Corporate Social Responsibility and Word - of - Mouth Intentions

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Abstract

Companies have invested substantial resources in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in part to accomplish various strategic objectives. However, firms may utilize CSR to not merely benefit the environment and society, but also to accomplish various firm level strategic objectives and gain competitive advantage. This paper examined the effectiveness of CSR in generating word - of - mouth and integrated the literature in CSR with the literature on WOM and demonstrated the linkages between the two. We tested the model with survey data from consumers in Korea. This was further supplemented with qualitative depth interviews in the United States. The results suggested that CSR image influenced trust and loyalty, and that trust and loyalty had a positive influence on WOM intentions. This research demonstrated that CSR activities could help with generating WOM and should motivate companies to engage in CSR, thus benefiting various stakeholders and society at large.

Keywords : CSR, loyalty, trust, WOM

Companies are showering increasing attention and resources on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Hillenbrand & Money, 2007 ; Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011). The many definitions of CSR speak to the efforts of companies to voluntarily and proactively incorporate societal and environmental perspectives into their operations and in their dealings with various stakeholders (Lantos, 2001 ; Oberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy, 2013). But as Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2011) pointed out, firms may utilize CSR to not merely benefit the environment and society, but also to accomplish various firm level strategic objectives and for gaining a competitive advantage. As Marín, Rubio, and De Maya (2012) noted, CSR can be a strategic competitive weapon for companies. A meta - analytic investigation conducted by Hou, Liu, Fan, and Wei (2016) found a positive association between CSR and firm performance in East Asia.

Many leading firms have recognized the importance of CSR and have appreciated its role as an important tool for eliciting favorable company image and attracting consumers' attention and consequently, emphasize various activities that resonate with stakeholders, especially those related to business ethics, environmental issues, treatment of employees, and the public good. Therefore, it is not surprising that researchers have given some attention to the impact of CSR initiatives on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Feldman & Vasquez - Parraga, 2013 ; Kang, 2014 ; Mueller, 2014 ; Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011).

Researchers have studied the influence of CSR initiatives on company image, consumer identification with the company, consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intentions (Oberseder et al., 2013). Researchers have found that CSR activities can contribute positively to firm image, enhance competitive advantage, and positively

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influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intention (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Forehand & Grier, 2003 ; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2004). In addition, CSR activities have been shown to be a good employee recruiting tool and encourages employees' identification with and commitment to their employers (Turban & Greening, 1996). CSR activities can thus enhance firm performance and contribute to firm reputation (Zhu, Sun, & Leung, 2014). One source of competitive advantage for firms is their ability to generate positive word-of-mouth (Reichheld, 2003). Bhattacharya, Korschun, and Sen (2009) pointed out that consumers' talk about firms' CSR activities with those in their social network.

Word - of - mouth (WOM) communication can be defined as "informal communication directed at other consumers on the ownership, use, or characteristics" (Westbrook 1987, p.261) of particular goods/services and/or sellers (De Matos & Rossi, 2008). The incidence and effect of WOM is shaped by various product and service characteristics such as the price and type of products and the stage of purchasing decisions (Stanley, 1977). Word-of-mouth communication has gained in prominence because of the rise of the Internet and social networking sites, and the much increased adoption of various electronic communication tools such as cell phones and smart phones through which consumers can more easily share information about their experiences with a much wider audience (Henning - Thurau & Walsh, 2003; Vázquez - Casielles, Suárez - Álvarez, & del Río - Lanza, 2013). Online communities, electronic newsgroups, blogs, and review sites such as Yelp reflect this important phenomenon (Breazeale, 2009 ; Ward & Ostrom, 2003). Vázquez - Casielles et al. (2013) noted the emergence of a trade association that focused exclusively on WOM marketing (WOMMA), the emergence of consulting firms like gaspedal.com specializing in WOM marketing, and the substantial usage of WOM marketing by major corporations like Nestle, Proctor & Gamble, and Microsoft.

De Matos and Rossi (2008) conducted a meta - analytic review of WOM communications and took a comprehensive look at the various antecedents or drivers of WOM. They observed that in general, researchers have not given sufficient attention to the antecedents of WOM. Their meta - analytic review found that antecedents of WOM were satisfaction, loyalty, service quality, perceived value, commitment, and trust.

In this paper, we demonstrate that CSR image also influences and shapes WOM. Bhattacharya et al. (2009) pointed out that the outcomes of CSR image represented a crucial topic but remained a relatively unexplored area of research. This study addresses the questions of whether CSR image influences WOM intention and what variables mediate the relationship between CSR image and WOM intention. Our study addresses a key research gap by integrating the research streams of CSR and WOM and examines the link between the two. It is to the best of our knowledge, the first study to demonstrate that CSR can promote WOM and also show the underlying mechanisms through which this might occur. We use both qualitative and quantitative research set in two different countries to test our hypotheses. In doing so, we contribute both to the CSR literature and the literature on WOM communication. As previously noted, companies are devoting significant resources to CSR activities and are also actively using WOM on a much larger scale to shape consumer image.

To address these central questions, we examine the relationship between CSR initiatives and WOM and suggest that two variables - trust and loyalty mediate this relationship. By doing so, we contribute to the growing body of literature that suggests that CSR can be a strategic competitive weapon. Second, while it is established in the literature that CSR initiatives can generate goodwill for a company, much remains to be understood about the influence of CSR. A major contribution of this research is that CSR can actually go beyond mere generation of goodwill and can actually generate demonstrable benefits for firms is an important finding. After all, companies or many executives within companies may not be fully persuaded about the benefits of expending money and effort on CSR initiatives. Our study empirically demonstrates an important and significant benefit of these initiatives. The importance of our findings is magnified when we consider that firms are now actively seeking ways to increase WOM, which has become even more important in the age of social media. We demonstrate that WOM can be induced via CSR initiatives and identify mediating effects. Our theoretical model draws upon the literature in relationship marketing, in addition to the CSR and WOM literature. Next, we develop our conceptual framework

and hypotheses. Then, we describe the data used to assess the conceptual model and present the results. Finally, we provide theoretical and managerial implications of the results, and identify limitations that can guide further research.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

While some scholars have been less than enchanted with CSR initiatives and have argued that the goal of a business is to create profits by satisfying customer needs (e.g., Friedman, 1970) and that businesses fulfill their social responsibility by creating employment and paying taxes, other scholars have long suggested that businesses should consciously work towards the common good (Carroll, 1979, 1991; Shaw & Post, 1993). Bowen (1953) defined CSR as firms' obligation to society while Maignan and Ferrell (2001) suggested that CSR includes various activities such as donations and volunteering. Today, firms engage in CSR activities with various motivations, such as enhancing their corporate image (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001, 2004) or as a way to enhance their relationship with various stakeholders be it customers, employees, or the community at large (Greening & Turban, 2000 ; Sparks & Cowton, 2004).

To develop the conceptual foundation for this study, we primarily relied on the relevant literature in areas such as CSR image and WOM intention. In the following paragraphs, we discuss these in greater detail.

(1) CSR Image and Trust : Morgan and Hunt (1994) ; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Barry (2002) ; Ganesan (1994), and others viewed trust as confidence in a partner and a belief in a partner's reliability, cooperativeness, and as a belief that they will keep their word. Essentially, consumer trust is a faith that a consumer has in a company's benevolence to come through with what they are promising. Trust has been shown to shape consumer attitudes and is found to reduce consumers' perceived purchase risk (Everard & Galleta, 2006). As Panda, Swar, and Mukerjee (2014) had noted, to build a brand, one needs to win the trust of consumers.

Brand trust has been defined as "the confident expectations of the brand reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer" (Delgado - Ballester, Munuera - Aleman, & Yague-Guillen, 2003, p. 37). Brand trust has been shown to influence brand equity (Ahmad & Thyagaraj, 2015). Pivato, Misani, and Tencati (2008) and Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, and Avramidis (2009) argued that firms' philanthropic activities can increase consumers' trust. This is so as through their CSR initiatives, firms send signals about their honesty and their commitment to consumer welfare (Stanaland et al., 2011). As Stokburger - Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012) argued, "brands have the ability to embody, inform, and communicate desirable consumer identities" (p. 406). Chernev and Blair (2015) observed that consumers viewed products of companies engaging in CSR more favorably. Thus, if consumers were to be favorably influenced by a firm's CSR activities, it would lead them to put greater trust in the firm. Lii, Wu, and Ding (2013) pointed out that CSR influences consumer attitudes. Thus, if a consumer perceived a firm's CSR activities favorably, it would be indicative that a firm was good and desirable as CSR activities bestow legitimacy to a firm (Pfau, Haigh, Sims, & Wigley, 2008 ; Stanaland et al., 2011).

Therefore, we hypothesize that the more favorably consumers perceive a firm's CSR activities, the more likely they will trust the firm. Thus :

✥ **H1:** Consumers' CSR image is positively related to consumer trust.

(2) CSR Image and Loyalty : Loyalty speaks to the desire of a consumer to maintain a long - term relationship with a firm (De Matos & Rossi, 2008). Researchers have focused on both the attitudinal and behavioral components of loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty comprises of referral and purchase intention and disinterest in competitive products ; whereas, behavioral loyalty is comprised of frequency and amount of purchase and repurchase (Chaudhuri &

Holbrook, 2001 ; Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988). Shin and Thai (2015) demonstrated that customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by CSR image. Saju and Rajan (2014) found that CSR significantly influenced customer loyalty within the Indian ethnic apparel retail context. Ferreira, Avila, and de Faria (2010) found that corporate social responsibility efforts of the firms enhanced the value image of consumers. Other studies demonstrated that CSR activities can enhance identification with the firm, customer purchases, and firm performance (Ellen, Webb, & Mohr 2006 ; Fombrun, 1996; Kang 2014; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Hur, Kim, and Park (2013) suggested that perceived social values influenced customer satisfaction within the context of green innovation. Martinez and del Bosque (2013) demonstrated that CSR initiatives favorably influence consumer trust and satisfaction. Thus, if a consumer perceives a firm's CSR activities favorably, that would increase commitment towards the firm. Accordingly, we hypothesize :

✥ **H2 :** Consumers' CSR image is positively related to consumer loyalty.

(3) Trust and WOM Intention : Trust has considerable influence on consumers' behavioral responses, and empirical studies have shown that the higher the level of trust, the more likely the positive WOM intention (De Matos &Rossi, 2008; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Trust reduces consumers' perceived purchase risk (Everard & Galleta, 2006). According to De Matos and Rossi (2008), trust provides consumers with various benefits such as lower anxiety and reduced uncertainty, and less vulnerability with respect to their transactions. When a consumer trusts a firm, the consumer has a good reason to talk about the firm's positive attributes because he/she can be confident of the firm's performance and that his/her trust in the firm will not be misplaced. As such, trust gives consumers the needed confidence to recommend a firm. Accordingly, we hypothesize that the more a consumer trusts a firm, the more likely he or she will have positive WOM intention. Thus :

✥ **H3:** Consumers' trust has a positive effect on consumers' WOM intention.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
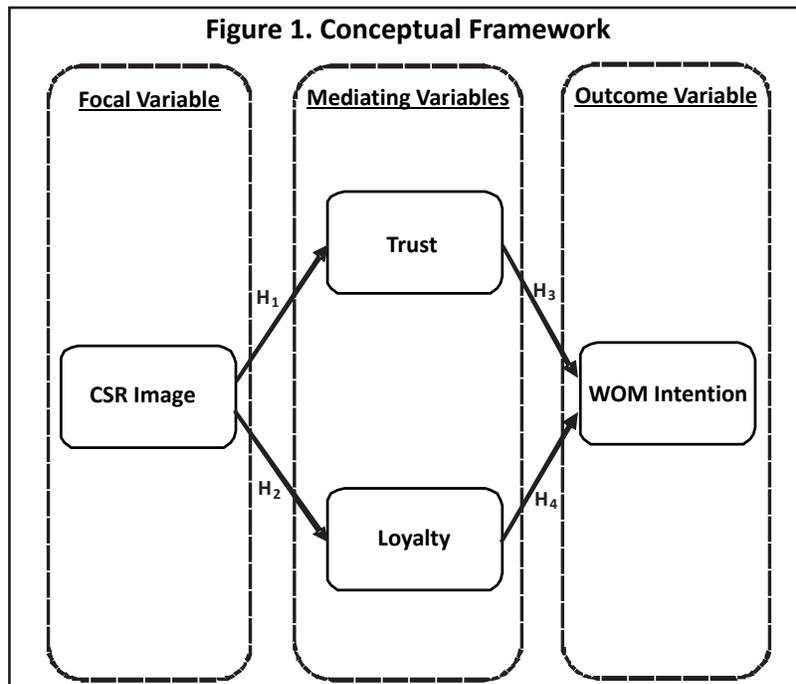
(4) Loyalty and WOM Intention : Few studies have investigated the effects of loyalty on WOM intention (De Matos & Rossi, 2008). To some extent, this may be because some researchers have treated WOM as a component of loyalty (De Matos & Rossi 2008). However, most researchers such as Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) treated loyalty as a distinct construct from WOM and argued that loyalty increased WOM intention positively. Similarly, De Matos and Rossi (2008) pointed out that the more loyal the customers, the more likely they are to engage in positive WOM. Intuitively, higher product usage (a measure of behavioral loyalty) should translate into higher WOM (Samson, 2010). Loyal consumers tend to show a positive attitude and commitment to a firm (Johnson, Garbarino, & Sivadas 2006). As a result, loyalty should influence WOM intentions. Consequently, we hypothesize that the more loyal a customer is to a firm, the more likely he or she is to have positive WOM intention. Thus:

✎ **H4:** Consumer loyalty has a positive effect on consumers' WOM intention.

The Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of this study based on the above hypotheses.

Methodology

✎ **Study 1 – Data Collection and Measurement :** Two hundred (n = 200) students from a business school in Korea (including international students) were randomly selected and they agreed participate in the survey. Each student was given a certificate of 10,000 Korean Won (about US $10) as incentive to participate. The survey was administered to the students individually during the summer of 2013 ; 53% of the respondents were men and 47% were women and about 80% were undergraduate students and the remaining were graduate students. Given our broad focus on consumer behavior, business ethics, and CSR image, this sample is appropriate.

We employed 5 - point multi-item Likert - type scales. We adapted three items for CSR image from Maignan and Ferrell (2001) ; four items for trust from Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) ; three items for loyalty from Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) ; and three items for WOM intention from Chevalier and Mayzlin (2004). The items are listed in the Appendix. To further ensure content and face validity of the measures prior to the deployment of the surveys, we conducted in-depth interviews with 10 key informants. On the basis of their responses, we revised a few questionnaire items to enhance clarity.

Analysis and Results

(1) Measurement Model : In the purification process, we did not note any problems and as such, no items needed to be deleted because of low factor loading. Next, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. The measurement model fits well. All factor loadings loaded on their respective latent constructs and were significant (p < .01). Furthermore, the lowest composite reliability was .90, and additionally, the lowest average variance extracted was .70, providing good evidence of adequate reliability and convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Furthermore, the squared correlations between the latent constructs were smaller than the average variance extracted from the respective constructs, providing further evidence of discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). We next conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) and the structural model analysis with Lisrel 8.70. The measurement model (Table 1) indicates acceptable reliability and validity. The composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha of all the constructs exceed the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988), suggesting sufficient reliability. All factor loadings are significant (p < .01), suggesting sufficient convergent validity. The maximum correlation is .21 (Table 2), and therefore, $\Phi \pm 2 * $ S.E. is not 1, further indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The *AVE* (average variance extracted) exceeds their respective squared correlations, indicating sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 1. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	*AVE*
CSR	CSR1	0.89	0.87	0.90	0.75
	CSR2	0.88			
	CSR3	0.85			
Loyalty	Loy1	0.89	0.88	0.92	0.70
	Loy2	0.87			
	Loy3	0.89			
Trust	Trust1	0.86	0.86	0.91	0.71
	Trust2	0.84			
	Trust3	0.88			
	Trust4	0.86			
WOM	WOM1	0.92	0.90	0.94	0.83
	WOM2	0.90			
	WOM3	0.91			

Note: $n = 200$. All factor loadings are significant at $p < .01$, AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 2. Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Constructs
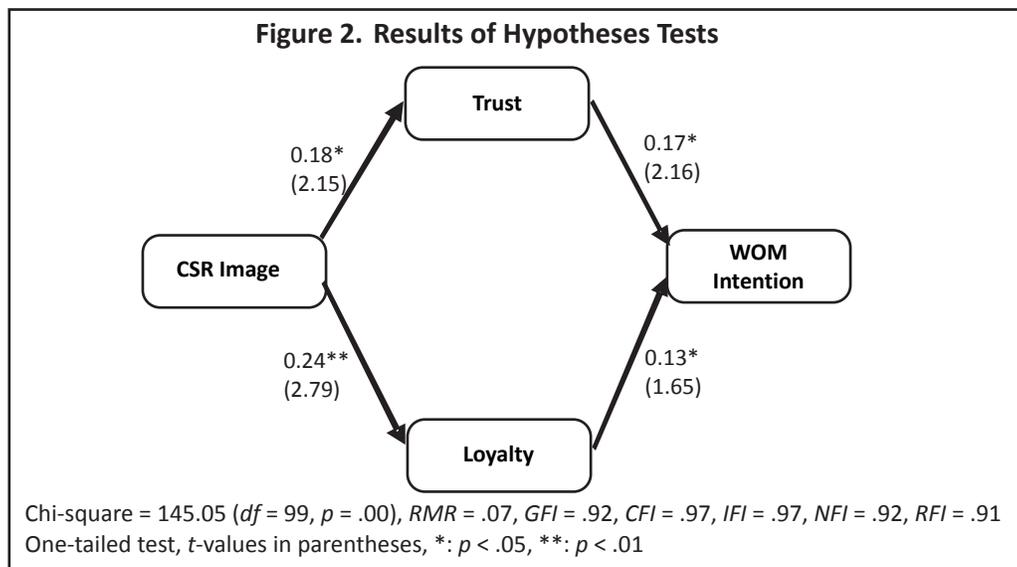
Construct	Correlation				*Mean*	*SD*
CSR	1				4.51	0.48
Loyalty	0.2**	1			4.47	0.49
Trust	0.14*	0.2**	1		4.46	0.51
WOM	0.14*	0.17*	0.16*	1	4.49	0.59

Note: $n = 200$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

We checked for common method bias by conducting Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The results of the exploratory factor analysis indicate five factors with Eigen values exceeding 1.0, and there is no single factor explaining a large portion of the explained variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We next employed the CFA marker technique (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). The one-marker CFA model provides a significantly worse fit than the original CFA model (Δ chi-square > 3.84, $p < .05$), indicating that common method bias is not an issue in this study. The Table 1 presents the results from the confirmatory factor analysis, while Table 2 presents descriptive and correlational statistics.

(2) Hypotheses Tests : To test the hypotheses, we conducted structural equation modeling analysis with Lisrel 8.70. The Figure 2 presents the results, which generally indicate that the model provides a good fit to the data (chi-square = 145.05, $df = 99$, $p = .00$, RMR = .07, GFI = .92, NFI = .92, CFI = .97, IFI = .97). CSR image has a significant positive effect on trust (coefficient = .18, $p < .05$), providing support for H1. CSR image has a significant positive effect on loyalty (coefficient = .24, $p < .01$), providing support for H2. Trust has a significant positive effect on WOM intention (coefficient = .17, $p < .05$), providing support for H3. Loyalty has a significant positive effect on WOM intention (coefficient = .13, $p < .05$), providing support for H4.

In sum, all the four hypotheses are supported. CSR image has a significant effect on trust and loyalty, and trust and loyalty have significant positive effects on WOM intention. Accordingly, trust and loyalty mediate CSR image and WOM intention. There is no direct effect from CSR image to WOM intention, further confirming the mediation. The Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the hypotheses testing results.

Figure 2. Results of Hypotheses Tests

Chi-square = 145.05 (*df* = 99, *p* = .00), *RMR* = .07, *GFI* = .92, *CFI* = .97, *IFI* = .97, *NFI* = .92, *RFI* = .91
One-tailed test, *t*-values in parentheses, *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$

(3) Study 2 - Qualitative Study : Study 1 was set in Korea. We next decided to probe these issues in a different cultural context, that is, the United States. We conducted depth interviews with six respondents in the United States in early 2015. We choose depth interviews to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest. We also asked respondents to think of a specific company - they were asked to choose their favorite brand. The brands chosen were Apple, smart phone maker HTC, retail stores TJ Maxx and White House Black Market, the chocolatier Hershey's and consumer food giant Pepsi.

The respondents came from a variety of professions, age, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. The respondents were four women and two men ranging in age from 18 to 65 years. Three of the respondents were Caucasians, two were African Americans, and one Mexican American. A trained interviewer who was given a set of questions to guide the discussions conducted the interviews.

(i) Consumer Loyalty, Trust, and Word of Mouth : When prompted, the respondents were able to identify their favorite brand and articulate the extent and ways in which they were loyal to the brand. One respondent, a 65 year old retired pre-school teacher described her loyalty to the retail store TJ Maxx by saying, "It is the first place I seek out when I have to buy something," and "Friends and family know that I love shopping there." She added "my wardrobe is TJ Maxx - clothing, jewelry, perfumes." Another respondent, an 18 year old fast food restaurant shift supervisor described his loyalty to phone company HTC by saying, "I do consider myself loyal, do talk to other people about it." This respondent expressed annoyance at the tendency of phone salespeople to push Samsung over HTC and said it is because a "lot of people do not know what they are talking about." He further added, "I would be upset if someone criticized HTC. I think they would not be knowing what they are talking about, I would even challenge them." He added that HTC commercials focus on how they are different from other companies : "Those ads speak to me."

A 34 year old former defense worker and now student said she considered herself loyal to the women's clothing retailer White House Black Market as that was the "first place I would go to buy work clothes." Respondents indicating loyalty for a food brand (Hershey's chocolate) or drink (Diet Pepsi) also considered themselves loyal. The Hershey loyalist, a 20 year old full time college student said she bought Hershey's "99% of the time." She also said she spoke fondly of the brand to others. A 46 year old stay-at-home mother proclaimed loyalty to Pepsi and said this was what she ordered when she ate at restaurants and strongly preferred it to Coca-Cola, but if there was substantial price difference, she may choose Coca-Cola. She claimed that she could spot Pepsi in a blind taste test.

Another respondent, a 24 year old computer store employee who indicated that Apple was his favorite brand but also used competitor products such as Microsoft's Safari tablet said he trusted Apple as the "Company is well-organized. Knows how to make a sleek, good looking product." He further added that in television product placements, Apple products look "sleek, modern, and progressive thinking."

Respondents did discuss their favorite products with those in their social network. The 20 year old woman whose favorite brand was Hershey's remarked, "I have talked about the brand too many times to count." In other instances, the number of people with whom respondents discussed their favorite brand ranged from 10-15 to 30 people. In some cases, as in the case of clothing, such conversations emerged when someone showed interest in what the respondent was wearing. Respondents had mixed views of what their reaction would be if they heard someone criticize their favorite brand. Some said they would put it down as someone's personal opinion, but it would definitely prompt them to investigate the situation more closely depending on what was being said ; whereas, others might say nothing because it would be silly to "fight over a product." Others would be willing to defend their favorite brand.

(ii) CSR Influences : Respondents only had some awareness about CSR activities of their favorite brands. Sometimes such awareness was triggered by (as in the case of retail stores) when the store asked them during check-out as to whether they wanted to donate to a cause. A respondent appreciated this effort as this was the only time she really contributed to charity. Other respondents said that they did not think too much about CSR "except if a company has a terrible track record such as Wal-Mart." The consensus was that knowing a firm's CSR initiatives would make them think even more favorably about their favorite brand.

Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

This study examines the mechanism underlying CSR image and WOM intention. While prior research has examined the consequences of CSR activities on firm performance and consumer behavior (Brown & Dacin, 1997 ; Drumwright, 1996 ; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), only limited attention has been paid to the effect of CSR on WOM intention. We note that firms are increasingly focusing on ways in which they could increase WOM. Our results indicate that CSR image has significant positive effects on trust and loyalty and that trust and loyalty have significant positive effects on WOM intention. A small qualitative study also provides support that respondents identify with trust, and are loyal and talk extensively about their favorite brands with those in their social network and that while they are not deeply aware about the CSR initiatives of their brands, knowledge of these initiatives would make them even more favorably disposed to their favorite brand. Thus, our findings have important theoretical and managerial implications. Our results of the effect of CSR on loyalty and trust are in line with other studies (e.g., Martinez & del Bosque, 2013; Shin & Thai 2015) but our model is based on a broader nomological net and analyses the mediating role of trust and loyalty on WOM.

This study makes important theoretical contributions. Our results demonstrate that the effect of CSR image on WOM intention is mediated by trust and loyalty, providing clear understanding of the mechanism underlying the relationship between CSR image and WOM intention and thus narrowing the gap in the literature on this relationship. Second, CSR image has significant influence on trust and loyalty. Therefore, the results provide strong evidence of the benefits accruing to firms engaging in CSR activities. Third, trust and loyalty have significant influence on WOM intention.

The results have important managerial implications. First, marketing managers should develop strategies that can induce customer awareness and positive image of their CSR activities. CSR activities are important, but customers' positive image of those activities is essential. Many firms fail to benefit from their CSR efforts because they fail to inform their customers of these efforts. Our qualitative study also found that many loyal consumers were unaware about their favorite company's CSR initiatives. In this regard, effective communication strategies

can be valuable. Second, managers should recognize the positive effects of CSR image on trust and loyalty as they are significant shapers of long-term relationships. The importance of CSR has been appreciated (Brown & Dacin, 1997). If firms engage in CSR, then consumers are more likely to show trust and loyalty, which can help ensure their business success. Third, marketing managers should recognize the positive influence of trust and loyalty on WOM intention. The results suggest that CSR image can trigger consumers' positive responses (trust and loyalty), making positive WOM intention more likely.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

We would like to recognize the following limitations of the study. First, we examined the mediating effects of trust and loyalty. Future research can examine a wider array of variables such as awareness, preference, market share, and various financial metrics. Second, we considered only the mediating effect, and therefore, researchers should consider moderators such as organizational commitment, and customers' personality, involvement, and knowledge. Future research can explore various potential moderators. Third, we employed survey data from one group of consumers. While we did conduct a small follow up qualitative study in a second country, different samples could add to the generalizability of the results. We employed cross-sectional study design. Accordingly, a longitudinal study should be helpful to assure this result. Finally, the sample was limited to marketing students, and therefore, future research could employ more diverse samples for increased generalizability. While we did attempt to overcome this by choosing a heterogeneous sample for the qualitative study and set it in a different country (and this follow up qualitative study does support the basic conclusions of the quantitative study), we would still recommend researchers to replicate and extend the findings of our paper with large scale studies in other contexts. One interesting insight obtained from the qualitative study was as to whether CSR initiatives would overcome negatives about a brand that people are favorably disposed to (in this case Pepsi-"soda is not good for anyone.").

In conclusion, this research enhances understanding of a mechanism for the relationship between CSR image and WOM intention, which are often an important consideration for academics and practitioners in marketing. We hope that our research will boost the field's interest in CSR image and WOM intention, thereby prompting further work in this important domain. We encourage further studies of CSR image and WOM intention to bring research attention more in line with the importance of the topic.

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Appendix 1. Measurement Items

CSR Image

1. I think that the company tries to solve social problems.
2. I think that the company participates in public activities.
3. I think that the company gives its profits back to society through philanthropic behaviors.

Trust

1. I trust the company.
2. I believe the company is capable.
3. I believe the company is honest.
4. I believe the company responds to customers' needs quickly.

Loyalty

1. I want the other people to buy the company's products.
2. I consider the company's products first when I need to buy something.
3. I plan to continue purchasing the company's products.

WOM Intention

1. I plan to provide my friends with positive information on the company's products.
2. I plan to provide Internet sites with positive information on the company's products.
3. I plan to provide significant others with positive information on the company's products.

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