University of South Florida

Digital Commons @ University of South Florida

March 2024

Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Media Influencers: Effectiveness of CSR Brand-Endorsed Messaging on Consumers

Hannah Sarmiento
University of South Florida

Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Media Influencers: Effectiveness of CSR Brand-

Endorsed Messaging on Consumers

by

Hannah Sarmiento

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a concentration in Strategic Communication Management
Department of Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Kelly Werder, Ph.D.
Kelli Burns, Ph.D.
Christopher Noland, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
March 5, 2024

Keywords: expertise, fit, behavioral intentions, congruence theory, source credibility model

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my family and friends that have always encouraged me and supported me through the entirety of my academic career.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This would not have been possible without the support of my thesis chair, Dr. Kelly Werder. Thank you for the knowledge, guidance, and patience that you have provided through this complicated, yet fulfilling process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Kelli Burns, Dr. Kimberly Walker, and Dr. Christopher Noland for all your encouraging comments and valuable feedback. You have all made this such an enjoyable experience.

Thank you to my fellow academic peers that have been with me since the beginning of our program. Your words of encouragement and camaraderie has made this master's program and thesis process one of the most rewarding experiences in my academic career.

Lastly, to my family and friends. The support I have felt has been overwhelming, and I thank you for always being there for me. This would not have been possible without any of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility and social media influencers have both become key components in corporations' strategic communication. Social media influencers who are knowledgeable on the subject they are communicating have been found to be influential on consumers attitudes and behaviors. Fit between brand-endorsed messages and the spokesperson have also been found to have similar effects. Grounded in the Source Credibility Model and Congruence Theory, the study aimed to identify and analyze the main and interaction effects of perceived expertise of social media influencers and perceived fit between a brand and its social media influencer on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The research study utilized a between-subjects experimental method to analyze the effects of spokespersons perceived expertise and perceived fit to a brand and their CSR message. Results collected from an online questionnaire found that there were no statistically significant interaction effects of expertise and fit on consumers attitudes and behaviors across treatments. Although there were significant main effects that found that perceived expertise and perceived expertise were influential in determining the consumers' attitudes towards the brand and behaviors towards the brand. Theoretical implications suggest further research through the expansion of the method and manipulations. Practical implications of the study address how social media influencers and corporations can enhance their brand and business.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social media influencers don't seem to have anything in common at first glance. However, they are both on the rise within the marketing and strategic communications fields (Snider et al., 2003; Yesiloglu et al., 2021). This rise may be due to a shift in the needs and wants of consumers in recent years - now, potential consumers want to support and spend their money on brands and corporations that prioritize social issues, such as the environment and racial equality, and give back to the community through social issue advocacy (Ellen et al., 2006; Nan & Heo, 2007). Sometimes different CSR initiatives implemented by brands can determine whether an individual is willing to purchase the brand's product or service (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Blumenthal & Bergstrom, 2003). Companies have recognized this and as a result, CSR initiative implementations have been on the rise amongst big brands and corporations, both in the United States and globally (Snider et al., 2003).

The presence of social media influencers has been on the rise since the early 2000s, when communication via the Internet and cellular devices exploded into the public sphere (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). In the beginning, celebrities were the only type of influential people that followers listened to and idolized (Erdogan, 1999). However, social media has created "micro-celebrities." These micro-celebrities found fame on social media, and some have a network and platform as vast as some of the most well-known A-list celebrities (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Yesiloglu et al., 2021). Furthermore, social media influencers have evolved their platforms into an artifact of the

personal relationship they have with their followers (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Chen et al., 2023). Past literature suggests that individuals are more trusting and feel more relatable to the influencers they follow compared to celebrities they follow (Jin et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2019).

According to previous studies (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Nan & Heo, 2007), CSR initiatives can only be successful when brands know how to implement them properly. One of the most important factors to look at when choosing a CSR issue to support is the role of *fit* (Chen et al, 2023). Fit is the congruence that the brand and its supported CSR issue have, and fit can be applied to several aspects of the business (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). If there is high fit between the brand, its CSR initiatives, and its consumers, it can be beneficial in influencing attitudes and behavioral intentions of consumers (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). The current study draws on the congruence theory, which states that when two or more entities are harmonious, or lack harmony, they can influence changes among the constituents affected (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Previous literature related to the theory suggests that spokespersons congruent to entities such as the brand, its CSR initiatives, and consumers self-image will have effects on consumers attitudes and behaviors (Belance et al., 2021; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021; Kuo & Rice, 2015; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014).

Social media influencers have been known to create content pertaining to brand endorsements or collaborations, whether they use it often or not (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). Like the influence of fit on CSR effectiveness, *expertise* has been shown to be an important variable of interest when analyzing brand-endorsed media content (Chekima et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022). Expertise amongst social media influencers is a multi-factor construct that includes perceptions of an individual's credibility, trustworthiness, and accuracy in

communication of information (Erdogan, 1999). Expertise is just one component of the Source Credibility Model discussed by Erdogan (1999). The source credibility model consists of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Erdogan, 1999). Although the current study draws on the Source Credibility Model of Erdogan (1999) and others, it is limited to the analysis of source expertise. Previous literature related to the source expertise guides understanding of the independent variables utilized in the current study and informs the development of the hypotheses of interest.

After reviewing past literature that has utilized CSR initiatives and social media influencers to effectively increase consumers' positive attitudes and behavioral intentions (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Gräve & Bartsch, 2021), the research is still new when utilizing the two together. Brands and corporations are quick to use these two entities separately, however, research is limited on the effectiveness of social media influencers when paired with a brand's CSR initiatives (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, expertise is rarely isolated from other components of the Source Credibility Model through past research studies (Hudders et al., 2021). Researchers have suggested focusing on the variable to identify key influences in the communications field (Hudders et al., 2021). Through the present study, the data aims to highlight the effectiveness of using a personable and relatable spokesperson to elicit supportive CSR behavior from consumers. The present study also aims to identify key effects of the expertise variable in relation to utilizing spokespersons. These results are highlighted through the experimental design and data analysis conducted in subsequent chapters.

This study posits that, if consumers care about CSR initiatives and have perceived relationships with the social media influencers they follow, consumer attitudes and behaviors towards a brand may be influenced by characteristics of both the CSR initiative and the

influencer. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the main and interaction effects of perceived expertise of social media influencers and perceived fit between a brand and its social media influencer on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. Specifically, an experiment will be conducted using a 2x2 factorial design to test the following hypotheses posited in this study:

H1A: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H1B: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H1C: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

H2A: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H2B: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H2C: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

H3A: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H3B: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H3C: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

An online experiment will be conducted with a minimum goal of 50 participants per cell, to test the relationship among variables posited in the hypotheses. Participants were administered a questionnaire that began with an informed consent form. They were then provided with a brief description of social media influencers and corporate social responsibility. The randomly assigned treatment was then administered to participants. Participants had one out of four treatments, each consisting of a CSR brand-endorsed message given by a social media influencer. The social media influencer named the brand and CSR issue they were in support of, while establishing their expertise and fit within the scenario. After viewing the information, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their attitudes and behavioral intentions, with demographics ending it.

The next chapter includes a review of literature relevant to this study, including corporate social responsibility, social media influencers, the influence of fit on CSR effectiveness, and the influence of expertise on social media influencers. This is followed by the Methods chapter that details the procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures used to gather data for this study. Results and Discussion chapters follow with results and implications that can be drawn from the data analyses conducted.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the main and interaction effects of perceived expertise of social media influencers and perceived fit between a brand and its social media influencer on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The study aims to understand the influence of social media influencer expertise and CSR strategy fit on consumer perceptions of brands. The following chapter reviews literature on the important topics pertaining to the present study. These topics include CSR, the influence of fit on CSR effectiveness, social media influencers, and the influence of expertise on social media influencers. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates the importance of linking CSR initiatives and spokespersons to maximize effectiveness of communicated media content.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has been a growing business concern, with significant movement towards issue advocacy and stance taking over the past decade. Brands and corporations are beginning to prioritize CSR initiatives to not only give back to the environment/society, but to also increase profit and sales because of this "do-gooder" attitude that consumers perceive the brands to be (Argenti, 2022). A textual analysis study conducted by Snider and colleagues (2003) found an increase in corporations incorporating CSR initiatives and in turn an increase in communication of these initiatives with their audiences. According to Argenti (2022), CSR can be defined as "a corporation's social and environmental obligations to its constituencies and greater society."

Companies began this shift into prioritizing CSR programs and initiatives because of consumer perceptions of money-hungry profit and increased sales. This logical business goal has never changed; however, the environmental impact has also contributed to this shift. Disastrous events such as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 and the media exposure of sweatshop use amongst popular brands stirred companies to switch gears (Argenti, 2022). Company CSR initiatives can take several forms. Depending on the corporation, they will integrate or support initiatives that pertain to their products, goals, and values. In a study done conducted by Kwon and Lee (2021), researchers utilized a content analysis method looking at fashion brands and their advertisements for their CSR initiatives. Through the analysis, they found that fashion brands incorporate CSR initiatives that align with their field, such as sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. Kwon and Lee (2011) also found that fashion brands utilize several different techniques when advertising CSR initiatives including framing, frequency, and visually appealing messaging using Instagram.

A current example of this can be illustrated through Patagonia, is an active outdoor clothing brand. They prioritize creating their products in ethically working factories, sourcing materials from small business farmers, and providing work benefits for their employees (Social Responsibility, n.d.). This is just one example of the kind of CSR that brands and corporations can take part in. Other initiatives and actions that companies can take include monetary donations, volunteering, providing expertise and time on specific need-based situations, or sourcing materials from small business owners (Argenti, 2022). As previously stated, this shift in business priorities has seen extremely beneficial results for not only the environment and people, but also comradery amongst countries. In 2000, the United Nations drafted a document titled "Global Impact" and within the document, it listed ten principles that countries can and should

abide by to improve quality of life and quality of work. According to Argenti (2022), 156 countries have voiced their commitment in following these ten principles through work and life.

As result of the emergence of social media and the freedoms that come with it, it has been difficult for companies to communicate their CSR initiatives effectively to their audiences. As previously stated, companies must be strategic when communicating their CSR efforts to consumers. Social media has forced these companies into the spotlight, allowing consumers to expose bad actions, which can ultimately become detrimental for the business. This switch of power, from company to consumer, has evolved company goals into focusing on the satisfaction and experience of their consumers and how these consumers perceive the company. Variables within CSR, such as the role of fit, can help increase positive attitudes and behavioral intention amongst a company's target audiences. In this next section, this variable of fit is discussed in detail and the previous research supporting the importance of fit is reviewed.

The Influence of Fit on CSR effectiveness

Through past literature on CSR, researchers have discovered company-specific factors and individual-specific factors that influence the effectiveness of CSR initiatives towards their targeted consumers (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Varadarajan and Menon (1988) found similar results when their study highlighted several factors that companies should consider when deciding on their CSR initiative. Within the company, they should be considering the characteristics of their offered products, the brand image and its positioning within the market, and the characteristics of the market they are currently in. Researchers suggested that companies support causes that are aligned with their product, the brand, and their markets (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). This concept was later defined as fit. According to Becker-Olsen and colleagues

(2006) fit can be defined as "perceived congruence between a social cause and the firm's product line, brand image, position, and/or target market." (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006)

Furthermore, in a study done by Lee and colleagues (2012), researchers found that most consumers are unaware of company's CSR activities. As a result, researchers suggested several ways to connect with their consumers on a personal level. The factor of fit became extremely important in creating these personal relationships between the corporation and the consumer. For the current study, fit will be focused on and manipulated. When analyzing fit in relation to corporations, there can be fit between the corporation and the CSR initiatives they have chosen. However, there can also be fit between spokespersons and the messages they endorse, which is addressed through the current research.

Although fit may seem like one of many factors that influence a consumer's support of a company's CSR initiative, it can also affect consumers behavioral intention and attitudes toward the corporation itself. Sincerity and genuineness of a company's intentions can be called to question by consumers if the support they show does not seem to align with the company's values and goals. This concept was illustrated through Elving's study (2010) dealing with two factors: fit and reputation. Elving was interested in skepticism of consumers towards the company's CSR communications based on specific levels of fit and reputation. For instance, researchers found the lowest levels of skepticism with good reputation and good fit between the company and its CSR. The study suggests that the reputation and fit between a company and its CSR activities can influence the level of skepticism consumer's feel (Elving, 2010). Shortly after in 2015, Tao and Ferguson, found that company evaluations were affected by the company's ethical reputation which was determined by their motives to implement CSR initiatives (Tao & Ferguson, 2015). Previous work by Yoon and colleagues (2006) found similar results in relation

to bad reputation of a company. Researchers found that companies with bad reputations could achieve successful CSR campaigns if they had low suspicion or skepticism by consumers (Yoon et al., 2006). However, consumers with high suspicion tended to react badly to the company's CSR campaigns (Yoon et al., 2006). Kim and Lee (2018) found this factor to be important when their study focused on company fit, transparency levels and its influence on variables such as trust, organizational advocacy, and skepticism. The study suggested that factors such as the company, fit, and level of transparency all had to align for consumers to begin building trust with the company (Kim & Lee, 2018).

Like skepticism, Ellen and colleagues (2006) found that consumers had positive responses to CSR initiatives that were perceived as values driven and strategic. Juxtaposing this idea, consumers responded negatively to CSR initiatives that were perceived as disingenuous or stakeholder-driven (Ellen et al., 2006). This questioning of motives was a key factor in influencing the consumer's attitudes and experiences with the company. In the same year, Becker-Olsen and colleagues (2006), conducted a study looking at fit, motivation, and CSR initiatives within promotions. The research found that low-fit CSR initiatives were more likely to decrease overall attitudes towards the company, as well as perceptions of corporate credibility, corporate position, and lastly purchase intention of the consumer (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Purchase intention influenced by a company's CSR initiatives was also later seen in a study conducted by Chung and Lee (2022). Researchers found that increased purchase intention and decreased negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) was influenced by a company's high fit. CSR history within the company was also found to have positive impacts on consumers' purchase intention (Chung & Lee, 2022). Through company media, they can also employ cause-related marketing (CRM) to advertise their CSR initiatives, so consumers are aware of their societal

efforts. This was proven to be affective when Nan and Heo (2007) conducted a study and found that when these CRM messages had a high brand and cause fit, consumer attitudes toward the message and brand were more positive.

While high fit within company/CSR initiatives has been seen to influence consumer behavior and attitudes, fit within the consumer/company can influence the attitudes consumers have *towards* the CSR initiatives. According to Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), positive influences of CSR initiatives can result from consumers perceived fit to the corporation and its' CSR initiatives. However, in this specific study, researchers found mixed results when looking at purchase intention of consumers based on the CSR initiatives. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Alharbi and colleagues (2022) that looked at corporate social advocacy (CSA) and its pairing with controversial celebrities. Researchers found that consumers viewed fit between themselves and the brand more important compared to fit between themselves and the controversial celebrity, when dealing with CSA messaging (Alharbi et al., 2022). As seen before, a company's motives and intentions for implementing CSR initiatives can drastically influence the outcomes they wish to see with consumers. There is a fine line between a genuine intention to do better and just supporting for monetary gain.

Through research, individuals in the field have been able to approach their CSR initiatives in a strategic way that benefits all audiences in the end. The review of literature related to CSR, fit, and effects on consumers' attitudes and behaviors reveals the need to further the understanding of the variables most important to CSR effectiveness. Research suggests that perceived fit between a corporation's mission and its CSR initiatives impacts consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Chung & Lee, 2022; Becker-Olsen, 2006). In isolating the variable of

perceived fit within the current study, the data aims to replicate results from past literature. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1A: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H1B: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H1C: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

The current study aims to highlight the importance of perceived fit between two important entities: social media influencers and the brand and its CSR message. The manipulation of this variable aims to find differing responses of consumers based on their perceptions of high or low perceived fit.

Brands and Branding

In the discussion of the importance of CSR initiatives among a corporation's business goals, it is important to discuss what a brand is and what it consists of. A brand is defined as an overall representation of the separate parts that make up a corporation (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). However, brands can be further divided into a product brand or a corporate brand (Vallaster et al., 2012). According to Vallaster and colleagues (2012), the difference lies in the brand's main identification, "In essence, a product brand can be defined by what it does and represents, whereas a corporate brand also is determined by who it is." (Vallaster et al., 2012) Factors that make up a brand includes but are not limited to, the products or services themselves, marketing and advertising, quality levels, and the overall consumers' experience (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Popoli, 2011). It is imperative for corporations to establish a competitive brand

in the market to be able to grab the attention of their target audiences and keep up with competitors (Popoli, 2011). To establish the competitive brand, corporations take part in branding (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Branding elevates the corporation's image through several avenues including brand positioning, brand intangibles, brand personality, brand relationships, and brand experience (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). In the next section, CSR implementation is discussed as a branding tactic utilized by corporations.

The Influence of CSR on Branding

CSR implementation is one of the key factors related to a corporation's branding process because of increased CSR expectations among audiences such as, consumers, employees, stakeholders, and providers. The expansion of audiences that corporations must tailor to is called the multi-stakeholder perspective (Popoli, 2011). This has been seen across literature regarding branding and CSR a decade later through research conducted by Maon and colleagues (2021). Researchers stated that corporations have made the necessary shift from one stakeholder group determining CSR initiatives to a collective effort amongst multiple stakeholders (Maon et al., 2021). Furthermore, they state that the CSR initiatives implementation is an ongoing process that also occurs across multiple sectors of the corporation (Maon et al., 2021). This idea is due to the ever-evolving societal situations and issues, which is explicitly seen through research conducted by Popoli (2011).

Not only has the reach of CSR expectations expanded, but the *type* of expectations has also evolved. According to a chart created by Popoli (2011), old expectations have gone from "don't damage the environment" and "good quality/low price" to new expectations such as "improve the conditions of the environment" and "help resolve social problems." A content analysis of past CSR and branding literature reveals the direct link from CSR implementation to

the effects on brand image (Popoli, 2011). According to the article, the demand for CSR

implementation leads to a corporation's CSR response, which ultimately elevates or hurts the

corporation's brand image (Popoli, 2011). This is all dependent on how the corporation reacts

and responds to the expectations of their multi-stakeholder perspective (Popoli, 2011).

This direct link can be seen through research conducted on the Indian banking industry

and resulting effects on consumer brand loyalty (Pratihari & Uzma, 2018). Research suggests

that corporation's that prioritize CSR initiatives as part of their brand will see positive effects on

consumers' brand loyalty (Pratihari & Uzma, 2018). They also emphasized the importance and

effectiveness of CSR initiative implementations when needing to enhance the corporation's

brand image (Pratihari & Uzma, 2018). In turn, this will have beneficial effects for consumers

and the corporation through increased brand loyalty (Pratihari & Uzma, 2018). These effects can

be extremely beneficial for corporations as influential as the banking industry because it creates a

personal and humane connection to their consumers that will be appreciated (Vallaster et al.,

2012).

Blumenthal and Bergstrom (2003) list several reasons as to why CSR initiatives should

be implemented into a corporation's brand. These four reasons include maintaining customer

loyalty, conflict avoidance with shareholders, acknowledging the importance of the brand

promise, and lastly, boosting total investments through CSR (Blumenthal & Bergstrom, 2003).

Furthermore, research conducted by Vallaster and colleagues (2012) suggested four important

points corporations must keep in mind when planning CSR initiative implementations. These

four points include following through with corporation's brand promising to reduce stakeholder

ambiguity, state the type of role you will take when implementing CSR initiatives (leader or

follower), differentiate the company and its CSR initiatives from competitors, and lastly, react to scandal or controversy in the proper way to reduce or avoid conflict (Vallaster et al., 2012).

The Influence of Fit on Spokespersons & Brand Relations

Based on past research, the role of fit has also been applicable to other aspects of a brand and its business. When companies decide to collaborate with a spokesperson, whether it is a celebrity or social media influencer, it is important that the two entities fit together, or are congruent. In relation to spokespersons and brands, researchers use the term congruence. Congruence can be defined as the alignment and harmony among certain factors or concepts (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Through a study conducted by Fleck and colleagues (2012), researchers focused on two variables: congruence and likability. They looked at varying levels of congruency and likability of different celebrity spokespersons who were paired with a specific brand. The research suggests that congruency is more of an influence compared to the likability of the celebrity (Fleck et al., 2012). As a result, this congruency effect also influenced the consumers' perceptions of the endorsed message. Researchers found that varying levels of congruency and likability influenced factors such as attitudes towards the advertisement, brand beliefs, and purchase intention (Fleck et al., 2012). Furthermore, research has looked at fit between perceived personality of the endorsing celebrity and the way in which a consumer perceives themselves (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Through this study, Choi and Rifon (2012) found that consumers who believe they were congruent to the celebrity endorsement had higher purchase intentions and more positive attitudes towards the advertising message. Researchers also looked at other factors, such as the celebrity and congruency to the product. They found consumers had positive attitudes towards the advertisement if the celebrity and product fit together (Choi & Rifon, 2012). The role of fit can be applicable to many aspects of a brand or

corporation. In focusing on specific parts, researchers can identify and highlight important tools

that brands and corporations can use to maximize potential success of products or services.

Spokespersons

In the age of social media, brands and corporations have evolved their marketing and

advertising techniques to appeal to their audiences. One of these emerging techniques is the use

of spokespersons. Spokespersons are individuals who publicly endorse and communicate

messages for a specific brand or corporation (Callison, 2001). Spokespersons can either be

celebrities or social media influencers and this spokesperson usually partners with the brand to

create endorsement advertisements (Callison, 2001). In some instances, they become the face of

the brand and stay with them for an extended period. Celebrities are the most well-known type of

spokespeople that have worked with brands on collaborations or social media. Celebrities can be

defined as public figures that have risen to fame from traditional forms of media, such as movies,

television shows, music, and sports (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). They may also have social media

platforms, like social media influencers; however, they do not rely on these platforms to maintain

their fame and status. According to Yesiloglu and colleagues (2021), celebrities have been

collaborating with brands since the early 1900s, creating brand endorsements and advertisements

through television, radio, and magazines. By the year 1997, it was estimated that brands were

using celebrity spokespersons in at least 25% of the commercials running on television (Erdogan,

1999). This was a steady jump from 1979 with 15% of commercials and 1988 with 20% of

commercials including celebrity endorsements (Erdogan, 1999).

Previous literature dealing with celebrities and brand advertisements have highlighted

multiple effects on factors such as consumer attitudes towards the brand, attitudes toward the

spokesperson, and purchase intentions (Yoon & Kim, 2015; Zeitoun et al., 2020). A study

conducted in 2017 by Pileliene and Grigaliunaite found that it was beneficial for brands to utilize celebrities in advertisements if the goal was for consumers to form positive attitudes towards the brand and product. Two researchers found similar results when they compared celebrities' advertisements to non-celebrities' advertisements and found that celebrities were creating more positive attitudes among consumers (Yoon & Kim, 2015).

Researchers also found that fit between the celebrity and the brand message influenced consumers to have more positive brand attitudes (Yoon & Kim, 2015). Through a study done by Zeitoun and colleagues (2020) researchers have also looked at more than just celebrities as spokespersons. The study compared brand endorsement advertisements between celebrities, employees, and the CEO. The results suggested that different spokespersons can elicit different reactions and behaviors from consumers. While the CEO and employees helped influence overall brand image, celebrities helped elicit positive reactions towards the product's image (Zeitoun et al., 2020). The next section discusses the impact a new type of spokesperson, social media influencers, can have on brand endorsements.

Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers are like celebrities in the context of fame and breadth of platform. However, they traditionally find fame through online media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok. Comparable to "micro-celebrities," they differ from celebrities because of their consistent posting and communication with their followers through social media (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Yesiloglu et al., 2021). Social media influencers also differ from celebrities because they maintain their status through consistent creation of media content (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Their status is usually determined by numbers, such as followers, likes, and comments on media content. According to Yesiloglu and colleagues (2021) social media

influencers emerged in the 2010s when platforms such as Instagram exploded onto the scene. Social media influencers can utilize entertainment techniques or commercial content for the purposes of brand endorsements (Yesiloglu et al., 2021).

Like previous literature on celebrity endorsements, social media influencers have been studied through research methods (Jin et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2019; Gräve & Bartsch, 2021). However, since this research subject is more recent, there is an apparent theme of comparing social media influencers to celebrity spokespersons and the effects they can have on consumer perceptions and attitudes. Researchers have found that when comparing spokespersons, consumers feel more relatability, increased trustworthiness, and more self-identification with social media influencer advertisements compared to celebrity advertisements (Jin et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2019). An interesting insight into the type of social media influencer advertisements most effective was found by Gräve and Bartsch (2021) when they compared celebrity and influencer advertisements. Researchers found that social media influencer advertisements were most effective when the advertisements were subtle in its selling of the brand and product (Gräve & Bartsch, 2021). Studies that focused on the actual advertisements generated through collaborations with spokespersons found several things. First, social media influencers are generally sharing and posting more content with a brand (Zeren & Kapukaya, 2021). Secondly, advertisements with social media influencers have significantly more engagement compared to media content posted by the actual brand (Lou et al., 2019). Engagement in this instance includes logistics such as likes, comments, and shares (Lou et al., 2019).

With the rapid evolvement of social media, many social media influencers have grown to have a platform as large as traditional celebrities. Many of these individuals have the status and

fame that celebrities have cultivated over several years or decades (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). This highlights the sheer amount of growth that social media has developed just over the past decade. For this reason, the current study focused on and utilized the social media influencer role, rather than the traditional celebrity. The conducted research allows for a current and accurate representation of how brands and corporations utilize media today.

The Influence of Expertise on Social Media Influencers

There are many factors that can influence the way consumers react and behave after consuming brand content with social media influencers as spokespersons. The variable of source credibility has been chosen to focus on through the current study, which can be further divided into expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Source credibility is achieved when individuals accept a source as trustworthy and reliable when consuming a communicated message (Erdogan, 1999). Expertise can be defined as the length in which a communicator is perceived to others as a credible source of statements (Erdogan, 1999). Through these intertwined variables, consumers develop attitudes and behaviors based on their perceptions towards the brand and their messages. These concepts and subsequent research, specifically through celebrity endorsements, have been reviewed by Erdogan in 1999. According to the article, the source credibility model has been utilized in research to choose the best candidate for brand sponsored content with celebrities (Erdogan, 1999). The model is broken down into three different measurable variables: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Erdogan, 1999). For the sake of the current study, the variable of expertise will be manipulated. Expertise has been found to influence several factors related to consumer perceptions including product quality, increased persuasiveness, and increased buying behavior intentions (Erdogan, 1999).

A source credibility scale developed by Ohanian (1990) was originally used to measure celebrity endorser credibility. However, for the purpose of the current study, the scale will be adapted for social media influencers. The scale consists of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. All three variables consist of five statements that participants agree or disagree with, that includes a high end and low end for each statement. For example, under the variable expertise, one statement has two options: skilled or unskilled (Ohanian, 1990). The source credibility scale allows researchers to identify the variables that do well under endorsement circumstances, as well as the variables that need to be adjusted or reconsidered.

Source credibility has been studied through different segments of the media field. Through a public relations lens, Callison (2004) conducted a study looking at credibility with public relations practitioners. Many consumers believe that these practitioners have more nefarious intentions when utilizing public relations techniques for a brand or corporation (Callison, 2004). Callison (2004) found that sources who were associated with the brand or corporation were perceived more negatively by consumers, as well as less truthful when conveying any messages on their behalf. However, results found that internal spokespersons of the brand or corporation were perceived more negatively compared to individual spokespersons that were affiliated. Based on this suggestion, perceived attitudes and behavioral intentions towards brands or corporations with spokespersons, might fare better compared to using an employee within the company or the CEO.

Recent literature looking at social media influencers and the effects of source credibility have supported this concept suggested by Callison in 2004. Researchers were interested in the increasingly favored online shopping method and the effectiveness of social media influencers in cosmetics advertising (Chekima et al., 2020). They looked at the three components that make up

source credibility: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Chekima et al., 2020). The results suggested that influencers high in expertise (in this case cosmetics) influenced more positive consumer attitudes and purchase intention of cosmetic products (Chekima et al., 2020). Another study focusing on online shopping and engagement found that expertise and attractiveness influenced positive online engagement of consumers (AlFarraj et al., 2020). Researchers found that increased online engagement through high attractiveness and expertise, also increased consumers' purchase intentions (AlFarraj et al., 2020). The study suggested that corporations using influencers should focus on their expertise because it was the stronger attribute (AlFarraj et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Lim and colleagues (2017), researchers made several assumptions about source credibility. However, through their research, they found that these assumptions were not supported *because* participants recognized that influencers had a lack of credibility toward the product they were endorsing, which was perceived to them as inadequate expertise (Lim et al., 2017). This research suggests that consumers believe social media influencers are experts when they are well-versed in the product or service they are promoting. A recent study in 2022, verified this assumption when researchers looked at source credibility of social media influencers and its effects on purchase intention (Masuda et al., 2022). They found that consumers' perceived expertise of social media influencers was positively associated with purchase intentions (Masuda et al., 2022).

Through the source credibility literature focusing on social media influencers, expertise plays an important role when consumers are forming attitudes and behavioral intentions, not only to the spokesperson themselves, but also towards the brand and product (Chekima et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022). The review of literature relating social media influencers, source credibility, expertise, and its influence on effective messaging reveals the

need to further understand the variables most important to CSR effectiveness. Research suggests that perceived expertise of social media influencers impacts consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Chekima et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022). However, regularly noted in many of the studies was the lack of literature specifically focusing on the variable of expertise *within* source credibility (AlFarraj et al., 2020; Hudders et al., 2021). Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H2A: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H2B: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H2C: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

The current study aims to highlight the importance of perceived expertise of an important tool used in brand-endorsed messaging: social media influencers. The manipulation of this variable aims to find differing responses of consumers based on their perceptions of high or low perceived expertise.

The Link between Social Media Influencers and Corporate Social Responsibility

This review of literature on research related to social media influencers and CSR reveals gaps that deserve more scholarly attention. Specifically, minimal research has explored the link between social media influencers and CSR messaging to determine how source variables and message variables may interact to influence the effectiveness of corporate initiatives. Brands' marketing and advertising campaigns that utilize social media influencers have consistently adapted to rapid innovation in communication technology (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). As a result,

brands have seen the potential and future monetary advantage of the added consumer engagement social media influencers provide for brands (Yesiloglu et al., 2021). In addition, previous research suggests that not all consumers are aware of the social responsibility initiatives of brands and corporations (Lee et al., 2011). In utilizing a spokesperson liked and followed by many, a corporation can exponentially increase positive attitudes and behavioral intentions in consumers because of the service and likable figure (Chen et al., 2023).

Research conducted by Keel and Nataraajan (2012), proposes and emphasizes the importance of new research that analyzes this idea of partnership between spokespersons and CSR initiatives. The authors introduce the concept of *charitainment,* which is a concept combining media consumption, celebrities, and philanthropy (Keel & Nataraajan, 2012). It is suggested that celebrity philanthropy is not as genuine and can be motivated by ulterior motives (Keel & Nataraajan, 2012).

CSR is sometimes seen as the same way to consumers. Consumers may believe that brands and corporations only take part in CSR initiatives to save face or better their reputation (Keel & Nataraajan, 2012). For some that may be true, however, most brands and corporations are dedicated to giving back to society. A study conducted by Chen and colleagues (2023), looked at this specific concept when they used non-CSR-themed social media influencers to communicate CSR initiatives. Researchers studied the effectiveness of this partnership on consumers' support for CSR initiatives. However, they focused on opinion leadership and taste leadership, which were factors that contributed to the overall study. Factors such as trustworthiness, expertise, uniqueness, and congruity made up the opinion leadership, while taste leadership consisted of uniqueness and congruity. Overall, the study found positive attitudes and

behavioral intention towards the CSR initiatives when non-CSR-themed social media influencers were endorsing the CSR message (Chen et al., 2023).

Through the review of literature, it is necessary to study the link between social media influencers and CSR messaging. The apparent gap in research reveals the need to further the understanding of social media influencers' roles when interacting with CSR messaging and the effectiveness that expertise and fit can have. In studying the combination of the variables of perceived fit and perceived expertise within the current study, the data aims to further the limited research on these interaction effects. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H3A: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H3B: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H3C: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

Although the current study draws from past literature on the importance of fit and expertise within CSR initiatives and brand-endorsed messaging, two theories have also guided the chosen method and hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 utilized fit literature and the concepts of congruence theory to make the stated assumption. Hypothesis 2 utilized expertise literature and the components of the Source Credibility model to make the stated assumption. In the following section, the two theories are discussed in-depth.

Congruence Theory & Source Credibility Model

This study focuses on two foundational theories that will guide data analysis based on hypotheses and the method used. Within the business initiatives of CSR comes the variable of fit, also known as *congruity*. Drawing on congruence theory literature, the current study aims to collect and analyze results that reflect the concepts of this theory. Furthermore, source credibility – specifically source expertise – among social media influencers is an important factor influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors. The current study is guided by the source credibility literature discussed in the following section.

Congruence Theory

Congruence theory originated from researchers Charles E. Osgood and Percy H. Tannenbaum in a Psychological Review chapter from 1955. In this chapter, Osgood and Tannenbaum defined congruity as, "changes in evaluation are always in the direction of increased congruity with the existing frame of reference." (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955) Problems emerge within the concept of congruity when the communicated message makes a general assertion linking two or more of the factors involved. These two factors can either be congruent with one another, making the general assertion a true statement. However, the two factors can also be very different, making the general assertion a false statement. Based on the seminal work, the congruence between two objects, or lack of, can influence attitude and behavioral change amongst people perceiving the message. According to Osgood and Tannenbaum, attitude and behavior change can be determined by previous attitudes towards each factor alone (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). They go on to describe that attitudes can consist of positive, negative, and neutral descriptions. Congruence and harmony can be achieved and is most desired when attitudes align for two or more of the objects combined (Osgood &

Tannenbaum, 1955). For example, if the consumer has positive attitudes towards object #1 and positive attitudes towards object #2, they will most likely reach congruence and positive attitudes for both objects combined. Most importantly, attitude changes towards the message can be achieved if one of the objects does not hold strong attitudes by the consumer. The other object can hold strong attitudes, however, in the end, one attitude will become congruent with the other. This ultimately ends in the change of attitudes that are seen when consumers perceive specific messages (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955).

Meir (1989) elaborated on the congruence theory by illustrating four different layers of the theory. According to Meir (1989), a person's situation and decision-making determine which one of these categories they are in (Meir, 1989). The four categories consist of: vocational interests and occupational choices, the level of congruence between vocational interests and occupational choices, environmental congruence, and within-occupation congruence (Meir, 1989). For the first category, it is suggested that if someone's vocational interests and occupational choices align, they will most likely report satisfaction. For the second category, the level of interest one has in their occupational choices will influence their satisfaction in their decisions. For the third category, satisfaction can be achieved if there is congruence among the individual's personality and the environment in which they live and work in. Lastly, Meir states that specific within-occupation congruence is achieved if the individual is interested and satisfied with the field in which they work (Meir, 1989).

Congruence theory has been studied through various research methods and has covered multiple fields of communications (Belanche et al., 2021; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021; Xu & Pratt, 2018; Kuo & Rice, 2015; Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014). Within the newly emerging field of influencer marketing, researchers are interested in the congruence among factors such as

the social media influencers, the brand, and the targeted audiences and if these factors can influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Belanche et al., 2021). A study conducted by Belanche and colleagues in 2021, looked at congruence amongst three factors: influencers, consumers, and the sponsored brand. They found that high congruence between these three factors, resulted in positive attitudes towards the brand's product, higher purchase intentions, and higher recommendation intentions (Belanche et al., 2021). A study conducted within the same year found similar results when researchers focused on congruence among factors of influencer personality, brand personality, consumers' actual selves, consumers' ideal selves, and role of involvement (von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). They found that congruence between the brand and endorser was extremely important in high-involvement conditions, and involvement influenced the consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions (von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021). These concepts can be applied to brand endorsements that advertise services as well. A study utilizing social media influencers to promote travel destinations looked at congruence between consumers, a brand, its products, endorsers, and potential consumers (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Researchers' results suggested that endorsers/consumer congruence as well as endorser/destination congruence positively influenced consumers' visiting intentions (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

Congruence theory can also be applicable to CSR initiatives, specifically through cause-related marketing (CRM). CRM is a technique used to communicate CSR initiatives through media campaigns and advertising. A study conduct by Kuo and Rice (2015), focused on congruence between the firm and the CSR issue they chose to support. Researchers conducted three studies and concluded with several important findings. Firstly, perceived congruence between the firm and its cause resulted in positive perceptions of fit and consumer behavioral

intentions (Kuo & Rice, 2015). Secondly, congruence between the two influenced the effectiveness of the cause-related marketing campaigns (Kuo & Rice, 2015). Lastly, conceptual fit of the brand and its cause resulted in positive intentions compared to perceptual fit leading to negative consumer behavioral intentions (Kuo & Rice, 2015). Goldsmith and Yimin (2014) found similar results when looking at congruence among the brand-cause, brand-consumer, and cause-consumer. Their research suggested that congruence between the cause, brand, and consumer all positively influenced consumer reactions to the cause-related marketing campaigns (Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014). Based on the past literature, the current study aims to pair a varying levels of congruent social media influencers with a brand and CSR initiative to study the effects on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Congruence theory is an important foundational base to utilize when brands are making business decisions, whether it is social issues and issue advocacy or the right spokesperson for future partnerships. However, Congruence theory is just one theory that guides the current study. The Source Credibility Model, discussed below, has been used by researchers in the past to identify the most effective spokespersons to utilize for brands' business initiatives.

Source Credibility Model

One of the most important factors when analyzing spokesperson brand endorsements is source credibility (Erdogan, 1999; Hudders et al., 2021). This variable can influence the attitudes and behavioral intentions that consumers have towards the brand and its messaging (Chekima et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022). Thus, it is important for a corporation to prioritize this variable when deciding what kind of spokesperson attributes align with its mission, reputation, and desired image (AlFarraj et al., 2020; Chekima et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022).

The Source Credibility Model is comprised of three variables: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Erdogan, 1999). These three variables are measured using a scale and are used to assess how consumers perceive the spokespersons' brand endorsements (Ohanian, 1990). Trustworthiness of a spokesperson relates to the idea that consumers can believe and rely on the information that is spread through the brand endorsement (Erdogan, 1999). Consumers want to believe that their idol chose not to lie about how great the product is or how beneficial it is for the environment. Consumers want to trust both the spokesperson and the brand. To fully trust these two entities, however, the spokesperson needs to be an expert on the subject. Expertise is the extent to which the spokesperson is well-versed and proficient in the product or service they are endorsing (Erdogan, 1999). On a more superficial level, attractiveness of the spokesperson can also elicit specific attitudes and behaviors from consumers (Erdogan, 1999). This explains the shift that brands and corporations took when they decided to utilize celebrities in the early days of endorsement advertisements. During the big Hollywood craze, brands were quick to see the potential in partnerships and took advantage of the likeability and attractiveness of these famous actors and actresses (Erdogan, 1999). For the purpose of the current study, expertise will be focused on the and how varying levels can influence the perceptions that consumers may have on a brand's CSR initiatives. If the consumer believes that the social media influencer is high in expertise about the endorsed CSR message, are they more likely to elicit positive attitudes or negative attitudes?

Drawing from the Congruence theory and Source Credibility Model, the current study focuses on the manipulation of the variables of expertise and fit. The method looks at these two variables through an experimental scenario utilizing social media influencers, a brand, and its CSR message. Through this experiment, the research highlights the influence these factors can

29

have on consumers' perceived attitudes and behavioral intentions. The current study contributes

to the limited literature on social media influencers and their contributions to the field of media

and brand endorsed messaging.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the main and interaction effects of perceived expertise of social media influencers and perceived fit between a brand and its social media influencer on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, an experiment will be conducted using a 2x2 factorial design to test the following hypotheses posited in this study:

H1A: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H1B: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H1C: Perceived fit of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

H2A: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H2B: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H2C: Perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

H3A: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's consumer attitudes.

H3B: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's behavioral intentions.

H3C: The interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer who supports a corporation's CSR message will have a positive influence on participant's purchase intentions.

Overview

The current study utilized a between-subjects experimental method to analyze the effects of spokespersons perceived expertise and perceived fit to a brand and their CSR message. The effects aimed to focus on were consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. The variables of expertise and fit were manipulated through varying high and low levels. This experimental method was conducted to further the study of social media influencers and brand's CSR initiatives. The current study draws on previous literature regarding Congruence Theory and the Source Credibility Model to guide data analysis and discussion.

During the experiment, participants were administered a questionnaire that began with an informed consent form. Participants were provided with a brief description of social media influencers and the scenario for the experimental method. Participants had one of four randomly assigned treatments, each consisting of a CSR brand-endorsed message given by a social media influencer. The social media influencer named the brand and CSR issue they are in support of, while establishing their expertise and fit within the scenario. After viewing the information, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their attitudes and behavioral intentions, followed by demographics ending the questionnaire.

Sample

The sample of participants was obtained from the Pinellas County voters list provided online. The participants were collected and notified through a mass sent email to their registered voter's email. There was a total of 194 participants who completed the questionnaire and took part in the experiment. There were 174 fully completed questionnaires, with 20 partially completed questionnaires recorded. Utilizing the Pinellas County voters list allowed for a more holistic sample of participants because the demographic range was much larger and diverse compared to utilizing a college student sample.

Data Collection

The questionnaire used for the experiment was programmed into Qualtrics by the researcher. After completion, the Qualtrics questionnaire was sent out through a mass email invitation to the Pinellas County voters list. Individuals had the option to reply or ignore the email invitation. Participants were chosen if they decided to take part in the study and complete the questionnaire.

During the experiment, participants were administered a questionnaire that began with an informed consent form. Participants were then provided with a brief description of social media influencers and corporate social responsibility. Next, the scenario for the experimental method was provided in written form for participants to read at their own pace. Participants were randomly assigned one out of four treatments (treatments listed below), each consisting of the same CSR brand-endorsed message given by a social media influencer. The social media influencer named the brand and CSR issue they were in support of, while establishing their manipulated expertise level and manipulated expertise fit. After viewing the treatment, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their attitudes and behavioral intentions

regarding the scenario they just read about. Demographics were collected at the end of the questionnaire. Participants' responses were collected if they chose to finish the questionnaire to completion and disregard the option to pull their answers from the study.

Experimental Treatments

Brand: Kraft

CSR Message: The food brand is selling t-shirts in support of ending world hunger, and 100% of the proceeds go to The Hunger Project, an organization fighting for this cause; the CSR message is communicated and endorsed on behalf of the social media influencer through a written message to participants.
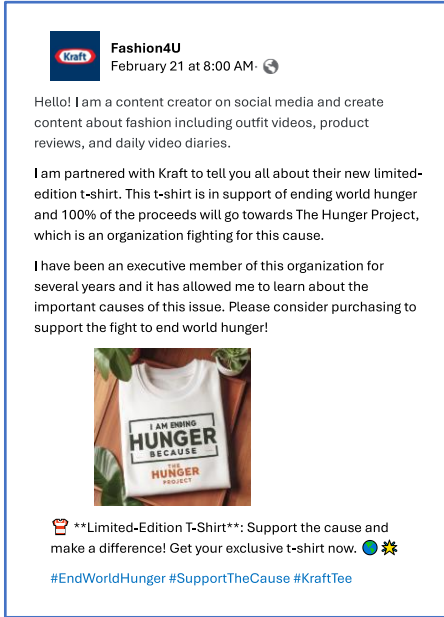
Organization: The Hunger Project

1. Manipulation of Expertise in CSR:

   - High: social media influencer is on the executive board of the organization
     - Exec member for several years and knowledgeable on CSR issue
   - Low: social media influencer is not a member of the organization at all
     - Has just learned about the issue and organization

2. Manipulation of Fit with CSR issue:

   - High: social media influencer creates advocacy and news content
     - Includes content such as: daily news roundup, major headlines, global and national politics
     - Just creates news content
   - Low: social media influencer creates fashion content
     - Includes content such as: outfit videos, product reviews, and daily video diaries
     - Just creates fashion content
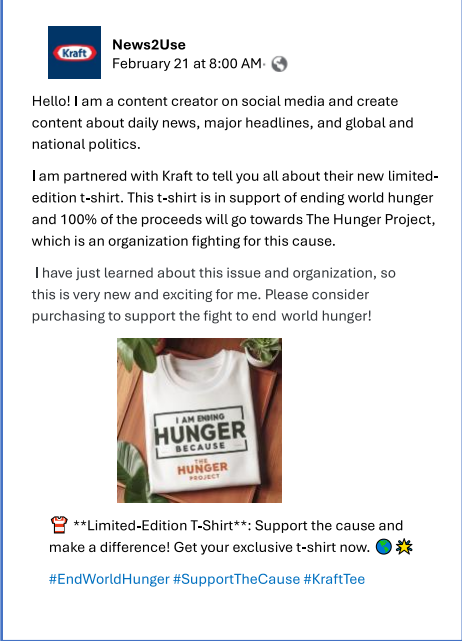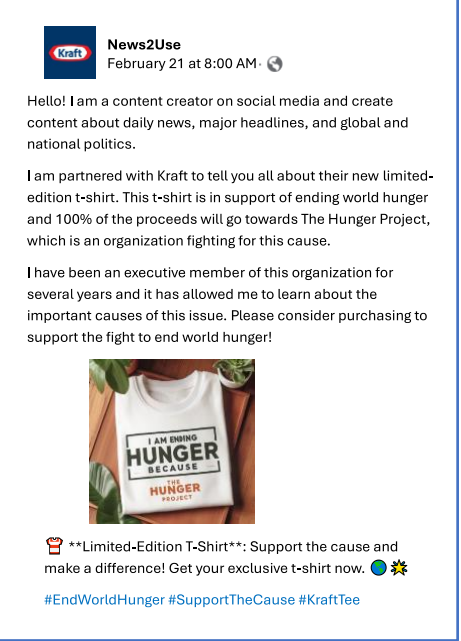
Table 1: Experimental Treatments

Expertise:	**High**	**Low**
Fit: **High**	Social media influencer is: Expertise – exec member of org Fit – news content creator	Social media influencer is: Expertise – not a member Fit – news content creator
Fit: **Low**	Social media influencer is: Expertise – exec member of org Fit – fashion content creator	Social media influencer is: Expertise – not a member Fit – fashion content creator

Table 2: Visual Experimental Treatments

Treatment #1: high expertise, low fit	Treatment #2: low expertise, low fit

Table 2: Continued

Treatment #3: low expertise, high fit	Treatment #4: high expertise, high fit

Variable Measurements

The following variables were tested through an experimental method using a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from "1" being "strongly disagree" to "5" being "strongly agree." Experimental method structure draws from several pieces of relevant literature (Callison, 2004; Chen et al., 2023; Elving, 2010)

Independent Variables

Perceived Expertise of SMIs

To measure perceived expertise of the social media influencers utilized, the Callison (2001) questionnaire on expertise was utilized. The four items in the questionnaire were presented as statements, and participants used a 5-point Likert scale to agree or disagree with the

statements. Items in the questionnaire included "the source' is "credible," "a good spokesperson," "an expert," and "informed."

Perceived Fit of SMIs

To measure perceived fit of the social media influencers utilized, the Elving (2010) questionnaire on congruity was adapted for the purpose of the study. The four items in the questionnaire were presented as statements, and participants used a 5-point Likert scale to agree or disagree with the statements. The statements included items such as, "Social media influencer fits with Kraft," "Social media influencer is similar to Kraft," and "Social media influencer fits with the cause of world hunger," and "Social media influencer is complementary to the cause of world hunger."

Dependent Variables

Attitudes toward brand and its CSR initiatives

To measure participant attitudes toward the brand and its CSR initiatives, items from Bae & Cameron (2006) were adapted to measure attitudes toward company. The three statements in the questionnaire included statements such as, "I feel pleasant towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer," "I feel good towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer," and "I feel favorable towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer."

Behavioral intentions towards Purchase Intentions and CSR Support

To measure participant purchase intentions, the behavioral intention questionnaires of Elving (2010) and Chung and Lee (2022) were adapted for the purpose of this study. The three statements included statements such as. "The next time I purchase a food product I will choose

Kraft," "The likelihood of my buying products made by Kraft is quite high," and "I would buy products made by Kraft in the future."

To measure behavioral intentions regarding CSR support, a questionnaire utilized by Chen and colleagues (2023) was adapted for the purpose of this study. The four statements included statements such as, "I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to see if there is any new information about world hunger," "I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to find information about world hunger," "I would follow my favorite social media influencer to help promote relevant world hunger programs offline," and "I would follow my favorite social media influencer to volunteer my time for relevant world hunger problems."

Other Variables

Demographics

Demographic questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. The questions asked for information such as age, gender, ethnicity, and political ideology of participants.

Manipulation Checks

To check for participant attention during the experimental questionnaire, there were two manipulation check questions. The first question asked participants whether the social media influencer was an executive member of the Hunger Project. The second question asked participants what kind of content the social media influencer created for their platform. Manipulation check questions were adapted from previous literature by Chung and Lee (2022).

For manipulation checks results, each treatment title will be based on the manipulated levels of expertise and fit. Treatment HiExLoF had high expertise and low fit, Treatment LoExLoF had low fit expertise and low fit, Treatment LoExHiF had low expertise and high fit, and lastly,

Treatment HiExHiF had high expertise and high fit. Results from the one-way ANOVA tests were used to check for accuracy and manipulation.

Manipulation Check 1

Table 3: Descriptives of Perceived Expertise Scale

PerceivedExpertiseScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HiExLoF	37	2.8986	.56353	.09264	2.7108	3.0865	1.50	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.4096	.79643	.11617	2.1757	2.6434	1.00	4.50
LoExHiF	44	2.6477	.78377	.11816	2.4094	2.8860	1.00	4.50
HiExHiF	47	2.7713	.83703	.12209	2.5255	3.0170	1.00	4.00
Total	175	2.6700	.77638	.05869	2.5542	2.7858	1.00	4.50

Table 4: Multiple Comparisons of Perceived Expertise Scale

Dependent Variable: PerceivedExpertiseScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.48907*	.16744	.004	.1586	.8196
	LoExHiF	.25092	.16994	.142	-.0845	.5864
	HiExHiF	.12737	.16744	.448	-.2031	.4579
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.48907*	.16744	.004	-.8196	-.1586
	LoExHiF	-.23815	.15982	.138	-.5536	.0773
	HiExHiF	-.36170*	.15716	.023	-.6719	-.0515
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	-.25092	.16994	.142	-.5864	.0845
	LoExLoF	.23815	.15982	.138	-.0773	.5536
	HiExHiF	-.12355	.15982	.441	-.4390	.1919

Table 4: Continued

HiExHiF	HiExLoF	-.12737	.16744	.448	-.4579	.2031
	LoExLoF	.36170*	.15716	.023	.0515	.6719
	LoExHiF	.12355	.15982	.441	-.1919	.4390

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The one-way between-subjects ANOVA conducted found that perceived expertise was statistically significant. There was a significant effect of perceived expertise at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 171) = 3.231, p = 0.024$]. Manipulation Check 1 was successful in determining if participants were paying attention to the treatment scenario provided. It is important to note that each treatment was imbalanced and unevenly distributed due to partially completed questionnaires. However, partially completed questionnaires were included in analyses.

Manipulation Check 2

Table 5: Descriptives of Perceived Fit Scale

PerceivedFitScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
HiExLoF	36	2.4306	.70105	.11684	2.1934	2.6678	1.00	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.3830	.80056	.11677	2.1479	2.6180	1.00	4.75
LoExHiF	42	2.7798	.84139	.12983	2.5176	3.0420	1.00	5.00
HiExHiF	46	2.8207	.69054	.10181	2.6156	3.0257	1.00	4.00
Total	171	2.6082	.78215	.05981	2.4901	2.7263	1.00	5.00

Table 6: Multiple Comparisons of Perceived Fit
Dependent Variable: PerceivedFitScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.04758	.16894	.779	-.2860	.3811
	LoExHiF	-.34921[*]	.17325	.045	-.6912	-.0072
	HiExHiF	-.39010[*]	.16974	.023	-.7252	-.0550
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.04758	.16894	.779	-.3811	.2860
	LoExHiF	-.39678[*]	.16196	.015	-.7165	-.0770
	HiExHiF	-.43767[*]	.15820	.006	-.7500	-.1253
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	.34921[*]	.17325	.045	.0072	.6912
	LoExLoF	.39678[*]	.16196	.015	.0770	.7165
	HiExHiF	-.04089	.16279	.802	-.3623	.2805
HiExHiF	HiExLoF	.39010[*]	.16974	.023	.0550	.7252
	LoExLoF	.43767[*]	.15820	.006	.1253	.7500
	LoExHiF	.04089	.16279	.802	-.2805	.3623

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA conducted found that perceived fit was statistically significant. There was a significant effect of perceived fit at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 167) = 3.914$, $p = 0.010$]. Manipulation Check 2 was successful in determining if participants were paying attention to the random scenario provided. It is important to note that each treatment was imbalanced and unevenly distributed due to partially completed questionnaires. However, partially completed questionnaires were included in analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

After collecting 194 responses through the Qualtrics program, questionnaire answers were exported to the SPSS program for statistical testing and data analysis. Analyses of the data consisted of several statistical tests relevant to the experimental method utilized. The frequencies and descriptive statistics of the data were first collected, and each variable's reliability scales were checked. Then, one- way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were run for all five variables to compare data across the four different treatments. Next, linear regression analyses were run to determine any effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Lastly, two-way ANOVA tests were conducted to identify any interaction effects of perceived expertise and perceived fit on the dependent variables.

Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies were first collected on the demographics of participants, and this included gender and ethnicity. There was a total of 194 responses collected through the Qualtrics questionnaire. However, only 174 questionnaires were completed to the end, leaving 20 questionnaires unfinished. Partial answers were included in data analysis. However, this also led to uneven administration of the four different treatments to participants.

Table 7: Statistics

		What is your gender?	What is your ethnicity?
N	Valid	174	174
	Missing	20	20

Table 8: What is your gender?

	N	%
Prefer not to say	3	1.5%
Other	1	0.5%
Female	99	51.0%
Male	71	36.6%
Missing System	20	10.3%

Table 9: What is your ethnicity?

	N	%
Other	8	4.1%
American Indian	1	0.5%
Asian	11	5.7%
Pacific Islander	1	0.5%
Caucasian	132	68.0%
African American	4	2.1%
Hispanic	17	8.8%
Missing System	20	10.3%

Descriptive statistics were collected for each item of the questionnaire. This included the number of valid observations (N), the mean, and standard deviation of each, totaling to 19 items. A table of all data and its statistics are included below. Reliability tests were conducted to check for internal consistency of the variable's scales. The scales included perceived expertise, perceived fit, attitudes, purchase intentions, and behavioral intentions. Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranged from 0.79 to 0.92 for all scales.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics of Data

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
PE1: Social media influencer is credible.	178	2.71	.981	0.808
PE2: Social media influencer is a good spokesperson.	178	2.95	.987	0.808

Table 10: Continued

PE3: Social media influencer is an expert.	178	2.11	.936	0.808
PE4: Social media influencer is informed.	178	2.94	.969	0.808
PF1: Social media influencer fits with Kraft.	174	2.68	.950	0.793
PF2: Social media influencer fits with the cause of world hunger.	174	2.71	1.043	0.793
PF3: Social media influencer is similar to Kraft.	174	2.23	.940	0.793
PF4: Social media influencer is complementary to the cause of world hunger.	174	2.83	1.017	0.793
A1: I feel good towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.	174	3.03	1.025	0.918
A2: I feel pleasant towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.	174	3.01	1.056	0.918
A3: I feel favorable towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.	174	2.95	1.098	0.918
PI1: The next time I purchase a food product, I will choose Kraft.	174	2.62	.965	0.853
PI2: The likelihood of my buying products made by Kraft is quite high.	174	2.80	1.042	0.853
PI3: I would buy products made by Kraft in the future.	174	3.24	.973	0.853
BI1: I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to see if	174	2.37	1.092	0.912

Table 10: Continued

there is any new information about world hunger.				
BI2: I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to find the information about world hunger.	174	2.32	1.069	0.912
BI3: I would follow my favorite social media influencer to help promote relevant world hunger programs offline.	174	2.55	1.115	0.912
BI4: I would follow my favorite social media influencer to volunteer my time for relevant world hunger problems.	174	2.48	1.126	0.912
My political ideology is - Conservative to Liberal	174	4.82	1.651	
Valid N (listwise)	174			

One-Way ANOVA

A condensed scale for each variable was created for the purpose of the one-way ANOVA tests. These condensed scales consisted of the average measures of each individual item on the questionnaire. The five one-way ANOVA tests that were conducted helped to determine any differences across the four different treatments participants were randomly assigned to. For the purpose of results and discussion, each treatment title will be based on the manipulated levels of expertise and fit. Treatment HiExLoF had high expertise and low fit, Treatment LoExLoF had low fit expertise and low fit, Treatment LoExHiF had low expertise and high fit, and lastly, Treatment HiExHiF had high expertise and high fit.

Perceived Expertise

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare perceived expertise of the social media influencer across the four different treatments administered. There was a significant effect of perceived expertise at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 171) =$ 3.231, $p = 0.024$].

To analyze specific differences from each treatment comparison, a post hoc test was included in the ANOVA test. Post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Treatment HiExLoF (M = 2.90, SD = 0.56) was significantly different than Treatment LoExLoF (M = 2.41, SD = 0.80). Furthermore, it was indicated that the mean score for Treatment LoExLoF (M = 2.41, SD = 0.80) was significantly different than Treatment HiExHiF (M = 2.77, SD = 0.84).

Table 11: Descriptives of Perceived Expertise Scale

PerceivedExpertiseScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HiExLoF	37	2.8986	.56353	.09264	2.7108	3.0865	1.50	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.4096	.79643	.11617	2.1757	2.6434	1.00	4.50
LoExHiF	44	2.6477	.78377	.11816	2.4094	2.8860	1.00	4.50
HiExHiF	47	2.7713	.83703	.12209	2.5255	3.0170	1.00	4.00
Total	175	2.6700	.77638	.05869	2.5542	2.7858	1.00	4.50

Table 12: Multiple Comparisons of Perceived Expertise Scale

Dependent Variable: PerceivedExpertiseScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.48907*	.16744	.004	.1586	.8196
	LoExHiF	.25092	.16994	.142	-.0845	.5864
	HiExHiF	.12737	.16744	.448	-.2031	.4579
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.48907*	.16744	.004	-.8196	-.1586
	LoExHiF	-.23815	.15982	.138	-.5536	.0773
	HiExHiF	-.36170*	.15716	.023	-.6719	-.0515
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	-.25092	.16994	.142	-.5864	.0845
	LoExLoF	.23815	.15982	.138	-.0773	.5536
	HiExHiF	-.12355	.15982	.441	-.4390	.1919
HiExHiF	HiExLoF	-.12737	.16744	.448	-.4579	.2031
	LoExLoF	.36170*	.15716	.023	.0515	.6719
	LoExHiF	.12355	.15982	.441	-.1919	.4390

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Perceived Fit

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare perceived fit of the social media influencer with the brand and CSR issue across the four different treatments administered. There was a significant effect of perceived fit at the $p < 0.05$ level for the four treatments [$F(3, 167) = 3.914, p = 0.010$].

To analyze specific differences from each treatment comparison, a post hoc test was included in the ANOVA test. Post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Treatment HiExLoF (M = 2.43, SD = 0.70) was significantly different from Treatment LoExHiF (M = 2.78, SD = 0.84) and Treatment HiExHiF (M = 2.82, SD = 0.69). Furthermore, it was indicated that the mean score for Treatment LoExLoF (M = 2.38, SD = 0.80) was significantly different from Treatment LoExHiF (M = 2.78, SD = 0.84) and Treatment HiExHiF (M = 2.82, SD = 0.69).

Table 13: Descriptives of perceived fit scale

PerceivedFitScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HiExLoF	36	2.4306	.70105	.11684	2.1934	2.6678	1.00	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.3830	.80056	.11677	2.1479	2.6180	1.00	4.75
LoExHiF	42	2.7798	.84139	.12983	2.5176	3.0420	1.00	5.00
HiExHiF	46	2.8207	.69054	.10181	2.6156	3.0257	1.00	4.00
Total	171	2.6082	.78215	.05981	2.4901	2.7263	1.00	5.00

Table 14: Multiple Comparisons of Perceived Fit Scale

Dependent Variable: PerceivedFitScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.04758	.16894	.779	-.2860	.3811
	LoExHiF	-.34921*	.17325	.045	-.6912	-.0072
	HiExHiF	-.39010*	.16974	.023	-.7252	-.0550
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.04758	.16894	.779	-.3811	.2860
	LoExHiF	-.39678*	.16196	.015	-.7165	-.0770
	HiExHiF	-.43767*	.15820	.006	-.7500	-.1253
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	.34921*	.17325	.045	.0072	.6912
	LoExLoF	.39678*	.16196	.015	.0770	.7165
	HiExHiF	-.04089	.16279	.802	-.3623	.2805
HiExHiF	HiExLoF	.39010*	.16974	.023	.0550	.7252
	LoExLoF	.43767*	.15820	.006	.1253	.7500
	LoExHiF	.04089	.16279	.802	-.2805	.3623

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Attitudes

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare attitudes towards Kraft across the four different treatments administered. There was not a significant effect of attitudes at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 167) = 1.204$, $p = 0.310$].

Table 15: Descriptives of Attitudes Scale

AttitudesScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
HiExLoF	36	3.2037	.70947	.11825	2.9637	3.4438	1.67	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.8085	.98722	.14400	2.5187	3.0984	1.00	4.33
LoExHiF	42	2.9444	.99024	.15280	2.6359	3.2530	1.00	4.33
HiExHiF	46	3.0652	1.16241	.17139	2.7200	3.4104	1.00	5.00
Total	171	2.9942	.99112	.07579	2.8445	3.1438	1.00	5.00

Table 16: Multiple Comparisons of Attitudes Scale

Dependent Variable: AttitudesScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.39519	.21912	.073	-.0374	.8278
	LoExHiF	.25926	.22471	.250	-.1844	.7029
	HiExHiF	.13849	.22015	.530	-.2962	.5731
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.39519	.21912	.073	-.8278	.0374
	LoExHiF	-.13593	.21007	.518	-.5507	.2788
	HiExHiF	-.25671	.20519	.213	-.6618	.1484
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	-.25926	.22471	.250	-.7029	.1844
	LoExLoF	.13593	.21007	.518	-.2788	.5507
	HiExHiF	-.12077	.21115	.568	-.5376	.2961

Table 16: Continued

HiExHiF	HiExLoF	-.13849	.22015	.530	-.5731	.2962
	LoExLoF	.25671	.20519	.213	-.1484	.6618
	LoExHiF	.12077	.21115	.568	-.2961	.5376

Purchase Intentions

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare purchase intentions towards Kraft across the four different treatments administered. There was not a significant effect of purchase intentions at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 167) = 1.110$, $p = 0.347$].

Table 17: Descriptives of Purchase Intentions Scale

PurchaseIntentionsScale

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
HiExLoF	36	2.9352	.73816	.12303	2.6854	3.1849	1.00	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.7943	.84714	.12357	2.5456	3.0431	1.00	4.33
LoExHiF	42	3.0714	.94721	.14616	2.7763	3.3666	1.00	5.00
HiExHiF	46	2.7681	.93984	.13857	2.4890	3.0472	1.00	4.33
Total	171	2.8850	.87844	.06718	2.7524	3.0176	1.00	5.00

Table 18: Multiple Comparisons of Purchase Intentions Scale

Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntentionsScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.14086	.19437	.470	-.2429	.5246
	LoExHiF	-.13624	.19933	.495	-.5298	.2573
	HiExHiF	.16707	.19528	.393	-.2185	.5526

LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.14086	.19437	.470	-.5246	.2429
	LoExHiF	-.27710	.18634	.139	-.6450	.0908
	HiExHiF	.02621	.18201	.886	-.3331	.3856
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	.13624	.19933	.495	-.2573	.5298
	LoExLoF	.27710	.18634	.139	-.0908	.6450
	HiExHiF	.30331	.18730	.107	-.0665	.6731
HiExHiF	HiExLoF	-.16707	.19528	.393	-.5526	.2185
	LoExLoF	-.02621	.18201	.886	-.3856	.3331
	LoExHiF	-.30331	.18730	.107	-.6731	.0665

Behavioral Intentions

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer across the four different treatments administered. There was no overall significant effect of behavioral intentions at the p <0.05 level for the four treatments [$F(3, 167) = 1.847$, $p = 0.141$]. However, according to the post hoc tests, which compared individual groups to one another, there was statistical significance at the p<0.05 level when comparing Treatment LoExLoF and Treatment LoExHiF.

Although there was found to be no overall significant effect, one comparison noted in the post hoc test was significant. Post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Treatment LoExLoF (M = 2.20, SD = 0.98) was significantly different than Treatment LoExHiF (M = 2.67, SD = 1.02).

Table 19: Descriptives of Behavioral Intentions Scale

BehavioralIntentionsScale

				95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum

Table 19: Continued

HiExLoF	36	2.4861	.88023	.14670	2.1883	2.7839	1.00	4.00
LoExLoF	47	2.1968	.98209	.14325	1.9085	2.4852	1.00	4.50
LoExHiF	42	2.6667	1.02062	.15749	2.3486	2.9847	1.00	5.00
HiExHiF	46	2.3533	.99104	.14612	2.0590	2.6476	1.00	5.00
Total	171	2.4152	.98113	.07503	2.2671	2.5633	1.00	5.00

Table 20: Multiple Comparisons of Behavioral Intentions Scale

Dependent Variable: BehavioralIntentionsScale

LSD

(I) AllTreatments	(J) AllTreatments	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
HiExLoF	LoExLoF	.28930	.21570	.182	-.1365	.7151
	LoExHiF	-.18056	.22120	.416	-.6173	.2561
	HiExHiF	.13285	.21671	.541	-.2950	.5607
LoExLoF	HiExLoF	-.28930	.21570	.182	-.7151	.1365
	LoExHiF	-.46986*	.20679	.024	-.8781	-.0616
	HiExHiF	-.15645	.20199	.440	-.5552	.2423
LoExHiF	HiExLoF	.18056	.22120	.416	-.2561	.6173
	LoExLoF	.46986*	.20679	.024	.0616	.8781
	HiExHiF	.31341	.20785	.133	-.0969	.7238
HiExHiF	HiExLoF	-.13285	.21671	.541	-.5607	.2950
	LoExLoF	.15645	.20199	.440	-.2423	.5552
	LoExHiF	-.31341	.20785	.133	-.7238	.0969

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Linear Regression

Regression analyses were conducted to identify any direct effects of perceived expertise

and perceived fit on attitudes, purchase intentions, and behavioral intentions. H1A-C and H2A-C

were addressed through analyses and were both significantly supported. Data on attitudes towards the brand was also found to have a significant influence on overall purchase intentions of consumers. Direction of influence on dependent variables is discussed below based on the linear regression results.

Attitudes

Results of the linear regression indicated that there was a significant effect on attitudes towards the brand based on the two independent variables, perceived fit and perceived expertise. Based on the SPSS analysis, both expertise and fit were found to have a positive correlation with attitudes. Focusing on perceived fit, a significant regression was found ($F(2, 171) = 55.73$, $p = 0.002$). The R^2 was 0.40, which indicated that **perceived fit** explained approximately 40% of the variance in attitudes towards the brand. Regression analysis provided evidence that perceived fit of the social media influencer was positively correlated with participants' attitudes towards Kraft, supporting H1A.

Looking at perceived expertise, significant regression was found ($F(2, 171) = 55.73$, $p = <0.001$). The R^2 was 0.40, which indicated that **perceived expertise** explained approximately 40% of the variance in attitudes towards the brand. Regression analysis provided evidence that perceived expertise of the social media influencer was positively correlated with participants' attitudes towards Kraft, supporting H2A.

Table 21: Model Summary of Attitudes

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.628[a]	.395	.388	.76917

a. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 22: ANOVA[a] of Attitudes

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.942	2	32.971	55.730	<.001[b]
	Residual	101.167	171	.592		
	Total	167.109	173			

a. Dependent Variable: AttitudesScale
b. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 23: Coefficients[a] of Attitudes

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.660	.231		2.860	.005
	PerceivedExpertiseScale	.585	.095	.460	6.188	<.001
	PerceivedFitScale	.296	.094	.234	3.150	.002

a. Dependent Variable: AttitudesScale

Behavioral Intentions

Results of the linear regression indicated that there was a significant effect on behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer based on the two independent variables, perceived fit and perceived expertise. Based on the SPSS analysis, both expertise and fit were found to have a positive correlation with behavioral intentions. Focusing on perceived fit, a significant regression was found ($F(2, 171) = 21.52$, $p = 0.005$). The R^2 was 0.20, which indicated that **perceived fit** explained approximately 20% of the variance in behavioral intentions. Regression analysis provided evidence that perceived fit of the social media influencer was positively correlated with participants' behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer, supporting H1B.

Looking at perceived expertise, a significant regression was found ($F(2, 171) = 21.52$, $p = 0.003$). The R^2 was 0.20, which indicated that **perceived expertise** explained approximately 20% of the variance in behavioral intentions. Regression analysis provided evidence that perceived expertise of the social media influencer was positively correlated with participants' behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer, supporting H2B.

Table 24: Model Summary of Behavioral Intentions

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.448[a]	.201	.192	.88028

a. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 25: ANOVA[a] of Behavioral Intentions

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33.344	2	16.672	21.515	<.001[b]
	Residual	132.508	171	.775		
	Total	165.852	173			

a. Dependent Variable: BehavioralIntentionsScale
b. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 26: Coefficients[a] of Behavioral Intentions

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.752	.264		2.847	.005
	PerceivedExpertiseScale	.331	.108	.261	3.060	.003
	PerceivedFitScale	.303	.108	.240	2.817	.005

a. Dependent Variable: BehavioralIntentionsScale

Purchase Intentions

Results of the linear regression indicated that there was no statistically significant effect on purchase intentions towards Kraft based on the two independent variables, perceived

expertise and perceived fit. Based on the SPSS analysis, both expertise and fit were found to have no correlation with purchase intentions. Since there was no statistically significant data, both H1C and H2C were not supported.

However, a linear regression was conducted to look at effects of attitudes towards Kraft on purchase intentions towards Kraft. Regression analysis found the results to be statistically significant and a positive correlation with purchase intentions. A significant regression was found ($F(3, 170) = 21.05$, $p = <0.001$). The R^2 was 0.27, which indicated that **attitudes** explained approximately 27% of the variance in purchase intentions towards Kraft.

Table 27: Model Summary of Purchase Intentions

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.520[a]	.271	.258	.75273

a. Predictors: (Constant), AttitudesScale, PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 28: ANOVA[a] of Purchase Intentions

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.787	3	11.929	21.053	<.001[b]
	Residual	96.324	170	.567		
	Total	132.110	173			

a. Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntentionsScale
b. Predictors: (Constant), AttitudesScale, PerceivedFitScale, PerceivedExpertiseScale

Table 29: Coefficients[a] of Purchase Intentions

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.276	.231		5.519	<.001

PerceivedExpertise Scale	.057	.102	.050	.556	.579
PerceivedFitScale	.139	.095	.124	1.471	.143
AttitudesScale	.366	.075	.411	4.885	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntentionsScale

Two-Way ANOVA

Two-way ANOVA tests were conducted to look at the interaction effects of perceived expertise and perceived fit on the dependent variables of attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase intentions. The tests analyzed the combination of independent variables to see if there were any significant effects. It also addressed H3A-C, which examined the interaction between perceived fit and perceived expertise of a social media influencer and if this had any positive effects on participants' attitudes towards Kraft, purchase intentions towards Kraft, and behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer.

Attitudes

Results of the two-way ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant effect on attitudes towards Kraft based on the interaction between perceived expertise and perceived fit. Based on these results, H3A was not supported.

Table 30: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Attitudes

Dependent Variable: AttitudesScale

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	116.941ª	86	1.360	2.358	<.001	.700
Intercept	683.745	1	683.745	1185.732	<.001	.932
PerceivedExpertiseScale	27.971	13	2.152	3.731	<.001	.358

Table 30: Continued

PerceivedFitScale	10.578	15	.705	1.223	.271	.174
PerceivedExpertiseScale * PerceivedFitScale	38.163	58	.658	1.141	.285	.432
Error	50.168	87	.577			
Total	1729.111	174				
Corrected Total	167.109	173				

a. R Squared = .700 (Adjusted R Squared = .403)

Behavioral Intentions

Results of the two-way ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant effect on behavioral intentions towards the social media influencer based on the interaction between perceived expertise and perceived fit. Based on the results, H3B was not supported.

Table 31: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Behavioral Intentions
Dependent Variable: PurchaseIntentionsScale

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	74.801ᵃ	86	.870	1.320	.099	.566
Intercept	645.144	1	645.144	979.379	<.001	.918
PerceivedExpertiseScale	13.870	13	1.067	1.620	.095	.195
PerceivedFitScale	14.474	15	.965	1.465	.137	.202
PerceivedExpertiseScale * PerceivedFitScale	34.537	58	.595	.904	.656	.376
Error	57.309	87	.659			
Total	1582.333	174				
Corrected Total	132.110	173				

a. R Squared = .566 (Adjusted R Squared = .137)

Purchase Intentions

Results of the two-way ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant effect on purchase intentions towards Kraft based on the interaction between perceived expertise and perceived fit. Based on the results, H3C was not supported.

Table 32: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Purchase Intentions

Dependent Variable: BehavioralIntentionsScale

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	94.111[a]	86	1.094	1.327	.095	.567
Intercept	423.985	1	423.985	514.165	<.001	.855
PerceivedExpertiseScale	22.769	13	1.751	2.124	.020	.241
PerceivedFitScale	24.251	15	1.617	1.961	.028	.253
PerceivedExpertiseScale * PerceivedFitScale	33.145	58	.571	.693	.931	.316
Error	71.741	87	.825			
Total	1191.750	174				
Corrected Total	165.852	173				

a. R Squared = .567 (Adjusted R Squared = .140)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Drawing from previous literature, the research study aimed to identify and analyze the main and interaction effects of perceived expertise of social media influencers and perceived fit between a brand and its social media influencer on consumer attitudes and behaviors. The foundational research of the Congruence Theory identified fit as an important factor, while the Source Credibility Model highlighted expertise as an important factor (Chekima et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022; Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955). Corporate social responsibility was incorporated into the research study because of its evolvement into mainstream media and corporations (Argenti, 2022). Important factors to focus on within CSR include corporations, their CSR issue, and the implementation of social media influencers (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Yesiloglu et al., 2021).

Theoretical Implications

The study provides theoretical implications that are important in furthering research. Firstly, the research study adds to the lack of literature that isolates expertise as a variable in the Source Credibility Model (AlFarraj et al., 2020). The results of the study indicate the effectiveness of the variable on its own through the significant effects on attitudes and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of expertise as a *key factor* that enhances overall source credibility (Chekima et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022). Although the Source Credibility Model has been studied thoroughly, expertise as an individual variable must

be further looked at through future research. Additionally, future research utilizing more extreme measures of expertise may find results that are significant.

The results support past literature on the Congruence Theory that emphasize the importance of fit within corporations (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Past literature has looked at different combinations of fit within advertising and marketing, such as fit with products, messaging, or CSR initiatives (Goldsmith & Yimin, 2014; Kuo & Rice, 2015). However, the research study emphasizes the importance of spokespersons when looking at the most influential factors that generally align. The study addressed a specific kind of fit that focuses on social media influencers and their content paired with the brand and CSR issue (Belanche et al., 2021; Fleck et al., 2012). The current research study results found that social media influencers who fit with a brand and its CSR issue can be increasingly effective compared to other tactics. More specifically, it emphasizes that social media influencer's content should relate to the brands they choose to collaborate with. As a result, this research study extends the definition of fit to include social media influencers as an important key factor that should align with the brand and its CSR issue. In turn, this can increase consumer attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase intentions similarly seen in past Congruence Theory research (Belanche et al., 2021; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2021).

The interaction effects included in H3A-C addressed the gap in past literature; however, results were found not statistically significant. The research study contributes to the gap of research because of the isolation of variables utilized, while also simultaneously addressing the potential for interaction effects that could occur. Studies combining expertise and fit and the effects they may have on consumers were not abundant (Chen et al., 2023; Keel & Nataraajan, 2012). One key finding, through linear regression, found that the attitudes of the participant,

specifically towards the brand, were effective in determining purchase intentions towards the brand. Although the interaction effects of perceived fit and perceived expertise were not statistically significant, these findings may suggest that variables such as attitudes can be more effective when influencing consumer behaviors. Furthermore, these results may support the notion that attitudes and beliefs of the consumers can be just as important as the strategic design of the corporate advertising and marketing. This idea is illustrated through the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). The theory states that attitudes and social norms can influence the behavior of a person. Further broken down, behavior would be influenced by attitudes towards the action/object and social norms or the perceptions of what the consumer believes to be expected behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Although attitudes are only one component that make up the Theory of Reasoned Action, the research results still highlight the importance and direct effect they may have when influencing a person's behavior. Following the theory, interaction effects may not have been found to be as effective because they did not emphasize the personal preference of the participant, such as attitudes towards the brand. In turn, these attitudes were more effective in determining whether or not participants were willing to purchase products from the brand in the future.

As previously mentioned, the interaction effects of these two variables must be further looked at and limitations can be drawn from the research study. First, the results may be due to the subtleness of manipulations in each treatment. Only 15-20 words were changed over the course of the four treatments. If participants were not paying attention, these words might not have been as effective, which in turn increased the likelihood of less effective testing One of the most important factors was the validity of the manipulations of expertise and fit. However, a positive point is that further research can build from the results of the research study. Future

research will have a threshold of manipulations that can be built upon to ensure more effective and significant data and results. Additionally, the interaction effect results draw from past literature on the Theory of Reasoned Action when analyzing why manipulated treatments were not as effective as initially hypothesized.

Practical Implications

The results of the study can be applicable to practices in the field of communications and marketing. The research highlights the importance of expertise and fit when corporations are determining the use of spokespersons, specific CSR issues, or the most effective tactics to use when targeting consumers. Significant effects were identified within the study that had direct implications on the participants attitudes and behaviors. It is important to note that corporations can focus individually on expertise or on fit, because of the results that showed individual effectiveness. Utilized correctly, this may increase positive attitudes of consumers, as well as increased positive behavioral intentions towards the brand and its messaging. However, further research is needed on the combination of these two variables before applying the results to real-life corporations.

Focusing on spokespersons, the results highlight the importance of choosing endorsements or collaborations that fit the image and content of the social media influencer. Content was found to be an effective influence on participants attitudes and behaviors throughout the research study and past literature (Fleck et al., 2012). Participants are more likely to support and follow a social media influencer who they believe aligns correctly with the content they are producing. Social media influencers should focus on their specific type of media, while expanding on the opportunities within that field. They should choose carefully when deciding what brands and products to endorse because their followers may be more likely to sense

disingenuous or fake content. These implications may help social media influencers grow their brand and following, while also helping to reach new target audiences.

For corporations, the results are insightful in identifying several key factors that must be focused on when creating goals for the future. First, corporations must be strategic when determining what kind of spokespersons they want to collaborate with. It is important that the spokesperson fits well with the corporation's brand image, as well as the product or service they provide. Selecting a spokesperson that fits well can effectively reach their audience or reach a new audience that they may be trying to target. Furthermore, selecting a spokesperson that is considered an expert in the topic can be just as effective as well. Results of the current study and past literature (AlFarraj et al., 2010) emphasizes the importance of a spokesperson's expertise on the subject. Consumers who view the spokespersons' expertise as high or low can influence their attitudes and behaviors towards not only the spokesperson, but also support for the brand. Second, corporations must also have a strategic plan when deciding what kind of CSR issue they want to implement or support. It is important for the corporation's foundational values and beliefs to align with the causes they support. Additionally, research results and past literature (Popoli, 2011) highlight CSR alignment as a key factor in enhancing/diminishing a brand's image. Selecting the right CSR issue can establish the corporation's stance as a serious and reputable entity within their field. This may in turn lead to further expansion and success of the corporation, not only in the CSR field, but also as a positive and influential source that consumers support.

Overall, it is important to note that corporations must prioritize knowing their targeted audiences' interests, values, and beliefs. Corporations must build off this foundation if they want to continue to grow their brand and targeted audiences. Results of the study support Blumenthal

and Bergstrom's list of reasons why CSR initiatives should be implemented into a corporation's brand (2003). The results specifically highlighting a correlation between attitudes towards the brand and purchase intentions towards the brand can be explained through the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Focusing on this crucial link between a corporation and their customers can enhance the customer loyalty towards the brand (Blumenthal & Bergstrom, 2003). Expertise and fit may be important, however, consumer attitudes and beliefs may also play an even bigger role for them. Corporations can begin with identifying not only their own foundational values, but also what is important to their consumers. These practical implications may lead to a corporation's successful growth and business.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Limitations and Future Approaches

The research study was insightful in facilitating the Source Credibility Model and the Congruence Theory discussed earlier. However, there are several limitations that must be noted about the research study. First, the random sample chosen for the study was limited to the Pinellas County voter's registration list. This population may skew results because of a potential unfamiliarity with social media influencers and the prevalence of brand-endorsed messages. Because of this, controls should be utilized for future research. Screening for variables such as brand familiarity, age, and preconceived notions on the subjects may help avoid results that are biased and skewed. Second, utilizing an online questionnaire and relying on participants' accessibility to technology may have limited the understanding and comfortability the participants' experienced. For future studies, in-person data collection may be more helpful in gaining participants' trust and understanding. Furthermore, more insightful methodology includes interviews or focus groups, where participants may expand on their ideas and opinions towards the social media influencers, the brand, and their CSR messaging. The open communication that qualitative methods provide may be more expansive compared to the limitations that one experiences through a fixed questionnaire. Additionally, there was a limited response rate through the Qualtrics questionnaire. A total of 200 responses was the goal. This may be due to consumers viewing the email invite as spam or unfamiliar to them (research or social media). However, 194 responses were recorded in total, with 174 complete questionnaires

analyzed. As mentioned previously, 20 questionnaires were partially completed, but they were still included in partial analysis on SPSS.

The treatments administered as readable social media posts may also be further expanded on through future research. Since real social media influencers were not used, participants may not have experienced the CSR message as they normally would if they saw it on their social media feed. It would be beneficial for future treatments to look more realistic and accurate to what consumers see on their daily feed, for example incorporating real figures in a video or pictures. This may simulate more accurate responses from participants. Furthermore, the use of the Kraft logo as the profile picture included in the social media post treatment could be misleading for participants. They may have believed that Kraft was posting the CSR brand-endorsed message since their logo was at the top of the post, however, the social media influencer was the one communicating the message. Participants who aren't paying close attention may have interpreted this incorrectly or believed it to be misleading. For the future, a simple black picture or plain color would be more beneficial to avoid confusion.

Most importantly, the manipulations for this study must be further explored in future research. Validity of the manipulations of expertise and fit can be called to question. The levels for perceived expertise and perceived fit may have been too subtle for participants to notice when reading the social media post. As a result, data analyses showing effects of both have not shown statistically significant differences between treatments. To improve on this limitation, more extreme manipulations for the two variables must be considered. This will eliminate confusion or low validity for each independent variable that is being tested. Expanding on the experimental method, it would be beneficial to explore other CSR issues that are considered more controversial, such as racial injustice or reproductive rights. These controversial issues may

elicit stronger attitudes and behavioral intentions from participants taking part in research. Additionally, it may also be beneficial to explore another field of product or service marketing and advertising. For example, choosing cosmetic or clothing brands may reach audiences that might not be as emotionally affected by food brands as they are with cosmetics and clothing.

The research study draws on previous literature on the Source Credibility Model and the Congruence Theory. Through the isolation of two variables, expertise and fit, the study aims to look at a new important component of corporations' advertising and marketing, which is utilization of social media influencers. Conducting an experimental method allows for the isolation of these two important variables, which have previously been seen to influence consumers (Callison, 2004; Fleck et al., 2012). Isolating these specific variables not only contributes to the lack of literature, but it also allows for the analysis of main effects and interactions related to consumer attitudes and behaviors. By utilizing social media influencers to endorse their CSR activities, corporations can successfully elicit positive attitudes and positive behavioral intentions towards the brand from their targeted audiences.

These findings have theoretical contributions to the research covering the Congruence Theory and the Source Credibility Model. Overall, the results contribute to both theories and their literature. Simultaneously, specific results from the study can be explained and supported through the Theory of Reasoned Action. However, it is important to note that future research could improve manipulations and the results collected from the data analysis. Furthermore, the results can be beneficial through practical implications for spokespersons and corporations. Social media influencers must be strategic when deciding on what types of brands they choose to collaborate with and endorse. Corporations must focus on selecting spokespersons and CSR issues or implementations that align with their foundational values. Studying variables such as

perceived expertise and perceived fit can have influential effects on both consumers and

corporations that are trying to reach their specific consumer target. The research study and

suggested future approaches can benefit real-world applications, which can ultimately lead to

effective strategies and tactics that consumers will not only connect to, but also enjoy.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behavior relations: A theoretical analysis and review of empirical research. *Psychological bulletin*, *84*(5), 888.

Alharbi, K., Kim, J. K., Noland, C., & Carter, J. (2022). When Corporate Social Advocacy Meets Controversial Celebrity: The Role of Consumer–Brand Congruence and Consumer-Celebrity Congruence. *Sustainability*, *14*(3), 1811.

AlFarraj, O., Alalwan, A. A., Obeidat, Z. M., Baabdullah, A., Aldmour, R., & Al-Haddad, S. (2021). Examining the impact of influencers' credibility dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry. *Review of International Business and Strategy*, *31*(3), 355-374.

Argenti, P. A. (2022). Chapter 5: Corporate Responsibility. In *Corporate Communication* (8th ed., pp. 81–108). essay, McGraw Hill.

Bae, J., & Cameron, G. T. (2006). Conditioning effect of prior reputation on perception of corporate giving. *Public Relations Review*, *32*(2), 144-150.

Becker-Olsen, K. L., Cudmore, B. A., & Hill, R. P. (2006). The impact of perceived corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. *Journal of business research*, *59*(1), 46-53.\

Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of Business Research*, *132*, 186-195.

Blumenthal, D., & Bergstrom, A. (2003). Brand councils that care: Towards the convergence of

    branding and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Brand Management*, *10*(4), 327-

    341.

Callison, C. (2001). Do PR practitioners have a PR problem?: The effect of associating a source

    with public relations and client-negative news on audience perception of

    credibility. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *13*(3), 219-234.

Callison, C. (2004). The good, the bad, and the ugly: Perceptions of public relations

    practitioners. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *16*(4), 371-389.

Chekima, B., Chekima, F. Z., & Adis, A. A. A. (2020). Social media influencer in advertising:

    The role of attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness. *Journal of Economics and*

    Business, *3*(4).

Chen, Y. R. R., Hung-Baesecke, C. J. F., & Cheng, Y. (2023). When non-CSR-themed social

    media influencers endorse corporate CSR initiatives: Effects of publics' perceived

    influencer characteristics and leadership. *Public Relations Review*, *49*(1), 102288.

Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). It is a match: The impact of congruence between celebrity

    image and consumer ideal self on endorsement effectiveness. *Psychology &*

    marketing, *29*(9), 639-650.

Chung, A., & Lee, K. B. (2022). Corporate apology after bad publicity: A dual-process model of

    CSR fit and CSR history on purchase intention and negative word of

    mouth. *International Journal of Business Communication*, *59*(3), 406-426.

Ellen, P. S., Webb, D. J., & Mohr, L. A. (2006). Building corporate associations: Consumer

    attributions for corporate socially responsible programs. *Journal of the academy of*

    Marketing Science, *34*(2), 147-157.

Elving, W. J. (2010, April). CSR and skepticism: The influence of fit and reputation on

    skepticism towards CSR communication. In *Proceedings of the conference on corporate*

    communication (pp. 63-77). New York: Corporate Communication International at

    Baruch College/CUNY.

Enke, N., & Borchers, N. S. (2019). Social media influencers in strategic communication: A

    conceptual framework for strategic social media influencer communication. *International*

    journal of strategic communication, *13*(4), 261-277.

Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of marketing*

    management, *15*(4), 291-314.

Fleck, N., Korchia, M., & Le Roy, I. (2012). Celebrities in advertising: looking for congruence or

    likability?. *Psychology & marketing*, *29*(9), 651-662.

Goldsmith, R. E., & Yimin, Z. (2014). The influences of brand-consumer and cause-congruence

    on consumer responses to cause related marketing. *Journal of Applied Marketing*

    Theory, *5*(2), 5.

Gräve, J.-F., & Bartsch, F. (2021). #Instafame: exploring the endorsement effectiveness of

    influencers compared to celebrities. *International Journal of Advertising*, *41*(4), 591–622.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1987041

Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The commercialization of social media

    stars: a literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media

    influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, *40*(3), 327-375.

Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer

    marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *37*(5), 567–579.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-09-2018-0375

Keel, A., & Nataraajan, R. (2012). Celebrity endorsements and beyond: New avenues for

    celebrity branding. *Psychology & marketing*, *29*(9), 690-703.

Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future

    priorities. *Marketing science*, *25*(6), 740-759.

Kim, H., & Lee, T. H. (2018). Strategic CSR communication: A moderating role of transparency

    in trust building. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *12*(2), 107-124.

Kuo, A., & Rice, D. H. (2015). The impact of perceptual congruence on the effectiveness of

    cause-related marketing campaigns. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *25*(1), 78-88.\

Kwon, K., & Lee, J. (2021). Corporate social responsibility advertising in social media: a content

    analysis of the fashion industry's CSR advertising on Instagram. *Corporate*

    Communications: An International Journal, *26*(4), 700-715.

Lee, E. M., Park, S. Y., Rapert, M. I., & Newman, C. L. (2012). Does perceived consumer fit

    matter in corporate social responsibility issues?. *Journal of business research*, *65*(11),

    1558-1564.

Lim, X. J., Radzol, A. M., Cheah, J., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The impact of social media

    influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian*

    journal of business research, *7*(2), 19-36.

Lou, C., Tan, S.-S., & Chen, X. (2019). Investigating consumer engagement with influencer- vs.

    brand-promoted ads: The roles of source and Disclosure. *Journal of Interactive*

    Advertising, *19*(3), 169–186. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2019.1667928

Maon, F., Swaen, V., & De Roeck, K. (2021). Coporate branding and corporate social

    responsibility: Toward a multi-stakeholder interpretive perspective. *Journal of Business*

    Research, *126*, 64-77.

Masuda, H., Han, S. H., & Lee, J. (2022). Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *174*, 121246.

Meir, E. I. (1989). Integrative elaboration of the congruence theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *35*(2), 219-230.

Nan, X., & Heo, K. (2007). Consumer responses to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives: Examining the role of brand-cause fit in cause-related marketing. *Journal of advertising*, *36*(2), 63-74.

Ohanian, Roobina (1990), "Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness and Attractiveness," *Journal of Advertising,* 19, No.3, pp .39-52.

Osgood, C. E., & Tannenbaum, P. H. (1955). The principle of congruity in the prediction of attitude change. *Psychological review*, *62*(1), 42.

Pileliene, L., & Grigaliunaite, V. (2017). The effect of female celebrity spokesperson in FMCG Advertising: Neuromarketing Approach. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *34*(3), 202–213. https://doi.org/10.1108/jcm-02-2016-1723

Popoli, P. (2011). Linking CSR strategy and brand image: Different approaches in local and global markets. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(4), 419-433.

Pratihari, S. K., & Uzma, S. H. (2018). CSR and corporate branding effect on brand loyalty: A study on Indian banking industry. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *27*(1), 57-78.

Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2019). Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: The role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising*, *39*(2), 258–281. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898

Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2001). Does doing good always lead to doing better? Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility. *Journal of marketing Research*, *38*(2), 225-243.

Snider, J., Hill, R. P., & Martin, D. (2003). Corporate social responsibility in the 21st century: A view from the world's most successful firms. *Journal of Business ethics*, *48*, 175-187.

Social Responsibility. Patagonia. (n.d.). https://www.patagonia.com/social-responsibility/

Tao, W., & Ferguson, M. A. (2015). The overarching effects of ethical reputation regardless of CSR cause fit and information source. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *9*(1), 23-43./

Vallaster, C., Lindgreen, A., & Maon, F. (2012). Strategically leveraging corporate social responsibility: A corporate branding perspective. *California management review*, *54*(3), 34-60.

Varadarajan, P. R., & Menon, A. (1988). Cause-related marketing: A coalignment of marketing strategy and corporate philanthropy. *Journal of marketing*, *52*(3), 58-74.

von Mettenheim, W., & Wiedmann, K. P. (2021). The complex triad of congruence issues in influencer marketing. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *20*(5), 1277-1296.

Xu, X., & Pratt, S. (2018). Social media influencers as endorsers to promote travel destinations: an application of self-congruence theory to the Chinese Generation Y. *Journal of travel & tourism marketing*, *35*(7), 958-972.

Yesiloglu, S., Costello, J., Leban, M., & Voyer, B. G. (2021). Social media influencers versus traditional influencers. In *Influencer marketing: Building Brand Communities and engagement* (pp. 26–42). essay, Routledge.

Yoon, Y., Gürhan-Canli, Z., & Schwarz, N. (2006). The effect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities on companies with bad reputations. *Journal of consumer psychology*, *16*(4), 377-390.

Yoon, D., & Kim, Y. K. (2015). The roles of a spokesperson and brand-message congruity in advertising effectiveness of coffeehouse brands. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, *16*(4), 347-368.

Zeitoun, V., Michel, G., & Fleck, N. (2020). When brands use CEOs and employees as spokespersons: A framework for understanding internal endorsement. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *23*(2), 241-264.

Zeren, D. & Kapukaya, N. (2021). Whose voice is louder? Influencer and celebrity endorsement on Instagram. Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, 14 (3), 1038-1050. DOI: 10.25287/ohuiibf.815713

BEGIN

1. informed consent form

2. information on social media influencers and corporate social responsibility:

"**Social media influencers** are defined as individuals who found fame through social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, or Vine. They are comparable to celebrities because of the fame and reach that their platform gives them. Social media influencers consistently create content for social media to grow their following and stay up to date with their followers. This consistency also helps social media influencers maintain their status, both online and in person. The role of a social media influencer on media platforms recently emerged in the 2010s after the popularization of platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. The following scenario will use the concept of a social media influencer creating brand-endorsed content for consumers' viewing pleasures."

"**Corporate social responsibility (CSR)** is defined as a corporation's commitment to supporting environmental and social issues through business initiatives. Corporations' initiatives may consist of monetary donations, volunteer services, employee benefits, or sourcing from small businesses. These are just a few of the ways that corporation's incorporate CSR into their business."

"After reviewing the information above about social media influencers and CSR, please take the time to carefully read through the scenario provided before proceeding with the study. On the next page, the following scenario will illustrate a social media influencer creating brand-

endorsed content. After reading the scenario, you will be asked to respond to a series of

statements about your feelings towards the brand and its CSR messages. There are no right or

wrong answers, so please respond as honestly as possible."

"Thank you for participating in this study!"

3. randomly administer one of the treatments listed below:

Treatment #1: high expertise, low fit

Treatment #2: low expertise, low fit

Treatment #3: low expertise, high fit

Treatment #4: high expertise, high fit

4. Questionnaire pertaining to the scenario above:

Manipulation Checks:

1. Is the social media influencer an executive member of The Hunger Project? **(expertise)**

   Answer: yes (treatments 1 & 4); no (treatments 2 & 3)

2. What type of content does the social media influencer create? **(fit)**

   Answer: news content (treatments 3 & 4); fashion content (treatments 1 & 2); food

   content (none)

Perceived Expertise:

3. Social media influencer is credible.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

4. Social media influencer is a good spokesperson.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

5. Social media influencer is an expert.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

6. Social media influencer is informed.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

Perceived Fit:

7. Social media influencer fits with Kraft.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

8. Social media influencer fits with the cause of world hunger.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

9. Social media influencer is similar to Kraft.

   1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

10. Social media influencer is complementary to the cause of world hunger.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

Attitudes:

11. I feel good towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

12. I feel pleasant towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

13. I feel favorable towards Kraft's brand-endorsed world hunger message given by the social media influencer.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

Purchase Intentions:

14. The next time I purchase a food product, I will choose Kraft.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

15. The likelihood of my buying products made by Kraft is quite high.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

16. I would buy products made by Kraft in the future.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

Behavioral Intentions:

17. I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to see if there is any new information about world hunger.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

18. I would regularly follow my favorite social media influencer to find information about world hunger.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

19. I would follow my favorite social media influencer to help promote relevant world hunger programs offline.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

20. I would follow my favorite social media influencer to volunteer my time for relevant world hunger programs.

1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree

Demographics:

21. What is your age?

22. What is gender?

23. What is your ethnicity?

24. My political ideology is…

5. Deception Debriefing and Opt Out is provided after the questionnaire.

"We thank you for your time spent taking this survey."

"Your response has been recorded."

END

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of **SOUTH FLORIDA**

APPROVAL

February 15, 2024

Hannah Sarmiento
████████████

Dear Hannah Sarmiento:

On 2/14/2024, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY006762
Review Type:	Expedited 7
Title:	Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Media Influencers: Effectiveness of CSR Brand-Endorsed Messaging on Consumers
Funding:	None
Approved Protocol and Consent:	• Thesis IRB Protocol; • Informed Consent; Approved study documents can be found under the 'Documents' tab in the main study workspace. Use the stamped consent found under the 'Last Finalized' column under the 'Documents' tab.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent. for the online survey as outlined in the federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.117(c).

Within 30 days of the anniversary date of study approval, confirm your research is ongoing by clicking Confirm Ongoing Research in BullsIRB, or if your research is complete, submit a study closure request in BullsIRB by clicking Create Modification/CR.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Bhupinder Sran
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5638

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Sarmiento is a second-year mass communications student at the University of South Florida's Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications. She received a bachelor's degree in psychology with minors in communications and sociology from Florida State University. She is currently earning her master's degree at the University of South Florida, and her interests include strategic communication management and consumer insight.