

The Process of Organizational Identity: What are the Roles of Social Responsiveness, Organizational Image, and Identification?

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Despite anecdotal claims attesting to the influence that social responsiveness has on the purchase behaviors of consumers, this article examined if a specific initiative could result in such outcomes. We investigated the extent to which the Drive for Diversity (D4D) initiative affected consumers' perceived image and patronage directed toward NASCAR. This study was partially motivated by the importance of social initiatives in practice to underscore their influence on customer-related outcomes. As such, the findings indicated that the NASCAR's D4D and the perceived image of the organization are key variables in the model. The results also highlighted the mediating role of image and the moderating role of identification on the proposed relationship. More specifically, the authors found that the socially responsive initiative only moderately influenced consumers' intentions but when coupled with the image of the organization, this relationship became far more impactful.

The National Association for Stock Car Racing (NASCAR) is fast becoming the most popular spectator sport in the United States. By embracing strong family and moral values (Derbyshire, 2003; Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008), NASCAR has evolved from a rowdy source of entertainment for the American South (Hall, 2002) into what has become "America's sport" (NASCAR, 2009). As some noted however, such ideals promote and reinforce the gendered and racialized history of motorsports (Kusz, 2007; Newman & Giardina, 2008). Recent lawsuits filed against NASCAR claiming sexual and racial discrimination provide support for such claims. As expressed by one claimant (i.e., Mauricia Grant), minority harassment was inherent within NASCAR such that sexist and racist beliefs perpetuated at the managerial ranks and were generally accepted practice (Fryer, 2008).

Coupled with NASCAR's history, Grant's statements point to the potential institutionalization of gendered and racialized practices within the organization (Scott, 1987). Such practices are reflected in the predominance of White males as drivers, crew members, team owners, and executives. Likewise, they inform and are informed

by the construction of NASCAR's image (Caraviello, 2008). By most accounts, the stereotypical NASCAR fan continues to be an unintelligible, Confederate flag-waving, White, Southern, good 'ol boy, despite the increased interest in NASCAR across North America (Hugenberg & Hugenberg, 2008). Some have contended that this image reflects a reality that is observable in "... the absence of non-White consumer subjects on the track, in the stands, and in NASCAR's corporate hierarchy" (Newman & Giardina, 2008, p. 493).

According to Scott (1987), phenomena are institutionalized when on the basis of historical precedent, tradition, and habit, they are accepted without hesitation; simply put, the "... way things are" and/or "... the way things are done" (Scott, 1987, p. 496). Consistent with this premise, we argue that NASCAR's culture, identity, and image are gendered and racialized such that they represent the organization's institutionalized practices. Despite billing themselves as "America's sport", NASCAR's lack of diversity on the track, in the pits, front offices, and in the stands suggests their constituents fail to mirror the true demographics of America (Derbyshire, 2003; Newman & Giardina, 2008), resulting in a contradiction in the definition of NASCAR's identity. Recognizing this dichotomy, NASCAR has implemented diversity-related programs and marketing initiatives in an attempt to reconstruct their identity and the motorsport industry as a whole. The most recent program, the

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“Drive for Diversity” (D4D) initiative, was implemented in 2004 with the intended purpose of developing minority and female drivers and crew members for NASCAR competition.

Given NASCAR’s roots, the suggested institutionalized nature of the organization, and the resultant image of stock car racing, we examined the extent to which NASCAR’s socially responsive efforts might impact consumer patronage. Prior research has generally indicated that an organization’s social activities can be a key element in how consumers view the organization (see Berens, Van Riel, & van Bruggen, 2005; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006) and increased patronage can be a function of such behaviors (Klein & Dawar, 2004). However, little work has examined if consumer awareness of a single responsive program could induce similar reactions. While a specific program (in and of itself) may not necessarily increase consumer patronage, we test the supposition that other factors might be necessary to influence the outcomes. Simply put, it is likely that NASCAR’s social responsiveness could contribute to a more positive attitude resulting in consumer inclination to patronize the organization, presumably because of the organization’s enhanced image.

Theoretical Background

A modern business climate fraught with dubious dealings and irresponsible practices (e.g., British Petroleum, Nestle, Pfizer, etc.) has led to a rise in public cynicism toward many standard business practices, the likes of which have prompted organizations to seek and reinforce strong and meaningful relationships with their many publics. According to Hatch and Schultz (2002), this has resulted in the need to examine concepts such as organizational identity, culture, and image more closely. In sport, MacIntosh and Doherty (2007) noted that as the cultures of sport organizations become increasingly transparent, the external perceptions of the organization’s core values become important for organizational success. Correspondingly, Parent and Foreman (2007) suggested that sport is a context in which the topics of organizational image, reputation, and identity are particularly pertinent, as the identity of a sport organization and a fan’s identity are indivisible. This is perhaps no more evident than in the case of NASCAR and its many fans.

The Process of Organizational Identity

An organization’s identity is the “... most central, enduring, and distinctive” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 394) aspect of its being. Through social interactions, it is both embedded into an organization’s cultural understandings and expressed through its projected outward image (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Organizational identity is therefore comprised of internal and external definitions and represents the perceived meanings held by its internal and external organizational constituents (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002; Scott & Lane, 2000). From a

social psychology perspective, the unilateral relationship that meanings have in shaping an organization’s identity mirrors the symbiotic relationship that such meanings have in forming individual identities (Mead, 1934). This process-based view of identity formation recognizes the necessary comparisons and modifications that take place when inconsistencies between meanings are perceived to be present. Just as individuals adopt identity-management strategies when internal and external meanings are incongruent (Mead, 1934), organizations may do the same when their identity, culture, and image are not consistent (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Based on this idea, we suggest that an organization’s socially-oriented programs can be one way they manage these inconsistencies.

According to Sethi (1975, 1995), corporate social responsiveness is an organization’s response to societal needs, thereby (partially) representing its relationship with society (see also Ackerman & Bauer, 1976; Crampton & Patten, 2008). Within this definition, “responding” implies taking explicit and forward looking actions when addressing stakeholders and social/public policy concerns (Frederick, 1994; Waddock, 2004). Several companies (e.g., Nike, Starbucks, International Paper, Kraft Foods, etc.) believe that being socially responsive is an important part of their overall image and they spend considerable effort and financial resources to shape it. Research has indicated that consumers care about socially responsible efforts (e.g., Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), pointing to the relationship between social initiatives and various affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses. Specifically, organizational social engagement has been linked to an enhanced corporate image (e.g., Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Quazi & O’Brien, 2000) and increased patronage intentions (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; David, Kline, & Dai, 2005; Creyer & Ross, 1997; Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Russel & Ryssel, 2010; Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, & Avramidis, 2009). However, to the authors’ knowledge this is the only study that has attempted to integrate the concepts of image and identification with a single socially responsive initiative to gauge consumer responses. Therefore, we extended the social engagement research first, by taking advantage of an actual initiative to demonstrate the impact of an organization’s responsive behaviors in the “real world”. Second, we assessed the multiplicative influences of image and identification because we felt this relationship is more multifaceted than previously acknowledged in the literature. By testing these ideas, we hope to contribute to the discussion pertaining to the key boundary parameters that provide beneficial returns through social responsiveness.

Applying social responsiveness to NASCAR, the organization’s D4D initiative can be viewed as one of their strategies to respond to the issue of diversity. By implementing the D4D in the wake of minority underrepresentation, NASCAR has attempted to manage its identity through the use of this responsive action. The identity of NASCAR reflects an institutionalized culture (i.e.,

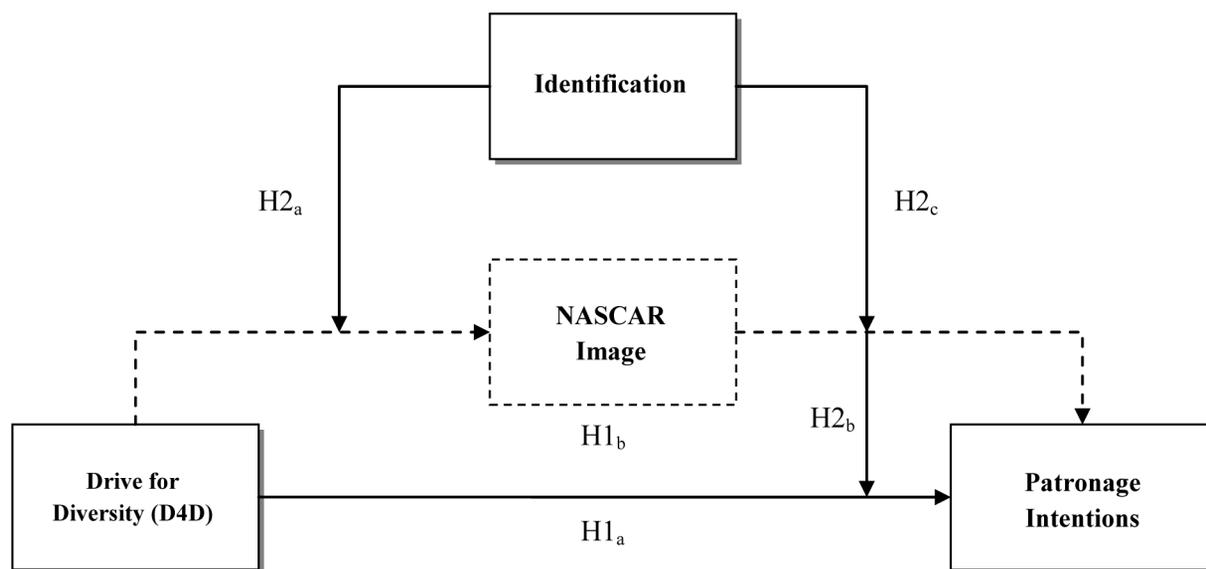
internal definitions) and a stereotypical image (i.e., external definitions) that runs counter to the identity NASCAR (presumably) wishes to project (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Scott & Page, 2000). We therefore suggest that NASCAR has adopted responsive and identity-enhancing measures to manage their identity through their image. As a result, we expected the program to be positively related to image and patronage directed toward NASCAR. Further, we felt this would allow NASCAR's stakeholders to identify with the organizational based on the overlap between identification with the sport and also with NASCAR. Figure 1 depicts the measurement model highlighting notably the mediating role of NASCAR image on the relationship between the D4D and patronage intentions. The rationale behind this mediation hypothesis rests in the belief that an enhanced image reflects an identity that consumers are more prone to financially support. We also postulate that consumer identification with NASCAR will moderate this relationship and that image will mediate (at least partially) this moderated effect.

Hypothesis Development

We characterize image¹ as a complex entity defined by individuals and groups both internal and external to an organization. For example, Hatch and Schultz (1997, p. 359) defined organizational image as "... a holistic and vivid impression" held by external organizational constituents resulting from individual and group sense-making and "... communication by the organization of a

fabricated and projected picture of itself". Adopting this definition allowed us to better frame how and why NASCAR's responsive initiative has the potential to enhance their image (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; exception Yoon, Gurhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006). This relationship is grounded in the assumption that consumer perceptions of organizational image is (in large part) due to the interpretation of managements actions (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997), the quality and satisfaction of the product offered (Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001), and the organization's record for social responsibility (Maignan & Ralston, 2002). These foci provide the organization an avenue for consumer awareness of its social activities that are designed to create or foster a "good" image (Adkins, 1999).

However, recent discussions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) have indicated that awareness of CSR is generally quite low and consumers are not prone to actively seek information about a company's social programs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Meijer & Schuyt, 2005). On the other hand, Margolis and Walsh (2003) noted that responding to socially perceived ills are excellent instruments to bolster firm legitimacy and to develop positive social images. Thus, when consumers are aware of various social efforts, the organization can indeed benefit. For example, Sen, Bhattacharya, and Korshun (2006) recently demonstrated that aware consumers held more favorable (albeit moderate) associations and identified more with the organization, than did unaware



Note. Solid paths are the hypothesized relationships. Dashed paths indicate that the relationships are (at least partially) mediated by NASCAR Image. Patronage Intentions = repeat purchase, merchandise consumption, media consumption, and word-of-mouth.

Figure 1 — Hypothesized Measurement Model.

consumers. Walker and Kent (2009) showed that CSR assessments only moderately predicted two forms of patronage among NFL consumers. More than just the being socially engaged, a responsive focus incorporates organizational actions in terms of specific social issues that society deems important as well as provides an organization with the opportunity to project a culture that values said social issues.

Consistent with the tenets of image and self-congruity theories, these findings may be attributed to a perceived value congruency between an organization and its constituents (see Beach & Mitchell, 1987; Clark, Schimmel, & Synowka, 2002; Sirgy, 1986). Such relationships become particularly germane in discussions of responsiveness, as the topic induces value-laden decisions (Nelson, 2004). Thus, it is reasonable to surmise that when consumers perceive an organization's responsive behaviors positively (i.e., because of perceived value congruency), their propensity to patronize the organization will likely increase. Applying this reasoning, we suggest that while weak relationships between an organization's responsive behaviors and patronage intentions might exist, it will be influenced (at least partially) by how consumers view the focal organization.

Hypothesis 1_a: All else being equal, the D4D initiative will positively influence NASCAR consumers' patronage intentions.

Hypothesis 1_b: The respondents' perceived image of NASCAR will (at least partially) mediate this relationship.

NASCAR fans share a degree of loyalty virtually unparalleled in professional sport (Amato, Peters, & Shao, 2005; Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann & Branscombe, 1993, 1995; Wann & Dolan, 1994; Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996). These fans identify with the sport such that exceptionally strong connections are formed between them, the sport, its drivers, and its sponsors. Since "... preserving, supporting, and improving the organization proceeds naturally from identification" (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005, p. 577), it is reasonable to understand how the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses of NASCAR fans are influenced by the degree to which they identify with the sport. From a social identity perspective, the greater a NASCAR fan's identity is linked to his or her membership, the more likely he/she will identify with and support NASCAR's efforts (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Murrell & Dietz, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Accordingly, if NASCAR's outward identity is threatened, members at the highest identification levels will act to preserve or enhance the organization's identity and (in turn) their own, regardless of consequence (Wann & Branscombe, 1990; Wann & Grieve, 2005). Adopting this perspective, we suggest that, as a result of NASCAR's recent legal issues and suggested racialized (and gendered) culture, NASCAR's investment in the D4D will be rewarded more by fans possessing higher levels of identification. Specifically, fans who are highly identified will take measures to promote NASCAR

in a positive light thereby maintaining and enhancing their perceived image of the organization.

Hypothesis 2_a: Fans who highly identify with NASCAR will view NASCAR's image more positively than will fans possessing lower levels of identification. Thus, identification with NASCAR moderates the relationship between the D4D initiative and image.

The image consumers carry about an organization may result in a number of affective and behavioral benefits for the firm (Sen et al., 2006). Likewise, the extent to which a consumer identifies with an organization may yield additional noteworthy benefits. Ahearne et al. (2005) demonstrated that the more identified a customer was with an organization the more likely he/she would use the organization's products. This indicates that identification is linked to a favorable organizational image which resulted in increased product consumption. This finding is consistent with the sport literature suggesting that identification with a favored sport property influences product consumption (see Kwon & Armstrong, 2002, 2006). Taken together, these results suggest an interactive relationship between image and identity with implications for consumptive behaviors. As such, we argue that image and identity work in concert, such that highly identified NASCAR fans not only aid in constructing a favorable organizational image but also facilitate greater more sustained patronage (Madrigal, 2000). Thus, we first hypothesize that identification will directly impact patronage intentions as a result of the D4D. Second, fans who identify with NASCAR will perceive NASCAR's image as enhanced as a result of the D4D.

Hypothesis 2_b: Highly identified NASCAR fans will have a higher propensity to patronize the organization as a result of the D4D initiative, than will fans at lower levels of identification. Thus, identification with NASCAR moderates the relationship between the D4D initiative and patronage intentions.

Hypothesis 2_c: NASCAR image (at least partially) mediates the moderated relationship among the D4D initiative, NASCAR identification, and patronage intentions.

In sum, we suggest that the internal (i.e., culture) and external (i.e., image) meanings of NASCAR contradict the organization's moniker as "America's sport" by reflecting institutionalized gendered and racialized practices (Cunningham, 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002; Kusz, 2007; Newman & Giardina, 2008; Scott, 1987). In response to this inconsistency, NASCAR has responded socially with the D4D program so that the organization can present itself as "... a place where people from all walks of life are welcome and where compassion is an important part of our lives" (NASCAR, 2009, para.1). The primary purpose of this study was to assess the extent to which NASCAR has been successful in their venture. Based on previous literature, several hypotheses were developed that support testing our model. The

first relationship (which is largely presumptive given the equivocal findings in the literature) examines the degree to which the D4D positively influences consumer patronage intentions ($H1_a$). We next examine whether the perceived image of NASCAR mediates the D4D initiative @ patronage intentions relationship ($H1_b$). We further hypothesize that identification with NASCAR will moderate the relationships between D4D initiative and NASCAR image ($H2_a$) and the D4D initiative and patronage intentions ($H2_b$). Finally, we feel that the consumer's image of NASCAR will (at least partially) mediate the moderated relationships ($H2_c$).

Method

Permission and cooperation were obtained from NASCAR officials to conduct the study before two large east-coast NASCAR events during the 2008 racing season. Administration of the questionnaires was conducted just inside the entrance gates of the two tracks using the following procedures: (1) the purpose of the study was explained; (2) voluntary participation was encouraged and participation was deemed anonymous; (3) the consent form was presented; (4) the questionnaire was distributed; and (5) the completed questionnaires and consent forms were collected and any questions about the research were fielded. On average, it took approximately 8 min to complete the questionnaire. NASCAR event attendees were selected because of the institutionalized nature of racing and the recent implementation of initiatives (i.e., D4D) in response to this issue. On-site, intercept sampling was employed because event attendees are considered to be one of the primary targets for the dissemination of socially responsive information and tend to represent NASCAR's primary consumers. In total, 235 event attendees willingly participated in the data collection.

Analytic Technique

To empirically validate the paths in both mediated and moderated models, multivariate regression analyses were performed. Regression was the preferred analytic method because it enabled the parameter comparisons of the interaction terms in our model more easily than structural equation modeling (Ping, 1996), and allowed us to control for self-selection sampling bias within respondent pool. Self selection bias indicates a situation in which the data collectors selected only "like" individuals who were willing to take part in research, resulting in a biased sample (Bifulco, 2002). This bias is problematic when self-selected respondents are systematically different from nonrespondents (Cuddeback, Wilson, Orme, & Combs-Orme, 2004; York, 1998). Consequently, certain regression effects that actually are due to sample selection factors and not variable interactions may be wrongly attributed to the exogenous variables under examination (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

This control was necessary as respondent inclusion may not have been random and could yield unreliable parameter estimates (Heckman, 1979; Little & Rubin, 1986). To examine this issue, Cuddeback et al. (2004) suggested that a two-stage technique be used. In the first stage, a choice model to describe the self-selection decision was employed and was corrected in the second stage via the lambda (λ) ratio (see also Heckman, 1979). This resulted in a nonsignificant lambda and its inclusion in the model did not significantly change the other estimated coefficients. We therefore concluded that the issue of self-selection did not significantly affect or bias the analyses.

Measurement

The questionnaire was developed by identifying constructs and items used in previous research (Fowler, 2002), the definitions of which are rooted in the extant literature. The social responsiveness items were developed using guidance from Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2007). Patronage intentions were measured using four subscales (i.e., media consumption, word of mouth, merchandise consumption, and repeat purchase) previously used by Walker and Kent (2009). NASCAR image was measured using the three item scale developed by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001). The three item NASCAR ID scale was adopted from Kwon and Armstrong (2002, 2004).

To assess the appropriateness of the study measures, internal consistencies and reliabilities were examined using Cronbach's alpha, item-to-total statistics, and interitem correlations (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2005). To assess the model fit and the discriminant validity of the constructs, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. We also conducted two analyses to determine whether NASCAR image mediated the hypothesized relationships. In the first analysis, we tested for mediation using the four conditions recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986): (1) the dependent variable influenced by the independent variable; (2) the mediating variable influenced by the independent variable; (3) the dependent variable influenced by the mediating variable; and (4) after the mediator is controlled, full mediation is determined if the impact of the predictor is no longer significant or if reduced in strength, partial mediation is determined. In the second analysis, Sobel's (1982, 1988) test determined whether the mediating variable carried the independent variable's effects to the outcomes. Significant t values would indicate that NASCAR's image is an important mediator.

Results

After the removal of incomplete questionnaires, 219 [male: 128 (60%); female: 85 (40%)] were used in the analyses. The average age of the respondents was 35.33 ($SD = 13.26$) and ranged from 18 to 83. In terms of ethnic breakdown, 85% identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 8% as African-American, 3% as Asian, 2% as Hispanic, >1% as Native-American, and >1%

self-identified themselves as “Other”. The respondents resided in the Southeastern United States (35.2%), followed by the Mid-Atlantic region (19.7%), the Northeast (19.2%), Midwest (12.4%), Western US (7.6%), and the Pacific Coast region (5.9%). Mean scores for the study measures are located in Table 1. The correlations revealed little variance between factors as 7 of the potential relationships were not significant. In addition, we found all correlations to be below .80, suggesting multicollinearity was not an issue (Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, 2004; Kaplan, 1994).

The overall model statistics support a good fit (chi-square = 2.039, $df = 94$, $p < .01$; CFI = .95; GFI = .90; RMSEA = .07). The CFA results also support convergent validity because the estimated loadings for the underlying constructs were significant (see Table 2). Factor loadings of the measures onto their corresponding constructs were all greater than .70, indicating a high degree of individual item reliability and the composite reliability values were above the acceptable level (Lance, Butts, & Michels, 2006; see Table 2). The average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded the .50 benchmark across all measures (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Two additional validity tests were conducted to ensure that our constructs were acting independently. The first discriminant validity test required that the construct share more variance with its items than it shared with other constructs (Hulland, 1999), which was confirmed. For the second test, the estimated AVE's exceeded the squared correlations between measures (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), adding further support of discriminant validity.

The Mediating Role of NASCAR Image

In the first regression, we found partial support of H1_a, the D4D initiative had a significant and positive effect on one type of patronage ($\beta = .162_{\text{media}}$, $R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$). While this single relationship could derail any assumption of mediation for the additional outcomes, evidence in the measurement literature has indicated that effects that do not exist can still be mediated (see Collins et al., 1998; Hayes, 2009; Judd & Kenny, 1981; Kraemer, Kiernan, Essex, & Kupfer, 2008; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006;

MacKinnon, 2000; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Specifically, several have argued that, in this first step of Baron and Kenny's causal sequence, IV (X) @ DV (Y) significance is not essential and it may not even be necessary to test this relationship, particularly if the process that is to be mediated is theoretically distal (Hayes, 2009; Kraemer et al., 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). According to Shrout and Bolger (2002), in a proximal condition, if X is a strong causal agent of Y, then an expected change in X should lead to a new value of Y. However, the more distal the causal process becomes, the smaller the effect size. Therefore, the likelihood increases that the effect is: (a) transmitted through additional links in a causal chain, (b) affected by competing causes, and (c) affected by random factors (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Based on recent work (Hayes, 2009; Kraemer et al., 2008; MacKinnon et al., 2007) and following the procedure outlined by Shrout and Bolger (2002), our analysis of the mediating role of NASCAR image was based the strength of our theoretical argument that a single socially responsive initiative is distal to consumer patronage, rather than on the basis of the statistical test of X on Y.

Wallace, Popp, and Mondore (2006) succinctly outlined the steps in the Shrout and Bolger method which first suggests that evidence must be provided that the distal construct is theoretically linked to the outcome in question. Second, the distal predictor must relate to the mediator. Third, after controlling for the distal predictor, the mediator must relate to the outcome. Fourth, the relationship between the distal predictor and outcomes should be null in the presence of the mediator (i.e., to claim full mediation). However, if both relationships are significant, then partial mediation can be claimed (Wallace et al., 2006).

Although some have demonstrated that awareness of social initiatives is a positive predictor of behavioral intentions, most articles discussing this issue have drawn these conclusions based on laboratory experiments and controlled designs (Klein & Dawar, 2004; Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001; Sen et al., 2006). As well, awareness of CSR has been shown in the real marketplace to be a weak

Table 1 Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations

Construct ^a	Mean	SD	Correlation Matrix							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Social Responsiveness	3.80	1.59	1.00							
2. Media Consumption	5.12	1.48	.180***	1.00						
3. Word of Mouth	5.62	1.12	.103	.477***	1.00					
4. Merchandise Consumption	5.00	1.70	.087	.462***	.531***	1.00				
5. Repeat Purchase	5.64	1.20	.082	.508***	.568***	.411***	1.00			
6. NASCAR Image	5.34	1.19	.056	.398***	.502***	.349***	.671***	1.00		
7. NASCAR Identification	3.47	1.82	.106	.273***	.148***	.389***	.003	.184*	1.00	

Note.^a1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2 Measurement Model (Standardized Estimates).

Factor and Items ^a	Loadings (b)	I-T	AVE	α
<i>Social Responsiveness</i>			.63	.85
I am aware of NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program	.84	.57		
I follow NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program	.88	.62		
NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program is successful	.76	.71		
I am unfamiliar with NASCAR's Drive for Diversity program (r)	.58	.51		
<i>Media Consumption</i>			.69	.86
I will read about NASCAR in the daily sport pages	.86	.65		
I will visit NASCAR's website for information on the organization	.84	.56		
I will watch sport broadcasts for information about NASCAR	.78	.59		
<i>Word of Mouth</i>			.70	.85
I will speak favorably of NASCAR to others	.71	.71		
I will encourage others to attend NASCAR events	.90	.79		
I will encourage others to generally support NASCAR	.87	.72		
<i>Merchandise Consumption</i>			.80	.92
I will purchase NASCAR-related souvenirs	.92	.79		
I will buy NASCAR-related clothing (t-shirts, caps, etc.) in the future	.94	.65		
I will buy other NASCAR-related merchandise	.85	.56		
<i>Repeat Patronage</i>			.67	.86
I will attend another NASCAR event in the near future	.83	.69		
I will attend more NASCAR events in the next few years	.79	.71		
I will attend the next NASCAR event at this particular venue	.76	.65		
<i>NASCAR Image</i>			.62	.78
I have always had a good impression of NASCAR	.78	.67		
In my opinion, NASCAR has a good image in the minds of consumers	.75	.68		
I believe that NASCAR has a better image than other sport leagues	.68	.61		
<i>NASCAR Identification</i>			.68	.87
When someone criticizes NASCAR, it feels like a personal insult	.83	.79		
I feel that the successes of NASCAR are my successes	.72	.61		
I feel a sense of ownership for NASCAR rather than just being a fan	.82	.78		

Note. I-T = Item-to-Total Correlations; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

(predictive) antecedent to consumer behavior (Ramasamy & Ting, 2004; Sen et al., 2006). These equivocal findings have therefore prompted researchers to use a number of intervening variables to explain the awareness-outcome link (e.g., corporate ability, CSR beliefs, consumer attributions, trust, identification, etc.). Consistent with this literature, the association between the D4D initiative and patronage in the current study was low (i.e., 61%

of the sample selected either 1—"strongly disagree" or 2—"disagree" on the social responsiveness items). Our theorizing, coupled with previous work, supported these data because consumers' ability to accurately identify the social activities of organizations from which they consume is generally low (Sen et al., 2006). In addition, the D4D initiative is not the largest social program that NASCAR promotes; thus, it seems unlikely that

even moderate awareness of the D4D program would significantly predict all of the patronage outcomes. Other evidentiary support for this finding is gleaned by examining the bivariate relationships between the study measures. These results support our distal argument that awareness of NASCAR's social responsiveness was positively related to media consumption ($r=.18, p<.05$) but none of the other patronage outcomes—indicating that a relationship does indeed exist (albeit distally). Based on the literature, current data, and our theorizing, awareness of the D4D is regarded as distal to its relationship to patronage intentions.

Shrout and Bolger's (2002) second condition was supported because the D4D had a significant effect on NASCAR image ($\beta = .201, R^2 = .03, p<.05$). The third condition, that NASCAR image should significantly affect the four patronage outcomes was also supported ($\beta = .502_{\text{word-of-mouth}}, R^2 = .25, p<.001$), ($b=.349_{\text{merchandise}}, R^2 = .12, p<.001$), ($\beta = .398_{\text{media}}, R^2 = .16, p<.001$), ($\beta = .671_{\text{repeat}}, R^2 = .45, p<.001$). In testing the fourth condition, the patronage outcomes were all nonsignificant in the presence of the mediator suggesting that image fully mediated the relationship (see Table 3). Sobel's (1982, 1988) test was then performed to assess the magnitude of the indirect effect (i.e., the parameter estimate and standard error from $X \rightarrow M$, multiplied by the parameter estimate and standard error from $M \rightarrow Y$). The indirect effect of social responsiveness on media consumption ($.20_{.06} \times .40_{.08}$ Sobel = 2.77), word of mouth ($.20_{.06} \times .50_{.05}$ Sobel = 4.47), merchandise consumption ($.20_{.06} \times .35_{.09}$ Sobel = 3.06), and repeat purchase ($.20_{.06} \times .67_{.05}$ Sobel = 4.68) were significant (see Table 3). These findings support $H1_b$ in that NASCAR image mediates (fully), the relationship between the D4D initiative and the four patronage outcomes.

Table 3 Mediated Regression Analysis

Paths ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)	Direct Effects Model ($X \rightarrow Y$)	Sobel t-Test	Full Mediation
Social Responsiveness → Image → Media	.162 (.06)	2.77**	Yes
Social Responsiveness → Image → Word of Mouth	<i>n.s.</i>	4.47**	Yes
Social Responsiveness → Image → Merchan- dise	<i>n.s.</i>	3.06**	Yes
Social Responsiveness → Image → Repeat Purchase	<i>n.s.</i>	4.68**	Yes

Note. Values for the direct effects model are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. If the absolute value for the Sobel test is greater than (\pm) 1.96 assuming a 2-tailed test and alpha of 0.05 this will be significant.

n.s.=not significant; ** $p<.01$

The Moderating Effects of NASCAR Identification

Hypothesis 2_a stated that identification with NASCAR (NASCAR ID), would moderate the influence of the D4D program on image, while $H2_b$ predicted that NASCAR ID would moderate the influence of the D4D program on patronage intentions. Acting as a moderator means that NASCAR ID must interact with social responsiveness to influence how it relates to image and patronage intentions. Baron and Kenny (1986) maintained that a moderation test should include the direct effect of the predictor (social responsiveness), the direct effect of the moderator (NASCAR ID) and the interaction term (i.e., product) of the two. Following Aiken and West (1991), the predictor (NASCAR ID) was standardized before the interaction term was calculated, which was added hierarchically from Step 2 to Step 3. The results in Table 4 show that the interaction term (D4D \times NASCAR ID) significantly influenced NASCAR image (supporting $H2_a$), word of mouth, merchandise consumption, and media consumption. According to Dawson and Richter (2006), moderation is indicated when: (1) the interaction term significantly effects the outcomes and (2) a significant change in R^2 when the interaction term is included. As seen in the table, the regression coefficients for three of the outcomes were statistically significant, partially supporting $H2_b$.

To further probe the interaction effects, we contrasted the simple slope of the image and patronage intentions regressions on NASCAR ID \times social responsiveness for both low and high social responsiveness groups (i.e., one standard deviation above and below the mean—high and low levels of the respective variable; Aiken & West, 1991). To visually interpret the moderating effects, Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 illustrate the significant relationships. Separate tests of simple slopes involving low and high levels of both social responsiveness and NASCAR ID revealed that the effects of identification on image and patronage intentions were positive. When compared with low identification, high identification increased the respondents' image of NASCAR as well as their intent to patronize NASCAR. Lower levels of identification were associated with a decrease in image and patronage intentions while the effect on media consumption was flat.

Results for Mediated Moderation

Hypothesis 2_c posited that NASCAR image would mediate the moderated relationships proposed in $H2$. We again followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) method which is similar to the previous conditions for mediation but requires entering the interaction term (NASCAR ID \times social responsiveness) rather than the main effect of social responsiveness. The four conditions that must be met for mediated moderation are expressed in a series of four regression models: (Model 1) the mediator should be significantly influenced by the interaction variable

Table 4 Moderated Regression Analysis

Variables	Moderator: NASCAR ID			
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 2	Step 3
	SR	SR	ID	SR × ID
Word of Mouth	.079 (.05)	.071 (.05)	.086 (.04)	.160 (.05)*
Repeat Purchase	.078 (.05)	.073 (.05)	.050 (.05)	.060 (.07)
Merchandise Consumption	.072 (.07)	.108 (.07)	.271 (.06)**	.301 (.08)***
Media Consumption	.151 (.06)**	.130 (.06)**	.112 (.05)*	.189 (.06)***
NASCAR Image	.224 (.05)*	.212 (.05)*	.189 (.06)*	.206 (.04)**
<i>F</i>	1.75	2.08	2.27*	3.65*
R ²	.07	.09	.16	.29
<i>F</i> for model change	1.75	1.97	3.48*	5.02*
ΔR ²	.07	.05	.07	.18

Note. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; ID = NASCAR Identification; SA = Social Responsiveness

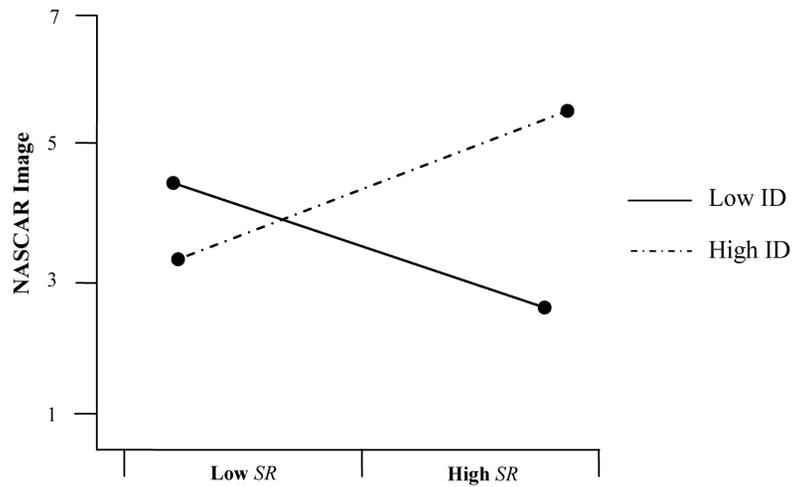


Figure 2 — Moderating role of NASCAR ID on image.

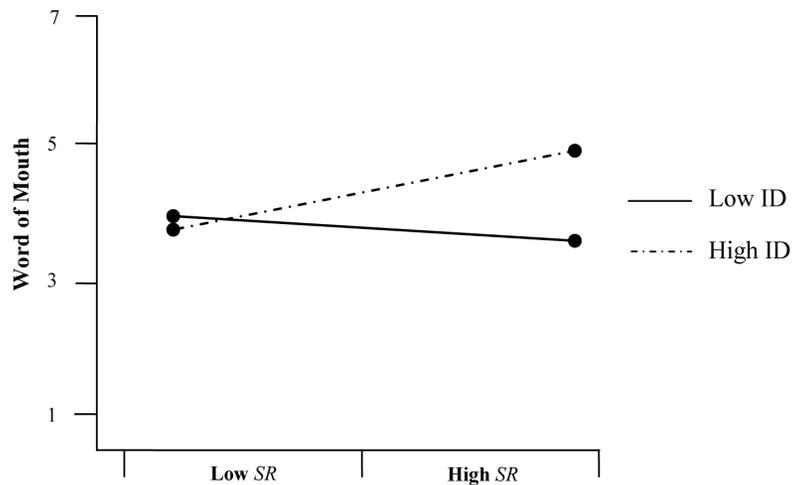


Figure 3 — Moderating role of NASCAR ID on word of mouth.

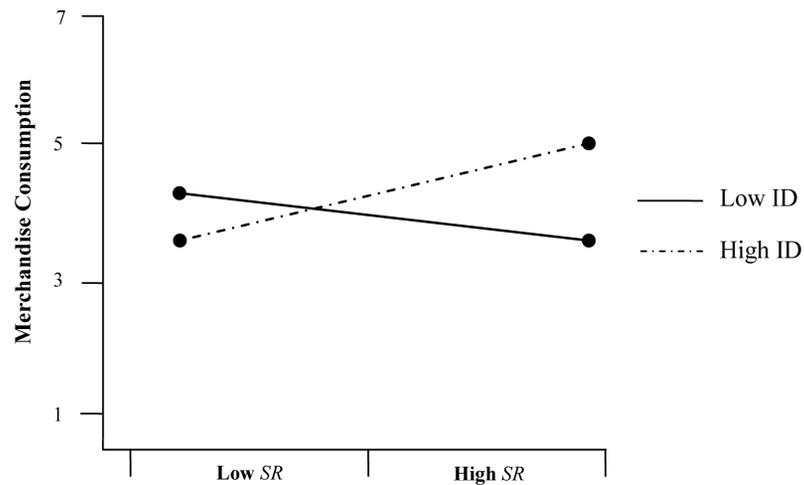


Figure 4 — Moderating role of NASCAR ID on merchandise consumption.

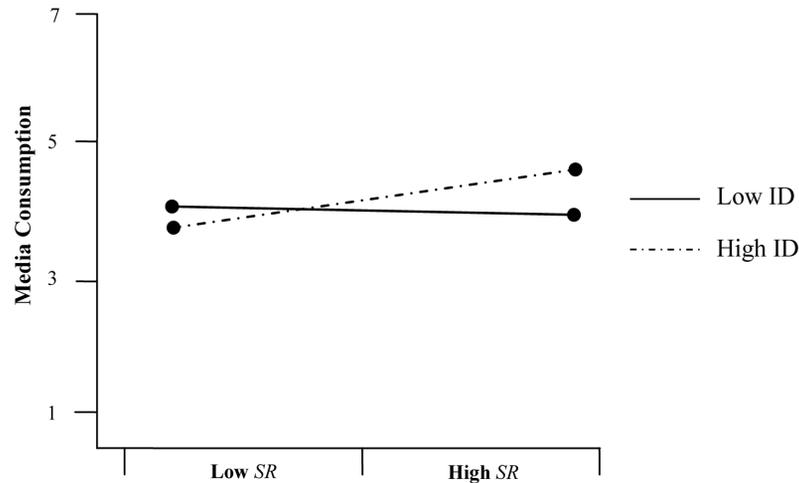


Figure 5 — Moderating role of NASCAR ID on media consumption.

(NASCAR ID \times social responsiveness); (Model 2) the dependent variables should be significantly influenced by the mediator; (Model 3) the dependent variables should be significantly influenced by the interaction variable (NASCAR ID \times social responsiveness); and (Model 4) when the mediator is controlled, the impact of the interaction variable should be reduced in strength (for partial mediation) or no longer significant (for full mediation).

We only examined the first, third, and fourth conditions because the second condition was previously met when testing H1_b. For the first condition, the interaction variable significantly influenced the mediator (see Table 5). For the third condition, the interaction variable significantly influenced three types of patronage (i.e., word of mouth, merchandise consumption, and media consumption). Finally when the mediator was entered,

image decreased the impact of the interaction term from the second to the third model. Specifically, the impact of the interaction term (SA \times ID) on patronage intentions was still significant (but reduced), which indicated partial mediation. The results suggest that the moderated relationships in H2_a and H2_b are partially mediated by NASCAR ID, supporting H2_c (see Table 4).

In sum, our findings indicate that NASCAR's D4D initiative positively (albeit partially) influenced patronage intentions (H1_a); however, the positive influence was augmented when NASCAR's image was inserted as a mediator (H1_b). Thus, it was by way of NASCAR's enhanced image that the D4D initiative influenced patronage intentions. Our findings also suggested that the extent to which patrons identified with NASCAR positively influenced this relationship (H2_a, H2_b, and H2_c).

Table 5 Test of Mediated Moderation

Variables ^a	Model Tests			
	Direct Effects (Model 1)	Direct Effects (Model 2)	Moderated Effects (Model 3)	Partial Mediation (Model 4)
ID × SR → IMG	.238**			
IMG → MED		.398***		
IMG → WOM		.502***		
IMG → MC		.349***		
IMG → RP		.671***		
ID × SR → MED			.189**	
ID × SR → WOM			.285**	
ID × SR → MC			.309***	
ID × SR → RP			.102	
(SR → IMG) → ID × SR → MED				.169**
(SR → IMG) → ID × SR → WOM				.206**
(SR → IMG) → ID × SR → MC				.287**
(SR → IMG) → ID × SR → RP				.006
R ²				
IMG	.06	–	–	–
MED	–	.16	.09	.08
WOM	–	.25	.12	.09
MC	–	.12	.10	.06
RP	–	.45	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>

Note. *n.s.*=not significant; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

ID = NASCAR Identification; SR = Social Responsiveness; IMG = Image; MED = Media Consumption; WOM = word of mouth; MC = Merchandise Consumption; RP = Repeat Purchase

¹ We recognize the distinction between perceived image and reality. Our discussion is therefore based on the assumption that although NASCAR's image is constructed by a variety of realities, image provides unique effects independent of said reality.

General Discussion

NASCAR's self-proclaimed moniker as "America's sport" has repeatedly been called into question. The organizations historical context coupled with recent lawsuit suggests that gendered and racialized practices may be accepted as the way things are done within the organization (Fryer, 2008). To some extent, the institutionalized actions purported to take place within NASCAR represent a culture, image, and identity that is perceived as discriminatory (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Scott, 1987). One way that NASCAR has attempted to assuage such perceptions is through socially responsive programs such as the D4D. As stated on the initiative's website, the purpose of the program is to "...take steps to better educate new fans about NASCAR, to provide meaningful opportunities, and to facilitate greater participation within the industry" (para 3).

While anecdotal evidence has suggested that consumers react positively to social programs, empirical data have been somewhat limited in exploring the extent

to which actual social initiatives influence consumer behavior. This study was constructed to partially fill this void by examining the influence of social responsiveness, the role of corporate image, and identification on NASCAR consumers' behavioral intentions. Previous research (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Crampton & Patten, 2008) has underscored the complexities that shape consumer responses to social initiatives, particularly in terms of purchase likelihood and image brokering. We sought to extend this line of inquiry by investigating if and how a socially responsive initiative could influence the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. In line with our research question and in response to the calls by Sen et al. (2006) and Du et al. (2007), we investigated these ideas in a natural field setting to paint a more externally valid picture of this seemingly complex phenomenon.

Some conceptual work has discussed social responsiveness in a more general sense (see McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Waddock, 2004). We felt however, that to understand how consumer intentions are influenced by responsiveness, it was important to examine this idea with

regard to a single initiative (i.e., NASCAR's D4D). We found that only one aspect of patronage intentions was directly influenced by the D4D initiative. However, when coupled with the image of NASCAR, this relationship significantly and positively predicted consumer intentions. Put simply, a positively perceived image toward NASCAR paired with the D4D, influenced the outcomes more than consumers simply being aware of a social initiative. The results of this study provided evidence of a positive social responsiveness–image–intentions relationship. In addition, we showed that the inclusion of image and identification in the relationship influenced the outcomes in varying ways.

Implications

There were several implications that emerged from the findings, the first of which is that NASCAR's D4D may assist in shaping the organization's identity via its organizational image. The positive image that NASCAR generates from the D4D represents a portion of its identity and informs its internal culture (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002). To the extent that NASCAR reflects on the positive perceptions gleaned from the D4D in relation to their current culture, it is plausible that many of their constituents will identify them as a more inclusive sport organization. We should note that the variance explained by the D4D program on image was low (i.e., 3%) but nonetheless significant across the outcomes. Despite these significant relationships, it still seems prudent to reserve judgment until it can be determined that a 3% change is truly meaningful. However, considering the newness of the program (i.e., implemented in 2004), the limited funds invested (i.e., estimates are placed around \$5 million) and the lack of consumer awareness, a 3% change in organizational image is still noteworthy.

In the wake of their recent legal issues and allegations of sexist and racist practices that have recalled their stereotypical identity (Fryer, 2008; Newman & Giardina, 2008), we believe that NASCAR could benefit from promoting this initiatives to a far greater degree. Furthermore, NASCAR has the ability to capitalize on its socially responsive behaviors through marketing campaigns (Du et al., 2007; Ellen et al., 2006; Klein & Dawar, 2004; Sen et al., 2006). As mentioned, the effect sizes were rather small but with vigorous marketing efforts to promote the program and show its impact, NASCAR stands to capitalize through an increasingly positive image. Additional works that incorporate longitudinal data and additional (related) outcomes are needed to test this presumption. Therefore, our discussion of the results is tempered slightly until further work has clarified under which conditions social responsiveness assumes an active image- and identity-shaping role.

Our results did however identify organizational image as a potential route through which social responsiveness is related to consumer patronage. The significant social responsiveness @ image @ patronage intentions causal chain suggests that NASCAR's responsiveness

could increase their perceived image and that resultant image could mediate the fiduciary gains accrued through consumer patronage. This mediating effect is important for three reasons. First, as an organization's image, culture, and identity are intertwined, the positive effects of NASCAR's image both reflect and inform its culture and identity. The positive image and resulting financial rewards received from the D4D program support the idea that perceived change within an organization's culture can be beneficial to both organizational members and external stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Thus, NASCAR is benefitting by communicating an organizational identity that values diversity and external stakeholders stand to capitalize by affiliating themselves with an organization that is socially responsive. Second, by using image as a mediator, our work extends the literature by testing a sparsely used variable in the responsiveness-behavior relationship. Although prior work has indicated that social responsiveness could (and should) affect an organization's image, the construct has only been implicitly discussed rather than explicitly examined. Lastly, the social responsiveness @ image @ patronage causal chain extends the research stream on organizational image (Barich & Kotler, 1991; Dichter, 1985; Kotler, 1982; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001) by revealing that a single initiative can be an important antecedent to organizational image.

While some research has examined the outcomes associated with a positively perceived image (see Christensen & Askegaard, 2001), few efforts have been undertaken to consider additional factors that increase or decrease consumer patronage based on image (particularly within the social marketing arena). Overall, the relationship from the D4D to image to intentions suggested that achieving a positive corporate image represented one of the underlying pathways through which consumer patronage was realized. The extent to which their socially responsive behaviors were beneficial to NASCAR's financial success was determined by how much consumers' perceived image of the organization was enhanced. This finding suggests that organizations should take steps to make the public aware of their social initiatives and their role in performing them. While seemingly simplistic, communicating socially responsiveness is not always one of the top priorities for an organization (Sen et al., 2006). Our findings suggested that as the structure of an organization evolves and stakeholder boundaries continue to dissolve (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002; McIntosh & Doherty, 2007; Scott & Lane, 2000), managers would do well to highlight their socially responsive behaviors to their range of stakeholders. This is particularly noteworthy in the current context considering the low awareness levels exhibited by the study participants.

Finally, the moderating role of NASCAR ID yielded some interesting findings. As illustrated by the partial support for H1 and in line with previous literature (Meijer & Schuyt, 2005; Mohr et al., 2001), the direct relationship between the D4D and patronage intentions was weak. However, our findings revealed that NASCAR ID moderated and strengthened the influence of social

responsiveness. Mirroring the results by Walker and Kent (2009), this moderation test yielded statistically significant relationships across three of the outcomes (as well as the mediating role of image) as the respondents' level of NASCAR ID increased. At the low end of ID, the range of variance explained by the D4D initiative was low (explaining .16–2.4% of the variance). Conversely at the higher end, the range of variance explained illustrated that social responsiveness could have a meaningful influence on consumer intentions (explaining a range of 3.9–9.9% of variance). Essentially, individuals at the higher end of the ID continuum seemed more willing to offer their support to NASCAR. Finally, the mediating role of image in the moderated relationship illustrated that our model was conceptually sound. In the aggregate, this result showed that for organizational level analyses, it is possible to combine existing research designs with emerging concepts in the sport management discourse to reflect the complexities of the industry (Walker & Kent, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

Some future research directions stem from the limitations inherent in this research. We argued at the outset that examining the D4D among individuals not affiliated with the sport would better demonstrate the success of NASCAR's responsive efforts. This argument could be strengthened when considering the high levels of identification exhibited by some NASCAR fans. Therefore, we encourage future researchers to examine individuals outside the NASCAR arena (not in an isolated environment) who may not exhibit such a wide range of identification levels. Given the mean score for NASCAR ID (i.e., just below the midpoint of the scale), our sample was representative of both ends of the identification continuum. The results illustrated that fans who identified strongly with NASCAR were more likely to purchase NASCAR merchandise, speak favorably of NASCAR, and encourage others to attend NASCAR events as a result of the organization's social responsiveness. To the extent that these behaviors spark conversation about and/or are performed in conjunction with discussing NASCAR's diversity, they may attract and engage a new audience as well. Thus, those who are quick to reduce NASCAR and its fans to the stereotypical depiction may discover a newfound appreciation for the sport (which provides an additional avenue for future inquiry). In addition, we believe that consumers may be exposed (simultaneously) to a host of salient information about the same organization (e.g., diversity, social outreach, community work). Thus, research investigating the multiple effects of these exposures to socially responsive information would allow for the isolation of the impacts of these divergent practices, which could add to the validity of our findings. We believe that our results can (at least in part) assist in the design of such studies.

Another potential limitation was the narrow focus on NASCAR's external stakeholders; a population that

both research and our sample demographics suggests is predominately Caucasian and male (Newman & Giardina, 2008). While necessary to accurately address our research question, future inquiries would do well to examine the D4D program as it relates to minority populations, as it is this same population whose interests are intended to be served by the D4D. Further, and to the extent that the identity of an organization also encompasses its internal values, beliefs, and assumptions as well as its external image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2002), a great deal of knowledge can be gained by assessing NASCAR's sense of "self" and the collective expression of its culture from its internal members. Given the extent to which NASCAR's institutionalized practices are publicized and its values questioned, make this matter even more important. As Greening and Turban (2000, p. 254) noted, "... some visionary firms have promoted CSR as a way to attract and retain quality employees." Therefore, we believe this is a viable line of inquiry and perhaps the next step to better understanding the totality of NASCAR's efforts. Beyond NASCAR, it is our hope that this research will encourage others to consider additional issues and factors related to institutional practices within sport organizations incorporating the idea of how social responsiveness can shape the attitudes and perceptions of a wide range of organizational stakeholders.

One additional area of future inquiry is identification with NASCAR, as it relates to specific drivers. As Amato et al. (2005) found, NASCAR fans identify with the sport as a whole as well as with specific drivers. Further, fans possessing high levels of identification are also more likely to be highly involved with the sport and very loyal to particular drivers. As today's NASCAR drivers are branded (both literally and figuratively), these same fans often form an inextricable link between a driver and his sponsor and (as a result) have been found to demonstrate purchase-related loyalty to the sponsor (Amato et al., 2005; Levin et al., 2004). Thus, NASCAR drivers serve as celebrity endorsers for their sponsor's and are viewed as such by their fans. It is plausible to expect that a similar degree of loyalty could be detected if a specific driver endorsed NASCAR's D4D program. The potential effects of pairing a contextually powerful name and face (e.g., Juan Pablo Montoya, Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Jimmy Johnson, etc.) with NASCAR's dedication to social issues could lead to exponential success for both NASCAR and its D4D program. As well, longitudinal research on NASCAR's D4D program should be carried out to see if consumer responses change when (and if) the initiative is publicized to a greater degree (i.e., increased knowledge of, and affinity for, the program might result). Thus, future inquiries should examine this as a possible avenue to test the idea of "responsive" marketing.

Finally, as with any study of complex phenomena, measurement must always be scrutinized. We acknowledge that social awareness is a multifaceted construct that is difficult to conceptualize and measure. An examination of the CSR literature finds that, not only have scholars spent some 30 years designing and modifying scales that

are meant to assess social responsibility and its implications (see Walker & Heere, 2010), but all indications suggest that scholars will continue to do so for years to come. Thus, while our measures were guided by the works of Du et al. (2007) and Sen et al. (2006), other measures and other works may also lend themselves to better understanding the implications of social awareness. One such work has been offered by Walker and Heere (2010) who recently constructed a seven-item, Likert-type scale titled, the Consumer Attitudes toward Responsible Entities in Sport (CARES) scale. The specificity that this scale has toward the sport context highlights its utility in future works examining CSR and the sport organizations in which they are implemented.

Conclusion

This study illustrated that firms could possess the ability to gain from consumers being aware of, and attendant to, a socially responsive initiative. Our results showed this can be accomplished in two main ways: (1) an organization's socially responsive actions can affect consumer patronage through corporate image and (2) returns from an organization's social responsiveness can be significant and positive depending on the level to which consumers identify with the organization. Based on our data, image played a role in the relationship between the D4D program and consumer patronage. For future inquiries, this means that proper implementation of a responsive initiative can result in a positively perceived image of the firm which then may result in increased patronage. Together, the results indicate that the D4D led consumers to view NASCAR in a more positive light (although effect sizes were modest). This enhanced image of NASCAR increased the likelihood of the intent to patronize the organization. Finally, by showing that NASCAR's image and identification play a role in the social responsiveness-patronage relationship, organizations may be able to capitalize on many associations that organizational stakeholders might use to evaluate social initiatives in practice.

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