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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Evolving Cross-Sector Collaboration in the Arts and Culture Sector: From Sponsorship to Partnership

Yijing Wang[1] · Kaspar-Pascal Holznagel[1]

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Abstract
The arts and cultural sector offers a beneficial field of cross-sector collaboration for businesses as it is closely related to contemporary consumers' lifestyle and civilization. This study examined the impact of two prominent cross-sector collaborations (i.e. partnership and sponsorship) on corporate reputation in the arts and culture sector, with the focus on a specific stakeholder group—the millennials. 154 millennials were recruited for an online experiment, using a convenience sampling through posting an open-call on the Facebook pages of the 100 most visited art museums in the world. The results show that partnership and sponsorship both indicate a positive effect on corporate reputation, whereas partnership is more appealing to the millennials than sponsorship. We also examined the moderation effects of sincerity, value alignment and credibility on the relationship of cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation. All three moderators are found to strengthen the relationship, while the impact of credibility is the strongest among them. The findings imply that companies should be aware of the need to present themselves as a trustworthy collaborator and the necessity to fulfil their duties deriving from the engagement in a particular cross-sector collaboration.

Keywords Corporate reputation · Partnership · Sponsorship · Arts · Culture · Millennials

Introduction

In July 2019, a five-year collaboration is formed between the high-tech Dutch company ASML and the Van Gogh Museum (Van Gogh Museum, n.d.). As the museum's Partner in Science, ASML not only will support the museum with its collection conservation activities, but also make a team of researchers available to assist the museum in research. This cross-sector partnership is just one case in many which may create more value together for both businesses and non-profits in the arts and culture sector, than they could have done separately (Austin 2000, 2010; Jackson and Nelson 2004). As expressed by Peter Wennink, CEO and President of ASML:

> He (i.e. Vincent van Gogh) was inspired by light and it was key to his work, as it is to ours. This partnership provides us with the opportunity to help to preserve the heritage of Van Gogh in Amsterdam, and through his heritage, to share our expertise on light with a broad audience. (Van Gogh Museum, n.d.)

Recently, cross-sector partnerships evolved from corporate sponsorships in the arts and culture sector. Partnerships are argued by Porter and Kramer as a critical ability to collaborate across profit–non-profit boundaries, which moved beyond traditional philanthropy (2011). Unilever's CEO Paul Polman (2010) regards cross-sector partnerships as a shift to collaborative capitalism. It implies that a set of relationships should be developed among stakeholders, so that long-term value can be created (Freeman 2010). In comparison, corporate sponsorships refer to a collaboration based on a two-sided barter that includes the corporate provision of resources, mainly in the form of monetary support, in exchange for a promotional exposure by the cooperating non-profit organization (Kirchberg 2011; O'hagan and Harvey 2000). It has a long-lasting tradition in the arts and culture sector, originating from the 60s of the nineteenth century (O'hagan and Harvey 2000). Partnerships, instead, underline a commitment between

✉ Yijing Wang
y.wang@eshcc.eur.nl

[1] Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, P.O. Box 1738, 3062 PA Rotterdam, The Netherlands

businesses and non-profit organizations in which both entities share responsibilities, risks and benefits (Lewandowska 2015; Surman 2006; Waddell and Brown 1997). Partnerships can take on diverse formats from arts- and culture-based educational and research programs implemented by businesses in cooperation with non-profits to long-term urban development projects. They gained increasing popularity in recent years as they are identified with the great potential for value-creation and mutual benefits (Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist 2006; Urriolagoitia and Planellas 2007).

The evolvement from corporate sponsorships to partnerships reflects the complexity of business–non-profit collaboration in the arts and culture sector. Arts and culture are "living, developing and changing live organisms" of our societies (Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009, p. 311). Produced by the surplus values of the societies, they give back to civilization in return. Thus, their survival is highly associated with the survival of our societies. Given today's fast-changing economic and social environment, the need for supporting the arts and culture sector has become an urgent call. Scholars argue that by offering a sustainable environment for the arts and culture sector, businesses may also enhance their long-run financial performance and strengthen their corporate reputation (Porter and Kramer 2011).

However, to date, very little has been done to examine the impact of cross-sector collaboration in the arts and culture sector on businesses, such as partnerships and sponsorships (Fahy et al. 2004; Lewandowska 2015). Urriolagoitia and Planellas (2007) confirm that empirical studies are highly needed for analysing the value that each type of collaboration may bring to businesses. To close the gap in literature, this study intends to examine the impact of partnerships and sponsorships in the arts and culture sector on businesses' corporate reputation. Our aim is to empirically test whether partnerships are perceived to create more value than sponsorships among millennial stakeholders. Along with this idea, three factors which are considered in literature to moderate the relationship between cross-sector collaboration and reputation—businesses' sincerity (Milewicz and Herbig 1994), value alignment with the non-profit organizations (Pappu and Cornwell 2014) and credibility (Ben-Ner and Putterman 2011), will be examined in this context.

Theory

Corporate Reputation Management: A Focus on Millennial Stakeholders

Corporate reputation is a multi-dimensional concept referring to the perception diverse stakeholders develop regarding a specific business enterprise (Chun 2005). Widely academically agreed upon, corporate reputation is perceived as a "valuable intangible asset" as its constructive nature is able to influence the behaviour of stakeholders towards an enterprise (Chun 2005, p. 91; Markham 2015; Fombrun and van Riel 1997). Such influences may include customer loyalty, employee satisfaction or shareholder's commitment to invest (Backhaus et al. 2002; Fombrun et al. 2000). While Chun (2005) defines reputation as a collective process of meaning-making of individuals in a business setting, Davies and Miles (1998) distinctively highlight corporate reputation as a trinity constructed by the concepts of image and identity. According to Davies and Miles (1998), the differences between how external stakeholders, like consumers, and internal stakeholders, like employees or the management, perceive a business and how the business tries to portray itself strategically constitutes what can be called corporate reputation.

In particular, this research incorporates the marketing perspective of corporate reputation, which defines the term as the accumulation of perceptions stakeholders construct in communicative interaction with a business entity (Fombrun and Shanley 1990). Notably, this perspective entails a multi-stakeholder approach considering a variety of shared value among the diverse interest groups of a business (Fombrun et al. 2000). Thus, the marketing definition of corporate reputation fits our research interests as it aligns with Austin and Seitanidi's notion of collaborative value creation through partnership or sponsorship activities (2012a, b). They argue that creating value is the key justification for cross-sector collaboration and will lead to a competitive corporate reputation in the long-run (Austin 2010; Austi and Seitanidi 2012a). Along with it, a few academics and practitioners view cross-sector collaboration, in particular between businesses and non-profits, as a powerful vehicle for implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR), which contributes to a business's continuous success (Backhaus et al. 2002; Hur et al. 2014; Lewis 2003; Markham 2015; Mohr et al. 2001; Sen 2006; Yoon et al. 2006). As cited in Austi and Seitanidi (2012a), Lacy et al. (2010) found through a global survey in 100 countries that among 766 CEOs, 78% believe in the value of engaging in cross-sector collaboration between businesses and non-profits to address development goals. It is worth mentioning that CEOs' motivations are not entirely instrumental, but rather mix altruism and utilitarianism (Austin et al. 2004; Freeman 2010; Freeman et al. 2010).

We chose to focus on the specific group of millennial stakeholders for this study due to their sensitivity towards creating shared value (McGlone et al. 2011). The term millennials refers to individuals born in the period between 1982 and 2000 (Moore 2012). Notably, millennials display a strong focus on sustainable development of our societies, as well as socially responsible practices in businesses (McGlone et al. 2011; Backhaus et al. 2002). The majority of this group indicates a strong willingness to change its behaviour towards business entities that view responsibility as a form of sharing (McGlone et al. 2011). Additionally, this specific stakeholder group recognizes the power shift in contemporary corporate communication from a one-way communication, in which the business had active control over the information published, to a multifaceted dialogue between stakeholders and businesses (O'Brien 2011). Deriving from these circumstances facilitated by social media, millennial consumers often take on the role of advocates for a business or openly criticize and point out flaws in a corporate's doing (Moore 2012; O'Brien 2011). This tendency of a communication engagement in a corporate setting further underlines the importance of studying the group of millennial stakeholders.

A Comparison of Partnership and Sponsorship in the Scope of Arts and Culture

The arts and culture sector evolved over time. In contemporary society, the reachability and popularity of some artwork made them more accepted as culture, resulting in a huge debate of the classification of arts and culture by artists and art critics (Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009). Culture, in short, is defined as anything forming a society, from the total of one society's language, traditions, beliefs, laws, to social behaviour and arts (Peters 2005). Art is defined as a tangible form of personal definition of beauty and aesthetics—a subjective beauty turned into an object (Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009; Evrard and Colbert 2000; Ferry 1990). Due to the subjectivity, the creation, recognition and conservation of artwork face clear challenges, such as financial barriers or spreading messages. As the arts and culture sector is produced by society surplus and gives back to civilization, meeting non-profit organizations in this sector in need is crucial for a continuous cultural development (Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009).

Focusing on the development of business–non-profit collaboration in the arts and culture sector, a strong historic connection can be identified (Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009; Thomas et al. 2009). Specifically, research has shown an ever-increasing amount of corporate involvement in this sector from one-time corporate sponsorships to long-term strategic partnerships (McNicholas 2004). The key element defining sponsorship in the arts and cultural sector is a "transactional collaboration" between businesses and non-profit organizations (Austin et al. 2012a, p. 739). It involves the corporate provision of resources, mainly in the form of monetary support, in exchange for a promotional exposure (O'hagan and Harvey 2000). With such promotional exposure, businesses attempt to generate a positive reputation among the public (Kirchberg 2011). Committing to a sponsorship, a business often shares the interests of a non-profit organization as creating value for oneself is dependent on the other. Such a linked interest may generate associational value, which leads to direct and often quantifiable benefits to the business (Austin et al. 2012a). Despite the benefits it may bring, to what extent a "transactional collaboration" generates social value is an issue considered by scholars. Selsky and Parker (2005) argue that "transactional collaboration" is developed primarily for self-interest and secondarily for social interest. Thus, a business's contribution to improving societal welfare through sponsorships remains questionable.

On the other hand, partnerships build on a mutual share of risks, responsibilities and benefits incorporating elements of both entities in one another's operations (Lewandowska 2015; Surman 2006; Waddell and Brown 1997). Also, partnerships depend on high level of mutual trust and common goals (Anastasio 2018; Stern and Green 2005). Anastasio (2018) claims that there is a clear shift from sponsorship to partnership in past two decades, recognizing the great potential of business–non-profit collaboration from a long-term relation for creating value, as opposed to a short-term business transaction which is interchangeable with other marketing-communication tools. Partnerships are assumed to result in a positive impact on corporate reputation due to their engagement of the public in positive cultural and artistic experience contributing to social causes (Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist 2006; Hollebeek et al. 2014; Iyer 2003). Austin et al. (2012a) define partnership as an "integrative collaboration" between businesses and non-profit organizations. In comparison to a "transactional collaboration", an "integrative collaboration" is integral to strategic success of each organization. More importantly, great priority is placed by the business on producing societal welfare (Austin et al. 2012a, b). For example, as shown in the van Gogh Museum and ASML's partnership, the business and the museum (i.e. non-profit organization) combined their key assets and core competencies to create synergistic innovative solutions. As higher level of engagement, interaction, strategic value and synergistic innovation are realized through an "integrative collaboration", partnerships are predicted to generate more positive perceptions among millenial statekholders than sponsorships, and thus have a stronger impact on corporate reputation. This prediction is summarized in the hypotheses below.

H1a In the arts and culture sector, a business with a cross-sector collaboration through partnerships or sponsorships affects corporate reputation more positively than a business without one.

H1b In the arts and culture sector, a cross-sector collaboration through partnerships affects corporate reputation more positively than a cross-sector collaboration through sponsorships.

The Moderation Effect of Sincerity

To examine the distinct effect of each type of cross-sector collaboration, Milewicz and Herbig's (1994) model of reputation building is adopted in this study. It defines the process as a distribution of a particular image of an organization's behaviour sustaining over time. The model highlights the notion of the attribute association and emotional involvement of consumers with the created image of an organization (Milewicz and Herbig 1994). A key factor determining the process of positive reputation building is sincerity, defined as the "believability of an entity's intentions at a particular moment in time" (Milewicz and Herbig 1994, p. 41). In literature, this notion describes the level of positive associations consumers assign to a business engaging in generating social value (Lewis 2003; Yoon et al. 2006; Rifon et al. 2004). According to Rifon et al. (2004), the effect of sincerity plays a significant role in affecting perceptions among stakeholders. Once the cross-sector collaboration is identified as being self-beneficial and putting emphasis on the promotional exposure rather than creating social value, its positive impact on corporate reputation may be weakened (Rifon et al. 2004). Therefore, in order to unravel the impact of partnerships and sponsorships on a business, it is crucial to recognize the extent of a contribution made by the initiative combining a variety of resources in order to obtain a social benefit (Mcdonald 1991; Lewandowska 2015). Further, Iyer (2003) claims that partnerships assume a mutual construct of meaning between the business and the non-profit, which indicates an important role of sincerity due to the emerging communicative experiences actively affecting one's perception. Therefore, we conjecture that sincerity moderates the impact of cross-sector collaboration on corporate reputation, in the sense that a higher perceived sincerity of businesses will strengthen the relationship between cross-sector collaboration and reputation.

H2a In the arts and culture sector, perceived sincerity strengthens the relationship of corporate sponsorship and corporate reputation.

H2b In the arts and culture sector, perceived sincerity strengthens the relationship of corporate partnership and corporate reputation.

The moderation effect of value alignment

Furthermore, research has shown that cross-sector collaboration with a strong value alignment between businesses and non-profit organizations contributes to the formation of positive associations with a business (Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Mcdonald 1991). Therefore, it is essential to recognize the value of organizational fit in a collaboration. In short, value alignment refers to the match of the corporate culture, the area of business and corporate attitudes and the representation of the non-profit partner perceived by stakeholders (Iyer 2003). According to Pappu and Cornwell (2014), the value alignment between sponsor and sponsee has a strong moderation effect on the relationship of sponsorship and corporate reputation. Similarly, Iyer (2003) states that value alignment in partnerships takes a critical role, as an absence of a comprehensible match between the business and the non-profit organization leads to a questioning of the collaboration's purpose by the stakeholders. On the other hand, a high value alignment provides an incentive for business and non-profit to collaborate more closely to co-create even more value (Austin et al. 2012a). Thus, we predict a moderating effect of value alignment in the relationship between cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation.

H3a In the arts and culture sector, perceived value alignment strengthens the relationship of corporate sponsorship and corporate reputation.

H3b In the arts and culture sector, perceived value alignment strengthens the relationship of corporate partnership and corporate reputation.

The Moderation Effect of Credibility

Similar to sincerity and value alignment, credibility is also identified in literature as an important factor contributing to the formation of perceptions, attitudes and feelings of consumers not only towards a business but also towards the cross-sector collaboration initiative itself and its outcome (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Rifon et al. 2004). Hur et al. (2014) define credibility as a signal, which indicates the extent to which consumers believe in a business's trustworthiness and expertise. In particular, consumers pay attention to if a business can be considered reliable in taking on responsibilities and converting promises into action (Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Ben-Ner and Putterman 2011). According to Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006), the successful acquisition of a positive image through engaging in partnerships is influenced by the assessment of stakeholders on a business's credibility to implement its value co-creation strategy. Thus, we predict that credibility moderates the relationship between cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation, in the sense that a higher perceived credibility of the business will strengthen the positive relation.

H4a In the arts and culture sector, perceived credibility strengthens the relationship of corporate sponsorship and corporate reputation.

H4b In the arts and culture sector, perceived credibility strengthens the relationship of corporate partnership and corporate reputation.

Methodology

Research Design

An online experiment with a between-subject design was employed to test the hypotheses. Moreover, the "Pre-Test-Post-Test Control-Group Design" is incorporated (Creswell and Creswell 2018, p. 161), which allows assessing the general attitude towards cross-sector collaboration practices in the arts and culture sector, as well as the familiarity with social media, in particular, Facebook, from all participants.

In Phase I of the experiment, participants were asked for their voluntary participation in the experiment. Then, the participants were asked to fill out a short set of questions related to their demographics (age, gender, education, origin, etc.), the general attitude towards cross-sector collaboration in the arts and culture sector and usage of social media. Such a pretest was conducted to detect any confounding effects (Babbie 2017; Vakorin et al. 2009). Individuals indicating themselves not a user of Facebook were directed to the end of the experiment and excluded from the sample. The scale to measure attitudes towards cross-sector collaboration is derived from Lii and Lee's (2011) study. It includes one statement of favourability measured on a seven-point scale varying from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. A participant's social media usage is measured by one question asking if the participant identifies oneself as a user of Facebook.

In Phase II, all participants were exposed to a fictitious corporate website, namely A* Athletics. It underlines the enterprise's description, products and value positioning. Such a website built a key basis for evaluating an enterprise's reputation (Yoon et al. 2006; Chun 2005; Fombrun and Shanley 1990). Then, the participants who were randomly assigned to the partnership or sponsorship conditions were presented with the business's Facebook page. It included a statement-post of a particular cross-sector collaboration initiative and the website of the fictitious non-profit institution, namely the Modern Art Museum (MAM). The statement-post consisted of a description of the cross-sector collaboration initiative, the non-profit organization and a picture illustrating the collaboration. The control group did not receive an exposure to the cross-sector collaboration and was directed to the next phase. The format of Facebook was used as it aligned with the media consumption of the tested population of millennials (Halliday and Astafyeva 2014).

In Phase III, the post-test included questions evaluating the corporate reputation of the fictitious business. Furthermore, the moderation effects of sincerity, value alignment and credibility on the relationship of cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation were measured (Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Ben-Ner and Putterman 2011; Becker-Olsen et al. 2006; Yoon et al. 2006). Lastly, the experiment ended with two manipulation questions (Oppenheimer et al. 2009). The first question asked the respondents to identify the correct type of cross-sector collaboration. The second question asked respondents from which social media outlet they received the information about the cross-sector collaboration. With this question, the attentiveness of the respondents was directly tested, as one option was applicable for the experimental group (i.e. Facebook post) and one option for the control group (i.e. no information was presented).

Sample

Participants were recruited through a convenience sampling in May 2018. An open-call was posted on the Facebook pages of the 100 most visited art museums in the world according to the American business magazine Forbes (https://www.forbes.com/), which included institutions such as the Louvre in Paris or the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Since the study includes social media, in particular, Facebook, as a key component, this construct of data collection assured that the research receives respondents that are familiar with the platform and are confirming to the age range (O'Brien 2011). Notably, the leading group of Facebook users consists out of millennials (Moore 2012).

Overall, 154 millennials took part in the experiment from which 130 participants completed the questionnaire. The age range of the 130 participants (Age: $M=4.22$, $SD=1.37$) varied from 16 to 36 years. As for the distribution of gender (Gender: $M=1.37$, $SD=0.48$), the sample consisted of 82 (63.1%) female respondents and 48 (36.9%) male respondents. Most respondents originated from the United States 54 (41.5%), Australia 16 (12.3%) and Germany (11.5%). Regarding the ethnic background of the participants (Ethnicity: $M=1.68$, $SD=1.38$), a total of 97 (74.6%) individuals identified as Caucasian followed by 12 (9.2%) Asian and 11 (8.5%) African-American respondents. Furthermore, the majority of respondents received either a Bachelor's degree (50.8%) or a Master's degree (16,9%) (Education: $M=5.81$, $SD=1.43$). Moreover, most participants indicated a 'strong agreement' (58.5%) or 'somewhat agreement' (23.8%) with the favourability of cross-sector collaboration initiatives in the field of arts and culture ($M=5.67$, $SD=0.81$).

Measurements

Dependent Variable: Corporate Reputation

The scale proposed by Ponzi et al. (2011) was used to measure corporate reputation in this study. The measurement consists of four items, each on a 7-point scale, from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. In particular, the items used by Pronzi et al. (2011) entail the feelings towards the business, the level of admiration and respect, confidence in the company and an assessment of the overall reputation. The internal consistency of the items was examined through a Cronbach’s alpha. An alpha of 0.94 suggests a high level of reliability of the constructed variable measuring corporate reptuation (Thompson 2004).

Moderators: Sincerity, Value Alignment and Credibility

Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) measured corporate sincerity to engage in cross-sector collaboration through an eight-item scale. The scale includes an evaluation of the business’s communication, credibility, favourability, identification of social contribution, overall attitude, the willingness of support, the trustworthiness of actions and business’s ability of performance (Becker-Olsen et al. 2006). This study employed three of the above-mentioned items to evaluate sincerity and adjusted them to a statement format with a 7-point scale, from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Babbie 2017). A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.99 indicated a high internal consistency.

Value alignment was measured by four items in Pappu and Cornwell (2014). These items, namely perceived fit, complement, consistency and comprehension of collaboration, were adjusted to statements with a 7-point scale, varying from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. Similar to sincerity, a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.99 indicated a high internal consistency.

Credibility was evaluated by four items including the perceptions of dependability, reliability, trustworthiness and honesty (Pappu and Cornwell 2014). The items were adjusted to statements with a 7-point scale, varying from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.99 indicated a high level of internal consistency.

Manipulation check

A χ^2 test confirmed that the manipulation of exposure to the sponsorship and partnership stimuli was successful, χ^2 (4, $n=130$) $=225.515$, $p<.001$. Overall, 42 (93.3%) out of 45 participants in the control group indicated the correct answer in the manipulation check. Furthermore, 38 (92.7%) out of 41 respondents in the group exposed to the sponsorship stimulus and all 44 participants in the partnership group also satisfied the manipulation check, which underlines a high level of internal validity of the experiment. Moreover, the success of the second manipulation check was proven in the same way conducting a Chi-square test, χ^2 (2, $n=130$) $=112.944$, $p<.001$. In this case of testing the attentiveness of respondents, 42 (93.3%) out of 45 participants in the control group and 40 (97.6%) out of 41 participants in the sponsorship group satisfied the manipulation check. The group exposed to the partnership stimulus consisting out of 44 respondents entirely indicated the correct answer.

Results

To test the effect of the exposure to sponsorship or partnership on corporate reputation among millennials, a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The Levene’s test ($p=0.235$) suggests that the assumption of homogeneity is not violated. The result of the ANOVA analysis indicates a significant difference cross all three groups, $F(2, n=130)=11.03$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.15$. In particular, corporate partnership affects corporate reputation more positively in the field of arts and culture ($M=5.20$, SD $=0.83$) than a business with no cross-sector collaboration ($M=4.23$, SD$=1.12$), $t(87)=-4.65$, $p<0.001$. Similarly, corporate sponsorship affects corporate reputation more positively ($M=4.82$, SD$=0.98$) than a company with no cross-sector collaboration ($M=4.23$, SD$=1.12$), $t(84)=-2.59$, $p=0.011$. Moreover, our conjecture that corporate partnership is more appealing to millennials than corporate sponsorship is weakly confirmed by the result of the independent-samples t test, $t(83)=1.94$, $p=0.055$.

To evaluate the moderation effects, an ordinary least squares regression analysis was conducted. The standardized (z-score) variables, namely corporate reputation, sincerity, value alignment and credibility were used in the analysis. The demographic variables such as age, gender, education and preexisting attitudes towards cross-sector collaboration initiatives in the field of arts and culture were included in the model. The interaction variables were constructed through the multiplication of the value of the tested moderator and the dummy variable of participation and sponsorship. As shown in Table 1, the expected moderation of corporate reputation through sincerity was weakly significant. Thus, sincerity does strengthen the relationship of corporate reputation and sponsorship as well as partnership ($\beta=0.160$, SE $=0.082$, $p<0.1$). Value alignment was found to be a weakly significant moderator ($\beta=0.147$, SE $=0.082$, $p<0.1$) as well. Credibility was found to be a strongly significant moderator of corporate reputation ($\beta=0.342$, SE $=0.080$, $p<0.01$). Thus, the moderation effect of credibility strengthening the relationship between the cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation can be confirmed.

In addition, the results suggest that the control variables all play a role in affecting corporate reputation. With respect to gender, male respondents perceive the reputation of the fictitious company more positively than female respondents ($p<0.01$). This finding is consistent in all three models. Age is weakly significant in Model 1 and Model 3 ($p<0.1$), suggesting the pattern that older respondents are more positive than younger ones. Education is however negatively correlated with corporate reputation ($p<0.1$ in Model 1 and Model 2, and $p<0.05$ in Model 3). One interpretation is that the

Table 1 Moderation effects of sincerity, value alignment and credibility

Unstandardized coefficient	Model 1 β (SE)	Model 2 β (SE)	Model 3 β (SE)
Constant	3.136*** (0.857)	2.737*** (0.785)	3.392*** (0.700)
Sincerity (SI)	0.027 (0.125)		
Interaction_SI	0.160* (0.082)		
Value Alignment (VA)		0.056 (0.133)	
Interaction_VA		0.147* (0.082)	
Credibility			− 0.182 (0.126)
Interaction_Credibility			0.342*** (0.080)
Gender	0.525*** (0.163)	0.627*** (0.161)	0.576*** (0.145)
Age	0.116* (0.063)	0.111 (0.063)	0.109* (0.057)
Education	− 0.119* (0.064)	− 0.122* (0.064)	− 0.129** (0.058)
Collaboration in arts and culture	0.311*** (0.100)	0.253** (0.103)	0.329*** (0.091)
Dummy (Partnership_Sponsorship)	− 0.820*** (0.314)	− 0.991*** (0.364)	− 1.561*** (0.298)
R^2	0.628	0.619	0.708
F value	11.330***	10.817***	17.490***

$^{*}p<0.1$, $^{**}p<0.05$, $^{***}p<0.01$

millennials who are more educated may become more critical about a company's cross-sector collaboration, and thus its reputation. Last but not least, the significant result of cross-sector collaboration in arts and culture ($p<0.01$ in Model 1 and Model 3, and $p<0.05$ in Model 2) suggests a clear pattern that the more millennials regard the collaboration engagement in the arts and culture sector as important, the more they will perceive a company's reputation positively.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship of prominent cross-sector collaborations and corporate reputation in the arts and culture sector, as this sector is increasingly supported by businesses and has a long-lasting history of corporate involvement (McNicholas 2004). Further, we examined the differences in perception originating from a specific stakeholder group—the millennials, who hold a high sensitivity to corporate communication with respect to creating social value (McGlone et al. 2011). Two collaboration types were distinguished in this study, namely sponsorships and partnerships. Previous studies have addressed the relevance of these two (Sen 2006; Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist 2006; Fahy et al. 2004), though a direct comparison of their impacts on reputation is new to literature.

Through designing an online experiment, we found that in the arts and culture sector, partnerships and sponsorships both influence corporate reputation among millennials positively. The results imply that by engaging in a cross-sector collaboration in the arts and culture sector, businesses are able to generate strategic benefits (Hur et al. 2014; Kirchberg 2011). Both initiatives reinsure the association transfer of the positive experience derived from exposure to a business's good doing either through the use of promotional means (e.g. sponsorships) or creating shared value such as in partnership (Lewandowska 2015; Colleoni 2013; Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist 2006). In addition, millennials are found to have a clear interest in the art and culture industry due to a high level of consumption of creative content and lifestyle products deriving from the industry (Halliday and Astafyeva

2014; McNicholas 2004). These positive attitudes towards the industry are considered to impact the perception of the cross-sector collaboration in this industry and thus facilitate a favourable corporate reputation formation among this group (Halliday and Astafyeva 2014; McNicholas 2004).

Furthermore, partnerships in the arts and culture sector were found to have a stronger positive impact on corporate reputation among millennials than sponsorships. This difference could be potentially explained by a higher level of immersion commonly provided by partnerships through the share of interests, responsibilities, resources and operations between a business and a non-profit (Lewandowska 2015; Iyer 2003). Contrary to sponsorships, in which a contribution to a non-profit is rewarded with a promotional exposure by such, partnerships actively involve both entities with one another constituting a collaboration in interaction which transcends over diverse stakeholder groups (Lewandowska 2015; Rifon et al. 2004). The experiment highlighted this difference clearly by emphasizing on the provision of experiences, like workout classes, from the collaboration of the partnership in contrast to the promotional exposure of donations by the corporate in the sponsorship. Due to the higher level of integration constituted by the construct of partnerships, such a collaboration results in more positive impact on corporate reputation among millennials. In particular, as millennials can be characterized by their active engagement in dialogues with businesses online and taking on roles such as advocates or critics, the interactive format of a partnership tailors accurately to this need and therefore enables a higher level of generating positive association influencing a corporate's reputation (Lewandowska 2015; Hollebeek et al. 2014; Moore 2012; O'Brien 2011).

This study also examined three moderators on the relationship between cross-sector collaboration and corporate reputation, namely sincerity, value alignment and credibility. The results imply that millennial consumers are impacted by perceived sincerity of sponsorship and partnership in the arts and cultural sector when evaluating a business's reputation. Further, a weak significance in the moderation effect of value alignment confirmed the assumption of millennial consumers being influenced in forming images of corporate reputation by the observed organizational fit between a business and a non-profit. Lastly, the moderation effect of credibility was also confirmed. It highlights that millennial consumers' construction of corporate reputation is influenced by the execution of duties of an business in its collaboration.

Discussion

The arts and cultural sector offers a beneficial field of collaboration for businesses as it is closely related to contemporary consumer's lifestyle and civilization (Thomas et al. 2009; McNicholas 2004; O'hagan and Harvey 2000). Importantly, managers have to be critical about the choice of collaboration a business should engage in. Even though sponsorships and partnerships both indicate a positive effect on corporate reputation, the affordances of each type differ fundamentally. While sponsorships solely entail a provision of resources by a business in exchange for a promotional exposure, partnerships require a higher level of commitment to establish mutual strategy, operations as well as sharing risks and resources (Lewandowska 2015; O'hagan and Harvey 2000). In return, partnerships foster direct interactive relationships with the audience leading to emotional connections while sponsorships benefit from an association transfer (Lewandowska 2015; Pappu and Cornwell 2014).

When targeting millennial consumers, partnerships in the arts and culture sector are found to be appealing. Thus, if a business holds the resources and affordances to commit to the collaboration, it will gain the potential to form positive perceptions among the millennials. This research also underlines that managers can consider sponsorships as a lucrative alternative regarding strengthening corporate reputation among millennials. Particularly, managers should emphasize on their willingness to improve societal welfare from a sincere point. Further, organizational fit is a key factor to consider for managers, referring to the screening of collaborator which the business should be associated with in a cross-sector collaboration. Along with it, information that highlights similarity and closeness of association should be emphasized in corporate communication towards millennial consumers. Lastly, businesses should be aware of the need to present themselves as a trustworthy collaborator and the necessity to fulfil their duties deriving from the engagement in a particular collaboration. Negative consequences on a business's reputation may occur if such an important factor is ignored (Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006).

Besides the managerial implications, this study also underlined the social importance of corporate contribution to the arts and cultural sector. This sector is identified as an essential social sector affecting the public through the enhancement of education and quality of life (Kirchberg 2011; McNicholas 2004). As art and cultural goods are subject to intercultural and global exchange, this sector holds extensive opportunities for businesses to contribute to a greater societal welfare (Colbert et al. 2005; McNicholas 2004; Tweedy 1991). Primarily, the engagement in sponsorships and partnerships of businesses within the field is evaluated to be mutually beneficial practices, which fosters a level of sustainability and advancement of civilization (Thomas et al. 2009; Tweedy 1991). Therefore, businesses can consider cross-sector collaboration in the arts and culture sector as a win–win solution for value creation.

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