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Exploring the Effects of For-Profit and Nonprofit Size Congruency: An Exchange Perspective on Cause-Related Marketing

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Abstract

Prior research on cause-related marketing (CM) shows that congruencies between for-profit and non-profit organizational missions and target markets affect consumers' perceptions of the partnership fit, and their subsequent response to CM promotions. The current work explores how congruencies between for-profit and non-profit sizes influence consumers' perceptions of the partnership fit, and subsequently, their attitudes toward CM efforts. Study 1 shows that consumers perceive a low degree of organizational partnership fit between a small for-profit and large non-profit (relative to other partnership configurations). Study 2 shows the nature of donated resources can affect organizational partnership fit perceptions, such that donations of needed goods (vs. money) can improve consumers' perceptions of partnership fit between a small for-profit and large non-profit. Study 3 shows that organizational cause congruency and organizational size both independently contribute to perceptions of organizational partnership fit.

Keywords: cause-related marketing, promotions, perceived organizational fit

Introduction

Cause-related Marketing (CM) is a prevalent promotional approach in which a for-profit (FP) company partners with a non-profit (NP) organization by linking sales of a featured product with a donation to the NP (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Firms' investment in these promotions appear warranted: CM promotions result in a more positive consumer attitude toward the company (Drumwright 1996; Strahilevitz and Myers 1998), a greater willingness to purchase a company's product (Nan and Heo 2007; Robinson, Irmak and Jayachandran 2012), and the perception that a company is socially responsible (Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992). Non-profit organizations also benefit from affiliation with a for-profit beyond the resources gained from the promotion; consumers are more likely to feel positive about, donate, volunteer, and contribute to a non-profit associated with a for-profit company (Rozensher 2013).

The success of CM campaigns depends on the consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit between the for-profit company and non-profit partner (Ellen et al. 2000; Lafferty et al. 2004; Kuo and Rice 2015; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Perceived partnership fit in this context is defined as the similarities or strength of the link between the FP and NP partner organizations (Varadarajan and Menon 1988) and has been explored on a number of dimensions, including the extent to which the FP and NP serve the same target markets (Drumwright 1996), whether they are engaged in the same type of industry (Pracejus and Olsen 2004), and perceptual congruency on aesthetic dimensions (such as color, size, and shape of a FP and NP's visual materials; Kuo and Rice 2015). Consumers' judgments of partnership fit are often determined based on simple heuristics, or mental shortcuts that allow for quick and efficient judgments (Barone et al. 2007; Drumwright 1996; Minton and Cornwell 2015; Nan and Heo 2007; Pracejus and Olsen 2004). Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand what factors affect consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit in order to influence these perceptions.

This work explores how the congruency of for-profit (FP) and non-profit (NP) organizations in terms of their sizes affects consumers' perceptions of partnership fit and, subsequently, their attitudes toward CM promotions. Size is a basic demographic characteristic of all organizations and may determine consumers' inferences about the balance of resources exchanged in a CM promotion. Consumers' perception of an organization's size may be determined by factors such as the number of people employed by an organization, the organization's monetary value, the extent of an organization's physical presence, number of products an organization produces, and the strength of an organization's brand name, among others. Drawing on the exchange theory, we propose that consumers use organizations' sizes to make judgments about organizational partnership fit. Specifically, they perceive low organizational partnership fit between a small FP and a large NP, relative to other size-based partnership configurations.

We make three main contributions to the CM literature. First, while prior research has focused on the effects of congruencies between FP and NP missions, brand image, products, and target markets (Ellen et al. 2000; Varadarajan and Menon 1988), we explore organization size as a dimension of congruency that affects consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit and responses to CM. Second, we show an asymmetrical heuristic effect: a partnership between a small FP and large NP is perceived as low in organizational partnership fit relative to other partnership configurations. In addition, we show that this heuristic effect can be mitigated by a FP's donation of goods needed by a partner NP, rather than money. Finally, we show that the effect of organization size congruency and organizational cause congruency contribute (additively) to influence consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit. From an applied perspective, this work demonstrates that marketers benefit from considering the joint effects of for-profit and non-profit size configuration, the nature of donated resources, and cause alignment while developing CM strategies. Moreover, consumer advocates can educate consumers about the nature of exchange in CM promotions to forestall incorrect inferences made on the basis of organizational size.

Exchange Theory

The view of marketing as an exchange process has a long history (Bagozzi 1975; Kotler 1979) and has been applied to understand marketing transactions across a range of contexts (Arndt 1983; Arnett, German, and Hunt 2003; Hirschman 1986). Though many exchange theories have been developed to understand market-based behavior (Bagozzi 1975; Blau 1964; Foa and Foa 1974; Thibaut and Kelley 1952), they each emphasize that exchange is anchored in self-interest and that individuals attempt to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs to obtain profitable outcomes. Parties engage in exchanges when the rewards exceed the costs for both entities (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Exchanges often entail different types of resources; for example, money in exchange for goods and services, or a vote in exchange for a candidate's promise to promote a particular ideology.

More recent research in marketing has expanded beyond a focus on exchanges that occur in a dyad to examine the nature of complex exchange among multiple actors (Hill and Martin 2014). Further, exchanges may differ in nature: while transactional exchanges focus on immediate, concrete benefits and costs, relational exchanges are more likely to occur in scenarios where both entities seek to develop an ongoing partnership and are construed at a more abstract, longer-term scale (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Safari and Albaum 2019). Consumers make nuanced judgments that guide complex exchanges; for example, they sometimes make exchange-related tradeoffs in the interest of seeking a balance between self- and collective-interest (Ross and Kapitan 2018) and make judgments about the nature of ongoing exchanges in communities that subsequently shapes their intention to follow the advice provided by those communities (Belanche et al. 2019). Exchange theory is particularly relevant to the understanding of cause-related marketing promotions, which represent a case of a complex exchange.

Exchange Theory and Cause-Related Marketing

Cause-related Marketing entails a complex exchange of resources between three entities; a consumer, a for-profit, and a non-profit (see figure 1). In this context, the consumer may have attitudes towards (and engage in exchanges with) the NP and FP, separately (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). The NP and FP also interact in executing the CM promotion. Past research has primarily focused on the transaction between the consumer and the FP organization in the context of CM: the FP receives money (some of which is eventually given to the affiliated NP), and the consumer obtains the intangible positive emotion associated with giving and the tangible benefit of the product purchased (Folse et al. 2010; Lii and Lee 2012). An exchange perspective has been applied to the consumer-FP dyadic exchange in the context of CM; for example, Vanhamme et al. (2012) suggested that consumers prefer to support causes that are physically proximate because they perceive a high degree of mutual benefit (e.g., they can see the impact of their donation to a local cause and in turn benefit from improved conditions).

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

The partnership between the FP and the NP, which forms the basis for the CM promotion, has received less attention from an exchange perspective. As described by Varadarajan and Menon (1988), FP organizations enhance their image and benefit from a public perception that the organization is socially conscious. In the terminology of Foa and Foa (1974), the FP primarily obtains status (Udayasankar and Das 2007), while NP organizations primarily benefit from the financial resources received from the partner FP (generated through the CM promotion). The nature of this exchange is consistent with past work demonstrating that FPs are perceived as competent or efficient (i.e., possess money) but lack warmth, while NPs are perceived as warm and socially desirable but lack financial resources (Aaker, Vohs, and Mogilner 2010). Thus, NP and FP stand to gain resources that they both lack through the joint sponsorship of a CM promotion.

Consumers explicitly recognize that FP organizations provide an NP with needed resources (and implicitly recognize that the FP organization receives an image boost in return). Furthermore, as partners in complex exchange, consumers observe (and make judgments about) the exchange inherent in the partnership between the FP and NP organization to form a CM promotion. Exchange theory suggests that exchanges in which two parties are rewarded proportionately to their costs create joint benefit, while unequal exchange does not, leading to dissatisfaction and avoidance of future transactions (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Seminal work on organizational partnership fit suggests that it is determined based on the presence of similarities between the organizational partners in question (Varadarajan and Menon 1988). We propose that symmetry or balance in exchange is one dimension upon which consumers may judge similarity; specifically, a consumer is more likely to perceive an arrangement that creates mutual benefit for the FP and NP as higher in organizational partnership fit, relative to a partnership in which they view an exchange as imbalanced.

Sizes of FP and NP organizations provide simple proxies or heuristics for estimating the needs and contributions of each partner in the CM exchange. Consumers perceive larger FP organizations to possess more financial resources than smaller businesses (Meznar and Nigh 1995; Weinrauch et al. 1991). Consumers also perceive larger NPs to need more resources to function than smaller non-profits, based on their more expansive scale of operations (Zolner et al. 2010). Therefore, consumers are likely to perceive an asymmetry in a partnership between a small FP and a large NP (such as the partnership between Feeding America, the second largest hunger-focused NP in the US, and WonderSlim, a small supplier of protein diet products), given the disparity in the resources needed by the large NP and provided by the small FP.

We do not expect consumers to perceive an exchange asymmetry between a large FP and small NP (such as the partnership between Alaska Airlines, a major American airline, and Hawaii Literacy, a small literacy-focused nonprofit), as a heuristic-based approach suggests that this configuration creates mutual benefit for both partners: the large FP is likely to be viewed by consumers as capable of providing the NP with sufficient resources. Additionally, consumers are likely to view partnerships that feature congruencies in size (such the partnership between Feeding America, the second-largest hunger-focused NP in the US, and Walmart, a large multinational retail corporation; or between Hawaii Literacy, a small NP, and Island Air, a small commuter airline) as mutually beneficial from an exchange perspective, as rewards are proportionally distributed.

Put another way; we propose that the effect of organization size configuration on consumers' perceptions of fit is primarily determined by the size of the NP. The FP stands to benefit from a CM partnership regardless of an NP's size, as the image boost the FP receives from the partnership with the NP (i.e., the resource contributed by the NP) is not contingent on this dimension. While a small NP's resource needs may be met by an FP of any size, and a large FP may be perceived as capable of meeting a large NP's needs, we propose that consumers are likely to perceive an asymmetry in the resource needs and contribution between a large NP and small FP. Formally:

> **H1:** FPs and NPs size configurations affect consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit; consumers perceive a low degree of organizational partnership fit in the partnership of large NPs with a small FP, relative to other size-based partnership configurations.

Consumers view equitability in an exchange favorably and are attracted to promotions that appear mutually beneficial for both parties (a "win-win-win"; Campbell, Gulas, and Gruca 1999). This perspective is supported by past work applying balance theory (Heider 1946): consumers in an exchange triad (such as that which is entailed by CM partnerships as depicted in figure 1) have a more favorable attitude towards the partnership when their attitudes towards the individual entities are aligned (Basil and Herr 2006). Further, based on past work indicating that perceived fit is an important predictor of promotion attitude (Barone et al. 2007; Drumwright 1996; Nan and Heo 2007; Pracejus and Olsen 2004), we propose:

> **H2:** Perceived partnership fit between the FP and NP organizations influences consumers' attitudes toward the CM promotion.

The Role of Donated Resources

While CM promotions often generate financial resources for partner non-profits, sometimes FPs donate their manufactured goods to a NP (such as when eyeglasses company Warby Parker donates a pair of glasses to a non-profit partner, VisionSpring, for each consumer purchase). Past research suggests that consumers may value various forms of donation distinctly: goods may be perceived as a more helpful donation to a NP organization (particularly when explicitly needed) relative to an objectively equal amount of money (Hamby 2016).

We propose the type of resources donated by a FP organization will attenuate consumers' perception of low organizational partnership fit in response to a promotion featuring a small FP and large NP: specifically, a CM promotion which indicates that the FP will donate goods that are needed by an NP will reduce consumers perceptions of imbalance in the exchange between small FPs and large NPs, relative to when the FP donates money. As a consequence, consumers will be less likely to perceive misfit in the partnership configuration. We thus propose that the nature of the donated resource (goods versus resources) represents a boundary condition to the proposed asymmetrical heuristic effect:

> **H3:** Consumers' perceptions of low organizational partnership fit in response to a promotion featuring a small FP, and large NP will be attenuated when the resource contributed by the FP is goods needed by the NP (versus money).

The Role of Cause Congruency

In the current work, we examine how variation in partner organizations' sizes influence consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit. We thus build upon the wealth of past work, which has shown that the congruency between FPs and NPs organizations in terms of their organizational causes or missions influences consumers' perceptions of partnership fit (Drumwright 1996; Pracejus and Olsen 2004; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). One question of practical and theoretical importance that arises relates to how FP and NP organizational size congruency and organizational cause congruency combine to influence consumers' judgments of overall organizational partnership fit:

> **RQ1:** Are the effects of organizational size congruency and organizational cause congruency on consumers' perception of organizational partnership fit additive or interactive?

We next present three studies to test these hypotheses and research question; see Figure 2 for our conceptual overview. In the first study, we examine how variation in NPs' and FPs' sizes influence consumer perceptions of organizational partnership fit. In study 2, we examine how the nature of the resources donated by the FPs (goods versus money) represents a boundary condition to the effect demonstrated in study 1. This manipulation provides support for our exchange theory-based perspective and provides practical guidance for the development of CM promotions. In study 3, we examine how cause congruency and size configurations jointly determine consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit.

[Insert Figure 2 About Here]

Study 1

Study 1 provides an initial test of our exchange theory perspective to explain consumers' perceptions of and responses to CM promotions. We show that consumers perceive a partnership between a small FP and a large NP as lower in organizational partnership fit (H1), relative to other size-based configurations. Perceptions of organizational partnership fit, in turn, enhance consumers' attitudes towards the promotion (H2).

Method and Measures

A total of 155 students at a large university in the United States participated through the online Qualtrics platform (M_{age} = 20.9, 72.3% female; no participants were excluded from analyses). Participants were assigned to a condition in a 2 (FP: small, large) x 2 (NP: small, large) design in which they considered a CM promotion featuring organizations that varied in terms of size (see Appendix A for stimuli; a pretest indicated that the partnership between the small FP and large NP did, indeed, evoke lower levels of perceived mutual benefit; that large FPs are perceived to possess more financial resources relative to small FPs; and that large NPs need more financial resources than small NPs). Participants then indicated their attitude toward the promotion and perception of organizational partnership fit between the two organizations (Appendix C for measures). We measured perceived firm motive as a confound check because of the potential unintended influence of the size manipulation (i.e., larger FPs may be perceived to have less pure motives than small FPs) on perceived organizational partnership fit; past work suggests that a company's perceived motive can influence perceived fit and attitudes toward a CM promotion (Barone et al. 2007) and we wanted to reduce the plausibility of this explanation.

Results

Confound Check

A 2 (FP size: large, small) x 2 (NP size: large, small) ANOVA on perceived firm motive yielded no significant interaction or main effects, suggesting perceived firm motive does not confound our results (p's > .46).

Perceived Organizational Fit

To test the effect of partnership size configuration on organizational partnership fit (hypothesis 1), we conducted a 2 (FP size: small, large) x 2 (NP size: small, large) ANOVA on consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit. An interaction emerged ($F(1,151) = 6.47$, $p = .01$; see Figure 3); contrast analyses indicated that the partnership between the small FP/large NP led to significantly lower levels of perceived fit ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.00$) than the small FP/small NP (M = 5.20 SD = .93; $F(1,151) = 10.11$, $p < .01$), large FP/small NP (M = 4.92, SD = .94; $F(1,151) = 3.96$, $p < .05$), or large FP/large NP ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.05$; $F(1,151) = 5.44$, $p = .02$) conditions, supporting H1. A marginally significant main effect also emerged such that organizational partnership fit was perceived as higher when the NP was small ($M = 5.06$, $SD = .94$) than when large ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.05$; $F(1,151) = 3.86$, $p = .05$).

[Insert Figure 3 About Here]

Mediation Analyses

We used PROCESS (Hayes 2017) model 7 to conduct a mediation analysis to test whether perceived fit mediates the effect of organizational size configuration on attitude towards the promotion. FP size, NP size, and their interaction predicted organizational partnership fit, which predicted attitude towards the promotion. Perceived organizational partnership fit had a significant, direct effect on attitude towards the promotion ($\beta = .30$, $t = 3.96$, $p < .01$), supporting hypothesis 2. As predicted, the effect of FP size on attitude towards the promotion was mediated through perceived organizational partnership fit when the NP partner was large ($\beta = .16$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = .0154, .3597), but not when then NP was small ($\beta = -.08$, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = -.2547, .0391). In other words, the size of the FP had an influence on consumers' attitudes because of their judgments of organizational partnership fit only when the non-profit was large; otherwise (when the non-profit was small), the size of the FP organization didn't make a difference in determining consumers' attitudes towards the promotion.

Discussion

This study examined how the size configurations of partners in CM promotions influence consumer perceptions of partnership fit and subsequent attitudes towards CM promotions. We obtained support consistent with an exchange perspective: Namely, a partnership between a small FP and large NP evoked lower levels of perceived organizational partnership fit relative to other organizational size configurations. Overall, this finding coheres with our exchange perspective explanation (H1).

Replicating past work and supporting hypothesis 2, we found that consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit influences consumers' attitudes towards CM promotions (Barone et al. 2007; Drumwright 1996; Nan and Heo 2007; Pracejus and Olsen 2004). We build on this past work by showing that organizational demographic factors (such as size) make a difference in consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit and their subsequent attitudes toward the promotion. Consumers' perceptions of partnership fit did not vary when the NP was small, and therefore did not explain downstream differences in consumer attitude (i.e., no indirect effect of FP size on attitudes in this condition); the exchange in this condition is likely to be viewed as equitable regardless of organization size. However, consumer attitudes toward the CM promotion did vary based on the size of the FP organization when the NP partner was large, and this effect was explained by their perceptions of low partnership fit. In the next study, we examine whether the nature of the resource donated (goods or money) attenuates differences in perceived organizational fit.

Study 2

This study explores how the nature of the resource donated by the FP organization influences consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit. Consumers were exposed to a CM promotion in which the FP either donates products that they produce (and that are needed by the partner NP), or money (as in study 1). We varied the size of the FP (small or large) and held the size of the NP constant (large; based on the results of study 1, which showed that differences in FP size influenced consumers' perceptions of organizational partnership fit when the NP was large). We predict that consumers will perceive a CM promotion in which the FP donates goods that are needed by an NP as creating a high degree of mutual benefit, regardless of size. As a consequence, consumers will be more likely to perceive a higher organizational partnership fit between a small FP and a large NP organization.

Method and Measures

A total of 234 Mechanical Turk workers (M_{age} = 30.51, 49.8% female) completed the study. Participants were told that they would evaluate a CM campaign, which was defined for them. Participants read about a CM promotion featuring a large NP, and either a small or large FP. We also varied the resources donated (goods versus financial resources; see appendix B for stimuli). Participants were thus assigned to a condition in a 2 (Size configuration: small FP/large NP, large FP/large NP) x 2 (Donated resource: money, goods).

Participants read their assigned scenario and indicated their attitude toward promotion and perception of organizational partnership fit as in study 1. In addition, participants completed items measuring their perception of mutual benefit created through the partnership (as a manipulation check), and attention check measures; see Appendix D. Measures were presented in a randomized order to reduce the plausibility of a measurement artifact.

Results

Attention and Manipulation Checks

Twelve participants (5% of the total sample) incorrectly identified the size of the FP organization in their assigned condition and were removed from analyses, yielding a total of 222 participants (results are similar when all participants are retained).

We conducted a 2 (Size configuration: small FP/large NP, large FP/large NP) x 2 (Resource donated: money, goods) ANOVA on the perceived mutual benefit composite. The expected interaction emerged ($F(1,218) = 4.72$, $p = .03$) such that the small FP – money donation condition elicited the lowest levels of perceived mutual benefit ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.34$) relative to the small FP – goods donation ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.24$), large FP – money donation ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.04$), and large FP – goods donation ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.34$) conditions (contrast ps < .02). These results confirm the effectiveness of our manipulation.

Perceived Organizational Fit

We conducted a 2 (Size configuration: small FP/large NP, large FP/large NP) x 2 (Resource donated: money, goods) ANOVA on perceived organizational fit. An interaction emerged ($F(1,218) = 4.49$, $p = .04$) replicating the results of study 1: when the resource donated was money, a partnership between a small FP and large NP evoked lower perceived organizational fit ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.37$) than a partnership between a large FP and large NP ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.34$;

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$F(1, 218) = 10.85$, $p = .001$). When the resource donated was goods, size configuration did not make a difference in perceived fit ($F(1, 218) = .08$, $p = .78$), supporting hypothesis 3. Main effects of size configuration ($F(1, 218) = 6.34$, $p = .01$), and resource donated ($F(1, 218) = 16.71$, $p < .001$) also emerged, such that fit was perceived as higher when the FP was large, and goods were donated. See Figure 4.

[Insert Figure 4 About Here]

Mediation

We used PROCESS (Hayes 2017) model 7 to examine whether the influence of partnership configuration on attitude towards the promotion was mediated through perceived organizational fit, and whether this indirect effect differed depending on whether goods or money were donated. As in study 1, and supporting hypothesis 2, perceived fit had a significant, direct effect on attitude towards the promotion ($\beta = .37$, $t = 7.57$, $p < .01$). Also replicating study 1, the effect of FP size on attitude towards the promotion was mediated through perceived fit when the resource donated was money ($\beta = .32$, $SE = .12$, 95% CI = .1115, .5766). When the FP donated goods, however, the size of the FP did not influence attitudes towards the promotion because of consumers' differences in perceived fit ($\beta = .03$, $SE = .10$, 95% CI = -.1645, .2218). In other words, the size of the FP had an influence on consumers' attitudes because of their perceptions of organizational fit only when the FP donated financial resources; otherwise (when the FP donated goods), the size of the FP organization didn't make a difference in determining consumers' attitudes towards the promotion.

Discussion

The current study was designed to provide additional evidence for our proposal that consumers' judgments about the fit between organizational partners in CM promotions are based on their perceptions of benefit generated for each organization through the promotion. Replicating the results of study 1, a partnership between a large NP and small FP led to lower levels of perceived fit towards the promotion relative to a partnership with a large FP, when the resource donated by the FP was money. This difference was attenuated when the FP donated needed goods to the NP (supporting hypothesis 3). Consumers may perceive (correctly or incorrectly) that a large NP has a relatively higher need for financial resources, and consumers may view a partnership with a smaller FP (perceived to possess lower levels of financial resources) as less capable of providing mutual benefit. However, when consumers were made aware that the NP needs a certain type of good that was produced and given by the FP, the FP's size no longer influenced judgments of partnership fit. Both types of donations (in-kind donation of products or financial resources) occur in practice. We next consider the relative effects of FPs' and NPs' cause congruency and size configurations on consumers' perceptions of organizational fit.

Study 3

Past work has shown that cause congruency, or alignment in partner organizations' missions, is a key determinant of perceived partnership fit (Drumwright 1996; Pracejus and Olsen 2004; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). This study examines the question of how size configurations and cause congruency combine to influence consumers' perception of partnership fit: are the effects additive or interactive? Building on study 2, we again held the size of the NP constant (large) and varied the size of the FP, as well as the mission-related congruency between the organizational partners.

Method and Measures

A total of 212 Mechanical Turk workers ($M_{age} = 40.29$, 57.1% female) were randomly assigned one of the four conditions in a 2 (Size configuration: small FP/large NP, large FP/large NP) x 2 (Cause congruency: low, high) design. To manipulate FP/NP cause congruency, we varied the mission alignment (such that the FP and NP were both health-focused, or the FP was health-focused while NP was environment-focused; see appendix C for stimuli). As in prior studies, participants completed measures of organizational partnership fit, CM attitudes, manipulation checks (perceived mutual benefit and perceived mission alignment), and attention checks (see appendix D).

Results

Attention and Manipulation Checks

Twenty-one participants (10% of the total sample) failed the attention check, yielding a total of 191 participants (results are similar when all participants are retained).

An ANOVA on perceived mission alignment indicated that participants viewed more alignment in the high cause congruency condition (M = 5.79, SD = 1.39) relative to the low cause-congruency condition (M = 4.58, SD = 1.51; $F(1,191) = 33.40$, $p < .001$). Also, an ANOVA on the perceived mutual benefit composite indicated that participants viewed higher mutual benefit when the for-profit (and non-profit) were large (M = 5.90, SD = 1.12) relative to when the for-profit was small (M = 5.17, SD = 1.42; $F(1,191) = 15.78$, $p < .001$), confirming the success of our manipulations.

Perceived Organizational Fit

We conducted a 2 (Size configuration: small FP/large NP, large FP/large NP) x 2 (Cause congruency: low, high) ANOVA on perceived organizational partnership fit. This analysis yielded a main effect of size configuration (such that partnerships between large organizations evoked higher fit than partnerships between a small FP and large NP; $F(1,191) = 10.18$, $p < .01$) as well as cause congruency (such that partnerships between organizations with aligned missions evoked higher fit than partnerships featuring low alignment; $F(1,191) = 19.58$, $p < .01$). The interaction was not significant ($F(1,191) = .48$, $p = .49$). See Figure 5.

[Insert Figure 5 About Here]

Mediation

We used AMOS (version 26) in SPSS to examine the indirect effects of size configuration and cause congruency on attitude towards the promotion through perceived organizational fit.[1] Perceived fit again had a significant, direct effect on attitude towards the promotion (β = .62, t = 14.22, $p < .001$). The effect of size configuration on attitude towards the promotion was mediated through perceived organizational fit (β = .40, SE = .15, 95% CI = .1344,.7298) as was the effect of cause congruency (β = .57, SE = .14, 95% CI = .3233, .8577).

Discussion

We conducted study 3 to address RQ1: Are the effects of organizational size and cause congruency on consumers' perception of partnership fit additive or interactive? The results of this study indicate that both organizational size and cause-congruency exert separate, additive effects on perceived organizational fit, which, in turn, determine consumers' attitudes towards the promotion. We consider the theoretical and practical implications next.

General Discussion

The current work contributes to the growing CM literature, which examines how consumers make judgments about CM promotions based on the fit between the partnering for-profit and non-profit organizations. We adopt an exchange theory perspective to highlight how sizes of partnering organizations influence consumer inferences about partnership fit. Across three studies, we show that partnerships between small FP and large NP organizations evoke lower judgments of perceived partnership fit, which in turn influences consumers' attitudes towards the promotion. In study 2, we show that this difference is attenuated when the FP partner donates goods (rather than financial resources). Study 3 shows that both organizational size and cause congruency independently contribute to consumers' perceptions of partnership fit.

[1] We used AMOS rather than PROCESS in order to specify a model without an interaction as well as to obtain estimates of the individual indirect effects.

Theoretical Implications

The current work makes three contributions to the literature on cause marketing. First, we contribute to research examining organizational partnership fit, which is critical for the success of CM promotions: high levels of fit can increase overall evaluations of the sponsoring firm (Ellen et al. 2006) and the CM campaign (Pracejus and Olsen 2004), enhance firm credibility (Rifon et al. 2004), and compensate for the sponsorship of less desirable causes (Barone et al. 2007). Past work has focused primarily on the congruency between FP and NP organizations' missions, products, and branding as determinants of fit (Luo and Rice; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). Studies 1 and 2 held constant these characteristics and found that configurations of FP and NP sizes and nature of exchanged resources influenced consumers' perceptions of fit. Study 3 separately manipulated the cause-congruency between the partnering organizations and found that size and cause-congruency exert independent effects on perceived fit. The current work thus suggests that perceived fit is a multidimensional construct and adds exchange-related specifications to other antecedents of partnership fit that have been examined by past work.

Second, the current work contributes to research on consumers' use of heuristics in making judgments about CM promotions: consumers relied on their stereotypes of organizations and understanding of what each partner receives to determine their perception of fit. Most past work examining CM promotions has held the aspect of organizational size constant: a typical exchange scenario studied in the context of CM entails a partnership between a large, nationally-known FP (possessing financial resources but needing a way to counter an impersonal, detached image) and a NP organization (possessing warmer, charitable image but often needing financial resources). Such partnerships are likely to be perceived by consumers as high fit in terms of the resources contributed and consequent benefits generated via the promotion for each organization; in practice, however, organizations of varying sizes may contribute to the joint formation of a CM partnership.

Specifically, we demonstrate that the basic demographic variable of organization size influences consumers' perceptions of the balance in exchange entailed in a CM partnership; consumers view a partnership between a small FP and a large NP as less mutually beneficial, reducing consumers' perceptions of organizational fit and attitude towards the promotion. This finding builds on past work which implies that consumers make judgments about CM promotions based on perceived fairness in an exchange: For example, Folse et al. (2010) demonstrated that larger monetary contributions by firms in a CM promotion enhanced consumers' purchase intentions relative to smaller contributions, and found that this effect was mediated by consumers' perception of firms' self-serving versus altruistic reasons for sponsoring the promotion. This finding is also related to past work that has applied balance theory (Heider 1946) to understand consumers' responses towards organizational partners in CM promotions: Specifically, Basil and Herr (2006) showed that balanced attitudes towards organizational targets enhanced perceptions of partnership appropriateness. Our work suggests that organizational size and resources are other dimensions that consumers consider when determining whether a partnership is balanced.

Finally, we examine the scope and limits of the effect of for-profit and non-profit sizes on consumer judgments. Study 2 shows that the effect of organizational size on perceptions of fit in the context of a CM promotion depends on the nature of goods that a FP gives to a NP. The effect of organizational size asymmetry on perceived partnership fit disappears when the FP organization donates needed goods, providing support for our exchange-based view of cause marketing. In other words, when the promotion highlighted that the FP provided resources (goods) needed by the partner NP, consumers inferred mutual benefit from this arrangement, regardless of the FP organization's size.

Practical Implication

This research has important implications for FP and NP groups who seek to develop effective CM promotions, as well as for consumer advocacy groups who educate consumers about how to interpret promotions. The current work demonstrated that consumers' subjective understanding of CM partners' exchange (rather than objective reality) determines their response to CM promotions. This is important for FP and NP organizations (particularly smaller FP and larger NP partners) who are considering developing CM promotions. One practical implication of our research is that small for-profit organizations that are interested in CM partnerships with small non-profits may benefit regardless of the resource they donate, while small for-profit organizations that are interested in partnerships with large non-profits are advised to incorporate donations of goods into CM promotions. Furthermore, the current work illustrated the importance of perceived mutual benefit in determining consumers' perceptions of fit and attitude towards the promotion. In order to enhance consumer attitudes, CM promotions may explicitly articulate the cap or mechanism of CM efforts in a way that suggests that the CM promotion creates mutual benefit for both partners. For example, WonderSlim (a small FP) advertises its mutually beneficial partnership with Feeding America (a large NP) on its product packaging by stating that the sales of each box of their products provide two meals to people in need through Feeding America. The results of the current work also support the findings of past work, which show that cause congruency also determines consumers' perceptions of organizational fit. Thus, organizations should seek to develop CM partnerships with organizations that espouse similar missions. In sum, both cause *and* size alignment combine to determine consumers' judgments of organizational fit.

The current work suggests that consumer advocacy groups may consider educating consumers about the potentially incorrect inferences they may make in the context of CM promotions. Media literacy-focused organizations, for example, create resources and disseminate messages designed to improve consumers' ability to objectively understand media content. Such organizations may educate consumers about some of the internal factors that drive the formation of joint partnerships between organizations of various sizes, and illustrate how such a partnership may, in fact, be mutually beneficial.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of the current research which pose opportunities for future research. The current work did not use the names of actual FP and NP organizations in order to control for prior attitudes (i.e., in the interest of interval validity). In the interest of external validity, future work should replicate the current findings with actual FP and NP organizations.

While the current work examined how the nature of the resources donated serves as a boundary condition, there are many other aspects of CM promotions that may interact with the effects examined. For example, do limits on the donation such as a maximum cap ("X% of proceeds will be donated to NP up to $Y") present a boundary condition to the effects demonstrated in the current work? Consumers may perceive a small for-profit sponsoring a promotion with a very high cap to donation as contributing more to the exchange than a small for-profit sponsoring a promotion with no explicitly stated cap.

The studies reported in the current work presented the CM promotion to participants with minimal contextualizing information (again, in the interest of internal validity). Contextualizing information may imply that a CM promotion is transactional or relational in nature (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Safari and Albaum 2019), which may serve as a moderator: information indicating that a partnership is relational and ongoing may mitigate consumers' perceptions of ill-fit between a small FP and large NP. Finally, future work can also explore how other demographic aspects of organizations (e.g., age of the organization, leadership structure, geographic location) influence the way joint benefit is determined by consumers, in order to provide practical guidance to organizations that seek to develop CM promotions.

Appendix A: Study One Stimuli

"Cause-related marketing is a promotional approach in which a for-profit company partners with a non-profit cause for mutual benefit. An example of this is when the business that produces Campbell Soup promises to donate 10 cents to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation for every can of soup purchased by a customer.

We are interested in your perceptions about these types of promotions. Imagine that you are considering purchasing a product featuring a Cause-related Marketing promotion. The company producing the product is a [**large, well-known**/*small, unknown*] company. For every purchase of the focal product, the company will donate a certain amount to a [**large, well-known**/*small, unknown*] non-profit organization."

Appendix B: Study Two Stimuli

"Cause-related marketing is a promotional approach in which a for-profit company partners with a non-profit cause for mutual benefit. An example of this is when the business that produces Campbell Soup promises to donate 10 cents to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation for every can of soup purchased by a customer.

Imagine that you are considering purchasing a product featuring a Cause-related Marketing promotion. The company producing the product is a [**small, unknown company (e.g., Smile Squared Dental Care)** / *large, well-known company (e.g., Crest Dental Care)*]. For every purchase of the focal product, the company will donate [**a certain amount of money to a large, well-known non-profit organization (e.g., World Dental Relief)** / *products to a large, well-known non-profit organization (e.g., World Dental Relief) that are needed by that organization.*]"

Appendix C: Study Three Stimuli

"Cause-related marketing is a promotional approach in which a for-profit company partners with a non-profit cause for mutual benefit. An example of this is when the business that produces Campbell Soup promises to donate 10 cents to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation for every can of soup purchased by a customer.

Imagine that you are considering purchasing a product featuring a Cause-related Marketing promotion. The company producing the product is [*a small and unknown company* / **large, well-known company]**. The company's mission is related to making products that enhance consumers' health and well-being. For every purchase of the focal product, the company will donate a certain amount of money to a large non -profit that is focused on enhancing [*sustainability and the environment* **/ consumers' health and well-being**].

Appendix D Measures

Construct	Items (All scaled on 7 points)
Attitude toward the promotion: "Overall, all things considered, I see the Cause-related Marketing promotion as:" Study 1: α = .87 Study 2: α = .91 Study 3: α = .93	Bad - Good Uninteresting - Interesting Unfavorable – Favorable
Perceived Fit: "How do you view the fit between the FP company and NP organization?" Study 1: α = .87 Study 2: α = .94 Study 3: α = .9	Low fit - High fit Inconsistent - Consistent Not complimentary - Complimentary
Confound Check, Study 1 Perceived Motive: ("Which motives below reflect your perception of the FP company's rationale for partnering with a NP organization?") Study 1: α = .88	Impure-Pure, Selfish-Unselfish Uncaring-Caring
Manipulation Check, Study 2: α = .92 Manipulation Check, Study 3: α = .90 Consider the partnership between the for-profit and the non-profit. To what extent do you view the partnership as:	Mutually beneficial Balanced Equitable (1) Not at all – (7) A great deal
Manipulation Check, Study 3 How aligned are the missions of the for-profit and non-profit organizations?	(1) Not at all – (7) A great deal
Attention Check, Study 2, and Study 3: "In the scenario, you read, what was the size of the for-profit partner?"	1 = Large 2 = Small 3 = Not sure

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FIGURE 1

The Complex Exchange in CM Promotions

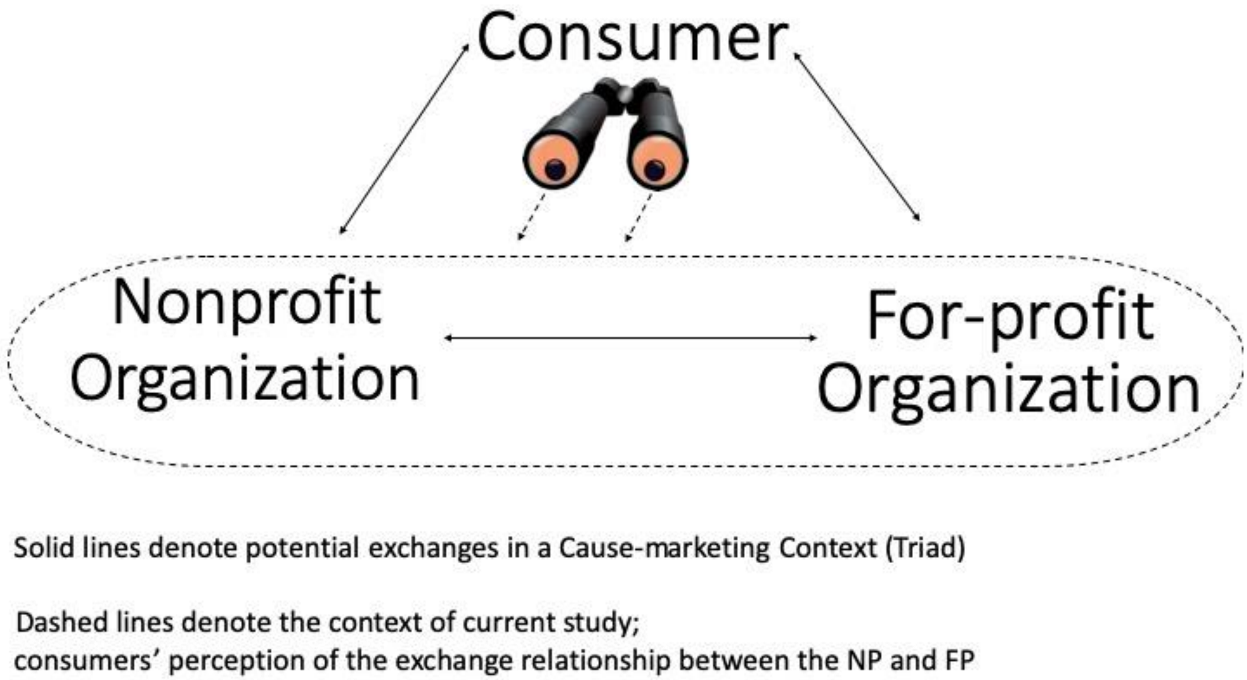

FIGURE 2

Conceptual Overview

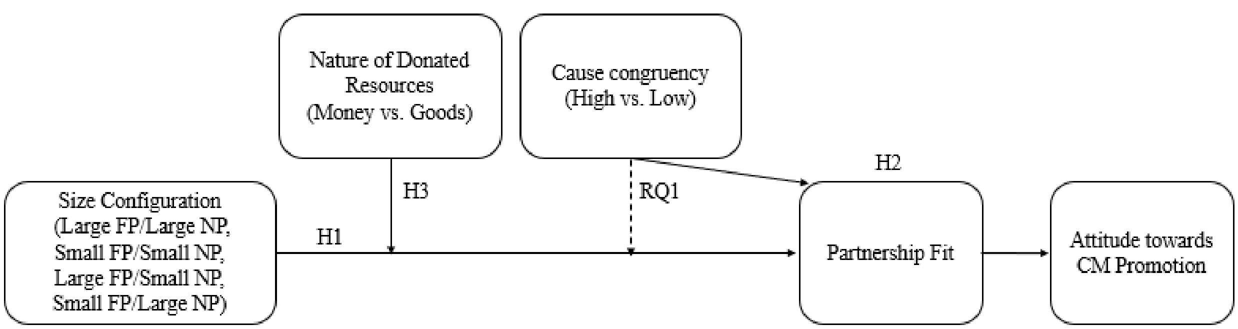

FIGURE 3

Effects of FPs and NPs Size Configurations on Perceived Organizational Partnership Fit in Study 1

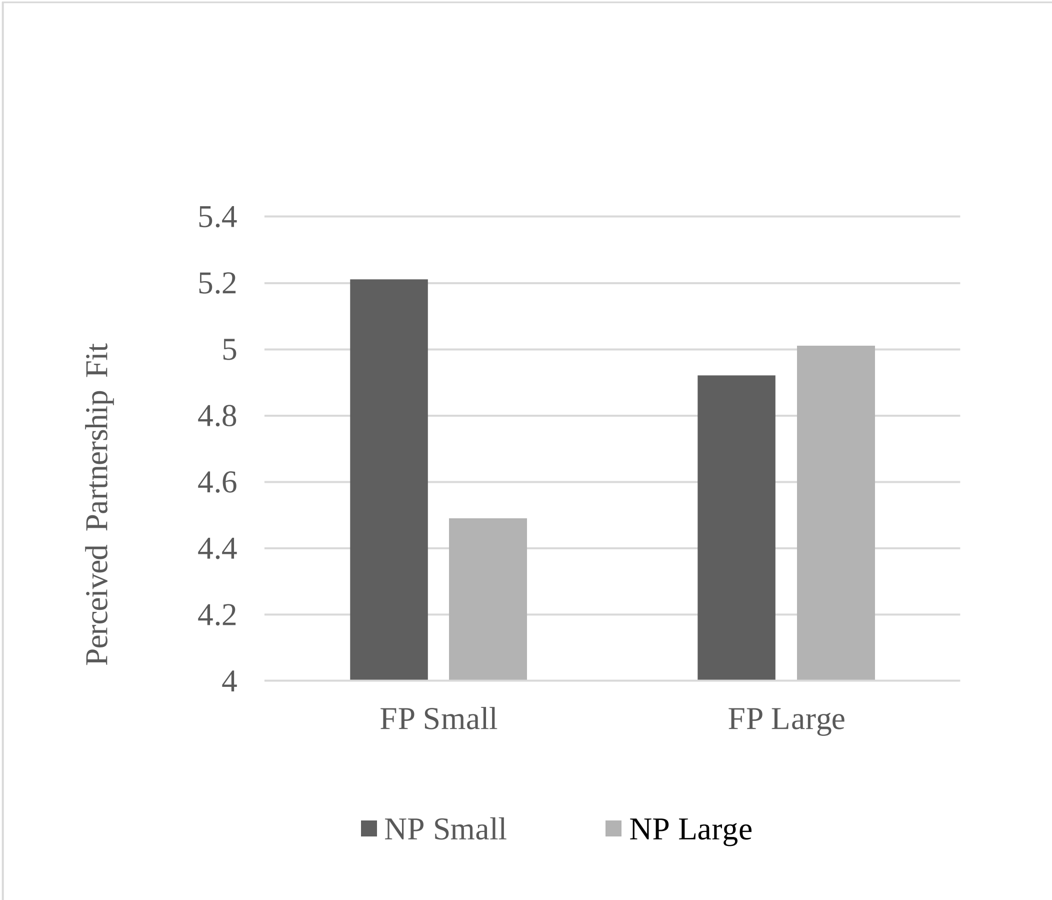

FIGURE 4

Effects of FP and NP Size Configurations and Donated Resources on Perceived Organizational Partnership Fit in Study 2

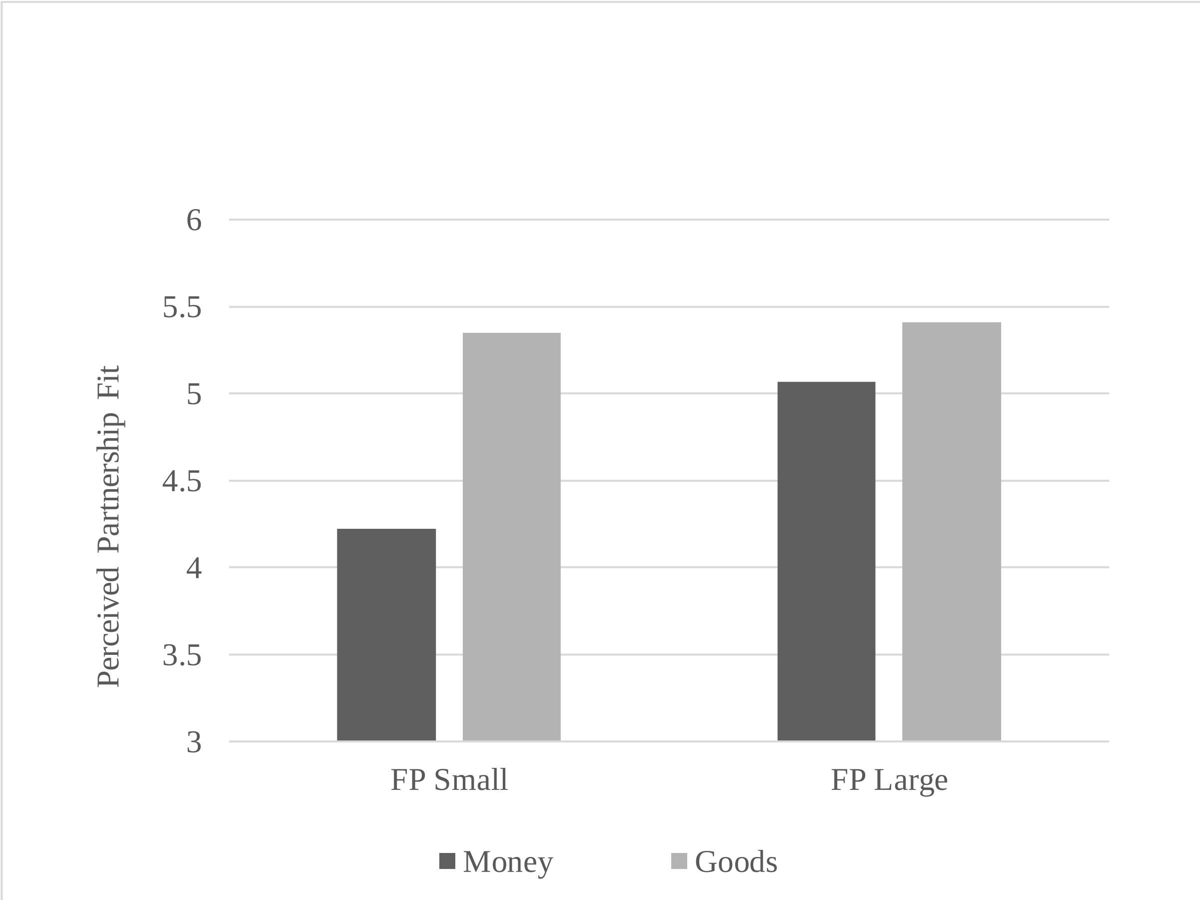

FIGURE 5

Effects of FP and NP Size Configurations and Donated Resources on Perceived Organizational Partnership Fit in Study 2