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What Makes CSR Communication Lead to CSR Participation? Testing the Mediating Effects of CSR Associations, CSR Credibility, and Organization–Public Relationships

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Abstract This study examines consumers' uses of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication channels, the relationship of such uses to consumers' CSR awareness, and the mechanisms through which consumers' CSR awareness can lead to their intention to participate in CSR activities. Specifically, we explored the mediation effects of consumers' CSR associations with a company, consumers' assessment of the company's CSR credibility, and consumers' perceptions of their relationship with the company, applying the conceptual frameworks of the uses and gratification theory, source credibility theory, and organization–public relationship (OPR) scholarship. We conducted an online survey of a company's customers ($N = 394$), and the results showed that their level of awareness of the company's CSR activities was positively related to the degree of use of all communication channels through which they received CSR messages, except CSR reports. The degree of the customers' awareness of the company's CSR programs, however, did not always correspond to the customers' intention to participate in the programs: a crucial condition mediating between the customers' knowledge of CSR programs and their intention to participate in the programs was their associating the company with CSR. The CSR associations influenced CSR credibility and perceived OPR quality, which, in turn, led to CSR participation intention. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Introduction

Over the past few years, companies' strategic approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR) have evolved from being subtle, information-based, and behind-the-scenes to being more explicit, and sometimes even bold and innovative. As CSR has become commonplace for companies, CSR professionals have realized that many CSR initiatives require more than simply informing the public about them—public engagement is essential to the implementation of many CSR programs, as the public are either needed as supporters of the program or are the ultimate target audience whose behavior the program seeks to impact. For example, Unilever's "brightFuture" (formerly "Project Sunlight"), launched in 2013 as a global initiative to motivate the public to help create better living conditions for children, asks the public to watch a video to promote the initiative, to adopt the ideas in their own household habits, and to brainstorm about new ways to help children. Similarly, AT&T's "It Can Wait" campaign urges the public not to text while driving, and Starbucks' community service program calls for the public to participate in local community initiatives. The growing need for public engagement in CSR strategies is forcing practitioners to

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weigh how effective various communication strategies are at creating such engagement and to look for evidence that the investment in CSR is worthwhile.

The scholarly literature, however, has rarely examined the effectiveness of CSR communication at engaging the public with CSR activities, and thus when and how the public becomes engaged with CSR programs is poorly understood. Previous studies have largely focused on the effects of CSR programs on generating business value, such as consumers' evaluation of a company or their purchase intention. Less emphasis has been placed on how CSR programs generate social value, that is, improvements to societal welfare, including increasing public awareness of social issues and facilitating behavioral changes that are beneficial to individuals and to society as a whole—areas where public engagement with CSR programs is essential (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Du et al. 2010, 2015). To fill this gap, the present study explores consumers' uses of CSR communication channels, the relationship of those uses to consumers' CSR awareness, and the mechanisms through which consumers' CSR awareness can lead to their intention to participate in CSR activities. Specifically, we investigate the mediating effects of consumers' CSR associations with a company, their assessment of the company's CSR credibility, and the perceived quality of their relationship with the company (i.e., organization–public relationships, or OPRs) on their CSR participation intention.

The present study has both theoretical and practical implications. In terms of theory, it advances scholarship by expanding the CSR literature to examine public engagement with CSR activities. It also applies the conceptual frameworks of the uses and gratification theory, source credibility theory, and OPR scholarship—which have been widely applied in fields such as political communication, crisis communication, and health communication—to the CSR communication context. In terms of practice, the results have implications for designing and executing CSR communication strategies to engage consumers with CSR activities.

Literature Review

CSR Communication and Awareness

Kotler and Lee (2005, p. 3) defined CSR as a company's "commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources," emphasizing the philanthropic responsibility of businesses. Corporate social initiatives can take the form of cause-related marketing, of philanthropy (i.e.,

corporate donation)—the most commonly studied form of CSR (Peloza and Shang 2011)—or of corporate social marketing (CSM), which originated in the social marketing traditionally implemented by government agencies and nonprofits (Kotler and Zaltman 1971) and which involves "initiatives that have a primary goal of persuading people to engage in socially beneficial behaviors" (Bloom et al. 1997, p. 313). In the present study, we define CSR engagement as public participation in any type of CSR activities, because CSR strategies are often multifaceted and the lines between different types of CSR are often blurred.

The necessary first step in the public's engagement with CSR activities is their awareness of opportunities to participate in such activities. Information about CSR activities typically originates from companies; once companies design CSR programs, they employ various channels to convey their CSR messages to engage the public (Bhattacharya et al. 2011), the most commonly used of which are mass media, corporate offline channels, corporate online channels, interpersonal communication, and CSR reports.

According to the uses and gratifications theory (Katz 1959), however, audiences deliberately choose media channels and content to satisfy their needs. Einwiller et al. (2010) empirically showed that news media coverage of companies had impacts on stakeholders' emotions about, evaluations of, and behavior toward companies only for those corporate attributes (e.g., social and environmental responsibility) that they deemed important or that they were interested in. Scholars have also found that news media use is associated with civic participation. Citing McLeod et al. (1996, 1999), Shah et al. (2002) argued that

> newspaper reading and local news viewing is related to civic participation at the community level, where individuals can use the information they acquire to reflect and deliberate about local issues. Such informational uses of mass media, then, do more than educate; they provide the basis for political discussion and deliberation that can lead to civic action. (p. 470)

Consequently, we presumed that, although the effects of media use can vary across channels (Eberle et al. 2013; Skard and Thorbjørnsen 2014), in general, people who more actively seek out CSR information or who are more receptive to CSR messages may have a higher level of awareness of CSR activities or be more knowledgeable about CSR issues. Based on the literature, therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The higher consumers' level of media use to gain CSR information about a company, the higher their level of awareness of the company's CSR activities will be.

The Mediating Roles of Company-Related Factors

The literature has identified two corporate characteristics—CSR credibility and OPRs—as factors that may influence consumers' CSR participation behavior. First, corporate credibility can affect the credibility of a CSR program among consumers, which will, in turn, affect their engagement with the program. Corporate CSR programs are often considered less credible than social marketing programs led by government agencies or nonprofits; consumers are more likely to be skeptical about companies' motives for CSR programs, and such skepticism can negatively impact the persuasive ability of CSR messages (Bloom et al. 1997). Second, the public relations literature suggests that OPRs—which are an outcome of an organization's public relations or communication efforts, including CSR communication—can positively affect the public's intentions toward supportive behaviors (Bruning and Ledingham 2000; Kang and Yang 2010; Ki and Hon 2007a, b).

In addition, consumers' CSR associations with a company (that is, consumers' social image of a company) can play a mediating role between consumers' CSR awareness of a company and the company's CSR credibility, as well as between consumers' CSR awareness and OPRs. Inoue and Kent (2014) posited that CSR associations are a factor that influences CSR credibility, and Du et al. (2007) argued that CSR associations (which they term "CSR beliefs") can drive company–consumer identification, which, in turn, can strengthen consumers' long-term relationship with the company.

CSR Credibility

Source credibility theory contends that more credible sources exert greater persuasive power than do less credible ones (Hovland et al. 1953; Hovland and Weiss 1951/1952). Sternthal et al. (1978, p. 252) explained that "a message recipient's initial opinion is an important determinant of influence. In response to a persuasive appeal, individuals rehearse their issue relevant thoughts, as well as those presented to them." Recipients' initial perception of a message source can be a cue to process information and recognize it as a signal for the quality of the message; if they perceive a source as credible, they perceive the message as more believable; if a source is not perceived as credible, uncertainty about the message remains. A substantial body of literature has lent empirical support to this theory (e.g., Goldberg and Hartwick 1990; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; Newell and Goldsmith 2001; Walker and Kent 2013).

Early studies of source credibility focused mainly on individuals such as celebrities, endorsers, or spokespersons (e.g., Hovland and Weiss 1951/1952; McCracken 1989; Ohanian 1990). Later, scholars' interest extended to the credibility of organizational sources, including corporations (Goldberg and Hartwick 1990; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989; Newell and Goldsmith 2001). Corporate credibility is "a type of source credibility focused on a specific corporation as the maker of a product and/or the source of advertising and of other marketing communications" and can be defined as "the extent to which consumers feel that the firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claims and whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth or not" (Newell and Goldsmith 2001, p. 235). In the line of source credibility research initiated by Hovland et al. (1953), corporate credibility comprises two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness (Lafferty et al. 2002; Newell and Goldsmith 2001). *Expertise* is "the extent to which consumers feel that the firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claim," and *trustworthiness* is "whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth or not" (Newell and Goldsmith 2001, p. 235). Studies have found that, as with individual source credibility, corporate credibility also has persuasive power affecting consumers' attitudes and purchase intention (Goldberg and Hartwick 1990; Goldsmith et al. 2000; Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999; Lafferty et al. 2002; MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

In the present study, we further explicate the concept of corporate credibility in the context of CSR communication. Consumers evaluate a company's expertise in two areas—that of corporate ability and that of CSR (also called CSR value)—which are interrelated but distinct, as the driving force that forms the perception of each dimension is different (Brown and Dacin 1997; David et al. 2005; Du et al. 2007). Corporate ability is related to a company's expertise in its products and services, whereas CSR is related to a company's social performance, social obligations, or corporate citizenship initiatives.

In distinguishing the two types of expertise, CSR credibility can be considered an aspect of corporate credibility, although previous studies have used the concepts interchangeably (e.g., Inoue and Kent 2014; Pérez and del Bosque 2013). CSR credibility can be defined as how credible consumers find a company's CSR involvement to be. If corporate credibility refers to the overall perception of a company's expertise and trustworthiness, which encompasses the company's innovativeness, environmental record, and community involvement (Keller and Aaker 1998), then CSR credibility refers to CSR-related dimensions of corporate credibility. Based on source credibility theory, we hypothesize that CSR credibility will have positive effects on consumers' CSR participation intention.

H2: The greater a company's CSR credibility, the higher the level of consumers' intention to participate in the company's CSR activities will be.

Organization–Public Relationships

Companies' CSR activities and their communication efforts, which are based on mutual benefits, such as generating social value and favorable corporate reputation, can be seen as companies' relationship-building efforts with their publics, including, but not limited to, community members and consumers.

The concept of organization–public relationships (OPRs) originated in the field of public relations as its unique contribution to organizational effectiveness, and this relational perspective and relationship management became the dominant paradigm in the field. It has been an important aspect of public relations practice and research since Ferguson (1984) initially declared that future PR research should focus on relationship management. As the long-term effects of ongoing communication efforts, relationship outcomes highlight the managerial role of public relations practitioners, which goes beyond merely producing communication materials. Relationship management theory posits that "effectively managing organization–public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics" (Ledingham 2006, p. 476).

This perspective has prompted a need for the conceptual explication of relationships and the development of valid operational measures of the concept to evaluate the success of communication efforts and to advance theory building. Several definitions of OPRs appear in the literature. Broom et al. (2000) described an OPR as being "represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and the linkage between an organization and its publics" (p. 18). Focusing on their impacts, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) explicated OPRs as the "state that exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (p. 62). Emphasizing the characteristics or attributes that constitute such relationships, Huang (1998) defined an OPR as "the degree that the organization and its publics trust one another, agree [that] one has rightful power to influence [the other], experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another" (p. 12).

Regardless of which definition is adopted, there is a general consensus that OPRs are a multidimensional concept, and scholars have made extensive efforts to identify the dimensions that constitute OPRs while developing scales to measure OPRs quantitatively (e.g.,

Bruning and Galloway 2003; Bruning and Ledingham 1999; Hon and Grunig 1999; Huang 1997, 2001; Ki and Hon 2007a, b; Ledingham and Bruning 1998). Some of the scales focus on relationship maintenance strategies (e.g., openness, investment, community improvement), others on attributes of relationships (e.g., commitment, satisfaction, trust, control mutuality) or types of relationships (e.g., communal relationships, exchange relationships, professional relationships). For example, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) identified trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment as relationship dimensions. Huang (1997) defined the dimensions of OPRs as trust, control mutuality, commitment, and relational satisfaction, and then later, in 2001, added the dimension of face and favor, to incorporate the values of Eastern cultures. Based on Huang's (1997) four dimensions, Hon and Grunig (1999) also included communal relationships and exchange relationships, but said they considered the original four dimensions to represent OPR quality, whereas the other two were types of relationships that public relations programs attempt to achieve. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) showed that OPRs focused on the public's perception of their professional relationship, personal relationship, and community relationship with an organization. Expanding Bruning and Ledingham's (1999) scale, Bruning and Galloway (2003) argued that OPRs have at least five dimensions: anthropomorphism, professional benefits/expectations, personal commitment, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives.

In the present study, we have adopted Huang's (1997) original proposal that trust, control mutuality, relational commitment, and relational satisfaction are the most essential and the most pertinent indicators to measure the quality of OPRs, and we posit that the quality of OPRs can be measured through the public's perception of these four relational outcome dimensions, for the following reasons. First, scholars have repeatedly considered these four dimensions to be the most essential features of the quality of OPRs (Grunig and Huang 2000; Hon and Grunig 1999; Huang 2001; Ki and Hon 2007a; Yang 2007), and they have appeared consistently in various OPR scales. Huang (2001) explained why these four dimensions represent the essence of OPRs:

> Control mutuality reflects the unavoidable nature of power asymmetry in OPRs. Likewise, both trust and satisfaction reflect the cognitive and affective aspects of all relationships. Moreover, the level of commitment reflects the degree of resource interchange, which includes emotional and psychological aspects of interpersonal relationships and behavioral aspects of interorganizational relationships. (p. 65)

Second, these key relational features have been the most widely studied (Jo 2006; Ki and Hon 2007a, b; Kang and Yang 2010; Kim 2001; Huang 1997, 2001; Yang 2007). In particular, three of these dimensions—trust, commitment, and satisfaction—have been supported as critical dimensions of relationships in cross-cultural settings, and thus have been deemed a global measure for OPRs (Jo 2006).

Hon and Grunig (1999, p. 3) defined *trust* as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party." *Satisfaction* is the amount of favor the two parties feel toward one another and is typically due to reinforcement of positive relational expectations. *Control mutuality* is "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (Hon and Grunig 1999, p. 3). *Commitment* is the level of each party's feeling or belief that the relationship is worth spending energy to promote and maintain.

Perceived OPR quality can mediate the relationship between CSR awareness and intention to participate in CSR activities. Several scholars have posited that for an organization to maximize public engagement in its CSR efforts, it must form strong and enduring relationships with the public (e.g., Bhattacharya et al. 2011). Relationship building is typically predicted by the public's awareness of an organization's efforts to build relationships. Grunig and Hung (2002) noted that organization–public relationships vary based on the degree of familiarity and personal experience the public has with an organization. They showed that the public's active communication behaviors and familiarity with a company are likely to result in a stronger relationship with the company. In the context of CSR, Hall (2006) examined the association between consumers' awareness of a company's philanthropic efforts and their relationship with that company, and found that the more consumers were aware of the company's programs, the stronger they perceived their relationship with that company to be. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: The higher consumers' level of awareness of a company's CSR is, the stronger they will perceive their relationship with the company to be.

Perceptions of OPRs can lead to consumers' behavioral intention. Although the link between relationship building and behavioral intention has not been explored in depth in the context of CSR research, it has in other contexts. In the corporate context, Ki (2013) surveyed bank customers in the USA and found that the strength of their relationship with the bank significantly predicted customers' attitude and behavior. In a philanthropic context, Waters (2011) explored the relationship between nonprofits and donors and found that the stronger donors perceived their relationship with a nonprofit to be, the more donors gave back

to the organization. In a similar vein, Du et al. (2010) posited that a strong company–public relationship enhanced the public's advocacy behaviors. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: The stronger consumers perceive their relationship with a company to be, the higher their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities will be.

Based on H3 and H4, we also posit that the more aware consumers are of a company's CSR efforts, the stronger they will perceive their relationship with the company to be, which will then lead to more engagement with the company's CSR efforts (Bhattacharya et al. 2009). Based on this logic, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: The perceived quality of consumers' relationship with a company will mediate the relationships between their CSR awareness of the company and their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities.

CSR Associations

Corporate associations can be defined as consumers' cognitive associations between a company and an attribute or attributes; these associations fall into two categories, similar to those of corporate expertise: corporate ability associations and CSR associations (Brown and Dacin 1997). Corporate ability associations relate to a company's abilities in regard to its products and services, whereas CSR associations relate to a company's "status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations" (Brown and Dacin 1997, p. 68).

Based on previous studies (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Brown and Dacin 1997; Lichtenstein et al. 2004), we expect that individuals who are aware of a company's CSR initiatives will have stronger associations between the company and the CSR domains. It is true that CSR associations can be both positive and negative: in addition to being associated with CSR initiatives that a company has created to form a positive image, the company can also be associated with any criticisms of its behavior in the area of social performance, forming negative CSR associations. The assumption in the present study, however, is that information about CSR initiatives derived from a company is positive in nature, as a desired or projected image, and that consumers' CSR awareness implies their familiarity with, awareness of, or knowledge about the company's CSR initiatives. As corporate associations are "the link between the company and attributes stored in a person's memory" (Einwiller 2013, p. 293), consumers' knowing more about a company's CSR initiatives may create stronger associations between the company and the CSR domain and lead them to view the company as more

socially responsible (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Brown and Dacin 1997; Lichtenstein et al. 2004). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: The higher the level of consumers' CSR awareness of a company, the stronger consumers' CSR associations with the company will be.

Researchers have sought to identify factors that influence the perceptions of corporate credibility; adapting Haley's (1996) work, Inoue and Kent (2014) proposed that CSR associations can influence CSR credibility through a company's experience in leading CSR programs. A company's previous success in CSR activities is likely to lead consumers to believe that the company has the technological expertise, skills, and resources needed to manage CSR programs; conversely, consumers are unlikely to form CSR associations if a company has a negative CSR history. A company must also maintain ongoing dialogue with consumers, both to ensure that its CSR programs reflect consumers' needs and to implement those programs successfully, and doing so forms the basis for earning trustworthiness. Empirical studies support this proposition (e.g., Keller and Aaker 1998; Walker and Kent 2013). For example, Keller and Aaker (1998) found that a company's involvement in environmental and community causes significantly increased its corporate credibility. Accordingly, we posit positive relationships between CSR associations and CSR credibility and also mediating effects of CSR associations and CSR credibility in the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness and their CSR participation intention.

H7: The stronger consumers' CSR associations with a company are, the higher the level of the company's CSR credibility will be.

H8: Consumers' CSR associations with a company and the company's CSR credibility will mediate the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness of the company and their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities.

The positive effects of CSR associations can also impact consumers' perceptions of their relationship with a company; one explanation is that CSR associations form consumer–company identification (C–C identification). C–C identification is consumers' psychological attachment to a company based on common characteristics or perceived similarity. According to organizational identification theory, consumers with a stronger C–C identification become psychologically attached to and care more deeply about an organization, which motivates them to commit to the achievement of the organization's goals and to expend more voluntary efforts on its behalf (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Dutton et al. 1994).

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and Du et al. (2007) argued that C–C identification induces a relational outcome as an immediate result, particularly when the C–C identification is formed through CSR associations (which they term CSR beliefs). Those relational outcomes may then lead to supportive behaviors such as favorable word of mouth and advocacy behaviors for the company. These scholars viewed C–C identification as a psychological underpinning for a deep, committed, and meaningful relationship with a company, and thus contended that C–C identification can strengthen a company's relationship with its customers. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H9: The stronger consumers' CSR associations with a company, the stronger they will perceive their relationship with the company to be.

H10: Consumers' CSR associations with a company and the perceived strength of their relationship with the company will mediate the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness of the company and their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities.

The overall model is proposed in Fig. 1.

Method

We conducted a survey using a real-world company to examine the effects of actual CSR communications on consumers' perceptions. H-E-B is the largest grocery store chain in Texas, and we chose it as the study corporation for three reasons: it deals with a broad cross section of customers, it has well-developed CSR programs, and customers have regular interaction with H-E-B at its stores or through H-E-B-sponsored community relationship-building programs such as community volunteer work and community events. OPRs can best be studied when relationships between the organization and the public are cultivated through direct experience (Ki and Hon 2007a, b). H-E-B's CSR programs range from education and child literacy programs to holiday dinners and environmental initiatives.

Via an online panel company, Survey Sampling International (SSI), we administered an online survey to H-E-B customers ($N = 394$) within the company's operating area. The study population was people on SSI panels living in seven cities in Texas, where H-E-B is largely based, who had shopped at H-E-B in the preceding 3 months. The incidence rate (the percentage of people on the panels who were eligible to participate in the survey) was 20%.

Among the respondents, 53.05% ($n = 209$) were male and 46.95% ($n = 185$) were female, and the average age
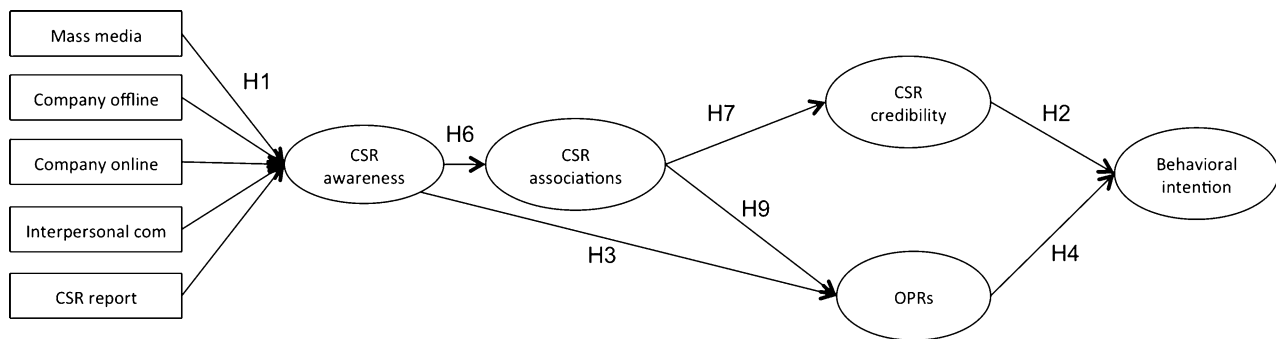
H5 posits the mediating role of OPRs in the relationships between CSR awareness and behavioral intention.
H8 posits the mediating role of CSR associations and CSR credibility in the relationships between CSR awareness and behavioral intention.
H10 posits the mediating role of CSR associations and OPRs in the relationships between CSR awareness and behavioral intention.

Fig. 1 Proposed model for the study

was 41. The majority of the respondents had some college (31.22%, $n = 123$) or a college degree (31.47%, $n = 124$). Among the rest, 16.75% ($n = 66$) had a graduate degree, 14.21% ($n = 56$) were high school graduates, 5.08% ($n = 20$) had some graduate school, and 1.27% ($n = 5$) had less than a high school degree. The median income category was from \$55,001 to \$70,000, and the majority ethnic group was White (64.21%, $n = 253$), followed by Hispanic (20.05%, $n = 79$), Black (10.15%, $n = 40$), Asian (5.08%, $n = 20$), and Native American (0.51%, $n = 2$).

Measures

CSR Participation Intention

Behavioral intention can be explained as "the intention to perform a particular behavior, a plan to put behavior into effect" (Perloff 2003, p. 92). In the present study, behavioral intention refers to respondents' intention to participate in H-E-B's CSR activities. Scholars often measure behavioral intention as a predictor or immediate antecedent of actual behavior (e.g., Ajzen 1991; Perloff 2003). Adapting Burton et al. (1998) and Grewal et al. (1998), we measured respondents' probability of participating or willingness to participate in H-E-B's CSR activities using four items ($\alpha = .95$): "It is probable that I will be involved in the company's community service programs"; "My involvement in the company's community service programs is likely"; "I am willing to get involved in the company's community service programs"; and "I would consider getting involved in the company's community service programs" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

CSR Media Use

CSR media use was defined as the degree of respondents' use of various channels to gain CSR information about the company. We measured the uses of five types of communication channels, some of which consisted of more than one information source. First, the mass media category included (1) television, (2) newspapers, and (3) radio ($\alpha = .88$). We did not distinguish news from advertising within each medium. Second, corporate offline channels included (1) posters, (2) flyers, and (3) direct mail ($\alpha = .89$). Third, corporate online channels included (1) corporate websites and (2) social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) ($\alpha = .84$). Fourth, the interpersonal communication category included respondents' obtaining information through (1) word of mouth (e.g., friends, co-workers, family members, etc.) and (2) in-store promotions ($\alpha = .88$). Fifth, CSR reports stood as a category on its own. Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always*). The scores within the same channel were averaged out. For example, a respondent's mass media use score was calculated by an average of that person's television use, newspaper use, and radio use, as measured on a five-point scale. Each of the five channels (the mass media, corporate offline channels, corporate online channels, interpersonal communication, and CSR reports) served as an exogenous observable variable.

CSR Awareness

Adapting David et al. (2005), we defined CSR awareness as respondents' familiarity with a company's CSR activities. We asked respondents about their familiarity with H-E-B's

CSR activities in general and their familiarity with each of H-E-B's five ongoing CSR programs, such as the Food Bank assistance program and the Read 3 children's literacy program. Response options ranged from 1 (*not familiar at all*) to 5 (*very familiar*). The answers for the programs' levels of familiarity were averaged and became one item ($\alpha = .90$), resulting in two items, general familiarity and program familiarity, to measure CSR awareness. Among the respondents, 116 (29.44%) said that they were not familiar at all with H-E-B's CSR activities in general, and 93 (23.60%) said they were not familiar with any of the CSR programs at all. The rest said they were at least somewhat familiar either with the company's CSR activities in general or with specific programs.

CSR Credibility

A company's CSR credibility is its perceived trustworthiness and expertise in its CSR involvement. Adapting Pérez and del Bosque (2013), we used four items to measure CSR credibility as follows: "The company has great expertise in corporate community service programs"; "The company is competent in the implementation of its responsibilities toward its community"; "The company's commitment to its community is credible"; and "The company is honest about its commitment to its community" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) ($\alpha = .94$).

Perceived OPR Quality

OPR quality can be defined as "factors that determine or characterize successful relationships between an organization and its strategic publics" (Ki and Hon 2007a, p. 425). In this study, we used four dimensions—*commitment*, *satisfaction*, *trust*, and *control mutuality*—as factors that determine or characterize OPR quality. Hon and Grunig (1999) concluded that these four dimensions indicate relationship quality and can evaluate people's long-term relationships with an organization. These four dimensions have been widely used to measure OPRs (e.g., Kang and Yang 2010; Ki and Hon 2007b). Accordingly, perceived OPR quality in the present study refers to consumers' perception of these four dimensions as indicators of their relationship with an organization.

Commitment is "the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" and has the dimensions of *continuance* commitment, which is action/behavior-level commitment, and *affective* commitment, which is an emotional-level commitment (Hon and Grunig 1999, p. 3). We measured commitment using four items covering both types of commitment: "I feel that the company is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me";

"Compared to other grocery stores, I value my relationship with the company"; "There is a long-lasting bond between the company and people like me"; and "I can see that the company wants to maintain a relationship with people like me." Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) ($\alpha = .92$).

Satisfaction represents the degree of feeling favorable toward the other formed through reinforcement of positive expectations (Hon and Grunig 1999). We measured satisfaction using three items, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): "Overall, I am happy with the company"; "I believe that most people like me are happy in their interactions with the company"; and "Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship the company established with people like me" ($\alpha = .92$).

Trust is defined as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (Hon and Grunig 1999, p. 3). Trust has three underlying dimensions—*integrity*, *dependability*, and *competence* (Barney and Hansen 1994; Carnevale 1995; Daley and Vasu 1995, Hon and Grunig 1999). *Integrity* is the belief that an organization is fair and just; *dependability* is the belief that an organization will keep its promises; *competence* is the belief in an organization's ability to fulfill its promises. Five items were used to measure trust, representing all three sub-dimensions of trust. The items were measured using a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): "The company treats people like me fairly and justly"; "The company can be relied on to keep its promises"; "Whenever the company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me"; "I believe the company takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions"; and "I feel that I can trust the company to do what it says it will do" ($\alpha = .93$).

Control mutuality is defined as "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (Hon and Grunig 1999, p. 3). To measure this dimension, we used three items, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): "The company believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate"; "In dealing with people like me, the company seems to throw its weight around" (reverse coded); and "It seems like the company really listens to what people like me have to say" ($\alpha = .59$[1]).

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[1] An inconsistent item that resulted in a low reliability coefficient was omitted. See the Measurement Model section for more details. After omitting the item, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the control mutuality dimension was .84.

CSR Associations

Consumers' CSR associations with a company refer to the association of a company with the image of being socially responsible or the perception of how well a company fulfills its social responsibility and meets consumers' expectations through various CSR initiatives. Adapting Lichtenstein et al. (2004), we gauged participants' CSR associations with the company using five items with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): "The company is committed to using a portion of its profits to help nonprofits"; "The company gives back to the communities where it does business"; "Local nonprofits benefit from the company's contributions"; "The company integrates charitable contributions into its business activities"; and "The company is involved in corporate giving" ($\alpha = .93$).

Data Analysis Procedure

We analyzed the data with structural equation modeling using the Mplus 7.0 software package. First, we assessed the measurement model of the latent variables and then tested the structural model. As one of the main purposes of the study was to test the mediating effects of CSR associations, CSR credibility, and OPRs, the mediating effect analysis follows. In the structural model, we considered OPRs as a second-order factor, comprising four dimensions—commitment, satisfaction, trust, and control mutuality—and measured each of the dimensions by multiple indicators. The literature showed that these four dimensions measure OPR quality (Hon and Grunig 1999), and the primary interest of the present study was the relationships between OPRs and other variables, rather than the relationships between each dimension of OPR outcomes and other variables.

To assess mediating effects, we tested the significance of indirect effects using the bias-corrected bootstrap method (Preacher and Hayes 2008; MacKinnon 2008). The bootstrapping approach does not assume a normal sampling distribution and quantifies the existence of indirect effects. The distribution of the estimates, as a nonparametric approximation of the sampling distribution of indirect effects, generates asymmetric confidence intervals. If the value of 0 is not part of the 95% bootstrap confidence interval around an indirect effect, the indirect effect is significant at the .05 level (MacKinnon 2008). We took 10,000 samples from the data.

Results

Measurement Model

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with constructs (i.e., latent variables)—CSR awareness, CSR associations, CSR credibility, OPRs, and CSR participation intention—to assess the convergent and discriminant validity, which comprise construct validity, and the consistency of our measures. Convergent validity and item consistency were evaluated using three criteria—factor loadings (cutoff value is .70), composite reliabilities (CR) (cutoff value is .80), and average variance extracted (AVE) (cutoff value is .50) (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hair et al. 1998). Discriminant validity of constructs is evidenced when AVEs are all greater than squared correlations of between-measure pairs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Ultimately, one item in the control mutuality dimension, "In dealing with people like me, the company seems to throw its weight around," was removed due to lack of convergent validity.

Excluding the one item, the fit of the model was satisfactory [χ^2 (362) = 861.948, χ^2/df = 2.38, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, NFI: .93, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06]. Table 1 shows the factor loadings, composite reliabilities (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). All factor loadings were statistically significant, with the minimum value of .79; CRs were all above .80, which is the cutoff value; and AVEs were above .50, which is the cutoff value. Hence, all met the norms for convergent validity and item consistency. In examining discriminant validity, the AVEs of CSR awareness, OPR quality, and CSR participation intention were all greater than the squared correlations of between-measure pairs. For the OPR quality construct, we examined the discriminant validity of the second-order construct, instead of each dimension of OPR quality, as compared with other constructs in the model. The AVEs of CSR associations and CSR credibility were not much greater than the squared correlations of the two constructs, suggesting a lack of or weak discriminant validities of the items measuring those two constructs. The primary source of the problem was the high correlation of the two constructs; however, this is not completely unexpected, considering that one is the independent variable and the other is the dependent variable, rather than the two serving as parallel independent variables in the model. We also checked the cross-loadings of the items; no instance of obvious cross-loading could be observed. We therefore left all the items in the two constructs, which will also retain face and content validities.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and scale validation

Variables and items	M	SD	Factor loadings	CR	AVE
CSR awareness				0.90	0.82
General CSR activities	2.54	1.27	0.79		
Ongoing CSR programs	2.39	1.19	0.91		
CSR associations				0.97	0.84
The company is committed to using a portion of its profits to help nonprofits	3.68	0.81	0.84		
The company gives back to the communities where it does business	3.81	0.78	0.86		
Local nonprofits benefit from the company's contributions	3.75	0.82	0.90		
The company integrates charitable contributions into its business activities	3.77	0.83	0.85		
The company is involved in corporate giving	3.72	0.80	0.84		
CSR credibility				0.97	0.89
The company has great expertise in corporate community service programs	3.68	0.81	0.86		
The company is competent in the implementation of its responsibilities toward its community	3.73	0.78	0.89		
The company's commitment to its community is credible	3.84	0.77	0.92		
The company is honest about its commitment to its community	3.81	0.79	0.92		
Perceived OPR quality				0.98	0.92
Commitment	3.74	0.80	0.91		
Satisfaction	4.04	0.77	0.90		
Trust	3.79	0.72	0.98		
Control mutuality	3.73	0.78	0.92		
Commitment				0.96	0.85
I feel that the company is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me	3.81	0.82	0.83		
Compared to other grocery stores, I value my relationship with the company	3.75	0.91	0.86		
There is a long-lasting bond between the company and people like me	3.64	0.98	0.87		
I can see that the company wants to maintain a relationship with people like me	3.75	0.84	0.89		
Satisfaction				0.96	0.89
Overall, I am happy with the company	4.15	0.85	0.84		
I believe that most people like me are happy in their interactions with the company	4.01	0.78	0.94		
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship the company has established with people like me	3.97	0.83	0.92		
Trust				0.96	0.83
The company treats people like me fairly and justly	3.99	0.76	0.86		
The company can be relied on to keep its promises	3.87	0.81	0.86		
Whenever the company makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me	3.54	0.89	0.81		
I believe the company takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions	3.68	0.88	0.85		
I feel that I can trust the company to do what it says it will do	3.86	0.77	0.85		
Control mutuality				0.91	0.83
The company believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate	3.76	0.81	0.85		
It seems like the company really listens to what people like me have to say	3.65	0.86	0.86		
CSR participation intention				0.97	0.87
It's probable that I will be involved in the company's community service programs	2.93	1.03	0.83		
My involvement in the company's community service programs is likely	2.93	1.04	0.84		
I am willing to get involved in the company's community service programs	3.13	1.05	0.96		
I would consider getting involved in the company's community service programs	3.25	1.06	0.92		

N = 394. Factor loadings are standardized coefficients. *CR* composite reliability, *AVE* average extracted variance

Table 2 Fit indices for estimated models

Fit index	Measurement model fit*	Structural model fit	Recommended cutoff value**
Normed Chi square	2.38	2.23	<5.0
CFI (comparative fit index)	.96	.95	≥.95
TLI (Tucker–Lewis index)	.95	.95	≥.96
NFI (normed fit index)	.93	.91	>.90 or ≥.95
RMSEA (root-mean-square error of approximation)	.06	.06	≤.06
SRMR (standardized root-mean-square residual)	.04	.07	≤.08

* The measurement model does not include the information sources that respondents used. Only items used to measure latent variables were included in the model

** References for cutoff values include Bentler and Bonnet (1980), Hooper et al. (2008), Hu and Bentler (1999), and Wheaton et al. (1977)

Structural Model

To test the hypotheses focusing on each path in the model, we assessed the structural model. Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation was used to analyze the data for the hypothesized model. The fit of the model was adequate [χ^2 (506) = 1130.201, χ^2/df = 2.23, CFI = .95, TLI = .95, NFI = .91, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .06] (see Table 2).

H1 posited that the more consumers used media to gain CSR information about a company, the more aware they would be of the company's CSR activities. There were significant relationships between media use and the level of CSR awareness for each category of communication channel, except CSR reports: mass media use (B = .22, SE = .07, p = .001), corporate offline channel use (B = .14, SE = .06, p = .03), corporate online channel use (B = .14, SE = .06, p = .02), and interpersonal communication (B = .42, SE = .06, p < .001). The results indicated that when respondents used the mass media, corporate online and offline channels, and interpersonal communication to receive the company's CSR messages, they were more familiar with the company's CSR activities. Therefore, H1 was supported, except for the channel of CSR reports.

H2 postulated that CSR credibility would be a factor that predicted CSR participation intention. As hypothesized, CSR credibility was significantly related to CSR participation intention (B = .27, SE = .07, p < .001). The more respondents believed the company had expertise in leading CSR programs and perceived it as trustworthy, the greater their intention to participate in the company's CSR programs. Therefore, H2 was supported.

H3 posited that consumers' having a higher level of CSR awareness of a company would be associated with their having a stronger relationship with the company. The results showed, however, that the level of CSR awareness was not

directly related to the strength of respondents' OPRs (B = .07, SE = .05, p = .18), and thus H3 was not supported. H4 predicted that consumers' perception of having a stronger relationship with the company would lead to their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities. Supporting H4 (B = .27, SE = .07, p < .001), the stronger respondents perceived their relationship with the company to be, the more willing they were to support the company's CSR activities. Based on H3 and H4, H5 hypothesized the mediating effects of OPRs on the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness and their CSR participation intention. As direct effects of CSR awareness on respondents' relationship with the company were not found, the mediating effects posited in H5 did not exist.

H6 posited significant relationships between consumers' CSR awareness about a company and their CSR associations with the company. The results supported H6 (B = .52, SE = .04, p < .001), showing that the more respondents knew about the company's CSR activities, the more they perceived the company to be a socially responsible company. H7 hypothesized that consumers' CSR associations with the company would, in turn, increase the CSR credibility of the company. The results supported H7 (B = .94, SE = .01, p < .001); the more socially responsible consumers perceived the company to be, the more they believed the company had the expertise and trustworthiness needed to run its CSR programs.

As all the direct effects from CSR awareness to CSR associations, from CSR associations to CSR credibility, and from CSR credibility to CSR participation intention were statistically significant, we tested the mediating effects of CSR associations and CSR credibility. The results confirmed that CSR associations and CSR credibility were mediators between CSR awareness and CSR participation intention (B = .13, SE = .05, p = .008, 95% CI [.03, .22]); thus, H8 was supported.

Table 3 Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis		Results
H1	Higher levels of media use will lead to higher levels of awareness of the company's CSR activities	Accepted for all media types except for CSR reports
H2	The greater a company's CSR credibility, the higher the level of consumers' intention to participate in CSR activities will be	Accepted
H3	Higher levels of awareness will lead to consumers' having a stronger perceived relationship with the company	Rejected
H4	A stronger perceived relationship with a company will lead to higher intentions to participate in the company's CSR activities	Accepted
H5	Perceived relationship quality with a company will mediate the relationships between CSR awareness and intention to participate in the company's CSR activities	Rejected
H6	Higher levels of CSR awareness will lead to higher levels of CSR associations with the company	Accepted
H7	Higher levels of consumers' CSR associations will lead to higher levels of the company's CSR credibility	Accepted
H8	CSR associations with a company and the company's CSR credibility will mediate the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness and their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities	Accepted
H9	Higher levels of CSR associations with a company will lead to a stronger perceived relationship with the company	Accepted
H10	CSR associations with a company and a stronger perceived relationship with the company will mediate the relationships between consumers' CSR awareness of the company and their intention to participate in the company's CSR activities	Accepted
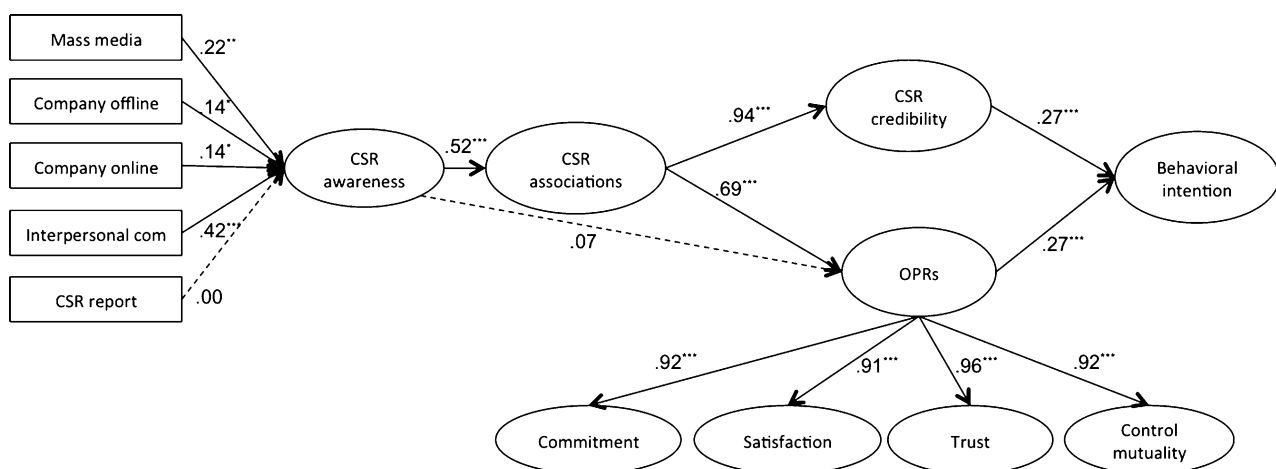
Fig. 2 Standardized coefficients of the structural model. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .001$

H9 hypothesized that consumers' CSR associations with a company would boost their relationships with the company. The results supported H9 ($B = .69$, SE = .04, $p < .001$), showing that CSR associations strengthened respondents' relationships with the company. Lastly, the indirect effects of CSR associations and perceived OPR quality on the relationships between CSR awareness and CSR participation intention were also significant, $B = .10$, SE = .04, $p = .004$, 95% CI [.04, .18]. Therefore, H10 was supported as well. A summary of the results for each hypothesis is presented in Table 3 and Fig. 2.

Discussion

We are living in an era when public engagement is indispensable to the successful implementation of CSR campaigns and the achievement of companies' desired outcomes, and thus a better understanding of how to engage the public is urgently needed. In the wake of the growing popularity of CSR practices, companies have diversified their strategies, shifting the paradigm from information-based to participatory, whether the type of CSR practice is corporate social marketing, cause-related

marketing, corporate philanthropy, or issue promotion campaigns. Furthermore, in the case of corporate social marketing, the aim is for changes in the public's behavior to improve the public welfare or the environment. Previous research, however, has not fully explicated how the public becomes engaged with CSR activities.

To address this gap in the literature, the present study sought to explore the relationships between consumers' media use to obtain CSR information about a company and their awareness of the company's CSR activities, as well as to investigate how CSR communication can lead to consumers' CSR participation. First, we tested the relationship between consumers' media use to seek out CSR messages and their CSR awareness. The results showed that respondents' level of use of all communication channels except CSR reports was positively related to their level of CSR awareness about the company, and among the different channels, the use of mass media and interpersonal communication were more strongly related to CSR awareness than were the use of corporate online and offline communication channels.

The results highlight the importance of a company's ongoing communication efforts in regard to its CSR activities, and of using the right channels for such communication. Based on the uses and gratifications theory, one of the assumptions of this study was that consumers play an active role in obtaining CSR information, and consumers' awareness of CSR information was deemed to be the result of their actively seeking out CSR information. Therefore, one way to increase awareness of a company's CSR activities is by meeting consumers' need for and expectations about CSR information and making that information readily available. The present results also showed that the effects of media use on CSR awareness varied across the channels: legacy media, such as newspapers, television, and radio, and interpersonal communications, such as word of mouth among friends, co-workers, and family members and in-store promotions, showed stronger relationships than did corporate online and offline channels. These results are aligned with what we know about source credibility and the channel effects of CSR information. One of the biggest challenges in CSR communication is consumer skepticism, and the literature has suggested that CSR communication through corporate sources generates more skepticism and is deemed less credible than noncorporate sources (Du et al. 2010; Skard and Thorbjørnsen 2014). Therefore, companies should consider increasing in-store promotions or creating social media strategies or viral marketing strategies, which can generate word of mouth, while still making communication efforts through other channels as well.

Second, we explored the conditions under which consumers' awareness of CSR activities might lead to their intention to participate in a company's CSR activities. This study found two primary mechanisms—one mediated through CSR associations and CSR credibility, and the other through CSR associations and perceived OPR quality. As hypothesized, both CSR credibility and perceived OPR quality were antecedents of CSR participation intention, and respondents' CSR associations with the company mediated the relationships between their CSR awareness and the company's CSR credibility, and between their CSR awareness and perceived OPR quality, respectively. Knowing about CSR programs, however, did not directly increase perceived OPR quality; instead, only when CSR associations were formed did CSR awareness increase perceived OPR quality.

These results highlight the importance of consumers' CSR associations with a company as a condition to moving them from being an aware public to being an active public. CSR awareness is program based and can be generated through short-term exposure to information, but CSR associations are cognitive-based evaluations which are more long-term and aggregate in nature. Therefore, the present results underscore the need for a company to make a long-term commitment to CSR with ongoing communication efforts. Companies can also design CSR message strategies to strengthen CSR associations. Kim (2011) tested three types of CSR message strategies: a corporate ability strategy, a CSR strategy, and a hybrid strategy. A corporate ability strategy highlights a company's expertise in its products and services; a CSR strategy focuses on a company's CSR activities or image; and a hybrid strategy combines both of those strategies. Kim (2011) found that CSR associations were significantly stronger when companies used a CSR strategy than when they used a corporate ability strategy or a hybrid strategy. Therefore, to generate strong CSR associations among consumers, companies can use the message strategy of creating CSR-focused messages.

The significant effects of CSR credibility on predicting CSR participation intention imply that companies should consider strategies to gain CSR credibility. As the competitive environment becomes more crowded even within the same topics in CSR, consumers will have an array of CSR activities to choose from. Consumers' perception of how much expertise a company has in leading CSR programs and how trustworthy the company is will determine whether they will participate in the company's CSR activities. The present study suggests that establishing strong CSR associations is one way to achieve CSR credibility. Other strategies for improving CSR credibility that companies should consider include sharing previous successful practices or long-term commitments, boosting two-way communication by using interactive features online or new technologies, or investing in areas of CSR that are a

particularly good fit with the company's mission or values, as these strategies have been shown to reduce consumer skepticism toward CSR activities (Eberle et al. 2013; Inoue and Kent 2014).

This study also showed that perceived OPR quality with a company is another significant factor associated with consumers' intention to participate in the company's CSR activities. In line with previous research, the present findings lend additional support to the value of having strong OPRs specifically in the context of CSR, an area that has been largely unexplored, and indicate that strong relationships with consumers can be a significant resource in the successful implementation of CSR strategies. Therefore, another essential strategy for engaging consumers in a company's CSR activities is maintaining good relationships with them. Simultaneously, companies should make ongoing CSR efforts and communicate about those efforts, as these can also contribute to building or maintaining good relationships with consumers, especially when consumers form CSR associations through such long-term efforts. The reciprocal nature of the benefits of CSR to a company (i.e., OPRs) feeding back into consumers' engagement with CSR activities indicates how both desired outcomes (generating value for a company and for society) can be intertwined and can be achieved concurrently.

The present study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. In terms of theory, the present study advances CSR scholarship. Despite the emerging trend of participatory CSR strategies and the expansion of corporate social marketing, in which public engagement is essential, scholars have paid little attention to this area. In particular, the characteristic that most distinguishes CSR engagement from adjacent areas such as civic engagement, prosocial behavior, volunteering and donation for nonprofits, and proenvironmental behavior is that company-related factors come into play, and such factors are the focus and the unique contribution of the present study. Due to consumers' underlying skepticism toward companies' CSR activities, the influence of company-related factors on consumer attitudes and behavior can be greater and more complex than the factors related to other types of organizations such as government agencies or nonprofits.

Furthermore, the present study is the first empirical study (to our knowledge) to integrate the uses and gratifications theory, source credibility, and OPR scholarship and apply them to the CSR context. First, the uses and gratifications theory takes an audience-centered approach and posits that people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs (Katz 1959). The correlations between consumers' levels of various types of media use (with the exception of CSR reports) to gain CSR information and their level of awareness of the CSR information support this audience-centered approach, suggesting that the assumption of the theory holds true in the CSR context. Second, the findings suggest that the stronger the relationship is between a company and a consumer, the more likely the consumer will be to participate in the company's CSR activities, supporting previous research about the advantages of having strong OPRs (e.g., Ledingham and Bruning 1998). Third, the present study adopted the concept of CSR credibility, which was derived from source credibility and corporate credibility but has rarely been explored, and found that CSR credibility plays a significant role in eliciting CSR participation. Finally, by mapping out the mechanism of how CSR communication can lead to CSR participation using these three theories within the CSR context, the study makes connections among these theories, making the present study interdisciplinary in nature.

In terms of practice, the study provides CSR professionals with insights into how to implement CSR initiatives. The findings suggest that practitioners should have a long-term plan and vision for CSR execution and for ongoing communication about their CSR initiatives, as it is important to meet consumers' needs for CSR information and to enable them to form CSR associations. Companies should especially emphasize these associations if the purpose of the communication is not limited to increasing consumer awareness but seeks to elicit behavioral engagement from the public, as consumers do not generate CSR associations, CSR credibility, and OPRs in a short time period.

Moreover, to engage the public, practitioners should consider how to make their company more credible. Engaging the public with CSR activities is more challenging for a company than for nonprofits or government agencies due to the public's skepticism and the competition among companies. To assure the public that a company is trustworthy and has CSR expertise, the company needs to have led successful CSR campaigns or activities over time and to communicate about them effectively, so that the public can perceive the company as authentic and competent.

Finally, practitioners are reminded that a company's CSR strategy should not be separate from its overall communication or organizational strategy. As the present results showed how CSR awareness can strengthen OPRs and, reciprocally, how these strong OPRs can facilitate the implementation of CSR strategies, it is important for practitioners to maintain good relationships with consumers through various communication efforts beyond the realm of CSR.

This study has several limitations. First, although using a survey was the most appropriate method because it is the best way to gauge consumers' understanding of and opinions on a subject, the self-reporting nature of the method

has inherent weaknesses in establishing causal direction. Future research using a combination of experiment and survey will gather convincing research evidence on the effectiveness of CSR communication strategies.

Second, we tested the relationships using only one company. Future research should attempt to replicate this study by controlling for contextual factors or by focusing on other types of companies to verify the generalizability of our findings. Certain contextual factors may have impacted the results. For example, the presence of a company in a community (i.e., the number of stores in one location and their proximity) and how long it has existed can affect consumers' perception of the company. Companies' strategies and decisions may differ depending on whether they are B2B or B2C companies. Homburg et al. (2013) found that, although the impact of CSR in a B2C context does not readily transfer to a B2B context, CSR still had great practical relevance in B2B industries. In addition, H-E-B is a physical bricks-and-mortar company whose customers interact with it solely by shopping in H-E-B's stores. The experience customers have with a bricks-and-mortar store versus their experience with one that does not have a physical presence may be a factor that influences customers' intention to participate in CSR efforts. Research has shown that customers who visit a store experience high levels of customer satisfaction due to the personal touch provided at physical stores (Jamal and Naser 2002). Future research can explore the present study's model in an online or virtual store. Additionally, future studies can examine non-US companies, as cultural differences may require researchers to look at additional factors. Researchers can also include the Eastern-oriented OPR dimension of "face and favor" (Huang 2001) in measuring OPRs, if examining a company that is based in or does significant business in East Asia.

Third, in the present study, our focus was on the role of company-related factors in consumers' CSR participation intention, and we only examined CSR associations, CSR credibility, and perceived OPR quality as potential mediators in the process leading from CSR awareness to CSR participation intention. Future research can explore individual characteristics, such as issue involvement and locus of control or other types of factors, to understand the mechanisms that engage consumers with CSR activities.

Fourth, this study adopted an active audience perspective and focused on how audiences' active use of various communication channels in seeking for CSR information can lead to their participation in CSR activities. Future research can examine a broad spectrum of audiences, both active and passive. Fifth, future research can employ more fine-grained media categories, distinguishing, for example, news consumption from advertising when considering mass media use to obtain CSR information. SMS and other mobile phone applications can also be added to the channel options to reflect the growing popularity of organizations' use of mobile communications.

Finally, the present study did not address the influence of the news media in forming CSR reputation. As previous research has revealed, one of the primary ways the public learns about organizations and their activities is through the news media (Deephouse 2000). Einwiller et al. (2010) found that stakeholders were strongly influenced by the media, as they were the primary source of information, and the stakeholders had a strong need to learn about a company's CSR performance. Future studies can examine the impact of different forms of media in more detail using other theoretical frameworks, including the agenda-setting theory and the learning hierarchy model.

Despite these limitations, the present study serves as a stepping-stone that advances current CSR research. This survey-based study makes a significant theoretical contribution in delineating the mediating mechanisms of public CSR engagement and in integrating multiple theoretical frameworks. It also provides practical insights into how to implement credible and effective long-term CSR initiatives. Future research can further explicate the factors that contribute to public engagement in CSR initiatives.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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