

## **One size fits all? How CSR communication influences donation and revisit intention differently in local independent and chain restaurants**

### **Highlights**

- Local community CSR initiatives are more effective for chain restaurants.
- Detail CSR messages work for local independent restaurants, but not for chain ones.
- Perceived warmth mediates the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on consumer behaviors.
- Perceived competence mediates the impact of CSR type and construal level on consumer behaviors.

### **Abstract**

Considering that limited research has been conducted to explore CSR initiatives in local brand context, compared to global brand context, this study is to bridge the gap by comparing CSR initiatives in local independent restaurants with those of international chain restaurants. Two studies were performed to examine the impact of CSR type and construal level in CSR message using experimental designs. In addition, the mediating effects of perceived warmth and competence were examined as potential psychological mechanisms explaining consumers' reactions. Findings show that consumers are more likely to donate to CSR initiatives of chain restaurants and revisit them when the initiatives lean toward local community CSR rather than global environmental CSR. Also, consumers prefer local community CSR initiatives that are presented in detail in local independent restaurants. This study also reveals different mediating effects of perceived warmth and competence in relation to CSR type, restaurant type, and consumer behaviors.

Keywords: CSR, Local restaurant, Chain restaurant, Donation, Message framing

## Introduction

Increasing numbers of restaurants now engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, because many consumers are concerned about the environmental and social issues associated with restaurant operations (Kang & Baker, 2022; Stadlthanner et al., 2022). Restaurants use CSR practices to build a strong, positive brand image and generate more revenue (Sung et al., 2020). However, CSR practices do not guarantee a positive response from consumers, as they may be skeptical toward such practices (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013; Stadlthanner et al., 2022). Therefore, marketing researchers have explored the most effective ways to convey CSR messages to consumers (e.g., Huang & Liu 2020; Huang et al., 2021; He et al., 2022). Based on signaling theory, consumers seek particular signals in a message to evaluate the potential value and experience that they will receive (Lin et al., 2020). In terms of framing CSR messages, previous studies have examined many signals that can impact the consumer evaluation process, such as CSR type (Lin & Chung, 2019), consumer need for status (Zhang et al., 2018), and local versus global markets (Popoli, 2011).

Within the CSR literature, consumer donations are one keyway of gauging consumer engagement (e.g., Zhang, 2014; Zhu et al., 2017). According to the IEG's guide (2017), annual spending on donation-based CSR initiatives grew from \$100 million in 1990 to \$62.8 billion in 2017. Consumers' willingness to donate, and their donation amounts, indicate their engagement in CSR initiatives (Zhu et al., 2017). In the restaurant industry, researchers have also evaluated the effectiveness of CSR messages in promoting donations (e.g., Zhang, 2014; Line et al., 2016). Their findings suggest that the restaurant industry needs to use effective message framing and communication methods to achieve higher consumer engagement in CSR initiatives. Within the connection between CSR message framing and consumer engagement, personal traits could

influence such a connection. Prior research has highlighted that perceived warmth and competence can mediate the influence of CSR message framing and consumer behaviors (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Gao & Mattila, 2014).

Within CSR context, stakeholder theory has been regarded as being instrumental to its effective implementation (Doh & Guay, 2006), providing a background for understanding how different stakeholders' interests can be balanced. While different type of business may have different stakeholders, however, most previous research has examined the restaurant industry holistically or focused on publicly traded companies. Local independent restaurants have received little attention, while they may require different CSR strategies given their deep roots within local communities (Muller, 2006). Local community stakeholders may also have specific needs in terms of social issues in comparison with general restaurant patrons (Chen & Hang, 2021). Such stakeholders may be interested in humanity issues within the neighborhood (Chen & Hang, 2021), including homeless people support, disaster relief, and employee welfare. Rhou and Singal (2020) found that local community CSR activities have not drawn sufficient attention in the extant hospitality literature. Furthermore, previous studies have argued that hospitality companies' characteristics are an important contextual factor for their involvement in CSR practices (Park & Kim, 2014; Rahman et al., 2012). That is, restaurant companies' commitment to CSR practices may depend on whether they are international chains or local independent restaurants. This study therefore is to address this critical gap in the literature by exploring possible different mechanism for CSR practices in the local brand context as well as in the global brand context.

In addition, as consumers may react to CSR messages based on individual interpretations of the associated content (Trope et al., 2007), it becomes important to understand the mechanism

of the effects of CSR message construal on consumers' responses to the message. As Zhang (2014) pointed out, CSR message framing, particularly at the construal level, can impact consumer perception of CSR message. This study therefore incorporates a psychological perspective on the potential target audience (i.e., consumers) of CSR messaging.

Accordingly, this study has two objectives: 1) to explore the effectiveness of the CSR messages of local independent restaurants (versus international chains) and 2) to examine CSR types and construal levels and their influence on the effectiveness of CSR messages. Based on a separate stand of stakeholder theory that distinguishes different stakeholders and construal level theory, this study makes a contribution to the literature in advancing our understanding of CSR communication. Specifically, the findings of this study suggest a more relativistic point of view than a holistic point of view in relation to stakeholder theory. That is, CSR messages originate from different points or may be targeted differently to relevant stakeholders, suggesting that the content and the target of CSR messages are important variables to be considered. Further, the findings provide practical implications for the restaurant industry practitioners that want to maximize the marketing effects of CSR messages.

## **Literature review**

### *CSR messages and CSR communication: A research gap*

Traditionally, companies have developed their CSR messages and transmitted them to their stakeholders (e.g., employees or consumers), who may or may not have been willing participants in the communication process (Cortado & Chalmeta, 2016). Print media, TV channels, websites, and corporate annual reports have been the main media used by companies to deliver their CSR messages. To evaluate companies' CSR messages and the way the messages

are presented, in academia, numerous researchers have investigated various outcomes of the companies' CSR messages and their effort in disseminating their CSR initiatives (e.g., Andreu et al., 2015; Du et al., 2010; Eberle et al., 2013; Kim & Ferguson, 2018). For example, Eberle et al. (2013) examined companies' communication regarding CSR through online media and found that using interactive communication channels to promote CSR can improve corporate reputation. Andreu et al. (2015) found the elements of effective CSR communication toward consumer attitude regarding the type of CSR initiatives (environment-related vs. employee-based), message appeals (emotional vs. rational), and service types. Further, Kim and Ferguson (2018) identified six dimensions of effective CSR communication that provide a better understanding of what consumers expect from CSR communication and how companies should plan to communicate their CSR initiatives accordingly. In addition, Brammer et al. (2007) identified different types of CSR messages (internal vs. external) that may generate different outcomes (e.g., employees' well-being and benefits, organization's contribution to the society). More recently, Dalla-Pria & Rodríguez-de-Dios (2022) investigated the impact of CSR message source (corporate vs. influencer) and framing (values-driven vs. performance-driven motives) in CSR communication and found the corporate source generates more word-of-mouth (WOM) and values-driven motives as well as increase corporate reputation. In the hospitality context, Kim et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between regulatory focus and CSR messages, suggesting an advertisement and different types of CSR activities jointly impact consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. More recently, as CSR activities can influence employees' behavioral and psychological consequences (Kim et al., 2018), Sun et al. (2022) examined how Generation Z employees interpret and react to hotel CSR messages during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, particularly at the consumer level, several scholars have suggested that Carroll's conceptualization of CSR that defined CSR as "the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (Carroll, 1979). However, Carroll's conceptualization of CSR, a widely adopted one in the literature, has limited applicability to consumer behavior research as it looks at CSR from the firm's perspective, and its dimensions are not conducive to interpretation by consumers (Maignan, 2001). In this respect, several studies have proposed a new theoretical framework that classifies CSR dimensions from the consumer standpoint and embraces consumers' holistic perceptions of CSR (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Deng & Xu, 2017). This framework asserts that consumers holistically evaluate micro- and macro-level CSR initiatives, including external practices (e.g., maximization of the well-being of the environment and society) and internal aspects of those practices (e.g., maximization of profit) (Deng & Xu, 2017). That is, consumers assess firms' CSR initiatives based on their expectations of economic benefits for themselves, environmental protection, and social cohesion resulting from firms' business operations (Alvarado-Herrera et al., 2017). In fact, consumers not only expect firms to be socially responsible, but they also want to be informed about what the firms are doing and support firms that pursue CSR initiatives corresponding to their expectations (Pomeroy & Dolnicar, 2009). Research has found evidence that if firms effectively communicate their CSR efforts to consumers, it leads to higher levels of purchase intention among consumers and further builds a more positive reputation with stakeholders (Chernev & Blair, 2015; Mohr & Webb, 2005). However, while the importance of effective CSR communication has been emphasized in the marketing literature, relatively little attention has been paid to the investigation of effective

CSR communication at the consumer level in the hospitality literature (Kim et al., 2012; Zhang, 2014).

*Enhancing benefits of CSR and its communication efficiency: A perspective on brand*

While the effects of CSR communication strategies on brand-related outcomes (e.g., brand image, brand awareness) or customer-related outcomes (e.g., customer loyalty, customer's willingness-to-pay) have been studied, less attention has been given to these strategies' effectiveness. While several factors, including CSR message type (Hameed et al., 2016), CSR message source (Wang & Huang, 2018), service type (Andreu et al., 2015), product type (Bartikowski & Berens, 2021), or industry type (Kim, 2011), there is scant literature focusing on the influence of boundary conditions of brand.

Du et al. (2010) posited that increasing and managing stakeholders' awareness of CSR and of companies' CSR initiatives is a prerequisite for maximizing the initiatives' strategic benefits (i.e., business returns). In the restaurant industry context, Rhou et al. (2016) found empirical evidence that stakeholders' CSR awareness affects the manner in which CSR initiatives can result in financial gain in the restaurant context. To achieve these goals, managers should gain a deeper understanding of key issues to communicate CSR initiatives to stakeholders. Managers must take responsibility for their communications (i.e., message content) (Du et al., 2010) and understand company-specific factors, such as brand identity or target customers, that enhance the strategic benefits of CSR (Du & Vieira, 2012). In this respect, message content pertaining to both brand identity originating from the company and relevant target audiences (i.e., stakeholders including customers, communities, suppliers, employees, etc.) may amplify or dampen the effectiveness of the company's CSR communication efforts.



While companies are encouraged to communicate their CSR efforts to stakeholders, different stakeholders usually have a heterogeneous emphasis on CSR criteria and different brand image perceptions (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009; Friedman & Miles, 2002). That is, stakeholders, including consumers, may show different responses to the company's CSR activities and its effective communication as a function of brand, as different brands may pursue different CSR activities to offer different types of value to relevant stakeholders (Peloza & Shand, 2011; Werther & Chandler, 2005). For this reason, CSR communication is regarded as a strategic branding tool, providing an attractive element of the company's overall branding (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). Nevertheless, in the restaurant context, scholars have paid little attention to developing an appropriate CSR communication strategy under different restaurant branding conditions.

*Effective CSR communication strategy: International chain restaurants vs. local independent restaurants*

Previous studies (e.g., Dimofte et al., 2008; Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004) have suggested that local and global brands may differ in their approaches to formulating business strategy, as strategic advantages of the local and global brands are not identical. In the CSR context, Popoli (2011) mentioned that the way in which CSR transfers to brand image that influences a company's relationship competencies that contribute to stakeholder satisfaction differs in local and global brands. Companies may prioritize certain stakeholders depending on how each stakeholder group contributes to brand value (Jones, 2005). In fact, for a local brand, CSR strategy tends to involve the selection and prioritization of different dimensions of CSR according to local community stakeholders' expectations. For a global brand with a wider range

of stakeholders having potentially conflicting goals, CSR strategy is likely to be based on a standardized approach so that it can meet the demands of multiple stakeholders (Popoli, 2011). A locally responsive CSR strategy could entail many risks, because the company's CSR strategy may be fragmented and inconsistent from one country to another (Christmann, 2000). Even within a company, perspectives could differ on whether it should develop a centrally coordinated CSR strategy or stimulate decentralized CSR strategies developed locally in consultation with community stakeholders (Muller, 2006). In both cases, CSR strategy types and their impact on stakeholders could differ depending on the characteristics of the business. For example, local independent restaurants may develop their CSR messages that appeal to community residents, whereas international chain restaurants could design their CSR message to reach out to an international pool of customers (Zhang, 2014). Thus, CSR message may not present the same dynamics in the local brand context as in the global brand context. Nevertheless, while many researchers have examined the branding effect for international chain restaurants, little attention has been paid to local independent restaurants (e.g., Agarwal & Dahm, 2015; Lin et al., 2020).

Researchers have shown that local independent restaurants are community contributors in terms of economy, job creation, and social connectivity. They return twice as much from each dollar in sales back to the community than do international restaurant chains (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2017). Local independent restaurants are rooted in the local community, and communities, in turn, tend to support them. However, local independent restaurants face fierce competition from international chain restaurants even in their local communities (Parsa et al., 2005), and are more likely to fail and find it more difficult to grow (Parsa et al., 2005). International chain restaurants tend to have an established brand image, more standardized procedures, and more financial and human resources (Camillo et al., 2008). Due to their distinct

characteristics, it is therefore critical to separate these two restaurant types when considering their business strategies. In the CSR context, local independent restaurants' CSR messages must enhance their brand visibility and community connection. Since international chain restaurants have a wider range of stakeholders and markets, they may develop CSR messages that are broader and more abstract in nature (Sung et al., 2020).

To summarize, communicating CSR initiatives may not present the same dynamics in the local brand context as in the global brand context. As noted earlier, different restaurant brands may pursue different CSR activities and communicate their efforts differently given certain targeting stakeholders. This study thereby focuses on investigating the effectiveness of the CSR communication strategies of international chain restaurants and local independent restaurants.

### *Construal level theory*

Construal level theory (CLT) is an account of how psychological distance affects individuals' perception, evaluations, and behaviors (Zhang, 2014). CLT is rooted in action identification theory (Vallacher & Wegner, 1989), and holds that events and objects are construed as psychologically near or distant. Objects that are psychologically near are often perceived as more concrete, with low-level, detailed, contextualized features and information, whereas psychologically distant objects have high-level, abstract, decontextualized features and information (e.g., Trope et al., 2007). Such a construal influences people's information processing, perception, and preference (e.g., Adler & Sarstedt, 2021; Ding et al., 2021; Henderson, 2013; Pizzi et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2019). CLT, as a theoretical framework, has been widely adopted by researchers in areas such as social psychology, finance, marketing, and hospitality and tourism (e.g., Kim et al., 2016; Weisner, 2015).

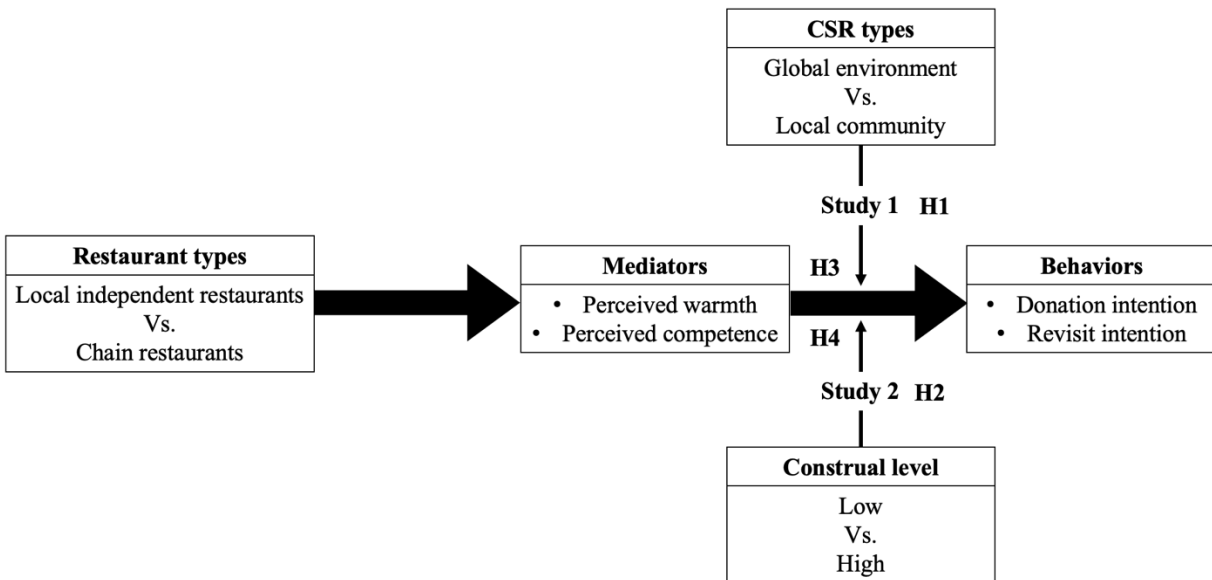
In hospitality, researchers have examined how psychological distance impacts consumers' behaviors and decision-making related to service consumption with a focus on the general effects of construal level. For instance, Kim et al. (2014) studied how construal level influences hotel guests' preferred promotional messages. Their findings indicated that people who plan a vacation in the distant future or to a far destination prefer abstract promotional messages (vs. concrete). Moreover, Cai and Leung (2020) examined the effect of psychological distance and message framing on people's intention to purchase online food delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of their study suggested that promotion-framed messages, along with low-level construal (vs. high), are more effective in severely affected regions (vs. mildly affected regions). Researchers have also explored the relationship between psychological distance and CSR. For instance, Zhang (2014) examined the joint effect of CLT and processing fluency. The results showed that when customers are making a decision about the distant future, they prefer a CSR message with high processing fluency (vs. low). Line et al. (2016) studied three types of psychological distance (i.e., spatial, temporal, and social) and found that CSR messages that are congruent with consumers' perception of sustainability elicit more positive attitudes toward the restaurant. Recently, Sung et al. (2020) examined restaurant chains' CSR messages on social networking sites and considered the role of social distance. Their findings showed that restaurant chains' concrete (vs. abstract) CSR messages on social media have a positive influence on consumers' perception of brand equity when their social distance is close (vs. far). While most research has mainly focused on the general effects of construal level of CSR messages and its effects for chain restaurants (e.g., Line et al., 2016, Sung et al., 2020; Zhang, 2014), independent restaurants and their CSR strategies have not been explored. Thus,

the current research sets out to examine the effectiveness of independent restaurants' CSR messages in regards to construal level.

### *Hypothesis development*

This study examines the effectiveness of CSR initiatives for restaurant marketers, particularly for different types of restaurants (i.e., local independent restaurants and chain restaurants). This study uses two sub-studies to examine the effect of different types of CSR (Study 1) and the impact of construal level (Study 2) on local independent restaurants and chain restaurants' CSR communication (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual model



In Study 1, the joint effect of CSR type and restaurant type is examined. We argue that local community CSR initiatives are perceived differently from global environment CSR

initiatives for different types of restaurants, considering that the extant literature have suggested that companies' characteristics are an important contextual factor for various CSR initiatives (Park & Kim, 2014; Rahman et al., 2012). When the CSR initiatives focus on the global environment, we propose that consumers respond more positively to an independent restaurant (vs. chain). Chain restaurants are generally multiple-unit operations, some of which are internationally operated (Sung et al., 2020). They are often engaged in a variety of CSR initiatives including the ones benefiting the world as well as the local communities (Muller, 2006). Consumers may favor CSR initiatives that directly benefit the community (e.g., volunteer events and education support) because it fits their needs better (Lin et al., 2020). Local independent restaurants are rooted in the local community. When they promote global environment CSR initiatives, they are likely to still invest in local community initiatives due to community connection and support (Muller, 2006; Severt et al., 2022; Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020). Local community involvements, such as local food purchase (e.g., Severt et al., 2022; Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020) and local employee support (e.g., Wang et al., 2020), can connect businesses with local stakeholder groups. Given such a connection, we predict that consumers will respond more positively when a local independent restaurant (vs. chain) engages in CSR initiatives for the global environment. On the other hand, when the CSR initiatives focus on the local community, we propose that the difference between a chain and an independent restaurant disappears as consumers will simply use CSR initiatives as a cue, which leads to more trust and commitment from consumers (Ahn & Kwon, 2020). Consumers in general will respond to this type of CSR messages favorably, regardless of restaurant types. Within the favorable behaviors, consumers may show their interest and support by donating (Zhang et al., 2019) and frequent

visits (Ahn & Kwon, 2020) when they encounter restaurant CSR initiatives. Both behaviors contain consumer recognition of CSR initiatives and monetary encouragement to restaurants.

Therefore, we propose:

H1: There is an interaction effect between restaurant type and CSR type on consumers.

Specifically,

H1a. Consumers are more likely to donate to and revisit independent restaurants (vs. chain restaurants) when the CSR initiatives focus on global environment.

H1b. Consumers will show a similar level of intent to donate and revisit intention towards local independent and chain restaurants when the CSR initiatives focus on local communities.

According to CLT, consumers typically prefer restaurants to use concrete CSR messages (Line et al. 2016). Concrete information can shorten the psychological distance between consumers and CSR initiatives, which generates a sense of familiarity (Zhang, 2014).

Additionally, researchers have suggested that it is easier for consumers to understand and process a concrete CSR message due to its use of specific information, terms, and expressions (e.g., Kim & Bae, 2016). This is particularly important for small businesses such as local independent restaurants because specific information included in their CSR messages conveys objectivity and truthfulness (e.g., Robinson & Eilert, 2018). Therefore, given a low construal level of CSR messages, local independent restaurants are favored as compared to chains (Lin et al., 2020). On the other hand, compared to chain restaurants, which have stable resources and training support from franchisers, local independent restaurants may have varying levels of resources and knowledge (Lin et al., 2020). Despite the eagerness to promote CSR in their business, local

independent restaurants may have difficulty and concerns setting up appropriate marketing campaigns to promote CSR initiatives without proper resources and knowledge (e.g., Liang & Chen, 2021). With a high construal level in CSR messages, it is more difficult for consumers to process the information properly, which attenuates the positive responses consumers have towards independent restaurants. Compared with local independent restaurants, chain restaurants provide significantly more public information that clearly describes their CSR goals, practices, and outcomes (Sung et al., 2020). For example, Lee et al. (2020) focused on chain restaurant section to examine how four types of CSR practices (e.g., economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic) influence brand attitude and service quality to satisfy and retain consumers. They found that CSR practices can create value for branding and public reputation for chain restaurants. Compared to local independent restaurants, chain restaurants have more resource and network to promote their CSR effort (Sung et al., 2020). Therefore, consumers can obtain information via the chain restaurants' developed marketing network, which can fill in additional information when they read a CSR message from this type of restaurant. As such, given a high construal level of a CSR message, we propose that the difference between chain and independent restaurants may not have a salient impact on consumers' donation and revisiting behavior. Therefore, we propose:

H2: There is an interaction effect between restaurant type and construal level on consumers.

Specifically,

H2a. Consumers are more likely to donate and revisit to local independent restaurants (vs. chain) given a low level construal CSR message.



H2b. Consumers will respond similarly to independent and chain restaurants' CSR initiatives given a high construal level.

This study also included perceived warmth and perceived competence as mediators. As a part of CSR messages, warmth, a concept from social psychology, can help define corporate identity from a consumer perspective (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). On the other hand, competence focuses on the corporate capability to accomplish strategic goals via their effectiveness and competitiveness (Grandey et al., 2005). The generation of warmth is considered prompt and automatic, yet it takes an individual longer processing time to assess competence via multiple contacts (Gao & Mattila, 2014). In addition, prior research argues that perceived warmth often changes due to certain scenarios, whereas perceived competence is relatively stable. In the context of CSR, prior research has found that perceived warmth serves as the underlying psychological mechanism for consumers' positive perceptions and evaluations (e.g., Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Gao & Mattila, 2014). For instance, Bolton and Mattila (2015) demonstrated the impact of company warmth and competence in CSR messages on customer satisfaction and loyalty intentions. However, the effect of perceived competence is less conclusive. Researchers have argued that while CSR, by definition, does not imply competence, CSR could have a "spill over" effect on consumers' perceptions of a firm's competence due to the halo effect (Du et al., 2007). Thus, more research is needed to further clarify the effect of perceived competence in a CSR context, which is one of the main focuses of the current research. In this study, we propose:

H3a: Perceived warmth mediates the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on consumer behaviors (i.e., intent to donate and revisit intention).

H3b: Perceived warmth mediates the impact of CSR type and construal level on consumer behaviors (i.e., intent to donate and revisit intention).

H4a. Perceived competence mediates the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on consumer behaviors (i.e., intent to donate and revisit intention).

H4b: Perceived competence mediates the impact of CSR type and construal level on consumer behaviors (i.e., intent to donate and revisit intention).

## **Study 1. CSR type**

### *Method*

Study 1 examines the interaction effect between restaurant type and CSR type. A 2 (restaurant type: chain vs. independent)  $\times$  2 (CSR type: local community vs. global environment) between-subject experiment was conducted. After providing their consent, the participants were asked to think about either a chain or an independent restaurant that they often go to for dinner. The definitions of chain and independent restaurants were provided, along with some examples. The participants were also informed that they should choose a restaurant that features table service, rather than buffet restaurants or fast-food restaurants. The participants indicated their choice of restaurant, which was subsequently used in the rest of the scenarios. Following the manipulation of restaurant type, the participants were told to imagine that a few days from now, they would decide to eat dinner at this restaurant with their regular dining companion(s). When their server brought the bill, he would inform the participants that the restaurant was

participating in a sponsor program that would either benefit the local community or protect the environment, depending on the CSR type condition.

Specifically, in the local community condition, the participants read that the restaurant “invests in benefits to the local community in a way that improves quality of life in the local community, employees, and/or consumers as a top priority, such as sponsoring cultural programs for the local community, educational programs, or public health programs.” In the global environment condition, the participants read that the restaurant “invests in benefits to the global environment in a way that reduces any harmful effects on the natural environment as a top priority, such as developing/implementing pro-environmental initiatives (e.g., reducing pollution and recycling), launching eco-friendly products, using only the necessary natural resources.” In addition, the participants were told that their server would inform them that they could participate in this initiative by adding a donation to their bill. The scenarios were adapted from Line et al. (2016).

Next, the participants were asked to indicate their donation intention and intention to revisit the restaurant as the dependent variables. Donation intention was measured via four items adopted from Line et al. (2016) (e.g., “I would add a donation to my bill”; Cronbach’s alpha = .988). Revisiting intention was captured using two items adopted from Han et al. (2009) (e.g., “I would choose this restaurant for a future dining experience;  $r = .917$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Perceived warmth and competence were also measured as the mediators. Perceived competence was measured via two items adopted from Gao and Mattila (2014) (e.g., “To what extent do you believe this restaurant is extremely incompetent – extremely competent” on a Likert-type scale from 1-7;  $r = .881$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, perceived warmth was measured using two items adopted from Gao and Mattila (2014) (e.g., “To what extent do you believe this restaurant is

extremely cold – extremely warm” on a Likert-type scale from 1-7;  $r = .916$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Two attention-check questions were included in the survey. Participants who failed them were removed from the analyses.

A total of 243 general consumers recruited from Prolific participated In Study 1. Prolific is an established crowdsourcing platform for online subject recruitment (Palan & Schitter, 2018). It has good recruitment standards and explicitly caters to researchers and has shown to be a reliable subject pool used by researchers from different areas (Palan & Schitter, 2018). To recruit participants, a survey link with a description of the research was posted on Prolific.com. Upon completing the consent form, the participants were asked to read the scenarios and respond to the questions measuring the DVs and their demographic information. Participants were then compensated accordingly after they finished the survey. Among these participants, the largest number fell into the age bracket of 25–34 years old (27.2%), followed by 35–44 (24.3%) and 18–24 (23.0%). In terms of sex, 47.7% of the participants were male; in terms of ethnicity, 75.3% were Caucasian, followed by Asian (13.2%) and African American (6.2%). Pluralities of the participants had a Bachelor’s degree (41.6%) and an annual household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (22.6%).

## *Results*

A pilot study was first conducted to examine the effectiveness of the manipulations of restaurant type and CSR type. A total of 97 general consumers recruited from Prolific participated in the pilot test. The participants were asked to respond to four manipulation check questions: “It was a chain restaurant that was featured in the scenario I just read,” “It was an independent restaurant that was featured in the scenario I just read,” “In the scenario, the

restaurant invests in initiatives to protect the environment,” and “In the scenario, the restaurant invests in initiatives to benefit the local community.” The results indicated that the participants in the Chain condition responded to the first statement more positively ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 6.69$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 1.10$ ,  $t = 44.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas the participants in the independent condition responded to the second statement more positively ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 1.29$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 6.90$ ,  $t = -59.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, the participants in the Environment condition responded more positively to the third statement ( $M_{\text{environment}} = 6.49$ ,  $M_{\text{local}} = 1.92$ ,  $t = 16.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) while their counterparts in the Local community condition showed a higher level of agreement with the fourth statement ( $M_{\text{environment}} = 3.88$ ,  $M_{\text{local}} = 6.73$ ,  $t = -8.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, the manipulations of restaurant type and CSR type were successful.

Following the pilot study, the survey for Study 1 was revised slightly to strengthen the manipulation of CSR type, and then launched on Prolific. The same manipulation check questions were employed, and results indicated that the manipulations were successful. Next, a MANOVA analysis was performed with restaurant type and CSR type as independent variables and donation intention and revisiting intention as dependent variables. MANOVA was employed, as opposed to ANOVA, because prior research has shown that consumer donate intention and revisit intention to a restaurant are often highly correlated (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). When consumers’ positive perceptions of CSR initiatives increase their trust and commitment, which affects their donor behavior and donation intention. They also show more positive attitudes and a higher level of intentions to revisit particular activities/firms (e.g., Ullah et al., 2021). The results indicated that the interaction effect between restaurant type and CSR type was marginally significant on donation intent ( $F = 2.94$ ,  $p = .088$ ) and significant on revisiting intent ( $F = 6.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (See Table 1). Planned contrasts further indicated that when the CSR type

focused on the global environment, participants in the Independent restaurant condition were more likely to revisit it ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 6.08$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 6.56$ ,  $t = -2.63$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ) ( $N = 60$ ). Their donate intent was not statistically significant ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 3.87$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 4.38$ ,  $t = -1.44$ ,  $p = .15$ ). When the CSR message focused on the local community, the impact of restaurant type was not significant (Donation intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 4.68$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 4.35$ ,  $t = .98$ ,  $p = .33$ ; Revisiting intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 6.43$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 6.29$ ,  $t = .82$ ,  $p = .41$ ).

To examine the mediating effects of perceived warmth and perceived competence, Hayes' PROCESS model (Model 14) was used, with the recommended bias-corrected bootstrapping technique (number of bootstrapping samples = 5,000). Restaurant type served as the independent variable (IV) and CSR type was included as the moderator in the model. The results showed that the mediating effects of perceived warmth and competence were not significant for donation intention (Competence:  $b = -.22$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.5903, .0644]$ ; Warmth:  $b = .11$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.1663, .4617]$ ). However, the mediating effect of perceived warmth was significant for revisiting intention (Warmth:  $b = -.13$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.3047, -.0226]$ ; Competence:  $b = .03$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.1121, .1871]$ ). Therefore, H3a was partially supported but H4a was not supported.

Table 1. *MANOVA results (Study 1)*

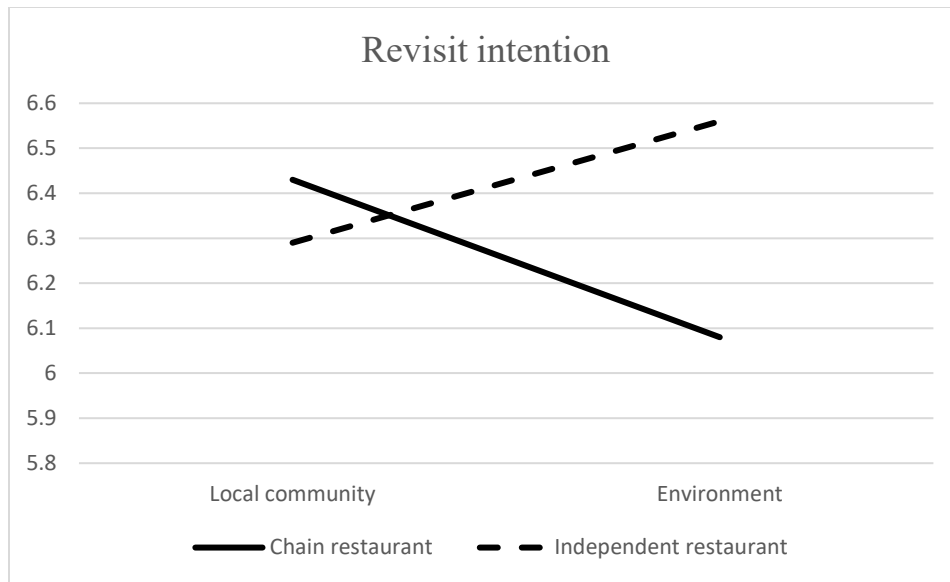
Source	Pillai's	Univariate Follow-ups					
	Trace ( <i>p-value</i> )	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	DF	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Test Effects</i>							
Restaurant Type	0.008	Donate Intent	0.520	1	0.520	0.142	0.707

	(0.377)	RI	1.743	1	1.743	1.954	0.163
CSR Type	0.010	Donate Intent	9.076	1	9.076	2.472	0.117
	(0.287)	RI	0.092	1	0.092	0.103	0.749
Restaurant Type *	0.029	Donate Intent	10.800	1	10.800	2.942	0.088
CSR Type	(0.031)	RI	5.567	1	5.567	6.240	0.013
<b>Error</b>	-	Donate Intent	877.464	239	3.671		
		RI	213.197	239	0.892		
<b>Total</b>	-	Donate Intent	5424.188	243			
		RI	9993.000	243			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	-	Donate Intent	897.630	242			
		RI	220.650	242			

Figure 2. The interaction effect of restaurant type and CSR type on intent to donate (study 1)



Figure 3. The interaction effect of restaurant type and CSR type on revisit intention (study 1)



## Study 2. Construal level

### *Method*

In Study 2, a 2 (restaurant type: chain vs. independent)  $\times$  2 (construal level: high vs. low) experiment was conducted. As in Study 1, the participants were asked to think about either a chain or an independent restaurant. Then, they were asked to imagine being informed by the server that the restaurant was engaged in CSR initiatives to benefit the local community. In the high construal level condition, the information presented was rather abstract. It read, “Our restaurant makes an effort to improve quality of life in the local community focusing on giving back to local communities. Our restaurant provides educational opportunities and career development programs to embrace the community.” In the low construal level condition, the information provided included more details. It read, “In partnership with local community organizations, our restaurant is offering a new pre-employment work-readiness and soft skill training designed to help young people develop competencies as well as making a real impact in the local community regarding opportunities for employment. Specifically, in 2021, our restaurant began a five-year, one hundred-thousand-dollar commitment to fund collegiate



scholarships, as well as grants for supervised agriculture experiences for high school students.”

The scenarios were developed based on the CSR reports released by publicly traded companies such as Darden, McDonald’s, and Dominos. The same dependent variables were measured in the survey (donation intention: Cronbach’s alpha = .968; revisiting intention:  $r = .910$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Our mediators, perceived warmth ( $r = .870$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and perceived competence ( $r = .870$ ,  $p < .001$ ), were captured via the same scales.

A total of 238 participants from Prolific completed the survey after the removal of participants who failed the attention check questions. The majority were 25–34 (32.4%) or 18–24 (28.6%) years old. In terms of sex, 40.8% were male; in terms of ethnicity, 66.0% were Caucasian, followed by Asian (19.3%) and African American (5.9%). Pluralities of the participants had a Bachelor’s degree (37.8%) and an annual household income between \$25,000 and \$49,999 (28.2%).

## *Results*

The same manipulation check questions as in Study 1 were used to check the manipulation of restaurant type: “It was a chain restaurant that was featured in the scenario I just read” and “It was an independent restaurant that was featured in the scenario I just read.” The results indicated that the participants in the Chain condition responded more positively to the first statement ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 6.50$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 1.24$ ,  $t = 52.51$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas those in the independent condition responded more positively to the second statement ( $M_{\text{chain}} = 1.56$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 6.74$ ,  $t = -48.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ). To check the manipulation of construal level, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “I feel that the CSR initiative on benefiting the local community is rather close – rather distant.” The

participants in the High construal condition indicated a higher level of agreement than those in the Low construal condition ( $M_{\text{high}} = 3.35$ ,  $M_{\text{low}} = 2.90$ ,  $t = -2.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, the manipulations were successful.

Next, a MANOVA analysis was carried out with restaurant type and construal level as the IVs and donation intention and revisiting intention as the dependent variables. The results indicated that the interaction effect between restaurant type and construal level was marginally significant on donation intention ( $F = 2.98$ ,  $p = .086$ ) and significant on revisiting intention ( $F = 6.89$ ,  $p < .01$ ) (See Table 2). Further, planned contrasts showed that the participants in the Concrete condition (i.e., low level of construal) responded more positively to an independent restaurant (vs. chain) (Donation intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 3.83$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 4.86$ ,  $t = -3.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Revisiting intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 5.65$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 6.37$ ,  $t = -4.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $N_{\text{chain}} = 63$ ,  $N_{\text{independent}} = 57$ ). For the participants in the Abstract condition (i.e., high level of construal), the effect of restaurant type disappeared (Donation intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 3.66$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 3.93$ ,  $t = -.78$ ,  $p = .44$ ; Revisiting intention:  $M_{\text{chain}} = 5.64$ ,  $M_{\text{independent}} = 5.48$ ,  $t = .54$ ,  $p = .59$ ;  $N_{\text{chain}} = 62$ ,  $N_{\text{independent}} = 56$ ).

To examine the mediating effects of perceived warmth and perceived competence, Hayes' PROCESS model (Model 14) was used, with the recommended bias-corrected bootstrapping technique (number of bootstrapping samples = 5,000). Restaurant type served as the IV and construal level was included as the moderator in the model. The results showed that the mediating effects of perceived warmth and competence were not significant for donation intention (Competence:  $b = .03$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.2502, .3238]$ ; Warmth:  $b = .03$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.2644, .3290]$ ). However, the mediating effect of perceived competence was significant for revisiting intention (Competence:  $b = .24$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[.0496, .5460]$ ;

Warmth:  $b = -.07$ , 95% bootstrap CI =  $[-.3814, .1297]$ ). Therefore, H4b was partially supported but H3b was not supported. Table 3 summarizes the hypothesis testing results for both Study 1 and Study 2.

Table 2. *MANOVA results (Study 2)*

Source	Pillai's	Univariate Follow-ups					
	Trace ( <i>p-value</i> )	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	DF	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<b>Test Effects</b>							
Restaurant Type	0.037	Donate Intent	24.995	1	24.995	8.606	0.004
	(0.012)	RI	4.697	1	4.697	2.865	0.092
Construal Level	0.041	Donate Intent	18.198	1	18.198	6.266	0.013
	(0.008)	RI	12.017	1	12.017	7.329	0.007
Restaurant Type *	0.031	Donate Intent	8.647	1	8.647	2.977	0.086
Construal Level	(0.025)	RI	11.296	1	11.296	6.890	0.009
<b>Error</b>	-	Donate Intent	679.610	234	2.904		
		RI	383.647	234	1.640		
<b>Total</b>	-	Donate Intent	4649.313	238			
		RI	8360.250	238			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	-	Donate Intent	730.518	237			
		RI	410.669	237			

Figure 4. The interaction effect of restaurant type and construal level on intent to donate (study 2)

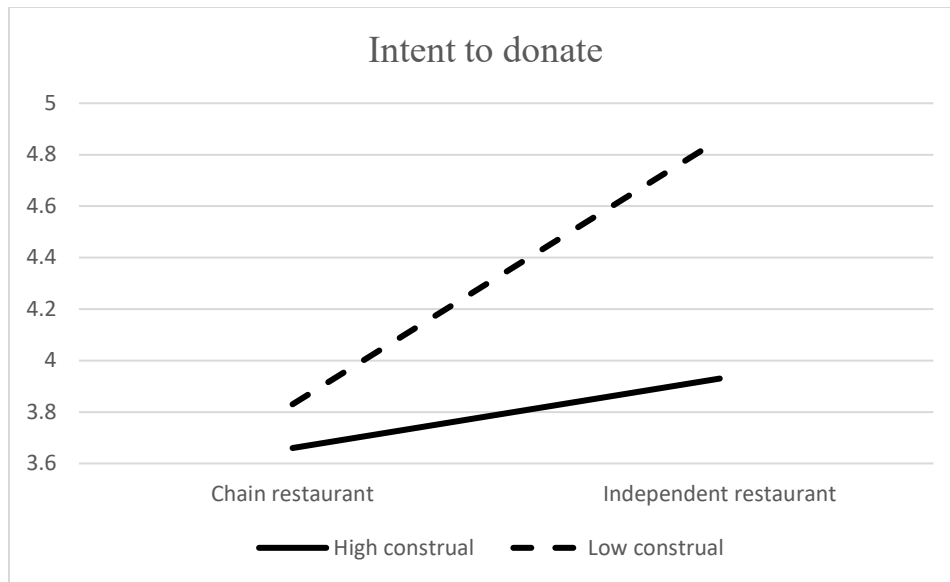


Figure 5. The interaction effect of restaurant type and construal level on revision intention (study 2)

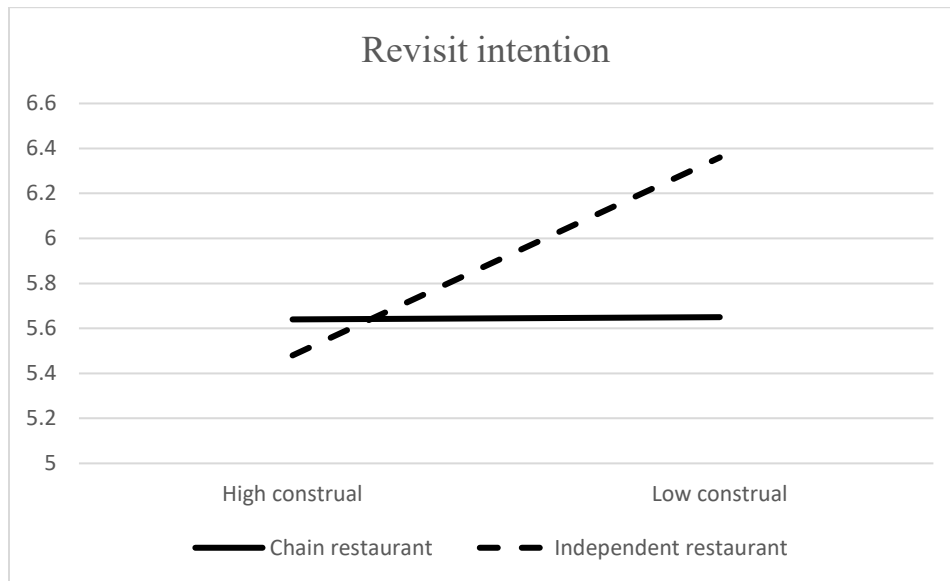


Table 3. Hypothesis testing for both studies

Proposed hypothesis	Result	Explanations

H1a	Partially supported	Given CSR initiatives focus on global environment, consumers are more likely to revisit independent restaurants (vs. chain restaurants).
H1b	Supported	Given CSR initiatives focus on local communities, consumers will show a similar level of intent to donate and revisit intention towards local independent and chain restaurants
H2a	Supported	Given a low level construal CSR message, consumers are more likely to donate and revisit to local independent restaurants (vs. chain)
H2b	Supported	Given a high level construal CSR message, consumers will respond similarly to independent and chain restaurants' CSR initiatives
H3a	Partially supported	Perceived warmth mediates the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on revisit intention.
H3b	Not supported	Perceived warmth does not mediate the impact of CSR type and construal level on consumer behaviors.
H4a	Not supported	Perceived competence does not mediate the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on consumer behaviors.
H4b	Partially supported	Perceived competence mediates the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on revisit intention.

## Discussion

We conducted two studies to examine the impact of CSR message communication on donations for different types of restaurants (i.e., local independent restaurants and chain restaurants). Study 1 examined how two types of CSR initiatives (i.e., local community vs. global environment) are perceived. The results indicated that CSR type influenced consumers' willingness to donate and revisiting intentions towards different types of restaurants. In particular, when the CSR message focuses on global community, consumers showed a greater level of revisit intentions toward independent restaurants (vs. chain). When the CSR message focuses on the local community, such a difference disappeared. Such results support prior research's findings that CSR type matters in the restaurant context. For example, Andreu et al. (2015) focus on environment-related and employee-based CSR initiatives. Although consumers' attribution level is salient in both types, an emotional message is more effective in employee-based CSR initiatives, whereas a rational message is more effective in environment-related CSR initiatives, suggesting that CSR type matters. In this study, consumers prefer local independent restaurants' CSR initiatives (vs. chain) to global environment CSR initiatives because the former benefit local stakeholders, including consumers. Local independent CSR initiative provides a less distant messaging toward consumers, which may create emotional attachment. Local independent restaurants, therefore, should find effective ways to advertise their global environment CSR initiatives to attract more customer, which could lead to enhanced customer satisfaction and financial performance. Chain restaurants are generally perceived as more distant than local independent restaurants, so local community CSR initiatives may help alleviate such perception gap. More local stakeholders can benefit from a more local community-driven CSR initiative and are likely to support restaurants with such initiatives. In this respect, chain

restaurants should consider assigning greater authority to regional managers to make decisions about implementing CSR initiatives that focus on the local community. Moreover, Study 1 found that perceived warmth was a significant mediator for revisiting intention. One plausible explanation is that consumers vary their emotional responses to different CSR practices, as their interests could be incompatible with other stakeholders (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2015). Global environmental and local community CSR initiatives may satisfy different consumer interests so that it may create a moderated mediation effect for revisit intention.

In Study 2, we further explored the impact of message construal level on local community CSR initiatives by local independent restaurants and chain restaurants. The results showed that construal level has a salient effect. When the message provides details about local community CSR initiatives rather than merely stating a general purpose, consumers are more willing to donate to the local independent restaurant's CSR initiative and revisit the restaurant. This finding lines up with previous research on construal level, particularly in the context of donations (e.g., Zhang, 2014; Zhu et al., 2017). Consumers prefer a specific, closer message to an abstract, distant message because they favor shorter psychological distance so that they feel closely related to the actual event. Moreover, such an effect is not salient, as many chain restaurants have various CSR marketing strategies to satisfy and retain consumers (Lee et al., 2020). In addition, the results of Study 2 indicated that perceived competence was a significant mediator for revisiting intention. This study focuses on local community CSR initiatives with scenarios for message framing. We found that consumers perceive local independent restaurants as more competent towards CSR initiatives, as their messages provide less distant and concrete information.

### *Theoretical contributions*

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it expands the current understanding of CSR initiatives based on a separate stand of stakeholder theory in the restaurant context. Although prior research has explored restaurant firms' CSR messages, this study is the first to compare the effectiveness of the CSR messages on international chains with local independent restaurants. In specific, this study shows how the effectiveness of CSR practices differed based on contextual factors, such as chain affiliation or restaurant type, and emphasizes the important roles these factors played in understanding CSR initiatives. In line with the previous literature (e.g., Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008), to ensure effective marketing communication, this study suggests that different stakeholders may have a heterogeneous emphasis on CSR criteria, and firms should use different approaches when implementing certain types of CSR initiatives to deal with their relevant stakeholders. By investigating the relative effect of different types of CSR initiatives on consumers, this study provides evidence that different types of CSR initiatives can affect customers differently depending on the business environment and construal level. Specifically, the findings help explain consumer donation and patronage behaviors for different types of restaurants and CSR initiatives. Further, the findings suggest that local community and global environment CSR initiatives involve different target stakeholders and consumers may value them differently. These two initiatives do not have identical impacts on different restaurants, as these restaurants may have distinct groups of key stakeholders. Given the lack of comparative studies of different types of restaurants' CSR initiatives and their influence on stakeholders, this study contributes to the literature and provides empirical evidence to stakeholder theory in relation to CSR type. In specific, local independent restaurants focus more on the local community engagement (e.g., Lin et al., 2020), whereas chain



restaurants engage with a broader set of stakeholders, potentially from other countries (e.g., Lee et al., 2020). Precise targeted CSR message can enhance the effectiveness of CSR message, which strengthens the understanding of stakeholder theory in the restaurant industry.

Second, this study reveals significant mediating effects of perceived warmth and competence to provide an understanding of the mechanisms underlying engagement and trust levels. Two different mediating effects were identified in two experiments. Specifically, the mediation effect of perceived warmth in relation to the impact of CSR type and restaurant type on revisiting intention provides additional discourse about the role of emotion in the link between CSR message and target audiences' positive perceptions and evaluations. The tested mediation role of perceived warmth supports the findings in the extant literature (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Gao & Mattila, 2014), which indicates that perceived warmth is likely to enhance favorable consumer responses toward the company via effective CSR message. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by corroborating the importance of warmth in CSR context and suggests future studies explore accurate CSR message framing as a business strategy that deals with relevant stakeholder groups with a special emphasis on emotional connection. In addition, this study finds that perceived competence significantly mediates the impact of CSR type and construal level on revisiting intention. Such perceived competence includes firm capability and skillfulness that are relevant to their CSR strategy implementation. Given that relatively little empirical work has assessed whether consumers are likely to include a firm's competence as a factor when evaluating firms' CSR efforts, this study attempts to move the discussion from a corporate perspective to a consumer perspective and thereby contributes to the extant literature.

Third, this study provides evidence that CSR initiatives offer different values to consumers and relevant stakeholders in different contexts of the restaurant industry, namely

different types of restaurants (i.e., local independent restaurants and chain restaurants). In specific, the findings show that different types of CSR initiatives in chain restaurants influence consumer donation intention and revisiting intention to a varying degree, but not in local independent restaurants. This suggests that consumers favor local community CSR initiatives implemented by chain restaurants that have more resources and networks, as they are better suited for providing adequate benefits to the community they serve (e.g., volunteer events, corporate charitable giving, education support). Local independent restaurants, on the other hand, are critical parts of the local community so that CSR initiatives for such type of restaurants may have already impacted local stakeholders. By revealing an underlying mechanism of CSR communication, the findings of this study further suggest ways that CSR messages built on signaling theory may promote higher stakeholder resonance and engagement. That is, the findings may help in promoting CSR initiatives where the information needs and demands of targeting stakeholders are taken into account.

Last, by examining how processing fluency influences the effectiveness of CSR messages, this study shows that CSR message framing can affect customers differently depending on construal level. This study thus furthers the discussion of CLT in restaurant research. Previous studies mainly focus on message framing via processing fluency and promotion strategy (e.g., Zhang, 2014; Line et al., 2016; Sung et al., 2020). This study explored the effect of business characteristics in message framing, in particular construal level, to examine how consumers comprehend the message based on additional external information (i.e., different contexts of the restaurant industry, namely global brand and local brand). This study finds that the combination of environmental factor (i.e., business characteristics) and types of CSR initiatives extends CLT, in which consumers process information about CSR initiatives

differently depending on business type. In this study, message framing was considered to be a combination of message presentation and extrinsic cues that are transient and provide details of CSR initiatives.

### *Practical implications*

Although a growing number of restaurant companies have implemented CSR initiatives to show their commitment to society, they have had little guidance from the literature regarding effective ways to promote these initiatives (Kim et al., 2012). This study consequently has several important implications for the restaurant industry practitioners. This study posits that if a restaurant aims to deliver CSR messages in a way that induces consumer engagement (i.e., donation intention) and further enhances customer-related outcome (e.g., revisiting intention), it should do so while considering its branding conditions and business environment. Specifically, depending on their brand identity and business scope, local independent restaurants and international chain restaurants should differentiate their CSR messages and types of CSR initiatives they promote. This study thus assists restaurant industry practitioners in developing CSR messages for their target audiences and stakeholders, including consumers. In particular, CSR communication should be tailored for different types of restaurants (i.e., local independent restaurants and chain restaurants). Chain restaurants should choose local community CSR initiatives over global environment CSR initiatives to enhance consumer revisiting intentions. That is, chain restaurants should use their CSR messages to emphasize their local community CSR initiatives, such as volunteering in local institutions or community projects, supporting a local charity with financial contributions, or sponsoring a local event. Such initiatives can further satisfy the needs of local stakeholders and develop reliable relationships. For example, Texas

Roadhouse empowers employees to serve in local communities. In specific, Louisville-based Texas Roadhouse teams up with Christian Appalachian Project to impact lives of children and families in Appalachia. More recently, Starbucks supports communities impacted by Hawaii wildfires. Starbucks is working quickly and diligently to ensure the safety of all of their local partners in affected areas and to understand the impact in the communities they serve. In specific, the Starbucks Foundation is providing a total of \$100,000 in grants to nonprofit organizations providing support to those in need. In a similar vein, McDonald's starts to develop programs designed to deliver longer-term community support that satisfy locally relevant needs of franchisees as well as individuals around the world.

In addition, restaurant marketing managers should manipulate the construal mindset in different situations. For example, local independent restaurants may provide additional details about their CSR initiatives, as a lower construal level is preferred by consumers. CSR messages should include the purpose of the CSR initiative, the beneficiaries of donations, and the specific outcome that the charity aims to achieve. Such details can help consumers better understand the initiatives and shorten the psychological distance. For example, many major chain restaurants, such as McDonald's or Starbucks, describe their CSR messages in a way that represents specific CSR goals accompanied with certain numbers (e.g., Supplier diversity goal by Starbucks: Starbucks committed to spend \$1.5 billion annually with diverse suppliers by 2030. In FY22, \$882 million had been spent with diverse suppliers, which helps stakeholders to understand their CSR initiatives better). The benefit of such a concrete message framing is particularly effective for local independent restaurants, whose stakeholders are more closely connected and may be aware of each other's needs, compared to chain restaurants.

Finally, the findings in relation to two different mediating effects (i.e., perceived warmth and competence) suggest that restaurant marketing managers should not only focus on prioritization of certain CSR initiatives but also frame CSR messages that highlight both the warmth and the competence aspect of those CSR initiatives. Specifically, as heterogeneity may exist among interests of target audiences and consumers, restaurant industry practitioners should acknowledge that different CSR initiatives bring different consumers' emotional responses and further influence their behavioral outcomes. In addition, according to the results of Study 2, target audiences and consumers are likely to perceive restaurants with low construal level messages as more competent towards CSR initiatives, as their messages provide less distant and concrete information. In this respect, restaurant marketing managers should pay attention to consumer perceptions of competence elicited by those CSR initiatives.

### *Limitations*

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, this study used a hypothetical experimental design. Although this research design is effective in addressing causal effects among variables, a field study methodology can be used in future research to test such effects in real-life settings. Second, this research only focused on two types of CSR practices (i.e., local community vs global environment) without addressing other CSR types (e.g., employee welfare). Future research can examine other types of CSR engaged in by restaurants to evaluate their message framing. Third, our research identified perceived warmth as the underlying psychological mechanism behind the effect of CSR on consumers. Future research should explore other mediators such as perceived value, trust, or engagement. Additionally, given the nature of CSR, future research should consider the self-presentation bias

issue as well. Last but not least, several of the measurement scales we adopted from prior research only have two items. Future research is encouraged to select scales that have three items or more to increase reliability.

## **Conclusion**

This research used two studies to scrutinize the effectiveness of CSR initiatives by local independent restaurants and chain restaurants. Study 1 focused on the CSR type (local community vs. global environment), and Study 2 examined the CSR message construal level (in details vs. general). Our findings from Study 2 showed that local community CSR initiatives in chain restaurants stimulated a higher level of willingness to donate and greater revisiting intentions than global environmental CSR initiatives. Such an effect did not exist in local independent restaurants. In addition, Study 2 found that consumers were more willing to donate to and revisit local independent restaurants if the local community CSR initiative provided details rather than expressing only a general purpose. Our research extends the current understanding of stakeholder theory and construal level theory. Restaurant managers and marketers can also benefit from the findings to customize their CSR messages to increase consumers' willingness to donate to their CSR initiatives and revisit the restaurant.

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## **Appendix I: Scenarios**

### **Study 1: chain restaurant and local community CSR scenario**

Imagine the following scenario: A few days from now, you decide to eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a chain restaurant) with your regular dining companion(s). When your server brings you the bill, he or she informs you that the restaurant is participating in a sponsor program to benefit the local community. In specific:

\_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a chain restaurant) invests in benefits to the local community in a way that improves quality of life in the local community, employees, and/or consumers as a top priority, such as sponsoring cultural programs for the local community, educational programs, or public health programs.

Your server further informs you that you can participate in this initiative by adding a donation to your bill.

### **Study 1: local independent restaurant and environmental CSR scenario**

Imagine the following scenario: A few days from now, you decide to eat dinner at \_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a local independent restaurant) with your regular dining companion(s). When your server brings you the bill, he or she informs you that the restaurant is participating in activities to protect the global environment. In specific:

\_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a local independent restaurant) invests in benefits to the global environment in a way that reduces any harmful effects on the natural environment as a top priority, such as developing/implementing pro-environmental initiatives (e.g., reducing pollution and recycling), launching eco-friendly products, using only the necessary natural resources.

Your server further informs you that you can participate in this initiative by adding a donation to your bill.

### **Study 2 chain restaurant and high construal level**

Imagine the following scenario: Suppose you are having a dinner at \_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a chain restaurant). When you're having a meal, you immediately notice that the restaurant is doing following campaigns:

Our restaurant makes an effort to improve quality of life in local community focusing on giving back to local communities. Our restaurant provides educational opportunities and career development programs to embrace community.

If you'd like to be a part of it, please participate now by adding a donation to your bill.

### **Study 2 local independent restaurant and low construal level**

Imagine the following scenario: Suppose you are having a dinner at \_\_\_\_ (respondent entered a local independent restaurant). When you're having a meal, you immediately notice that the restaurant is doing following campaigns:

In partnership with local community organizations, our restaurant is offering a new pre-employment work-readiness and soft skill training design to help young people develop the competencies as well as making a real impact in the local communities regarding opportunities for employment. Specifically, in 2021, our restaurant began a five-year, one hundred-thousand-dollar commitment to fund collegiate scholarships, as well as grants for supervised agriculture experiences for high school students.

If you'd like to be a part of it, please participate now by adding a donation to your bill.

## Appendix II: Systematic literature review of CSR message framing in restaurants

Authors	CSR initiatives	Restaurant types	Message framing	Theoretical background	Behavioral outcome
Andreu et al. (2015)	Employee-based and environmental-related	Fictitious	Emotional vs. rational	Attribution theory	Positive
Line et al. (2016)	Garbage and water usage reduction	Fictitious	Construal levels (temporal, spatial, and social)	Construal level theory and information processing theory	Attitude
Chen & Jai (2018)	Food waste prevention	Buffet restaurant	Gain vs. loss and with vs. without creditable source	Prospect theory and attribution theory	Behavioral intentions
Xu & Jeong (2019)	Green practices	Fine dining vs. fast casual dining	Attribute-based vs. benefit-based appeal	Construal level theory	Attitude and visiting intentions
Kim et al. (2019)	Environmental (eco-labels and eco-certifications)	Fictitious	Text-only vs. one with text and visuals	N/A	Trust, scepticism, and corporate reputation
Huang & Liu (2020)	Local food bank	Drive-through	Warmth-focused vs. Competence-focused	Processing fluency theory	Donation intention and brand loyalty
Sung et al. (2020)	Goodness	Chain restaurant	Concrete vs. abstract	Construal level theory	Credibility and brand equity
Pérez et al. (2020)	Ecofood	Fictitious	Storytelling vs. expositive	Storytelling theory	Purchase and advocacy
Huang et al. (2021)	Food waste prevention	Buffet restaurant	Gain vs. loss	Prospect theory and construal level theory	Repatronage intention and food waste reduction intention
He et al. (2022)	Local food bank	Fictitious	Pride vs. empathy	Theories of social judgment	Loyalty intention
Kang & Baker (2022)	Medical workers	Fictitious	Cause promotion, psychological	Congruence theory and psychological ownership theory	Purchase intention, intention to support, and positive WOM



			ownership, or advocacy advertising		
Stadlthanne r et al. (2022)	Environmental	Cafe	Gain vs. loss	Prospect theory	Intention to cause and intention to company
Schade et al. (2022)	Corporate-NGO partnership	Fictious	Narrative vs. expositive	Narrative paradigm theory	Attitude, eWOM

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