

The role of brand personality and consumer skepticism in corporate social responsibility

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a key part of organizational strategy, yet its credibility depends on how consumers interpret brand motives. This thesis examines how brand personality (warmth vs. competence), CSR message focus (people, planet, profit), and consumer skepticism interact to shape perceptions of CSR authenticity.

A 3x2 between-subjects experiment was conducted using Tony's Chocolonely (warmth) and Heineken (competence) as manipulation brands. A total of 211 participants were randomly exposed to one of six CSR messages and rated perceptions of authenticity, skepticism, warmth, and competence.

Results showed that warm brands were perceived as more authentic than competent brands, and that consumer skepticism strongly reduced authenticity perceptions. Message-brand fit, however, did not moderate these effects. Across both brands, people-focused CSR messages were rated as more authentic than profit-focused ones. This suggests that the type of CSR message used is more telling for perceived CSR authenticity than message-brand fit. Contrary to expectations, competent brands appeared somewhat more vulnerable to skepticism than warm brands, though this trend was not statistically significant.

The study extends CSR communication research by showing that perceived sincerity outweighs strategic fit in authenticity judgments. For practice, it suggests that brands should emphasize warmth cues and people-centered initiatives to strengthen CSR credibility, while competence-oriented brands may need to invest more in transparency and trust-building to mitigate skepticism.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, brand personality, warmth and competence, consumer skepticism, authenticity

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important aspect of organizational strategy, significantly influencing marketing practices. CSR consists of the practices of an organization that balance economic objectives with social and environmental responsibilities, catering to the interests of multiple stakeholders such as employees, consumers and society (Mehnaz et al., 2024). For example, Starbucks is committed to their Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices program since 2004, which requires their coffee to be grown, processed and traded with regards to economical, social and environmental responsibility (SCS Global Services, n.d.). Research in marketing highlights that incorporating CSR practices in marketing strategies enhances brand loyalty and builds stronger consumer relationships (Chakraborty & Jha, 2019; Menaga & Shanmugam, 2020). It has become a core component of corporate identity, which is used as a strategic marketing dimension to influence how organizations are perceived by consumers (Menaga & Shanmugam, 2020).

The effectiveness of CSR efforts depends largely on communication. Because consumers cannot directly verify most corporate practices, they rely on communication to judge whether CSR actions are genuine. This makes CSR communication a central part of marketing strategy: it has the power to strengthen credibility and brand relationships, but also to trigger skepticism when perceived as insincere (Chong & Wang, 2024; Sivapalan et al., 2024). A key framework for CSR communication is the 3P model, standing for people, planet and profit, created by John Elkington (1994). It stems from the triple bottom line framework, which suggests that business outcomes should be measured with more than financial metrics, namely societal and environmental well-being (Elkington, 1999). The people, planet and profit dimensions provide a clear foundation for CSR communication strategy. However, the

effectiveness of a CSR message is greatly determined by the perceived identity or reputation of the organization that employs it. (Švermová, 2022).

This is where brand personality and reputation comes into play, as consumers interpret CSR communication through the lens of how they perceive the brand itself. Brand reputation is a multifaceted construct, which Fombrun & Shanley (1990) define as the audiences' collective perception of the organization. These perceptions are largely shaped by the human-like qualities that consumers attribute to brands, often referred to as brand personality. Fiske et al. (2006) suggest that consumers generally assess others based on two dimensions: warmth and competence. Consumers rely on these dimensions to evaluate the authenticity of CSR initiatives, because warmth traits (such as sincerity, empathy, and ethical concern) signal that a brand's actions are driven by intrinsic, value-based motivations rather than by external pressures or strategic gain. In contrast, competence traits are more often interpreted as reflecting calculated, performance-driven incentives (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012; Kolbl et al., 2020).

CSR communication and brand reputation have both been studied extensively, as research shows that CSR can enhance trust, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (Eisingerich et al., 2023). Similarly, studies show that brand personality traits such as warmth and competence strongly shape consumer perceptions, trust, and behavioral intentions (Xue et al., 2020; Kolbl et al., 2020). However, little is known about how the three CSR dimensions (people, planet, profit) interact with different brand personalities. In particular, it is unclear whether consumers respond more favorably to specific CSR focuses depending on whether a brand is perceived as warm or competent. Understanding this dynamic could aid organizations in using CSR messaging most effectively. At the same time, consumer skepticism toward CSR has grown, as research shows that doubts about corporate motives can significantly undermine perceived authenticity (Guo et al., 2022; Sivapalan et al., 2024). Yet few studies consider how

skepticism moderates the impact of message content and brand traits. This gap limits our understanding of how authenticity judgments are formed at the intersection of brand identity, message framing, and consumer doubt.

This study addresses the gap by examining how the three CSR dimensions—people, planet, and profit—shape consumer responses, and how these effects depend on whether the brand is perceived as warm or competent. The consumer response variable that this research focuses on is *perceived CSR authenticity*. This thesis research is structured around the following research question:

How do CSR message focus, brand personality, and consumer skepticism interact to shape perceptions of CSR authenticity?

Theoretical framework

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial component of organizational strategy over the past decades. It is most often defined as the efforts an organization takes to provide social, environmental and economic benefits to all stakeholders (Fraihat et al., 2023). The European Commission defines CSR as the enterprise's responsibility over the impact it has on society. Companies carry social responsibility by embedding their business strategy with environmental, social and ethical, considerations (European Commission, n.d.). CSR promotes a shift from shareholder-focused decision-making to stakeholder-focused decision-making practices, often laying emphasis on economical, social and environmental value-creation.

Recent studies have examined CSR from the perspective of multiple disciplines in business environments, such as management (Mason et al., 2021), marketing (Nickerson & Georgiadou, 2024; Meanaga & Shanmugam, 2020) and organizational behaviour (Roy, 2022;

Chong & Wang, 2024). Research in management literature elaborates on CSR as a tool for improving organizational reputation, mitigating risk and increasing long-term financial performance (Mason et al., 2021). In marketing, the implementation of CSR strategies is linked to brand equity, stakeholder trust and customer loyalty (Nickerson & Georgiadou, 2024). Menaga and Shanmugam (2020) found that marketing to consumers over CSR activities through social media increases consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Research in organizational behaviour emphasizes internal CSR benefits, such as employee engagement and organizational commitment. Roy (2022) explains that engaging in CSR activities significantly influences employee engagement with their employer, and stimulates a positive culture within organizations (Chong & Wang, 2024).

A foundational and influential framework in CSR literature is the Triple Bottom Line model by John Elkington (1999), which uses more than traditional financial metrics to enable corporate evaluation. The Triple Bottom Line model expands on CSR through three interconnected dimensions, namely 'people', 'planet' and 'profit', which is why it is often referred to as the 3P model. Brands CSR messages normally use one of these dimensions as the focus, depending on their identity and values (Cramer et al., 2004). The 'people' dimension emphasizes on the importance of social equity and fair labor practices. The 'planet' dimension is unmistakably linked to environmental sustainability, while the 'profit' dimension promotes economic sustainability and growth. The model suggests that long-term business success is interconnected with societal and environmental well-being. Organizations should strive for value creation through the 3P's, while being transparent to stakeholders and foster open dialogue (Cramer et al., 2004).

Perceived CSR authenticity

Building on this emphasis on transparency and open dialogue with stakeholders, perceived CSR authenticity becomes a prevalent factor in evaluating the effectiveness of CSR initiatives. It explains the level to which consumers honestly believe an organization's CSR initiatives are upright and altruistic, instead of being self-enhancing or opportunistic (Guo et al., 2022). Ellen et al. (2006) illustrate however, that consumer responses to CSR initiatives are more complex than being either self-serving or society serving. They differentiated self-centered motives into being either strategic or egoistic, while other-centered motives entailed values-driven or stakeholder-driven motives. Importantly, consumers evaluate these motives differently. Strategic and values-driven motives are generally interpreted positively—strategic motives are accepted when perceived as mutually beneficial, and values-driven motives are praised for their authenticity and moral foundation. In contrast, stakeholder-driven motives often signal lack of intrinsic commitment (Ellen et al., 2006).

Much CSR communication research has focused on outcomes such as reputation, loyalty, or purchase intention (e.g., Mehnaz et al., 2024; Mason et al., 2021). While relevant, these measures provide only an indirect view of how CSR is judged. Authenticity offers a more direct lens, as it reflects whether stakeholders perceive initiatives as sincere and aligned with brand values (Alhouti et al., 2016). In marketing research, authenticity is seen as a key driver of consumer trust and long-term relationships. Authentic brands are perceived as sincere, consistent, and true to their values, which strengthens credibility and emotional connections with consumers (Södergren, 2021; Nunes et al., 2021). Authenticity not only enhances brand attitudes and loyalty but also helps brands differentiate themselves in competitive markets, making it a crucial factor in today's value-driven marketplace (Södergren, 2021; Nunes et al., 2021). In the context of CSR communication, authenticity therefore becomes a critical outcome: it determines whether stakeholders see CSR initiatives as genuine commitments to social and environmental goals, or purely as strategic incentives.

Brand personality

The way consumers assess the authenticity of CSR efforts is deeply influenced by the human-like traits they attribute to brands, commonly referred to as brand personality. Originating from social psychology, these attributions are often explained through the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2006), which identifies two universal dimensions of social perception: warmth and competence. Building on this model, the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012) shows how consumers evaluate brands much like they evaluate people. It explains how consumers consider a brand's intentions, and its ability to act on those intentions. This perspective has been widely applied in marketing literature, emphasizing that warmth is associated with sincerity and moral intent, while competence reflects capability and reliability (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012; Kolbl et al., 2020). Together, these dimensions shape consumer responses to CSR communication by signaling whether a brand's motives are authentic or self-serving.

The dimension of warmth encompasses traits such as trustworthiness, sincerity and ethicality. Brands perceived by consumers as warm are believed to have positive intentions towards society. This is often linked to empathy and high moral standards (Fiske et al., 2006). These perceptions are formed by how brands communicate and act upon their purpose, where warm brands typically prioritize social responsibility, transparency and stakeholder wellbeing (Kolbl et al., 2020). Gao & Mattila (2014) emphasize that warmth fosters stakeholder relationships and trust, which leads to increased brand attitude and loyalty.

Conversely, the competence dimension refers to the brand's perceived ability to effectively deliver on its promises. Fiske et al. (2006) explain that competent brands are seen as efficient, reliable, skillful and intelligent. The level of perceived competence is based on a brand's performance, quality, innovation and professionalism. In contrast with warmth, which

is associated with moral character, competence reflects the capability of a brand to fulfill stakeholder expectations (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Competent brands are often associated with operational excellence and being an industry leader (Kolbl et al., 2020).

These brand personality dimensions are prevalent in consumer's evaluation of brands. As CSR initiatives are often evaluated based on perceived motives, a brand seen as warm is more likely to be viewed as having genuine intentions regarding social causes (Antonetti et al., 2021). Warmth evokes perceptions of moral character, which leads consumers to attribute CSR activities to intrinsic, value-driven motives rather than self-serving motives. Antonetti et al. (2021) found that warmth reduces consumer suspicion and stimulates forgiveness, even when corporate behavior is questioned. This increases the likelihood that its CSR actions are perceived as authentic. For a competent brand, committing to CSR actions will more likely be evaluated as coming from strategic and self-serving intentions.

H₁: Warm brands will lead to higher perceived CSR authenticity than competent brands.

Interaction of brand personality with CSR message dimensions

A brand's CSR actions and the way in which they are presented both influence CSR communication. Elkington's (1999) Triple Bottom Line is a widely used concept in corporate social responsibility that divides messages into three main dimensions: people, planet, and profit. By taking a social (people), environmental (planet), or economic (profit) approach, brands can create added value through CSR actions. The focus of a CSR message, combined with the personality trait of the brand, may influence how stakeholders interpret the brand's underlying intentions, determining the perceived authenticity of the effort.

The degree to which the content of the CSR message aligns with the brand's perceived personality, or message brand alignment (Pranjal & Sarkar, 2020), determines the

effectiveness of the message. When the message aligns with the brand's personality, the perceived authenticity of that message increases (Chong & Wang, 2024). Contrarily, a mismatch of message type and brand personality might raise doubts about actual intentions among stakeholders.

Warmth-oriented brands, characterized as sincere, empathic and ethical, are naturally expected to align mostly with a people-focused CSR message (Fiske et al., 2006; Kolbl et al., 2020). These might emphasize fair labor practices, community improvements or social equity. Similarly, planet-focused CSR messages resonate most with warm brands, as environmental well-being resonates with ethicality and sincerity. Brands considered as warm are likely to have intrinsic motivations for people and planet-focused CSR actions, thus improving perceived CSR authenticity (Gao & Mattila, 2014).

H_{2a}: A people-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a warm brand than with a competent brand.

H_{2b}: A planet-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a warm brand than with a competent brand.

Competent brands, which are characterized as capable, efficient and results-driven (Fiske et al., 2006), are expected to align better with profit-focused CSR messages. Profit-focused CSR initiatives include creating employment and creating sustainable economic opportunities in local and international markets. Using this focus, competent brands can reduce the perception of self-serving bias and increase perceived credibility of its CSR intentions (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012).

H_{2c}: A profit-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a competent brand than with a warm brand.

Consumer skepticism and CSR authenticity

Consumer skepticism is the natural tendency to question the underlying motivations of corporate actions. This tendency frequently moderates the impact of CSR initiatives, despite these actions being taken to increase stakeholder trust and gain more favorable evaluations (Sivapalan et al., 2024). When determining whether CSR actions are perceived as genuine or as opportunistic, skepticism plays a crucial role in forming consumer perceptions and reactions to these actions. Sivapalan et al. (2024) state that skepticism causes critical assessment of motives, which lowers the impact of the CSR message. Consumers with high levels of skepticism are more inclined to doubt the genuineness of CSR claims, and might even evaluate well-meaning initiative as deceptive (Ellen et al., 2006). This is particularly relevant in an online media landscape where customers are regularly subjected to corporate scandals and greenwashing, as it strengthens the belief that CSR is used for marketing purposes over moral and ethical standards (Mazza et al., 2022).

Additionally, the amount of skepticism can have different effects depending on message brand alignment. Warm brands are expected to have a better fit with people and planet-focused CSR messages, while profit-focused CSR messages work better paired with competent brands. Consumers – especially those highly skeptical – will question the sincerity of the brand’s motives. Conversely, strong alignment between brand personality and CSR focus can negate the combined effect of skepticism and message brand alignment on perceived CSR authenticity.

H₃: The more skeptical a consumer is, the less authentic they perceive CSR messages when message-brand fit is low.

Impact of skepticism on warmth vs. competence brands

In addition to message-brand alignment, the impact of skepticism may differentiate depending on the brand personalities. Fiske et al. (2006) suggest that warm brands, often

being empathic and ethical, may be more vulnerable to skepticism towards their CSR actions. Because warm brands position themselves as trustworthy and having ethical intentions, consumers hold them to higher moral standards, expecting their CSR actions to be intrinsically motivated (Kervyn et al., 2012). When that perceived sincerity is challenged, the reputational damage may be more severe (Gao & Mattila, 2014). Contrarily, a competent brand is seen as strategically capable, efficient and results-driven. Its reputation relies less on emotional appeal, and more on performance (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Skeptical consumers expect competent brands to start CSR actions as part of a broader strategic goal, thus expressing less negative effect on CSR authenticity (Sivapalan et al., 2024).

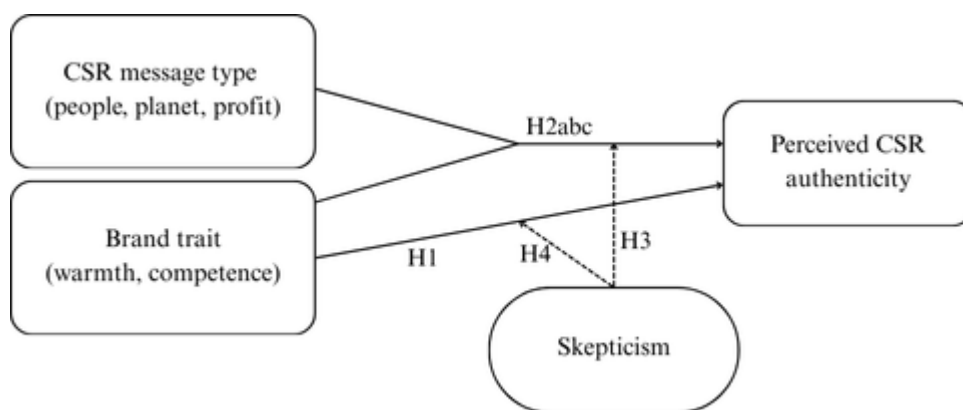
H₄: The negative effect of consumer skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity will be stronger for warmth than for competence organizations.

Conceptual model

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 is a visual representation of the hypothesized relationships between the concepts explained in the theoretical framework. Different conditions of CSR message and brand trait are hypothesized to influence perceived CSR authenticity. Skepticism among consumers is an influential variable in this conceptual model that is expected to influence the relationships between variables as well as have a direct effect on perceived CSR authenticity.

Figure 1

Conceptual model



Method

Research design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to explore the relationships between brand trait and CSR message type as independent variables, skepticism as a moderator and perceived CSR authenticity as the dependent variable. Quantitative research is appropriate for testing the specific hypotheses outlined, as it facilitates statistical analysis to assess relationships between variables and their interactions. This approach ensures objectivity, replicability, and generalizability of findings to a broader population.

An experiment was employed for data collection. This method is effective for collecting standardized responses from a large sample, making it ideal for analyzing consumer attitudes. They allow for efficient data collection across diverse populations while maintaining consistency in measurement. Additionally, experiments offer flexibility in assessing perceived CSR authenticity using established scales.

To perform this research, a 3x2 factorial between subjects design was implemented. A factorial design allows the investigation of both main effects and interaction effects, providing insights into how brand traits and CSR message type individually and as a combination influence consumer responses.

Instruments

A pre-test was designed to test the level of warmth and competence of six brands, to select two brands – one with the highest level of warmth and one with the highest level of competence. Participants were given definitions of warmth and competence, after which they were asked to evaluate six well-known brands based on warmth and competence. The two brands were then chosen based on the highest warmth and competence score respectively. Second, the participants were provided with three brand messages, each representing a people, planet or profit focused message. This was done to ensure the message focus was perceived as intended. Based on the outcomes of the pre-test, the two brands chosen for the different brand traits were Tony's Chocolonely (warmth) and Heineken (competence). Results of the pre-test are reported in Appendix B.

In the experiment, a manipulation check was incorporated to ensure that the manipulations of brand trait and CSR message type were perceived as intended by participants. After presenting the participant with one of six experimental scenarios, participants responded to items designed to confirm the manipulation. For instance, for the brand trait manipulation, participants rated the brand based on characteristics of warmth (e.g. *this brand is good-natured*) and competence (e.g. *this brand is intelligent*) (Kolbl et al., 2020). Responses are analyzed to verify that participants in the warmth conditions indeed perceive the brand as warm. This is used to confirm the validity of the experimental conditions and exclude responses from participants who do not perceive the manipulation as intended.

The experimental scenarios align with the 3x2 factorial design, involve combinations of warmth or competent brand traits and a people, planet or profit focused CSR message. Each participant was shown a brief textual description of the brand, followed by one of the six stimuli. The stimuli created for each of the six scenarios consisted of a brand's fictional CSR campaign message on their website, graphically and textually designed to represent one of three CSR message types. Each message is between fifty and seventy words in length, and

aligns with one of three CSR message focuses. Additionally, the messages were matched carefully to the brands' visual identity to ensure coherence. An example of a people oriented message for the warmth brand trait is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Stimulus 1: people centered CSR message for warmth brand trait



Population and sampling

The sample size consists of 211 participants, with an average age of 37.8 years (SD = 17.0), indicating a wide age range in the sample. A mixture of convenience sampling and snowball sampling ensured a sufficient amount of respondents. Participants were gathered through personal connections, LinkedIn and the SONA program of the University of Twente. This approach guaranteed representativeness of the target population and generalizability of findings.

Table 1

Respondent demographics

	Mean	SD
<i>Age</i>	37.8	17.0

	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	127	60.2
Female	83	39.3
Non-binary	1	0.5
<i>Education</i>		
No diploma	1	0.5
Primary education	2	0.9
VMBO, HAVO / VWO	35	16.5
MBO	41	19.3
Bachelor (HBO / WO)	94	44.3
Master (HBO / WO)	39	18.4

Procedure

The experiment included five sections. The first section provided an informed consent form and an introduction explaining the study's purpose. The second section collected demographic data and screen participants for eligibility. The third section measured the level of skepticism towards brand messages using adaptations of proven measurement items from Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998). The fourth section presented participants with one of six experimental scenarios. Afterwards, Likert-scale items were used to measure the level of perceived CSR authenticity. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six groups to ensure balanced representation across conditions. The experiment duration was between eight and ten minutes on average. Participants that entered through the SONA program and SurveyCircle received their credits afterwards.

Measures

Perceived CSR authenticity was measured on a 7-point Likert scale with items from Alhouthi et al. (2016), which capture whether consumers see CSR initiatives as genuine, consistent, and aligned with a company's values. An example item is: "*The brand is*

concerned about improving the well-being of society.” This scale has been widely adopted in CSR research and provides a reliable indicator of perceived authenticity.

Brand warmth and competence were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale with items from Kolbl et al. (2020), which apply the Stereotype Content Model to branding contexts. Participants rated the brand on traits such as kindness and good-naturedness (warmth), and capability and efficiency (competence). These items ensure that the stimuli were perceived along the two universal social cognition dimensions relevant for evaluating brand intentions and abilities.

Consumer skepticism was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with items from Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998), a widely used and validated scale originally developed for advertising skepticism. Example items include: *“We can depend on getting the truth in most brand messages.”* This scale captures a general tendency to doubt persuasive claims and has been applied in CSR contexts to explain consumer resistance to corporate communication.

Reliability and validity

To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments, a factor analysis was conducted on all key constructs: skepticism, warmth, competence, and CSR authenticity. This analysis served to confirm that the measurement items for each construct represented a unidimensional and internally consistent scale.

For the independent variables, similar analyses confirmed the reliability of the scales. The skepticism scale, adapted from Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998), showed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89, indicating high reliability. The brand warmth scale and the competence scale, both based on Kolbl et al. (2020), demonstrated Cronbach’s alphas of 0.87 and 0.85, respectively. These reliability levels indicate that the items consistently measured the intended constructs.

Table 2*Factor analysis of independent variables*

Statements	Factor			
	1	2	3	
Skepticism_1_We can depend on getting the truth in most CSR communication	0.68			
Skepticism_2_The aim of CSR communication is to inform the consumer	0.57			
Skepticism_3_I believe CSR communication is informative	0.53			
Skepticism_4_CSR communication is generally truthful	0.75			
Skepticism_5_CSR communication is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products	0.79			
Skepticism_6_CSR communication is truth well told	0.77			
Skepticism_7_In general, CSR communication presents a true picture of the action being communicated about	0.70			
Skepticism_8_I feel I have been accurately informed after seeing most CSR communication	0.73			
Skepticism_9_Most CSR communication provides consumers with essential information	0.62			
Warmth_1_Friendly		0.82		
Warmth_2_Good-natured		0.79		
Warmth_3_Kind		0.85		
Warmth_4_Warm		0.8		
Competence_1_Capable			0.82	
Competence_2_Competent			0.91	
Competence_3_Efficient			0.68	
Competence_4_Intelligent			0.60	
	Cronbach's Alpha:	0.89	0.89	0.85
	Explained variance:	25.5%	16.2%	14.6%
	Eigenvalue:	4.34	2.75	2.49

For the dependent variable, CSR authenticity, an exploratory factor analysis revealed that all eight items loaded strongly onto a single factor, with loadings ranging from 0.76 to 0.84. The factor accounted for 67% of the total variance, and the eigenvalue for the first factor was 6.04, well above the threshold of 1.0. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

Table 3*Factor analysis of dependent variable*

Statements	Factor	
	1	
Authenticity_1_The company's CSR message is genuine	0.76	
Authenticity_2_CSR message preserves what the company means to me	0.76	
Authenticity_3_The CSR message captures what makes the company unique to me	0.79	
Authenticity_4_The company's CSR message is in accordance with the company's values and	0.81	
Authenticity_5_The company is being true to itself with its CSR message	0.83	
Authenticity_6_The company is standing up for what it believes in	0.84	
Authenticity_7_The company is a socially responsible company	0.79	
Authenticity_8_The company is concerned about improving the well-being of society	0.76	
	Cronbach's Alpha:	0.91
	Explained variance:	67.0%
	Eigenvalue:	6.04

Overall, the combination of factor loadings, explained variance, eigenvalues, and Cronbach's alpha values across all scales confirms that the instruments used in this study possess sufficient validity and reliability to support the integrity of the findings.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were integrated into the study design. Informed consent is obtained at the start of the experiment, by assuring confidentiality and anonymity of the input provided by participants. Data is stored securely on University of Twente servers, accessible only to the researcher. Participants retain the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, the research complies to the ethical standards outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA). At the conclusion of the experiment, participants were shown a concluding page summarizing the study's objectives and providing contact information, for if there were any questions or inquiries. Sensitive or intrusive questions were not be used to ensure participants' privacy and freedom of answering.

This research design integrated a well structured quantitative approach and a comprehensive sampling strategy. Important ethical measures are taken to ensure reliability and validity. This enables the researcher to thoroughly examine the interaction effects of brand traits and CSR message type on perceived CSR authenticity, offering actionable insights for organizational strategies.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The mean scores of the independent variables – warmth, competence and skepticism – are shown in table 4, and illustrate the differences in evaluation between the two brands. Skepticism was measured before being met with the conditions, and reports similar skepticism

levels for Tony's Choclonely participants ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.72$) as for Heineken participants ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.77$).

Table 4

Scale descriptives of skepticism, warmth and competence per brand condition

Scale descriptives	Tony's x people			Tony's x planet			Tony's x profit			Heineken x people			Heineken x planet			Heineken x profit		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
<i>Measurement scales</i>																		
Skepticism	35	2.88	0.81	24	3.12	0.66	39	3.04	0.68	39	3.12	0.78	36	2.84	0.77	38	3.13	0.76
Warmth	35	5.28	0.90	24	5.25	0.68	39	5.22	1.06	39	4.56	0.89	36	4.6	1.28	38	4.49	1.05
Competence	35	5.04	0.97	24	4.77	1.09	39	5.03	0.95	39	5.46	0.70	36	5.49	1.33	38	5.51	0.86

Skepticism items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree / 5 = Strongly agree)

Warmth and competence items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree / 7 = Strongly agree)

Participants in the Tony's Choclonely condition reported high ratings for warmth ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 0.88$) and competence ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.00$). In contrast, participants in the Heineken condition reported significantly lower warmth ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.07$), while scoring significantly higher for competence ($M = 5.49$, $SD = 0.96$). These differences confirm that the brand manipulation was successful: Tony's was perceived as a warm brand, while Heineken was perceived as more competent.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the warm brand would be perceived as more authentic than the competent brand. Table 5 presents the overall perceived CSR authenticity scores for the warm and competent brand, with the average scores of the three message types combined. On average, participants perceived the warm brand as more authentic ($M = 4.99$) than the competent brand ($M = 4.16$), $t(208) = -5.86$, $p < .001$. This confirms H1, which expected significantly higher perceived CSR authenticity scores for warm brands than for competent brands.

Table 5*Perceived CSR Authenticity scores by Brand*

<i>Scale Descriptives per Message Type</i>		<i>Tony's Chocolonely</i>			<i>Heineken</i>		
		<i>Message type</i>	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean
<i>Measurement scale</i>							
Perceived CSR Authenticity	People	35	5.46	0.81	39	4.33	0.99
	Planet	24	4.86	0.76	36	4.26	1.17
	Profit	39	4.66	1.10	38	3.90	1.05
	<i>Total</i>	98	4.99	0.99	113	4.16	1.07

Items were measured on a 7-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree / 7 = Strongly agree)

Hypotheses 2a–c predicted that CSR message type would interact with brand personality to influence perceived CSR authenticity, such that people- and planet-focused messages would be rated as more authentic for the warm brand, and profit-focused messages would be rated as more authentic for the competent brand. A two-way ANOVA (Table 6) revealed a significant main effect of brand, $F(1, 205) = 35.97, p < .001$, indicating that messages from the warm brand were rated as more authentic than those from the competent brand. There was also a significant main effect of message type, $F(2, 205) = 6.87, p = .001$, suggesting that the type of CSR message influenced perceived authenticity. However, the brand \times message type interaction was not significant, $F(2, 205) = 1.25, p = .290$, indicating that the effect of message type on perceived authenticity was similar for both brands. Post-hoc tests using Tukey's HSD showed that people-focused messages ($M = 4.86$) resulted in significantly higher authenticity scores than profit-focused messages ($M = 4.29, p < .001, d \approx 0.52$). No significant differences were found between people- and planet-focused messages (p

= .196) or between planet- and profit-focused messages ($p = .188$). As the expected interaction was not significant, all of the sub-hypotheses (H2a–c) were rejected.

Table 6

Two-way ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Brand	36.32	1	36.32	35.966	< .001***
Message_Type	13.87	2	6.93	6.866	0.0013**
Brand:Message_Type	2.52	2	1.26	1.247	0.2896
Residuals	207.01	205	1.01		

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Correlations analysis

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables (warmth, competence, skepticism) and the dependent variable (perceived CSR authenticity). All variables were measured on 7-point Likert scales, except for skepticism, which was measured using 5-point Likert scales. As shown in Table 7, warmth correlated strongly and positively with perceived authenticity ($r = .62$, $p < .001$). Likewise, competence was positively related to authenticity ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), while skepticism showed

moderate negative correlation ($r = -.39, p < .001$). This indicates that a higher level of skepticism results in lower perceived CSR authenticity.

Table 7

Pearsons correlations of variables

		1	2	3	4
Measures					
1	Warmth	1.00			
2	Competence	0.32**	1.00		
3	Skepticism	-0.20*	-0.26**	1.00	
4	Authenticity	0.62**	0.28**	-0.39**	1.00

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 3 proposed that message–brand fit would moderate the effect of skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity. People- and planet-focused CSR messages were considered a conceptual fit with warm brands, while profit-focused CSR messages were expected to fit better with competent brands. Regression model 1 (Table 8) revealed a significant main effect of skepticism ($\beta = -0.66, p < .001$), indicating that higher skepticism was associated with lower perceived authenticity. However, neither the main effect of message–brand fit ($\beta = -0.19, p = .743$) nor the interaction between skepticism and fit ($\beta = 0.16, p = .382$) was significant. These results suggest that message–brand fit did not significantly moderate the effect of skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity. Therefore, H3 is rejected.

Table 8

Regression analysis predicting perceived CSR authenticity by Skepticism and Message–brand

Fit

<i>Model statistics</i>	<i>Adj, R²</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Model 1: Skepticism * Message-brand Fit	0.16	14.80	< .001 *
Model 2: Skepticism * Brand	0.29	29.5	< .001 *

	<i>β</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Model 1: Skepticism * Message-brand Fit (ΔAdj, R² = 0.16)</i>			
Skepticism	-0.66	-5.18	< .001 *
Message-brand Fit	-0.19	-0.33	0.74
Skepticism * Message-brand Fit	0.16	0.88	0.38
<i>Model 1: Skepticism * Brand (ΔAdj, R² = 0.29)</i>			
Skepticism	-0.71	-6.19	< .001 *
Brand (Tony's Choclonely)	-0.13	-0.24	0.81
Skepticism * Brand (Tony's Choclonely)	0.31	1.80	0.07

significance levels for regression coefficients: $p < .001$ (), two-tailed

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the negative effect of skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity would be stronger for warm brands than for competent brands. Model 2 in Table 8 shows that the regression was significant, $F(3, 207) = 29.50, p < .001$, accounting for 29% of the variance ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = .29$). Again, skepticism had a strong negative main effect ($\beta = -0.71, t = -6.19, p < .001$). The interaction between skepticism and brand approached significance ($\beta = 0.31, t = 1.80, p = .07$), suggesting a possible trend that, contrary to expectations, skepticism may have had a somewhat stronger effect for the competent brand than for the warm brand. However, since this effect did not reach significance, H4 is rejected.

Table 9

Summary of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Confirmed or rejected
H1 Warm brands will lead to higher perceived CSR authenticity than competent brands.	Confirmed
H2a A people-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a warm brand than with a competent brand	Rejected
H2b A planet-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a warm brand than with a competent brand.	Rejected
H2c A profit-focused CSR message will result in higher perceived authenticity when paired with a competent brand than with a warm brand.	Rejected
H3 The more skeptical a consumer is, the less authentic they perceive CSR messages when message-brand fit is low.	Rejected
H4 The negative effect of consumer skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity will be stronger for warmth than for competence organizations.	Rejected

Discussion

Discussion of findings

The aim of this study was to investigate how brand personality (warm vs. competent), CSR message type (people-, planet-, and profit-focused), and consumer skepticism interact in shaping perceived CSR authenticity. Drawing on the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2006) and the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012), the research tested whether warmth-oriented brands are evaluated as more authentic in their CSR communication than competence-oriented brands, whether message-brand fit influences authenticity perceptions, and whether skepticism moderates these effects. In CSR contexts, where moral motives are often most important, consumers may prioritize perceived sincerity over ability, which could explain the consistent advantage for warmth-oriented positioning.

Across message types, people-focused CSR communication received the highest authenticity evaluations, followed by planet-focused messages, whereas profit-focused communication was evaluated least positively. Interestingly, this pattern was not dependent on brand personality: people-focused messages resonated across both warm and competent

brands. This suggests that the moral salience of certain CSR topics (e.g., fairness, social equity) may override expectations of message–brand fit. Prior research highlights the role of congruence in fostering credibility (Pranjal & Sarkar, 2020; Chong & Wang, 2024), yet the present findings nuance this assumption by showing that topic relevance can dominate fit effects.

Another key finding is the consistent negative role of consumer skepticism. Regardless of message type or brand personality, skepticism lowered authenticity perceptions, aligning with earlier studies emphasizing skepticism as a central barrier in CSR communication (Ellen et al., 2006; Sivapalan et al., 2024). Contrary to theoretical expectations that message–brand fit could buffer this effect (Guo et al., 2022), the results indicate that skepticism functions more as a broad evaluative filter: once present, it colors judgments across conditions.

An unexpected pattern emerged in relation to brand personality. While theory suggests that warm brands may be more vulnerable to skepticism due to heightened expectations of sincerity (Gao & Mattila, 2014), the results suggested the opposite trend. Competence-oriented brands appeared to suffer more when skepticism was high. A possible explanation is that competence cues are readily interpreted as strategic or performance-driven, which may be amplified under skeptical conditions (Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). In contrast, warm brands may benefit from an existing reservoir of goodwill, which shields them against skepticism’s full impact (Antonetti et al., 2021).

Implications of the study

The insights gathered from this study provide meaningful implications for further academic research, as well as practical implications for experts in the fields of business and communication.

Theoretical implications

This study extends the understanding of CSR authenticity by integrating brand personality, message type, and consumer skepticism into a single framework. The results provide empirical support for the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2006; Kolbl et al., 2020) and the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (Kervyn et al., 2012), showing that warmth-oriented brands receive higher overall authenticity ratings than competence-oriented brands, even across different CSR message types. This reinforces the primacy of perceived moral intent over ability in shaping trust and authenticity judgments. Additionally, this study showed that the negative impact of skepticism on perceived CSR authenticity is stronger for competence oriented brands. It reinforces that the trustworthiness of warm brands, as mentioned in the SCM, helps negate the effect of skepticism.

The findings on CSR message type challenge the assumption that message–brand fit is always necessary for high authenticity. While previous research suggests that alignment enhances credibility (Guo et al., 2022), the consistently higher ratings for people-focused messages across brand types suggest that the influence of brand traits in certain CSR themes override fit effects. This adds nuance to existing research by suggesting strategic brand alignment may sometimes be outweighed by other, more prevalent factors, such as the moral salience and universality of certain CSR themes.

The role of skepticism was also clarified. While it reliably reduced authenticity perceptions, the absence of moderation by message–brand fit suggests that skepticism may operate as a general filter. Moreover, the unexpected trend in H4 suggests that competent brands may be more vulnerable to skepticism in CSR contexts. Future research should examine when and why a competence-focused image increases this risk.

Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings offer several guidelines for designing CSR communication strategies. First, brands seeking to enhance authenticity should consider incorporating warmth cues into their positioning, as this seems to resonate strongly with audiences. Second, people-focused CSR messages may have broad appeal regardless of brand type, making them a safe choice for campaigns aiming to reach diverse consumer segments. However, for brands with established competence-oriented identities, extra care should be taken to counteract baseline perceptions of self-interest—such as by providing transparent evidence of CSR outcomes or leveraging credible third-party endorsements.

For all brands, skepticism remains a significant barrier to perceived authenticity. As message–brand fit did not attenuate its effects, reducing skepticism may require a combination of evidence-based claims, consistent long-term CSR engagement, and stakeholder involvement in CSR initiatives. Importantly, the findings suggest that competent brands may need to invest more heavily in trust-building activities, as skepticism appears to have a particularly strong negative impact on their CSR credibility.

Limitations & future research

During the experiment and the writing process, several limitations of this research emerged which should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Additionally, the research offers opportunities for future research.

This study examined two brands—Tony’s Chocolonely and Heineken—selected to clearly represent warmth- and competence-oriented brands. While this approach ensured a strong manipulation of brand personality, it may limit generalizability to other brands. Brands, even within the same category, can differ in history, positioning, and consumer associations, which may influence how their CSR efforts are interpreted.

The experiment relied on self-reported perceptions of CSR authenticity in an online setting. Although this allowed for controlled manipulation of variables, it may not fully reflect consumer responses in real-world. Field experiments or longitudinal studies could capture how authenticity perceptions develop over time and in more elaborative communication landscapes.

Skepticism emerged as a consistent predictor of lower authenticity ratings, but the underlying drivers of this trait—such as prior brand attitudes, media coverage, or personal CSR values—were not in the scope of this research. Understanding these antecedents could help identify strategies to address and potentially reduce skepticism toward CSR initiatives.

The hypothesized moderation effects for message–brand fit and brand type were not statistically significant, though the trend for H4 indicated an unexpected direction. Future work should explore whether this pattern appears with different brand–message combinations and under varying conditions, such as differences in industry, consumer involvement, or cultural backgrounds.

The study examined CSR communication through three message types derived from the triple bottom line framework. Other CSR dimensions, such as diversity and inclusion or local community engagement, may influence authenticity perceptions differently. Broadening the range of CSR topics, for example by including diversity and inclusion, local community engagement, or mental health initiatives, could clarify when moral relevance or the prominence of certain topics outweighs the influence of strategic message–brand alignment.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer the research question: *How do CSR message focus, brand personality, and consumer skepticism interact to shape perceptions of CSR authenticity?*

The results highlight that brand personality remains central in shaping CSR authenticity, while also revealing that strategic message–brand alignment plays a less decisive role than often assumed.

Despite these mixed outcomes, the study contributes valuable insights, emphasizing that brands can enhance CSR authenticity by highlighting warmth cues in their positioning and by focusing on people-centered initiatives. Competence-oriented brands, however, may need to invest more heavily in transparency and trust-building to mitigate skepticism. For research, the study extends the understanding of CSR authenticity by showing that topic salience and moral relevance can sometimes outweigh strategic alignment between message and brand.

Ultimately, authenticity in CSR communication is less about strategic alignment than about convincing consumers of sincerity, along with many other factors that shape consumer perceptions.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Usage of AI software

AI software was used during the development of this thesis. Specifically, it was employed to suggest potential brands for inclusion in the pre-test, to support translation and reformulation of sentences for improved clarity, and to generate code for statistical analyses.

Appendix B – Pre-test

Qualtrics Pre-test experiment

Introductory text

Welcome to this short pre-test about brand traits and brand communication. First, you will be shown six well-known food and beverage brands and asked to rate them on two qualities. Second, you will be shown three brand messages and asked about the messages' content.

There are no right or wrong answers — we are interested in your personal impressions. This survey takes approximately 5 minutes. By continuing, you agree to participate voluntarily.

Part 1

People tend to evaluate brands based on two key qualities:

Warmth is the perception of a brand as trustworthy, ethical, and caring, shown through empathy, transparency, and social responsibility.

Competence is how capable and reliable a brand is seen, based on performance, professionalism, and innovation.

Please take your time to read and understand the two definitions above, before proceeding. In the following section, you will be shown a total of six brands. Your assignment is to rate each brand on warmth and competence, based on your personal impressions of the brands.

1. Red Bull + logo

Red Bull is an Austrian company best known for its energy drinks. The brand is globally recognized and markets itself through sports sponsorships, extreme events, and media production.

How warm do you believe this brand is? (1 = Not at all warm, 7 = Very warm)

How competent do you believe this brand is? (1 = Not at all competent, 7 = Very competent)

2. Tony's Chocolonely + logo

Tony's Chocolonely is a Dutch chocolate company established in 2005. It produces chocolate bars, primarily for the Dutch market. The brand was founded with the aim of addressing issues in the cocoa supply chain, and it advocates for more transparent and equitable sourcing practices.

“
“

3. Innocent Drinks + logo

Innocent Drinks produces smoothies, juices, and other non-carbonated drinks made from fruit and vegetables. Innocent emphasizes simplicity and natural ingredients in its product offerings.

“
“

4. Ben & Jerry's + logo

Ben & Jerry's is an American ice cream company founded in 1978. Ben & Jerry's expresses its originality as a brand and frequently communicates on social and environmental topics.

“
“

5. Nespresso + logo

Nespresso is a Swiss brand that produces coffee machines and single-serve coffee capsules. Nespresso operates worldwide and targets both consumer and professional coffee markets. The brand emphasizes precision, technology, and convenience in its coffee systems and offers a membership-based customer program.

“
“

6. Heineken + logo

Heineken is a global brewing company that owns over 300 beer and cider brands and distributes its products internationally. Its flagship beer is Heineken lager, and the company is known for large-scale operations and global advertising campaigns.

“
“

You completed the first part of this pre-test.
By clicking the arrow you proceed to the final part of this pre-test.

Part 2

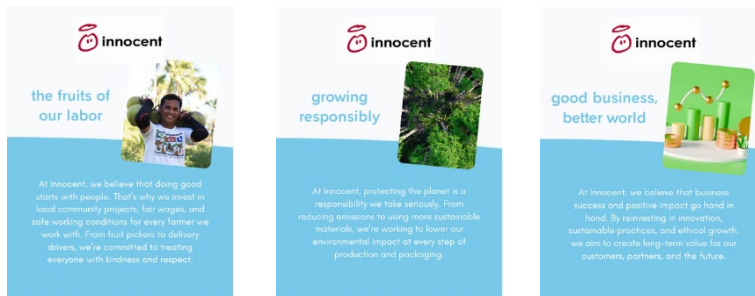
Companies often focus their social responsibility activities on three different areas:

- People:** Improving well-being of individuals and communities.
- Planet:** Reduce environmental impact and promote sustainability.
- Profit:** Create long-term business success through responsible growth, innovation, and reinvestment.

In this final part, you will see three short messages from a company about its social responsibility efforts. You are asked to choose which of the 3 focuses (People, Planet, Profit) this message tries to convey.

What is the main focus of this message?

People/Planet/Profit



We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

Pre-test results

Table B1
Mean scores of warmth and competence

Scale descriptives	Red Bull		Tony's Chocolonely		Innocent Drinks		Ben & Jerry's		Nespresso		Heineken	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Measurement scales												
Warmth	12	4.17	12	6.27	12	5.00	12	5.17	12	5.17	12	5.00
Competence	12	5.33	12	5.09	12	4.08	12	4.42	12	5.50	12	5.75

Table B2
Effectiveness of message manipulation

<i>Message focus</i>	People	Planet	Profit
	N	N	N
<i>Observed as</i>			
People	11	0	0
Planet	1	12	4
Profit	0	0	8

Appendix C – Stimuli manipulations

★ Heineken

THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR




At Heineken, we believe that doing good starts with people. That's why we invest in local community projects, fair wages, and safe working conditions for every partner we work with. From barley farmers to delivery drivers, we're committed to treating everyone with kindness and respect.

Competence - People

★ Heineken

GROWING RESPONSIBLY



At Heineken, protecting the planet is a responsibility we take seriously. From reducing emissions to using more sustainable materials, we're working to lower our environmental impact at every step of production and packaging.

Competence - Planet

★ Heineken

GOOD BUSINESS, BETTER WORLD




At Heineken, we believe that business success and positive impact go hand in hand. By reinvesting in innovation, sustainable practices, and ethical growth, we aim to create long-term value for our customers, partners, and the future.

Competence - Profit

TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOR




At Tony's, we believe that doing good starts with people. That's why we invest in local community projects, fair wages, and safe working conditions for every farmer we work with. From cocoa pickers to delivery drivers, we're committed to treating everyone with kindness and respect.

Warmth - People

TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

GROWING RESPONSIBLY



At Tony's, protecting the planet is a responsibility we take seriously. From reducing emissions to using more sustainable materials, we're working to lower our environmental impact at every step of production and packaging.

Warmth - People

TONY'S CHOCOLONELY

GOOD BUSINESS, BETTER WORLD



At Tony's, we believe that business success and positive impact go hand in hand. By reinvesting in innovation, sustainable practices, and ethical growth, we aim to create long-term value for our customers, partners, and the future.

Warmth - People

Appendix D – Qualtrics experiment

Introductory text

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. This study is part of a master's thesis project at the University of Twente and focuses on how companies communicate their social responsibility efforts, and how this influences consumer perceptions.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will remain anonymous and confidential. There are no right or wrong answers – we are simply interested in your personal opinions. The survey will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete.

By continuing, you confirm that:

- You have read and understood the instructions.
- You consent to participate in this study.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact the researcher at t.g.h.sessink@student.utwente.nl.

Demographics

1. What is your age? (minimum 18)
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other
3. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
 - Primary education
 - VMBO, HAVO/VWO
 - MBO
 - Bachelor (HBO / WO)
 - Master (HBO / WO)

Skepticism

In this section, we are interested in your general impressions of how companies communicate about their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

A CSR message is any form of communication in which a company highlights its positive impact on society, the environment, or the economy. These messages appear on company websites, social media, advertisements, or product packaging, and often focus on topics such as sustainability, treating workers fairly and helping communities.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about CSR-messages. (7-point Likert scale)

- We can depend on getting the truth in most CSR communication
- The aim of CSR communication is to inform the consumer
- I believe CSR communication is informative
- CSR communication is generally truthful
- CSR communication is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products
- CSR communication is truth well told

- In general, CSR communication presents a true picture of the action being communicated about
- I feel I have been accurately informed after seeing most CSR communication
- Most CSR communication provides consumers with essential information

Warmth & Competence

In the next part, you are shown a well known brand. You are asked to rate the brand on some general traits.

After that, you are given a CSR message from that brand. Pay close attention to the message, and give answers to the following statements.

Participants are introduced to either Tony's Chokolonely:

Tony's Chokolonely is a Dutch chocolate company established in 2005. It produces chocolate bars, primarily for the Dutch market. The brand was founded with the aim of addressing issues in the cocoa supply chain, and it advocates for more transparent and equitable sourcing practices.

Tony's Chokolonely logo

Please rate Tony's Chokolonely based on your own impression, using the statements below.
I believe Tony's Chokolonely is ...

Or Heineken:

Heineken is a global brewing company that owns over 300 beer and cider brands and distributes its products internationally. Its flagship beer is Heineken lager, and the company is known for large-scale operations and global advertising campaigns.

Heineken logo

Please rate Heineken based on your own impression, using the statements below.
I believe Heineken is ...

- Friendly
- Good-natured
- Kind
- Warm
- Capable
- Competent
- Efficient
- Intelligent

Perceived CSR Authenticity

You will now see a message from (*Tony's Chokolonely/Heineken*) describing one of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Respondents are shown one of six different CSR messages

Based on the CSR message you just read, what was the main focus of the company's initiative?

- People
- Planet
- Profit
- Not sure

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the company and its CSR message. (*7-point Likert scale*)

- The company's CSR message is genuine
- The CSR message preserves what the company means to me
- The CSR message captures what makes the company unique to me
- The company's CSR message is in accordance with the company's values and beliefs
- The company is being true to itself with its CSR message
- The company is standing up for what it believes in
- The company is a socially responsible company
- The company is concerned about improving the well-being of society

End

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.