

ISSN 0167-4544, Volume 95, Number 4

Journal of Business Ethics

Volume 95, No. 4
September (I) 2010
This Issue Completes Volume 95

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Social Responsibility and the Olympic Games: The Mediating Role of Consumer Attributions

Matthew Walker
Bob Heere
Milena M. Parent
Dan Drane

ABSTRACT. Current literature suggests that corporate social responsibility (CSR) can affect consumers' attitudes towards an organization and is regarded as a driver for reputation-building and fostering sustained consumer patronage. Although prior research has addressed the direct influence of CSR on consumer responses, this research examined the mediating influence of consumer's perceived organizational motives within an NGO setting. Given the heightened public attention surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, data were collected from consumers of the Games to assess their perceptions of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) socially responsible initiatives. We hypothesized that consumers of the Games were likely to cognitively elaborate on CSR messages by way of three specific attribution effects derived from the literature. The results show that, contingent on CSR awareness, consumers responded positively to social efforts judged to be values-driven and stakeholder-driven; and a negative response was seen for efforts judged to be strategic. These attribution effects influenced various types of patronage and perceived organizational reputation.

KEY WORDS: consumer attributions, social responsibility, Olympic Games, mediation

Introduction

Stemming from business practices in the second half of the twentieth century, societal and business consciousness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has risen dramatically. Discussions in the popular press (Alsop, 2004), among business and political leaders (O'Rourke, 2003), and in the academic literature (Crampton and Patten, 2008; Edward and Willmott, 2008; Matten and Crane, 2005), have spurred an interesting debate over the nature and

scope of CSR in modern business. This debate has led to the emergence of various theories and approaches used to describe the *business–society relationship* (Wood, 2000). Accordingly, CSR is viewed as a subset of corporate obligations dealing with a company's voluntary and discretionary relationships with its societal stakeholders (Waddock, 2004) to "... minimize or eliminate harmful effects and maximize long-run beneficial impacts on society" (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 47). Not surprisingly, this debate has also reflected the instrumental (i.e., business pragmatism) discussions on the relationship between a firm's reputation, stakeholder associations, and corporate success (Sen et al., 2006). The instrumentalist position is perpetuated, however, by the recent spate of *social irresponsibility* providing ammunition to the media depicting organizations that promote social responsibility as deceptive and self-interested (Basu and Palazzo, 2008).

Irrespective of an instrumental business orientation, the rising influence of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs; especially nonprofit NGOs) has been one of the most significant business developments over the past 20 years (Doh and Guay, 2006). While strategy has generally been regarded as the impetus for CSR policy implementation, NGO views (and societal views of social issues) have influenced the social policy-making processes of many large business groups. According to Winston (2002), NGOs have risen dramatically in number, power, and influence; and their force has been felt in a range of major public policy debates, resulting in major changes in corporate governance. As a result, many now regard NGOs as a counterweight to business and global capitalism (Doh and Teegan, 2002), although others suggest that

“privatizing” public policies that deal with social issues are inherently risky ventures (Lyon and Maxwell, 2008). Nonetheless, the emergence of NGOs seeking to promote what they perceive to be more socially responsible business practices has generated substantial changes in corporate strategy (Doh and Teegen, 2003).

No such recent example of NGO influence is better than the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic organizing committees in answering the critics’ calls by addressing the social impacts derived from mega-sporting events. Sport, in general, and the Olympic Movement, in particular, have frequently been promoted as a force for good in the world (Black and Bezanson, 2004; Bloom et al., 2005; International Olympic Committee, 2008). However, critics of the Games argue that rather than promoting “Olympism” the Games have been used to leverage public funds to satisfy elite economic interests resulting in long-term debt and negative host city impacts (Andranovich et al., 2002; Hall, 2006; Lenskyj, 2003; Whitson and Macintosh, 1993). As well, concerns relating to the environmental impacts of the Games have been forwarded (Berkaak, 1999; Getz, 2005; Leopkey and Parent, 2009; Stubbs, 2001). These practices have led to arguments that CSR among sport organizations breeds public cynicism as consumers now suspect many organizations of “greenwashing” (Breitbarth and Harriss, 2008) and cause exploitation (Vlachos et al., 2009).

For the Olympic Games, social progress is centered on the symbolic importance that many nations have placed on winning the right to host, and then successfully hosting the Games (Black and Bezanson, 2004; Whitson and Macintosh, 1993). Much “face” was on the line in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics as their billing as the “Green Games” was dichotomized by China’s poor environmental record. Consequently, this was a major source of leverage for activists (and the media) interested in discrediting the Chinese government and the IOC for their selection of the host site. Therefore, the associations that Olympic consumers assigned to the Games represented a new battleground over what Sen et al. (2006, p. 158) termed “stakeholder mind share.” As witnessed by the media attention given to the Games, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) attempted to

leverage the associations stakeholders formed to garner positive publicity for China (Séguin et al., 2008). While intuitively appealing, the actual influence and direction of such associations held by Olympic consumers is empirically unknown.

Much of the consumer association research has centered on corporate ability (CA – ability to produce a quality product) and corporate social responsibility (CSR – commitment to social causes; Brown and Dacin, 1997; Sen et al., 2006). Not until recently have researchers begun to address the psychological mechanisms through which these types of associations influence the attitudinal and behavioral reactions of consumers (Berens et al., 2005; Ellen et al., 2006; Gurhan-Canli and Batra, 2004; Madrigal, 2000; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Research on CSR-driven consumption has focused on the cognitive components of CSR strategy (i.e., awareness of CSR; Du et al., 2007) as antecedents to certain behavioral components (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Mohr et al., 2001; Sen et al., 2006), without taking into account any interaction effects that may influence this relationship. Sen et al. (2006) put forth two noteworthy points about current CSR research: (1) most work in this area has presumed (in laboratory studies) CSR awareness on the part of the test populations and (2) the real-world impact of CSR awareness is more multifaceted than is currently acknowledged. Further, Du et al. (2007, p. 224) suggested “... the need for CSR research to move beyond controlled contexts to paint a more externally valid picture of the forces determining consumer reactions to CSR.”

Based on the preceding commentary and by utilizing a framework describing consumers’ attributional judgments of CSR as values-, stakeholder-, and strategic-driven (see Ellen et al., 2006), this research sought to extend the scope of consumer attribution research by integrating and refining current models to (1) understand how “real-world” consumers view organizational motives for social engagement of NGOs and (2) contingent on CSR awareness, understand the mediating influence attribution effects have on relevant organization-level outcomes. While consumer perceptions (in general) influence behavior (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Hoeffler and Keller, 2002; Pelsmacker et al., 2005), awareness alone is generally considered to be a weak predictor of actual behavior, especially in the

social marketing arena (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Thus, assessing the indirect influence of consumer attributions may provide additional insight into this seemingly complex relationship. The central thesis of this study is that consumer attributions directed toward the IOC would help to better predict certain CSR-driven attitudinal and consumption patterns – specifically, consumer patronage and perceived organizational reputation.

This article is organized into several sections. First, the context of the study is discussed (i.e., nature and scope of the focal international nonprofit organization). Second, the hypothesized measurement model is presented which illustrates the role of attribution-based consumption relative to the outcomes. The methodology is then described and the results of the analyses are presented and discussed. Finally, conclusions based on our empirical findings are offered.

Research context: the IOC and the Olympic Games

Hosting the Games can result in a variety of impacts on the host region, particularly within the human, financial, industrial, and environmental areas. For example, the (Summer) Games bring together in excess of 10,500 athletes (in 300 events), 200 international delegations, 20,000 international media, and 4 billion spectators and television viewers (International Olympic Committee, 2009a). Given the tremendous scale of these different elements, an organizing committee (e.g., BOGOC) has 7 years to prepare. These preparations require (at the outset) only a few individuals but can quickly escalate to tens of thousands of volunteers and other paid staff who need to mobilize a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g., governments, media, community, sponsors, sport organizations, international delegations, etc.).

The IOC is a nonprofit/NGO considered to be at the same level as other global NGOs (e.g., UNESCO, UN, Red Cross; see Chappelet and Kübler-Mabbott, 2008). The IOC's activities are supported by both UN and UNESCO resolutions. For example, as part of its historical foundation and core aspects, the IOC's Olympic Truce is enacted during each summer and winter edition of the Games and is actually adopted as a resolution in the fall preceding

the Games by the UN General Assembly. What's more, the IOC's owners, its 115 members forming the General Assembly or Session, are volunteers and do not receive the profits incurred by the organization. The IOC members are individuals and not organizations or states; and they (in fact) pride themselves on not being led by external stakeholders (e.g., governments, sponsors, etc.) for managerial decisions. The organization is adamant about having representative organizations in each country (e.g., the Canadian Olympic Committee, the United States Olympic Committee) to represent its interest, not the other way around (i.e., Canada or the United States having its interest represented at the IOC). The IOC is therefore a member-driven entity. As a simple example, the IOC's past president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, was famous for making the IOC session and Executive Board follow his desires (see Jennings, 2000; Pound, 2004). Thus, by their very nature, such organizations (i.e., NGOs, or nonprofits more broadly) are believed to have a CSR-related purpose (i.e., to help the greater good in lieu and in addition to profit maximization). As such, we can reasonably surmise that positive CSR perceptions of these organizations held by their clients are a critical aspect of the continued survival and success of these organizations. Moreover, given the above, we also see that this study's findings can be applied to not only other major international sport federations, such as FIFA (soccer) and IAAF (track and field), but also to other global NGOs.

From a fiduciary standpoint, the Games require significant spending from the organizing committee, as well as from governments and official sponsors. The top sponsors of the 2012 London Games are spending 50–100 million pounds for the privilege of being associated with the Games (Beard and English, 2006). Johnson and Johnson paid the IOC approximately 100 million dollars for a 4-year commitment to Games and then an additional 57 million Euros to activate their sponsorship for the 2008 Beijing Games (Radio Canada, 2008). The cost of the 2008 Beijing Games was estimated to have been around 44 billion dollars (Pravda.ru, 2008), which was far more than any previous Games. The Games also have an impact on local infrastructure, tourism, and business leveraging (Chalip and Leyns, 2002; Parent, 2008; Preuss, 2005; Ritchie, 1984; Ritchie and Smith, 1991). For example, various governmental

agencies have spent over 1 billion dollars in infrastructure for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games. As well, the Games have several negative impacts such as environmental damage and low-income citizen displacement (Chappelet, 2008; Lenskyj, 1996, 2000). Given such pejorative outcomes, the concept of CSR seems intrinsic to the IOC and its Olympic Movement. The IOC promotes social responsibility as a means "... to provide access to sports practice, and in so doing to spread the values of sport to all sections of society" (Jacques Rogge, IOC President). The IOC's brand of CSR comes in the form of four divergent practices: (1) promotion of women in sport (i.e., set up a positive trend to enhance women's participation in sport at all levels), (2) protection of athletes (i.e., attention to protecting these "heroes" of the Games), (3) human development assistance (i.e., social and economic issues), and (4) sustainable development (i.e., greater resources to sustainable development in and through sport).

Current research on the Games has focused on marketing and sponsorship (Madrigal, 2006; Séguin et al., 2005, 2008); economic and tourism impacts (Chalip and Leyns, 2002; Crompton, 1995, 2004; Gratton et al., 2006; Jinxia and Mangan, 2008); risk and terrorism management (Atkinson and Young, 2002; Chappelet, 2001; Leopkey and Parent, 2009); and political and social issues (Burbank et al., 2001; Jinxia and Mangan, 2008; Whitson and Macintosh, 1993, 1996). However, limited research exists pertaining to consumer awareness of and perceived reputation directed towards the Games. Additionally, such research has not touched upon CSR or its relationship to any of these concepts. This lack of work is somewhat startling given the widespread positive and negative impact of the IOC and its Games on the general population, businesses, and even governments who, for example, are now passing laws to protect the Olympic brand (e.g., Bill C-47 in Canada, Ellis et al., 2008). Given that the field of sport event management only dates back to the 1980s, the lack of substantive research is not all that surprising. Nevertheless, this means that much work remains to build the literature by, for example, linking various concepts such as consumer awareness, stakeholders, and reputation. Currently, we have little insight regarding the awareness levels of consumers regarding the IOC's social responsibility,

what consumer opinions are of these activities, how their awareness and opinions impact consumer behavior (e.g., merchandise, ticket, and repeat purchase), nor the impact of the CSR activities on the IOC and its Games' success/performance. Examining these relations is not only beneficial for the field of sport/event management but could provide useful information for other global NGOs (e.g., UN, UNESCO, Red Cross) and other major international sport organizations (e.g., FIFA, IAAF) who endorse and promote CSR.

Theoretical background

CSR awareness

Awareness of and consumer associations directed towards corporate activity have been regarded as critical elements in the development of what consumers believe about an organization (Berens et al., 2005; Brown and Dacin, 1997; Brown et al., 2006; Milberg et al., 1997; Rao et al., 2004). Sen et al. (2006) noted that consumer associations become critical elements to stakeholder mind-share, because this information has the power to influence individuals' responses to the organization – particularly towards a firm's reputation. However, in the case of CSR, consumers generally do not actively seek out information about a company's social behavior (Meijer and Schuyt, 2005). Hence, limited awareness represents a key stumbling block in the organization's quest to reap strategic rewards from CSR, in general, and the associations that stakeholders have of the organization, in particular (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). In order for the organization to benefit from a potentially large spectrum of associations, it is necessary to generate awareness of CSR as "... lack of awareness is a major inhibitor of overall responsiveness to CSR" (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 48).

Using awareness to identify consumers' understanding of CSR is only a valid approach if researchers can determine the effect of stakeholders' internal beliefs regarding the motives for social engagement. For example, consumers may view the IOC's motives for CSR engagement in a number of ways, including strategy (i.e., Does the organization benefit at all from the CSR activities?); a focus on

organizational stakeholders (i.e., How does CSR benefit or satisfy salient stakeholder groups?); and/or a focus on organizational values (i.e., Is CSR simply the right thing to do?). These attributions connected to consumer awareness of the IOC's social efforts may have a significant impact on any short- or long-term benefits they might receive from their actions. Ellen et al. (2006) maintained that consumers may care more about why firms are engaged in CSR rather than what types of CSR they endorse. Based on this rationale and responding to Maignan's (2001) call for more research on consumer awareness of social responsibility, CSR awareness was selected as the primary interactive determinate of consumer attributions. While researchers have alluded to the importance of CSR awareness as a precursor to both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004; Du et al., 2007), the awareness → attributions link has yet to be examined. Given that information is one of the inputs of rational choice (Schuler and Cording, 2006), we argue that basic information (i.e., being aware of CSR) coupled with the perceived motives behind CSR engagement can lead to increasingly efficient consumer responses to CSR.

Consumer attributions

As mentioned, little is known about how consumers construct their beliefs of CSR. Some presume that awareness of CSR alone is a valid predictor of attitudes and behavior. However, since researchers have only begun to address the impact of CSR awareness (see Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004; Du et al., 2007; Maignan, 2001), attribution theory served as the more appropriate guide for the current study (Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967, 1972). The underlying precept of attribution theory in the context of CSR is that favorability towards a social program is likely contingent on certain attributions consumers make about the motives underpinning an organization's actions (Du et al., 2007; Ellen et al., 2006; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Menon and Kahn, 2003; Sen et al., 2006; Webb and Mohr, 1998). An attribution (or corporate association) is what an individual knows or feels about a particular organization (Brown and Dacin, 1997). These associations "... serve as the 'reality' of the organization for an

individual" (Brown et al., 2006, p. 105) and what individuals believe can ultimately influence various organizational responses.

Empirical consensus on classifying consumer attributions still remains equivocal. Early attribution work discussed principles such as legitimacy, public responsibility, and managerial discretion (Wood, 1991) with the idea of stakeholder management assuming a key role in CSR policy implementation (Clarkson, 1995; Maignan et al., 1999; Wood, 1991). Swanson (1995) proposed a three-dimensional model for CSR attributions consisting of a utilitarian perspective (i.e., CSR as a strategic approach to improve the bottom line), a negative duty perspective (i.e., CSR is undertaken to conform to stakeholders' values), and a positive duty perspective (i.e., CSR is undertaken because it is the right thing to do). Later, Maignan and Ralston (2002) classified consumer attributions three-dimensionally (i.e., values-driven, performance-driven, and stakeholder-driven). More recently, Ellen et al. (2006) argued for a two-dimensional framework reflecting either self- (i.e., egoistic-, and strategic-driven) or other-centered attributions (i.e., values-, stakeholder-driven).

Incorporating the aforementioned attribution models into our theorizing, we argue that when IOC consumers are aware of the organization's social involvement, they are likely to elaborate on that message by way of three specific attribution effects (e.g., strategic-, stakeholder-, and values-driven). Based on previous work in this area (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; Ellen et al., 2006; Maignan and Ralston, 2002), we know these specific attributions are likely to influence consumer evaluations of the firm. When motivations are considered firm serving or profit-related (i.e., strategic-driven), attitudes toward the organization are likely to negatively manifest; when motivations are considered socially motivated (i.e., values-driven) or society/community focused (i.e., stakeholder-driven), attitudes toward the organization are likely enhanced (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006).

Strategic goals inherent to a firm's survival are among the most widely accepted attributions (Ellen et al., 2006). Yet, some CSR-related activities have been criticized, running the risk of "consumer backlash" if individuals question the validity, relevance, or appropriateness of a firm's actions (Drumwright, 1996; Osterhus, 1997). Vlachos et al.

(2009), however, maintained that unethical business behavior have drawn intense media coverage, thereby increasing the public's attention to corruption – even in the nonprofit sector. Therefore, due to heightened public cynicism directed toward China, and consequently the IOC, we predict that negative effects will result from strategic-driven associations. On the other hand, values-driven motives are related to altruistically motivated giving. These motives are derived from individuals believing that firms implement CSR because they care; thus, positive effects for the current study are anticipated. Finally, stakeholder-driven motives relate to the support of social causes due to stakeholder pressures. While Vlachos et al. (2009) argued this attribution seeks to avoid retribution, we believe the IOC's consumers may view these as responsive to their needs and those of the wider world.

The motives underlying CSR have been used in explaining consumer reactions to CSR (Godfrey, 2005). However, most have focused on the moderating role of attributions to evaluate the strength of the attributed relationships (see Klein and Dawar, 2004; Sen et al., 2006). Given the literature suggesting awareness as an (albeit weak) antecedent to behavior, and in line with additional work in this area (Yoon et al., 2006), we hypothesized the attributions as indirectly influencing the proposed model rather than acting as moderators. Thus, we expected awareness of CSR initiatives to be mediated by a set of organization-specific attributions pertaining to the thoughts and feelings of IOC consumers.

- H*₁: The attributions (i.e., values-driven, stakeholder-driven, and strategic-driven) will (at least partially) mediate the proposed relationships.
- H*₂: (a) Values-driven and (b) stakeholder-driven attributions will yield positive consumer responses while (c) strategic-driven attributions will yield negative consumer responses.

Reputation

Certain resources are capable of providing a competitive advantage for a firm (Barney, 1991, 2001), and a large portion of these resources are intangible

(Barney and Hansen, 1994; Black et al., 2000; Fryxell and Wang, 1994; Hall, 1992, 1993; McMillan and Joshi, 1998; Teece, 1998). Among these intangibles, reputation has been regarded as one of the key elements in marketing and organizational positioning (Amis, 2003; Hall, 1993; Herbig and Milewicz, 1993) and may constitute the bulk of the worth of many organizations (Feldwick, 1996; Hall, 1992).

Recently, academics have become interested in how reputation relates to CSR (Brammer and Pavelin, 2006; Fombrun, 2005) because elements of responsibility have been viewed as key drivers of reputation (Schnietz and Epstein, 2005; Tucker and Melewar, 2005). Conversely, Hillenbrand and Money (2007) argued that rather than an antecedent of reputation, social responsibilities are key attributes in terms of how an organization's reputation is judged. These equivocal arguments suggest that further work needs to be done regarding CSR and the attributions that influence this relationship. Through the accumulation of homogenous evaluations of social performance though, consumers may generate a lasting reputation of the organization (Logsdon and Wood, 2002) because they translate past social performance into expectative future behavior. Based on prior research (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Sen et al., 2006), we argue the more sincere (or altruistic) the motive, the more likely that values-driven reactions will result. Conversely, the more instrumental (or strategic) the motive, the more likely negative reactions will result. These CSR-based associations are likely to engender positive and/or negative attitudes toward the IOC (Sen et al., 2006).

- H*₃: CSR awareness will positively impact reputation when mediated by values-driven and stakeholder-driven attributions but negative impacts will be seen for strategic-driven attributions.

Patronage intentions

Several studies have investigated consumer patronage and socially conscious businesses (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Mohr and Webb, 2005; Porter and

Kramer, 2002; Ricks, 2005), finding that *credible* CSR associations influenced consumer attitudes toward the organization. Corporate credibility is therefore thought to influence purchase intent because consumers' perceptions of corporate trustworthiness and expertise are part of the information they use to judge organizational quality (Fombrun, 1996). Winters (1988) and Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) found that credibility had a positive effect on corporate sales. Others have found that consumers' purchase decisions are influenced by a company's good citizenship (Maignan and Ferrell, 2001; Netemeyer et al., 2001), by a firm's support of a social cause (Ross et al., 1990–1991), by certain corporate associations (Brown and Dacin, 1997), by marketing with at least one social objective (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002), by corporate identification (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003), and by proactive corporate giving (Ricks, 2005).

The positive link between CSR and consumer patronage has incentivized organizations to devote more energy toward such initiatives. In other words, the lure of greater profits has significantly contributed to increased justifications for social activity, shifting the debate from “whether” to “how” (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004, p. 10). This increasing commitment to CSR is fostered by the growing sense that consumers reward corporate citizens through sustained patronage (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen et al., 2006), particularly within consumer-appropriate domains (Du et al., 2007). However, since awareness is regarded as a weak antecedent to intentions and few studies have examined the influence of consumer attributions and purchase intentions, we predict CSR awareness will positively impact patronage toward the IOC if perceived as values-driven or stakeholder-driven, while strategic-driven attributions will have negative effects.

H₄: CSR awareness will positively impact patronage intentions (i.e., word of mouth, repeat purchase, and merchandise consumption) when mediated by values-driven and stakeholder-driven attributions, but negative impacts will be seen for strategic-driven attributions.

The attribution model

Despite the growing importance of CSR to modern organizations including the IOC, there are still few studies that describe the attitudes and behaviors of “real-world” consumers toward CSR and little attention has been paid to intervening variables that may influence consumer responses to the practice (see Du et al., 2007; Ellen et al., 2006; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Lichtenstein et al., 2004). While some empirical work has suggested consumers possess positive attitudes toward CSR (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Creyer and Ross, 1997; Mohr and Webb, 2005; Mohr et al., 2001; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), understanding their perceived motives underpinning CSR is still in its infancy. Our hypothesized model illustrates that the attributions (i.e., stakeholder, values, and strategic) will indirectly influence the effects that CSR awareness has on the consumers' perceived reputation and patronage intentions directed toward the IOC (see Figure 1).

Method

Sample

A research team collected data (via intercept technique) from attendees of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games representing 38 different nations over a 3-week period. The attendees were approached outside the spectator entrances of several Olympic venues and told that we were interested in their opinions about the IOC's social agenda. In total, 538 randomly selected attendees were identified and were willing to participate in the research. To ensure against any translational biases, the data collection team was instructed to ask each respondent if they spoke and read English. Additionally, a verbal appraisal of the respondents' connection to the Games was also conducted to guard against any direct stakeholder biases. This second step in the protocol was performed for two reasons: (1) eliminate any “familiarity” responses that would bias the results and be difficult to interpret and (2) measure only consumer responses rather than those of the internal stakeholder's who may possess only a limited (i.e., one-way) view of the IOC's social initiatives.

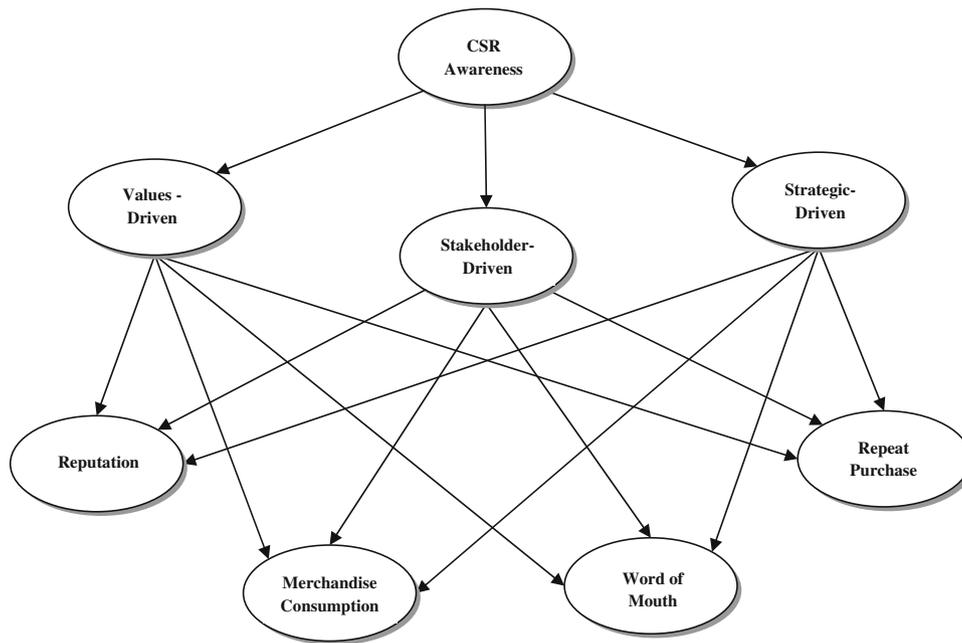


Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

Given that CSR is perceived differently across cultures and has many (and sometimes conflicting) definitions, made the respondents' interpretation of CSR critical to our analyses. Several recent studies have investigated perceptual differences of CSR dependant on country of origin (Maignan and Ralston, 2002; Matten and Moon, 2008). These studies concluded (in the aggregate) that CSR means different things to different people. Regardless of the minutia of individual differences, however, the collective consensus that CSR is enacted for societal betterment is both implicitly and explicitly understood in the global context (Matten and Moon, 2008). Thus, the IOC was selected as the focal organization due to the international nature of their CSR efforts, the world-wide publicity given to the Games, and the public skepticism of the social, environmental, human rights issues surrounding this mega-event (Minxin, 2008). The varied nature of the IOC's social programs, as well as the wide-spread (both self-reported and popular press) attention given to their activities, made the IOC's consumers an ideal group to assess both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, as well as the attributions they might assign to their social initiatives (McWilliams and

Siegel, 2001). The sample (on-site, random sampling) in this study was appropriate because event attendees are considered to be one of the primary targets for the dissemination of socially responsive information by the focal organization.

Analytic technique

We used existing scales for the measurement of the constructs (see Table I), the definitions of which are rooted in the extant literature. CSR awareness was developed with guidance from previous literature (Du et al., 2007; Sen et al., 2006). The attribution measures were adopted from those developed by Ellen et al. (2006). Intentions were measured using three subscales adopted from the work of Walker and Kent (2009). Reputation was measured using items adopted from those developed by Gaines-Ross (1998). Several minor changes were made to the scale items to make them appropriate for this study. Some of the behavioral items were adapted to fit this specific case.

The most rigid change that was made was to exclude the egoistic-driven construct from the

TABLE I
Measurement model results (standardized estimates)

Factors and items ^a	Loadings	AVE	CR
<i>CSR awareness</i>			
I am aware of the IOC's efforts to support environmental issues	0.831	0.60	0.85
I am aware of the IOC's efforts to support human developmental/social issues	0.744		
I am aware of the IOC's efforts to promote the legacy of the games	0.885		
<i>Reputation</i>			
The IOC is a high-quality organization	0.772	0.54	0.87
The IOC is a sound organization	0.763		
The IOC sets an example of how major sport organization should be run	0.667		
I would believe in the IOC if it were under media attack	0.751		
<i>Patronage intentions</i>			
Repeat Purchase 1: I will attend another event being promoted by the IOC in the near future	0.813	0.64	0.86
Repeat Purchase 2: I will attend more events supported by the IOC in the next few years	0.935		
Repeat Purchase 3: I will attend the next Olympic Games	0.744		
Word of Mouth 1: I will speak favorably of the IOC to others	0.853	0.65	0.84
Word of Mouth 2: I will encourage others to attend events promoted by the IOC	0.771		
Word of Mouth 3: I will encourage others to support the IOC	0.812		
Merchandise Consumption 1: I will purchase this events souvenirs	0.801	0.56	0.77
Merchandise Consumption 2: I will read about the IOC in the sport media	0.740		
Merchandise Consumption 3: I will visit this IOC's website for information on the organization	0.660		
<i>Consumer attributions</i>			
Values-Driven 1: They have a long-term interest in society	0.663	0.67	0.83
Values-Driven 2: They want to make it easier for consumers who care about the causes to support them	0.977		
Values-Driven 3: They are trying to give something back to society at large	0.793		
Stakeholder-Driven 1: They feel society in general expects social responsibility	0.736	0.62	0.81
Stakeholder-Driven 2: They feel that all of the Olympic nations expect social responsibility	0.857		
Stakeholder-Driven 3: They feel their employees and committees expect social responsibility	0.720		
Strategic-Driven 1: They will retain more consumers by promoting social responsibility	0.884	0.63	0.73
Strategic-Driven 2: They will gain more consumers by promoting social responsibility	0.659		
Strategic-Driven 3: They hope to increase profits by supporting social responsibility	0.783		

Note: ^a1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.
 $\chi^2(\text{df}) = 659.29(247)$, $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.669$, $p < 0.001$; RMSEA = 0.058, CFI = 0.93, NFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.94.

attributions scale as developed by Ellen et al. (2006). Conceptually, this construct is different from the other three, in that the wording indicates a certain negative judgment of organizational activities. However, if this connotation is removed, the items are simply reflective of strategic-driven attributions. Previous attribution work by Maignan and Ralston (2002) supports our rationale. Specifically, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) performed by Ellen and colleagues indicated a four-factor model, which they ultimately put forth. Despite the results of the factor analysis though, these findings lack sufficient support for hypothesis testing, as no confirmatory test of this factor structure was performed. The internal consistency of the egoistic factor indicates a level below 0.80, suggesting the work is exploratory, and according to Lance et al. (2006) still requires additional refinement. Since Ellen et al. (2006) failed to perform a confirmatory analysis, the validity and reliability of their model remains unexplored. As well, the reported factor loadings do raise concerns in regards to both discriminant and convergent validity of the individual constructs. Irrespective of validity issues, the wording of the egoistic items raised concerns for us regarding their applicability to organizations operating in a “nonprofit” manner as they are geared toward for-profit entities only. For example, the following items were deemed to be unrepresentative of a nonprofit, NGO: “They are taking advantage of the nonprofit organization to help their own business,” “They are taking advantage of the cause to help their own business,” and “They want it as a tax write-off.”

Ellen et al. (2006) conceptualized their constructs based on two dimensions of CSR: (1) “self-centered” and (2) “other-centered.” It is questionable though whether stakeholders’ attributions should be categorized under the “other-centered” label. After all, many stakeholders could be regarded as having a strong interest and/or stake in the organization, thereby placing stakeholder-driven attributions on the crossroads between the self- and other-centered dimensions. Based on this, we made the choice to remove the egoistic items and confine our analyses to a three-dimensional model. We propose that by limiting ourselves to three attributions, the full spectrum of self- and other-centered motives was covered. Values-driven is regarded as “other-centered”; stakeholder-driven is regarded as balancing

both “self” and “other” centered attributions; while the strategic-driven attributions are seen “self-centered.”

To assess the appropriateness of the scales in this particular setting, reliability and internal consistencies were examined using Cronbach’s Alpha, inter-item correlations, and the item-to-total statistics (Hair et al., 2005). To assess the fit and the relationships in the measurement model, we first conducted a CFA to assess the reliability and validity of the model and the individual constructs. Next, multivariate regression involving path analysis was used to estimate the path coefficients. Our analyses then proceeded in two steps to determine the model’s validity and to assess whether the attributions served as mediators. In the first step, we followed the method outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test mediational linkages (i.e., direct effects) in the measurement model. To establish mediation, three conditions must be met: (1) the dependant variable predicted by the independent variable; (2) the intervening variable predicted by the independent variable; and (3) the dependant variable predicted by the intervening variable. Full mediation occurs if the independent variable has no significant effect on the dependent variable when the intervening variable is controlled or should be reduced in strength for partial mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986). In the second step, Sobel’s (1982, 1986) test was used to determine whether the intervening variables carried the effects of the independent variables onto the dependent variable. Significant *t*-values would indicate the attribution effects were important mediators.

Results

After the removal of incomplete questionnaires, 503 [male: 286 (57%); female: 217 (43%)] people were utilized in the analysis. Respondent ages ranged from 18 to 72 and among the nations represented, the following returned the highest numbers of willing participants: USA = 189 (37.6%), Canada = 45 (8.9%), Australia = 24 (4.8%), Korea = 21 (4.2%), Mexico = 20 (4.0%), England = 19 (3.8%), and Germany = 15 (3.0%). Upon inspection of the means our findings are consistent with prior research (Mohr et al., 2001; Sen et al., 2006), suggesting that

TABLE II
Mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations among study measures

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation matrix								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1. CSR awareness	3.03	0.919	1.00								
2. Reputation	3.73	0.711	0.483**	1.00							
3. Repeat purchase	3.10	1.09	0.382**	0.328**	1.00						
4. Word of mouth	3.62	0.928	0.517**	0.605**	0.369**	1.00					
5. Merchandise consumption	3.80	0.973	0.248**	0.341**	0.195**	0.357**	1.00				
6. Values-driven	3.62	0.805	0.514**	0.450**	0.143**	0.443**	0.214**	1.00			
7. Stakeholder-driven	3.66	0.801	0.319**	0.339**	0.186**	0.270**	0.145**	0.642**	1.00		
8. Strategic-driven	3.62	0.892	0.189**	0.132**	-0.047	0.100**	-0.045	0.252**	0.350**	1.00	

Note: ** $p < 0.001$.

consumer awareness of CSR was generally low (63% of the sample selected either 1 – “strongly disagree” or 2 – “disagree” on the CSR awareness items). The mean scores for the other constructs were above the scale midpoints (see Table II).

The reliabilities of the individual constructs were robust, all Cronbach’s Alpha scores exceeded 0.70, there were no problematic correlations between the items and all item-to-total statistics were above the 0.50 cutoff (Hair et al., 2005). The overall generic model supports our proposition revealing an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.669, p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.93; NFI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.058; SRMR = 0.049). We conducted two tests to ensure that our constructs were acting independently. The first discriminant validity test was based on the squared correlations relative to the AVE score for each construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). None of the squared correlations exceeded the lowest AVE score (0.54), thereby fulfilling the requirements of this test. The second discriminant validity test was conducted on all pairs of constructs whose correlation exceeded 0.30. Each pair of constructs was not perfectly correlated, providing further evidence that discrimination among the constructs was achieved (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Test of direct effects

Baron and Kenny’s (1986) procedure was followed to test for relationships between awareness, patron-

age intentions, and reputation as well as the influence of the attributions. As mentioned, multivariate regression analyses were used to assess the path structure of the regression models. To reduce the risk of correlated errors, the regressions were conducted in a step-wise fashion. Model 1, the paths from the independent variable (awareness) to the dependent variables (patronage intentions and reputation) were all in the positive direction and significant ($\beta_{repeat} = 0.482, R^2 = 0.23, p < 0.001$), ($\beta_{word-of-mouth} = 0.654, R^2 = 0.42, p < 0.001$), ($\beta_{merchandise} = 0.103, R^2 = 0.32, p < 0.001$), ($\beta_{reputation} = 0.539, R^2 = 0.29, p < 0.001$). Model 2, the paths from the independent variable (awareness) to the intervening (attributions) variables were also significant ($\beta_{values} = 0.353, R^2 = 0.13, p < 0.001$), ($\beta_{stakeholder} = 0.374, R^2 = 0.14, p < 0.001$), ($\beta_{strategic} = -0.175, R^2 = 0.03, p < 0.001$). Model 3, when examining the paths from the intervening variables (attributions) to the dependent variables (patronage and reputation), 8 of the 12 paths were found to be significant (see Table III, “Direct” Column). The significant paths provide support for the first and second conditions of Baron and Kenny’s (1986) criteria for mediation but only partially support the third condition.

Test of mediation

Given the direct effects results, we explored mediation along the eight significant pathways (see

TABLE III
Results of the mediated regression analysis^a

Paths (a → b → c)	Direct effects (a → c)	Full mediation	Sobel <i>t</i> -test
Awareness → Values → WOM	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.001$
Awareness → Values → Repeat	ns	No	–
Awareness → Values → Merchandise	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.05$
Awareness → Values → Reputation	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.001$
Awareness → Stakeholder → WOM	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.001$
Awareness → Stakeholder → Repeat	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.001$
Awareness → Stakeholder → Merchandise	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.05$
Awareness → Stakeholder → Reputation	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.001$
Awareness → Strategic → WOM	ns	No	–
Awareness → Strategic → Repeat	$p < 0.001$	Yes	$p < 0.05$
Awareness → Strategic → Merchandise	ns	No	–
Awareness → Strategic → Reputation	ns	No	–

Note: ^a $n = 503$.

ns = not significant.

Table III). Baron and Kenny’s (1986) first condition for mediation requires that the independent and dependent variables in an analysis be significantly related. Due to the insignificant relationships in step three (see “Direct Effect Model” column in Table III), the testing results provide only partial support for Baron and Kenny’s (1986) third condition. However, the real strength of mediation is determined after controlling for the mediating variables (consumer attributions). When this control is performed, the impact of the predictor (CSR awareness) on the dependent variables (patronage intentions) should no longer be significant for full mediation or should be reduced in strength for partial mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986, p. 1177). When this was done, the patronage outcomes were all nonsignificant suggesting the attributions fully mediated the relationship (see “Full Mediation” column in Table III). Sobel’s (1982, 1986) test confirmed this result as significant *t*-values across the outcomes indicated the attributions were important mediators in the model (see Table III).

Competing models

After determining the path structure, a rival-models comparison was performed to identify the model representing the best fit. The comparison was between three models in which CSR awareness carried

direct effects in addition to the indirect effects associated with the attributions. The three competing models were (Model A) the fully mediated model (the three attributions as mediators); (Model B) the partially mediated model (model when the attributions were controlled); and (Model C) the nonmediation model (no direct effects on the attributions). Model “C” was immediately ruled out due to an unacceptable fit. However, Model “A” produced a marginally better fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.693$, $p = 0.000$; RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.50, GFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.94) than Model “B” ($\chi^2/df = 3.268$, $p = 0.000$; RMSEA = 0.067, SRMR = 0.56, GFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.92). Due to the similarity of the model testing results (and beyond simply “eye-balling” the fit indices), we used two additional criteria to determine the best fit: (1) the percentage of significant paths and (2) parsimony, as measured by the PNFI index. With the exception of the nonmediation model (which fit the data significantly worse than the two other competing models), Model “B” had fewer significant paths than Model “A” and was less parsimonious.

Hypothesis testing summary

Figure 2 represents the path structure for the fully mediated model. As expected, CSR awareness pos-

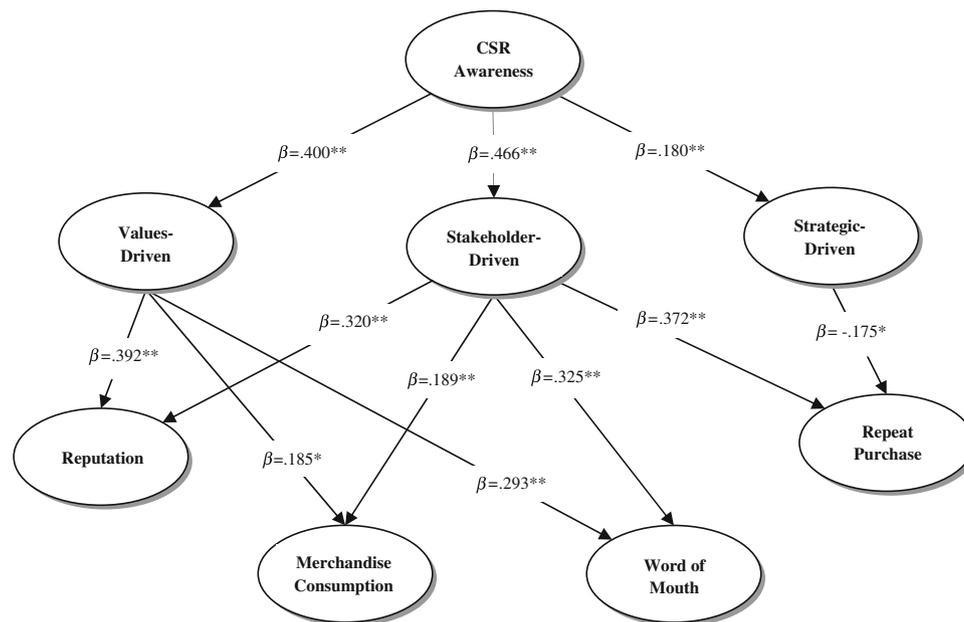


Figure 2. Fully mediated model. Note: $\chi^2(df) = 608.690(226)$, $\chi^2/df = 2.693$, $p = 0.000$; RMSEA = 0.058, GFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.93.

itively predicted patronage intentions and reputation when mediated by one of the three attributions. A major tenet of this research was the central role of consumer attributions in the CSR awareness–reputation–patronage relationship. The hypothesis testing results (see Table IV) fully support H1 in that the attributions fully mediated the model. Second, the positive effects seen for values-driven (H2_a) and stakeholder-driven (H2_b), as well as the negative effect seen for strategic-driven attributions (H2_c), lend support to our directional hypothesis. Third, the results partially support H3 in that overall positive effects on reputation were seen for stakeholder-driven ($\beta = 0.320$, $p < 0.001$) and values-driven ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$) attributions; however, no negative effects resulted from the strategic-driven attributions. Fourth, the results support H4 because positive effects for both stakeholder-driven and values-driven attributions on patronage intentions were seen, as well as one negative effect for strategic-driven attributions (see Figure 2).

Discussion

This research examined the mediational role of consumer attributions on consumer responses. We

extended the research on CSR-induced attributions (in the NGO context), positing them as indirectly influencing patronage intentions and reputation. The motives that Olympic consumers ascribed to the IOC's CSR initiatives were examined in the real marketplace to construct an externally valid picture of this seemingly complex phenomenon. In doing so, we sought to clarify if and how both negative and positive connotations of the IOC were reflected in consumers' attributions directed toward the organization. Our work revealed that within a NGO context, stakeholder-driven and values-driven attributions (as opposed to strategic-driven attributions) toward CSR may be more profound than within a business context and can influence both relational (i.e., reputation) and transactional (i.e., patronage intentions) consumer responses.

Among the most interesting findings was that CSR awareness had a greater effect on stakeholder ($\beta = 0.466$) and values-driven ($\beta = 0.400$) than on strategic-driven attributions ($\beta = 0.180$).

This implies that raising consumer awareness of CSR might influence their perception from a stakeholder- and/or values-driven perspective but it will not alter their strategic-driven perception. Any new information perceived through this attribution is essentially ignored and reaffirms the consumers'

TABLE IV
Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Key findings	Conclusion
H ₁	The CSR awareness → outcomes (i.e., patronage and reputation) relationship is better understood through the mediating influence of stakeholder-, values-, and strategic-driven attributions	Hypothesis supported
H ₂	Stakeholder- and values-driven attributions resulted in positive effects on the outcomes while one negative effect was seen for strategic-driven attributions	Hypothesis partially supported
H ₃	Stakeholder- and values-driven attributions yielded positive effects on the consumers' perceived reputation of the IOC	Hypothesis partially supported
H ₄	Positive effects on patronage intentions were seen for both stakeholder- and values-driven attributions; and one negative effect was seen for repeat patronage	Hypothesis supported

perception of the motives of the organization for CSR activities. When the IOC's consumers assigned either stakeholder- or values-driven attributions to CSR, the influence on both reputation and patronage was far more impactful. Du et al. (2007) found similar results concluding that consumers are more responsive (or sensitive) to favorable CSR attributes (i.e., intrinsic attributes such as a company's record for CSR). However, the weak positive relationship between CSR awareness and strategic-driven attributions indicates that those consumers who view an action undertaken by the IOC for strategic reasons may not be easily converted to support more altruistic beliefs. In fact, it might strengthen their current view of the organization thereby reducing any positive CSR effects that exist. This finding extends the results of Vlachos et al. (2009) who found that suspicious consumers tend to entertain mainly negative CSR attributions, which can negatively influence both internal and external responses. Thus, the suspicion that CSR may, for some consumers, serve as a fashionable label rather than a substantive concept derives from the view that perceived instrumental motives underlying CSR actions diminish favorability toward CSR. Even though IOC consumers expect the organization to behave in socially acceptable ways due to their "Olympism" moniker, they do feel their actions to be motivated at least in part by self-interest. More specifically, when consumers elaborated on CSR awareness and connected an attribute, the idea of suspicion and elements of the persuasion knowledge

model (Friestad and Wright, 1994, 1995) may partially explain their responses. This model describes how people's previous knowledge of organizational goals impacts their response to persuasion attempts. For example, when the consumers regarded CSR as strategic (i.e., self-interested), it had either no impact on patronage intentions, or when it came to repeat purchase – it had a negative impact. Therefore, when consumers perceive CSR to be implemented for self-centered reasons, it loses effectiveness and can even result in negative responses (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Vlachos et al., 2009). However, further work still remains to clarify the conditions under which such positive and negative attributions toward CSR will or will not affect consumer intentions and behaviors.

Another explanation for the strong mediational influence of stakeholder- and values-driven attributions might be caused by the NGO context of our study and may also be a result of the pressures imposed by the IOC's stakeholders and society to undertake CSR-related activities for an internal, normative reason (i.e., the "right thing to do") rather than purely strategic (i.e., selfish) reasons. However, this attitudinal pattern seems to still personally resonate with the respondents and is not really affected by self-centered motives because consumers may simply believe in the IOC. Due to the nature of the IOC's operations, consumers may expect adherence to their nonprofit roots, as opposed to for-profit sport organizations (e.g., Nike), for which consumers expect to focus on strategic issues to increase their competitive advantage.

Due to the history and origin of the IOC, its consumers expect it to act on behalf of its stakeholders and society in general. Consequently, if the IOC (a non-profit organization) is seen undertaking activities which society mostly associates with for-profit organizations (i.e., self-centered), consumer intentions and behaviors could be negatively impacted. This has wider-reaching implications for other global NGOs to stay true to their original stated purpose.

Another noteworthy finding was the strong and positive influence that stakeholder-driven attributions had on the outcomes. We believe the reason behind such strong predictive power of this attribution set to be twofold. First, the IOC (as with many global NGOs) is surrounded by a number of stakeholders (e.g., governments, national and international sport organizations, media, and sponsors) who are important to the operations of the organization. All of these stakeholders may carry expectations that the IOC performs in their best interests similar to other global NGOs (e.g., UNESCO). This became apparent during the 2002 Salt Lake City Games when allegations of bribery and bidding scandals changed the bidding rules for all subsequent Olympic Games. These changes forced the IOC to reevaluate its own organization, thereby distancing itself from some of its members (Jennings, 2000). It appears that self-serving activities of the IOC are indeed monitored and can be influenced by key stakeholders, representing a form of control that is rewarded by consumers. Therefore, the strong relationship between stakeholder-driven attributions and the outcomes may only be specific to this study, and the results may be limited to organizations similar to the IOC (e.g., FIFA, IAAF, United Nations, UNESCO, etc.). Second, it could be a result of our sampling, which may constitute an inherent limitation when studying organizations like the IOC. The questionnaires were distributed to the visitors of the 2008 Games; and upon reflection, many of these individuals – in line with stakeholder theory – might actually have been (directly or indirectly) connected to the IOC (irrespective of our screening processes). For example, the respondents could have been associated with the IOC's corporate partners, members of the media, or other professional associations indirectly connected to the Games. This rationale supports the general trend in the organizational literature suggesting that stake-

holders play a more central role than previously thought (Parent, 2008). In fact, today, the media (53% of total revenues) and corporate sponsors (34% of total revenues) have replaced the traditional consumer (11% of total revenues) as the main source of revenue for the organization (International Olympic Committee, 2009b).

Contributions to attribution theory

From an attribution theory perspective, CSR activities undertaken by the IOC are driven by the organization's hope that consumers will draw certain correspondent inferences (Yoon et al., 2006). Thus, when observing an organization that supports worthwhile causes, consumers will hopefully attribute positive motives to the organization, thereby fostering or improving its reputation. Our findings support this rationale by illustrating the significant influence that attributions have on consumer intentions and attitudes. However, our findings go against the propositions in the product/brand literature (Weiner, 2000), as well as the CSR-based attribution literature (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2001; Klein and Dawar, 2004), suggesting that consumers' attributions are more pronounced following negative rather than positive information. For example, Bhattacharya and Sen (2001) found consumers' company evaluations to be more sensitive to negative CSR information than positive CSR information. The attributional principle of subjective likelihood addresses this positive/negative issue, stating that if an attribution (whether positive or negative) is ascribed to a positive and stable cause (one that is enduring over time) then the same outcome will be anticipated in the future. On the other hand, ascription to an unstable cause (one that is temporary and perhaps socially irresponsible) will diminish or negatively impact the attributed response almost immediately (Weiner, 2000).

Given these ideas, and in contrast to the work of Ellen et al. (2006), we expected strategic-driven attributions to negatively influence the outcomes due to the negative media attention given to the IOC in the months and weeks preceding the Games (e.g., Tibet and the environment). Ricks (2005) argued that when organizations react to negative information, it is likely to result in some level of

negative affect for the consumer, which may overshadow a previously held positive view of the organization. This could be partially explained by subjective likelihood. For example, the issues surrounding the Games only received attention in the months preceding the Games (versus tickets being typically sold over a year in advance). Thus, the beliefs that Olympic consumers held were not influenced to the extent an impact on the outcomes could be seen, and 2 years between Games, may weaken any previously held negative perceptions of the IOC. Although the act of supporting CSR may seem to be a public serving action, consumers' perceptions of stakeholder- and values-driven motivations drove their evaluations of the IOC. Our findings also confirmed (at least in this context) that a motive viewed as strategic can lead to a negative firm-level outcome. While Ellen et al. (2006) found that strategic attributions yielded positive consumer responses (i.e., when both strategic- and values-driven motives were attributed simultaneously), when testing the multiplicative effects of the attributions, we found them to be mutually exclusive – that is – consumers only assigned one set of attributions to the IOC.

While empirical evidence suggests that organizations with poor CSR records experience significantly negative consequences when their records become public (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), this was seemingly not the case even in light of the negative publicity directed toward the IOC and BOCOG. Apparently, even if consumers were aware of any efforts to deflect negativity surrounding the Games, it had no substantive influence (other than a negative effect on repeat purchase). Perhaps the IOC's Olympism values and brand/reputation may (now) be strong enough to weather periodic negative press.

Implications

From the results, a few notable conclusions emerged. First, one of the unique contributions of this article was the use of the attribution literature to assess consumer perceptions of CSR performed by a nonprofit, global, NGO. There is growing interest among NGO managers in the antecedents and consequence of CSR. These corporate managers are

mindful that business norms and standards, regulatory frameworks, and stakeholder demand for CSR can vary substantially across nations, regions, and lines of business. They are also aware that their divisional managers are under constant pressure from employees, suppliers, community groups, and the government to increase their involvement in CSR. However, research on the nonprofit side of the NGO equation is relatively under-researched. In particular, little is known about the effects that CSR initiatives might have on nonprofits or, moreover, how the typical consumer ascribes the motives behind the social engagement of these entities. Despite the obvious benefits to the beneficiaries of the organizations, CSR initiatives can be particularly risky for nonprofits, which usually are (by their nature) less powerful organizations, and CSR strategies may not ultimately serve the nonprofit's long-term interests (Lichtenstein et al., 2004). It is important not only that nonprofits benefit from CSR initiatives but the perceived motives of these initiatives are of equal merit.

The consumer attributions were identified as a route through which CSR awareness is related to consumer patronage and reputation. Our results of the significant CSR awareness → attributions → intentions/reputation causal chain suggest that the IOC's social responsibility could significantly influence the perceived motives underlying CSR, and those perceived motives mediate the transactional (i.e., patronage) and relational (i.e., reputation) rewards accrued for the IOC. These mediating effects are important for three reasons. First, by using the attributions as mediators our work extends the CSR literature by using a relatively new (and still emerging) construct in the CSR awareness–outcome relationship. Although prior work has noted that CSR awareness could and should affect stakeholders' perceived organizational motives, the construct has not until recently been empirically examined. Second, the CSR awareness → attributions → patronage/reputation causal chain extends the attribution literature by revealing that CSR awareness can be an important antecedent (albeit weakly) to the attributions posited by Ellen et al. (2006). Third, the relationship from CSR awareness to the attributions to intentions/reputation suggests that achieving positively perceived motives behind CSR engagement represents one of the underlying path-

ways through which consumer patronage and perceived reputation on the basis of CSR awareness is realized.

Second, and also regarding to the attributions, a conceptual contribution of this work pertains the manner in which the attributions were measured. We revised the Ellen et al. (2006) attribution framework making it congruent with previous conceptual work in this area. The authors introduced four dimensions to the attribution framework (in lieu of several preceding three-dimensional models), but failed to support this both conceptually and empirically. By removing the egoistic construct, this study resulted in a strong three-dimensional model that is applicable to nonprofit NGOs as well as for-profit organizations. In addition, this article makes the distinction between awareness and the attributions, acknowledging them as mediators rather than indicators of CSR awareness. This makes conceptual sense, in that there must first be awareness of CSR to elicit any positive and/or negative responses from organizational stakeholders. In essence, awareness was revealed as an important antecedent to any attributions that consumers/stakeholders might assign to the organization. However, given the low mean score for CSR awareness it appears that even being mildly aware of CSR can still be impactful for the organization.

Third (from a practical perspective), the IOC should emphasize the importance of consumer perceptions of the motives behind their engagement in social outreach. Consumer responses to CSR are often dependent on information about the programs (Mohr and Webb, 2005). While many organizations (including the IOC) communicate the “good” things they are doing, consumer skepticism of organizational communication is high, making these communications of suspect value – especially regarding the heightened attention surrounding the 2008 Games. For firms that wish to derive the most benefit from their CSR initiatives, our findings confirm that while awareness of CSR is a key determinate for the attribution effects, consumer awareness of such initiatives was rather low. This finding illustrates that many consumers are completely unaware of the breadth of CSR activities with which the IOC was involved (illustrated by the low mean score for CSR awareness; $M = 3.03$). In general, the level of information regarding most

CSR initiatives is often forwarded by the firm through the media or even activists seeking to discredit the organization (McWilliams et al., 2006) through biased reporting that cannot be controlled (Parent and Foreman, 2007). Based on this, IOC executives should develop communication strategies that provide details to salient stakeholder groups about how their organization has addressed various social issues (Porter and Kramer, 2006), specifically focused on values-driven and stakeholder-driven attributions. Further, our results indicate that organizations operating in similar contexts to the IOC should strategically integrate CSR into their competitive positioning by designing programs that reinforce consumers’ perceptions of CSR working for them or benefiting society. This tactic may assuage any negative effects that strategically perceived motives might potentially evoke.

Conclusions

Taken together, this study stresses the importance of incorporating attribution judgments of the consumer into the evaluation of organizational CSR practices. Each of the attributions had a unique influence on the outcomes, and it appears important for the IOC to fully understand what attributions consumers attach to their CSR initiatives. In particular, when consumers perceive CSR to be implemented for strategic reasons, the effectiveness of the CSR falls away and can even cause “diminishing returns” for the organization. The apparent disconnect between, notably, the attributed motives toward the IOC’s activities, their core values, and stakeholder pressure to perform in an international context seems to point to a more complex relationship which certainly requires further study. Our results suggest that real-world consumers possess limited awareness of CSR activities but when certain attributions were attached as salient cues, the IOC capitalized through patronage and reputation. The presence of favorable attributions that may be unique to the IOC is critical to the overall success of their CSR strategy. For example, when CSR becomes more prominent, IOC leaders would do well to consider positioning the messages toward organizational values and relevant stakeholders so they contribute to the cycle of organizational success. Conversely, messages deliv-

ered at the strategic level may push consumers to perceive them as tactical maneuvers designed to mislead, which would also run contrary to NGOs' perceived core purpose.

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