood of doing charitable deeds because Iranians, in general are interested in benevolent affairs and are even sensitive to doing it in the best way (Rashid

et al. 2016). Therefore, in this study, students from a major university in Tehran, Iran, have been considered the target group to gauge their perspectives on CRM by book publishers and how to do it. Determining the group's point of view can give the book publishers an accurate understanding of how likely the latter are to succeed in doing CRM.

Furthermore, multiple studies have been carried out to find out the impact of CRM on customers' responses in developed countries to understand this emerging concept from different perspectives. But very little work has been done in the context of developing countries. With this conceptualization, the current study aims to determine the perspectives of university students toward CRM employment in the book publishing industry. The research questions posed in this study are as follows:

- How are the reading habits and books buying behaviour of university students?
- What are the students' perspectives on cause-related activities?
- What are the students' perspectives on cause-related marketing by book publishers and bookstores?
- What are the students' benevolent priorities in case of implementation of cause-related marketing by book publishers and bookstores?
- What are the most appropriate advertising methods and social media platforms for promoting cause-related book marketing?
- What are the effects of demographic characteristics on students' perspectives toward cause-related marketing in the book industry?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nowadays, CRM is a growing issue with the maximum growth than ever before. According to Stole (2006), CRM can be arranged in several different ways, namely through;

- Advertising – the business communicates a specific cause's message,
- Public relations – business calls public attention to the partnership between itself and a non-profit organisation,
- Sponsorship – the business funds a specific event,
- Licensing – the business pays to use a charity logo on its products or services,
- Direct marketing – both the business and the non-profit organisation raise funds and promote brand awareness,
- Facilitated giving – the business supports the customers' donations to the charity organisation, and
- Purchase-triggering donation – the business donates a percentage or a set amount of products price to the charity organisation.

CRM provides social benefits by allowing consumers to demonstrate their charitable disposition and act in a pro-social manner via their consumption decisions (Giebelhausen et al. 2016; Giebelhausen et al. 2017). Consumers believe that social responsibility involves more than just engage in charity. Therefore CRM was not alone an appropriate way for brands to create quality or loyalty (Tynander and Ekström 2014). By purchasing a product or service linked with social causes, the customers can be assured that they are donating money for a social cause and getting mental satisfaction (Koschate-Fischer, Huber and Hoyer 2016). Hashem and Niqresh (2020) found that the consumers are keen to support and buy a brand associated with a cause/charity. They are also willing to repeat their purchase and remain loyal to the brand. The findings of Heidarian and Bijandi (2015) revealed that CRM has a positive impact on the brand image, especially among skeptical

customers who are somewhat hesitant in buying the brand. The customers' perceptions are also shaped by the perceived business motives behind the CRM campaign.

The charitable organisation ought to be well known; the credibility and matching of partners in the CRM cooperation had to be trustworthy; and a clear communication from both parties of why the collaboration was initiated and the amounts donated were all very significant factors (Fehrm and Wikström 2009). It seems that by associating a brand with a cause/charity (CRM campaign), businesses have the potential to influence positively the perceptions held by consumers towards the brand, the corporation, and subsequently their purchase intention, consumer behaviour and brand loyalty (Hashem and Niqresh 2020). In the same way as the findings of Hashem and Niqresh (2020), Riva, Uddin and Rubel (2019), and Mohammed and Rashid (2012), which showed that customers' attitudes toward CRM have a significant influence on purchase intention. On the other hand, Fan and Miao (2012) focused on purchase intention from different points of view. Their findings revealed that a cause that is relevant to the audience and circulated through an advertisement could increase the credibility of the organisation. So, cause involvement increases the interest of the customers, and this increased interest can develop positive attitudes toward the company and ultimately purchase intention (Fan and Miao 2012). CRM campaigns can favourably impact customers' responses compared with a similar advertisement without a CRM component (Riva, Uddin, and Rubel 2019). Furman and Maison (2020) explored the role of beneficiary origin in reactions to CRM campaigns created by brands. Results showed that the beneficiary type influenced advertisement evaluation, whereas brand origin influenced product and firm perception. CRM exposure does not have the same effect as an actual CRM purchase, and that a CRM promotion is different from a discount promotion in its influence on subsequent consumer choices. The results of Chang and Chu (2020) suggested that mere exposure to CRM reduces subsequent self-indulgent behaviour, whereas purchasing a product with a cause tends to increase such behaviour.

It is not surprising that individuals who have positive attitudes towards CRM have the habits of giving at least 1 percent of their income to social causes or for any charity work (Riva, Uddin and Rubel 2019). The study of Johansson, Liljenberg and Nordin (2016) showed altruism and self-interested motivations function as the two primary determinants of participation intention. Consumers with a tendency of being altruistically motivated are more prone to purchase because related products and the influence of this factor represents the primary determinant of choice to participate in monetary CRM campaigns.

Alcheva, Cai and Zhao (2009) found that educational background and nationality have a significant effect on CRM awareness. Respondents enrolled in the business programme were more aware with CRM strategy than those from other programmes. Their findings revealed that Asians' respondents were not as familiar with this marketing communication strategy as the European were. Both Asian and European wish that the company donates more money to the charity. Bergstén and Olsson's (2014) study on Swedish Generation Y concluded that this generation respond to causes related to humans, e.g., health and well-being, education and, social matters and that they want to see long-term commitment from companies. Even in developing countries, the perceptions of CRM due to diversity in culture, local-global consumer values, and national level of prior CRM exposure are different (Pandey et al. 2020).

None of the reviewed studies have addressed CRM concerning the book market and publishing industry. Target groups were also examined in general, and apart from the study

by Bergstén and Olsson (2014) who worked on Sweden's Generation Y, the rest did not consider specific sections of the community or customers with common characteristics. Both of these cases have been considered in the present study, i.e., assessing the perspectives of students (particular group) on charity and CRM by book publishers and bookstores.

METHOD

The survey research design was used to achieve the objective of the study. The Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran, Iran, with 1868 students at the undergraduate and postgraduate level (including doctoral students) had been identified as the target group to gauge their perspectives on CRM by book publishers. This is due to the importance of books in humanities and studying literature. According to Krejcie and Morgan's table for determining sample size from a given population, the sample size for such a population is 320. Students were selected by stratified random sampling based on their college majors (Table 1). Out of the 320 questionnaires distributed, 261 (81.5%) usable questionnaires were returned after continuous follow-up efforts.

Table 1: Stratified Random Sampling Frame for Students based on Academic Majors

Academic Majors	Population	Percent	Sample
Persian literature	397	21	67
Arabic literature	290	15	49
Archaeology	323	17	55
History	365	20	73
Philosophy	238	13	41
Ancient Iranian culture and language	168	9	30
Linguistics	87	5	5
Total	1868	100	320

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. This survey instrument was prepared keeping in view the purpose of the study, the characteristics of publishers and booksellers, the local conditions and previous studies related to CRM. The questionnaire was designed in two main parts. The first part includes demographic characteristics, reading and buying behaviour, tendency to do charity deeds, and familiarity with the CRM concept. A few definitions of CRM were presented for clarity before the respondents move to the second part of the questionnaire. The second part had several questions for determining the following items:

- (a) Students' perspectives on CRM by book publishers and bookstores.
- (b) Prioritising benevolent affairs from students' point of view.
- (c) The most appropriate advertising methods and social media for promoting.

The questionnaire was reviewed by five experts in Library and Information Science (LIS). for content validation. The reliability of the survey instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall testing result of the reliability for the instrument was at the alpha level .88, which represents a high level of internal consistency of the instrument. The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 for descriptive and inferential statistics and the charts and graphs were created using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. To analyse the data, the frequency, one-sample T-test, a Friedman test, and Multivariate analysis of variance were utilised.

RESULTS

Out of the 261 respondents from the Faculty of Literature and Humanities who completed the questionnaire, 58.2 percent were female, and 39.8 percent were male, and majority were undergraduate students (58.2%) and not working (i.e. full-time students, 72.4%). Table 2 presents the frequency distribution and percentage of respondents based on some demographic characteristics. The academic major of the respondents according to the seven disciplines of the faculty is also presented in Table 2. Most of the respondents were from Persian literature major (25.3%) and the least were linguistics major (1.9%).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Respondents Based on Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	152	58.2
	Male	104	39.8
	Unanswered	5	1.9
Academic qualification	Bachelor's degree	152	58.2
	Master's degree	84	32.2
	Doctorate degree	20	7.7
	Unanswered	5	1.9
Academic major	Philosophy	18	6.9
	Archaeology	55	21.1
	Persian literature	66	25.3
	Arabic literature	34	13
	Linguistics	5	1.9
	History	52	19.9
	Ancient Iranian culture and language	26	9.9
	Unanswered	5	1.9
Employment status	Unemployed	189	72.4
	Employed	66	25.3
	Unanswered	6	2.3
Age	Average - 24.10	Probability value (p) - 6.73	

Reading Habits and Book Buying Behaviour

Questions to examine students' reading habits were on (a) the type of book they favour, and (b) their library usage. Educational or textbooks is the most preferred type by 47.1 percent of the respondents, followed by non-educational (non-textbooks, 40.2%). The data suggests that at least 42.5 percent of humanities students go to the library every week, and 23.4 percent patronize the library every day. About 7 percent of students reported never go to the library. Table 3 presents these findings.

In terms of students' book buying behaviour, there is a strong preference towards buying educational books (60.5%) compared to non-educational (28.4%). The highest proportion of respondents reported buying between 5 to 10 books with different titles annually (32.2%) followed by more than 15 books annually (30.7%). As expected, as many of the respondents were full-time students and unemployed, a high majority (70.1%) acknowledged cannot afford to buy more books because of financial issues. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Students' Reading Habits

Question	Item	Frequency	Percentage
What is your favourite book type?	Educational	123	47.1
	Non-educational	105	40.2
	Supplementary	4	1.5
	Unanswered	25	9.6
How often do you use the library?	Every day	61	23.4
	Every week	111	42.5
	Every other	39	14.6
	Once a month	29	11.1
	Never	19	7.3

Table 4: Students' Book Buying Behaviour

Question	Item	Frequency	Percentage
How many books do you buy annually?	Less than 5 titles	50	19.2
	5-10 titles	84	32.2
	10-15 titles	45	17.2
	More than 15 titles	80	30.7
What kind of book do you buy?	Educational	158	60.5
	Non-educational	74	28.4
	Supplementary	7	2.7
	Unanswered	21	8.0
Do you avoid buying more books because of financial shortage/limitations?	Yes	183	70.1
	No	48	18.4
	Maybe	27	10.3

Perspectives on Cause-related Activities and CRM by Book Publishers and Bookstores

In this study, five questions were considered to determine students' perspectives on cause-related activities in buying books. The findings for these questions are presented in Table 5, which indicated that a high majority of students (78.2%, 204) are not familiar with CRM. The majority of students want to spend a percent of the book price on charitable cause (59%, 154). More than half of the respondents (55.9%, 146) are affected by the fact that part of the book price is spent on charity, and 58.6 percent (153) of them are willing to cooperate in charitable and non-profit activities. About one-third of the respondents (35.6%, 93) prefer to buy a cheap book, and slightly more than one-third would also have the tendency to buy a book at a higher price but for cause goals (36.8%, 96).

To assess the students' views on the implementation of CRM by book publishers and bookstores, seven items were presented in the questionnaire, and assessed using the 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) (Table 6). The degree of students' agreement with each item was determined using a one-sample t-test. The obtained averages for each item were compared with a hypothetical average of 3 (average in the spectrum). The significance level of the tests was considered 0.05. The results of the one-sample t-test indicate the difference between the means and the hypothetical mean of 3 ($p < 0.05$). According to the means presented, it can be accepted with 95% confidence that the rate of students' agreement with items intended to assess their view of CRM by publishers and bookstores is above average. The overall mean for the student's

Students' Perspectives on Cause-related Marketing of the Book Publishing Industry

perspectives on the implementation of CRM by book publishers and booksellers is 3.67 (see Table 6).

Table 5: Tendency to Cause-related Activities in Buying Books

Question	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Do you want to spend a percent of the book price on charitable cause?	Yes	154	59.0
	No	70	26.8
	Maybe	34	13.0
If you find that a percent of the book price is spent on charity, will it affect you?	Yes	146	55.9
	No	62	23.8
	Maybe	48	18.4
Do you want to participate in charitable and non-prophet activities?	Yes	153	58.6
	No	63	24.1
	Maybe	43	16.5
Do you know anything about cause-related marketing?	Yes	32	12.3
	No	204	78.2
	Maybe	22	8.4
Do you have the tendency to buy a more expensive book with cause goals or prefer to buy a cheap book?	Buy a more expensive book with cause goals	96	36.8
	Buy a cheap book	93	35.6

Table 6: Students' Perspectives on CRM by Publishers and Bookstores

Items	Mean*	Test statistics (T)	Probability value (p)
Publishers and bookstores must implement CRM	3.80	14.40	0.00
I agree more with publishers and bookstores that apply CRM	3.76	14.35	0.00
Buying books from bookstores that are involved in CRM is effective in having a better society	3.86	15.60	0.00
CRM can help publishers to increase reading and book purchases	3.52	8.63	0.00
CRM contributes to the success of publishers and bookstores	3.54	9.53	0.00
CRM promotes publishers' and bookstore's products and branding	3.39	6.37	0.00
It is crucial for customers to know where their money is spent	3.84	15.93	0.00
Overall student's perspectives on the implementation of CRM by publishers and booksellers.	3.67	16.08	0.00

*1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: moderately agree, 4: agree, and 5: strongly agree

Prioritising Benevolent/Charity's Affairs

The students were asked what do they prefer to spend their book purchase money on, and a list of ten statements were presented. Students' attitude on ten statements that gauge benevolent/charity's affairs were collected in the form of a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). To determine the degree of students' agreement with benevolent/charity's affairs, a one-sample t-test was applied, based on which the means obtained for each benevolent/charity's activity were compared with the hypothetical average of 3 (average in the Likert scale) (see Table 7).

Table 7: “What do you prefer to spend your book purchase money on?”
Students’ Priorities about Benevolent/Charity’s Affairs

Items	Mean*	Test statistics (T)	Probability value (p)
Treatment of the special diseases and poor patient	4.32	23.11	0.00
Planting trees, creating green space and improving water quality for deprived areas	3.97	15.44	0.00
Education of poor or working children	4.47	30.14	0.00
Purchasing books for underprivileged children	4.31	24.32	0.00
Establishing libraries for socially disadvantaged children (working children, orphans, runaway girls, etc.)	4.22	21.26	0.00
House building for the homeless and addicted, etc.	4.09	17.52	0.00
Establishing libraries, museums, cultural and art centers	3.86	13.27	0.00
Reconstruction the houses and cities destroyed by natural disasters (Earthquake, flood, fire, etc.)	3.96	15.29	0.00
Building factories and creating jobs for the unemployed	4.00	15.69	0.00
Removing addiction in society	3.85	12.68	0.00

*1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: moderately agree, 4: agree, and 5: strongly agree

The results in Table 7 show that the rate of students' agreement with all ten benevolent/charity’s affairs is above average ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the Friedman test was utilised to rank these elements ($\chi^2 = 173.57$ and $p < 0.05$), the priorities of which are presented in Table 8. Regarding the cause respondents most wanted to support, the education of poor or working children tops the list, followed by treatment of the special diseases and poor patient, purchasing books for underprivileged children, and purchasing libraries for socially disadvantaged children.

Table 8: Prioritising Benevolent/Charity’s Affairs on Spending Book Purchase Money

Priorit	Benevolent / Charity’s Affairs
1	Education of poor or working children
2	Treatment of the special diseases and poor patient
3	Purchasing books for underprivileged children
4	Establishing libraries for socially disadvantaged children (working children, orphans, runaway girls, etc.)
5	House building for the homeless and addicted, etc.
6	Building factories and creating jobs for the unemployed
7	Planting trees, creating green space and improving water quality for deprived areas
8	Reconstruction the houses and cities destroyed by natural disasters (Earthquake, flood, fire, etc.)
9	Establishing libraries, museums, cultural and art centers
10	Removing addiction in society

Prioritising Advertising Methods and Social Media Platforms for Promoting Books

Students' opinions about eight advertising methods and eight social media platforms were collected, and they were asked to give a score of 1 to 10 to the items considered. Friedman test was utilized to prioritise advertising methods and social media (advertising methods: $\chi^2 = 77.01$ and $p < 0.05$, social media: $\chi^2 = 773/99$ and $p < 0.05$) the results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Prioritising Advertising Methods and Social Media Platforms for Promoting Books

Priority	Advertising method	Average	Priority	Social media	Average
1	Mass media	2.94	1	Telegram	1.81
2	Online advertisement	3.24	2	Instagram	2.52
3	Website	3.51	3	WhatsApp	2.89
4	On products	3.97	4	YouTube	4.53
5	Book stores	4.05	5	Twitter	4.60
6	Email	4.26	6	Facebook	5.07
7	Newspaper	4.96	7	LinkedIn	5.35
8	Phone call	4.88	8	Pinterest	5.77

The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Students' Views on Cause-related Marketing

To investigate the effect of some demographic characteristics on students' views on CRM (i.e. are the mean scores for CRM differ between the demographic characteristics), the multivariate analysis of variance test was used, the results of which are presented in Table 10.

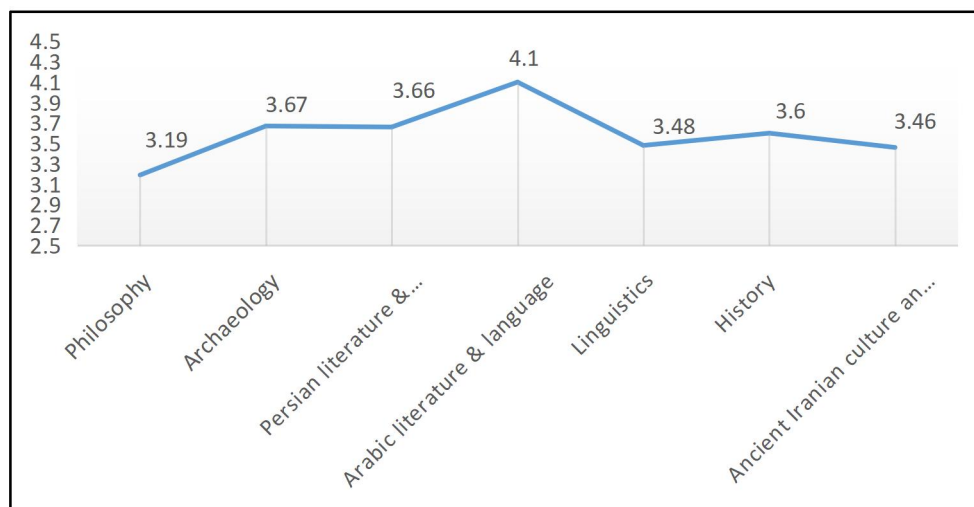
Since the probability values obtained for all factors, except the academic major, are greater than the significant level of 0.05, therefore, with 95% confidence, it can be declared that no significant effect was observed among students with varying gender, academic qualification and employment status in their views on CRM in the book industry. As the p-value for academic major is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that a significant effect does exist among students with varying academic majors in their views on CRM in the book industry. Figure 2 presents the differences between the means scores obtained for respondents' agreement with bookstores' CRM by students' academic major

Table 10: Effects of Demographic Characteristics on Students' Views on Cause-related Marketing in the Book Industry

Factor	Probability value (p)	Test statistics (F)	Findings
Gender	0.94	0.00	No significant effect is observed
Academic major	0.04	2.33	A significant effect is observed
Academic qualification	0.21	1.60	No significant effect is observed
Employment status	0.38	0.77	No significant effect is observed

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

CRM is one of the types of marketing that can be effective in the progress of any profession or industry if appropriately used. One of the professions that are relatively little welcomed in Iran are book publishing industry. For this reason, this study seeks to answer the question of the tendencies towards CRM by one of the groups that are very much related to information resources, especially books, namely students. Determining these perspectives will be useful to make more informed decisions about CRM strategies in the Iranian publishing and book industry.



*1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: moderately agree, 4: agree, and 5: strongly agree

Figure 2: Average Scores Obtained for Respondents' Agreement with Bookstores' CRM by Students' Academic Major

The respondents of this study with an average age of 24 years included "female" (58.2%), "Persian Language and Literature" students (25.3%), "bachelor's degree" students (58.2%), and "unemployed" (72.4%). As expected, most students (47.1%) were interested in reading textbooks. Therefore, the highest purchase (60.5%) belongs to textbooks, and it is estimated to be between five to ten titles per year (32.2% of the respondents). Majority of students (70%) admitted that they could not afford to buy more books due to financial limitations. Most of them did not have a job and were not financially independent. The price of printed books in Iran is likely to go up as production costs soar, and the effect of this financial pressure on student purchases seems obvious. This has caused a large number of them (42.5%) refer the faculty library, almost every week to satisfying their information needs

Although many students said they could not afford to buy more books due to financial shortage, the majority preferred to buy an expensive book but assigned some of its price on charity. This strongly influenced their purchasing decision (58.6% of them were affected by this fact). These findings are in line with the those by Hashem and Niqresh (2020), Riva, Uddin, and Rubel (2019), and Mohammed and Rashid (2012). More than half of the students participated in the current study were willing to take part in charity (56%), and donate a percentage of the book's price to cause (59%). The existence of this spirit related to charitable affairs is expected since numerous charitable exhibitions and activities had been carried out by students at the faculty. Although 78.2 percent of them had no information about CRM and its concept, student's perspectives on the implementation of CRM by book publishers and bookseller was above average. Findings indicated that the students agree that by doing CRM, publishers can contribute to creating a better society (mean=3.86), and they should do so (mean=3.8). Alcheva, Cai, and Zhao (2009), also found that Asians and Europeans were unfamiliar with these concepts, but in general customers believed organisations should donate more money to charities.

In this study, nearly 60 percent of respondents acknowledged knowing that a part of their book purchase money was spent on charity influenced their decision to buy. In this regard,

it was vital for them, as customers to know where the publisher or bookseller spent their money on. Findings on various benevolent/charity's affairs practices on spending book purchase money showed that three out of the four top priority are related to books, education, and children. However, there were other options to choose from, related to social, environmental issues, and other vulnerable groups. Research conducted by Bergstén and Olsson (2014) also indicated that Sweden's Y generation responds better to CRM human-related charitable concepts such as education and social issues. This illustrates that if book publishers and booksellers doing CRM and devote some percent of their income on charity, not only will they turn into a popular brand, but they will also effectively attract new customers and retain current customers. Without a shadow of a doubt, this amount of money will go back to the publishing industry which would ultimately lead to their prosperity. In addition, the respondents' attention to children indicates that students pay attention to this group vulnerability and hope that holding such charity affairs guarantee a better future and education for children. The findings of Amini and Pashootanzadeh (2019) concerning socially disadvantaged children show that cultural poverty is a significant obstacle preventing them from growth and improvement. Accessing sufficient information resources under their information needs could bring about the capability of dealing with life difficulties and prepare them to pursue a bright future for themselves and their families.

To successfully apply any marketing technique, it is necessary to know the appropriate platforms to inform the audience about the goals and methods of work. The current study highlights that from university students' perspective, mass media and online advertising were the best advertising methods for marketing in the book industry. In addition, Telegram, Instagram, and WhatsApp were identified as the best social media platforms in this regard. Due to the almost constant involvement of university students with information sources especially books and their desire to buy textbooks, it is suggested that textbook publishers take the lead in CRM through mass media, online advertising, social web and messaging platforms. Given the popularity of charitable work by students, the success rate for outreach seems to be high. By institutionalizing this shopping style and culture, it can be expected that other book publishers and bookstores, especially children and teens publishers, will have a smoother path in using this strategy. This is because their customers are somehow related to or interested in children and teens, and if publishers coordinate their CRM strategies with this research priorities, they will probably be welcomed by customers. Eventually the publishers should consider that CRM is done in most cases in cooperation with a charity organisation, and it is important that before finalising their cooperation with any other parties, investigate about their credibility and reputation.

This study was conducted in the context of a university in Iran on a single population i.e students from the Faculty of Literature and Humanities. Its results may have been influenced by the unique spirit of literature and humanities majors that place importance of books in this academic discipline. A larger-scale survey is needed to study the trends in students' perspectives in CRM for book publishing industry at the state or national level, or for other academic disciplines. Pandey et al. (2020) who examined the attitude, intention, and loyalty towards CRM reported national differences in the level of prior CRM exposure, local-global consumer values and culture that can result in heterogeneity in consumer perceptions of CRM across countries.

Around the world¹ different companies such as Apple, Amazon, PepsiCo, TCHIBO, BIC and Iberia, shared their experience about CRM for environmental causes, social causes, and health causes (Vrontis, Christofi, and Katsikeas 2020). But these are well-known companies and probably used different marketing strategies simultaneously to promote themselves. There are companies in Iran such as sports products, insurance institutions, banks, consumer goods, and retail companies that have employed CRM, although their experiences were documented or not shared widely. None of these companies (whether International or Iranian) are in the type of publishing industry or in a crisis which Iranian publishers are facing. To the best of the authors' knowledge, as this is the first study in Iran that reports students' perspectives in applying CRM strategies to attract customers in buying books and creating a positive effect on purchase intention, it has paved the way for further research.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest relating to data presented in this article. Its contents, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are solely those of the authors.

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¹ Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Germany, Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Tanzania, Uruguay, and the USA

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