

## Gendered Leadership Sport Brand Strategy and Marketing During Crises

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50-minute poster presentation

5:45-6:35 PM, Chicago River Ballroom Salon D,E,F,G

### Introduction and Purpose

Recent societal emphasis on gender equity, gender issues, and the rise of the MeToo movement, have all led to a greater research emphasis on women in sport (see: Burton, 2015; Main, Rowe, Schoenberg, Gastin, & Walsh, 2018). Particularly, an emphasis to understand how women matriculate into sport leadership positions, how women lead compared to men, and what outcomes women sport leaders influence, have all garnered the attention of researchers (Burton, 2015; Katz, Walker, & Hindman, 2018). Further, research has examined the difference in perception by employees between men and women leaders during a crisis (Celebi & Saatci, 2016). Celebi & Saatci (2016) found junior associate employees preferred a male leader in a no crisis situation, but a female leader in times of crises, as females were perceived to provide a more calming atmosphere compared to the males. Despite the emphasis that gender, and specifically, women in sport leadership positions has received, little is known about how sport consumers perceive female leaders' response to crises compared to responses from male leaders.

Sport organizations are affected by internal and external factors (Welty Peachey, Damon, Zhou, & Burton, 2015), and may experience various degrees of crises (Prior, O'Reilly, Mazanov, & Huybers, 2013). Such crises may first be managed by way of social media, i.e. Twitter and Facebook, as these modes of communication are the quickest way to disseminate information addressing a crisis. The current study seeks to extend the above research by examining if there is a perceived difference in how female and male leaders in sport organizations respond to crises via social media outlets. Further, we aim to determine what the differences mean for how sport consumers perceive and interact with the corresponding organizations.

### Theoretical Framework

Consumer researchers have illustrated differences between male and female consumers' perceptions toward marketing efforts. Specifically, Moss, Gunn, and Heller (2006) found significant differences among how consumers perceived male- and female-produced websites. Further, Stokburger-Sauer and Teichmann (2013) determined that females have better impressions and higher purchase intentions toward luxury brands than males.

As noted earlier, female leaders in sport have garnered increased scholarly attention in recent years (Burton, 2015; Katz et al., 2018). As far as how female leaders were perceived compared to men, Welty-Peachy and Burton (2011) found participants did not prefer male leaders to female leaders when evaluating associated leadership outcomes. While sport marketing research on the perception of leader responses to crises is limited, there has been some research in the marketing and consumer behavior fields which have illustrated differences between male and female consumer perceptions toward marketing efforts and crises responses (Moss, Gunn, & Heller, 2006; Prior et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013).

### Research Questions

Based on the theoretical framework, we have constructed the following research questions to guide the study:

R1: Do female leaders respond differently than male leaders following a crisis?

R2: Do consumers perceive female leaders' response to a crisis more favorably than males?

R3: Is there a significant difference between how male and female sport consumers perceive male and female sport leaders' responses to crises?

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R4: Is there a significant difference between fans of professional teams and intercollegiate teams regarding leadership crisis responses?

### Method

In order to address the research questions, we will utilize Rtweet, which will be aimed to measure sport consumers' perceptions of different sport organizations' crisis management. Specifically, we will use Rtweet to analyze Tweets and Facebook posts following crises. The leaders we are targeting for this study will include personnel who have interacted with stakeholders (i.e. fans, media, and general public) in response to and during times of crisis involving the leader's organization. The various leaders will include professional sport and intercollegiate athletics marketing managers, public relations personnel, coaches, and athletic directors.

Crises will be categorized by level of scandal, ranging from firings of coaches to allegations of abuse by coaches or athletes, and cases of corruption (Maennig, 2005). We will examine crises from 2014-2019, as this provides an ample amount of data and several levels of crises that occurred in professional sport and intercollegiate athletic programs.

Data are to be collected during the Summer 2019 using Rtweet, to allow for thousands of responses to be collected in a short period of time. Data will be analyzed using SPSS, specifically; analysis of variance (ANOVA) and other appropriate analyses will be used to answer the research questions mentioned earlier. Any identifying information within the data will be removed or coded to protect a subject's identity.

### Expected results

We expect the results to illustrate statistically significant differences between how consumers perceive a female leaders' response compared to a male leaders' response. While previous researchers (Celebi & Saatci, 2016) have found that women are viewed more favorably during times of crises; sport consumers' perceptions of how male or female sport leaders respond to crises have yet to be thoroughly examined. Based off of the previously mentioned research (Celebi & Saatci, 2016; Prior et al., 2013; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2011), we expect to find differences in how sport consumers perceive a female sport leader's response compared to a male sport leader's response to similar crises. Further, we anticipate differences between male and female sport consumers in how they perceive a sport leader's response to a crisis. Additionally, we believe sport consumers will perceive differences among sport contexts in how leaders respond to crises. The results will help to inform not only sport marketers and consumers, but also sport leaders in how gender affects an organization's brand management.