

RESPONSIBLE MARKETING STRATEGIES: NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The AMS call for proposals reflects on the challenges that organizations face in a changing global marketplace to provide distinctive and differentiated value to customers while taking into account the bi-directional nature of value creation between consumers and organisations and an increasing customer focus on issues such as Corporate Responsibility. This paper is an attempt to answer the AMS call in terms of two questions that have been found to be of critical importance to marketing practitioners and academics. These are: “*What are the challenges of responsible marketing?*” (e.g. Willmott 2001) and “*what is the value of responsible marketing strategies?*” (e.g. Zadek 2001). The paper will use theories from within the academic literature to develop a model to answer these two questions.

The first question of “*what are the challenges of responsible marketing?*” is answered by drawing upon themes within marketing theory such as understanding expectations and engaging with customers. The second question relating to “*what is the value of responsible marketing strategies?*” is answered by linking the answer to the first question with measures of value drawn from the social psychology and relationship management literature. This is achieved by presenting and then testing an empirical framework through application of the structural equation modelling technique Partial Least Squares.

In terms of the first question of “*what are the challenges of responsible marketing?*”, the results of the study suggest that CR should be defined in terms in both process and content. In terms of process, CR can be seen as related to customer engagement. In this process, important issues defining CR can be highlighted. Issues such as delivering benefits to customers, communicating with them and demonstrating care to the wider community, employees and the environment have been identified as key issues. The ultimate judgement about the CR of an organisation can therefore usefully be made in terms of the extent to which an organisation engages with customers and then meets their expectations in terms of these issues.

In terms of the second question of “*what is the value of responsible marketing strategies?*”, the findings of this study suggest that experiences, observations and beliefs about responsible strategies have a significant impact upon both positive attitudes and behavioural intentions of customers. Up to 44% of attitudes and 48% of behavioural intentions of customers in this study are explained in terms of issues such as those mentioned above and relating to a holistic definition of responsibility. This suggests that responsible marketing strategies are a key driver of business performance, particularly, as the literature review highlighted the importance of positive attitudes and behavioural intentions of customers to the long-term success of business.

The findings also suggest that it is possible to link answers to these important questions through the use of complimentary measures. This allows strategic options, in this case potential investments in responsible marketing strategies to be linked to desired outcomes for the business as expressed in supportive attitudes and behavioural intentions. The current study has been conducted with customers of a financial service organisation in the UK. Future studies could extend this research to other industries and countries to test whether or not the approach developed in this paper provides a framework that can be applied across different contexts.

References Available on Request