

Are you helping your firm or our community? Investigating the relationship between perceived firm motivation for CSR, “CSR-Covid 19 Fit,” and consumer re-visit intention

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Abstract

This paper investigates how consumers’ perceived motivations for corporate social responsibility (CSR) influence retail store re-visit intentions, and how consumers’ cultural beliefs influence consumers’ perception of CSR activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Two studies were conducted, the first one was in 2021 when the pandemic was severe and the second was in early 2023 when the pandemic was less severe. Regression results suggest community-motivated (vs. firm-motivated) policy has a substantial positive impact on customers’ re-visit intentions. Moderated mediation models suggest perceived “fit” between CSR policy and Covid-19 mediates the impact of perceived motivation on re-visit intention. Further, results suggest that consumer collectivism and uncertainty avoidance negatively moderate the indirect effect of perceived motivation on customers’ re-visit intention when the pandemic was most severe (study 1). Moreover, the negative moderation effects on consumer revisit intention disappeared when the pandemic became less of a concern (study 2). Summarily, our results indicate consumers favored community-motivated (vs. firm-motivated) CSR policy, and as consumers’ collectivism and uncertainty avoidance increased, re-visit intention was negatively impacted, suggesting this consumer group favors social norms of reducing virus spread and avoiding potential risks by reducing store re-visits under the severe pandemic condition. Overall, the results suggest that regardless of the motivations for adopting CSR activities, managers should focus on improving the relevance and contribution of their CSR policies to help communities cope with a crisis. Other theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: consumer behavior, global pandemic, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance

Declarations

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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Introduction

There can be little doubt that the Covid-19 global pandemic profoundly altered the retail landscape. The emergence of this novel coronavirus was officially declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, prompting many governments to introduce emergency measures to reduce the spread of the virus and minimize strain on the health care system (AJMC, 2021). In many cases, “stay-at-home” orders were issued by governments, limiting consumer access to retailers. While e-commerce experienced unprecedented sales growth in conjunction with the pandemic, brick-and-mortar shopping faced uncertainty and risk (Repko, 2021). Retailers were forced to adapt their business models, implementing initiatives such as social distancing, limited shopping hours, and face-covering mandates (Repko, 2021). These initiatives were designed to meet guidelines from government officials and public health agencies. Still, a broader question remains about how consumers perceive retailers’ “social responsibility” in response to the pandemic. Consumers have increasingly expected firms to be responsible and responsive to social and environmental concerns, and corporate social responsibility activities are often a means for companies to communicate prosocial behavior with stakeholders (Nunez and Nunez, 2019). With the health crisis prompting so many sweeping changes in the consumer shopping experience, questions arise regarding retailers’ perceived motivation for these socially responsible initiatives and, more generally, how these initiatives fit into a firm’s marketing strategy. The current research aimed to examine consumer perception of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives related to the Covid-19 pandemic. While CSR has been studied extensively, the current research sought to analyze CSR initiatives within the unique context of what Taleb (2008) referred to as a “Black Swan Event” – meaning a shocking event that changes the world.

Specifically, this research addresses important questions regarding CSR during a health crisis: (1) how do consumers perceive the firm’s motivation for CSR initiatives in this crisis context?; (2) how do consumers evaluate the effectiveness of CSR initiatives for coping with the pandemic?; (3) how does consumers’ perceived motivation for CSR in this crisis context impact re-visit intentions?; (4) how does the perceived fit of the CSR initiative with the Covid-19 practices impact shopping intentions?; (5) how do consumers’ cultural values impact perceived motivation and shopping intention in this crisis context?

CSR has been referred to as the policy and practice of a firm’s involvement over and beyond its legal obligations to satisfy social needs (Angelidis and Ibrahim, 1993; Enderle and Travis, 1998). By and large, many firms have leveraged community-related CSR to offer aid and support against the virus. For example, some companies transformed factories to produce protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and so on, to support community-oriented efforts to beat the virus – oftentimes even donating these specialty items to communities (He and Harris, 2020). Recognizing the profound impact the pandemic has had on the world’s economy, and more specifically on the workforce, socially responsible initiatives designed to benefit employees were also an important consideration. Researchers estimate that 1 in 2 workers worldwide suffered reduced income as a result of the pandemic (Bhalla, 2021). Many laborers had their working hours reduced, and others lost jobs altogether, resulting in even more challenges for retailers trying to meet consumer needs during a pandemic. Companies initiated policies for social distancing and mandated face coverings to benefit the safety and well-being of employees. One might argue these

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initiatives might appear firm-motivated for companies to remain operational and profitable, even though there may be an indirect benefit to consumers from a community-related perspective.

Extant research suggests a consumer who perceives a company’s CSR initiatives as more community-motivated rather than firm-motivated has a more positive brand attitude, higher purchase intention, and higher consumer satisfaction (Wu and Wang, 2014; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Park, Kim, and Kwon, 2017). However, most of this empirical research has been conducted in the context of “normal” or non-crisis business scenarios. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to examine how consumers perceive different types of CSR activities (firm-motivated vs. community-motivated) in the context of the pandemic crisis. While Jiang and Dodoo (2021) focused on mask-wearing in the context of perceived risk, levels of social distance, gain-loss framing, and self-other interest in Covid-19 messaging appeals, it remains unclear how perceived motivation and “fit” for CSR initiatives impact shopping intention during a pandemic. The current research examines how the perceived fit between CSR and Covid-19 interacts with the perceived motivation (firm-focused vs. community-focused) to impact consumer re-visit intention. The researchers believe this study will provide new insights and guidelines for marketers to understand how CSR initiatives might be perceived amidst a “Black Swan Event.”

Drawing from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, this research contributes to consumer behavior literature and CSR strategy. TRA was selected as the theoretical foundation because it addresses how consumers cope with Covid-19 (Wang et al., 2021). TRA has been applied broadly to examine behaviors in a health context, including weight loss and HIV prevention, and TRA relates well to factors associated with Covid-19, such as attitude and compliance. The current research uses TRA to investigate how consumers perceive CSR motivation in a pandemic situation and subsequently, how consumers’ intentions are shaped by CSR perception. Based on TRA, a person is more likely to adopt a particular behavior when a person has a more positive attitude toward the behavior (Rahmayanti et al., 2021). The current research posits a consumer will view community-motivated CSR more favorably and thus view it as more effective for coping with Covid-19.

Further, the authors hypothesize that key components of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions (1980, 2011), specifically individualism and uncertainty avoidance, are integral to the model. Various researchers have investigated the relationship between cultural dimensions and CSR. Based on Hofstede’s work (1980), Triandls et al. (1990) suggest cultural values can be viewed as multidimensional constructs at the individual level, wherein collectivism can be analyzed in this vein.

Peng et al. (2014) found Hofstede’s dimensions impacted CSR in contrasting ways, with positive influence by individualism and uncertainty avoidance, and negative influence by power distance and masculinity. Bae and Kim (2013) showed consumers with a collectivistic, long-term orientation and high uncertainty avoidance perceive CSR activities as important. Other research (Hur and Kim, 2017) has also shown consumers from collectivistic cultures prefer to buy products that prevent losses or negative outcomes, and they dutifully and loyally fulfill their social roles. Therefore, we can observe collectivistic people focus more on the contribution to improve benefits and fulfill group goals. In the context of the pandemic, the authors focused primarily on dimensions of individualism and uncertainty avoidance, while also testing power distance as this dimension may impact consumer pressure on businesses relative to CSR (Peng et al., 2014).

While matters of compliance with pandemic protocols have been defined as “socially responsible” on a personal level (Wang et al., 2021), firms play a critical role in messaging to

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convey policy and expectations for consumers while in their establishments. As a result, a deeper understanding of how consumers respond to and cope with Covid-19 in the context of CSR is beneficial.

The contributions of this research involve four pertinent areas. First, this research extends the CSR literature by investigating perceived CSR motivation (e.g., firm-focused vs. community-focused) and consumers' shopping intention during the intense condition of a global pandemic. Second, this research analyzes the perceived relevance and contribution (e.g., “fit”) of firm CSR activities pertinent to coping with the pandemic. The research purports appropriate “fit” will mediate the relationship between perceived firm motivation and shopping intention. Finally, this research lends clarity to the role of consumers' cultural values and beliefs within the model. Specifically, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance were the individual values examined in reference to this model. Overall, this research provides practical guidelines for firm managers and marketing professionals to strengthen messaging strategy amidst the risk and uncertainty associated with the pandemic.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Scholars postulate behavior can largely be predicted by the individual's attitudes towards an object through the intervening effect of behavioral intention (Al-Suqri and Al-Kharusi, 2015). According to the theory, the intention to perform a certain behavior predicts the actual behavior. This intention is known as behavioral intention and comes as a result of a belief that performing the behavior will lead to a specific outcome, such as purchase intentions, willingness to pay, and loyalty. TRA also suggests stronger intentions lead to increased effort to perform the behavior, increasing the likelihood of completing the behavior. In line with this theory, the current research examines shopping intention in the context of consumers re-visiting the stores. Furthermore, the current research predicts the consumer's re-visit intention will change due to the perceived motivation of the company's CSR initiatives.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been referred to as the policy and practice of a firm's involvement over and beyond its legal obligations to satisfy social needs (Enderle and Travis, 1998; Angelidis and Ibrahim, 1993). Prior research argued that the Covid-19 pandemic offers countless opportunities for businesses to shift towards more genuine and authentic CSR (He and Harris, 2020). It also contributes to addressing urgent global, social, and environmental challenges. In this context, firms experience new scenarios and respond to the community or the environment proactively or reactively to emphasize the firms' long-term role in a dynamic social system (Mcgee, 1998). Therefore, firms apply CSR actions to become responsible business entities. The CSR activities influence not only the sale of the firm's products and consumers' purchase intention, but also the employees of the firm. Consumers associate certain expectations with firms operating in society, and a firm's responses in the form of CSR activities affect consumers' overall evaluation of the firm and its products (David, Kline, and Dai, 2005).

Hypothesis development. Dodd and Supa (2011) found it is crucial to recognize the relationship between purchase intention and the organization's participation in socially responsible activities, as CSR is often viewed as merely a public relations tool. Chaisurivirat (2009) supports the belief of positive relationships among attitudes toward CSR, attitude toward the brands, and purchase intention, regardless of the type of CSR initiative. Ali (2011) found a significant positive

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influence of CSR between building the corporate reputation of doing good and developing consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore, we argue consumers' perception of CSR motivation for coping with Covid-19 has a positive association with re-visit intention.

As indicated by Morsing et al. (2008), consumers expect firms to adopt CSR activities, but when firms start to communicate their responsibilities, skepticism arises. Therefore, it is critical to investigate how consumers perceive firm motivations for CSR. In this research, we explored two CSR messaging strategies used by stores during this pandemic. For instance, *store “A”* positioned as more firm-focused by “helping its employees to deal with Covid-19,” and *store “B”* positioned as more community-focused by “helping communities deal with Covid-19.” Store A is positioned as helping employees through daily health screening and providing protective wear. Store B is positioned as helping the community by donating more than \$100 million to support the local communities through various initiatives.

These CSR activities (firm-focused vs. community--focused) signal consumers about the firm's motivation. In general, consumers perceive a firm's CSR initiatives more positively when they observe the company focuses on the community rather than on its employees (Wu and Wang, 2014; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Park, Kim and Kwon, 2017). Therefore, consumers may view the CSR initiatives geared toward supporting the community during Covid-19 as more positive, enhancing their re-visit intentions. Whereas the CSR initiatives to protect their employees during Covid-19 could be viewed less favorably. Therefore, we propose:

H1: Consumer perception of community-motivated (vs. firm-motivated) CSR policy has a greater positive influence on customers' re-visit intentions.

Previous research has identified “fit” as the alignment between a firm's core business and its CSR endeavors (Elving, 2013). Scholars have suggested when consumers perceive a stronger alignment between a firm's CSR initiative and its core business, skepticism is reduced while purchasing intention, loyalty, and attitude toward the firm increase (Ham and Han, 2013; Samu and Wymer, 2009; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). It might be inferred determination of fit between a firm's CSR initiative and its core business involves a values assessment of sorts on the part of the consumer. The current research aims to expand the interpretation of “fit” and test this construct in the context of the pandemic. Specifically, the authors tested the “perceived fit” between the perceived firm motivation for CSR (firm-focused vs. community-focused) and the perceived effectiveness for coping with the pandemic. It is expected that when the consumers' perception of how the CSR initiative helps cope with the pandemic aligns with the company's motivation for CSR activities, consumers will have a more positive view of CSR activities. To better understand this construct, we propose the concept of “CSR policy-Covid 19 fit”, which refers to how consumers evaluate and perceive the suitability as well as the contribution of the CSR activities to cope with the pandemic. Following the similar logic of the Match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990), we argue consumers are more likely to have a high level of re-visit intention when they perceive a high degree of “CSR-Covid 19 fit”, leading to the following hypothesis:

H2: The perceived “CSR-Covid 19 fit” partially mediates the impact of perceived motivation of the store's Covid-19 policy on existing customers' re-visit behaviors.

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Consumers have expressed varied responses to coping with the pandemic. Different levels of risk tolerance, different values, and beliefs, even different political views may indeed impact how consumers cope with the pandemic. For example, compliance with mask-wearing among United States respondents was at 61% in August 2020, suggesting at least 6-in-10 Americans recognized benefits to health and community for mask-wearing. In contrast, that leaves 4-in-10 Americans adopting a more “individualistic” view of compliance with mask-wearing (Thompson, 2020). While these percentages may vary over the course of the pandemic, the overarching question arises about how to measure individual characteristics that may influence consumer perception of pandemic policies. Additional research (Kim and Choi, 2005) has revealed value beliefs can be used to predict consumer behavior. For example, the collectivistic belief improves consumers’ purchase behavior of green buying through enhancing the belief about consumers’ effectiveness.

With the aim to gain insight into what motivates consumers to respond positively to CSR initiatives for coping with Covid-19 at the individual level, we test the moderating role of individual variables within the pandemic context. Specifically, we investigate how cultural values might impact consumers in response to the CSR activities related to the pandemic. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the authors examined whether consumers’ high level of collectivism actually *reduces* their re-visit intention when they believe that CSR activities adopted by the firm are contributing to effectively coping with the pandemic. High collectivism would suggest a consumer is willing to follow the rules, policies, and protocols that are in the best interest of the group, which we assume to be compliance in order to reduce the spread of the virus. In that vein, consumers view the best course of action as *not* to re-visit the store because this action serves the group better.

In this regard, we investigate whether collectivism acts as an internal factor to motivate consumers to respond to CSR activities during Covid-19. We assume that if collectivism values the importance of the group, it is reasonable to conclude that consumers with a higher level of collectivism are more likely to have a lower re-visit intention when a store’s CSR efforts are perceived to fit the Covid-19 highly. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3: Consumer individual collectivism negatively moderates the relationship between perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit and consumer re-visit intention, such that the indirect effect of perceived motivation will be weaker for consumers high in collectivism and stronger for those low in collectivism.

During times of crisis, it is safe to assume an individual’s tolerance for risk and uncertainty might influence perceptions and behaviors. By investigating uncertainty avoidance, we aim to explore how individuals with different levels of uncertainty avoidance react with the CSR initiatives during the pandemic. Specifically, the authors explore how uncertainty avoidance impacts the relationship between perceived CSR motivation and consumers’ re-visit intention. Previous research has suggested individuals with high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980; 1985) tend to follow the formal rules and regulations, avoid the situations that make them anxious and stressed, and be intolerant to abnormal ideas and behaviors.

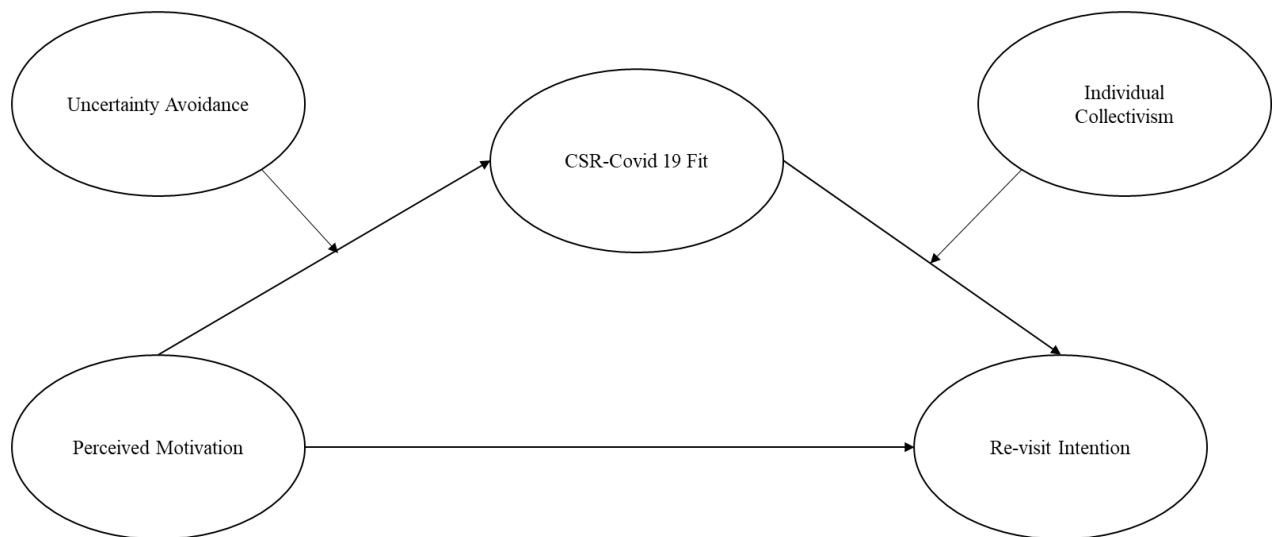
However, individuals with low uncertainty avoidance are more tolerant of different opinions and behaviors. In the context of CSR, individuals with high uncertainty avoidance are inclined to require companies to take socially responsible actions and avoid unethical situations

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that might create uncertainty for them (Bae and Kim, 2013). Hofstede and Bond (1984) find people from high uncertainty avoiding cultures are less likely to take risks, and these risks are highly correlated to unethical actions. Thanetsunthorn (2014) demonstrates firms from a higher uncertainty-avoidance culture will be more likely to have a higher CSR performance on employees, community, and environment. Empirical evidence of our research demonstrated that both stores (store “A” and store “B”) had substantial contributions in CSR activities during this pandemic in terms of helping the community and employees. Therefore, we propose high uncertainty avoidance will facilitate a negatively moderated mediation on the relationship between perceived CSR motivation and re-visit intention, resulting in the following hypothesis:

H4: Consumer uncertainty avoidance negatively moderates the relationship between perceived CSR motivation and perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit, such that the indirect effect of perceived motivation will be weaker for consumers high in uncertainty avoidance and stronger for those low in low uncertainty avoidance.

Figure 1. The Impact of Perceived CSR Motivation on Consumer Re-visit Intention



Study 1: The Intense Pandemic Condition

In late January 2020 and March 2020, the Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and former president Donald Trump issued the declarations of a public health emergency and a national emergency declaration, respectively, to help the country deal with the global pandemic. Following these declarations, which signaled the severity of the pandemic, states successively began issuing “stay-at-home” orders to reduce the spread of virus (Moreland et al., 2020). Study 1 was conducted during the pandemic intense period, late 2020 and early 2021, and the main purpose of study 1 was to evaluate the simple mediation and moderated mediation models and hypotheses proposed above.

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Method

Sample. Data was collected from Amazon MTurk and a behavioral lab in a university through an online survey. Adult participants were recruited via Amazon MTurk (n = 100) and compensated 75 cents (USD) for their participation, while the remaining responses (n = 297) were collected from a lab session at a midsize, private Midwest university in the United States. There was no missing data because the survey required forced responses. However, we deleted 44 “speeders” who completed the survey in less than half of the median completion time, consistent with criteria used by Scott, Schumayer and Gray (2012), leaving us with 353 usable responses for the final analysis.

The final sample from both sources consisted of 182 males (52%) and 167 females (47%), while 4 (1%) of the participants reported their gender as “Others.” Among the participants, 267 (76%) were between 18 and 24 years of age, 56 (16%) were between 25 and 34 years old, 20 (6%) were between 35 and 44 years old, and only 10 (3%) were above 45 years old. Regarding their ethnic backgrounds, 30% of the participants reported as Asian and 57% as Caucasian. In addition, 3% have been identified as Native American, 2% as Black, 5% as Hispanic/Latinx, and 3% as Others (see table 1).

Table 1. Sample demographics (study 1 & study 2)

Study 1	Number	Percentage of total sample	Study 2	Number	Percentage of total sample
Age (years)			Age(years)		
18-24	267	75.6%	18-24	39	15.6%
25-34	56	15.9%	25-34	71	28.4%
35-44	20	5.6%	35-44	40	16%
Above 45	10	2.8%	Above 45	100	40%
Sex			Sex		
Female	167	47.3%	Female	114	45.6%
Male	182	51.6%	Male	131	52.4%
Other	4	1.1%	Others	5	2%
Education background			Education background		
Graduated high school or equivalent	303	85.8%	12 th grade or less	4	1.6%
Bachelor degree	32	9.1%	Graduated high school or equivalent	114	45.6%
Master degree	18	5.1%	Bachelor degree	100	40%
			Master degree	26	10.4%
			Doctorate degree	6	2.4%
Ethnic backgrounds			Ethnic backgrounds		
Asian	106	30%	Asian	22	8.8%
Caucasian	201	57%	Caucasian	185	74%
Native American	11	3%	Native American	2	0.8%
Black	7	2%	Black	28	11.2%
Hispanic/Latinx	18	5%	Hispanic/Latinx	10	4%
Others	10	3%	Others	3	1.2%
Note: n= 353			Note: n=250		

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Procedure. Given the merits and shortcomings of within-subject and between-subject design (Charness, Gneezy, and Kuhn, 2012), a within-subject design was used in study 1 to provide respondents an opportunity to evaluate two distinct approaches to Covid-19 retail policy. Study 1 aims to explore how subjects’ perceptions of different CSR policies influence their re-visit intentions. Therefore, the subjects are expected to observe both scenarios and contrast them. All participants read the information for the policy to cope with Covid-19 implemented by two stores (Store A with a firm-motivated policy description and Store B with a community-motivated policy description). To eliminate the potential biases based on price, product assortment, and product quality, participants were told that both stores offer a great variety of products at reasonable price levels. To eliminate order bias, two scenarios were randomly presented to participants in sequence. The descriptions are shown below:

Store A: “To cope with Covid-19, Store A conducts wellness checks and offers protective wear and other health supplies for protecting their employees. Specifically, store leaders ask screen questions when employee arrives at work, and the employees will be required to wear masks and gloves all the time. The store makes sure that all employees will have access to health supplies throughout the store. More importantly, not only was employees’ physical health supported, but the store also supported employees’ mental health by offering therapy sessions for all employees.”

Store B: “To cope with Covid-19, Store B is dedicating more than \$100 million to support the emerging needs of our communities, which includes \$55 million to support local small businesses in partnership with Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The community contributions also include a \$10 million donation of essential protective products to do our part in helping keep medical professionals on the frontlines safe and healthy. The store chain B empowered all its stores to donate products to local hospitals and first responders in their communities to serve short and long-term needs. It stopped selling N95 respirators and has donated all its medical-grade respirators to the country’s two largest healthcare distribution organizations.”

Respondents were asked to consider themselves as existing customers of the stores. After reading the descriptions, participants were asked to report their agreements (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) on six questions intended to measure their perception of the motivation for the stores’ CSR Covid-19 coping policies. Next, their intention to re-visit the stores was evaluated. Finally, data were collected on the participants’ beliefs on individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Some general demographic information about the participants, such as age, gender, and race, was also collected.

Measures. All items used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

For Perceived Motivation of CSR Policy, we adopted a 6-item scale from Gao and Mattila (2014) and Becker-Olsen, Cudmore and Hill (2006). Sample items for firm-motivation are “the activities adopted by this store are self-interested,” “the activities adopted by the store are firm focused,” and “the activities adopted by the store are profit motivated.” The items that indicate community motivation are “the activities adopted by the store are community interested,” “the activities adopted by the store are customer-focused,” and “the activities adopted by the store are socially motivated.” The Cronbach’s alpha for firm-motivation and community-motivation scales are .81 and .73, respectively.

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The CSR-Covid 19 fit was measured using a 2-item scale. The items are “to what extent do you perceive the relevance of the measures adopted by the store as helping to cope with the Covid-19 situation” and “the measures adopted by the store positively contribute to coping with the Covid 19 situation”. The Cronbach’s alpha in this sample was .80.

We also used the Likert 7-point scale to measure cultural dimensions of individual collectivism (COL) and uncertainty avoidance (UNA) (Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz, 2011). The Cronbach’s alpha for COL and UNA were .90 and .87, respectively.

The dependent variable was the re-visit intention, and measured by asking, “the policy described above will have an impact on my likelihood to re-visit the store.”

Results

Preliminary statistics. Means, standard deviations, and the correlations among variables are shown in Table 2. As expected, perceived CSR- Covid-19 fit was positively related to re-visit intention ($r = .52, p < .01$) and referral intention ($r = .55, p < .01$).

Table 2. Variable, means, standard deviations, and correlations (study 1 & study 2 in bold)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Motivation	5.04/ 4.90	1.40/ .82	1	.26**	.27**	.275**	.21**	.20**
2. Perceived Fit	5.62/ 6.21	1.41/ 1.21	.29**	1	.66**	.66**	.17**	.24**
3. Re-visit	5.43/ 5.44	1.49/ 1.62	.22**	.52**	1	.85**	.28**	.22**
4. Positive WOM	5.46/ 5.42	1.40/ 1.60	.21**	.55**	.68**	1	.26**	.21**
5. Collectivism	4.32/ 3.87	1.16/ 1.21	.14**	.02	.12**	.14**	1	.25**
6. Uncertainty Avoidance	5.46/ 5.78	.98/ .91	.15**	.23**	.26**	.28**	.25**	1

N=353/250. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Before testing the hypotheses, we conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) separately for Store A and Store B. There are six items to measure how consumers perceive the motivations of the CSR initiatives, two items for Covid-19 fit, five items for uncertainty avoidance, and nine items for the variables of collectivism. The loadings for all items are in the acceptable range except for two (Table 2). The results show good measurement for both Store A and Store B: the chi-square, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA have values of 3974 (231), .927, .916, .062 for Store A; 3990 (231), .914, .901, .068 for store B (Table 3).

We found support for convergent validity for both stores: perceived fit (.731), collectivism (.510), uncertainty avoidance (.586) and perceived motivation (.554) for store A; perceived fit (.782), collectivism (.509), uncertainty avoidance (.586), and perceived motivation (.552) for store B (first column in Table 3). The average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded .50. Similarly, there were supports for the discriminant validity of the measurements as the square root of AVE was more than all relevant inter-factor correlations. There was also evidence for discriminant validity for perceived fit, perceived motivations, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, as the square root of AVE was more than the relevant inter-factor correlations (Table 4, the values before the diagonal are for store A; the values after the diagonal are for store B).

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Table 3. Results of CFA in study 1

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings		Cronbach's alpha
		Store A	Store B	
Perceived Motivation (Adapted from Gao and Mattila, 2014; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006)	The activities adopted by the Store are in its self-interest.	.588	.834	Perceived firm-motivation: .810 Perceived community-motivation: .730
	The activities adopted by the Store are firm-focused.	.920	.798	
	The activities adopted by the Store are profit-motivated.	.407	.715	
	The activities adopted by Store are in the interest of the community.	.812	.835	
	The activities adopted by the Store are customer focused.	.800	.293	
	The activities adopted by the Store are socially motivated.	.805	.828	
Perceived Fit	The activities adopted by the Store described above are highly relevant to cope with the Covid-19 situation.	.851	.897	.800
	The measures adopted by the Store positively contribute to supporting employees in coping with the Covid-19 situation.	.859	.871	
Collectivism (Yoo et al., 2011)	Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.	.742	.742	.900
	Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.	.568	.564	
	Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.	.777	.773	
	Group success is more important than individual success.	.795	.790	
	Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.	.785	.786	
	Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.	.809	.812	
	A person should sacrifice himself/herself for the future of his/her nation.	.668	.673	
	The interests of nation outweigh the individual interests of its members.	.706	.710	
	A person cannot be contented if his/her nation is suffering.	.510	.511	
Uncertainty Avoidance (Yoo et al., 2011)	It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.	.680	.683	.870
	It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.	.757	.762	
	Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.	.840	.837	
	Standardized work procedures are helpful.	.790	.788	
	Instructions for operations are important.	.750	.749	

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Table 4. Results of AVE and discriminant validity for Store A/Store B (square roots of the AVE are bold)

	AVE	Perceived motivation	Perceived fit	Collectivism	Uncertainty Avoidance
Perceived motivation	.554/.552	.744/.743			
Perceived fit	.731/.782	.367/.336	.855/.884		
Collectivism	.510/.509	.081/.042	.110/-.040	.714/.714	
Uncertainty Avoidance	.586/.586	.129/.132	.373/.259	.254/.256	.765/.765

Test of hypotheses. Two paired-sample t-tests were conducted to confirm consumers’ perception of the firm motivations for store policy. The coping policy of store A was described as firm-focused, and store B was described as community-focused. The first t-test was used to check whether participants perceived the policy of store A to have a stronger firm-motivation than store B. Results showed a significant difference between the consumers’ perceptions of firm-motivation between store A (M=4.77, SD=1.17) and store B (M=3.94, SD=1.47), $t(668) = 8.26, p < .001$. The results indicated consumers are more likely to perceive initiatives of helping employees as self-focused and seeking self-interest when compared with donation CSR activities. However, there was no significant difference in the mean values of consumers’ perception of community motivations regarding these two types of CSR initiatives adopted by Store A (M=5.74, SD=1.08) and Store B (M=5.72, SD=.98), $t(695) = .279, p = .7801$.

Hypothesis 1 assumed a community-motivated policy has a greater positive impact on the existing customers’ re-visit intentions. The first simple linear regression analysis predicts the impact of a firm-motivated coping policy on re-visit intention. Using the enter method, it was found perceived firm-motivation significantly predicts re-visit intention (Beta = .08, $t(703) = 2.133, p < .033$), but it only explains a small amount of the variance in the value of re-visit intention ($F(1, 703) = 4.55, p = .033, R^2 = .01, R^2_{Adjusted} = .01$). Another linear regression analysis was conducted to test the impact of a community-motivated coping policy on re-visit intention. Results showed community-based coping policy explained a larger amount of variance in the value of re-visit intention ($F(1, 703) = 288.43, p < .000, R^2 = .495, R^2_{Adjusted} = .246$) than firm-interest coping policy. The analysis shows other-motivated coping policy significantly predicts re-visit intention (Beta = .50, $t(703) = 15.11, p < .000$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

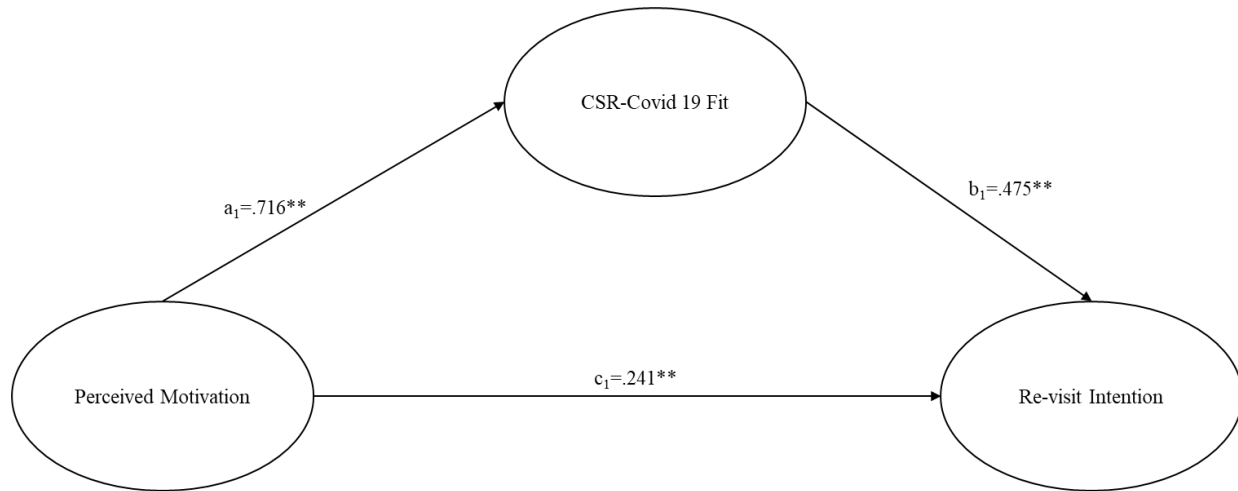
Mediation of perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit. Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were tested by the moderated mediation model (see Figure 1) with a bootstrapping approach to assess the significance of the indirect effect at different levels of the moderator (Hayes, 2013). Perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit was the mediator, with individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as moderators. The outcome variable was re-visit intention.

Hypothesis 2 contended the mediating effect of perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit between perceived motivations and re-visit intention. The PROCESS macro, Model 4 in SPSS 23 with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals was used to test the significance of indirect effects between perceived motivations and re-visit intention. The R^2 was .284 ($p < .000$). Figure 2 shows the path coefficients for model 1. Results of bootstrap analysis revealed a significant indirect effect from perceived motivation to re-visit intention through perceived fit ($a \times b = .340, p < .000$) with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero [.262, .423]. The direct effect of perceived motivation on re-visit intention was also significant with the presence of mediator ($c' = .241, p < .000$) with a 95%

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confidence interval excluding zero [.123, .358]. Because $a \times b \times c$ is positive, there is a complementary mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Figure 2. The Mediating Effect of CSR-Covid 19 Fit (study 1)



As predicted by hypothesis 2, the indirect effect (perceived motivation \rightarrow Perceived fit \rightarrow Re-visit intention) = .340** [.262, .423]

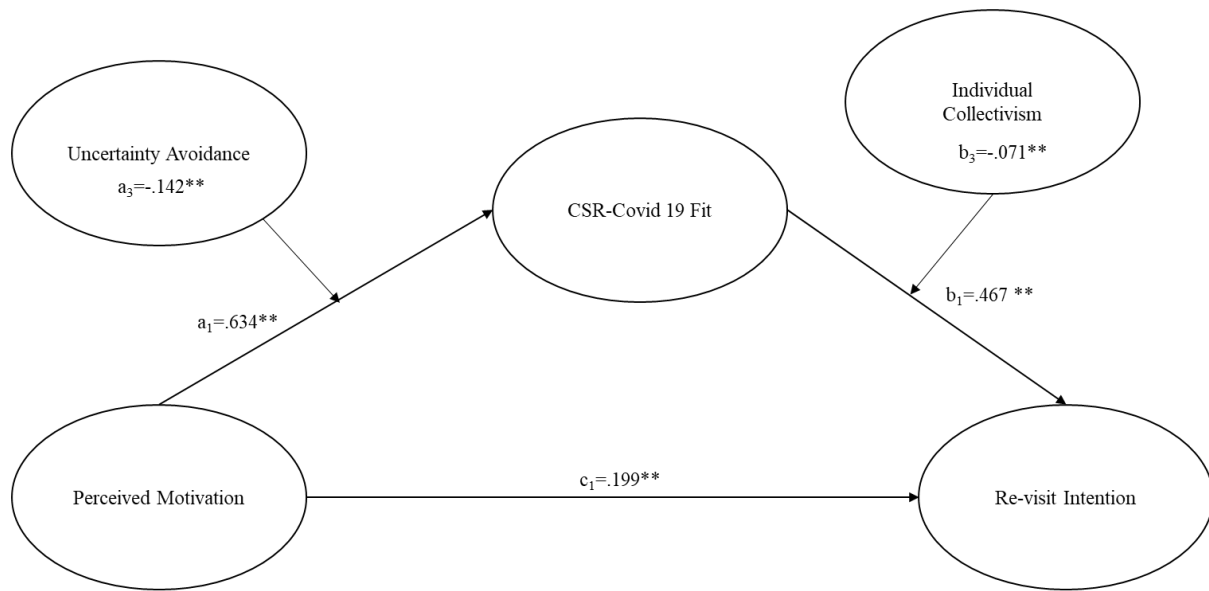
Moderating roles of Individual Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance. Hypothesis 3 suggested that individual collectivism will negatively moderate indirect effect of perceived motivation on re-visit intention through perceived CSR-Covid-19 fit. Hypothesis 4 suggested uncertainty avoidance negatively moderates the indirect effect of perceived motivation on re-visit intention through perceived CSR-Covid-19 fit. To test the moderating roles of individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, PROCESS macro Model 21 (a multiple moderated mediation model) was used for analysis. The index of multiple moderated mediation shows a moderated mediation does exist (index=.010, 95% CI= [.0013, .0206]), the R^2 was .300 ($p < .000$). As shown in Figure 3, H3 was supported as the index of moderated mediation is significant (index=-.071 95% CI= [-.1240, -.0186]). H4 was also supported as the index of moderated mediation is significant (index=-.1415 95% CI= [-.2195, -.0636]).

Study 2: The End to Pandemic Condition

On Jan 30, 2023, the Biden administration issued a statement to end the Covid-19 national emergency and public health emergency effective May 2023, indicating the pandemic is near an end (source: Statement of Administration Policy). While study 1 was conducted when pandemic was intense during 2021, study 2 aimed to test the proposed hypotheses when pandemic was less intense in 2023. We expect that in study 2, perceived fit will still mediate the impact of perceived motivation on consumer re-visit intention, but the negative moderating impacts of uncertainty avoidance and individual collectivism will not be significant since consumers were less concerned about the spread of the virus.

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Figure 3. The Moderated Moderated Mediation Model in study 1



A moderated moderated mediation effect was found in study 1: index = .010** [.001 .021].

Method

Sample. Data for study 2 was obtained from 250 respondents on Prolific during Feb 10-13, 2023 through an online survey. Respondents were compensated 75 cents (USD) for participating. The final sample include 114 (45.6%) males and 131 females (52.4%), while 5 (of the participants reported their gender as “Others.” Among the participants, 39 (16%) were between 18 and 24 years of age, 71 (28%) were between 25 and 34 years old, 40 (16%) were between 35 and 44 years old, and 100 (40%) were above 45 years old. Four of the participants reported their education background as “12th grade or less”, 114 reported that hold a graduated high school or equivalent, 100 participants have a bachelors’ degree, 26 have a master's degree and 6 have a doctorate degree (see table 1).

Procedure. In study 2, the same materials were utilized as in study 1, but a between-subject design was employed. Respondents were randomly presented with only a firm-centered policy description (store A) or a community-centered policy description (Store B). To eliminate the potential biases based on price, product assortment, and product quality, participants were told that the store offers a great variety of products at reasonable price levels. Respondents were asked to consider themselves as an existing customer of the store. After reading the description, they were asked to report their agreements (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) on six questions intended to measure their perception of the motivation for the store’s CSR Covid-19 coping policies. Next, their intention to re-visit the store was evaluated. Finally, data was collected on the participants’ beliefs on individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Some general demographic information about the participants, such as age, gender, and race, was also collected and included as the control variables. An attention check was used in study 2 following the suggestion of Cobanoglu et al. (2021), participants were asked to indicate their year of birth and

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age in different places of the survey. The plan was to eliminate any responses with inconsistent answers, but it turned out that all responses passed the attention check.

Results

Preliminary statistics. Means, standard deviations, and the correlations among variables are shown in Table 2 (in bold). As expected, perceived CSR- Covid-19 fit was positively related to re-visit intention ($r = .66, p < .001$) and referral intention ($r = .657, p < .001$). The power distance variable was also tested as moderator in a separate moderated mediation model for study 2, and results were not statistically significant (index = $-.158, 95\% [-.440, .075]$). The preliminary results in study 2 replicate the effects found in study 1.

Test of hypotheses. Like study 1, two paired-sample t-tests were first conducted to confirm consumers' perception of the firm motivations for store policy. The coping policy of store A was described as employee-centered, and store B was described as community-centered. Results again showed a significant difference between the consumers' perceptions of firm-motivation between store A ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.30$) and store B ($M = 3.73, SD = 1.41$), $t(248) = 4.92, p < .001$. A second t-test indicated there was no significant difference in the mean values of consumers' perception of community motivations regarding these two types of CSR initiatives adopted by Store A ($M = 5.69, SD = 1.09$) and Store B ($M = 5.62, SD = 1.01$), $t(248) = .54, p = .587$.

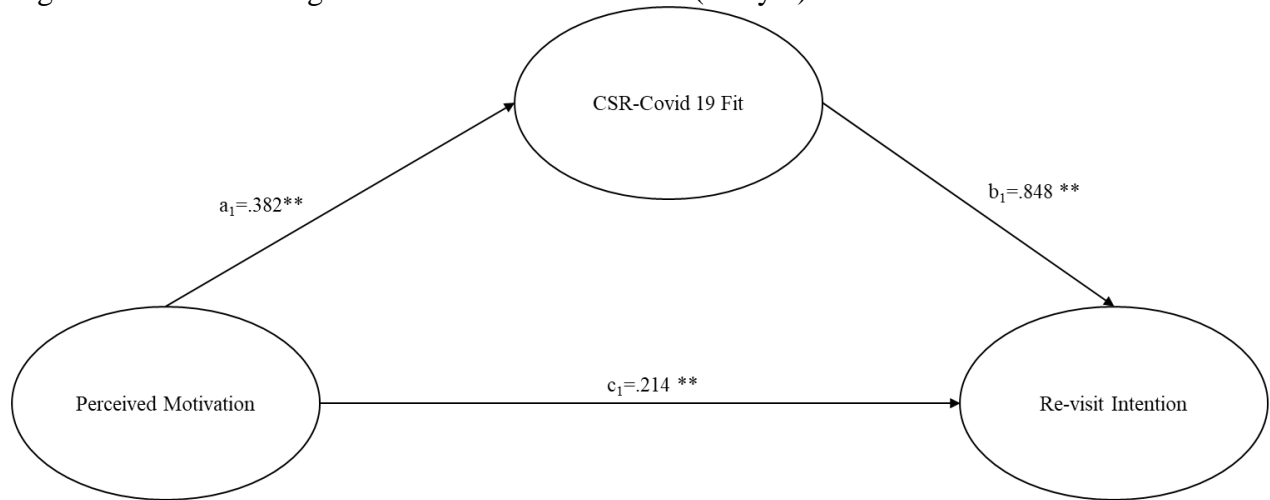
Hypothesis 1 assumed a community-motivated policy has a greater positive impact on the existing customers' re-visit intentions. The first simple linear regression analysis evaluated the impact of a firm-motivated coping policy on consumer re-visit intention. Using the enter method, it was found that firm-motivated coping policy significantly predicts re-visit intention (Beta = $-.179, t(248) = 6.284, p < .05$), but only explains a small amount of the variance in the value of re-visit intention ($F(1, 248) = 6.284, p = .013, R^2 = .025, R^2_{Adjusted} = .021$). Another linear regression analysis was conducted to test the impact of a community-motivated coping policy on re-visit intention. Results showed community-motivated coping policy significantly predicts re-visit intention (Beta = $.50, t(248) = 15.11, p < .000$) and explained a larger amount of variance in the value of re-visit intention ($F(1, 248) = 170.437, p < .001, R^2 = .407, R^2_{Adjusted} = .405$) than firm-interest coping policy. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Mediation of perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit. Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were tested by the moderated mediation model (see Figure 1) with a bootstrapping approach to assess the significance of the indirect effect at different levels of the moderator (Hayes, 2013). Perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit was the mediator, with individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as moderators. The outcome variable was re-visit intention.

Hypothesis 2 contended the mediating effect of perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit between perceived motivation and re-visit intention. The PROCESS macro, Model 4 in SPSS 23 with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals was used to test the significance of indirect effects between perceived motivation and re-visit intention. The R^2 was $.52 (p < .000)$. Figure 4 shows the path coefficients for this mediation model. Results of bootstrap analysis revealed a significant indirect effect from perceived motivation to re-visit intention through perceived fit ($a \times b = .324, p < .000$), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero [$.165, .492$]. The direct effect of perceived motivation on re-visit intention was also significant ($c = .214, p < 0.05$) with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero [$.023, .406$]. Because $a \times b \times c$ is positive, there is a complimentary mediation (Zhao et al., 2010). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported in study 2.

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Figure 4. The Mediating Effect of CSR-Covid 19 Fit (study 2)



As predicted by hypothesis 2, the indirect effect (perceived motivation → Perceived fit → Re-visit intention) = .324** [.165, .492]

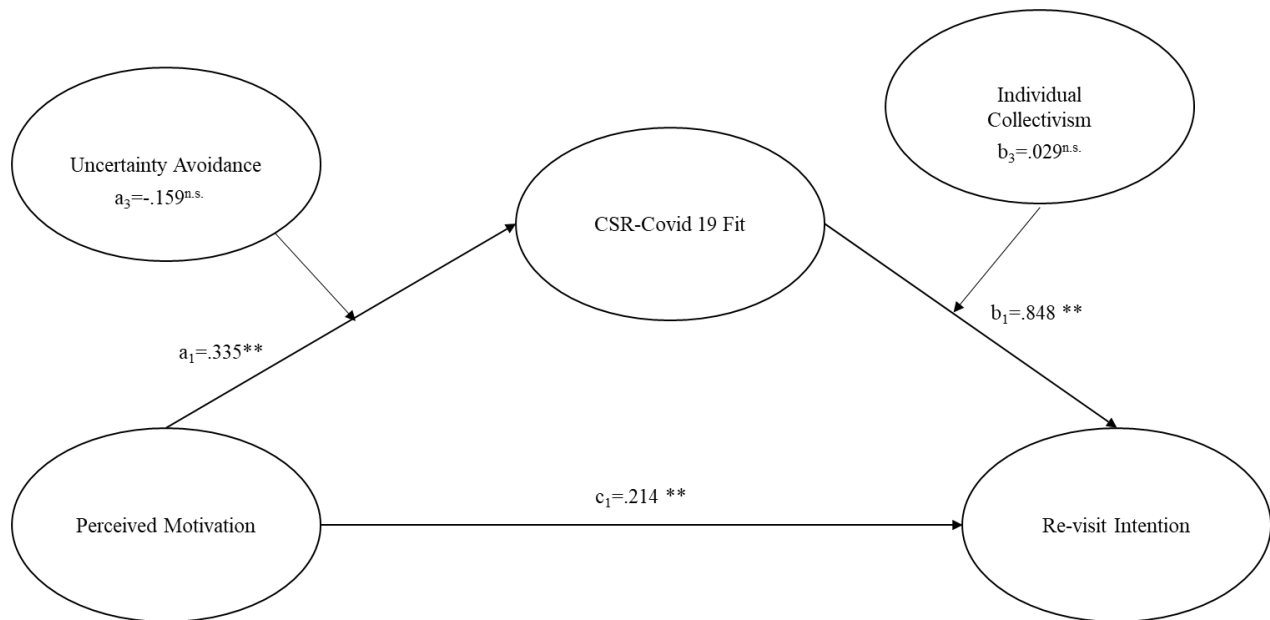
Moderating roles of Individual Collectivism and Uncertainty Avoidance. Hypothesis 3 suggested that the indirect effect of perceived motivation on consumers’ re-visit intention through CSR-Covid 19 fit will be negatively moderated by individual collectivism. Hypothesis 4 suggested that the indirect effect of perceived motivation on consumers’ re-visit intention through CSR-Covid 19 fit will be negatively moderated by uncertainty avoidance. Model 21 of the PROCESS macro was used to test the moderating roles of individual collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. Results showed that there was no moderated mediated mediation as the index was not significant (index= -.0046, 95% CI= [-.0248, .0118]). H3 was not supported in study 2 as the index of moderated mediation (index= .0288, 95% CI= [-.0729, .1304]) is not significant since confident interval includes zero. Results showed that H4 was also not supported in study 2 as the index of moderated mediation (index= -.159, 95% CI= [-.3377, .0197]) is not significant since confident interval includes zero (figure 5).

Discussion

Using the two types of CSR policies, we revealed that consumers’ perceived motivations of CSR initiatives dealing with Covid-19 explain their re-visit intentions for both stores, with perceived community motivation explaining more than perceived firm motivation. Then, we showed perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit intervenes with perceived motivation to influence consumers’ re-visit intentions. Furthermore, we investigated the moderating effects of individual cultural beliefs with two variables: uncertainty avoidance and individual collectivism. The results of study 1 demonstrated uncertainty avoidance beliefs negatively moderate the impact of the perceived motivation of a store’s coping policy on perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit, which suggests consumers with higher uncertainty avoidance have higher expectations regarding firms’ CSR efforts. The moderated mediation suggests that consumers expect the utmost CSR performance prior to revisiting the store.

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Figure 5. The Moderated Moderated Mediation Model in study 2



No moderated moderated mediation effect was found in study 2: index = $-.005$ [$-.025, .012$].

The results of study 1 also demonstrate individual collectivism beliefs negatively moderate the impact of CSR policy-Covid 19 fit on existing consumers’ re-visit intentions. Consumers with high collectivist beliefs report a low level of re-visit intentions. In this specific context, the data suggests collectivist-oriented consumers favor group goals with a *reduced* re-visit intention. Typically, this might be perceived as a negative consumer outcome from the retailer’s perspective. However, it can also be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen consumer loyalty due to the favorable view the consumer has of the CSR policy. As found in study 2, the negative moderating effects of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance on consumer behavior disappear when pandemic becomes less severe and the spread of virus becomes less of a concern.

Study 1 results suggest the retailer can leverage the consumer view of reduced re-visit intention to benefit community by offering increased service in the way of online shopping and curbside pickup to retain customers. Even though we do not formally report positive word of mouth as a dependent variable in this paper, we did collect data for this variable and empirically tested the correlations between re-visit intention and consumers’ willingness to speak favorably about the stores’ CSR policies. We have found there is a strong correlation between consumers’ re-visit intention and positive WOM in both studies (Pearson’s $R_{study\ 1} = 0.68$, $p\text{-value} < .01$; Pearson’s $R_{study\ 2} = 0.85$, $p\text{-value} < .01$). In the following section, we discuss theoretical and practical implications from the findings.

Implications

Our paper contributes to the CSR literature for the following reasons. First, this research builds on previous scholarly work (Dodd and Supa, 2011) by expanding understanding of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) through the relationship between CSR activities

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and consumers’ shopping intentions during a pandemic situation. We investigated how consumers perceive the motivations of CSR policies adopted to cope with Covid-19 in the retail context and demonstrated that perceived CSR-Covid 19 fit partially mediates the impact of perceived motivation on consumers’ re-visit intention. Second, we suggest a new construct of “perceived CSR policy-Covid 19 fit” to measure how consumers perceive the relevance and contributions of the CSR efforts to cope with the social health crisis. By doing so, we extend knowledge of CSR by exploring consumer perception and store re-visit intentions during a social health crisis. In turn, this can inform CSR strategy.

Additionally, we explored the moderation effects of cultural values (uncertainty avoidance, collectivism) on the relationship between perceived motivation and consumer re-visit intention in a pandemic context. The results support the importance of the consumer’s value orientations in determining their appreciation of CSR initiatives adopted by retail stores (Basil and Weber, 2006; Siltaoja, 2006). In essence, this research expands the body of knowledge for CSR strategy, and has practical implications for strengthening connections with consumers. Drawing from the Theory of Reasoned Action, this research examined variables with both positive and negative influence on re-visit intention to gain insight on consumer intentions during a pandemic. This research may be applicable to other crisis contexts.

These findings have implications for managerial practices. Evidence suggests consumers expect firms to adopt corporate social responsibility policies during the pandemic situation and attribute different types of CSR activities to various motivations. Specifically, consumers are more likely to perceive initiatives of employee-related CSR activities as firm-focused when compared with community-related CSR activities. While the findings suggest consumers perceive both community-related and employee-related CSR activities as beneficial for coping with Covid-19 and both types of initiatives positively impacted re-visit intentions, community-related CSR was more impactful on consumer re-visit intentions. The findings are consistent with prior empirical work under “normal” business situations (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill, 2006). However, further analysis of cultural values suggested that consumers’ re-visit intentions were impacted when considering CSR-Covid 19 fit and individual collectivism. Specifically, the CSR-Covid 19 fit was found to partially mediate the effects of perceived motivation on re-visit intention. It suggests regardless of the motivations for adopting CSR activities, managers should focus on improving the relevance and contribution of their CSR policies to help communities as a whole cope with Covid-19. This may be especially important to consumers who hold high collectivism beliefs and high uncertainty avoidance beliefs.

The negatively moderating role of collectivism to impact the effect of perceived motivation on re-visit intention has more valuable implications for stores operating during Covid-19 and future “Black Swan” situations. First, consumers with high collectivist beliefs will likely prefer to stay at home. Thus, in order to target this group of consumers, a store can provide more online options, delivery services and curbside pickup to increase sales. Second, to control the flow of people to stores and minimize the spread of the virus, stores can focus on advertising the importance of store traffic control for collective health and safety. Overall, the findings suggest in the context of crisis, marketing managers can carefully craft CSR initiatives reflective of community-based outcomes to more effectively engage consumers.

Further, this research specifically examined store re-visit intentions under two distinct conditions: (1) when pandemic was severe in 2021, and (2) when pandemic was much less severe in 2023, after medications and vaccinations were available to reduce severity of the virus. Sheth

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(2020) raised the question of whether modified consumer habits due to Covid-19 would be enduring, or return to familiar patterns once the crisis subsided. Our findings indicate the negative effects of individual influences disappeared when pandemic became less of a concern. Future research could explore other potential long-lasting consumer perceptions of CSR after crisis conditions have diminished. Generally speaking, consumer behavior patterns relative to global crisis is a promising area for future inquiry.

As with any study, this research has limitations. While a United States sample was utilized in this research, examining a broader sample from multiple countries may lend to more robust findings. Scholars suggest consumer response to Covid-19 shopping dynamics had similarities across multiple countries and cultures (Sheth, 2020), and broader data collection could quantify these modified consumer habits more clearly. Future research is also encouraged to conduct cross-cultural studies.

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