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

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

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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 ₁ : 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 ₂ : How satisfied would you be with purchasing the new product?" PI ₃ : 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 ₁ : Positive/Negative attitudes toward CRM	Koshate-Fischer, Stefano and Hoyer (2012)
Perception of CRM goal achievement (GA)	GA ₁ : Positive/Negative perception to add value to the cause GA ₂ : Positive/Negative perception to help the cause GA ₃ : Positive/Negative perception to contribute to the cause	Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012)
Brand-fit (BF)	BF ₁ : Extremely poor/Extremely good perception of the coherence between the cause and the Company	Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012)
Brand-use (BU)	BU ₁ : Purchase frequency	Nelson and Vilela (2017)
Gender (G)	G ₁ : 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 ²	0.21	0.43	0.59	0.15	0.22	0.29
Adjusted R ²	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
50
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
23
24 of social causes and charitable organizations sponsored by CRM (e.g. Boenigk and Schuchardt, 2013;
25
26 Ladero et al., 2015). These positive attitudes can affect consumers' purchases for particular firms and
27
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-
53
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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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
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41 and Samu, 2009) or only partially identify them (e.g. Shelley and Polonsky, 2002; Saleh and Harvie,
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43 2017), some studies have found that women could be more influenced by CRM than men (e.g.
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45 Trimble and Rifon, 2006; Vilela and Nelson, 2016). In fact, women tend to buy brands that support
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47 causes through CRM campaigns (Ross et al., 1992) and to make donations to charity (Shelley and
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49 Polonsky, 2002) more than men.
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53 For example, Kropp et al. (1999) showed that the educational and thoughtful role of women in the
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55 society may be relevant in influencing their positive feelings about CRM. Shelley and Polonsky
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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
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5 through a survey in the United States.
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8 Mesch et al. (2011) state that males and females have differences in motivations for giving. Women,
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10 compared to men, have much higher levels as regards empathic concern and the principle of care.
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12 Moreover, they have a greater chance to make a donation or to donate more money. For that reasons,
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14 females are usually more willing to buy a product to sustain a cause compared to men (e.g. Anuar
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16 and Mohamad, 2011; Vilela and Nelson, 2016).
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19 In short, research has generally shown that gender affects consumers' reaction to CRM and may have
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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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45 In this study we choose a quantitative methodology through a survey approach to experiment and test
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47 our hypotheses. The chosen methodology Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) allowed us to test the effects
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49 of moderators on the baseline relationship, that is widely used in management studies (Bresciani and
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51 Ferraris, 2016; Ferraris et al., 2017; Santoro et al., 2017; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017), while previous
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53 studies on the topic used mostly experiments (e.g. Pracejus and Olsen, 2004).
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57 Since most aspects of consumer behavior are culture-bound (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011), we chose
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59 a cross-cultural research methodology analyzing and comparing Italian (individualistic culture) and
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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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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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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 company¹ 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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¹ We do not report in this paper the name of the brand.

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

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

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27 We measured consumers purchase intentions (PI) thanks to different items, inspired by the research
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29 of Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012), in which the consumers expressed their opinion in a 7
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31 point Likert scale on three items. (1 = "not at all likely," and 7 = "very likely" or 1 = "not at all
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33 satisfied," and 7 = "very satisfied"). After that, we took the average values of these three items to
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35 build the dependent variable (*consumers purchase intention*).
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39 Then, we asked to target their personal approach with CRM adapting it from the study of Koshate-
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41 Fischer, Stefano and Hoyer (2012). Consumers expressed their opinion using a 7 point Likert scale
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43 (1 = "extremely negative attitude," and 7 = "extremely positive attitude) thus we built our independent
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45 variable (CRM).
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49 Regarding our first moderator variable, to evaluate *the perception of CRM goal achievement (GA)* in
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51 this research we build on the study of Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran (2012) that considers that
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53 a near goal gives a greater perception of personal role in the CRM campaign studying this aspect
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55 directly and how it impacts on the consumer's purchase intentions (see Table 1 for all the items used).

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57 To evaluate *brand-fit (BF)* we proceed as follows (based on Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran,
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59 2012). First, we introduced the follow contextual factors: "We would like you to determine how well
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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 consumers perceptions using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = extremely poor fit to 7 =
6 extremely good fit. Moreover, we adapted the items used from Nelson and Vilela (2017) to evaluate
7 *brand-use (BU)* asking for consumers’ purchase frequencies of the product. For *gender (G)*, we create
8 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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23 We also include some control variables that can influence the consumers purchase intentions based
24 on some socio and demographic factors. To define the *age* we used the methodology of Balabanis
25 and Siamagka (2017) that consider a 4 point Likert scale structured as follows: 0 if the age is between
26 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
27 36 and 50; 4 if the age is more than 50. In reference to the work of the latter, the *educational*
28 *background* is asked in the form of a scale of values 1 to 7 as follows: 1) *Junior High School*; 2) *High*
29 *School*; 3) *College No Degree*; 4) *Bachelor’s Degree*; 5) *Master’s Degree*; 6) *Professional Degree*;
30 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 **4. Results**

52 The hypotheses were tested using OLS regression analysis and the results are presented in Table 3,
53 distinguishing between Italian and Brazilian consumers purchase intentions. For both samples, Model
54 1 represents the effect only of moderators independently (perception of CRM goal achievement,
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3 brand-fit, brand-use and gender) and control variables on consumers purchase intentions. In this
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5 model, a low and significant effect has been showed by the perception of CRM goal achievement
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7 (0.07), gender (0.12) and age (0.06) for Italian consumers and by brand-fit (0.08), brand-use (0.07),
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9 gender (0.07) and educational background (0.04) for Brazilian consumers. Model 2, instead, is
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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
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15 (significant at five per cent level), thus confirming a positive relationship of CRM on consumers
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17 purchase intentions of both samples. This supports our baseline hypothesis.
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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.
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31 For Italian consumers in our sample, the coefficient for CRM x perception of CRM goal achievement
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33 is 0.33 (significant at one percent level), the one for CRM x Brand-fit is 0.11 (significant at five per
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35 cent level) and the one for CRM x Gender is 0.31 (significant at one percent level). This means that
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37 all the three moderators have a positive effect on the relationship between CRM and consumers
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39 purchase intentions, improving the efficacy of CRM campaigns. This supports our hypothesis 1, 2
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41 and 4 for Italian consumers.
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45 For Brazilian consumers in our sample, the coefficient for CRM x Brand-fit is 0.16 (significant at
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47 five per cent level), the one for CRM x brand-use is -0.25 (significant at one percent level) and the
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49 one for CRM x Gender is 0.12 (significant at five per cent level). This means that two moderators
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51 have a positive effect on the relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions,
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53 improving the efficacy of CRM campaigns. On the contrary, CRM x brand-use has a negative effect
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55 on the above mentioned relationship. This supports our hypothesis 2, 3 and 4.
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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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10 **5. Discussion and implications**

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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.
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5 They are: a) perception of CRM goal achievement, b) brand-fit, c) brand-use, and d) gender.
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8 We found positive evidences for moderator effects of the perception of CRM goal achievement,
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10 brand-fit and gender on Italian respondents. Differently, we did not find a significant moderator effect
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12 of brand-use on Italians while we found it significant and negative for Brazilian respondents.
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14 Moreover, we found that the perception of CRM goal achievement does not moderate the
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16 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
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21 different approaches to the perception of CRM goal achievement. As a matter of fact, within the
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23 individualistic group we can identify a linear path passing from CRM → perception of CRM goal
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25 achievement → consumers purchase intentions. A second general implication is about the influence
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27 of prior brand use on consumers purchase intention of collectivistic consumers. According to Hamlin
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29 and Wilson (2004), results suggest that in collectivistic contexts CRM may have negative influence
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31 on people who have already bought brands that support causes they trust. Consequently, marketers
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33 might consider these results, when planning their CRM campaigns.
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40 Theoretical implications

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

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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.
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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.
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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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12 Finally, we give also an implication regarding the gender target where women have responded
13 positively to the CRM campaigns more than men, confirming some previous research but testing it
14 with a cross-cultural study and validating it in very different cultures (Wang, 2014; Ladero et al.,
15 2015; Vilela and Nelson, 2016). This receptivity can be the result of a greater familiarity with CRM
16 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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8 Regarding brand-fit, the choice of the cause should be carefully thought by managers and marketing
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10 specialists in the case of international CRM campaigns. Regarding brand-user, we found again
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12 significant differences among our sample of Italian and Brazilian respondents suggesting that
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14 managers that want to target consumers from a more individualistic culture need to know in advance
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16 that they may be less (or not) affected by the previous purchase brand behaviors while, on the
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18 contrary, consumers that have a more collectivistic culture may be negatively affected by this factor,
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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
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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
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39 as well as that several factors may improve the efficacy of this growing important marketing tool.
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41 Despite many studies focused on factors that affect CRM outcomes, we gave a clearer and fine
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43 grained view of the CRM phenomenon, in particular focusing on different factors that moderate the
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45 relationship between CRM and consumers purchase intentions, finding also interesting differences
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47 among culturally distant groups of consumers (Italians and Brazilians).
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51 Future studies should therefore continue in investigating factors that may amplify or improve the
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53 effectiveness of CRM on different outcomes of consumer behaviors in different cultural contexts
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55 (Lavack et al., 2003; Chang and Cheng, 2015; Thrassou et al., 2018) or improve its awareness within
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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
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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
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11 show the same or different effects on the aforementioned relationship (Vaidyanathan et al., 2013; La
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13 Ferle et al., 2013; Shams et al., 2019). Moreover, CRM may be part, integrated within or adapted to
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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).

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

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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
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34 amount of the donations has a big relevance because it influences the profitability of the company
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36 that, however, should face a trade-off. Therefore, firms wishing to support a CRM program related
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38 to large or expensive causes should use market research to identify the number of people in their
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40 target market who have a strong positive approach towards helping others and, meanwhile, to identify
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42 the involvement and attitude of their clients towards different causes. This represents an interesting
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44 avenue for future research that must be taken into account when deciding if and how to implement a
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46 CRM campaign and the specifics of an appropriate donation amount. Also in this case, as for
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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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