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## Refining the relation between cause-related marketing and consumers purchase intentions

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*Original Citation:*

*Availability:*

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1736724> since 2021-12-10T11:22:34Z

*Published version:*

DOI:10.1108/IMR-11-2018-0322

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**Refining the relation between Cause Related Marketing and consumers purchase intentions: a cross-country analysis**

Journal:	<i>International Marketing Review</i>
Manuscript ID	IMR-11-2018-0322.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	CRM, cause related marketing, Consumer Behaviour, moderators, Cross-cultural studies, International marketing

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Tab 1: Items used to investigate the independent and mediating variables

Construct	Items	References
Purchase intentions (PI)	PI <sub>1</sub> : The next time you need a product of the same category of the new one just said, how likely are you to purchase it by this specific company?" PI <sub>2</sub> : How satisfied would you be with purchasing the new product?" PI <sub>3</sub> : How likely would you be to purchase other products of the same company?"	Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012) Putrevu and Lord (1994) MacKenzie and Lutz, (1989)
CRM personal approach (CRM)	PA <sub>1</sub> : Positive/Negative attitudes toward CRM	Koshate-Fischer, Stefano and Hoyer (2012)
Perception of CRM goal achievement (GA)	GA <sub>1</sub> : Positive/Negative perception to add value to the cause GA <sub>2</sub> : Positive/Negative perception to help the cause GA <sub>3</sub> : Positive/Negative perception to contribute to the cause	Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012)
Brand-fit (BF)	BF <sub>1</sub> : Extremely poor/Extremely good perception of the coherence between the cause and the Company	Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012)
Brand-use (BU)	BU <sub>1</sub> : Purchase frequency	Nelson and Vilela (2017)
Gender (G)	G <sub>1</sub> : Female/Male	Balabanis and Siamagka, (2017)

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Table 2 - Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. CRM	3.22	.88	(.77)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. GA	2.91	1.02	.32***	(.74)	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. BF	2.33	0.78	.08*	.24	(.81)	-	-	-	-	-
4. BU	3.87	0.67	.09*	.03*	.21***	(.88)	-	-	-	-
5. G	.43	.54	.18**	.09	.09	.23	(.82)	-	-	-
6. Age	1.84	1.45	.07*	.14	.11*	.14*	.04	(.79)	-	-
7. Educational Background	5.66	1.89	.11*	.19	.19*	.06*	.06	.03	(.83)	-
8. PI	4.31	1.55	.43***	.18**	.11*	.14**	.06*	.09*	.013*	(.80)

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Table 3 – Results of the regression analysis

Variable	Italian Consumers Purchase Intentions			Brazilian Consumers Purchase Intentions		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
CRM		0.21 **	0.22 **		0.15 **	0.17 **
GA	0.07 *	0.11 *	0.17 *	0.09	0.10	0.11
BF	-0.06	-0.11	0.12	0.08 *	0.10 *	0.15 *
BU	-0.08	-0.05	0.04	0.07 *	0.07 *	0.12 *
G	0.12 *	0.18 *	0.19 *	0.07 *	0.09 *	0.12 *
CRM x GA			0.33 **			0.09
CRM x BF			0.11 *			0.16 *
CRM x BU			- 0.14			- 0.25 **
CRM x G			0.31 **			0.12 *
Age	0.06 *	0.17 *	0.05 *	0.09	0.12	0.12
Educational Background	0.12	0.02	0.04	0.04 *	0.02 *	0.04 *
R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.43	0.59	0.15	0.22	0.29
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.35	0.50	0.12	0.20	0.26
F-value	2.46 *	4.67 **	7.12 **	2.16 *	3.21 **	4.58 **

\* P<.05

\*\* P<.01

# Refining the relation between Cause Related Marketing and consumers purchase intentions: a cross-country analysis

## Abstract

Cause Related Marketing (CRM) is an ever growing marketing strategy developed by companies that may result in a win-win-win strategy for business, non-profit organizations and society. However, the specific relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions have been analyzed in a fragmented way within the mainstream literature. Grounding on this, the aim of this paper is to give a more comprehensive view of this phenomenon, testing the effect of several moderators on the relationships between CRM and consumers purchase intentions in two different countries. Our sample consists of 234 Italian (individualistic culture) and 164 Brazilian (collectivist culture) consumers surveyed online. Ordinary Least Squares analysis has been carried out in order to test the moderator effects hypothesized. Regarding Italian respondents, we found positive evidences for moderator effects of the perception of CRM goal achievement, brand-fit and gender. On the contrary, we did not find a significant moderator effect of brand-use while we found it significant but negative for Brazilian respondents. Moreover, we found that the perception of CRM goal achievement does not moderate the aforementioned relationship for Brazilians while brand-fit and gender still have positive effects. Thus, a more fine grained picture of the CRM-purchase intentions relationships have been provided through the empirical test of several moderators, finding different effects on individualistic (Italians) and collectivist (Brazilians) culture, thus deriving interesting implications in the international marketing field of research.

Keywords: Cause Related Marketing, Consumers purchase intentions, Perceptions of CRM goal achievement, Brand-fit, Gender, Brand-use, Cross-country analysis

## 1. Introduction

The scientific debate on corporate social responsibility and consumer expectations has thoroughly analyzed the relationship between economic and social performance of companies (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; De Abreu et al., 2012; Bresciani et al., 2016). In this context, a key question is to what extent consumers are willing to reward good corporate behavior through their consumption decisions (Beckmann et al., 2006; Moosmayer and Fuljahn, 2010; Vrontis et al., 2017).

Driven by the consumer demand for companies to be socially responsible, cause-related marketing (CRM) is a kind of corporate social responsibility initiative (Chatzoglou et al., 2017), fundraising innovation (Docherty and Hibbert, 2003) or marketing strategy (Robinson, Irmak, and Jayachandran, 2012) that has become very attractive in recent years. In CRM, companies “join with charities or ‘causes’ to market a product or service for mutual benefit” (Krishna, 2011). Several studies connected CRM to innovation (Christofi et al., 2014; Christofi et al., 2015a,b), to strategy and competitive advantage (Christofi et al., 2013) and obviously to different aspects of marketing (Docherty and Hibbert, 2003). As these studies pointed out, a purchase by consumers generates a donation by the firm to a non-profit organization. The resulting partnerships between firms and non-profit organizations can raise significant funds for the latter supporting a social cause and, at the same time, improving performance for businesses (Grolleau et al., 2016; Bonfanti et al., 2018). A basic assumption has been that when it works effectively, CRM is convenient for everyone resulting in a win-win-win strategy because: a) firms increase sales and improve their image (Hawkins, 2012); b) non-profit organizations boost public awareness, images and donation amount, also targeting consumers who are not direct donors (Wymer and Samu, 2009; Michaelidou et al., 2015); and c) consumers benefit from using the product and from the pleasure derived from donating to a cause (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Altıntas et al., 2017).

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3 A growing number of scholars put the attention on how CRM may be practically more effective in  
4 order to find out which are the factors that influence the success of these initiatives (e.g. Pracejus et  
5 al., 2004). In fact, many companies are nowadays engaging in CRM activities developing some  
6 targeted marketing campaigns, which suggests that in practice CRM may achieve positive results.  
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12 However, despite the ever growing attention and real life examples within the nowadays society,  
13 scholars and researchers developed fragmented pieced of research on the heterogeneous factors that  
14 improve the effectiveness of CRM, in particular those affecting the specific relationship between  
15 CRM and consumers purchase intentions.  
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21 Previous research have described some specific aspects or enabling factors in the context of CRM  
22 initiatives, generally focusing on the study of one or a couple of them that can alter different kinds of  
23 consumer behaviors, such as customer attitudes, consumer reactions, consumer perceptions of CRM  
24 or of firm behaviors. For example, Grau and Folse (2007) showed the importance of donation  
25 proximity and message framing on CRM campaign attitudes and participation intentions of less-  
26 involved consumers. The work of Nelson and Vilela (2017) discussed about the different response to  
27 a CRM campaign in relation to gender and to be a brand user or not. Furthermore, Koshate-Fisher,  
28 Stefan and Hoyer (2012) argued and found evidence of a positive relationship between the company's  
29 donation amount and customers' willingness to pay. Moreover, Pracejus and Olsen (2004) proposed  
30 the role of the fit between the company and the charity in improving the effectiveness of cause related  
31 marketing campaigns. Furthermore, Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012) introduced a  
32 component of choice in the CRM campaign, so that the company can give a part of the value spent to  
33 buy the product to a charity chosen by the consumer.  
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51 Taking this scenario as a starting point, this study develops and empirically tests a model aimed at  
52 analyzing the impact of CRM on consumers purchase intentions, pondering the leverage of four  
53 moderator factors which can affect positively or negatively the relationships between CRM (as  
54 independent variable) and consumers purchase intentions. In doing so, we grounded on mainstream  
55 literature on the determinants of CRM consumer perceptions considering the following factors: the  
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3 perception of CRM goal achievement, the brand-fit, the brand use, and the gender of target  
4 consumers.  
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7 More specifically, this research widens the previous literature on CRM effectiveness in three main  
8 ways. Firstly, the literature proposes only few articles that document the consumers' reaction to a  
9 CRM message in relation to different variables simultaneously. In this sense, the present research  
10 contributes to the literature by exploring several factors that affect/moderate the relation between  
11 CRM and consumer buying behavior, in order to define a broader analysis scheme of the  
12 phenomenon. While gender and brand-cause fit have been widely addressed in other CRM studies  
13 (e.g. Chéron et al., 2012; Anuar and Mohamad, 2011), only few of them have investigated the  
14 perception of these factors as moderators of the CRM-purchase intentions behavior. Moreover, the  
15 perception of CRM goal achievement and brand use have been addressed by a very limited range of  
16 studies in this context of analysis (two notables exception are Robinson et al., 2012 and Nelson and  
17 Vilela, 2017 under different circumstances and relationships) and there is a need to better understand  
18 these factors within the aforementioned relationship.  
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34 Secondly, this study intends to pioneer efforts to analyze consumer behavior variations from a cross-  
35 cultural standpoint (Kipnis et al., 2014) and to address key questions relevant to the development of  
36 a cross-cultural marketing strategy (Engelen et al., 2011). Thus, we extend literature on consumer  
37 buying behavior by providing evidence on the impact of a collectivistic vs. individualistic value set.  
38 This is an important contribution due to the fact that not many cross-cultural studies have been  
39 provided in the CRM field of research (e.g. La Ferle et al., 2013).  
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50 Thirdly and connected to the second, we empirically test the moderating effect of the perception of  
51 CRM goal achievement, the brand-fit, the brand use and the gender of target consumers in two  
52 different contextual setting analyzing consumer behavior in individualistic (Italians) and collectivist  
53 (Brazilians) countries (see Hofstede, 1984). In collectivist societies, people subordinate their  
54 individual goals to the mission of the collective; on another hand, in individualistic societies people  
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3 are used to place the personal goals ahead of the in-group goals (Triandis, 1987). Hence, the  
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5 geographical contexts of analysis may provide original contribution for the international marketing  
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7 discipline, highlighting how cultural differences impact on CRM and consumers behaviors  
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9 (Vaidyanathan, 2013). Moreover, Italian and Brazilian contexts of analysis have been scarcely  
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11 addressed in the CRM literature and this is quite unusual because many studies on related topics, such  
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13 as CSR, have been deeply investigated in these specific geographical regions (e.g. Perrini et al., 2007;  
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15 de Abreu et al., 2012; Santoro et al., 2019) addressing cultural and geographical characteristics as  
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17 relevant factors.  
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22 Our analysis is based on an online survey on 234 Italian and 161 Brazilian respondents. We found  
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24 interestingly heterogeneous results that showed different consumers behavior, deriving insights and  
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26 CRM implications for international marketing scholars and managers. The rest of the paper has been  
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28 organized as follows: first, cause-related marketing has been introduced and some studies on its  
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30 impact on consumers purchase intentions have been provided; second, several hypothesis regarding  
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32 different moderator factors on the above relationship have been propose; third, the research design  
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34 along with the variables used in the study has been proposed. In the last section results of our analysis  
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36 have been presented as well as their discussion and implications, limitations and future lines of  
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38 research.  
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## 45 **2. Literature backbone and hypothesis development**

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47 American Express is generally credited with pioneering the concept of “cause-related marketing”,  
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49 phrase coined by their marketing people in 1983, raising funds to restore the Statue of Liberty (Ross  
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51 et al., 1991). The first conceptualization of CRM, instead, is from Varadarajan and Menon (1988, p.  
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53 80): “Cause-Related Marketing is the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities  
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55 that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specific amount to a designated cause  
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57 when customers engage in revenue providing exchanges that satisfy organizational individual  
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3 objectives". This amount is generally presented as a percentage of the donated price; nonetheless, it  
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5 is becoming increasingly common to specify the contribution in absolute terms (e.g. "2 euros donated  
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7 for each unit sold") (Chang, 2008). For example, in 2008, Starbucks donated 50 cents per sale of  
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9 exclusive RED Starbucks beverages to the Global Fund for the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and  
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11 malaria.  
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14 CRM campaigns include a specific corporate social proposal, characterized by a constant  
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16 involvement in prosocial behavior through distinct initiatives designed to improve the sustainability  
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18 and responsibility of its products (Andreoni, 1989; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998; Arora and  
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20 Henderson, 2007; Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran, 2012). Previous research carried out in CRM  
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22 has reported that consumers have particularly favorable attitudes towards CRM, companies in support  
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24 of social causes and charitable organizations sponsored by CRM (e.g. Boenigk and Schuchardt, 2013;  
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26 Ladero et al., 2015). These positive attitudes can affect consumers' purchases for particular firms and  
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28 products and generate awareness for a particular social cause (Bigné-Alcañiz, Curras-Perez, Ryuz-  
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30 Mafe, and Sanz-Blas, 2012; Human and Terblanche, 2012). Employing a sample of 100 students,  
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32 Nan and Heo (2007) demonstrated that an advertisement containing a CRM message generated more  
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34 favorable attitudes toward the company than those exposed to a message with no CRM.  
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40 In the past, some surveys have been carried out to find out consumer perceptions about CRM. For  
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42 instance, Ross et al. (1992) reported that almost half of their sample had purchased a product or  
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44 service because of their desire to support a social cause. In a telephone survey, Smith and Alcorn  
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46 (1991) showed that almost half of respondents interviewed would probably switch brands to support  
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48 companies that give money to nonprofit organizations. More recently, Demetriou, Papasolomou, and  
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50 Demetriou (2010) interviewed 820 people in Cyprus, outlining that most of the consumers still await  
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52 companies to be sincerely involved in corporate social responsibility and, more specifically, in cause-  
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54 related marketing. Chang and Cheng (2015) analyzed the psychological antecedents of the consumer  
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56 skepticism toward advertising in CRM finding different mindsets related to the positive or negative  
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58 consumer perceptions.  
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Moreover, some academics (i.e., Wymer and Samu, 2009; Christofi et al., 2018) observed increasing purchase intentions for products linked to CRM, in particular when consumers felt that the cause was relevant to them. Thus, from many studies CRM programs favorably influence consumers' purchase intentions (Chéron et al., 2012; Ladero et al., 2015).

Thus, previous research has proven that CRM can affect customers' behaviors and purchase intentions (e.g. Arora and Henderson, 2007; Chang, 2008; Grolleau et al., 2016; Hawkins, 2012; Nan and Heo, 2007; Pracejus and Olsen, 2004).

In line with what has been said, we propose that consumers mature mostly positive attitudes towards CRM, that reflect on companies supporting the social causes and the charity itself (Boenigk and Schuchardt, 2013; Ladero et al., 2015; Nan and Heo, 2007). These favorable attitudes affect the consumers' purchases intentions of interested firms and its product, thanks to the involvement with the proposed social cause (Bigné-Alcañiz, Curras-Perez, Ryuz-Mafe, and Sanz-Blas, 2012; Human and Terblanche, 2012).

So, we propose the following:

*Baseline hypothesis: CRM positively impacts consumers purchase intentions*

However, the outcomes of a cause-related marketing program are significantly affected by several related factors. In this section we propose different variables that may have an impact on consumers purchases of a product sponsored by a CRM campaign. These are: a) the perception of CRM goal achievement, b) brand-fit, c) brand-use, and d) gender.

### *2.1 Perception of CRM goal achievement*

Since cause-related marketing is “characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives” (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988, p. 80), the understanding of consumer subjective feelings and perception of CRM objectives achievement is assuming a

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3 strategic role. As a matter of fact, the perceived contribution of the campaign to the cause is of high  
4 importance, as this may influence the campaign's success as well as the way in which organizations  
5 are perceived by the consumer.  
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10 *Perception of CRM goal achievement* refers to the proximity to the cause objectives (Drumwright  
11 and Murphy, 2001; Robinson et al., 2012). This has a strong impact on how consumers perceive their  
12 personal role in supporting the campaign objectives achievement. In fact, when the target is perceived  
13 as close, people are likely to feel their choice of a product related to a cause as more relevant given  
14 that the contribution given from the customer to the cause is a relatively high percentage of the  
15 remaining amount that the charity has to collect (Förster, Higgins and Idson, 1998) and thus moves  
16 the charity considerably closer to achieve its objective being making more effective and of value the  
17 contribution (Robinson et al., 2012).  
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28 On the contrary, when the objective is farther away, the personal role perceived in supporting the  
29 cause to reach its target is probably low, since the contribution would leave the charity far from its  
30 declared objective (Koo and Fishbach, 2008). Moreover, when the CRM goal is distant from its target,  
31 people may feel that they are spending their money unhelpfully and this could reduce the value and  
32 the proven sense of participation in the CRM program (Norton, Mochon and Ariely, 2012).  
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40 Thus, we hypothesize that:  
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44 Hypothesis 1: the closer the perception of CRM goal achievement, the higher is the effect of CRM  
45 on consumers purchase intentions.  
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## 51 *2.2 Brand-fit*

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53 As several authors pointed out, company's responsible initiative can add value, trust and reputation  
54 to products, improving their legitimacy (Porter and Kramer, 2002). In order to maximize the potential  
55 benefits of these activities, social responsible initiatives must be directly linked to the core business  
56 of the company. More specifically, in order to implement efficient and effective corporate social  
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3 strategies from both an economic and a social point of view, the alignment between company value  
4 and strategy, corporate social responsibility actions and core business appears to be fundamental  
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8 (Zadek, 2004).  
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10 Furthermore, previous research suggested that the fit between the company's brand and responsible  
11 activities is a key variable for higher performance arguing that the higher the responsible activities  
12 fit, the more positive the consumers' evaluations (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore and Hill, 2006).  
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16 In this vein, brand-fit in CRM refers to the extent to which consumers perceive that the cause being  
17 supported in the CRM campaign has significant connections with the company's core business and  
18 brand (Chéron et al., 2012). This means that the fit between the company and a cause can be described  
19 by the way the two parties seem to connect or make sense together (Robinson et al., 2012). In this  
20 context, Strahilevitz and Meyers (1998) argued that fit among brand and cause could influence the  
21 success of CRM program. We can draw from several simile behavior to support this. Brand-fit is able  
22 to assist the transfer of positives from an object (celebrity, main brand, etc.) to the mark associated  
23 with the object (Pracejus and Olsen, 2004). If the fit is significant, it is likely that the firm is also  
24 better able to help the cause because fit improves the transferability of competence, synergies in  
25 activities, skills, products, technologies or markets (Zdravkovic et al., 2010). In our context, this  
26 means that CRM campaign may be more effective and may achieve higher effect on consumers  
27 purchase intentions when the perceived fit between the company and the cause is higher. So, we  
28 proposed the following:  
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49 Hypothesis 2: the higher the brand-fit, the higher is the effect of CRM on consumers purchase  
50 intentions.  
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### 54 55 56 *3.3 Brand-use*

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58 Recently, Nelson and Vilela (2017) sustained that prior brand use or buying behavior can affect the  
59 reaction of individuals to CRM campaigns because consumers may have more direct or indirect brand  
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3 relationships. People who previously purchased a good of a certain brand should not be considered  
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5 equivalent to those who had not purchased a brand yet (or could not remember if they had already  
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7 bought it). Nelson and Vilela (2017) also suggested that, after contact with the CRM campaign, there  
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9 is a significant increase in purchase intentions, in particular for non-typical consumers of the brand.  
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11 This appears to give credit to the "weak theory" of CRM or the advertising effects in that product  
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13 usage has more incidence than ads or CRM programs (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). The "weak  
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15 theory" of advertising argued that the main role of advertising is the strengthening of the brand  
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17 (Barnard and Ehrenberg, 1997). In this perspective, advertising can increase awareness even if  
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19 without strong persuasive effects on purchasing behavior. In fact, consumers are continually urged to  
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21 remember brands through advertising, but they generally pay attention only to brand announcements  
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23 for which they already have positive past experiences.  
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28 For non brand users, exposure to an advertisement do not significantly affect their buying intentions.  
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30 In the specific context of consumers of charity bracelets, Yurchisin et al. (2009) showed that attitude  
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32 toward purchasing a cause-related fashion product was not a good predictor of behavior. Lafferty et  
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34 al. (2005 and 2009) have noticed in their studies greater persuasion (more positive brand attitudes  
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36 and greater purchasing intentions) for the brand that people had never tried and, at the same time, less  
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38 persuasion for the brand well known and already bought.  
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42 Hamlin and Wilson (2004) found little influence of CRM message on purchase intentions in the case  
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44 of brand-use of a specific category of family products (such as milk). In the case of non brand user,  
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46 people do not have relevant associations or experiences with the brand so the exposure of the product  
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48 to a CRM campaign may have a greater influence on consumers and positive persuasion can work  
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50 through the transfer of positive effects (Nan and Heo, 2007). *De facto*, CRM linked to an important  
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52 cause and a not well-known brand can help increase the chances of buying that brand to that of a  
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54 well-known brand.  
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58 As a result, brands for which the person show no or little usage can take more advantage from CRM  
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60 because consumers who are not familiar with the brand may not have developed relevant associations



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3 yet. Therefore, the CRM could favor the first purchase of the brand by non-buyers. On the contrary,  
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5 CRM may have lower influence on people who have already bought brands that support causes they  
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7 trust. So, we propose the following:  
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12 Hypothesis 3: the higher the brand-use, the lower is the effect of CRM on consumers purchase  
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14 intention.  
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#### 17 18 19 *2.4 Gender*

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21 Ladero et al. (2015) proved that the attitude in relation to CRM is affected by some socio-  
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23 demographic features and characteristics as for example gender, age, education, employment,  
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25 income, children. Regarding gender, several academics have found that women may be less  
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27 suspicious than men about cause-related marketing campaigns (e.g. Ross et al., 1992, Trimble and  
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29 Rifon, 2006) and may show more positive behaviors towards the organization and the charity  
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31 compared to men (Vilela and Nelson, 2016; Wang, 2014). For instance, Anuar and Mohamad (2011)  
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33 found that adherence to the cause affects only women, who choose to sustain a campaign locally  
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35 rather than internationally.  
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39 Although some researchers fail to identify gender differences in attitudes towards CRM (e.g. Wymer  
40  
41 and Samu, 2009) or only partially identify them (e.g. Shelley and Polonsky, 2002; Saleh and Harvie,  
42  
43 2017), some studies have found that women could be more influenced by CRM than men (e.g.  
44  
45 Trimble and Rifon, 2006; Vilela and Nelson, 2016). In fact, women tend to buy brands that support  
46  
47 causes through CRM campaigns (Ross et al., 1992) and to make donations to charity (Shelley and  
48  
49 Polonsky, 2002) more than men.  
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52  
53 For example, Kropp et al. (1999) showed that the educational and thoughtful role of women in the  
54  
55 society may be relevant in influencing their positive feelings about CRM. Shelley and Polonsky  
56  
57 (2002) discovered in focus groups and surveys that older individuals and women are more  
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3 predisposed towards supporting a charity. Vilela and Nelson (2016) achieved the same conclusions  
4  
5 through a survey in the United States.  
6

7  
8 Mesch et al. (2011) state that males and females have differences in motivations for giving. Women,  
9  
10 compared to men, have much higher levels as regards empathic concern and the principle of care.  
11  
12 Moreover, they have a greater chance to make a donation or to donate more money. For that reasons,  
13  
14 females are usually more willing to buy a product to sustain a cause compared to men (e.g. Anuar  
15  
16 and Mohamad, 2011; Vilela and Nelson, 2016).  
17

18  
19 In short, research has generally shown that gender affects consumers' reaction to CRM and may have  
20  
21 effect on consumers behaviors, thus we propose the following hypothesis.  
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26 Hypothesis 4: the effect of CRM on consumers purchase intentions for females is higher than for  
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28 males.  
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33 In Figure 1 we graphically outline our hypothesis.  
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37 --- PLEASE, INSERT FIGURE 1 AROUND HERE ---  
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### 40 41 42 **3. Research design**

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44  
45 In this study we choose a quantitative methodology through a survey approach to experiment and test  
46  
47 our hypotheses. The chosen methodology Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) allowed us to test the effects  
48  
49 of moderators on the baseline relationship, that is widely used in management studies (Bresciani and  
50  
51 Ferraris, 2016; Ferraris et al., 2017; Santoro et al., 2017; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017), while previous  
52  
53 studies on the topic used mostly experiments (e.g. Pracejus and Olsen, 2004).  
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56  
57 Since most aspects of consumer behavior are culture-bound (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011), we chose  
58  
59 a cross-cultural research methodology analyzing and comparing Italian (individualistic culture) and  
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2  
3 Brazilian contexts (collectivist culture). CRM and corporate social responsibility research are equally  
4 important and appropriate in these context, and conceptually equivalent (Malhotra, Peterson, and  
5 Kleiser, 1996).  
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9  
10 Data were collected using a questionnaire formed by close questions. The web-based survey  
11 (Dillman, 2000) has been built on the base of previous studies and has been pre-tested by some  
12 researcher and manager that have experience in the field of study. The link to the web-based survey  
13 have been promoted both in Italy and in Brazil during different seminars and classes by the authors  
14 and thanks to the help of colleague's expert on the topic as well as through online promotions through  
15 social networks.  
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23  
24 The survey was administered between April and October 2018. The questionnaire it was sent to a  
25 population of around 1000 people from which 398 usable questionnaire responses were obtained: 234  
26 online questionnaires have been compiled by Italian consumers and 164 by Brazilian consumers. The  
27 survey is proposed to collect information on CRM and purchase intentions of consumers as well as  
28 some key information on the respondents related to the cause or to the brand in order to give a more  
29 fine grained picture of the impact of CRM on consumer behavior. Participants were informed that a  
30 Food and Beverage worldwide company<sup>1</sup> was selling a new product within its product range,  
31 associated with a CRM campaign. In fact, people can read that 10% of the paid price to buy the  
32 product will be donated to a charitable foundation. Taking a hint from the (RED) program, we propose  
33 a solidarity campaign where the contribution will be invested in actions to fight diseases as HIV/AIDS  
34 in Africa.  
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49 Initially, respondents were asked to provide their personal information such as age and educational  
50 background. The demographic age was between 15 and 55 and this may be a very important issue to  
51 address because, compared with older generations, young and educated consumers would be more  
52 likely to support CRM campaigns (e.g. Chang and Cheng, 2015).  
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<sup>1</sup> We do not report in this paper the name of the brand.

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2  
3 33% of the Italian respondents (35% of Brazilians) are consumers between 19 and 26 years old while  
4  
5 39% (33% of Brazilians) are between 27 and 35, making our sample mostly representative of Y  
6  
7 Generation. With regard to educational background 44% of the Italian respondents (32% of  
8  
9 Brazilians) have a Master's Degree while 36% (31% of Brazilians) have a professional degree and  
10  
11 only 7% of the total respondents have a Doctoral degree. 53 % of respondents were female and 47 %  
12  
13 were male.  
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### 19 *Main variables used in the study*

20  
21 All variables were measured using existing validated constructs. Since the items were placed on a  
22  
23 seven-point Likert scale, a higher score on each scale means a greater consonance with the question  
24  
25 (Likert, 1932; Munshi, 2014). Variable measures are listed in Table 1 and were employed as follows.

26  
27 We measured consumers purchase intentions (PI) thanks to different items, inspired by the research  
28  
29 of Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012), in which the consumers expressed their opinion in a 7  
30  
31 point Likert scale on three items. (1 = "not at all likely," and 7 = "very likely" or 1 = "not at all  
32  
33 satisfied," and 7 = "very satisfied"). After that, we took the average values of these three items to  
34  
35 build the dependent variable (*consumers purchase intention*).  
36  
37

38  
39 Then, we asked to target their personal approach with CRM adapting it from the study of Koshate-  
40  
41 Fischer, Stefano and Hoyer (2012). Consumers expressed their opinion using a 7 point Likert scale  
42  
43 (1 = "extremely negative attitude," and 7 = "extremely positive attitude) thus we built our independent  
44  
45 variable (CRM).  
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48  
49 Regarding our first moderator variable, to evaluate *the perception of CRM goal achievement (GA)* in  
50  
51 this research we build on the study of Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012) that considers that  
52  
53 a near goal gives a greater perception of personal role in the CRM campaign studying this aspect  
54  
55 directly and how it impacts on the consumer's purchase intentions (see Table 1 for all the items used).

56  
57 To evaluate *brand-fit (BF)* we proceed as follows (based on Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran,  
58  
59 2012). First, we introduced the follow contextual factors: "We would like you to determine how well  
60

1  
2  
3 you think the causes fits with Company X. The fit between a company and a cause means how well  
4 the two organizations connect, or appear to make sense together”. Then, we collect information on  
5 the two organizations connect, or appear to make sense together”. Then, we collect information on  
6 consumers perceptions using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = extremely poor fit to 7 =  
7 extremely good fit. Moreover, we adapted the items used from Nelson and Vilela (2017) to evaluate  
8 *brand-use (BU)* asking for consumers’ purchase frequencies of the product. For *gender (G)*, we create  
9 a dummy variable where 0 was for female and 1 was male (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017).  
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19 --- PLEASE, INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE ---  
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24 We also include some control variables that can influence the consumers purchase intentions based  
25 on some socio and demographic factors. To define the *age* we used the methodology of Balabanis  
26 and Siamagka (2017) that consider a 4 point Likert scale structured as follows: 0 if the age is between  
27 1 and 18; 1 if the age is between 19 and 26; 2 if the age is between 27 and 35; 3 if the age is between  
28 36 and 50; 4 if the age is more than 50. In reference to the work of the latter, the *educational*  
29 *background* is asked in the form of a scale of values 1 to 7 as follows: 1) *Junior High School*; 2) *High*  
30 *School*; 3) *College No Degree*; 4) *Bachelor’s Degree*; 5) *Master’s Degree*; 6) *Professional Degree*;  
31 7) *Doctoral Degree*.  
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42 Some descriptive statistics and correlation matrix have been presented below in Table 2.  
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51 --- PLEASE, INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE ---  
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#### 4. Results

The hypotheses were tested using OLS regression analysis and the results are presented in Table 3, distinguishing between Italian and Brazilian consumers purchase intentions. For both samples, Model 1 represents the effect only of moderators independently (perception of CRM goal achievement,

1  
2  
3 brand-fit, brand-use and gender) and control variables on consumers purchase intentions. In this  
4  
5 model, a low and significant effect has been showed by the perception of CRM goal achievement  
6  
7 (0.07), gender (0.12) and age (0.06) for Italian consumers and by brand-fit (0.08), brand-use (0.07),  
8  
9 gender (0.07) and educational background (0.04) for Brazilian consumers. Model 2, instead, is  
10  
11 implemented to test the impact of CRM on our dependent variable. Our analysis showed a  
12  
13 standardized coefficient of 0.21 for CRM for Italian consumers and of 0.15 for Brazilian consumers  
14  
15 (significant at five per cent level), thus confirming a positive relationship of CRM on consumers  
16  
17 purchase intentions of both samples. This supports our baseline hypothesis.  
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19

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21 Finally, in Model 3 the interaction terms are proposed to test the interaction effects concerning the  
22  
23 four moderators on the relationships between CRM and consumers purchase intentions. The results  
24  
25 of the empirical analysis highlighted that 3 out of 4 moderators have been showed positive and  
26  
27 significant coefficients, but with some differences with regard to Italians and Brazilians.  
28  
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30  
31 For Italian consumers in our sample, the coefficient for CRM x perception of CRM goal achievement  
32  
33 is 0.33 (significant at one percent level), the one for CRM x Brand-fit is 0.11 (significant at five per  
34  
35 cent level) and the one for CRM x Gender is 0.31 (significant at one percent level). This means that  
36  
37 all the three moderators have a positive effect on the relationship between CRM and consumers  
38  
39 purchase intentions, improving the efficacy of CRM campaigns. This supports our hypothesis 1, 2  
40  
41 and 4 for Italian consumers.  
42  
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44  
45 For Brazilian consumers in our sample, the coefficient for CRM x Brand-fit is 0.16 (significant at  
46  
47 five per cent level), the one for CRM x brand-use is -0.25 (significant at one percent level) and the  
48  
49 one for CRM x Gender is 0.12 (significant at five per cent level). This means that two moderators  
50  
51 have a positive effect on the relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions,  
52  
53 improving the efficacy of CRM campaigns. On the contrary, CRM x brand-use has a negative effect  
54  
55 on the above mentioned relationship. This supports our hypothesis 2, 3 and 4.  
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58  
59 Overall, our results fully confirmed our second and fourth hypothesis and partially confirmed our  
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first (only for Italian consumers) and third (negative effect on Brazilian consumers) hypothesis.

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6 --- PLEASE, INSERT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE ----  
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## 10 **5. Discussion and implications**

11  
12 CRM is becoming an effective and valuable marketing tool that companies use for many reasons such  
13 as improving performances, reputation, image, the number of products sold, etc. However, CRM  
14 faced criticism and skepticism, especially in relation to the company motivation for the initiative: as  
15 in the case of expensive products, consumers tend to perceive that the company is exploiting the cause  
16 to improve their sales (Boenigk and Schuchardt, 2013; Nowak and Clarke, 2003). CRM critics argue  
17 that consumers should contribute directly to non-profit organizations rather than through product  
18 purchases (Gaines, 2013; Winneroski, 2015).  
19

20  
21 Nonetheless, Fraser et al. (1988) argued that cause-related products could bring an “anchor price” for  
22 donations in case people desist from donating to charities because they have difficulties estimating a  
23 socially acceptable donation amount and fear donating an inappropriate amount (Dhar, 1996). In  
24 fact, many studies showed that consumers are willing to reward companies that return to society by  
25 paying more for their goods and services (Nielsen Global Research, 2014). Our results confirm the  
26 positive relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions and this is also in line with  
27 some previous research that showed that consumers have more positive reactions to companies that  
28 engage in social responsibility programs such as CRM campaigns (e.g. Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001).  
29 Our main original results show that the effect of CRM on consumers purchasing intentions may be  
30 affected by several factors that companies need to evaluate before developing this strategy, also  
31 finding differences between consumers belonging to more individualistic or collectivistic society.  
32 While the literature on these factors is fragmented and only few studies tested and found evidences  
33 of multiple moderator variables, in this research we simultaneously proposed four factors that may  
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3 influence our baseline relationship, testing them in to 2 groups of Italian and Brazilian consumers.  
4  
5 They are: a) perception of CRM goal achievement, b) brand-fit, c) brand-use, and d) gender.

6  
7 We found positive evidences for moderator effects of the perception of CRM goal achievement,  
8  
9 brand-fit and gender on Italian respondents. Differently, we did not find a significant moderator effect  
10  
11 of brand-use on Italians while we found it significant and negative for Brazilian respondents.  
12  
13 Moreover, we found that the perception of CRM goal achievement does not moderate the  
14  
15 aforementioned relationship for Brazilians while brand-fit and gender still have positive effects.  
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19 As result suggest, the peculiarities within the two groups - individualistic or collectivistic - determine  
20  
21 different approaches to the perception of CRM goal achievement. As a matter of fact, within the  
22  
23 individualistic group we can identify a linear path passing from CRM → perception of CRM goal  
24  
25 achievement→ consumers purchase intentions. A second general implication is about the influence  
26  
27 of prior brand use on consumers purchase intention of collectivistic consumers. According to Hamlin  
28  
29 and Wilson (2004), results suggest that in collectivistic contexts CRM may have negative influence  
30  
31 on people who have already bought brands that support causes they trust. Consequently, marketers  
32  
33 might consider these results, when planning their CRM campaigns.  
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#### 40 Theoretical implications

41  
42 Currently, mainstream studies on the topic show only few articles that empirically test the consumers'  
43  
44 reaction to CRM campaigns in relation to different moderators simultaneously. Thus, this research  
45  
46 contributes to the CRM literature by exploring several factors that affect the relation between CRM  
47  
48 and consumer purchasing behavior, in order to give a broader and fine grained explanations of the  
49  
50 phenomenon.  
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53  
54 Among all the variables investigated, one of the most original implication of this research is related  
55  
56 to the perception of CRM goal achievement. In fact, the proximity to the objectives of the cause  
57  
58 chosen by the firm is rarely addressed in CRM research landscape, leaving underexplored an  
59  
60 important aspect of the CRM campaign (a notable exception is Robinson et al., 2012). Most



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2  
3 interestingly, we found that only Italian consumers may be affected by the perception of CRM goal  
4 achievement while this is not the case for Brazilians. This is probably linked to the more utilitarian  
5 and concrete individualist society in which Italians live, and with this study we add to existing  
6 and concrete individualist society in which Italians live, and with this study we add to existing  
7 knowledge on the topic proposing a further factor that may impact on the relationships between CRM  
8 and consumers purchase intentions.  
9

10  
11 Another theoretical implication is the interestingly different results with regard to brand use (La Ferle  
12 et al., 2013), where hard brand users show a negative moderating effect only on Brazilian consumers.  
13 Regarding the non significant effect of brand user for Italians, it could also be the case in which CRM  
14 brand buyers were more persuaded and may have already developed strong attitudes and buying  
15 intentions. Thus, their purchase intentions did not improve after exposure to the CRM message, nor  
16 did they fall substantially later, but they are still high and marketing messages with CRM may simply  
17 reinforce buying intentions for a brand in which consumers already use (Nelson and Vilela, 2017).  
18 The results for the Brazilian consumers may be explained by the fact that heavy users should be more  
19 motivated to pay attention to the cause supported through CRM than to the manipulative motives of  
20 CRM (Chang, 2012) that, instead, attract more the attention of consumers with individualistic culture.  
21 In fact, when paying attention to the cause, brand users may be more motivated than non brand users  
22 to become emotionally involved with it. These results shows how cultural attitudes should take care  
23 in international CRM campaigns (Cadogan, 2012), with a particular attention in the case of previous  
24 purchase behaviors.  
25

26  
27 A further important theoretical implication is that firms try to improve consumer confidence should  
28 consider identifying charities that are consistent with their product offerings (Rifon et al., 2004).  
29 Indeed, we found evidence that the fit between the brand and the cause can have a large impact on  
30 the success of CRM programs. This is in line with Pracejus and Olsen (2004) that found that in terms  
31 of dollar value trade-offs, the high-fit CRM program had roughly 5 times the incidence of the low-fit  
32 program and 10 times the incidence in their second study. Evidently, perceived fit between the firm  
33 (and brand) and the cause is a relevant measure that should always be taken into strong consideration  
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3 to any CRM program. This may support the results of Koschate-Fischer et al. (2012) which showed  
4 that brand-fit has been found as a relevant factor that moderates the relationship between donation  
5 amount in CRM and willingness to pay of the consumer, making it a very important variable to  
6 carefully take care in this context.  
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10  
11 Finally, we give also an implication regarding the gender target where women have responded  
12 positively to the CRM campaigns more than men, confirming some previous research but testing it  
13 with a cross-cultural study and validating it in very different cultures (Wang, 2014; Ladero et al.,  
14 2015; Vilela and Nelson, 2016). This receptivity can be the result of a greater familiarity with CRM  
15 programs amid women since the campaigns have historically and mainly addressed them.  
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### 24 25 26 Managerial implications 27

28 Even more important in this context, companies need to carefully design and think to several and  
29 multiple factors that simultaneously affect consumer's behaviors before developing a CRM campaign  
30 that can also cause negative financial and non financial performances. In fact, although the  
31 effectiveness of CRM is generally demonstrated, in some cases the application of this strategy may  
32 have adverse and unexpected results (Grolleau et al., 2016). Practically speaking, the perception of  
33 CRM goal achievement, brand fit, previous brand usage and gender need to be carefully evaluated by  
34 firms and marketing managers before starting a CRM campaign. Regarding the first, one notable  
35 implication for managers is to take into account the perceived role of the consumer within a CRM  
36 campaign. In fact, in each purchase of a product or a service, the consumer perceives a sense of  
37 involvement in the cause that goes beyond the mere satisfaction of the needs in particular when the  
38 purchase contributes to a "good cause". In this article we showed that only Italian consumers give a  
39 high importance to the closeness to the CRM goal achievement. This may be related to the more  
40 individualistic culture that affects consumer behaviors, making Italian respondents more utilitarian  
41 and concrete. So, the perception of CRM goal achievement (or the way this message has been  
42 promoted or delivered by the company) is a factor that may lead to an improvement of the efficacy  
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3 of a CRM campaign mainly (only in our research) on consumers that have a higher individualistic  
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5 orientation.  
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7  
8 Regarding brand-fit, the choice of the cause should be carefully thought by managers and marketing  
9  
10 specialists in the case of international CRM campaigns. Regarding brand-user, we found again  
11  
12 significant differences among our sample of Italian and Brazilian respondents suggesting that  
13  
14 managers that want to target consumers from a more individualistic culture need to know in advance  
15  
16 that they may be less (or not) affected by the previous purchase brand behaviors while, on the  
17  
18 contrary, consumers that have a more collectivistic culture may be negatively affected by this factor,  
19  
20 *de facto* reducing the positive effect of CRM on their purchase intentions.  
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24 Overall, a wider identification of the specific factors (and cultural differences) that may affect or not  
25  
26 the effect of CRM on purchase intentions may open the space for managers to craft different, targeted  
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28 and more efficacy international CRM campaigns.  
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## 33 **6. Conclusion and future research**

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35 A key goal of our research was to examine the relationship between CRM and consumers purchase  
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37 intentions. We found that CRM leads substantially to increase in the purchase behaviors of consumers  
38  
39 as well as that several factors may improve the efficacy of this growing important marketing tool.  
40  
41 Despite many studies focused on factors that affect CRM outcomes, we gave a clearer and fine  
42  
43 grained view of the CRM phenomenon, in particular focusing on different factors that moderate the  
44  
45 relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions, finding also interesting differences  
46  
47 among culturally distant groups of consumers (Italians and Brazilians).  
48  
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50  
51 Future studies should therefore continue in investigating factors that may amplify or improve the  
52  
53 effectiveness of CRM on different outcomes of consumer behaviors in different cultural contexts  
54  
55 (Lavack et al., 2003; Chang and Cheng, 2015; Thrassou et al., 2018) or improve its awareness within  
56  
57 both public and private organizations (Demetriou et al., 2018). This is also a limitation of our research  
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3 that focus only on Italian and Brazilian respondents, thus we cannot test using this sample other  
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5 kind of differences among cultures (e.g. all the other factors highlighted by Hofstede, 1984 and  
6  
7 subsequent developments). Future research may be directed in further cross-cultural comparative  
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9 studies focusing on several cultural differences and testing if the factors included in our framework  
10  
11 show the same or different effects on the aforementioned relationship (Vaidyanathan et al., 2013; La  
12  
13 Ferle et al., 2013; Shams et al., 2019). Moreover, CRM may be part, integrated within or adapted to  
14  
15 the overall knowledge management (KM) strategy of the company in order to collect relevant data  
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17 and information that may be critical for further marketing strategies (Del Giudice and Della Peruta,  
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19 2016; Scuotto et al., 2017; Ferreira et al., 2018) coupled with international sustainable practices  
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21 (Carayannis et al., 2017; Del Giudice et al., 2017).

22  
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25  
26 Finally, this research does not include donation related factors that may influence this relationship,  
27  
28 such as: a) donation proximity; b) donation amount.

29  
30 Regarding the first, donation proximity means the distance between the consumer and the donation  
31  
32 activity that can be national, regional or local (Grau and Folse, 2007). Regarding the second, the  
33  
34 amount of the donations has a big relevance because it influences the profitability of the company  
35  
36 that, however, should face a trade-off. Therefore, firms wishing to support a CRM program related  
37  
38 to large or expensive causes should use market research to identify the number of people in their  
39  
40 target market who have a strong positive approach towards helping others and, meanwhile, to identify  
41  
42 the involvement and attitude of their clients towards different causes. This represents an interesting  
43  
44 avenue for future research that must be taken into account when deciding if and how to implement a  
45  
46 CRM campaign and the specifics of an appropriate donation amount. Also in this case, as for  
47  
48 international marketing practices, cultural characteristics should be seriously included in to future  
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50 studies on CRM topics in order to achieve success (Cadogan, 2012).  
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