

**The Role of Personality in Consumer Attitudes Toward Cause-Related Sport Marketing**

*Jaedeock Lee, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania*

*Mauricio Ferreira, Hypothesis Group and University of San Francisco*

*Robert Fleischman, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania*

**Marketing**

**Saturday, June 1, 2013**

**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)**

**Abstract 2013-188**

**8:55 AM**

**(Room 412)**

Given the significant attention focused on the development of cause-related sport marketing (CRSM) initiatives in recent years, academic researchers have begun to examine its impact on sport consumer behavior. Initial work by Roy and Graeff (2003) and Irwin et al. (2003) examined consumer attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions vis-à-vis CRSM. Their findings indicated that consumers tend to have positive attitudes and perceptions toward cause-related efforts of sport organizations. These studies provide an initial foundation for understanding CRSM. However, many more questions remain regarding the role of these cause-related initiatives in sport.

To further understand CRSM, it would help to begin with a review of cause-related marketing (CRM) in other academic fields. Since Varadarajan and Menon's (1988) seminal work, many researchers have examined the foundational bases of CRM, as well as its potential benefits and risks (e.g., Adkins, 1999; Kotler & Lee, 2005; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Webb & Mohr, 1998). Moreover, many scholars have looked at consumer perceptions, responses, and behaviors toward CRM (e.g., Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000; Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Cornwell & Coote, 2003; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004). In general, previous studies on consumer perceptions have demonstrated that CRM can have a positive or negative impact on consumer responses contingent upon a variety of factors.

Some of the most influential factors impacting consumer perceptions vis-à-vis CRM initiatives include: 1) fit between the organizations sponsoring CRM programs and beneficial cause(s) involved (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006); 2) the sponsoring organization's motivation to engage in CRM programs (Baron et al., 2000; Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006); and 3) gender of the consumer(s) involved (Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). In particular, the literature on CRM indicates that consumers are more likely to respond positively when beneficial causes are highly congruent with an organization's mission and core business (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006) as well as when they perceive that firms engage in CRM programs for more altruistic reasons (e.g. to benefit a cause) rather than for commercial exploitation (Barone et al., 2000). Gender differences have also been shown to influence consumer reaction to CRM programs. For example, Ross et al. (1992) conducted personal interviews and found that females showed significantly more favorable attitudes toward CRM programs compared with males.

Despite several studies that previously identified factors such as fit, motivation, and gender affecting consumer response, no prior research has focused on the role individual characteristics such as personality, and how that may influence consumer response toward CRSM. From a practical perspective, this could include building customer profiles of specific market segments based on personality. Therefore, the purpose of the present study aimed to examine the role of personality as a predictor of consumer attitudes toward CRSM, as well as a moderator of the relationship between fit (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006) and motivation (Barone et al., 2000), as well as consumer attitudes toward CRSM. The main premise set forth in this paper is that consumer personality, in particular the personality of the socially conscious consumer, may influence their reactions to CRSM. This theory is supported by examining a case study involving the CRSM programs implemented by the Major League Baseball (MLB). A 2 (fit: high vs. low) x 2 (motivation: socially-motivated vs. profit-motivated) within subject experimental design was employed to test the proposed model. From the pre-test, the Baseball Tomorrow Fund was chosen as a high-fit beneficiary of the MLB, and the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation was selected as a low-fit partner. Motivation was manipulated by adding statements in the hypothetical messages that reflected either a profit or a social motivation. Students (N=86) at a large southwestern university participated in the experiment; they were asked to read four manipulated CRSM messages and to evaluate their attitudes (six items adopted from Burton & Lichtenstein, 1988; Lichtenstein & Bearden, 1989) toward each message. Students then were asked to complete a personality inventory (the Big Five personality scales of Saucier's (1994) Mini-Markers) following the experiment.

## **2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)**

To avoid ordering bias, students were randomly assigned to four different sequences in which the messages were presented.

The mixed effects model analysis was employed to examine the carryover effects as well as the direct and interaction impacts of fit, motivation, gender, and personality traits. First, a main effects model was built to investigate the carryover effects, including group, order, carryover, fit, motivation, gender, and personality traits (Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience) variables. Since group and carryover effects were not significant, the main effects model included only order, fit, motivation, gender, and personality traits variables. Then, a full interaction model was constructed with direct factors as well as interaction terms in order to examine the role of personality traits on consumer attitudes toward CRSM programs. In order to compare the main effects model and the full interaction model, goodness of fit statistics, such as the deviance (a minus twice log likelihood of the model), AIC, and BIC, were compared to show the impact of personality traits on consumer attitudes toward CRSM messages (Akaike, 1974; Schwarz, 1978).

Results supported a significant predicting and moderating role of personality in generating consumer attitudes toward CRSM. Consumer 'Agreeableness' personality was found to be positively related to attitudes toward the CRSM initiatives, but more so for socially-motivated as opposed to profit-oriented programs. On the other hand, 'Neuroticism' personality was directly and negatively associated with attitudes toward CRSM.

The findings provide theoretical as well as managerial value. Theoretically, this study was the first attempt to examine the effects of personality on consumer attitudes toward CRSM programs and found a significant role of individual characteristics such as personality traits and gender when consumers respond to CRSM programs. Results supported the notion that individual differences, as well as fit and motivation, have a direct impact on consumer attitudes toward CRSM, with gender and agreeableness moderating these relationships. From the practitioner standpoint, understanding the relationship between CRSM program response and personality traits can prove helpful for the creation and implementation of new CRSM strategies. By measuring consumers' personality, segments can be identified based on consumers' personality in a way to aid innovative advertisement or promotion strategies (Alwitt, 1991). For instance, different messages can be targeted to people with certain profiles that can be related to different degrees of agreeableness personality when implementing societal marketing programs. In conclusion, only well-managed cause marketing strategies will serve to decrease negative perceptions, and therefore the overall effectiveness, of cause-related sport marketing programs.