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## The Effects of Resilience and Familiarity on the Relationship between CSR and Consumer Attitudes

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**Introduction**

In the course of daily life, consumers may be unexpectedly exposed to traumatic events including natural disasters and man-made disasters. These unexpected and uncontrolled events have a massive impact on consumers’ decision making and consumption. In 2016, CNN polled Americans about the biggest risks in life. The first and second-ranked threats were gun violence and terrorist attacks. These risks threaten consumers’ pursuit of well-being, or satisfaction with life (Iyer and Munch, 2016; Uysal et al., 2016). The cities of Munich, Orlando, Boston, Paris, Barcelona, London, and Las Vegas share two things in common – they all receive millions of tourists each year and they all have been targets of terrorist attacks that have taken the lives of many. Various consumer behaviors identified in response to terroristic attacks include increased ethnocentrism, patriotism, tolerance for government regulations, emphasis on product quality, and emphasis on time management (Dube and Black, 2010). Another risk or traumatic impact on consumers would be natural disasters: (Ritchie, 2004), Camille (1969), Andrew (1992), Charley (2004), Katrina (2005), Sandy (2012), and Harvey (2016) have been some of worst hurricanes in U.S. history, demolishing the livelihood of people living in the affected areas. Unexpected risks of diseases or pandemic (e.g., SARS (2002), MERS (2012), Ebola (2014), and COVID-19, known as coronavirus) are traumatic to all stakeholders in a market. These traumatic events cannot be systemically controllable even though they are forecastable. Thus, it has become evident that traumatic events negatively affect consumer decision-making and consumption (Ryan, 1993).

Unsafe market circumstances consequently lead to the steadily increasing demand for consumer well-being. Companies play an important role in the pursuit of consumer well-being by helping consumers have better lives through socially responsible marketing actions (Tian et al., 2011). The company also works with local communities to help address communities' needs by raising funds that satisfy these needs. For instance, Xerox offered a science education program (known as Xerox Science Consultant Program) to a local community, which needed to improve students' attitudes toward science. Corporate social responsibility (hereafter CSR) as a marketing strategy or a communication tool helps not only companies experience in increasing consumers' familiarity but also consumers have their positive attitudes or knowledge toward the company (Keller, 2013; Porter and Cramer, 2006; Smith, 2003). Consumers also have further expectations that companies will do more than they have been doing in the past to ensure consumer safety. Then, companies focus on environmental protections and consumer safety. Thus, companies may improve their image and financial performance longitudinally by satisfying the further needs and wants of stakeholders (Terlaak and King, 2006; Terziovski et al., 2003). In this vein, CSR is an important issue that may affect consumers' well-being and their attitudes toward CSR.

Despite the randomness that disaster events insert into the marketplace, it appears that consumers have an ability to recover their sense of well-being after an attack (Bonanno, 2004). Southwick and Charney (2012) argue that individuals as consumers are able to pursue happiness or satisfaction not only by the absence of suffering but also by an internal ability to overcome threats. This ability is called consumer resilience, and it relates to how quickly a consumer can adapt to and overcome traumatic experiences and events (Reivich and Shatté, 2003). Resilience helps consumers form and maintain a positive attitude. However, there has been little research on

the relationship between CSR and consumer resilience to the traumatic events and the impact of resilience on forming consumer attitudes, even though there is much research on consumer well-being in the marketing discipline. Thus, we propose the following research questions to fill this gap:

- 1) Can a company’s marketing action help consumers change their attitudes toward the company, especially in a situation where consumers are exposed to traumatic information and/or events?*
- 2) Which factors can improve consumer attitudes, especially focusing on consumer resilience as an internal factor of consumer well-being and brand familiarity from the interaction between customers and company as an external factor of consumer well-being?*

This study aims to find factors that help to parsimoniously understand consumer attitudes based on the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. In particular, the study will identify the role of consumer resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. This study also investigates the role of brand familiarity in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes because both resilience and familiarity help consumers distinguish a product/service/brand from competitors and build a positive attitude as noted above (Keller, 2013; Smith, 2003; Mackey et al., 2007; Southwick and Charney, 2012). Thus, consumers might feel more comfortable and show more positive attitudes toward both their lives and companies conducting CSR.

The following sections include a review of the existing literature, the proposed hypotheses, the framework that guides the study, a description of the tests of the hypothetical arguments, a report of the results, and a conclusion with theoretical and practical implications.

## Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

### *Traumatic events*

The number of traumatic events and incidents is increasing (Bolin and Kurtz, 2018). Traumatic events are categorized into two different types: natural disasters and anthropogenic hazards. Natural disasters are adverse events from natural processes including floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Natural disasters are an external variable or event because they are almost impossible to control (Ritchie, 2004). On the other hand, anthropogenic hazards result from human activities, such as criminality, civil disorder, terrorism, war, industrial and engineering hazards, fire, and power outages. The size of their impact on human life has been dramatically augmented and dreadful (Faulkner, 2001).

Based on existing research, Figure 1 categorizes natural and anthropogenic disasters in terms of events and their severity. The figure also indicates their likelihood of disasters in the categories. The table includes severity, meaning the level of destructive power of each traumatic event, on the x-axis, and frequency, meaning how often the events happen, on the y-axis. The explosion in red color indicates more severe and more frequent events in terms of trauma. For instance, terrorism is categorized as less severe and low frequency. However, it has become more severe and frequent (Ryan, 1993). It is thus categorized in the explosion area colored in red. As Figure 1 shows, all types of events are becoming a traumatic event more often and harshly.

[Figure 1]

One element of crises or disasters is their unpredictability and lack of control over their threat to human life and quality of life (Booth, 2015). It is important for companies to design and

1  
2  
3 apply good management systems to cope with disasters. Through establishing such systems,  
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5 companies can help both themselves and their communities, including consumers, to overcome  
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7 the traumatic experience and memory. Souiden and Pons (2009) argue that organizational crisis  
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9 management and proactive strategies are the best solutions to avoid a loss in consumer loyalty to  
10  
11 the company. In other words, customers are more likely to show behavioral loyalty, such as  
12  
13 repurchase intention, when they are exposed to and experience caring through marketing actions  
14  
15 including CSR as a proactive strategy. Thus, these strategies have become more important  
16  
17 because of the increase in the likelihood of traumatic events including both natural and  
18  
19 anthropogenic disasters (Hyun and Choi, 2018).  
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23  
24 *Relationships of attitudes with corporate social responsibility, consumer resilience, and brand*  
25  
26 *familiarity*  
27

28 CSR has been highlighted as a marketing and management strategy across industries,  
29  
30 especially in sustainability research. Large companies invest substantially more in CSR (Luo and  
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32 Bhattacharya, 2006) because CSR has been recognized not only as an appropriate endeavor but  
33  
34 also as a source of competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Smith, 2003). Managers can  
35  
36 distinguish their companies from rivals through CSR. In other words, CSR is strategically  
37  
38 associated with a firm's ability to distinguish its brand, product, or service from those of its rivals  
39  
40 and consequently enhance its financial performance. Podnar and Golob (2007) present CSR as a  
41  
42 corporate marketing instrument and a strategy supporting long-term organizational performance:  
43  
44 "a way for companies to do well by doing good." Thus, this study adopts the view of CSR as a  
45  
46 business and marketing strategy. However, Hsu (2012) argues that it is not clear whether firms  
47  
48 can directly obtain competitive advantage and improve financial performance through  
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50 conducting CSR. This is because a firm can receive positive returns from a CSR strategy only if  
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the strategy cannot be easily imitated by rivals (Hoppe and Lehmann-Grube, 2001). More importantly, the advantages from CSR may not result in improved financial performance because consumers in the market do not react immediately to CSR, but rather to promotion or price (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Thus, a company using CSR should be patient in verifying the CSR effort's effect on financial outcomes.

Aside from the long-term effect of CSR on a firm's financial performance, CSR plays an increasingly important role in today's business environment, especially in the tourism industry, which heavily depends upon environmental, cultural, and social resources (Calveras, 2015; Rew and Minor, 2018). For instance, a hotel can take advantage of strategic CSR by implementing green practices, such as waste management, to show consumers how committed it is to conserve the environment and protect the planet. This action may change consumers' initial negative or neutral image of the hotel into a positive one. Thus, CSR is an important factor that enables firms to satisfy consumers and give them a good experience (Saeidi et al., 2015) as well as improve a firm's reputation, especially in the context of environmental concerns. In other words, strategic CSR affects consumers' attitudes toward a firm's image and reputation because these are constructed by consumers' previous experiences (Liu et al., 2014), and the marketing action helps consumers to form positive images of objects including the firm, brands, services, products, and places.

This type of strategic action has become increasingly important in the tourism industry because tourism is highly susceptible to external factors and pressures, such as natural and human-influenced (anthropogenic) incidents including terrorist attacks, gun violence, and natural disasters (Richie, 2004). Faulkner (2001) suggests that it is important for firms in the industry to design a risk management system including recovery strategies providing both an immediate



response and long-term support to consumers and local communities. This support helps consumers recognize the sincerity of the marketing actions and helps overcome the memory of traumatic experiences. Sullivan-Taylor and Wilson (2009) show that CSR strategies that manage the threat of terrorism in the tourism industry also improve the level of organizational resilience. In a study on whether CSR activities affect consumer repurchase intention, Jose et al. (2015) show that risks have a negative impact on bank customers' attitudes, and they suggest CSR to reduce and limit financial risks. In other words, this argument suggests that marketing activities can change consumer attitudes even though consumers are already exposed to or have experienced traumatic accidents or risks and have a negative attitude toward the company. Therefore, this study proposes the following research hypothesis:

**H1:** CSR actions positively affect consumer attitudes toward the company conducting CSR actions.

Resilience is an individual's or organization's ability to quickly recover after experiencing tragic events, such as violent threats or serious accidents (Reivich and Shatté, 2002). Thus, a company using CSR should be patient in verifying the CSR effort's effect on financial outcomes. The degree that consumers themselves are socially responsible can also affect the success of CSR strategies (Quazil et al, 2016). Resilience, as an inherent ability, helps individuals return to the original point or normal status before they were in the traumatic situations. Resilience has several components: optimism, facing fear, altruism, religion and spirituality, social support, role models, training, brain fitness, cognitive and emotional flexibility, and purpose of life (Southwick and Charney, 2012). Resilience can be improved through a consumer's intention or willingness. For instance, Reivich and Shatté (2003) argue that resilience is the capacity to respond in healthy and productive ways when faced with adversity or

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3 trauma. This capacity is a given ability in consumers, so this inherent capacity enables them to  
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5 find ways to fulfill their needs and wants. According to a study of Southwick and Charney  
6  
7 (2012), social support as one of the factors of resilience plays an important role in developing  
8  
9 said capacity. An entire network of family, friends, and community helps consumers, who have  
10  
11 experienced a traumatic event, to recover from their pains. Socially responsible marketing action  
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13 as a social support can improve resilience because it helps consumers rapidly return to their  
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15 normal life through the special marketing programs supporting the consumer's life and caring for  
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17 the consumers who experienced the traumatic events. On the basis of this point of view, we  
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19 argue that appropriate CSR as a strategic marketing action may enable consumers to recover  
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21 from a negative experience.  
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26 **H2:** CSR actions positively affect consumer resilience.

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28 CSR plays another important role as a marketing communication tool in the process of  
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30 creating a plausible corporate image that carries a socially responsible depiction of a firm  
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32 (Jahdi, 2013). CSR as a marketing communication tool positively enhances firm image and  
33  
34 reputation (Saeidi et al., 2015; Tingchi Liu et al., 2014; Jose et al., 2015). Through using CSR as  
35  
36 a communication tool, companies attempt to understand consumers' needs and wants and  
37  
38 familiarize customers with the companies' offerings. Due to the exposure of consumers to  
39  
40 brands/services/products through CSR, it can be expected that consumers' familiarity will consist  
41  
42 of their direct/indirect experiences related to brands/services/products/companies (Alba and  
43  
44 Hutchinson, 1987; Ha and Perks, 2001). In other words, it is expected that appropriate marketing  
45  
46 actions will build consumers' familiarity with the brands/services/products/companies based on  
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48 consumers' experiences as follows:  
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54 **H3:** CSR actions positively affect brand familiarity.

In the service-oriented market, customers play an especially important and active role as a co-worker or co-producer in the entire process of manufacturing and consuming a product/service (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Thus, companies are required to create and maintain the relationship with customers to increase firm performance (Keller, 2013). Once a firm creates a relationship with customers, it is necessary for the firm to develop marketing strategies that improve the quality of the relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Based on the point of view of customer relationship marketing (CRM), it is important for companies to apply the concept of familiarity to create and maintain a sound relationship between the firm and its customers. When consumers are exposed to marketing programs that help them acknowledge and experience a brand/service/product, consumers will be familiar with the brand/service/product and this familiarity might play a crucial role as a mediator in building a strong relationship between the company and consumers. This is because the familiarity of a brand, product, service, or firm enables consumers to distinguish a product/service from its competitors (Smith, 2003; Mackey et al., 2007). Thus, consumers who communicate with companies might feel more comfortable and show more positive attitudes toward the company. With this point of view, it is important for a company to optimize the effect of CSR on building positive consumer attitudes and a firm's performance through establishing a sound relationship with consumers. Based on the theoretical argument, the following is hypothesized:

**H4:** Brand familiarity positively affects consumer attitudes toward the company conducting CSR actions.

*Relationship between brand familiarity and consumer resilience*

According to Southwick and Charney (2012) and Reivich and Shatté (2003), resilience as an individual ability may be improved through other factors such mediation, building

relationships with people, or having a religion. Through these influences, it would be possible for individuals or consumers to improve their ability to cope with traumatic realities. In other words, consumers can reduce fear that results from uncertainty or unfamiliarity which affects decision-making (Lerner et al., 2015).

In this vein, marketing programs may strengthen consumer resilience by reducing the uncertainty of a market environment and the negative emotions consumers may feel in the risk or uncertain market environment. Kent and Allen (1994) insist that advertising as a marketing program influences consumers' memory of brands through increasing their familiarity with the brand. From this point of view, when CSR as a marketing action or program that affects consumers' memory of a brand functions to positively affect consumer resilience, it is very possible that consumers will remember the brand in the situation where they must make a decision. For instance, it would be natural for consumers to show a tendency to choose and consume a familiar object rather than consuming a new product/service/brand when they travel to unfamiliar areas. Through consuming the familiar products/services/brands, consumers can be comfortable and maintain their composure by controlling the uncertainty of traveling in places they have not yet experienced. Therefore, a research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

**H5:** Brand familiarity positively affects consumer resilience.

#### *Relationship between consumer resilience and attitudes*

Consumer resilience may be a key aspect of the quality of an individual's life because it refers to the individual's ability to bounce back from stress and trauma (Southwick and Charney, 2012). Reivich and Shatté (2003), however, expand their view of the concept of resilience, describing it as a mindset that enables individuals to seek out new experiences and to recognize their lives as a work in progress. In other words, the concept of resilience includes not only the

physical ability of people to deal with and recover from traumatic risk but also their attitudes toward an event that happened in their lives. Accordingly, this study recognizes individual resilience as the ability to control one's attitudes when faced with a traumatic experience or circumstance. Many factors affect resilience, including emotion regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching-out (Reivich and Shatté, 2003). Reivich and Shatté argue that the overall resilience measurement indicates an individual's level of resilience. A lower score of its measurement illustrates a lower level of resilience and vice-versa (Keye and Pidgeon, 2013).

Through the process of adapting to and overcoming the outcomes of innumerable choices and actions, consumers maximize and optimize their welfare based on the experience of their consumption and utility. This is because consumers attempt to satisfy themselves by better decision-making in the given situation (Donavan et al., 2016). In this process, emotion regulation, optimism, impulse control, and causal analysis as the pillars of resilience enable consumers to overcome negative experiences from their past choices and marketing actions and to change their attitudes towards life from negative to positive (Glandon, 2015; Reivich and Shatté, 2003; Rew and Minor, 2018). For example, when a trusted brand suffers from bad news about the brand, consumers are more likely to support the brand even if the bad news is true (Laverie and Arnett, 2000). In this vein, resilience can help the consumer determine his or her relationship with a firm as well as overcome negative information about the firm. This is because when consumers are familiar with a specific brand or company and are exposed to negative information about that brand or company, they resist such negative information and maintain their preference for and loyalty to the brand or company through a higher level of resilience. In other words, people who have a higher level of resilience can easily adapt to and overcome a

negative experience with a brand or company and show a higher level of loyalty to that brand or company. Therefore, consumer resilience may play a key role in determining consumer attitudes toward objects when consumers are exposed to traumatic events. The following hypothesis is proposed:

**H6:** Consumer resilience positively affects consumer attitudes toward the company conducting CSR.

Based on these theoretical arguments, a research framework is developed to show how the constructs are structurally connected to each other for this study (Figure 2).

[Figure 2]

## Methods

### *Data/Sample*

The purpose of this study is to measure consumer attitudes toward companies' marketing action when consumers are exposed to traumatic events such as gun violence, terrorists' attacks, or natural disasters. For the purpose, this study investigates the effect of CSR and the effects of variables including brand familiarity and consumer resilience on consumer attitudes. We sampled consumers in the state of Texas who actually experienced the disasters including Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and massive gun violence in San Antonio in 2018. The study also included consumers who have family members experiencing the traumatic events and the form of the marketing program to aid the suffering local community, such as providing relief goods and relief funds to Texans who have faced. The study was made up of 49% males, and 51% females. The age of the sample was highly skewed toward the 20-29 age group because sampling for this study was conducted in areas (Houston, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio) near universities. The median education level was a college degree. A total of 290 surveys were

administered. After removing invalid data including missing values, we finally had 194 responses as the valid sample for this study. The descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

[Table 1]

*Measurements*

For the purposes of this study, we developed survey questionnaires that measure each variable: consumer attitudes, CSR, brand familiarity, and consumer resilience. The statistical results of testing reliability and validity of each construct are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

To measure consumer attitudes, this study modified the set of items measuring attitudes developed by Richins (1983). Attitudes have been defined as a comprehensive summary and assessment of an object including products, services, brands, and companies (Azjen 2001; Malhotra, 2005). Thus, for the purpose of this study, we modified the items including such statements as “In general, I am satisfied with most of the products/services that I buy”, “What most products/services claim to do and what they actually do are two different things”, and “The business of XYZ has helped raise the standard of living in our country/community.”

To measure CSR, this study adapted the set of items developed by Jamali and Mirshak (2007). CSR contains four different pillars, namely economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (social and public) responsibilities (Carroll, 1999; Wood, 1991). This study employed Jamali and Mirshak’s (2007) statements such as “XYZ is committed to well-defined ethical principles”, “XYZ ensures that its employees act in a legal manner”, “XYZ plans for its long-term success as well as society’s”, and “XYZ plays a role in our society that goes beyond the mere generation of profits.”

To measure consumer resilience, this study referred to the studies of Reivich and Shatté (2003) and Southwick and Charney (2012). Reivich and Shatté (2003) measured resilience

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2  
3 according to seven dimensions: emotion regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis,  
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5 empathy, self-efficacy, and reaching out. Southwick and Charney (2012) estimated the concept  
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7 according to 10 dimensions, namely optimism, facing fear as an adaptive response, moral  
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9 compass as doing what is right, religion and spirituality, social support, role models, training as a  
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11 form of physical fitness and strengthening, brain fitness, cognitive and emotional flexibility, and  
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13 meaning and purpose of life. However, to obtain statistically more reliable and valid measuring  
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15 results, this study employed the items developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) including all  
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17 meanings of resilience in both studies, Reivich and Shatté (2003) and Southwick and Charney  
18  
19 (2012). A total of 10 statements (e.g., “I am able to adapt to change”, “I can deal with whatever  
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21 comes”, “I try to see the humorous side of problems”) were all examples included in the survey  
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23 to evaluate the concept of resilience.  
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29 This study defined the concept of brand familiarity as the accumulated related  
30  
31 experiences that customers have had with a brand. This definition is based on the definition of  
32  
33 brand familiarity given by Alba and Hutchison (1987) as the number of product-related and  
34  
35 service-related experiences that have been accumulated by the customer. This study modified a  
36  
37 measurement scale developed by Oliver and Bearden (1985) to measure the level of customers’  
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39 experiences including items such as “In general, would you consider yourself familiar with the  
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41 company you chose?”, “Would you consider yourself informed about the company you chose?”,  
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43 and “Would you consider yourself knowledgeable about the company you chose?”.  
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47 The composite reliability and Cronbach’s alphas ranged from a low of .731 to a high  
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49 of .886. The value for five items on consumer attitudes (ATT) was .731. According to Nunnally  
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51 (1967), this level of value is acceptable because it is above 0.6 as a threshold point. Each  
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53 construct, including corporate social responsibility (CSR = .811), brand familiarity (BF = .866),  
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and consumer resilience ( $CRL = .878$ ), has statistically significant values of reliability as well as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR), for which the threshold is above .5 (Hair et al., 2014).

Each construct was statistically significant in testing its validity, which is over .7 (Hair et al. 2014). As shown in Table 2, the range of testing validity is from .754 as the lowest level in attitudes to .888 as the highest level of consumer resilience. The results of cross-loading and reliability are provided in Table 2. The results for descriptive statistics and correlation are also provided in Table 3.

[Table 2]

[Table 3]

**Results**

To test the research hypotheses, both a simple regression and path analyses were employed. First of all, we argued that CSR has a positive relationship with consumer attitudes toward CSR as a marketing action in places which have been targets of terrorists’ attacks or have experienced other traumatic events (Hurricane Harvey), including major cities in the state of Texas (Corpus Christi, Houston, and San Antonio). This research hypothesis is supported by the statistical evidence ( $t = 7.603, p < .000$ ). The findings verify a positive relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. In the second research hypothesis, we argued that there is a positive relationship between CSR and consumer resilience. However, the statistical evidence did not support a relationship between CSR and consumer resilience. The third research hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between CSR and brand familiarity was supported by the statistical result ( $t = 8.216, p < .000$ ). This study logically hypothesized that a positive

relationship exists between brand familiarity and consumer resilience. The result of statistical analysis supported the hypothesis ( $t = 3.973, p < .000$ ). We hypothesized positive relationships of brand familiarity and consumer resilience with consumer attitudes toward CSR. The statistical results show there are positive relationships of brand familiarity ( $t = 6.539, p < .000$ ) and consumer resilience ( $t = 2.001, p = .042$ ) with consumer attitudes. All statistical results are presented in Table 4.

[Table 4]

#### *Additional analysis*

To find the roles of brand familiarity and consumer resilience, this study conducted mediating effect analysis as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). According to Baron and Kenny, there should be significant relationships among three variables: for example, each of the two independent variables is statistically significant in the relationship with a dependent variable and there is also a statistically significant relationship between two independent variables. After conducting this mediating effect test, if the relationships of the two independent variables with the dependent variable are statistically significant, we can argue that there is a partial mediating effect of one of two independent variables between the other independent variable and the dependent variable as the main effect in a study (Hair et al., 2014). However, if only the independent variable has a significant relationship with the dependent variable, we can argue it partially mediates the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986). We found that only brand familiarity partially mediates the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. The results of the mediation tests of brand familiarity and consumer resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes are provided in Table 5.

[Table 5]

In detail, we separated all participants into two groups: a group having a high level of resilience (above the average consumer resilience of 3.9) and another group having a low level of consumer resilience (below the average score of consumer resilience). As shown in Table 6, for the group having a high level of resilience, there was a full mediating effect of consumer resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes toward CSR actions, even though there was no mediating effect of consumer resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes.

[Table 6]

Conclusions

This study aimed to find the effect of CSR on forming consumer attitudes in places that have experienced traumatic events. The study argues that companies’ marketing actions including CSR have a positive impact on building consumer attitudes through the interaction effects of brand familiarity and consumer resilience on the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. All these theoretical arguments have been supported by a scientific way of investigation into the relationship between CSR and consumer resilience.

Theoretical implications

Based on these arguments and the empirical support for the hypotheses, this study makes theoretical contributions to the marketing discipline. First of all, the findings support that companies play a role in improving the quality of consumers’ lives and communities as this study has stated. CSR as an active marketing action for community and society helps consumers change their mindsets from negative to positive through practically helping consumers improve

and sustain the quality of their lives (Tang et al., 2016). Thus, the marketing action has a positive impact on building and changing consumers' attitudes or mindsets through increasing the quality of communication with consumers.

The findings of this study show there is a positive relationship between brand familiarity and consumer attitudes. Although the main effect of CSR has a positive impact on building consumer attitudes toward the company conducting CSR, thereby helping local communities heal from traumatic events including gun violence and terrorist attacks, brand familiarity also plays an important role as a mediator that intensifies the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. This finding supported the argument that the effect of CSR on forming consumer attitudes can be maximized by increasing the level of brand familiarity. While there is research that shows the role of brand familiarity as a moderator in the relationship between CSR and product performance and the different direction of causality between CSR and brand familiarity (Türkel et al., 2016), the concept of brand familiarity is especially identified as an antecedent of behavioral variables including satisfaction and attitudes as Tam (2008) denotes. Keller (2013) takes into account brand familiarity in measuring brand equity, which is the added value from marketing programs that help consumers understand what the brand is and what values or benefits they can obtain from the brand. Thus, this study sought to support the causal relationships among CSR, brand familiarity, and consumer attitudes by empirically testing the relationships, and the results indicate that brand familiarity is a mediator in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes. The findings of this study contribute to sustainable marketing research and consumer research by exploring a positive effect of consumer resilience on forming consumer attitudes. The concept of resilience in consumer research refers to how fast consumers can return to the condition which was experienced before a traumatic event. Indeed,

there is a positive relationship between consumer resilience and attitudes. Even though the role and effect of consumer resilience as a mediator in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes were not supported in the findings, there was a relationship of consumer resilience with other behavioral variables including brand familiarity and consumer attitudes, and our findings show a positive relationship between consumer resilience and consumer attitudes. However, testing the two different levels of resilience in two groups showed that only the group holding a higher level of resilience had a mediating effect of resilience in the relationship between CSR and attitudes.

In addition, through the finding of a mediating role of consumer resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes, it is possible to argue that consumer resilience is already inherent within consumers as an embedded ability in their mindsets. Additional analysis verified a statistically significant difference in resilience levels within the two groups, higher resilience group and lower resilience group-specifically showing there is a mediating effect of resilience in the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes toward CSR for the group having a high level of resilience but not for the group having a low level of resilience. Through testing the difference of consumer resilience between groups, this study identified the role of consumer resilience as a mediator and an inherent ability. Thus, the findings of this study support the theoretical argument that consumer resilience mediates the relationship between CSR and consumer attitudes.

*Managerial implications*

Managerial suggestions for managers and marketing practitioners derive from the findings of this study. First of all, CSR has a positive impact on forming consumer attitudes toward the company conducting the marketing action (i.e., CSR) on behalf of local communities.

Many marketers consider that marketing actions, including CSR, do not have a direct impact on a firm's performance (Joshi and Hanssens, 2010) because it is hard to immediately monetize the effect of marketing actions on a firm's performance. However, this strategic investment in marketing actions, including CSR, can change consumer attitudes toward the image and perception of the company. According to Keller (2013) and Kent and Allen (1994), to make brands strong, companies must establish brand equity, which is added value from brand awareness, knowledge, familiarity, images, and so forth. Thus, it is important to understand what customers think about a brand in terms of what values they want to obtain from the brand. This may be a core of building brand equity. In other words, if companies do not go into a market to get information about customers, they will never be competitive in the market (Naver and Slater, 1990; Hunt and Morgan, 1995). Appropriate marketing actions help companies understand customers' needs and wants so the information about customers will create a competitive advantage for the company in a market. Thus, CSR as a marketing action is a useful tool for companies that will help them be more competitive in a market by positively impacting on consumer attitudes toward the company.

The finding of the role of brand familiarity as a mediator supports this managerial suggestion that appropriate marketing actions, including contributing relief goods and funds, making shelters for victims, helping to rebuild the social infrastructures of local communities suffering from a traumatic event, and helping consumers create and increase familiarity with the brand/service/product, are essential. This positive formation of familiarity in consumers' minds strengthens their positive attitudes toward a company including the brand/service/product (Ajzen 2001; Keller 2013). Building on the finding that brand familiarity has positive relationships with consumer resilience and attitudes, managers can develop appropriate marketing programs to

obtain consumers' positive mindsets that guide customer loyalty (Suh and Yi, 2006). In other words, familiar objects, such as friends/products/services/brands, increase the level of confidence that helps consumers make a choice efficiently. Thus, it is important for companies to make consumers familiar with brands/services/products through creative and sustainable marketing actions, including CSR.

From this point of view, that appropriate marketing actions help consumers familiarize themselves with the firm/brand/product/service, it can result that companies are required to develop marketing programs assisting companies in order to increase the quality of communication between companies and consumers. Such programs are related to prices, ways of distribution, products, and promotions. This is especially applicable to sponsorship promotions, which contribute to specific communities that have suffered from unexpected traumatic experiences and can lead to creating and increasing the level of consumers' understanding of companies including their brands/services/products. For example, HEB, a supermarket chain founded in San Antonio, Texas, has provided humanitarian aid to local communities including Houston, Texas and the eastern parts of Texas affected by Hurricane Harvey (Solomon, 2017). These marketing actions, including CSR, play a crucial role in creating a mutual value and long-term relationship for both consumers/communities and companies. Thus, another managerial suggestion is that companies invest in developing and improving their quality of communication with consumers to create a long-term relationship so that consumers can better understand the companies/brands/services/products (Keller, 2013).

*Research limitations and further research*

There are limitations to this study. First of all, we conducted a cross-sectional study to explore relationships among CSR, consumer resilience, brand familiarity, and consumer

attitudes. For a future study, it would be more helpful and meaningful to look at how each variable in the research model structurally changes over time. As a measurement issue, this study used a survey-based measurement for behavioral variables. While the traditional marketing research methods are useful and convenient, they are limited in supporting theoretical arguments by contributing and extending the knowledge based on findings to other fields of study (Shaw and Bagozzi, 2018). Thus, such knowledge may provide further insight by employing neuroscientific methods, such as Electroencephalogram (EEG) to measure brain waves activated by a specific stimulus and functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to depict the brain functional area activated for a specific behavior by capturing the changes in blood flow. Utilizing neuroscientific methods, future research may be able to measure consumer resilience, brand familiarity, and consumer attitudes more accurately and provide insight related to brain region activation.



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Table 1. Descriptive statistic of sample demographics

Age		Gender		Education		Ethnicity	
20-29	105	Male	95	< High school	10	African American	12
30-39	12	Female	99	College	169	Asian	16
40-49	22			Graduate	15	Caucasian	42
50-59	35					Hispanic	123
Over 60	20					Other	1
Total	194						

Table 2. Measurement values and factor loading

	Cronbach's $\alpha$	AVE	CR	KMO	ATT	CSR	BF	CRL
ATT1	.731	0.513	0.825	0.754	.700			
ATT2					.656			
ATT3					.738			
ATT4					.720			
ATT5					.762			
CSR1	.811	0.582	0.848	0.847		.761		
CSR2						.768		
CSR3						.724		
CSR4						.798		
BF1	.886	0.610	0.823	0.821			.710	
BF2							.798	
BF3							.827	
CRL1	.878	0.692	0.957	0.888				.863
CRL2								.859
CRL3								.877
CRL4								.775
CRL5								.868
CRL6								.864
CRL7								.767
CRL8								.866
CRL9								.858
CRL10								.702

\*Note: ATT = consumer attitudes, CSR = corporate social responsibility, BF = brand familiarity, and CRL = consumer resilience, AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability, KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measuring the adequacy of sampling

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Each Construct and Correlations

	Mean	St.Dev	N	ATT	CSR	BF	CRL
ATT	3.512	.551	194	1.000			

CSR	3.786	.718	194	.481*	1.000		
BF	3.388	1.050	194	.427*	.510*	1.000	
CRL	3.964	.685	194	.142*	.103	.275*	1.000

\*Note: St.Dev. = Standard deviation, \*correlation is significant at .05 level (2 tailed)

**Table 4.** The Results of Hypothesis Testing

Model	Coef.(b)	St. Error	t-value	p-value	Supported (Y/N)
H1: CSR → ATT	.369	.048	7.603	.000	Y
H2: CSR → CRL	.098	.068	1.487	.140	N
H3: CSR → BF	.745	.090	8.216	.000	Y
H4: BF → ATT	.224	.034	6.539	.000	Y
H5: BF → CRL	.191	.048	3.973	.000	Y
H6: CRL → ATT	.115	.057	2.001	.042	Y

\*Note: Coef.(b) = coefficient beta (b) value, St. Error = standard error, Significant at  $p < .05$

**Table 5.** The results of mediating effect of brand familiarity and consumer resilience

Model	Coef.(b)	St. Error	t-value	p-value	Findings
Intercept	2.042	.183	11.145	.000	
BF	.129	.038	3.426	.000	Partially mediated
CSR	.273	.054	4.972	.000	
Intercept	1.845	.261	7.057	.000	
CRL	.080	.051	1.474	.142	Not mediated
CSR	.362	.049	7.433	.000	

\*Note: Significant at  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .28$  (model with BF and CSR),  $R^2 = .24$  (model with CRL and CSR)

**Table 6.** The difference of consumer resilience between groups

Groups	Model	Coef.(b)	Std.Err	t-value	p-value	Findings
Low-Resilience	CSR-ATT	.488	.095	5.101	.000	Sign.
	CSR-CRL	.028	.081	1.852	.070	Not sign.
	CRL-ATT	.115	.163	2.071	.048	Sign.
	Intercept	2.501	.573	4.364	.000	
	CSR	.493	.096	5.143	.000	
	CRL	.146	.141	1.036	.304	Not mediated
High-Resilience	CSR-ATT	.353	.092	2.320	.034	Sign.
	CSR-CRL	.127	.053	2.879	.019	Sign.

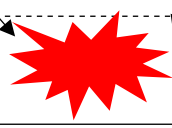
CRL-ATT	0.336	0.185	2.113	0.043	Sign.
Intercept	1.886	0.794	2.374	0.020	
CSR	0.186	0.181	1.028	0.307	
CRL	0.330	0.095	3.462	0.001	Fully mediated

\*Note: Significant at  $p < .05$ , CSR: corporate social responsibility, CRL: consumer resilience, Sign.: significant



**Figure 1.** Traumatic events matrix

Events		Severity	
		Less	More
Frequency	Seldom	T	N/E      N/D
	Frequent	T/Acc.      E/D	



Notes: T = terrorism, N/E = nuclear events, N/D = natural disasters (e.g., epidemic diseases, earthquake, flood, hurricane, typhoon, and drought, etc.), T/Acc. = transportation accidents (e.g., cars, trains, ships, and airplanes), E/D = environmental disasters (e.g., political policies)

**Figure 2.** The theoretical relationship and the research framework