Preventing Brand Activism From Backfiring: How the Use of an Ingroup Model Can Limit the Negative Effects of One-Time CSR History

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PREVENTING BRAND ACTIVISM FROM BACKFIRING: HOW THE USE OF AN INGROUP MODEL CAN LIMIT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ONE-TIME CSR HISTORY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by

Cole Catherine Dunnam
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2020
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ABSTRACT

Brands are beginning to engage in corporate social advocacy (CSA) with social movements to form deeper connections with their audience, but not all are successful. This thesis asks why a brand’s target audience considers some CSA campaigns as more authentic than others. In Study I, I use Twitter data to conduct an exploratory analysis that applies existing research to two extreme CSA cases: Nike’s Emmy-winning “Dream Crazy” campaign starring Colin Kaepernick and Pepsi’s unsuccessful “Live for Now–Moments” campaign starring Kendall Jenner. Pepsi failed despite its history of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. I suggest that group identity theory impacts audience perception. A white celebrity main model for Pepsi’s CSA campaign may have alienated supporters by ignoring the Black Lives Matter movements’ ingroup, the Black community.

Study II determines how a brand’s CSR history and campaign model’s group identity impact its audience’s perception. I conduct a representative online survey of 500 American adults analyze the data in a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test. The independent variables are the brand’s CSR commitment (continuous or one-time) and the campaign’s main model group identity (ingroup or outgroup). The dependent variable is the audience’s perceived authenticity measured as brand values, brand personality, and brand intent scales. I find main effects from CSR commitment and group identity on all three scales. Interaction effects show that using an ingroup model limits the negative effects of a less-extensive CSR history.

In summary, brand engagement in continuous CSR initiatives yields the most authentic audience perception, but brands just beginning to engage in CSA without a continuous history of CSR can use a social movement ingroup model to increase the campaign’s perceived authenticity.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Pepsi released its “Live for Now – Moments” campaign, with an ad depicting celebrity Kendall Jenner deescalating police and protester tensions at an impassioned rally by offering an officer a can of Pepsi. The ad received immediate backlash across news outlets and social media platforms, especially Twitter. Pepsi released a public apology and pulled the ad from all platforms. While Pepsi’s advertisement backfired, the trend of incorporating brand activism into advertisements continue to become more popular in advertising (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Research shows that brands incorporating activism into their ad campaigns, known as corporate social advocacy (CSA), gain publicity and connect with consumers who support the social movement on a deeper, emotional level beyond consumerism (e.g., Shetty et al., 2019; Hambrick & Wowak, 2019). CSA can create a strong sense of brand loyalty with consumers, thus, leading to this research’s principal question: Why do some brands’ CSA attempts backfire with their target audiences?

There are numerous fragmented theories that make up the bulk of scholarly research available on brand activism (Sibai et al., 2021). While many published studies analyze how brands engage in activist movements (e.g., Shetty et al., 2019; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019), these resulting theories are not cohesive in clarifying which variables are important in creating a successful and authentic CSA campaign.

The purpose of my experiment is to clarify the term authenticity in relation to CSA campaigns, identify the factors that influence an audience’s perception of brand authenticity, and further explore the theories of group identity and CSR commitment in relation to CSA campaigns. To achieve these large goals, I approach my research through two studies.
First, I define the term *authenticity* using existing theories from social and developmental psychology. I connect research on authentic brand activism with Kohlberg’s theory of moral development (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977) and Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) typology of authentic brand activism. In Study I, I conduct a qualitative content analysis on two drastically different CSA campaigns. Study I explores what “authenticity” is in a CSA campaign and how the current scholarly research aligns with real-world CSA campaign case studies. The first case study is the infamous 2017 Pepsi CSA campaign starring Kendall Jenner. The second case study is Nike’s Emmy-winning “Dream Crazy” campaign starring Colin Kaepernick.

In this study, I question why Pepsi’s campaign failed to resonate with its intended audience and why, in contrast, Nike’s campaign succeeded with its target audience. In my Study I results, I find that Nike and Pepsi have a history of engaging in prosocial corporate practices, but their CSA campaigns had vastly different results. I consider all the potential factors that may have contributed to Pepsi’s CSA failure. While exploring the Pepsi ad, I question if the theory of group identity can be applied to CSA campaigns. I note the difference in the CSA campaign main models for Nike versus Pepsi. Both campaigns used celebrities, but Kaepernick is a member of the Black Lives Matter movement racial ingroup, and in contrast, Jenner is an outgroup member of the BLM movement. I question if Jenner, as white celebrity, impacted the campaign’s perceived authenticity and if it felt tone-deaf to supporters to have a white celebrity as the main model for a CSA campaign depicting police-protester tensions. This consideration let me to my variables in Study II, my quantitative experiment.

In Study II I conduct a demographically representative online survey of 500 American adults. I apply existing theories to test my two independent variables, a company’s history of CSR commitments and the group identity of the campaign’s main model. I determine which
variables influence consumers’ perception of brand authenticity the most, finding that overall engaging in CSR initiatives is the best method to come off authentically in CSA campaign. However, if a company lacks in a consistent history of CSR initiatives, it can curb the negative effects of low prosocial engagement by using an ingroup member of the social movement advocated as the CSA campaign’s main model.

For the scope of my thesis, I am concentrating on how brands can avoid criticisms of inauthenticity from supporters of their targeted social movements. This will address why consumers who identify with a particular social movement may criticize some brand activist campaigns. It will not address the issue of consumers disagreeing with social movements that brands support, since this is not the brand’s target audience. For example, Pepsi’s “Live for Now–Moments” ad intended to be culturally relevant among protests against police brutality, but social movement supporters found this advertisement tone-deaf (Victor, 2017; Smith, 2017).

This research is important because perceived authenticity impacts a CSA campaign’s ability to connect with its target audience (Vredenburg et al., 2020). When consumers consider a brand’s CSA to be inauthentic, or hopping on the bandwagon of a social movement, the advertisement may have adverse effects with its target audience. (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Instead of creating positive feelings with consumers who align in values with a company’s CSA ads, activism perceived as inauthentic may create negative feelings amongst consumers that tarnish a brand’s reputation (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Another important aspect of this research is that it will also benefit social movements in addition to brands. By focusing my research on what makes a CSA campaign authentic to activist supporters, brands will be persuaded to engage in CSA campaigns that are beneficial to social movements to achieve a more authentic public perception. This will provide brands with potential guidelines for connecting with a particular
social movement. This thesis will also help brands to avoid alienating their target audience when supporting social movements by identifying key factors that impact public perception.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining Brand Activism

First, it is essential to clarify what scholarly research considers brand activism. While activism, in general, is considered campaigning to bring about social change, brand activism involves companies speaking publicly in the name of social movements. Brand activism is a relatively newer research focus is intertwined with the long-studied concept of corporate social responsibility. Brand activism is a brand or corporation publicly campaigning on behalf of a social movement to influence public policy, social norms, or community values (e.g., Carroll, 2008; Hong & Li, 2020; Smith & Ferguson, 2001; Sommerfeldt et. al, 2012). For the scope of this thesis, I focus on two types of brand activism: corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate social advocacy (CSA).

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Social Advocacy

Since brand activism research is still relatively new, there may be confusion between a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate social advocacy (CSA). CSR is a company's moral and ethical responsibility to society (Kang et al., 2016). These are standard social and environmental concerns that companies incorporate into their business models (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). An example of CSR would be a company donating money to disease research. These actions have a high public favorability and are not partisan (Bhagwat et al., 2020).

While CSR is not traditionally controversial, the “newer generation of consumers” expects companies’ CSR initiatives to include measures that support current social movements such as racial equality and women’s rights (Shetty et al., 2019). This still differs from corporate social advocacy in that CSR initiatives are morally expected from consumers (Kang et al., 2016).
The main distinction between CSR and CSA is that CSA is typically considered as a higher level of CSR (Hong & Li, 2020). CSR encompasses corporate initiatives and actions. This is typically incorporated into business models and known as prosocial corporate practice (Hong & Li, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020). CSR initiatives are usually published on company websites, but entire ad campaigns are not always created about them.

In comparison, CSA takes a public stance on social or political issues and is inherently more controversial (Tarin et al., 2021; Parcha & Westerman, 2020). While CSA shares a lot of commonalities with CSR, CSA can be considered as companies going the extra mile. CSR initiatives are expected, whereas CSA campaigns are likely more voluntary for companies (Carroll, 2015; Shetty et al., 2019). Corporations have engaged in CSR for many years, but CSA is a comparably new strategy that companies execute to form an emotional connection with their consumers or advance a particular social movement (Lee, 2016; Hambrick & Wowak, 2019). CSA has developed from consumers desiring to know more about companies' social beliefs and values (Edelman, 2018 as cited in Bhagwat et al., 2020). While CSR is different from CSA, it impacts the audience’s perception of CSA by establishing a history of engaging in prosocial corporate practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

CSA is different from additional forms of brand activism, such as corporate political activity (CPA) which consists of more discrete lobbying forms (Lux et al., 2011). In contrast, companies intend for CSA to be publicized as part of their platform (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Nalick et al., 2016, as cited in Bhagwat et al., 2020). CSA is also more forward facing than CSR, since it typically involves publicized ad campaigns (Hong & Li, 2020).

CSA’s public and potentially voluntary perception may cause skeptics to question its authenticity (Holt, 2002). While prior literature has discussed the need for perceived authenticity
in brands’ sociopolitical activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020), research has not clarified the extent to which certain factors may contribute to the audiences’ perception of brand authenticity, or how some factors may balance out others.

2.3. Authentic Brand Activism

The concept of authenticity is difficult to define, and often we just “know it when we see it.” However, since numerous brands have failed at achieving authentic CSA marketing, this term should be clarified. According to Oxford’s English Dictionary, authenticity is the quality of being genuine or true.¹ For consumers to perceive a brand activist campaign as authentic, it should present to its targeted audience as genuine, sincere, pure, and true. These concepts are explored extensively in the field of developmental psychology.

In developmental psychology, Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) describe a post-conventional level of morality. At this level of morality, people operate for the greater good of society or adhere to a universal ethical principle. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) consider this the highest level of morality, and in turn, we can consider actions here as occurring authentically with genuine, unselfish intentions.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) use a purpose and values-driven strategy to define authentic brand activism as “the alignment of activist marketing messages with brand purpose, values, and prosocial corporate practice contribute to perceptions of authenticity” (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 456).

Beyond altruistic motives, brands seek to achieve authenticity in their CSA advertisements to benefit their buying power. Prior research (Vredenburg et al., 2020) shows that

the perception of authenticity leads to a positive response to brands’ CSA advertisements. When 
brands are perceived as inauthentic, they will be deemed as “woke-washing” (Sobande, 2019; 
Vredenburg et al., 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Woke-washing is when a brand is considered 
inauthentic because its actions do not align with the message it is promoting (Vredenburg et al., 
2020). Inconsistency between a corporation’s public messaging and its actual practices leads to 
an inauthentic public perception that can negatively impact a brand.

Moorman (2020) argues that brands maintaining a consistent social advocacy viewpoint 
resonates more with consumers (e.g., Becker, Wiegand, and Reinartz 2019; as cited in Moorman, 
2020). If a brand voluntarily branches out from its consistent views, it may seem inauthentic and 
appear as though the company is woke-washing. This causes consumers to question the 
company’s motives.

While these are well-developed theories on brand authenticity, the literature remains 
disjointed. Some scholars suggest that theories of morality impact a brand’s authenticity (Sibai et 
al., 2021); others offer a purpose and values-driven strategy (Vredenburg et al., 2020). I suggest 
that CSA research should center on creating authentic messages. While authenticity may seem 
like a subjective measurement, Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral development can act as a 
guide for brands navigating CSA campaigns. Additionally, Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) typology 
of brand activism can help structure what people believe is authentic CSA messaging.

2.4. Theory of Moral Development Related to Brand Activism

The theory of moral development comes from developmental psychology and prior 
research on branding has used moral development to discern corporations’ motives (e.g., 
Vozzola, 2014; Lee & Nguyen, 2014; Hunt, 2019). I am applying Kohlberg’s (1977) theory to 
brand activism research to clarify the term authenticity. Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral
development can provide some insight as to why the public perceives corporations’ intentions behind different CSA campaigns in a particular way. Kohlberg categorizes the moral development theory into three levels and six stages (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977).

Technically, it is impossible for capitalist brands to reach a level higher than the lowest, pre-conventional moral development level if brands’ motives are assumed to be profit based. Instead of trying to dissect a corporation’s true intentions, I am focusing on how the target audience perceives the company’s intentions. The intended audience perception is what ultimately defines the success of a brand, and in that scenario, the perceived level of moral development can reach Kohlberg’s (1977) highest level.

The first level is the pre-conventional, where people act in their own best interest. These motivations could be a fear of punishment or a focus on company benefits and profits. The first level is where inauthentic or woke-washing activism falls. I consider this level the “danger zone” for CSA. Here, the public perception of the CSA is that the company is acting out of its own best interest or avoiding criticism.

Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) inauthentic brand activism typology applies to the pre-conventional level of moral development as well, or as I call it, the “danger zone.” Vredenburg et al. (2020) classify inauthentic brand activism as occurring due to a lack of prosocial corporate practice and a lack of explicit prosocial brand purpose. I consider inauthentic brand activism woke-washing because it only meets Kohlberg’s (1977) first level of moral development.

The second level of moral development is the conventional level (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Here are stages 3 and 4, where individuals behave in a way that gains approval from others or is driven by rules. I suggest that this represents where CSR falls. Since companies
expect CSR, it is an act that maintains a company’s positive status and is relatively low risk. I consider corporate social responsibility to be the “safe zone” for brands.

The third level is Kohlberg’s (1977) highest level of moral development, the post-conventional level. The post-conventional level contains stages 5 and 6, where individuals or companies make choices out of respect for others’ well-being and safety and value justice and social good above self-interest (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). In this case, the target audience will perceive an activist campaign as post-conventional if the ad appears to prioritize the needs of the social movement above profits and the brand. This is perceived to be a selfless act by the company, one that could be at the detriment of the brand to advance the movement. At this level, the public perceives CSA to be authentic brand activism.

I suggest that Kohlberg’s post-conventional level corresponds with Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) typology of inauthentic brand activism. When the public perceives the brand as acting selflessly and prioritizing the social good, they view the motives as authentic. The four standards of authentic brand activism that must be met here are a “high activist marketing message, high engagement in prosocial corporate practice, explicit prosocial brand purpose and values, [and] the brand must be perceived to be framing and driving solutions to problems of public interest” (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449). This creates a successful CSA with positive public feedback from social movement supporters. I consider this level the “Benefit Zone” when authentic brand activism is accomplished.

Based on Kohlberg’s theory, I have categorized the moral development levels into brand activism zones. Figure 1 explains what I consider to be the different zones of success in brand activism related to Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral development.
2.5. Authentic Brand Activism’s Real-World Application

In 2017, Pepsi’s “Live for Now – Moments” CSA campaign drew on current protestor-police tensions to co-opt the BLM movement and apply it to an ad. Pepsi’s campaign advertisement starts out by showing Kendall Jenner, a white female celebrity, posing in a high-end fashion shoot. Outside while the fashion shoot is taking place are protesters taking to the streets with vague signage saying, “join the conversation,” “love,” and “unity.” Jenner then walks out of her photoshoot and joins the crowd of protestors in a standoff against a line of police, depicted in Figure 2. The commercial depicts tension between the protesters and police force. Jenner proceeds to grab a can of Pepsi from an ice bucket and crosses the protester picket line to hand a policeman a Pepsi. The officer then drinks the Pepsi, and the crowd of protesters begins cheering. The ad depicts Jenner as solving the tension between police and protesters by sharing a Pepsi with officers. This campaign received immediate backlash across news outlets and social media platforms, especially Twitter. Pepsi released a public apology and pulled the ad from all platforms.

In comparison, the Nike “Dream Crazy” campaign consisted of numerous media such as print, billboard, and digital. The initial advertisement in this campaign that sparked social media input was Colin Kaepernick announcing on Twitter that he would be the face of Nike’s campaign (Figure 2). Kaepernick began silently protesting for racial equality during the NFL national anthem by taking a knee starting in the 2016 season. Critics said this disrespected the flag, and
after significant pushback, Kaepernick filed a collusion grievance against the NFL for attempting to keep him out of the league.

Following this scandal, Nike broadcasted their “Dream Crazy” campaign which starred Kaepernick and publicly supported the Black Lives Matter movement. It featured billboards and digital graphics showcasing Kaepernick’s face with the quote “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” Kaepernick was also featured as the narrator in an additional “Dream Crazy” commercial for Nike in this same campaign. Along with Kaepernick, other Black athletes, such as LeBron James and Serena Williams were also featured in the “Dream

Figure 2. Kaepernick’s Tweet Announcing Nike’s “Dream Crazy” Campaign

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Crazy” campaign. While not without controversy, this campaign was ultimately successful with its target audience, receiving viral praise and winning an Emmy award.

These two extreme examples of brand activism success and failure guide my research questions for study one along with considering Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) and Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) definitions for authenticity.

2.6. Research Questions

Study I is an exploratory content analysis using the two extreme examples of brand activism discussed in my literature review as case studies.

**RQ1:** Why is Pepsi’s “Live for Now” CSA campaign perceived as inauthentic with its target audience?

I am using the Pepsi case for my first research question to explore the reasons some brands fail at CSA attempts. I am applying Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) authentic brand activism typology to the Pepsi campaign to see if there are any gaps in the existing brand activism literature.

For my second research questions, I am analyzing Nike’s successful “Dream Crazy” CSA campaign.

**RQ2:** Why is Nike’s “Dream Crazy” CSA campaign perceived as authentic with its target audience?

I am using Nike’s campaign for my second case study since it is an extreme example of successful brand activism. I will be applying Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) authentic brand activism typology to this case as well to potentially identify any influences on perception not previously identified.
2.7. Group Identity’s Impact on Brand Activism

While researching Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) authentic brand activism typology related to the Pepsi campaign, I questioned if authenticity encompasses something more than a brand’s purpose, advocacy, and CSR history. Would the public perceive the Pepsi campaign starring Kendall Jenner differently if it explicitly stated support for the Black Lives Matter movement and the audience knew Pepsi had a history of prosocial practices supporting the Black community? Or, would the ad still feel inauthentic to viewers? Could the structure of a CSA campaign itself impact the perceived authenticity even when it has a high activist message, clear brand values, and a history of CSR commitment?

After considering these questions, I researched how group identity can impact the perceived authenticity of a CSA campaign. Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed the social identity theory, which describes how people view themselves based on their group memberships. People's social identities impact their norms, attitudes, and behaviors. The social identity theory suggests that people categorize themselves and others into groups to make sense of the world. Mason (2018) says that group members are primally and powerfully motivated to see outgroups as different from them.

The group identity of a CSA campaign model may impact the perceived authenticity of a brand if participants recognize that an ingroup member of a social movement is representing the campaign. In contrast, if an outgroup member is representing a CSA campaign, then the brand may be viewed as acting inauthentically since he or she is not representative of the social movement. For the scope of my thesis, group identity is referring to how an audience perceives the group identity of the campaign’s main model in relation to the social movement’s group identity. For example, in Study II I focus on the Black Lives Matter movement. The ingroup for
the BLM movement is the Black community, and the outgroups for the BLM movement are all other racial groups.

Collective action literature highlights the importance of ingroup members participating in their community’s social movements (Kelly, 1993; Tran & Curtin 2017). Tran and Curtin (2017) define own-group activism as purposeful actions that create sociopolitical change to improve one’s ingroup status and conditions. Own-group activism might contribute to CSA being viewed as authentic. By seeing ingroup members of the social movement represented in ads, it may center the attention on the movement rather than the brand. For example, having a wealthy white woman at the center of a brand’s campaign against racist police brutality may appear inauthentic compared to centering the ad on a member of the Black community. I hypothesize that centering a brand’s CSA campaign on an ingroup member of a social movement will increase the audience’s perception of brand authenticity compared to using an outgroup model.

2.8. Hypotheses

Study II’s experiment is guided by hypotheses that draw from existing literature and the results from Study I. First, I apply the concept of prosocial corporate practice through a history of continuous CSR commitment to my research. Vredenburg et al. (2020) suggest that audiences will perceive a brand with high engagement in prosocial corporate practice as more authentic in CSA campaigns than a brand with low engagement. Similarly, Park and Kim (2014) suggest that a companies with a continuous CSR commitment improve consumer attitudes, purchase intention, and organizational support. Since existing scholarly research suggests that a company’s CSR history positively impacts its audience’s level of perceived authenticity in CSA campaigns (Vredenburg et al., 2020), I apply this concept to my experiment in Hypothesis 1.
**H1**: A brand with a more extensive corporate social responsibly (CSR) history will be perceived as more authentic by its audience than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments.

To better understand the dependent variable of authenticity in my hypotheses, I analyze authenticity on three separate scales. I created these scales through grouping similar statements surveying perceived authenticity from Miller’s (2015) ad authenticity scale. I grouped authenticity into following three categories: the campaign’s perceived authenticity to the brand’s company values, the perceived authenticity of the campaign related to the brand’s public persona or personality, and the perceived authenticity of the brand’s intentions when creating the CSA campaign. I created these categories by grouping together Miller’s (2015) authenticity statements. The categories were influenced by Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) authenticity characteristics.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) suggests that a company is authentic when its messaging aligns with its values, practice, and purpose. When group Miller’s (2015) ad authenticity scale statements, I naturally saw these categories in the prompts. I apply Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) value characteristic into the value group, practice characteristic into the public persona group, and purpose into the intent group.

I used the three authenticity categories to analyze my results by turning them into the following scales: the brand values scale, the brand public persona or personality scale, and the brand intent scale. Below I apply those three scales to Hypothesis 1.

**H1a**: A brand with a continued history of CSR commitments will be perceived as more authentic to its values than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments.
**H1b:** A brand with a continued history of CSR commitments will be perceived as more authentic to its public persona than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments.

**H1c:** A brand’s intent behind its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic when it has continued history of CSR commitments than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments.

For Hypothesis 2, I apply the group identity theory to my experiment. In Study II, group identity refers to how an audience perceives the group identity of the campaign’s main model in relation to the social movement’s group identity. Since the social movement used in Study II is the Black Lives Matter movement, members of the Black community are the racial “ingroup” for this activist campaign. A non-Black model is considered the racial “outgroup” for an activist campaign supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

I am applying group identity to my experiment because prior research emphasizes the importance of ingroup representation (e.g., Kelly, 1993; Tran & Curtin 2017). Hypothesis two will test if having an ingroup members of the social movement represented in ads, will be perceived as more authentic since it amplifies the movement instead of just the brand.

**H2:** A CSA campaign using an ingroup social movement model will be perceived as more authentic by its audience than a brand using an outgroup model.

Again, I utilize the three scales I created through grouping similar statements surveying perceived authenticity from Miller’s (2015) ad authenticity scale. I analyze Hypothesis 2 using the following three ad authenticity scales: the values scale, the personality scale, and the intent scale.
**H2a:** A brand using an ingroup social movement model in its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic to its values than a brand using an outgroup model.

**H2b:** A brand using an ingroup social movement model in its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic to its public persona than a brand using an outgroup model.

**H2c:** A brand’s intent behind its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic when it uses an ingroup social movement model than a brand that uses an outgroup model.

For my third hypothesis, I suggest that there will be interaction effects between my two independent variables. I include this hypothesis because it is important to the integrity of my research that I identify if my independent variables interact together in any way. Additionally, researching simple main effects concurrently with interaction effects will show how the variables interact and which factors may influence the audience’s level of perceived authenticity.

**H3:** There will be an interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its main model that influences the perceived authenticity of its CSA campaign.

To be comprehensive, I also apply the following three ad authenticity scales to my analysis of Hypothesis 3: the values scale, the personality scale, and the intent scale.

**H3a:** There will be a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived authenticity to its values.

**H3b:** There will be a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived authenticity to its public persona.
**H3c:** There will be a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived intent behind its CSA campaign.
CHAPTER 3. STUDY I METHODS

Study I’s exploratory content-analysis poses two research questions: why is Pepsi’s “Live for Now” CSA campaign perceived as inauthentic with its target audience and why is Nike’s “Dream Crazy” CSA campaign perceived as authentic with its target audience? These questions guide my content analysis as I consider the various factors that might influence an audience’s perception of a CSA campaign.

I conducted a content analysis using Brandwatch, a social media analytic tool, to explore Twitter conversations surrounding two brand activist campaigns. Study I is a case study comparing the public Twitter users’ perceptions of Nike’s successful, Emmy-winning “Dream Crazy” campaign starring Colin Kaepernick with Pepsi’s notoriously unsuccessful “Live for Now Moments Anthem” campaign starring Kendall Jenner.

I chose these two advertisements because they are extreme examples of brand activist campaigns. Both campaigns tried to target consumers that care about social movements and activist protests, specifically relevant to racial inequality, but they resulted in drastically different outcomes. Nike’s campaign was a success with its target audience and won an Emmy for Outstanding Commercial in 2019. Pepsi’s campaign starring Kendall Jenner received such negative feedback that the company pulled the campaign and formally apologized to consumers. Since these two campaigns resulting in drastically different outcomes, I decided to analyze their characteristics to help identify what contributes to an audience viewing a CSA campaign as authentic.

3.1. Procedure

To analyze the Nike and Pepsi case studies, I used a qualitative approach. While my data is mostly qualitative content analysis, I have included a variety of data regarding the public
perception and results for both companies. I have utilized Brandwatch’s crawler software to yield the content analysis results. The software ran a query for both campaigns to collect public Twitter feedback posted when the advertisements were originally trending, the week of their respected release dates.

To analyze CSR data, I considered both companies’ CSR impact reports from the year each respective campaign occurred. These reports are published on Nike and Pepsi’s official websites for public use. Finally, I also considered public perception and news coverage when referring to Nike’s campaign as a successful and Pepsi’s as an unsuccessful example of brand activism.

3.2. Content Analysis Software

Brandwatch aggregated public response data from Twitter users during each campaign’s peak. Brandwatch is a private, subscription-based company that uses crawler technology to pull keywords and hashtags publicly available on social media (Wu, 2017). This means the program will “crawl” through millions of content pages to index the searched information. It is an AI-powered social listening tool that allows brands and companies to monitor and interact with customers and prospects over all digital media channels. This includes social media, review sites, and messaging channels. The software allows users to conduct research on marketing, advertising, sales, and engagement.

A query searched through tweets citing the brand names and specific campaign titles. For the Pepsi query, my keywords were “Pepsi,” “Live for Now,” “Live for Now Moments Anthem,” and “Kendall Jenner.” For the Nike query, my keywords were “Nike,” “Dream Crazy,” “Kaepernick,” and “Colin Kaepernick.”
The Pepsi query is from April 3, 2017, to April 5, 2017. April 3 is the starting point because this is the day the campaign went live. I chose April 5 as the end date because the campaign’s trending status and mentions waned on the results chart, and there was no longer a spike. The Nike query is from September 3, 2018, to September 6, 2018. I chose these dates because September 3 is the day the campaign was released and on September 6 the spike in tweets dropped off the charts.

After aggregating all the tweets from this period, I created a word cloud to help gauge the overall public perception of each advertising campaign. I right clicked and removed terms that were originally searched to eliminate data that did not add to my overall analysis. For example, #KendallJennerPepsiAd was deleted from the Pepsi word cloud since it did not address the actual perception of the public when the advertisement was trending. These word clouds will be examined more in the results section of the paper.
CHAPTER 4. STUDY I RESULTS

4.1. Pepsi’s Public Feedback

The Brandwatch query results for Pepsi’s campaign had many references to backlash and outrage as seen in the word cloud, Figure 3. This word cloud consists of the trending topics, keywords, organizations, and phrases from April 3, 2017, to April 5, 2017. Overall, the sentiment appears negative with the targeted audience rejecting the ad.

In total, my query provided 471 unique mentions during the two day timeframe about the Pepsi campaign. To further determine the public perception of the Pepsi campaign, I analyzed around 200 tweets that Brandwatch identified as having the most impressions. For example, Bernice King’s handle, the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., gained over 182 million impressions on Twitter\(^3\) (see Figure 5). I chose this method instead of a random sample because a large portion of tweets were news article links without significant interactions. By viewing the tweets with the highest interactions, I can see the public perception most viewed on Twitter, but

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my data does consist mostly of verified accounts. Some examples of these tweets are Figures 4, 5, and 6.

Ultimately, the Kendall Jenner “Live for Now Moments Anthem” campaign resulted in Pepsi pulling the ad and issuing a formal apology (Figure 7). In this apology, Pepsi said they “missed the mark” on their messaging and halted all further “Live for Now” campaign ads. The formal apology was still met with criticism from its target audience. People tweeted requests for Pepsi to act through donations and other means in support of protesters as part of their apology⁴.

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⁴ Some examples include:

Stowell, C. [@calvinstowell]. (2017, April 5). will you be donating money to orgs leading the resistance like @ACLU @PPact and BLM? [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/calvinstowell/status/849679615471865856?s=20

[@heydizzledizzle]. (2017, April 5). If theyre willing to exploit a serious issue bc they think its trendy marketing and end up insulting ppl YES [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/heydizzledizzle/status/84972897587302408?s=20
Nike’s campaign had a drastically different public perception than Pepsi. Through analyzing the Brandwatch generated word cloud in Figure 8, I found that the targeted audience appeared to connect with the campaign.

Some key trending words from September 3, 2018, to September 6, 2018, are “#imwithkap,” “awareness,” and a heart emoji. The word cloud consisted of trending words, phrases, hashtags, and emojis. While the word cloud does have some words trending critiquing the campaign, these tweets are not from Nike’s targeted audience. The distinction here is that
Nike is not trying to connect with people who disagree with Kaepernick taking a knee, instead, Nike is trying to connect with Kaepernick’s supporters and consumers who care about the Black Lives Matter movement. In this context, the ad was successful because supporters of this movement connected with the campaign and found it authentic.

This support from the targeted audience can be seen through the highest impression tweets from Brandwatch. Some examples of these tweets are Figures 9, 10, and 11.

![Figure 9. Eugene Gu, MD’s Tweet Supporting Nike’s Ad](image)

![Figure 10. Wes Clark’s Tweet Supporting Nike’s Ad](image)

![Figure 11. Serena Williams’ Tweet Supporting Nike’s Ad](image)

While the “Dream Crazy” campaign could be considered controversial to some, it objectively was successful with its target audience. This campaign even won Nike an Emmy for Outstanding Commercial in 2019\(^5\).

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4.3. CSR Results for Pepsi and Nike

This study also considered prior CSR reports for Pepsi and Nike to determine if these brands had exemplified prior involvement in social movements protesting racial inequality. Pepsi’s 2017 Performance with Purpose Metrics includes a section about company diversity initiatives\(^6\). These initiatives focus mostly on gender equality, but there is a history of Pepsi implementing continuous diversity CSR into its workplace. In comparison, Nike’s past impact reports include sections addressing racial inequalities and diversity statistics within the company\(^7\). Specifically, Nike’s 2018 Fiscal Year Impact Report includes sections about diversity and strategies for making the company better for underrepresented groups.

Both companies appear to have continuously engaged in diversity-focused CSR initiatives, though Nike’s CSR history appears to have a more explicit history of supporting the Black community.


CHAPTER 5. STUDY I DISCUSSION

5.1. Authentic Brand Activism

In Study I, the Pepsi and Nike case studies, I found Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) research on authentic brand activism to be extremely applicable. Both Pepsi and Nike had a high level of brand activist messaging and released campaigns centered on social movements protesting. Additionally, both Pepsi and Nike have a history of engaging in continuous diversity CSR practices. While these two campaigns are structurally similar in many ways, the results show a clear distinction in the target audience’s perception of the two campaigns.

One reason for this disparity may be that Nike’s campaign took a clear stance on the Black Lives Matter movement by supporting Kaepernick after he was released from the NFL for kneeling as a sign of silent protest during the national anthem. In contrast, Pepsi did not clearly support a specific stance in the protest scene of its advertisement. Pepsi’s campaign drew from and directly paralleled the Black Lives Matter protests in its messaging without clearly stating its support for the movement. An example of this is Kendall Jenner’s scene where she breaks off from protesters and approaches the police, deescalating tensions by handing them a Pepsi. This scene closely resembled the famous photo of Ieshia Evans protesting in Baton Rouge in 2016 (Bachman, 2016) as seen in Figures 12 and 13. This exemplifies how Pepsi attempted to profit
from the Black Lives Matter movement without showing direct support for it and was perceived as acting out of self-gain by the public.

Figure 12. Pepsi’s Ad Depicting Kendall Jenner

Figure 13. Photo of Ieshia Evans Arrested While Protesting in Baton Rouge in 2016 by Jonathan Bachman for Reuters in 2016

This relates back to Vredenburg’s (2020) theory that authentic brand activism requires a “high activist message.” Nike communicated a high activist stance by clearly supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. The ad’s messaging was particularly impactful because it coincided with an increase in racial protests across the United States. The audience’s perception of authenticity appears to correspond with critics’ perceptions of each ad as well.

These factors may have contributed to the success of Nike’s campaign and, similarly, the failure of Pepsi’s campaign. However, I question if there is an additional factor impacting the target audience’s perception of the Pepsi campaign. I theorize that using Jenner as the focus in Pepsi’s ad, an outgroup white celebrity, may have increased feelings of inauthenticity in the target audience. In contrast, Nike’s ad focused on Kaepernick, an ingroup Black athlete who has publicly faced racial injustice. I suggest that using an ingroup social movement member to support a brand’s CSA may increase its perceived authenticity. This factor will be tested in Study II.
I consider Pepsi’s public perception as only reaching Kohlberg’s (1977) pre-conventional level of moral development, since it felt inauthentic to its target audience. Since people viewed the campaign as selfish and tone deaf, and not at all for the greater good, it does not reach Kohlberg’s post-conventional level of moral development. This relates to my suggestion that authenticity can be better understood and measured by applying it to Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral development.

Additionally, Pepsi’s campaign depicts the brand as the focal point in the ad by framing it as a solution for protester and police tensions. In a time of many Black Lives Matter protests, this may present as an inauthentic gimmick to profit off recent activist events. In comparison, Nike made Kaepernick and the Black Lives Matter movement the center of its campaign with the Nike logo playing only a small role. The Nike campaign may be perceived by the public as centering the focus more on the social movement than the brand. This may contribute to the target audience’s perception of Nike’s campaign as authentic. This relates to Kohlberg’s (1977) highest level of moral development, the post-conventional level.

5.2. Limitations

One limitation with this case study is the notoriety that the Pepsi and Nike campaigns have garnered over the years. Both campaigns were so well-known and circulated through the media that some people may have formed opinions about the ads before ever seeing them. This limitation is accounted for in Study II as the campaigns in that experiment are fictional to prevent this potential bias from occurring.

Study I lacks the sample size needed to support the results as a complete analysis of brand activism. Though this study has these limitations, this case study provided a solid structural outline for analyzing CSA in Study II. This case study also helped to expand on existing theories regarding brand activism.
5.3. Future Research

Based on Nike and Pepsi’s CSR history, there’s a disparity in the company’s actions and the public’s perception of the company. In Study II, I explore this disparity by posing the hypothesis that group identity impacts the target audience’s perception of the CSA campaign’s authenticity. I believe a company’s history of CSR commitments also impacts its audience’s perception of authenticity, so I include CSR history as a second independent variable in Study II. Since I hypothesize that the campaign’s main model group identity influences audience perception, I create two fictional campaigns in study two, one with an ingroup model and one with an outgroup model to test its impact.
CHAPTER 6. STUDY II METHODS

6.1. Authentic Brand Activism– Experiment

Study II used a 2 (CSR: continuous vs one-time) × 2 (Group ID: ingroup vs outgroup) between-subjects experimental design to examine the impact of CSR commitment and group identity on the audience’s perception of a company’s CSA campaign (i.e., authentic, or inauthentic) (Park & Kim, 2014). I created four scenarios about a hypothetical soap company, named Sav’s, involving CSR and Group ID. This experimental structure came from Brown and Dacin (1997) as cited in Park and Kim (2014). I chose a fictional soap company for my experiment because it’s a general product used by everyone. When researching soap advertisements, I found that most advertisement models were female, so in the experiment I used a female main model for both CSA campaigns.

To address the hypotheses, I conducted an experiment using Lucid, an online market research company. This study’s independent variables are the group identity of the advertisement model and the brand’s history of CSR commitment. The dependent variable of this study is perceived authenticity, measured by 3 types of authenticity: company values, company personality, and company intent.

6.2. Research Participants

Lucid vetted the survey respondents to create a representative sample of 500 American adults who support the Black Lives Matter movement. The participants were a census representation of the United States population for race, ethnicity, sex, and age, for ages 18-65. I set these quotas to properly represent the general population of the United States, Ages older than 65 were screened out so the sample would be more representative of people who are more likely to see activist campaigns. Lucid provides its willing respondents with financial
compensation for their participation. Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the experiment participants.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sample Characteristics</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>25-34</td>
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<td>21.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-65</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>21.4</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>83.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 500*
I placed four attention checks throughout the survey to screen out participants who answered incorrectly. Additionally, I screened survey respondents to include only people that support the BLM movement in the study. I did this to prevent people with predispositions against the BLM movement from biasing the data, since it is not relevant to the research questions or hypotheses. People who disagree with the social movement are not the brand’s target audience. This study is focused on why people who support certain social movements may perceive CSA campaigns supporting those movement as inauthentic.

6.3. Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study are a company’s CSR history and the group identity of the campaign’s model. Company CSR history is broken down into two types: One-time CSR and Continuous CSR history. These categories were formed from Park and Kim’s 2014 study. The CSR history independent variable describes the company’s history of engaging in prosocial practices relevant to the social movement.

For this study, one-time CSR describes a company that has engaged in a one-off instance of diversity inclusion but does not have a consistent history of engaging with those issues. This was phrased in the survey as “In 2020, following George Floyd’s death, Sav’s released a statement supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Sav’s received criticism for releasing the #BlackLivesMatter statement without sharing any diversity data, material donations, or equity and inclusion principles.” And, this was included, “Sav’s is now releasing its newest campaign supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and donating 10% of its profits this month to the BLM movement” (see Appendix A).

In this study, continuous CSR describes a company that has historically and consistently engaged in prosocial practices that support the Black community. I described the company as
historically receiving awards and recognition for its commitment to the Black community. Additionally, the description included consistent diversity initiatives over the course of 10 years.

I created the continuous CSR history from using data on real diversity awards and initiatives that real-world companies have introduced. I took those initiatives and applied them to Sav’s to appear more realistic to participants. I included the following in my continuous CSR prompt: “Sav’s has been recognized in Forbes’ ‘Top 20 List for America's Best Employers For Diversity’ every year for the past 10 years.”, “As of 2020, ‘39.7% of the company’s board was made up of racial and ethnic minorities, and its workforce as a whole was 49.8% racial or ethnic majorities’ (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2021, para. 10).”, “In 2014, Sav’s put out a statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and have continued to donate to it in annual campaigns every year following.”, and “In 2020, following George Floyd’s death, Sav’s CEO announced that the company would ‘donate a total of $5 million to Equal Justice Initiative, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Color of Change, and Black Lives Matter’ (Hunter, 2021, para. 27).” (see Appendix A).

Phrasing the CSR histories as one-time commitment or a continuous commitment, instead of CSR history and no CSR history, was chosen to make the study more realistic, following Park and Kim’s (2014) structure. Having no CSR history does not fit this research, because a company engaging in brand activism is at some point engaging in CSR practices. One-time CSR commitment describes a company that is not dedicated to the issues it is publicly speaking out about in campaigns. This fits with the definition of woke-washing defined in the literature review (e.g., Sobande, 2019; Vredenburg et al., 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020). These company descriptions leave the audience open to interpret how strong or weak the company’s CSR commitment is, since both descriptions included the brand engaging in some form of corporate
social responsibility prior to the campaign. My manipulation check for the CSR variable can be found in my results section.

The group identity variable is broken down into ingroup member and outgroup member. This variable describes the racial identity of the main model in the activist campaign. Since the experimental campaign is in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, members of the Black community are considered the ingroup identity. I used a white model as the outgroup member for this ad campaign. The study’s models are illustrations, so I screened out participations who did not recognize the model’s race in their randomly presented ad group (see Appendix B). Out of 500 respondents, 250 were randomly placed in the ingroup treatment, and 250 were randomly placed in the outgroup treatment through the Qualtrics survey platform.

6.4. Dependent Variables

Study II’s dependent variable is the audience’s perception of brand authenticity after viewing the CSA campaign and reading about the company’s CSR history. I used Miller’s (2015) Ad Authenticity Scale (see Appendix C) and broke it down into three scales: brand values, brand personality, and brand intent. I measured all three scales on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with 7 representing the “most authentic” brand perception score.

The values scale measured how audience perceived the CSA campaign to align with the company’s values, expressed through its CSR history. The brand personality scale measured how the audience perceived the CSA campaign to align with the brand’s personality, or if it was authentic to the brand. The brand intent scale measured the audience’s perception of the brand’s intent, or motives, for the ad.
I created these categories by naturally grouping together Miller’s (2015) ad authenticity statements in accordance with Vredenburg et al.’s (2020) characteristics of authentic brand activism—values, practice, and purpose. I applied those characteristics into the values scale, personality scale, and intent scale, respectively.

I also used Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral development to create the intent scale. The theory of moral development categorizes morality by intentions. Similarly, if the brand’s intentions for the CSA campaign are altruistic or for the greater good of the social movement the campaign will be viewed as more authentic.

**6.5. Internal Consistency Check**

I conducted an internal consistency check on the three scales I developed using Cronbach’s alpha. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the scale were the following: .95 (α=0.95) for the brand values scale, .88 (α=0.88) for the brand personality scale, and .95 (α=0.95) for the brand intent scale. Since all three scales received reliability scores higher than the conventional Cronbach’s alpha of .80, I assumed the scales to be consistent and reliable.

**6.6. Data Screening and Assumption Check**

Since Lucid was used to conduct this study, participants reported their scores accurately without missing information. I conducted a visual inspection of the data as well. There were approximately equal numbers of participants in the between-subject comparison conditions (n=250 for the continuous CSR condition and n=250 for the one-time CSR condition; n=245 for the ingroup condition and n=255 for the outgroup condition). Since there are approximately equal numbers of subjects in each condition, ANOVA is robust to the results, regardless of any heterogeneity results.
6.7. Procedure

I designed the online survey to last approximately 15 minutes, and subjects completed it on their own timeframe at their chosen location. This helps prevent respondents from a laboratory setting influencing their results.

After clearing the screening questions, participants were randomly presented either the continuous CSR commitment treatment or the one-time CSR commitment treatment for the fictional soap company Sav’s (see Appendix A). Next, participants were randomly presented with a CSA campaign starring either an ingroup model or an outgroup model (see Appendix B). The campaign and company were created for this study to prevent any preconceived biases from influencing their perception of the company’s authenticity.

After viewing the company CSR history and the CSA campaign, participants completed a series of manipulation checks on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). I first tested if respondents reported knowing Sav’s soap prior to the experiment, to which the median response was 2. Then, I checked the manipulation of the CSR independent variable, also on a seven-point Likert scale.

After the manipulation checks, I ranked 26 statements regarding brand authenticity on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Two of the statements were attention checks that are omitted from the study’s results.
CHAPTER 7. STUDY II RESULTS

7.1. Research Overview

This experiment investigated how influential a brand’s CSR history and group identity are on its target audience’s level of perceived authenticity. This study included two independent variables, CSR history (continuous versus one-time) and the group identity of the campaign’s main model (ingroup versus outgroup). The dependent variable was perceived authenticity, measured on three different scales (values, personality, and intent).

I conducted a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to assess Study II’s data. I examined the independent variables, CSR history and group identity, in a between-group comparison design. A total of 500 American adults participated in the study. This study focuses specifically on how an audience that agrees with the Black Lives Matter movement perceives CSA campaigns supporting it, so I placed a screening question regarding people’s support of the BLM movement at the beginning of the survey. The sample is representative of United States’ sociodemographic characteristics according to 2020 census data.

7.2. Descriptive Statistics: Value Scale

Overall on the value scale, the mean score for the continuous CSR history and ingroup identity was the highest, with 5.78 and a range of 5.53 to 6.03, followed by continuous CSR with an outgroup model (5.32, 5.07-5.57). The lowest mean score, 4.87, was the campaign with one-time CSR history and an outgroup model ranging from 4.63 to 5.12. The value scale’s mean statistics are displayed in Table 2.
Table 2. Value Scale Mean Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSR History</th>
<th>Overall Authenticity Score</th>
<th>Group Identity</th>
<th>CSR History Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.17)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>5.32 (1.03)</td>
<td>5.78 (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity Means</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.09 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.49 (1.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3. Descriptive Statistics: Personality/Public Persona Scale

On the personality scale, the mean score for the continuous CSR history and ingroup identity was the highest, with 5.66 and a range of 5.42 to 5.90, followed by continuous CSR with an outgroup model (5.28, 5.04-5.52). The lowest mean score, 4.78, was the campaign with one-time CSR history and an outgroup model ranging from 4.56 to 5.03. The personality scale’s mean statistics are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Personality Scale Mean Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSR History</th>
<th>Overall Authenticity Score</th>
<th>Group Identity</th>
<th>CSR History Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.24 (1.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>5.28 (.99)</td>
<td>5.66 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity Means</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.03 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.45 (1.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4. Descriptive Statistics: Intent Scale

On the intent scale, the mean score for the continuous CSR history and ingroup identity was the highest, with 5.83 and a range of 5.47 to 6.19, followed by continuous CSR with an
outgroup model (5.50, 5.14-5.85). The lowest mean score, 4.41, was the campaign with one-time CSR history and an outgroup model ranging from 4.06 to 4.76. The intent scale’s mean statistics are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Intent Scale Mean Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSR History</th>
<th>Group Identity</th>
<th>Overall Authenticity Score</th>
<th>CSR History Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outgroup</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.79)</td>
<td>5.48 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous CSR</td>
<td>Mean (Std.)</td>
<td>5.50 (1.51)</td>
<td>5.83 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity Means</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.94 (1.74)</td>
<td>5.65 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5. Manipulation Check

Since the CSR independent variable was open to interpretation by the respondents, I conducted a manipulation check using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The independent samples t-test results indicate that respondents who received the continuous CSR condition (5.89, .86) perceived the company as having a more consistent, long-term history of CSR participation compared to those the one-time CSR condition (5.23, 1.09). The results are significantly different, $t(479.90) = -7.60, p<0.001$.

7.6. Hypothesis 1a

To address hypothesis 1, that a brand with a more extensive corporate social responsibly (CSR) history will be perceived as more authentic by its audience’s than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments, I conducted a two-way ANOVA test to determine the influence a brand’s CSR history has on its audience’s level of perceived authenticity on the value scale, personality scale, or intent scale.
For testing the main effects of hypothesis 1a, that a brand with a continued history of CSR commitments will be perceived as more authentic to its values than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments, I looked at the significance CSR history had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. CSR history’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand values is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, $F(1,496) = 27.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. The ANOVA analysis for CSR history on the brand values scale is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA Analysis: CSR’s Impact Brand Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.36</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>563.34</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>615.24</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: $p<.001$, **: $p \leq .01$, *: $p \leq .05$

7.7. Hypothesis 1b

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 1b, that a brand with a continued history of CSR commitments will be perceived as more authentic to its public persona (personality) than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments, I looked at the significance CSR history had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. CSR history’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand
personality is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, \( F (1,496) = 24.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05. \)

The ANOVA analysis for CSR history on the brand personality scale is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. ANOVA Analysis: CSR’s Impact on Brand Personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>25.74</td>
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<td>25.74</td>
<td>24.63</td>
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<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>20.32</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>565.30</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: \( p < .001, **: p \leq .01, *: p \leq .05 \)

7.8. Hypothesis 1c

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 1c, that a brand’s intent behind its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic when it has continued history of CSR commitments than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments, I looked at the significance CSR history had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. CSR history’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand intent is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, \( F (1,496) = 27.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05. \) The ANOVA analysis for CSR history on the brand intent scale is displayed in Table 7.
### 7.9. Hypothesis 2a

To address hypothesis 2, that a CSA campaign using an ingroup social movement model will be perceived as more authentic by its audience’s than a brand using an outgroup model, I conducted a two-way ANOVA test to determine the influence a brand’s group identity has on its audience’s level of perceived authenticity on the value scale, personality scale, or intent scale.

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 2a, that a brand using an ingroup social movement model in its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic to its values than a brand using an outgroup model, I looked at the significance the group identity variable had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. Group identity’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand values is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, \( F(1,496) = 17.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04 \). The ANOVA analysis for group identity on the brand values scale is displayed in Table 8.
Table 8. ANOVA Analysis: Group Identity’s Impact on Brand Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
<td>.40</td>
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<td>.40</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>563.34</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>615.24</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p < .001, **: p ≤ .01, *: p ≤ .05

7.10. Hypothesis 2b

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 2b, that a brand using an ingroup social movement model in its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic to its public persona (personality) than a brand using an outgroup model, I looked at the significance the group identity variable had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. Group identity’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand personality is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, $F (1,496) = 20.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$. The ANOVA analysis for group identity on the brand personality scale is displayed in Table 9.
Table 9. ANOVA Analysis: Group Identity’s Impact on Brand Personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>25.74</td>
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<td>25.74</td>
<td>24.63</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>20.32</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>518.35</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>565.30</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p<.001, **: p≤.01, *: p≤.05

7.11. Hypothesis 2c

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 2c, that a brand’s intent behind its CSA campaign will be perceived as more authentic when it uses an ingroup social movement model than a brand that uses an outgroup model, I looked at the significance the group identity variable had on audience perception. I analyzed this using a between-subject comparison approach. Group identity’s main effects on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand intent is statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, $F(1,496) = 26.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The ANOVA analysis for group identity on the brand intent scale is displayed in Table 10.
Table 10. ANOVA Analysis: Group Identity’s Impact on Brand Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>64.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64.22</td>
<td>27.26</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>61.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.48</td>
<td>26.10</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID**</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1168.29</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>2.36</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>1312.07</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p<.001, **: p ≤.01, *: p ≤.05

7.12. Hypothesis 3a

To address hypothesis 3, that there is an interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its main model that influences the perceived authenticity of its CSA campaign, I conducted a two-way ANOVA test to determine if there are any statistically significant interaction effects between CSR history and group identity. I looked for interaction effects on the value scale, personality scale, or intent scale. Overall, interaction effects were only statistically significant on the intent scale.

For testing the main effects of hypothesis 3a, that there is a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived authenticity to its values, I looked for significant interaction effects on a between-subject comparison approach. There were no significant interaction effects between CSR history and group identity on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to
brand values. The ANOVA analysis for interaction effects on the brand values scale is displayed in Table 11 and the Brand Values Interaction Effects Plot is displayed in Figure 14.

Table 11. ANOVA Analysis: Interaction Effects Impacting Brand Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSR History***</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31.53</td>
<td>27.76</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.28</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>563.34</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>615.24</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p<.001; **: p ≤.01; *: p ≤.05
While there are no statistically significant interaction effects on the brand value scale, an omnibus test showed significant simple main effects on authenticity for a brand with one-time CSR history by outgroup identity. The audience with a one-time CSR history treatment rated the brand value authenticity as .35 points higher with the ingroup model than the outgroup model (p = .01, 99% CI for the difference = .001 to .69).

7.13. Hypothesis 3b

To test the main effects of hypothesis 3b, that there is a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived authenticity to its public persona (personality), I looked for significant interaction effects on a between-subject comparison approach. There were no significant interaction effects between CSR history and group identity on the audience’s level of perceived authenticity to brand values. The ANOVA analysis for interaction effects on the brand
personality scale is displayed in Table 12 and the Brand Personality Interaction Effects Plot is displayed in Figure 15.

### Table 12. ANOVA Analysis: Interaction Effects Impacting Brand Personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.05</td>
</tr>
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<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>21.23</td>
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<td>21.23</td>
<td>20.32</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR History x Group ID</td>
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<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.75</td>
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<td>Error</td>
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<td>496</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>565.30</td>
<td>499</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p<.001, **: p ≤.01, *: p ≤.05
While there are no statistically significant interaction effects on the brand personality scale, an omnibus test showed significant simple main effects on authenticity for a brand with one-time CSR history by outgroup identity. The audience with a one-time CSR history treatment rated the brand personality authenticity as .44 points higher with the ingroup model than the outgroup model (p < .001, 99% CI for the difference = .11 to .77).

7.14. Hypothesis 3c

To test the main effects of hypothesis 3c, that there is a significant interaction effect between a brand’s CSR history and the group identity of its social movement main model that influences the brand’s perceived intent behind its CSA campaign, I looked for significant interaction effects on a between-subject comparison approach. There were statistically significant interaction effects between CSR history and group identity on the intent scale at an alpha level of .01, $F(1,496) = 7.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .02$. The ANOVA analysis for interaction
effects on the brand intent scale is displayed in Table 13 and the Brand Intent Interaction Effects Plot is displayed in Figure 16.

Table 13. ANOVA Analysis: Interaction Effects Impacting Brand Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>64.22</td>
<td>27.26</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identity***</td>
<td>61.48</td>
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<td>26.10</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>17.25</td>
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<td>7.32</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: p<.001, **: p≤.01, *: p≤.05
To determine the simple main effects on the brand intent scale, I ran an omnibus test that showed a significant simple main effect on authenticity for a brand with one-time CSR history by outgroup identity. The audience with a one-time CSR history treatment rated the brand intent authenticity 1.07 points higher with the ingroup model than the outgroup model (p < .001, 99% CI for the difference = .58 to 1.57).
CHAPTER 8. STUDY II DISCUSSION

8.1. Interaction Effects on the Intent Scale

The results indicate that a brand’s target audience will consider both CSR history and main model group identity to judge its intentions for the CSA campaign. Study II found a significant interaction effect between group identity and CSR history on the intent scale. An omnibus test showed simple main effects from the outgroup impacting the variables. When one-time CSR history is present, the ingroup variable is significantly more impactful on the audience’s perception than when continuous CSR is present. Additionally, the use of an ingroup model limits the negative effects of a company’s one-time CSR history.

This suggests that using an ingroup social movement member as the main model in a CSA campaign can prevent the negative effects of a company’s one-time CSR history by improving the audience’s perception of the brand’s intentions. Therefore, if a company wants to start engaging in brand activism, but is concerned about its intentions being viewed as inauthentic, they can help limit that perception by using an ingroup social movement member as the CSA campaign’s main model.

This interaction is unique because it only occurs on the intent scale, which suggests that the audience uses their knowledge of a company’s past CSR commitment and applies it to their judgements of the company’s intentions when viewing the ad using either an ingroup model or outgroup model.

An explanation for this interaction effect is that the audience may believe that the brand’s intentions are more authentic when the brand appears to understand the movement’s purpose and has a history of engaging with it. The audience appears to judge the brand’s intent based on a combination of the CSR history with the group identity used in the campaign. A brand with an
extensive CSR history appears to be given “the benefit of the doubt” by its audience when using an outgroup model for the campaign. Similarly, the audience appears to consider the group identity of the model when determining a brand without a continuous CSR history’s intent.

By using a social movement ingroup member in a CSA campaign, the brand conveys that it understands the voices the movement is trying to elevate, and it too is helping in that cause. Another explanation is that using an ingroup main model may shift the campaign’s focus to the social movement, instead of the brand, which feels more authentic to audiences. This explanation relates to Study I’s discussion, where Nike’s successful campaign focuses on the BLM movement, and Pepsi’s failed campaign focuses more on the brand.

These findings are beneficial to both brands and social movement supporters because it may encourage brands to begin engaging with CSA and CSR regardless of their company’s history. This can encourage more brands to help social movements that otherwise might have opted out of practicing brand activism to avoid it potentially backfiring.

8.2. CSR Main Effects on All Scales

Overall, Study II’s results suggest that creating a solid foundation of continuous CSR commitments is the best way for brands to achieve an authentic perception from their target audience. This result is statistically significant across all three ad authenticity scales: brand values, brand personality, and brand intent. These findings support Hypothesis 1, that a brand with a more extensive CSR history will be perceived as more authentic by its audience than a brand with a less extensive history of CSR commitments. Study II supports Hypothesis 1 on every scale (H1a, H1b, and H1c). This also suggests that by “putting their money where their mouth is” brands may prove their commitment to advocacy causes and appear more authentic to their target audience.
The CSR main effect finding advantages social movements, because it will encourage brands that want to reap the benefits of CSA campaigns to engage in prosocial corporate practices with social movements. Essentially, this will encourage brands support social movements with more than just publicity. Instead of only speaking out for social movements, brands will be called to take action in a more substantial and consistent way.

8.3. Group ID Main Effects on All Scales

In Study II, there are main effects from group identity to the audience’s perception of authenticity on every scale. There is a significant difference in the perceived authenticity of a CSA campaign when an ingroup model is used compared to an outgroup model, which supports Hypothesis 2, that a CSA campaign using an ingroup social movement model will be perceived as more authentic by its audience than a brand using an outgroup model. This finding was present in all three ad authenticity scales which supports H2a, H2b, and H2c.

One reason for this discovery may be that the target audience finds CSA campaigns that use a member of social movement’s ingroup as more involved with or in touch with the social movement. By using a main model who is representative of the social movement, the brand makes the social movement the focus of the advertising, instead of the company. This appears more authentic to the target audience, because the brand’s motives are considered more altruistic, rather than profit-based.

8.4. Interaction Effects on the Values and Personality Scales

There were no significant interaction effects between CSR history and group identity on the values or personality scale, therefore, Study II Hypothesis 3a and H3b are not supported. This shows that there is no significant interaction between the group identity and CSR history on the
values or personality scale. This suggests that, overall, the variables act independently of one another to influence the audience’s perception of the brand’s values and personality authenticity.

8.5. Limitations

Study II has some limitations due to the scope of the experiment. One limitation is that in a real-world setting, people may not have a company’s CSR history readily accessible when viewing an ad to influence their perception of it. Larger, well-known corporations may not have this problem, but smaller brands may find their audiences less influenced by their CSR history. However, prior research shows that a majority of consumers have begun to take a vested interest in their brands’ CSR initiatives (Shetty et al., 2019; Sibai et al., 2021), which suggests that as brand activism continues to grow more prevalent, buyers will become more commonly aware of brands’ CSR commitments.

Another limitation is survey sample. While the sample size was sufficient \((n = 500)\) and representative of the United States census demographics, the financial compensation for completing the survey may influence the respondents. Overall, I believe this was a sufficient sample method for this research that produced quality results, as seen by the internal validity and manipulation checks. While controlling for BLM movement support was important in my experiment, this screening question could potentially impact the audience’s perception of the campaign or unintentionally prime respondents.

In my experiment, the outgroup model was depicted as white, but the BLM movement’s outgroup encompasses all races that are not a part of the Black community. I limited my research to test only for a white racial outgroup member, but this may have an impact on the audience’s perception. An audience may react different to minority outgroup main model than a white outgroup main model. I believe it’s important to consider the implications of using a white model
to co-opt a movement focused on empowering the Black community and how a white outgroup model may produce more extreme results from respondents.

Lastly, the scales I created may cause some concern. I grouped the ad authenticity scale by Miller (2015) into subcategories based on the statements. While these scale categories are only based on my interpretation of the statements, they were considered internally valid by Cronbach’s alpha tests. I also believe these scales add to the research and help suggest some types of brand authenticity that consumers may consider when viewing a CSA campaign.

8.6. Future Research

Future research should investigate how brand popularity may impact the importance of a continuous CSR commitment on perceived authenticity. Comparing an additional study using well-known companies with the results of Study II would provide insight on how the CSR and group identity variables apply to real-world scenarios.

Additionally, this scope of this thesis was limited to studying sociodemographic characteristics on a general level. For future research, controlling for sex, race, ethnicity, and age could provide valuable insight into how sociodemographic differences in audience members influence their perceived level of authenticity when viewing a CSA campaign. I plan to test these control variables in my upcoming research.

In future research, I also plan to test different brands to see if the type of product being advertised has any influence on the campaign’s perceived level of authenticity. Controlling for the main model’s gender may also have an impact on research, so I plan to test that in a future study as well.

I also believe this research is applicable to brand activism as a whole and should be replicated on other social movements, such as the Me Too movement, in the future.
CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

A comprehensive look at Study I and II conclude that the best CSA practice involves a continuous CSR commitment and using an ingroup identity member as the campaign’s main model. However, Study II suggests that the audience is influenced by both CSR history and group identity interacting when judging the brand’s intentions behind the CSA campaigns. Furthermore, these results propose that a brand without a continuous history of CSR can still engage in CSA campaigns by using an ingroup member of the social movement to curb negative effects.

Overall, the studies answer this paper’s guiding question by suggesting that brands should support a social movement with action, like a continuous CSR commitment, to avoid being perceived as inauthentic in its CSA campaigns. Likewise, these studies suggest using members of a social movement’s ingroup as representatives in a CSA campaign can lead to a higher perception of authenticity from its target audience.

This research adds to the existing literature on perceiving ad authenticity. This also provides additional authenticity scales (values, personality, and intent) that can be utilized in brand activism research.

As prior research has shown, authentic advertising has a positive effect on brand attitudes, product sales, and credibility (Miller, 2015). This may motivate brands to produce more authentic CSA campaigns that go beyond benefitting the brand, and benefit the social movements, instead of woke-washing. Promoting brands to increase their CSR commitment and use of ingroup models also helps to advance social movements. CSR helps social movements in an actionable way, beyond just raising awareness through a public campaign. In a similar way,
using an ingroup model for CSA advertising may help to elevate the voices that social movement represents.

9.1. Implications

I believe this research on authentic CSA campaigns will advantage both corporations and social movements. Suppose companies realize that they must participate in authentic forms of activism to gain public support for CSA, then they may begin to act in ways that better help social movements. For example, this realization could cause corporations to shift the focus away from its brand in CSA advertisements and shift it more toward facilitating the social movement, following Kohlberg’s (1977) theory of moral development, and supported by the brand intent authenticity scale. This could lead to very practical improvements in brand activism and society as a whole. As shown in these two campaigns, authentic and moral activism leads to positive public support from the brand’s targeted audience without alienating the social movement’s supporters in the process.
APPENDIX A. CSR CONDITION

Continuous CSR History

Sav’s is an American soap company that produces organic bath and body products. The company was founded in 2002 and annually updates its diversity and inclusion programs. Sav’s has been recognized in Forbes’ “Top 20 List for America's Best Employers for Diversity” every year for the past 10 years. As of 2020, “39.7% of the company’s board was made up of racial and ethnic minorities, and its workforce as a whole was 49.8% racial or ethnic majorities” (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2021, para. 10).

In 2014, Sav’s put out a statement in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and has continued to donate to BLM in annual campaigns every year following. In 2020, following George Floyd’s murder, Sav’s CEO announced that the company will “donate a total of $5 million to Equal Justice Initiative, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Color of Change, and Black Lives Matter” over the next 5 years (Hunter, 2021, para. 27).

Sav’s is now releasing its newest campaign supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and donating 10% of its profits this month to the BLM movement. You will view Sav’s latest campaign on the next page.

One-Time CSR History

Sav’s is an American soap company that produces organic bath and body products. This company was founded in 2002 and has recently began updating its diversity and inclusion programs.

In 2020, following George Floyd’s murder, Sav’s released a statement supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Sav’s received criticism for releasing the #BlackLivesMatter
statement, without sharing any diversity data, making any material donations, or introducing any equity and inclusion principles within company.

Sav’s is now releasing its newest campaign supporting the Black Lives Matter movement and donating 10% of its profits this month to the BLM movement.

You will view Sav’s latest campaign on the next page.
APPENDIX B. GROUP ID CAMPAIGNS

Ingroup Main Model
Outgroup Main Model
APPENDIX C. SURVEY

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements regarding Sav’s Soap company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This company consistently engages in corporate giving.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This company consistently engages in community programs.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This company is concerned about human rights.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This company is committed to supporting the Black Community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have a favorable opinion about this company’s history supporting the Black Community.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement accurately reflects the true values of the brand</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand’s personality can be clearly seen in this advertisement.</td>
<td>〇</td>
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<td>〇</td>
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<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement accurately reflects the brand’s character.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement reflects what the brand is really all about.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement portrays the brand as they actually are.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand’s history can be clearly seen in this advertisement.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
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<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would expect to see this brand in this advertisement.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
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<td>〇</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand’s heritage can be clearly seen in this advertisement.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand’s values are clearly expressed in this advertisement.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
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<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement was appropriate for this brand.</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
<td>〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Circle Selection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement reflects the brand’s heritage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement accurately reflects the brand’s personality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement reflects what the brand claims to be.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The brand’s character can be clearly seen in this advertisement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select &quot;Agree&quot; for this statement.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This advertisement reflects the brand’s history.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate the degree to which you agree with the following statements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this advertisement the brand came across as fake.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement does not accurately reflect the character of the brand.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement doesn't really fit with how I think about this brand.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement does not reflect the true nature of the brand.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement does not accurately reflect the brand's personality.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select &quot;Neither Agree nor Disagree&quot; for this statement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am surprised to see this brand in this advertisement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement felt disingenuous.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This advertisement rubbed me the wrong way.</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this advertisement the brand comes across as phony.

Scale developed from Miller’s ad authenticity scale (2015).
APPENDIX D. IRB APPROVAL

TO: Lance Porter
LSUAM | Sch of MCOM | Mass Communication

FROM: Alex Cohen
Chairman, Institutional Review Board

DATE: 21-Feb-2022

RE: IRBAM-22-0076

TITLE: From Kendall to Kaepernick: Analyzing Authentic vs. Inauthentic Brand Activism

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application

Review Type: Exempt
Risk Factor: Minimal
Review Date: 20-Feb-2022
Status: Approved
Approval Date: 20-Feb-2022
Approval Expiration Date: 19-Feb-2025
Exempt Category: 2a

Requesting Waiver of Informed Consent: Yes
Re-review frequency: Three Years
Number of subjects approved: 500

LSU Proposal Number:

By: Alex Cohen, Chairman

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.

4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.

5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.

6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.


8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU’s Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/research

Louisiana State University
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

O 225-578-5833 F 225-578-5983

http://www.lsu.edu/research
REFERENCES


VITA

Cole Catherine Dunnam graduated summa cum laude as a University Medalist from Louisiana State University in May 2020 with two Bachelor of Arts degrees: Mass Communication (focus in Political Communication) and Geography (focus in Geographic Information Systems). Following graduation, Cole Catherine began working toward her Master of Mass Communication degree (focused on Strategic Communication) with a Graduate Assistantship while interning at local Baton Rouge branding and marketing firms, MESH and Xdesign, Inc. Cole Catherine plans to receive her Master this May 2022. After, she will transition into a full-time position at Xdesign, Inc. and ultimately plans to pursue a doctoral degree researching brand activism.