“Donate to help combat COVID-19!”
How typeface affects the effectiveness of CSR marketing?

Huiling Huang and Stephanie Q. Liu
Department of Human Sciences, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

Abstract

Purpose – Corporate social responsibility (CSR) marketing has become ubiquitous in the hospitality industry. The purpose of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of donation appeals containing warmth-focused versus competence-focused messages in hospitality CSR marketing. Moreover, we offer an innovative visual design strategy focusing on the typeface (handwritten vs machine-written) in donation appeals to encourage consumers’ donations and boost their brand loyalty.

Design/methodology/approach – This research used a 2 (message framing: warmth-focused vs competence-focused) × 2 (typeface: handwritten vs machine-written) between-subjects experimental design.

Findings – The findings suggest that donation appeals featuring warmth-focused messages combined with handwritten typeface and competence-focused messages combined with machine-written typeface can maximize donation intention and brand loyalty. Furthermore, results from the moderated mediation analyses indicate that brand trust is the psychological mechanism underlying these effects.

Practical implications – Hospitality managers should use typeface design, which is easy and inexpensive to manipulate, to enhance the effectiveness of CSR marketing. Specifically, for donation appeals featuring warmth-focused (competence-focused) messages, the handwritten (machine-written) typeface can boost consumers’ donation intention and brand loyalty.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors’ knowledge, this research is the first to reveal the competitive advantage of typeface design in hospitality CSR marketing. This research sheds light on the congruency effects of message framing and typeface design in donation appeals on consumers’ donation intention and brand loyalty while using the contemporary context of The Coronavirus Disease 2019 to test the theory.

Keywords Consumer behavior, Experimental design, Charitable donation, Covid-19, Hospitality CSR marketing

Paper type Research paper

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE: More people are facing hunger. Your gift helps provide urgently needed meals during this crisis.

–www.houstonfoodbank.org

Introduction

Undoubtedly, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has recently garnered considerable attention in the hospitality industry (Gao et al., 2020; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Wu et al., 2017; Zhang, 2014). A large body of hospitality research demonstrates that practicing CSR not only benefits society but also boosts a brand’s revenue and cultivates customer loyalty (Abaeian et al., 2019; Choi and Seo, 2019; Martinez and Del Bosque, 2013; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Shafeieizadeh and Tao, 2020). Importantly, customer participation plays a critical role in the success of hospitality CSR marketing, motivating hospitality organizations to develop
various strategies and programs to engage consumers in their CSR efforts (Giebelhausen et al., 2017; Mattila and Hanks, 2013; Wu et al., 2017). Implementing fundraising programs (e.g., checkout charity at restaurants) is a common strategy to involve hospitality customers in making monetary donations to help others while strengthening customer-brand relationships (Gao and Mattila, 2019; Wu et al., 2017). For example, Chili’s encourages consumers to donate to St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital when they check out (Samuely, 2020). This CSR practice not only has raised at least $72 million for St. Jude since 2002 but also enhanced consumers’ brand loyalty and sales for Chili’s (St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, 2020; Samuely, 2020).

Considering the increasing importance of CSR marketing in the hospitality industry, it is crucial for hospitality marketers to gain a deeper understanding of donation appeals (Choi et al., 2019; Mattila et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2017). Donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages are commonly seen in hospitality CSR marketing campaigns (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; RMHC, 2018, 2019). Donation appeals may use warmth-focused messages that highlight friendliness, care and love to convey good intentions (Zhang et al., 2019). For example, McDonald’s launches the Ronald McDonald House Charities campaign, featuring the slogans “give a little love” and “donate $1 or more to share a heart” to encourage charitable donations to families with a seriously sick child (RMHC, 2018, 2019). In contrast, donation appeals may adopt competence-focused messages such as confidence and capability to emphasize the ability to achieve an intention (Zhang et al., 2019). For instance, Chili’s uses the tagline “the power to fight cancer is in your hand” in its fundraising campaign for St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018). Despite the ubiquity of donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages in the hospitality industry, the existing hospitality CSR marketing literature provides little guidance on the effectiveness of such message framing and strategies to enhance persuasion.

CSR marketing has become even more pervasive and important for hospitality organizations during The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Gafni, 2020; He and Harris, 2020). Based on the global Edelman Trust Barometer report, 81% of consumers consider a brand’s involvement of CSR as the deciding factor of buying from the brand during COVID-19 and 65% claim that organizations’ responses to this crisis will greatly influence their brand choices in the future (Edelman, 2020). Thus, it is not surprising that many hospitality brands are elevating their CSR activities, especially the fundraising campaigns, during the coronavirus outbreak (Action Against Hunger, 2020; Cheng, 2020; Starbucks, 2020). For example, many restaurants in the deeply affected areas have launched fundraising campaigns to serve meals for frontline heroes in the COVID-19 fight (Lev-Tov, 2020). Specifically, Mimi Cheng’s restaurant in New York has created the Dumplings for Doctors campaign on the GoFundMe website, raising more than $49,100 from consumers to feed healthcare workers (Cheng, 2020).

The current research adds to the hospitality CSR marketing literature by proposing typeface design (i.e., handwritten versus machine-written typeface) as a novel marketing strategy to enhance the effectiveness of donation appeals. Recent research distinguishes between “handwritten typeface” that looks like it has been written by hands and “machine-written typeface” that appears to be created and printed by machines (Schroll et al., 2018). Importantly, handwritten and machine-written typefaces convey different meanings, such that handwritten typeface is associated with the sense of human touch and care, whereas machine-written typeface conveys strength and power (Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004; Schroll et al., 2018). In the present research, we argue that donation appeals containing warmth-focused messages would be more compatible with the handwritten typeface as they...
are similar in conveying human touch and care, whereas donation appeals containing competence-focused messages would be more congruent with the machine-written typeface because of their shared meanings in strength and power. CSR marketing communications can affect consumers’ participation in CSR activities and their brand loyalty (Gao et al., 2020), which refers to consumer’s motivation to demonstrate loyalty behaviors toward the brand including future purchases, as well as positive word-of-mouth (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Importantly, previous research suggests that a stimulus with congruent meanings across cues (e.g., message, typeface, etc.) can facilitate a feeling of trust (Rompay and Pruyn, 2011), which is a prerequisite for building customers’ brand loyalty (Martínez and Del Bosque, 2013; Rather and Hollebeek, 2019). Therefore, we propose that the congruency of message framing and typeface design in donation appeals (i.e., warmth-focused messages combined with handwritten typeface and competence-focused messages combined with machine-written typeface) will induce greater brand trust, which further leads to higher levels of donation intention and brand loyalty. Findings of this research help hospitality organizations better understand how to use typeface design in donation appeals to intensify the power of CSR marketing, especially in the time of COVID-19.

Conceptual background

CSR marketing in the hospitality industry

CSR refers to “a company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 47). The hospitality industry is often standing at the forefront of practicing CSR initiatives to reduce its negative influences while intensifying its positive impacts on society (Iyer and Jarvis, 2019; MacKenzie and Gannon, 2019; Singal and Rhou, 2017). Engaging in CSR activities is more important for the hospitality industry than the other industries that provide tangible goods (Singal and Rhou, 2017). Compared to goods quality, service quality is more difficult to evaluate due to its nature of intangibility (Wilson et al., 2016). Accordingly, hospitality customers tend to rely on peripheral cues to make inferences about the service quality before making a purchase (Brodie et al., 2009). Previous research suggests that CSR practices can serve as a cue to positively influence consumers’ evaluations of service quality and a hospitality brand’s equity (Kim et al., 2016; Martinez and Del Bosque, 2013; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Poolthong and Mandhachitara, 2009; Zhang, 2014). CSR marketing can bring other benefits to hospitality organizations such as enhancing consumer engagement on social media (Kucukusta et al., 2019) and employee well-being and organizational behavior (He et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Ko et al., 2019). In the time of COVID-19, CSR practices are especially valued and rewarded by customers, helping a hospitality brand to promote its positive image to consumers (Gafni, 2020; He and Harris, 2020).

Notably, customer participation plays a critical role in the success of hospitality CSR marketing (Farmaki, 2019; Giebelhausen et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2017). Hospitality organizations have used several strategies to involve customers in their CSR efforts such as consumer volunteering, recycle/repurpose and fundraising programs (Gao and Mattila, 2019; Mattila and Hanks, 2013; Wu et al., 2017). The current research focuses on fundraising programs where a hospitality organization solicits monetary donations from customers to support a cause (Gao and Mattila, 2019; Wu et al., 2017). In this research, we examine two types of message framing in donation appeals, warmth-focused and competence-focused, that are prevalently used to encourage customer participation in hospitality organizations’ fundraising efforts (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; RMHC, 2018, 2019).
Message framing in donation appeals

A stream of research demonstrates that message framing plays a significant role in consumers’ donation behavior (Chang and Lee, 2009; Grau and Folse, 2007; White and Peloza, 2009; Wu et al., 2017). Donation appeals can be framed with positive-valenced messages (e.g., “with your help, an unfortunate child can have an opportunity for a bright future”) or negative-valenced messages (e.g., “without your help, an unfortunate child will remain living in the dark”) (Chang and Lee, 2009). In the hospitality setting, Wu et al. (2017) find that the effectiveness of donation appeals using other-benefit messages (e.g., “your donation will help the homeless in our community and place them in permanent housing”) versus self-benefit messages (e.g., “your donation will get you a $5 coupon for your next visit”) depends on the observability of the donation. In this research, we focus on warmth-focused and competence-focused message framing in donation appeals, which is widely used in the marketplace but lacks a good understanding of its effectiveness and strategies to enhance persuasion.

Donation appeals with warmth-focused messages emphasize friendliness, care and love to convey the good intention of helping others (Zhang et al., 2019). Previous research suggests that highlighting warmth-related information has a beneficial effect on consumers’ charitable giving behavior (Zhou et al., 2019). For example, in the hospitality CSR marketing setting, donation appeals with messages expressing gratitude (e.g., “thanks to your generosity, lives will be changed”) are related to the construct of warmth and enhance customers’ donation intention (Mattila et al., 2016). Similarly, donation appeals featuring a warm character (e.g., a casually dressed househusband) can increase consumers’ blood donation behavior (Zawisza and Pittard, 2015). Even adding an anthropomorphized money image featuring a warm humanlike face to a donation appeal can encourage consumers to donate more money (Zhou et al., 2019).

On the other hand, donation appeals may use competence-focused messages such as capabilities, efficiency and effectiveness, to highlight the ability to achieve an intention (Zhang et al., 2019). Prior research demonstrates that emphasizing competence-related information may increase consumers’ donation intention (Zawisza and Pittard, 2015; Zhang et al., 2019). For example, messages emphasizing competence may amplify an individual’s motive to compete and signal his self-distinctiveness by making a monetary donation (Zhang et al., 2019). In the blood drive context, donation appeals featuring a competent character (e.g., a suited businessman) can enhance people’s willingness to become a blood donor (Zawisza and Pittard, 2015). Furthermore, stressing competence-related concepts such as self-efficacy has been shown to enhance an individual’s belief in his ability to make a difference, which transfers into the action of making a donation (Sharma and Morwitz, 2016).

Taken together, donation appeals containing warmth-focused or competence-focused messages have been shown effective in encouraging donations. However, the current research argues that not only the message itself but also the typeface dressing up such a message matters in hospitality CSR marketing. Indeed, every text-based appeal needs to choose a typeface, and it would not cost a hospitality brand extra. Understanding the interplay between message framing and typeface design in donation appeals provides a unique competitive advantage for hospitality brands to enhance consumer participation in their CSR initiatives and brand loyalty.

The interaction between message framing and typeface design

A growing body of research has demonstrated the important role of typeface design in persuasion (Celhay et al., 2015; Childers and Jass, 2002; Liu et al., 2019; Schroll et al., 2018;
Rompay and Pruyn, 2011). Prior research suggests that typefaces can convey different meanings and influence consumers’ decision-making (Liu et al., 2019; Schroll et al., 2018). Besides the literal definition of the word, a word written in a certain typeface can convey implicit meanings based on visual characteristics of the typeface (Cellhay et al., 2015; Childers and Jass, 2002). For example, Childers and Jass (2002) find that using a formal typeface (e.g., Empire Script) in a luxury car advertisement makes the car appear more luxurious, whereas using a casual typeface (e.g., Don Casual) in an advertisement for a casual pant makes consumers perceive the pant as more casual. Recent hospitality research has begun to understand the role of menu typeface design in leveraging consumer responses (Liu et al., 2019; Magnini and Kim, 2016). For example, Magnini and Kim (2016) find that a menu presented in an italicized typeface can make consumers view the restaurant as upscale and high-quality. Extending this stream of work, the current research focuses on handwritten versus machine-written typefaces and examines how they interact with the message framing in donation appeals to influence the effectiveness of hospitality CSR marketing.

While machine-written typeface is usually regular, uniform, straight and angular, the handwritten typeface is designed to mimic real handwriting and appears more irregular, natural, slanted and curved (Henderson et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2019; Schroll et al., 2018). Handwriting is often perceived as personal, effortful and sincere (Ren et al., 2018; Tassiello et al., 2018). For example, in the hotel context, a handwritten note can deliver warmth and make consumers feel a greater psychological closeness to the service employee (Ren et al., 2018). Similar to real handwriting, the handwritten typeface also weaves in a sense of human touch, care and sincerity into the marketing communications (Liu et al., 2019; Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004; Schroll et al., 2018). For example, using handwritten typeface on product packaging can trigger human presence perceptions and strengthen consumers’ emotional attachment to the product (Schroll et al., 2018). Similarly, applying handwritten typeface on product packaging can lend warmth to the product, encouraging consumers to touch it (Izadi and Patrick, 2019). In the hospitality context, a restaurant menu presented in the handwritten typeface can convey the service provider’s love of caring for consumers’ health by offering healthy foods (Liu et al., 2019). In contrast to handwritten typeface, machine-written typeface carries meanings of formality, power, profession, technicality and practicality (Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004; Tantillo et al., 1995). For example, given its association with practicality, the machine-written typeface can boost consumers’ product evaluation when the product is positioned as a utilitarian product (Schroll et al., 2018). Indeed, as the machine-written typeface is associated with quality of strength, it is considered more appropriate to use in an advertisement promoting building materials (Schiller, 1935).

In the hospitality CSR marketing setting, we propose an interaction effect between donation appeals’ message framing (warmth-focused vs competence-focused) and typeface (handwritten vs machine-written) on consumers’ donation intention and brand loyalty. Specifically, we argue that donation appeals containing warmth-focused messages would be more compatible with the handwritten typeface given their shared focus on human touch and care, whereas donation appeals containing competence-focused messages would be more congruent with the machine-written typeface because of their similarity in conveying strength and power. Previous research drawing on the processing fluency theory suggests that congruent meanings across cues on the stimulus can facilitate information processing, and such fluency triggers consumers to respond more positively to the stimulus (Doyle and Bottomley, 2006; Pleyers, 2019; Rompay and Pruyn, 2011). Therefore, we propose that for donation appeals with warmth-focused messages, the handwritten (vs. machine-written)
typeface will induce higher levels of donation intention and brand loyalty as they communicate meanings conceptually aligned. In contrast, for donation appeals with competence-focused messages, the machine-written (vs. handwritten) typeface will elicit higher levels of donation intention and brand loyalty. Formally, we put forth the following hypotheses:

\[ H1. \] For donation appeals featuring warmth-focused messages, the handwritten (vs. machine-written) typeface will elicit higher levels of (a) donation intention and (b) brand loyalty.

\[ H2. \] For donation appeals featuring competence-focused messages, the machine-written (vs. handwritten) typeface will elicit higher levels of (a) donation intention and (b) brand loyalty.

**Brand trust as the underlying mechanism**

We further propose that brand trust mediates the joint effects of message framing and typeface design on donation intention and brand loyalty. Brand trust refers to consumers’ belief that the brand is dependable and responsible for the interests of the customers (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). In the hospitality industry, brand trust has been considered as a prerequisite for developing a strong customer-brand relationship (Martínez and Del Bosque, 2013; Rather and Hollebeek, 2019). As consumers tend to donate a cause supported by a trustworthy brand (Sargeant et al., 2006), building brand trust is especially important for hospitality organizations implementing fundraising programs. Consumers’ brand trust can be formed through marketing communications (e.g., donation appeals and websites) (Burt and Dunham, 2009; Hibbert et al., 2007; Liu and Mattila, 2016). However, prior research on marketing design mostly uses noticeable elements such as images (Burt and Dunham, 2009) and messages (Hibbert et al., 2007; Liu and Mattila, 2016) to enhance brand trust. The current research switches our attention to an implicit element—typeface design—in donation appeals.

Prior research suggests that a stimulus with congruent meanings across cues (e.g., typeface, message, shape, etc.) can enhance consumers’ brand trust (Shaikh, 2007; Rompay and Pruyn, 2011). The congruence of cues can facilitate information processing and lead consumers to perceive the stimulus as credible (Parks and Toth, 2006; Unkelbach, 2007), which consequently translates into the perceived trustworthiness of the brand (Hagtvedt, 2011). For example, as slender shapes connote high degrees of luxury and low degrees of casualness, using a typeface conveying a sense of luxury (e.g., Empire Script) rather than casualness (e.g., Don Casual) on a slender–shape water bottle can strengthen consumers’ brand trust (Rompay and Pruyn, 2011). Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that consumers’ brand trust may be amplified by the congruency between message framing and typeface design in donation appeals (i.e., warmth-focused message framing with handwritten typeface, competence-focused message framing with machine-written typeface).

Furthermore, brand trust may influence consumers’ donation behavior and their relationship with the hospitality brand. Before making a donation, customers may be concerned about the possible misuse of donations by the brand (Sargeant et al., 2006). Brand trust can increase consumers’ confidence that the brand is able to use donations in an expected manner (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Doney and Cannon, 1997), and thus enhances consumers’ donation intention. Moreover, when consumers trust a brand, they tend to spread positive WOM, buy more and become more loyal to the brand (Folse et al., 2013; Liu and Mattila, 2016). Therefore, we argue that the congruency between message
framing and typeface design in donation appeals – warmth-focused messages combined with handwritten typeface and competence-focused messages combined with machine-written typeface – can enhance consumers’ brand trust, which consequently spills over to boost their donation intention and brand loyalty. Formally, we put forth the following hypothesis:

\[ H3. \text{ Brand trust will mediate the impact of message framing and typeface in donation appeals on (a) donation intention and (b) brand loyalty.} \]

A conceptual framework is provided in Figure 1.

**Methodology**

**Study design and sample**

To test the hypotheses, this research used a 2 (message framing: warmth-focused vs competence-focused) × 2 (typeface: handwritten vs machine-written) between-subjects experimental design. A total of 170 U.S. adult consumers recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Daly and Natarajan, 2015), participated in the study. The average age of the sample was 38 years, 63.5% of participants were male, 67.6% were caucasian, 76.4% held a bachelor’s degree or above and 72.9% had an annual household income of $40,000 or above.

**Procedures and stimuli**

All participants were instructed to imagine themselves in a hypothetical scenario. They were told that: “COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the most serious public health crises in centuries. In the USA, many restaurants encourage consumers to use drive-through, pick-up or delivery options in response to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. Today, you decide to take out food from a local restaurant. While waiting in line at the drive-through lane, you notice a flyer stating that the restaurant is collaborating with the local food bank to help fight hunger during the coronavirus crisis.”

Participants were randomly assigned to view one of the four donation appeals (Figure 2). Encouraging donations to the local food bank was used as a cause in the donation appeals (Gao and Mattila, 2019; Mattila et al., 2016) and it is a common CSR practice during the COVID-19 pandemic in the hospitality industry (Action Against Hunger, 2020; Discover Atlanta Editorial Team, 2020). Specifically, donation appeals with warmth-focused messages featured a tagline “the world needs sincere care, warmth and love to fight hunger,” accompanied by an image of a person dressed casually and holding a young child’s hand. In contrast, donation appeals with competence-focused messages had a tagline “the world needs courage, confidence and ability to fight hunger,” accompanied by an image of a person dressed in a suit with arms up showing strength. For the typeface manipulation, the

![Conceptual framework](image-url)
“DJB This is Me” font was used as in the handwritten-typeface condition, whereas the “Verdana Pro Light” font was used in the machine-written typeface condition (Schroll et al., 2018).

**Measures**

Donation intention was measured using three items: “how likely are you to make a donation,” “how inclined are you to make a donation” and “how willing are you to make a donation” (1 = not at all; 7 = very much, α = 0.91), adapted from White and Peloza (2009). Brand loyalty was measured by using five items adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996). Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would “say positive things about this restaurant to other people,” “recommend this restaurant to someone who seeks your advice,” “encourage friends and relatives to do business with this restaurant,” “consider this restaurant your first choice for casual dining services” and “be more likely to patronize this restaurant in the future” (1 = not at all likely, 7 = extremely likely, α = 0.93). Brand trust was measured via four items: “I believe this restaurant is trustworthy,” “I believe this restaurant is dependable,” “I have confidence in this restaurant,” “I believe this restaurant is responsible” (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree, α = 0.89), adapted from Gavilan et al. (2018).

The manipulation of message framing and typeface were checked through a recall-based method (Chang, 2014; Huang et al., 2020; Grau and Folse, 2007; Liu et al., 2018). Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the focus of messages featured the donation appeal (1 = care, warmth and love; 7 = courage, confidence and ability). The manipulation of the typeface was checked by asking participants to indicate
the extent to which the donation appeal looked machine-written or handwritten (1 = looks machine-written; 7 = looks handwritten). Stimuli realism was measured through two questions: “to what extent do you think the scenario was realistic?” And “how realistic was the donation appeal?” ($r = 0.74, p < 0.001$).

**Results**

*Manipulation and realism checks*

As expected, a two-way ANOVA on the message framing manipulation check scores yielded only a main effect of message framing ($F(1, 166) = 4.42, p < 0.037$), suggesting a significant difference between the warmth-focused message framing condition ($M = 3.80$) and the competence-focused message framing condition ($M = 4.50$). In addition, a two-way ANOVA on the typeface manipulation check scores revealed only a main effect of Typeface ($F(1, 166) = 13.26, p < 0.001$), indicating a significant difference between the handwritten typeface condition ($M = 4.94$) and the machine-written typeface condition ($M = 3.86$). The mean rating on stimuli realism was 5.85 ($t = 24.99, p < 0.001$, as compared to the scale midpoint), indicating that the experimental stimuli were perceived as realistic in a donation context. In sum, our manipulations were effective.

*Donation intention*

We conducted a two-way ANOVA on donation intention to test $H1a$ and $H2a$. The results only revealed a significant main effect of message framing ($F(1, 166) = 7.61, p < 0.006$), and most importantly, it was qualified by a message framing $\times$ typeface interaction ($F(1, 166) = 11.57, p < 0.001$), visualized in Figure 3. A simple main effect analysis was conducted to decompose this significant two-way interaction. Specifically, in the warmth-focused message framing condition, handwritten (vs. machine-written) typeface led to higher levels of donation intention ($M_{\text{handwritten}} = 6.13, M_{\text{machine-written}} = 5.28; F(1, 166) = 6.95, p < 0.009$), supporting $H1a$. In contrast, in the competence-focused message framing condition, machine-written (vs. handwritten) typeface resulted in higher levels of donation intention ($M_{\text{handwritten}} = 4.77, M_{\text{machine-written}} = 5.42; F(1, 166) = 4.68, p < 0.032$), which is consistent with $H2a$.

![Figure 3. Effects of message framing and typeface on donation intention](image-url)
Brand loyalty
We performed a two-way ANOVA on brand loyalty to test $H_{1b}$ and $H_{2b}$. The results only showed a significant main effect of message framing ($F(1, 166) = 8.75, p < 0.004$), and most importantly, it was qualified by a message framing × typeface interaction ($F(1, 166) = 16.54, p < 0.001$), illustrated in Figure 4. A simple main effect analysis was conducted to understand this significant two-way interaction. Specifically, in the warmth-focused message framing condition, handwritten (vs. machine-written) typeface led to higher levels of brand loyalty ($M_{\text{handwritten}} = 5.90, M_{\text{machine-written}} = 5.25; F(1, 166) = 5.43, p < 0.021$), supporting $H_{1b}$. In contrast, in the competence-focused message framing condition, machine-written (vs. handwritten) typeface resulted in higher levels of brand loyalty ($M_{\text{handwritten}} = 4.55, M_{\text{machine-written}} = 5.46; F(1, 166) = 11.95, p < 0.001$), which is consistent with $H_{2b}$.

Mediation analysis
To further understand the underlying mechanism of the message framing-typeface congruence effect in donation appeals, we conducted moderated mediation analyses using the bootstrapping method (PROCESS Model 8; Hayes, 2017).

To test $H_{3a}$, we specified typeface as the independent variable, message framing as the moderator, brand trust as the mediator and donation intention as the dependent variable. The bootstrapping results showed a moderated mediation process by brand trust (index of moderated mediation = 0.60, 95% CI = [0.3347, 0.8781]). Specifically, brand trust mediated the impact of typeface on donation intention in the warmth-focused message framing condition (indirect effect = $-0.21$, 95% CI = $[-0.4054, -0.4030]$) and the competence-focused message framing condition (indirect effect = $0.39$, 95% CI = $[0.1914, 0.5941]$). These results provide support for $H_{3a}$. To test $H_{3b}$, we specified typeface as the independent variable, message framing as the moderator, brand trust as the mediator and brand loyalty as the dependent variable. The bootstrapping results showed a moderated mediation process by brand trust (index of moderated mediation = 0.60, 95% CI = [0.3155, 0.8889]). Specifically, brand trust mediated the impact of typeface on brand loyalty in the warmth-focused message framing condition (indirect effect = $-0.21$, 95% CI = $[-0.3997, -0.0407]$) and the competence-focused message framing condition (indirect effect = $0.39$, 95% CI = $[0.1914, 0.5941]$).
framing condition (indirect effect = 0.39, 95% CI = [0.1745, 0.5966]). Hence, $H_{3b}$ was supported.

**Discussion and conclusions**

**Conclusions**
CSR marketing has become an important theme within the hospitality industry (Gao et al., 2020; Nyahunzvi, 2013; Wu et al., 2017; Zhang, 2014). The current research aims to understand the effectiveness of donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages in hospitality CSR marketing. We propose a novel visual design strategy focusing on the typeface (handwritten vs machine-written) and examine how typeface interacts with the message framing in donation appeals to enhance consumers' donation intention and their brand loyalty. As CSR marketing in the time of COVID-19 has become more prevalent and important for hospitality organizations (Gafni, 2020; He and Harris, 2020), we particularly use the contemporary COVID-19 context to test our proposed interaction effect. Results suggest that donation appeals featuring warmth-focused messages combined with handwritten typeface and competence-focused messages combined with machine-written typeface lead to higher donation intention and brand loyalty. Furthermore, findings from the moderated mediation analyses reveal that brand trust is the psychological mechanism underlying these effects.

**Theoretical implications**
The current research makes several important theoretical contributions to the hospitality literature. First, we extend the hospitality CSR marketing literature by centering on donation appeals with warmth-focused and competence-focused messages. Donation appeals containing warmth-focused or competence-focused messages are common in the marketplace (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; RMHC, 2018, 2019). Yet, the existing hospitality literature provides little guidance on strategies to enhance their effectiveness. Moreover, prior hospitality CSR marketing research on donation appeals has mainly focused on the examination of explicit messages (Choi et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2017). However, not only the message itself but also the typeface embedding such message matters in consumers’ decision-making and the role of typeface has been largely neglected in the hospitality CSR marketing literature. To address these gaps, this research centers on donation appeals containing warmth-focused versus competence-focused messages, and more importantly, examines how message framing interacts with typeface design to shape the effectiveness of CSR marketing. Previous marketing research on typeface design primarily focuses on its role in logos (Hagtvedt, 2011) and packages (Celhay et al., 2015; Schroll et al., 2018). Despite the increasing interest in typeface design, the existing hospitality research on typeface design mostly focuses on its role in menus (Liu et al., 2019; Magnini and Kim, 2016). To the best of our knowledge, we are among the first to examine handwritten and machine-written typefaces in hospitality CSR marketing. Therefore, this research also adds to the visual design literature on typeface design and extends hospitality CSR marketing literature to the typeface domain.

This work adds to the hospitality literature on congruence effects by revealing a conceptual alignment between message framing (warmth-focused vs competence-focused) and typeface design (handwritten vs machine-written) in donation appeals. Previous hospitality research has demonstrated the importance of congruence between the donation appeal's message framing and other factors such as donating settings (e.g., public vs private; Wu et al. (2017)) and individual differences (e.g., need for cognition; Zhang and Hanks (2017)). Extending this stream of research, our findings suggest that the effectiveness
of hospitality CSR marketing can be amplified when the meanings between the messages and the typeface in donation appeals are congruent. Specifically, we demonstrate that donation appeals containing warmth-focused messages are more compatible with the handwritten typeface given their shared focus on human touch and care, whereas donation appeals containing competence-focused messages would be more congruent with the machine-written typeface because of their similarity in conveying strength and power. These findings in the hospitality CSR marketing setting provide further empirical evidence to show that handwritten typeface is associated with the sense of human touch and care, whereas machine-written typeface conveys strength and power (Liu et al., 2019; Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004; Schroll et al., 2018; Tantillo et al., 1995).

Moreover, our findings suggest that brand trust is the underlying mechanism of the message framing–typeface congruence effect in donation appeals, which contributes to the hospitality literature on trust-building strategies. Recent hospitality research has begun to explore CSR marketing strategies that intensify the positive impact of CSR marketing on brand trusts such as the abstractness of CSR messages (Sung et al., 2020) and the hospitality organization’s transparency in CSR marketing (Shafieizadeh and Tao, 2020). This research extends this line of work by showing that choosing a proper typeface for the donation appeal can elevate consumers’ trust toward a hospitality brand. Specifically, for donation appeals with warmth-focused messages, the handwritten typeface induces greater brand trust. Conversely, for donation appeals with competence-focused messages, the machine-written typeface elicits greater brand trust. Furthermore, our findings show that increased brand trust spills over on consumers’ donation intention and brand loyalty. These results are congruent with the previous hospitality studies suggesting that brand trust is the cornerstone of a strong consumer-brand relationship (Martínez and Del Bosque, 2013; Rather and Hollebeek, 2019; Rhou and Singal, 2020). Therefore, this research also enriches the hospitality literature on customer relationship management.

Finally, we contribute to the hospitality literature by using COVID-19 as a contemporary context to test our proposed interaction effect. While the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has hit the hospitality industry (Baum and Hai, 2020; Baum et al., 2020; Jiang and Wen, 2020), many hospitality organizations proactively embrace CSR practices and collaborate with consumers to fight against the pandemic. Despite the prevalence of CSR marketing in the time of COVID-19 (Gafni, 2020; He and Harris, 2020), little empirical work has examined the power of CSR marketing during this crisis. Our work demonstrates that a well-made donation appeal can effectively encourage consumers’ participation in COVID-19 fundraising campaigns and boost their brand loyalty. Indeed, not only hospitality organizations but also consumers are accountable for showcasing responsibility through engaging in CSR practices (Volgger and Huang, 2019). Moreover, as brand loyalty-building during the COVID-19 pandemic might be more valuable and lasting than in the “peaceful” time (He and Harris, 2020), the current research provides empirical evidence to underscore the importance of CSR marketing in the time of COVID-19 for hospitality organizations striving to capture customer loyalty.

**Practical implications**

The current research provides hospitality organizations with a novel design strategy to amplify the effectiveness of their CSR marketing efforts. CSR initiatives in the hospitality industry have been shown effective in generating favorable consumer responses (Choi and Seo, 2019; Martínez and Del Bosque, 2013; Nyahunzvi, 2013). In the time of COVID-19, CSR practices are highly valued by consumers and offering hospitality organizations a unique opportunity to build a positive image (Gafni, 2020; He and Harris, 2020). A well-design
donation appeal is indispensable to a successful hospitality fundraising campaign (Mattila et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2017). Beyond common design elements (e.g., messages, images and color), our findings suggest that hospitality managers can use handwritten and machine-written typeface designs to encourage consumer participation in their fundraising campaigns. Notably, fine-tuning typeface design in donation appeals is easy and, more importantly, inexpensive. Cost-saving is extremely important for hospitality organizations as many of them are also suffering from the pressure on the bottom line caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this innovative design strategy enables hospitality brands to strengthen the power of CSR marketing in a simple and economical way.

Moreover, given the ubiquity of donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages in the hospitality industry (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; RMHC, 2018, 2019), it is highly beneficial for hospitality organizations to understand design strategies that enhance their effectiveness. Specifically, hospitality marketers should be aware that the effectiveness of donation appeals can be amplified by matching the message framing and typeface design. Our findings suggest that hospitality organizations should select a handwritten typeface when they use donation appeals with warmth-focused messages to promote CSR initiatives. Conversely, if they use donation appeals with competence-focused messages, it would be better to present these messages in a machine-written typeface. Though donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages are pervasive in the marketplace, hospitality marketers seem to neglect the importance of typeface design and tend to choose the machine-written typeface in the donation appeals (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; RMHC, 2018, 2019). As such, there is room for hospitality organizations to enhance their CSR marketing effectiveness through typeface design. Furthermore, it is worth noting that donation appeals using warmth-focused and competence messages are also common in other industries’ CSR marketing campaigns (Federal Bank, 2020; Western Union, 2020). Therefore, organizations in other industries might also benefit from our findings.

Furthermore, this research provides important insights for hospitality organizations on customer relationship management. Consumers tend to open their wallets for the CSR activities supported by a trustworthy brand (Sargeant et al., 2006). More importantly, recent Edelman Trust Barometer report finds that 60% of respondents claim they trust in the brands that they trust in the time of COVID-19 (Edelman, 2020), making brand trust a more vital metric for a hospitality organization’s success during this crisis. This work suggests that typeface design in donation appeals can be used to gain a competitive advantage in brand trust. Moreover, our results suggest that enhancing brand trust can better engage consumers in CSR activities and build brand loyalty. These findings are particularly beneficial for startup hospitality brands as building trust and cultivating loyalty with new consumers is crucial for a new brand’s growth (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa, 2004).

Finally, hospitality organizations, regardless of promoting CSR activities online or offline, can easily alter typeface design in donation appeals to amplify the effectiveness of CSR marketing. After all, where there is a word, there is a font. Donation appeals presented in print or digital marketing communication are widespread in the hospitality CSR marketing campaigns. For example, Mcdonald’s often puts a printed donation appeal on the cashier counter, whereas other hospitality organizations such as Four Seasons and Chili’s, use digital tools (e.g., websites, apps and social media) to promote CSR activities (Chili’s Grill and Bar, 2018; Four Seasons, 2020; Mcdonald’s, 2019). The application of digital tools for CSR marketing has become more pervasive during the COVID-19 pandemic when consumers’ mobility and social interactions have been drastically reduced (Cheng, 2020;
Federal Bank, 2020; Starbucks, 2020; Western Union, 2020). Moreover, when the website’s typeface is in sync with the brand’s ethos, customers tend to respond favorably to the brand and become more willing to use the website (Shaikh, 2007). Therefore, hospitality marketers should pay attention to the use of typeface when designing digital CSR marketing communication (e.g., web pages and mobile apps). Furthermore, in the online environment, consumers perceive greater risk in financial transactions, which is an important obstacle to engage them in CSR activities (Lacan and Desmet, 2017). As consumers rely heavily on marketing cues to evaluate brands’ trustworthiness in the online setting (Li and Yeh, 2010), we encourage hospitality managers to use typeface design to increase consumers’ brand trust and boost their willingness to participate in CSR practices.

Limitations and future research
This research has several limitations that offer opportunities for future research. First, the current research used a scenario-based method to capture consumers’ behavioral intentions. Future research should test the proposed strategy in a real hospitality fundraising campaign and collect consumers’ actual donation amounts and future loyalty behaviors. Second, this research is limited to donation appeals containing warmth-focused and competence-focused messages. Future research is warranted to examine how typeface design affects the effectiveness of other donation appeals such as guilt appeals. Previous research suggests that guilt appeals can evoke negative emotions and empathy (Basil et al., 2008). As handwritten typeface is emotional and superior on the warmth dimension (Liu et al., 2019; Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004; Schroll et al., 2018), it is likely that handwritten typeface will be more effective than machine-written typeface in enhancing consumer responses to a guilt appeal. Moreover, the current research only centered on one type of CSR marketing program (i.e., restaurant checkout charity) in the hospitality industry. Further investigations should extend the typeface effects into other hospitality CSR activities such as volunteering labor or time, recycling or the adoption of environmentally-friendly products and services. Furthermore, as fundraising programs are common in other industries’ CSR marketing (Federal Bank, 2020; Western Union, 2020), future research can examine our proposed interaction effect on consumers’ brand loyalty and trust in other industries beyond hospitality. Finally, we only examined the moderating role of message framing in donation appeals. Future research can explore other boundary conditions such as cultural differences. Previous research suggests that collectivists (e.g., Eastern consumers) prefer round shapes, whereas individualists (e.g., Western consumers) favor angular shapes (Henderson et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2006). Handwritten typeface tends to display round features, whereas machine-written typeface features angular shapes (Mackiewicz and Moeller, 2004). Therefore, it is possible that Eastern consumers may respond more favorably to an appeal presented in the handwritten typeface; in contrast, Western consumers may exhibit more positive responses to an appeal using the machine-written typeface.

References


Corresponding author
Stephanie Q. Liu can be contacted at: liu.6225@osu.edu

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:
www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com