

**Who Really Cares about Ethics?  
Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Purchase Intention**

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**Abstract**

*The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is intrinsically linked to both ethics and the practice of public relations. While past research has shown us that it is no longer a question as to whether or not a corporation should be socially responsible, but is a requirement of organizations by consumers, modern research has yet to conclusively show that organizational involvement in socially responsible activities positively affects financial performance. This study extended the existing body of literature related to CSR and financial performance with the inclusion of consumers' perspectives. In combination with Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action model for predicting behavior, this study used interviews and surveys of consumers to show that a positive relationship exists between CSR and financial performance or that consumers are more likely to purchase a product if they perceive the company that makes it as socially responsible. Additionally, comparisons were made among populations within the study based on demographic data, resulting in conclusions about those populations that are more likely to purchase products based on CSR activities. Some qualitative data was also included in order to further explicate consumers' understanding of CSR in general as well as in regards to specific organizational involvement in socially responsible activities.*

## Introduction

Modern corporate social responsibility (CSR) has many names, such as corporate citizenship, corporate philanthropy, corporate giving, corporate community involvement, community relations, community affairs, community development, corporate responsibility, global citizenship and corporate social marketing. Likewise, the definition of CSR changes from researcher to researcher. For example, CSR can be generally defined as the organization incurring responsibilities to society beyond profit maximization. (Pava and Krausz 1995, 1) A more specific definition of CSR is offered by Business for Social Responsibility: “operating a business in a manner that meets or exceeds the ethical, legal, commercial, and public expectations that society has of business” (Kotler and Lee 2005, 3).

Purchase intention can most readily be understood as the likelihood that a consumer intends to purchase a product. The concept of purchase intention is rooted in psychological and behavioral studies; therefore, the theory of reasoned action works well for identifying and understanding associations between CSR and purchase intentions for this study. Armitage and Christian (2004) explained that the theory of reasoned action holds that “behavior is solely dependent on personal agency (i.e., the formation of an intention), and that control over behavior (e.g., personal resources or environmental determinants of behavior) is relatively unimportant” (p. 6). In other words, the theory of reasoned action was designed to deal with relatively simple behaviors in which the prediction of behavior required only the formation of an intention.

Although the core of CSR is concerned with responsibilities beyond profit maximization, the relationship between an organization’s involvement in socially responsible practices and its effects on the financial performance of organizations have yet to be conclusively determined. It is important to recognize the relationship between consumers’ purchase intentions and organizations’ involvement in socially responsible programs because often CSR is dismissed as merely another public relations tool. However, understanding the underlying reasons consumers make purchases in relation to CSR would contribute to the understanding of CSR as a strategic management function overall. Furthermore, the literature addressing CSR in relation to an organization’s financial performance is conflicting; however, the majority of literature recognizes that a positive association exists between CSR and organizations’ financial performance. Auger et al. (2007) posited that, “The literature on the importance of social product attributes is much less developed than the branding literature. Most research, both commercial and academic, on the importance of these attributes suggests that a growing number of consumers are taking ethical and social issues into account when purchasing products” (p. 2). To put this in numbers form, Harrison (2003) found that, “By 1996, 67 percent of adults were claiming to consider a company’s ethical stance when buying a product and 55 percent would not deal with a company if they disliked its ethics” (p. 129). More importantly, however, Harrison (2003) cited that in 2001, 80 percent of consumers surveyed in the UK believed that companies should attach at least as much importance to social responsibility as profitability when making business decisions. (p. 129) Despite evidence that consumers appear to feel so strongly about organizational involvement in socially responsible programs, Abouzeid and Weaver (1978) determined that social responsibility was not a dominant goal in any of the 220 companies they studied.

Therefore, this study sought to go straight to the source of an organization’s financial performance, the consumer. Most indicative of the need for this study, Thompson (1995) stated that, “...knowledge about marketing ethics has increased substantially over the last several years, in large part because of the many empirical studies that have been conducted. However, the majority of this research has analyzed the ethical judgments of marketing professionals—consumers’ considerations of ethical issues has been neglected” (Creyer and Ross 1997, 422).

## Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance

Much of the research regarding CSR has focused on the financial aspects of the topic. McGuire et al. (1988) offered an excellent overview of the dilemma encountered when examining the relationship between CSR and financial performance: “One view is that firms face a trade-off between social responsibility and their financial performance. Those holding this view propose that firms incur costs from socially responsible actions that put them at an economic disadvantage compared to other, less responsible firms” (p.854). Thus, many organizations see involvement in socially responsible activities as a negative association.

Contrary to this viewpoint, McGuire et al. suggested the alternative view that the cost of CSR is minimal and that firms may actually benefit. Likewise, in interviews with corporate executives, Holmes (1976) found that, “A significant change in executive opinions and corporate philosophies of social responsibility has occurred over the past five-year period. Executives anticipated more positive than negative outcomes from the social efforts of their firms, and almost all executives believed that corporate reputation and goodwill would be enhanced through social endeavors” (p. 40). Therefore, CSR and financial performance was viewed by many organizations as having a positive association.

A third and final perspective suggested by McGuire et al. stated that no association could be seen between CSR and financial performance or “that the costs of socially responsible actions are significant but are offset by a reduction in other firm costs” (854). The relationship between CSR and financial performance is controversial; however, the majority of research and studies have revealed a positive association between CSR and financial performance. For example, Pava and Krausz (1995) analyzed 21 noteworthy studies related to CSR and financial performance. Their results indicated that of the 21 studies analyzed, the majority revealed a positive association, and more studies revealed that no association existed than that a negative association existed.

Numerous similar studies using content analyses methodology to show a positive association between CSR and financial performance have been done. Bragdon and Marlin (1975) conducted one of the earliest studies of CSR as it relates to financial performance studies. The researchers used measures of financial accounting in comparison to levels of pollution to show that lower levels of pollution had a positive association with better financial performance. Belkaoui (1976) also used pollution as a CSR topic of choice to show that stock returns were higher for firms that disclosed pollution control information in annual reports than for a control sample. In addition, Cotrill (1990) used *Fortune* magazine’s annual survey of corporate reputations in comparison to market share. Cotrill concluded a positive association existed between CSR and market share. Also, Roberts (1992) tested the stakeholder theory (McGuire et al. (1988) explained that, “Stakeholder theory suggests that a firm must satisfy not only stockholders and bondholders, but also those with less explicit, or implicit, claims” (p.854)) using financial accounting measures to conclude, once again, that a positive association existed between CSR and financial performance. Finally, Cochran and Wood (1984) used accounting data across five years and compared it to three categories of socially responsible corporations (best, honorable mention, and worst) identified by Moscovitz (1975). Cochran and Wood concluded that with operating earnings/sales as the financial performance measure, firms with “best” rankings outperformed “honorable mention” firms, which, in turn, outperformed “worst” ranked firms. Therefore, a positive association between CSR and financial performance was recognized.

However, research and studies on the association between CSR and financial performance have not always revealed a positive association, and it is important to address some prominent studies that have concluded that the relationship between CSR and financial performance has been identified as negative or nonexistent. One of the earliest and most commonly cited studies concluding that the relationship between CSR and financial performance is negative was Vance (1975). Vance used Moskowitz’s (1975) social responsibility index in comparison to a percentage

change in stock prices. He concluded that a negative association existed between CSR and financial performance. Vance is one of very few researchers to find a negative association.

More studies have found that no association existed at all than that a negative association existed as posited by Vance (1975). For example, Bowman and Haire (1975) performed a content analysis, examining the annual reports of 82 firms in the food processing industry between 1969 and 1973. By examining the amounts of attention given to CSR in the firms' annual reports, they divided the firms into upper, middle and no mention of CSR categories. Then the groups were compared to returns on equity percentages. Bowman and Haire (1975) concluded that the mean return on equity for firms in the middle group was 14.3 percent, while the mean return on equity for firms with no mention of CSR was 9.1 percent. Therefore, Bowman and Haire posited that at least a moderate amount of involvement in socially responsible programs increased financial performance. However, Bowman and Haire were unable to conclusively show that the upper-grouped firms produced a higher mean return on equity than firms in the middle group.

Likewise, Alexander and Buchholz (1978) used Moskowitz's (1975) social responsibility index in comparison to market-based returns to conclude that "no significant relationship exists between social responsibility ratings and market-based returns" (Pava and Krausz 1995, 156), and Freedman and Jaggi (1982) examined the Council on Economic Priorities air and water pollution measures in comparison to various financial accounting measures to conclude that, "In general there is no association between pollution measures and financial performance" (Pava and Krausz 1995, 157).

While the majority of studies in CSR and financial performance have indicated a positive association, the literature clearly lacks an examination of purchase intentions in relation to CSR. It is important to recognize the relationship between consumers' purchase intentions and organizations' involvement in socially responsible programs in order to both fill this gap in the literature and position CSR activities as a strategic management function of public relations.

### **The Theory of Reasoned Action**

In order to predict the importance CSR plays in consumer's purchase intentions, it is necessary to review some basic information and the relevant research and studies in behavioral theory. Specifically, this study is foundationally based on Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action; however, the theory is complex and controversial. Therefore, it is important to specifically address attitudes as they are capable of predicting behavior through the theory of reasoned action.

Historically, attitudes have been assumed to be direct predictors of behavior, thus the emergence of attitude scales such as the Thurstone (1931), Likert (1932), Guttman (1944) and Osgood (1957) scales. After a review of the current literature, Allport (1935) concluded that, the social psychological study of attitudes has been one of the core areas of discipline for decades, and that, "No other term appears more frequently in the experimental and theoretical literature" (798). Moreover, Armitage and Christian (2004) posit that although attitudes serve a great number of functions, attitudes as they serve to guide people's behavior account for the vast majority of research on the topic. (1)

LaPiere's (1934) study is perhaps one of the first and most widely cited examples of discrepancy between attitudes and behavior. LaPiere toured the United States with a young Chinese couple during times of anti-Chinese sentiment. After visiting 250 different establishments, the group was denied service on only one occasion; however, when LaPiere subsequently wrote the same establishments, 118 of the 128 replies claimed that they would not accept members of the Chinese race as guests in their establishment. LaPiere concluded, "Only a verbal reaction to an entirely symbolic situation can be secured by the questionnaire. It may indicate what the responder would actually do when confronted with the situation symbolized in the question, but there is no assurance

that it will. [...] If social attitudes are to be conceptualized as partially integrated habit sets which will become operative under specific circumstances and lead to a particular pattern of adjustment they must, in the main, be derived from a study of humans behaving in actual social situations. They must not be imputed on the basis of questionnaire data” (236-7). Likewise, Whitlow (1935) used questionnaires to predict the behavior of approximately 600 high school students over a six-year period. Whitlow concluded, “A particular student may behave in a way directly opposed to his attitude; or with respect to a particular item of conduct the behavior of the students in the aggregate may contradict their attitude. In other words, a professed attitude is not a criterion for predicting behavior” (491).

Following LaPiere (1934) and Whitlow’s (1935) conclusions, many researchers shifted their focus and concentrated on developing attitude measurements and theoretical positions on the measurement of attitudes, as they were capable of predicting behaviors. Perhaps, the most prominent of these studies is Wicker (1969). Wicker (1969) examined 42 studies (not necessarily using the theory of reasoned action) to determine that attitudes only generally correlate with behaviors,  $r = .15$ , and that corresponding correlations rarely exceed  $r = .30$  (Armitage and Christian 2004, 2). Moreover, Corey (1937) assessed attitudes toward cheating using, what was considered at the time, a highly reliable measure of attitudes toward behavior. Corey (1937) found only  $r = .02$  between attitude toward cheating and overt behavior.

Triandis (1967) concluded that, “there is a gap between those who are primarily concerned with the measurement of attitudes and those who have written theoretically about the measurement of attitudes. The former frequently rest their case after providing us with a single score, whereas the latter make a large number of theoretical distinctions but do not provide us with precise and standard procedures for measurement” (228). In so much, theoretical research was further split into examining potential moderators versus variables that might mediate the attitude-behavior relationship.

Baron and Kenney (1986) defined the difference between moderator and mediator measurements. A moderator variable “partitions a focal independent variable into subgroups that establish its domains of maximal effectiveness in regard to a given dependent variable” (1173). However, mediator refers to a variable “which represents the generative mechanism through which the focal independent variable is able to influence the dependent variable of interest” (1173). Armitage and Christian (2004) add that “as far as they are aware, only one variable has been investigated in this regard, namely, behavioral intentions” (4).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) stated, “Behavioral intentions are regarded as a summary of the motivation required to perform a particular behavior, reflecting an individual’s decision to perform a particular behavior, reflecting an individual’s course of action, as well as an index of how hard people are willing to try and perform the behavior. The idea that behavioral intentions mediate the attitude-behavior relationship represents a significant move away from the traditional view of attitudes: rather than attitudes being related directly to behavior, attitudes only serve to direct behavior to the extent that they influence intentions” (Armitage and Christian 2004, 4-5).

Thus, deriving from Fishbein’s extension of Dulaney’s theory of propositional control (1967), researcher Martin Fishbein introduced the theory of reasoned action in 1967 (See Dulaney 1967 and Fishbein 1967). Originally termed the Fishbein model, the theory of reasoned action is based on the assumption that human beings are usually quite rational and make systematic use of information available to them with the ultimate goal being the prediction and understanding of behavior. The theory is founded on the idea that the influence of attitude on behavior is mediated through behavioral intentions, and that behavioral intention is a function of two basic determinants: attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. A person’s attitude toward a behavior is basically the individual’s positive or negative evaluation toward performing the behavior, and subjective norms are the individual’s perception of the social pressures from relevant referents to perform (or not perform) the behavior.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) posit that a person's beliefs underlie a person's attitudes. Ajzen and Fishbein add that, "Although a person may hold a large number of beliefs about any given object, it appears that he can attend to only a relatively small number of beliefs—perhaps five to nine—at any given moment. According to our theory, these salient beliefs are the immediate determinants of the person's attitude" (63).

Therefore, according to the theory of reasoned action, the first step in predicting behavior is elicitation of salient beliefs, and because elicitation usually produces sets of beliefs that differ from respondent to respondent, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recommend eliciting beliefs from a representative sample of the population and selecting the most frequently elicited beliefs to create a modal set for the population, termed "modal behavioral beliefs." Next, the strength of beliefs is measured through weighting. For example, respondents are asked to indicate the likelihood that performing the behavior will result in a given outcome. According to the theory of reasoned action "a person's attitude toward a behavior can be predicted by multiplying their evaluation of each of the behavior's consequences by the strength of their belief that performing the behavior will lead to that consequence and then summing the products for the total set of beliefs" (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980, 67).

Subjective norms, which beliefs are also considered to underlie, must also be measured in order to predict behavior. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recommend assessing not only a person's normative beliefs (a person's belief that a specific referent thinks he should or should not perform a behavior) but also, the person's motivation to comply with each of his or her referents or the weight of those referents.

Finally, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) state, "We have argued that with the aid of appropriate elicitation and measurement procedures, it is possible to predict a person's attitude toward a behavior from a weighted sum of his or her beliefs about performing the behavior and to predict his or her subjective norm from a weighted sum of his normative beliefs. Since attitude toward a behavior and subjective norm are the determinants of intention, it should theoretically be possible to predict intention directly from the two sets of beliefs" (76). However, in order to predict behavior, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argue that certain conditions must be met: the set of behavioral beliefs must predict the attitude toward the behavior, the set of normative beliefs are predictive of the subjective norm and the attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm must be shown to predict the intention. (76)

Additionally, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) contend that in order for behaviors to be predicted using the theory of reasoned action, each component above must correlate specifically in terms of target, context, time and action. For example, "an individual's attitude toward exercising (action), to get fit (target) in the gym (context) in the next week (time) should be more closely related to a measure of behavior designed to tap exercising to get fit in the gym in the preceding week, than (say) an index of fitness" (Armitage and Christian 2004, 3).

In order to better understand the theory of reasoned action, the following example is offered by Armitage and Christian (2004): "Consider the following example of Gary's intention to use a condom. Gary's mother might want her son to use a condom every time he has sex with a new partner, but Gary is only likely to do so to the extent that he is motivated to comply with his mother (very little in this case). Similarly, Gary's latest partner also wants Gary to use a condom everytime he has sex with her; in this case, however, Gary is very motivated to comply with his new partner and therefore is more likely to intend to use a condom. Within the theory of reasoned action, both behavioral and normative beliefs are summed to produce global measures of attitude and subjective norm, respectively" (5-6).

Since the theory's conception in 1967, many researchers have found that it has adequate predictive utility. Bagozzi (1981) conducted a field study of blood donors examining hypotheses within leading attitude-behavior theories, including the theory of reasoned action. Bagozzi (1981) concluded that behaviors under an individual's complete volitional control showed that attitude

influences behavior only through its impact on intentions, as described by Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action. Moreover, Bagozzi (1981) found support for measuring the attitude-behavior relationship in regards to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) correlation of target, context, action and time. Bagozzi (1981) states, "The present study also demonstrates the sensitivity of the intentions-behavior and attitude-intentions relationships to specificity considerations. With respect to the former, the relations are strongest when the corresponding variables are measured at comparable levels of specificity with regard to action, target, context and time. With respect to the latter, the relationship is strongest when the respondent is allowed to adjust intention according to the degree of behavioral commitment he or she is willing to make. It appears that attitudes and intentions can correspond in terms of the consequences of the act as well as in terms of the action, target, context and time elements" (625).

Like Bagozzi (1981), Burnkrant and Page (1982) assessed the determinants of the intention to donate blood. Based on Bagozzi's (1981) findings, Burnkrant and Page assumed that intention would fully mediate intention, resulting in behavior. Burnkrant and Page concluded that, "Our results provide strong support for the validity of a two-component (i.e. attitudinal and normative) conceptualization of the determinants of behavioral intention" (560). Moreover, Schlegel et al. (1977) extended the generalizability of the theory of reasoned action through measuring alcohol drinking by adolescents. Schlegel et al. concluded that their research had shown the theory of reasoned action to be sufficiently strong and "compared favorably with results obtained from applications of the [theory] to other behaviors" (428).

Furthermore, Davidson and Jaccard (1975) tested the theory of reasoned action using phone interviews of women on the topic of family planning. The researchers attempted to show the predictivity and generalizability of the theory. Davidson and Jaccard concluded that, to the degree that attitudinal and normative components predict behavioral intention, the theory provides highly active predictions of family planning intentions. (1077) Also, the researchers found that a high correlation was present between individuals' attitude toward performing a given behavior and beliefs about the consequences of performing that behavior. (1079) And finally, Davidson and Jaccard showed support for the theory of reasoned action as correlations are stronger when the traditional attitude toward the object is replaced with attitude toward the act in predicting specific behaviors (as suggested by the theory of reasoned action). (1079) Davidson and Jaccard performed a two-year study of family planning behavior again in 1979. Again, Davison and Jaccard (1979) found predictive validity of the theory and concluded "Even prior to the adjustments made for attitude change and the sequence of events, both intention and the attitudinal and normative components measured at the first interview provided reasonable correlations with behavior during the subsequent 2 years (the lowest validity coefficient was .508)" (1374).

Possibly, the most overwhelming evidence of the theory's predictive utility is Sheppard et al. (1988). Sheppard et al. (1988) conducted two meta-analyses of past studies utilizing the Ajzen and Fishbein model. Sheppard et al. (1988) found that, "Based on the data [...], a frequency-weighted average correlation for the intention-behavior relationship was .53. This correlation is based on 87 separate studies with a total sample of 11,566 and is significant at the 0.01 level. Based on the data [...], a frequency-weighted average correlation for the attitude-subjective norm-intention relationship was .66. This correlation is based on 87 separate studies with a total sample of 12,624 and is significant at the 0.001 level. These results provide strong support for the overall predictive utility of the Fishbein and Ajzen model" (336).

Perhaps most closely linked to the study at hand, the theory of reasoned action has been proven effective in marketing literature. In applying the theory to predicting and understanding consumer behavior, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) demonstrated the theory's ability to predict purchase intentions by asking 37 college students to indicate their intentions to perform two or three different behaviors in reference to five brands in three product types (automobile, toothpaste and beer). While Ajzen and Fishbein stressed correspondence between measures, they concluded that "there is little

doubt that buying intentions can be accurately predicted from corresponding measures of attitude toward the behavior and subjective norm. With respect to the products and behaviors considered in this study, the attitude toward the behavior seemed to be the more important determinant of buying intention” (169).

In a review of the relevant marketing literature, Ryan and Bonfield (1975) cited that the theory had several shortcomings and recommended a larger body of marketing research using the theory; however, they also concluded that evidence across studies indicate that the theory has “value in predicting and explaining variance in intentions and behaviors over a wide range of purchase intentions and purchase behavior” (125). Ryan and Bonfield (1975) found that across the relevant literature, the average correlation between behavioral intention and behavior was .44. (125) Moreover, it is important to note, as Ryan and Bonfield (1975) have, that much of the marketing research based on the theory of reasoned action has not actually measured behavior, rather much of the research, both positive and negative, has measured the relationship between variables in the theory of reasoned action.

Wilson et al. (1975) applied the theory of reasoned action to a study of adult housewives answering questionnaires and then observing their behavior when selecting between six different brands of toothpaste, which they were given at no-charge for their participation in the study, from a display. Wilson et al. concluded that the theory of reasoned action can be applied in a marketing context, and that attitude toward action (as suggested by the theory of reasoned action) predicted behavioral intention better than other models. Additionally, it was argued that attitude toward action has considerably greater predictive power in purchase situations where barriers exist to purchase (e.g. financial, status effects, time etc.). (47) Likewise, a study by Tuck (1973) used the theory of reasoned action to show correlation across different user groups of a specific brand of bedtime drink, Horlicks. Tuck (1973) found that when the total sample was considered, the correlation was .74, and all correlations were significant at over the .005 level. (347) Tuck added, “Predictions of behavior will be improved (in my experience and that of other users of the model) by the measurement of normative beliefs according to the [theory of reasoned action]” (347).

Furthermore, Ryan and Bonfield (1980) used questionnaires and interviews of prospective loan customers at a credit union to study the theory of reasoned action as it resulted in behavior (loan application). Ryan and Bonfield determined their study supported the validity of the theory of reasoned action. (92). The researchers stated, “The results of this study are consistent with the findings of other researchers who have investigated this [theory]. [...] The mediating effect of behavioral intentions was shown, and the ability of this deterministic [theory] to predict unobtrusively observed real world group behavior adds external validity evidence to previous support” (90). Moreover, Ryan and Bonfield added “behavioral intention not only provides a quantitative criterion that is more convenient to monitor than overt behavior, but it also appears to mediate the effect of attitudes and norms on subsequent behavior” (90).

Unfortunately, several researchers have concluded that the theory requires revision in order to increase accuracy, and this is important to note. Most of this research focuses on alteration of one or more of the theory’s components. Ajzen and Fishbein argue, in most of these instances, that the theory is not being properly used, most often in regards to specificity across components indicating target, action, context and time. For example, assessing the attitude of a woman about punishing children is different then assessing the attitude of a woman about punishing her own children. Therefore, specificity is not stable across components predictive of behavior using the theory of reasoned action. Nevertheless, with this type of research guiding the relevant literature indicative of negative correlations between attitude and behavior using the theory of reasoned action, it is, therefore, important to address the major limitations of the theory.

Sheppard et al. (1988) explains that the theory, although it is frequently applied in these situations, is not applicable to situations in which “(1) the target behavior is not completely under the subjects’ complete volitional control, (2) the situation involves a choice problem not explicitly



addressed by Fishbein and Ajzen and/or (3) subjects' intentions are assessed when it is impossible for them to have all of the necessary information to form a completely confident intention" (325).

Moreover, it is important to note that the theory was later revised to include behaviors that may not be under the individual's complete volitional control (the Theory of Planned Behavior); however, for the purposes of this study, it was assumed that purchase intentions are completely under the consumer's volitional control. Therefore the theory of reasoned action was used in this study, rather than its revised counterpart, the theory of planned behavior (See Ajzen 1988, 1991).

### **Hypotheses and Research Questions**

Because the majority of research indicated a positive association between financial performance and CSR, this perspective will be the basis for determining the relationship between CSR and purchase intention. Therefore, this research assumes the relationship between financial performance and purchase intention to be similar. Furthermore, assuming that intent implied behavior, the theory of reasoned action worked well for predicting associations about attitudes of consumers in regards to CSR and purchase intention for this study. In addition, it was interesting to research consumers' awareness of organizational involvement in socially responsible practices on a basic level.

H1: A positive association exists between an organization's involvement in CSR programs and consumers' purchase intention. Thus, consumers are more likely to purchase an organization's product if that organization is involved in socially responsible practices.

RQ1: Are consumers aware of specific organizational involvement in socially responsible practices?

RQ2: Are consumers aware of a lack of specific organizational involvement in socially responsible practices?

### **Methods**

The methodology of this study sought to follow the established guidelines of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action in order to answer the hypothesis. After assessing consumers' salient beliefs and forming a modal set of behavioral beliefs for this study, consumers were initially asked to explain what CSR means to them. As few corporations have even fully grasped the concept of CSR, an explanation of CSR followed this question, including the variety of names CSR goes by and examples of CSR programs. Next, consumers were asked a series of questions based on the predetermined salient beliefs to determine the level of importance that CSR plays in their purchasing decisions. A second part of the interview and survey asked consumers which, if any corporations they consider to be particularly socially responsible or irresponsible.

The initial part of the research followed the guidelines posited by the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) to determine if consumers are more likely to purchase products from organizations based on involvement in socially responsible activities. The second part of the research, asking consumers which specific corporations they consider particularly responsible or irresponsible, was compared to *Fortune* magazine's top and bottom ranked socially responsible companies in 2007.

#### *Participants*

Participants were general consumers from a variety of backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, education and income levels or representative of U.S. consumers in the Midwest region.

## *Procedures*

Thirteen interviews were initially conducted at a popular Midwest business and 287 surveys were collected (14 percent response rate). Surveys were sent to approximately 2,000 webmail accounts at a large Midwestern university. Webmail accounts included faculty, staff and students at the university.

Participants were interviewed and surveyed with regard to the influence organizational involvement in socially responsible programs has on their intentions to purchase a product. Demographic information including age, gender, level of education, marital status, income level, political affiliation and whether or not they have children was collected in order to cross analyze results and ensure a representative sample is present.

## **Results**

Results of this study were encouraging in regards to the indication of a positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and consumer purchase intention. Also, comparisons between Fortune data and this study's data had moderately positive results.

### *Demographics*

Of the 287 responses, the majority (37.6 percent) of respondents indicated that they were between the ages of 18 and 25 (n=108). Fifty-eight respondents (20.2 percent) indicated that they were between the ages of 26 and 35, 33 respondents (11.5 percent) indicated that they were between the ages of 36 and 45, 46 respondents (16 percent) indicated that they were between the ages of 46 and 55 and 41 respondents (14.3 percent) indicated that they were 56 or older. Also, the majority (62.9 percent) of respondents indicated that they were female (n=180), and 106 respondents (37.1 percent) indicated that they were male.

Respondents were also asked to indicate marital status and if they had any children. In regards to marital status, similar amounts of respondents indicated single (n=135) and married (n=137), 47.4 percent and 48.1 percent, respectively. Only 12 respondents (4.2 percent) indicated that they were divorced, and one respondent (0.4 percent) indicated that they were widowed. Also, in regards to children, 59.4 percent of respondents (n=170) indicated that they did not have any children, and 40.5 percent (n=116) indicated that they had between one and five or more children.

The highest level of education completed and annual household income of respondents was also assessed. The majority of respondents (47.4 percent) indicated that they had completed a graduate degree or higher (n=135). Ten respondents (3.5 percent) indicated that high school was the highest level of education they had completed, 59 respondents (20.7 percent) indicated that some college was the highest level of education completed, eight respondents (2.8 percent) indicated that an associate's or professional degree was the highest level of education they had completed, and 73 respondents (25.6 percent) indicated that the highest level of education they had completed was a bachelor's degree. Also, in regards to annual household income, similar amounts of respondents indicated an annual household income of less than \$25,000 (n=92) and an annual household income of more than \$75,000 (n=90), 33.5 percent and 32.7 percent, respectively. Fifty-one respondents (18.5 percent) indicated an annual household income of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, and 42 respondents (15.3 percent) indicated an annual household income of between \$51,000 and \$75,000.

Finally, respondents were asked if they identified with a political party, to indicate which one. The majority of respondents (n=118 or 41.3 percent) indicated that they identified with the Democratic Party. Fifty-two respondents (18.2 percent) indicated that they identified with the Republican Party, 27 respondents (9.4 percent) indicated that they identified with the Independent Party, 14 respondents (4.9 percent) indicated that they identified with an other party, and 36

respondents (12.6 percent) indicated that they identified with no or “none” party. Thirty-nine respondents (13.6 percent) chose “not to answer this question.”

### *Hypothesis*

Study participants were asked to select from a set of advantages and disadvantages. They were asked to select all that apply to the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing products from socially responsible businesses in the next six months. The resulting beliefs and the frequencies of these beliefs can be seen in Table 1. Other advantages responses included: helps education, helps the economy, helps me, morally right, encourages other businesses to do the same, helps promote better informed citizens, helps sustain current jobs and creates new jobs. Other disadvantage responses included: limited product selection, reduced shareholder wealth, job losses, inconvenient and difficulty in identifying socially responsible businesses/products.

**Table 1: Identification of Modal Salient Beliefs**

Identification of Modal Salient Beliefs			
No.	Buying from socially responsible businesses...	Percent	Frequency
1.	Helps the community (advantage)	89.2%	256
2.	Helps the environment (advantage)	85.7%	246
3.	Helps with human/workers' rights (advantage)	73.2%	210
4.	Higher prices for consumers (disadvantage)	64.8%	186
5.	Helps decrease poverty (advantage)	53%	152
6.	Helps with health care (advantage)	40.8%	117
7.	Higher costs for businesses (disadvantage)	38.3%	110
8.	Helps prevent crime (advantage)	27.9%	80
9.	Supports causes I don't believe in (disadvantage)	22.3%	64
10.	None (disadvantage)	17.4%	50
11.	Wastes time, money and/or energy (disadvantage)	15.3%	44
12.	Does not help me (disadvantage)	10.8%	31
13.	Other advantage	10.5%	30
14.	Other disadvantage	6.3%	18
15.	None (advantage)	3.5%	10
TOTAL:			1,604

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recommend using the least arbitrary decision rule by choosing as many beliefs as necessary to account for a certain percentage, typically 75 percent. (p. 70) Seventy-five percent of 1,604 equals 1,203, which means the first nine beliefs were used based on the sum of the first nine beliefs' frequencies.

The strength of each belief was then measured by the assessment of salient belief strengths gathered through an initial interview process. This can be viewed as a limitation to this study because the initial interviews may or may not be indicative of the surveys being analyzed. However, only four of the belief strengths (helps the environment, helps with human/workers' rights, helps the community and higher prices for consumers) were predicted from those ascertained through the initial interviews because the majority of survey participants selected “unsure/none” for the remaining outcome evaluations, which results in the product of the belief strength and the outcome evaluation being “neutral” or zero. In other words, the product of the outcome evaluation and belief strength would be zero because the outcome evaluations were zero. The initial interview results showed that each of the four aforementioned belief strengths can be predicted to be “moderate” (2).

Outcome evaluations were assessed by participants responses to the question “how good/bad are socially responsible businesses at the advantages/disadvantages you selected?” Participants

selected from the following: extremely good (3), quite good (2), slightly good (1), unsure (0), slightly bad (-1), quite bad (-2), extremely bad (-3).

Therefore, using the nine previously identified modal salient beliefs, Table 2 adds the outcome evaluations and belief strengths and takes the product of each outcome evaluation and its belief strength in order to predict attitudes.

**Table 2: Modal Salient Beliefs about Buying from Socially Responsible Businesses**

Modal Salient Beliefs about Buying from Socially Responsible Businesses				
No.	Buying from socially responsible businesses...	Outcome Evaluations	Belief Strength	Product
1.	Helps the community (advantage)	+2	2	4
2.	Helps the environment (advantage)	+2	2	4
3.	Helps with human/workers' rights (advantage)	+2	2	4
4.	Higher prices for consumers (disadvantage)	-1	2	-2
5.	Helps decrease poverty (advantage)	0	0	0
6.	Helps with health care (advantage)	0	0	0
7.	Higher costs for businesses (disadvantage)	0	0	0
8.	Helps prevent crime (advantage)	0	0	0
9.	Supports causes I don't believe in (disadvantage)	0	0	0
TOTAL:				10

Therefore, results indicate that participants have a moderately positive attitude (+10) toward purchasing products from socially responsible businesses.

The next step in Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action involves determining subjective norms or beliefs that important others (referents) think that participants should or should not perform the behavior in question (in this case, purchasing products from socially responsible businesses in the next 6 months). Table 3 (below) displays the results of participants' identification of specific referents who believe they should or should not purchase products from socially responsible businesses.

**Table 3: Identification of Appropriate Referents**

Identification of Appropriate Referents			
No.	Referents	Percent	Frequency
1.	Friends	55.1%	158
2.	Family	50.9%	146
3.	Spouse	32.8%	94
4.	Church	28.9%	83
5.	Community members	28.2%	81
6.	Co-workers	22.3%	64
7.	Employer	22%	63
8.	Union	12.5%	36
9.	Other group/individual	7%	20

In order to determine the subjective norm, participants were then asked to indicate their normative beliefs and motivation to comply with these referents. Other group or individual responses included: teachers, students, universities, advocacy groups, nonprofit organizations, businesses, myself and the U.S. government.

Normative beliefs were assessed by asking participants to indicate how much the referents they had selected think they should or should not purchase products from socially responsible businesses. Participants selected from the following scale: Should (3), (2), (1), (0), (-1), (-2), (-3) Should Not.

Motivation to comply was assessed by asking participants, in general, how much they want to do what the referents they selected think they should do. Participants selected from the following scale: not at all (0), slightly (1), moderately (2), strongly (3).

Therefore, using the referents identified (above, Table 3), modal normative beliefs and motivation to comply were assessed, and each referent's modal normative beliefs were multiplied by the motivations to comply. The results of each referent's product were then added. Table 4 shows the results of the subjective norm.

**Table 4: Normative Beliefs about Buying from Socially Responsible Businesses**

Normative Beliefs about Buying from Socially Responsible Businesses			
Referents	Normative Belief	Motivation to Comply	Product
1. Friends	+3	2	6
2. Family	+3	2	6
3. Spouse	+3	3	9
4. Church	+3	0	0
5. Community members	0	2	0
6. Co-workers	0	1	0
7. Employer	0	1	0
8. Union	0	0	0
9. Other group/individual	0	0	0
TOTAL:			21

Therefore, it can be predicted that participants have a highly positive (+21) subjective norm or that most of their important others think they should purchase products from socially responsible businesses.

When combined, the products of the attitude (Table 2) and subjective norm (Table 4), indicate the overall intention toward the behavior (purchasing products from socially responsible businesses in the next 6 months).

Therefore, the attitude (10) is decidedly moderately positive, and the subjective norm (21) is decidedly highly positive. The average of these two numbers is 15.5, showing a positive intention toward the behavior. In so much, the high products and average of these variables show that a positive relationship exists between corporate social responsibility and consumer purchase intention. Therefore, the H of this study is correct: Consumers are more likely to purchase products if the company that produces them is perceived to be socially responsible.

Additionally, comparisons were made among the following populations: age, gender, marital status, children, education, annual household income and political affiliation. The results of comparisons among populations and with overall results are presented in the following table (5).

**Table 5: Comparisons Among Populations**

Comparisons Among Populations				
	Product 1 (Attitude)	Product 2 (Subjective Norm)	Average (Products 1 & 2)	Difference (15.5) Overall
Overall	10	21	15.5	0
Male	9	19	14	-1.5
Female	10	32	21	+5.5
Single	10	12	11	-4.5
Married	14	15	14.5	-1
<\$25,000	10	24	17	+1.5
\$25-50,000	8	22.5	15.3	-0.2
\$51-75,000	4	24.5	14.3	-1.2
>\$75,000	12	21	16.5	+1
High School	8	51	29.5	+14
Some College	12	14	13	-2.5
Associate's or Professional Degree	11	39.3	25.2	+9.7
Bachelor's Degree	8	10	9	-6.5
Graduate or higher	8	39	23.5	+8
Age 18-25	8	27	17.5	+2
Age 26-35	10	12.5	11.3	-4.2
Age 36-45	12	24.4	18.2	+2.7
Age 46-55	12	25	18.5	+3
Age 56+	10	34	22	+6.5
Democratic Party	10	27	18.5	+3
Republican Party	12	14	13	-2.5
Independent Party	7	13.6	10.3	-5.2
Other Party	7	52.5	29.8	+14.3
None (Party)	10	21	15.5	0
No Children	10	12	11	-4.5
Children	8	17.7	12.9	-2.6

### *Gender*

A significant difference exists between male and female populations in regards to subjective norms or the person's beliefs that specific individuals or groups think he or she should or should not purchase products from socially responsible businesses and his or her motivation to comply with these referents. However, a significant difference does not exist between males and females in regards to attitude toward behavior.

In so much, both males and females have a positive attitude toward purchasing products from socially responsible businesses, which is consistent with the overall results; however, it can be determined that females are far more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses provided their important others think that they should based on the significant difference in subjective norms. In comparison to the overall results, females are moderately (+5.5) more likely and males are slightly (-1.5) less likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses.

### *Marital Status*

Based on marital status, the researcher chose to only compare single and married participants (n=272) because the amount of participants in the divorced and widowed categories were not enough to represent the sample. The differences of the products indicate that married individuals are slightly

more likely than single individuals to purchase products from socially responsible businesses; however, in comparison to overall results, both single and married individuals are slightly (-4.5 and -1, respectively) less likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses.

#### *Income*

Next, based on annual household income, respondents were asked to select the option that best described their annual household income, and options were as follows: (1) less than \$25,000 (n=92); (2) \$25,000-50,000 (n=51); (3) \$51,000-75,000 (n=42); and (4) more than \$75,000 (n=90).

Results based on annual household income, in comparison to overall results, indicate results close to the overall population. Participants indicating annual household incomes less than \$25,000 and more than \$75,000 were both slightly more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses (+1.5 and +1, respectively). Participants indicating annual household incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 and between \$51,000 and \$75,000 were slightly less likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses (-0.2 and -1.2, respectively).

#### *Education*

In regards to level of education, the original question asked respondents to indicate their highest level of education completed, and the options are listed as follows: (1) High school (n=10); (2) Some college (n=59); (3) Associate's or Professional degree (n=8); (4) Bachelor's degree (n=73); and (5) Graduate degree or higher (n=135). Each group was analyzed, and, in comparison to overall results, participants indicating high school as the highest level of education completed were extremely more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses (+14). Participants indicating associate's or professional degree and graduate degree or higher were moderately more likely than the overall results to purchase from socially responsible businesses (+9.7 and +8, respectively). Also, participants indicating some college were slightly less likely (-2.5) and bachelor's degree were moderately less likely (-6.5) to purchase from socially responsible businesses. It is important to note that participants indicating high school education indicated the second highest subjective norm of all demographic populations, meaning this group is much more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses if they believe their important others think they should.

#### *Age*

Age was analyzed based on participants' selection from the following age groups: (1) age 18-25, (2) age 26-35, (3) 36-45, (4) 46-55 and (5) 56+. Each group was analyzed, and, in comparison to overall results, ages 18-25, 36-45 and 46-55 were slightly more likely (+2, +2.7 and +3, respectively) to purchase products from socially responsible businesses. Interestingly, ages 18-25 were slightly less likely (-4.2), and ages 56+ were moderately more likely (+6.5) to purchase products from socially responsible businesses. Also, it is important to note that ages 56+ indicated a significantly higher subjective norm than other age groups, which indicates that this age group is much more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses provided their important others think that they should.

#### *Political Affiliation*

Additionally, political affiliation was analyzed and produced interesting results in comparison to the results overall. Individuals indicating a political affiliation with the Democratic Party were slightly more likely (+3), individuals indicating a political affiliation with the Republican Party were slightly less likely (-2.5), and individuals indicating a political affiliation with the Independent Party were moderately less likely (-5.2) to purchase products from socially responsible businesses. The product of individuals indicating "none" for political affiliation exactly matched (15.5) the overall intent to purchase from socially responsible businesses. Most interestingly, individuals indicating a political affiliation with an "other" party were extremely more likely (+14.3) to purchase products from socially responsible businesses. This population shows the highest intent to purchase from socially responsible businesses than any analyzed in this study, but also has the highest subjective norm (52.5) than any population analyzed in this study.

### *Children*

Finally, results were analyzed based on populations with and without children. Participants were asked to select from the following options on the survey: (1) I don't have any children, (2) 1, (3) 2, (4) 3, (5) 4, and (6) 5 or more. The researcher has selected to group these options into individuals indicating no children (n=170) and children (n=112), regardless of how many children indicated.

Participants without children are more likely to not purchase from socially responsible businesses than those with children. In comparison to overall results, both participants with and without children are slightly less likely (-2.6 and -4.5, respectively) to purchase products from socially responsible businesses.

### *Research Questions*

Participants were also asked to identify specific businesses that they considered to be particularly socially responsible and irresponsible. Analysis of these responses revealed the following significant results for businesses identified as socially responsible, in order of frequency or "top ten": Starbucks (n=30), Patagonia (n=18), Target (n=16), Wal-Mart (n=14), McDonald's (n=11) and Eli Lilly (n=11), Apple (n=9) and Ben & Jerry's (n=9) and Walt Disney (n=8) and Whole Foods (n=8). The following businesses were identified as socially irresponsible, in order of frequency: Wal-Mart (n=78), AIG (n=19), Exxon Mobil (n=15), GM (n=15), McDonald's (n=14), Nike (n=10), Enron (n=8) and Ford (n=6). There were not enough significant results to create a "bottom ten."

Research question 1 revealed that, in comparison to Fortune magazine's top ranked socially responsible companies for 2007 (CHS, United Parcel Service, Whole Foods Market, McDonald's, Alcan, YRC Worldwide, Starbucks, International Paper, Vulcan Materials and Walt Disney), which are identified from surveying executives, directors and analysts per industry, participants in this study identified four of the Fortune top ten: Starbucks, McDonald's, Walt Disney and Whole Foods. However, Starbucks was ranked 8th by the Fortune study, whereas participants in this study identified it more often than any of the other businesses cited. This is not necessarily indicative of a ranking of 1st by participants, but it can be assumed that, as the most often identified, it should be ranked as such. Likewise, participants in this study ranked McDonald's 5th, while Fortune ranked it as the 4th most socially responsible business. Walt Disney and Whole Foods tied for 9th and 10th rankings by participants in this study; however, Whole Foods was ranked 3rd by Fortune, but Walt Disney was ranked 10th as most socially responsible.

Research question 2 revealed that, in comparison to Fortune's ten bottom ranked least socially responsible companies for 2007 (Visteon, Dana, CA, Delphi, Federal-Mogul, ArvinMeritor, Huntsman, Navistar International, Lyondell Chemical and Toys "R" Us), participants in this study did not identify any of the same businesses as the Fortune study did. However, Fortune ranked Delphi as the 4th most socially irresponsible business, and participants in this study identified GM, which is operated in part by Delphi, as the 4th most often cited socially irresponsible business. Also, it is interesting to note that Wal-Mart was identified both 4th as socially responsible and 1st as socially irresponsible by participants.

Overall, it appears that participants in this study had at least a moderate degree of awareness of social responsibility as it applies to specific businesses, identifying four to five of the ten same businesses as experts in the industries. Thus, the research questions can affirmatively be answered that consumers are moderately aware of specific organizational involvement in socially responsible activities and are slightly aware of specific organizational involvement in socially irresponsible activities.

### *Qualitative*

Additionally, qualitative data was collected that is important to note. Participants were initially asked to define what CSR means to them because CSR has proven to be an ambiguous and controversial topic. While it seemed that participants generally understood CSR, many participants in



this research were skeptical about organizational participation and promotion of CSR. For example, one respondent commented, “Social responsibility on a corporate level is a ploy to increase sales. Nothing more.” Another respondent commented, “I believe social responsibility is just a PR and marketing ploy. Starbucks may be paying a living wage to South American coffee growers, but are they offering decent health insurance and retirement plans to their coffee house employees?”

Despite skepticism, this study still shows that consumers are more likely to purchase products from socially responsible businesses, and, therefore, businesses should seek to implement and promote CSR activities, and many participants in this study agreed, indicating that CSR was an important, necessary business activity aimed at genuinely responsible business practices. For example, one respondent commented, “It is very important. For things to change in this world, socially, environmentally, etc., businesses need to take a leading role.” Another respondent commented, “I think social responsibility comes from the corporate top executives and trickles down. When a company is socially responsible everybody wins, not just the top echelon. I believe these companies will prosper even in difficult times.”

Specifically, in relation to the H of this study (A positive association exists between an organization’s involvement in CSR programs and consumer’s purchase intention.), many participants’ qualitative responses supported the H. For example, one respondent stated, “I am more likely to purchase products from socially responsible companies over socially neutral or irresponsible companies. The bad thing is that socially irresponsible companies do a good job of hiding any questionable activities they may be involved in, so sometimes I don’t have this piece of information to inform my shopping. I try to choose responsibly whenever I can.”

However, a significant number of qualitative responses indicated that the higher prices associated with socially responsible businesses prevented them from purchasing products from those companies. For example, one respondent commented, “I believe that there will always be a struggle when it comes to social responsibility, mostly because of the money issue, where companies who are socially responsible generally charge higher prices for their products because it is harder to be socially responsible. It comes down to whether or not people are willing to do what is ethical and what is cheap, and unfortunately, most have to choose cheap over ethical because they do not make enough money to choose what is ethical.”

## **Discussion**

The primary purpose of this research was to recognize the relationship between consumers’ purchase intentions and organizations’ involvement in socially responsible programs. The study’s H predicted that a positive association exists between an organization’s involvement in CSR programs and consumers’ purchase intentions or that consumers in this study are more likely to purchase an organization’s product if that organization is involved in socially responsible practices. Additionally, consumers’ awareness of specific organizational involvement in socially responsible and irresponsible activities was identified.

Overall, the results of this study support the H. Specifically, a positive association exists between an organization’s involvement in CSR programs and consumer’s purchase intentions. The attitude toward the behavior (10) is decidedly moderately positive, and the subjective norm (21) is decidedly highly positive. The average of these two numbers is 15.5, showing a positive intention toward the behavior. The high products and average of these variables show that a positive relationship exists between corporate social responsibility and consumer purchase intention.

Also, the research questions were affirmatively answered in regards to participants’ awareness of specific organizational involvement in socially responsible and irresponsible activities. It appears that consumers have at least a moderate amount of awareness in this regard. It is recommended that further research be conducted on this specific area.

### *Limitations*

The major limitation to this study could be that belief strength was not assessed with the survey participants. This could be eliminated by including belief strength questions in the survey; however, interviews are preferred to the survey method because the amount of questions can be overwhelming, resulting in survey fatigue.

Also, this study did not use frequency-averaged weighted sums, as many other studies on this topic have used. This can be seen as a limitation in regards to comparisons of this study with other similar studies using the theory of reasoned action. Future researchers should analyze this data with more statistical competency than this researcher had at her disposal during the time research was conducted.

Another limitation to this study is that this study is not indicative of consumers, in general, but is only applicable to the population studied. Also, within the population studied, education level and income level were high in relation to regional (Midwest) demographic averages. Moreover, future research should seek a larger sample size in order that higher amounts of participants are present within demographic comparisons.

Finally, following the guidelines of the theory of reasoned action, purchase intention should result in purchase behavior; however, it can be argued that several other mediating variables exist that result in purchase behavior, as addressed in the literature review of this study. For example, qualitative data from this study indicated that price was a major variable in purchasing behavior.

### *Implications*

Therefore, having addressed the limitations of this study, it has implications for consumers and businesses, as well as the public relations profession within this population. Possibly most important to the implications of this study, is the comparison of numbers among demographic consumer groups in this study. For example, it is possible to compare the products of attitudes and subjective norms in terms of age, gender, marital status, etc. From this, it can be determined if particular demographic groups in this study are more likely than others to purchase products if the company that produces them is perceived to be socially responsible. Comparisons were made among the following populations: age, gender, marital status, children, education, annual household income and political affiliation. The results of comparisons among populations and with overall results are presented in Table 5.

From the results of participants in this study, it seems that female consumers whose highest level of education completed is high school or a graduate degree and whose annual household income is less than \$25,000 and who are associated with an “other” political party are the most likely demographics to purchase products from businesses based on CSR.

Businesses patronized by consumers in this population should, therefore, seek to invest in the implementation and promotion of CSR activities among applicable demographics. Promotion of CSR activities per demographics is needed in order to make the public aware of these activities, thus, making consumers in this study more likely to purchase the business’s products.

In so much, a future implication of the positive relationship between consumer purchase intention and CSR, as determined by this study, may be an increase in demand for practitioners with a strong background in CSR. For example, a respondent to this research stated, “I believe that being 'socially responsible' will become a greater issue in the years to come. Differing viewpoints on it will also unearth. It's somewhat similar to ethics. Those companies that stick with topics that are more common ground for many consumers will be the most successful. For example, a fight against cancer campaign, a cause for human freedoms, giving to foster children, using clean energy, recycling and helping people who want to have a better future are all great ways for companies to show good will and make a powerful difference in our world.” Practitioners with the abilities to understand the many facets of and viewpoints on CSR will be most likely to succeed. Moreover, practitioners able to replicate this study or similar studies for a specific business’s demographics would be in greater demand.

In addition, practitioners often have difficulties proving the financial worth of public relations because results of public relations' activities are difficult to measure in terms of monetary units. However, the combination of public relations' activities aimed at the implementation and promotion of CSR programs and the replication of this study could be used to show an increase in profits for the business based on aiming CSR activities at specific demographics. For example, profits per demographics could be assessed at varying times prior to implementation of a CSR program, throughout the implementation and promotion processes and following the campaign or, in the case that the activities are of a more permanent nature, once the program has been established. Thus, public relations could demonstrate its financial worth to a business.

Based on results of this study and implications for businesses, it can be concluded that CSR is a multi-faceted challenge, but worth the associated risks. It is in the best interest of consumers, businesses, public relations practitioners and society, in general, that businesses patronized by consumers in this study undertake the challenge of implementing socially responsible programs and activities as a strategic management function aimed at increasing profits; however, future research and studies are still necessary.

#### *Future Research*

Because it is the first of its kind in regards to social responsibility, it is recommended that this study be replicated in order to determine likewise results of products in tables 2 and 4 in other populations. Specifically, it is recommended that this research be replicated using the revised version of the theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behavior.

Moreover, it is recommended that researchers simply ask the question: "Are you more likely to purchase products if the company that produces them is socially responsible?" The researcher could then use these variables in comparison to others.

This study could also be taken a step further using the weighting of attitudes and subjective norms, as many studies using the theory of reasoned action have done (see literature review). Also, it could easily be further analyzed from differences within the final results: It is interesting to note the significant differences that occur within the final products of these variables. For example, within the single v. married comparison, the majority of married individuals were strongly motivated to comply with family, while the majority of single individuals were only moderately motivated. More significantly, the normative beliefs about church for the majority of single individuals were that church was neutral (0) on wanting them to purchase products from socially responsible businesses; however, married individuals believed strongly (3) that church wanted them to purchase products from socially responsible businesses. Likewise, significant differences could be identified throughout this data. Analyzing the differences within final products could contribute to the understanding of the underlying reasons consumers make purchases in relation to CSR and to the understanding of CSR as a strategic management function overall.

In conclusion, this study should result in future scholarly research and analyses on this important topic. It could also be replicated in applied settings to determine key publics to target communications about businesses' participation in socially responsible activities, i.e. those publics that will be more likely to purchase products based on this information, and to enhance the demand of public relations practitioners. From the results of this study and the implications of these results, it seems that organizational participation in CSR programs and activities results in a win-win situation for everyone affected: consumers, organizations, the public relations profession and society, in general.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Special thanks to Dr. Dustin Supa, Assistant Professor of Journalism at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., for his assistance as the thesis chair for this paper.

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