

Impact of cause-related marketing on consumer advocacy and cause participation: A causal model based on self-reports and eye-tracking measures

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Abstract

Cause-related marketing improves corporate image and consumer attitudes toward brands. An important research gap is how the visual attention paid to cause-related cues in social media affect consumer attitudes and behaviors. In the present study, we analyze the moderating role of the visual attention paid to Instagram-based, cause-related posts on the impact of consumer perceptions (i.e., corporate image), beliefs (trust), and attitudes (i.e., corporate social responsibility [CSR] support) on behavioral intentions (i.e., cause participation, consumer advocacy, and intention to share posts) for fast-food restaurants. Data for the study were collected in a between-subjects experiment with 123 participants. Visual attention was measured using eye-tracking technology, and consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions through an online survey. The results show that the greater the attention paid to images (amount and duration of fixations) and the more revisits made lead to more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the cause and the company. On the other hand, the more time spent looking at the company's responses to negative user-generated content weakens the relationship between trust and consumer advocacy toward the company. These results can help practitioners design appropriate cause-related marketing strategies in social media.

KEYWORDS

cause participation, cause-related marketing, consumer advocacy, eye-tracking, fast-food restaurants, social media

1 | INTRODUCTION

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a core strategy for achieving long-term engagement with consumers (Lafferty et al., 2016). Previous research has identified positive effects of CRM on consumer attitudes and behaviors, such as purchase intention and loyalty (Patel et al., 2017; Randle et al., 2019). Consumer participation has been

shown to be particularly important for restaurants conducting CRM campaigns, and hence they must develop programs that engage and motivate consumers to participate (Huang & Liu, 2020). Furthermore, CRM has been especially important for restaurants during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, as it allowed those unable to operate to maintain relationships with consumers and other stakeholders. Nielsen (2020) reported that 72% of consumers

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considered companies' economic support for people affected by COVID as an important argument to buy their products, and that 84% of consumers identified companies supporting COVID-linked causes as being positively differentiated from their competitors. At the same time, the increasing consumer health awareness and the unknown long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on patterns of consumer behavior are expected to have a lasting effect on the fast-food market (Dube et al., 2020; Slack et al., 2020).

In terms of CRM communication, social media provide a faster and more efficient interaction with consumers, and therefore have become one of the most important for this purpose (Bialkova & Te Paske, 2021). Consumer intention to participate in CRM initiatives is positive when communicated through social media, considered as an opportunity to improve self-image (Choi & Seo, 2017). Interest in visual-based social media such as YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok is increasing (Liu et al., 2020), as these platforms develop a series of technology-related needs that contribute to the gratification after its use (Nanda & Banerjee, 2020). However, as Babic-Rosario et al. (2020) argue, the role of visual-based social media needs further research. Therefore, in this study we examine CRM content posted on visual-based social media and its effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the restaurant brand.

Visual attention has been recognized as a primary factor in advertising effectiveness since the appearance of the earliest models, for example, attention, interest, desire and action (Strong, 1925). Advertising cannot persuade consumers if it does not attract their attention. Visual attention can be very effectively measured by eye-tracking (Orquin & Wedel, 2020). In line with Babic-Rosario et al. (2020), we propose that eye-tracking should be used to identify what consumers are actually looking at in social media posts rather than what they are presumed to be viewing. Eye-tracking methodologies have been used in advertising research due to their linkage to cognitive processing (Pieters & Wedel, 2004). In particular, fixation measures (i.e., the point where the eye stops) such as fixation duration, number of revisits, and number of fixations have been used as proxies for interest and intensity of processing (King et al., 2019). Previous studies have applied eye-tracking to online advertising (e.g., Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2019) but, to the best of the authors' knowledge, very few have examined CRM in social media (for an exception, see Bigné et al., 2021). Existing works have focused on direct relationships, with visual attention as the dependent variable (e.g., Chang & Chen, 2017), but not as a moderator between consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Based on trust-commitment theory and selective exposure theory, we propose a model that combines consumer perceptions (i.e., corporate image), attitudes toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the company (i.e., CSR support and trust) and behavioral intentions (i.e., consumer advocacy, cause participation, and intention to share) with visual attention, measured through eye-tracking. Yun et al. (2019) study demonstrates how consumer's attitude toward a brand, along with the attitude toward a cause, predicts perceptions of CRM compatibility. This study gives further understanding to the CRM triad (Heider, 1946), adding the link between consumer

attitudes toward the company and CSR on brand advocacy and cause participation. The goal of this study is to identify the effects of CRM content posted by companies on visual-based social media on consumer trust in the company, participation in the cause, and positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), that is, advocacy for the company and intention to share posts on social media.

This study makes three contributions to the literature. First, we develop an integrative model that explains how CSR drives positive eWOM toward companies through consumer advocacy, intention to share posts, and cause participation intention. Second, this is among the first studies to hypothesize and empirically examine the moderating effect of visual attention paid to CRM campaigns on visual-based social media on the relationship between consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. We extend previous research on the impact of attitudes toward CRM on consumer perceptions of these actions (Yun et al., 2019) by adding the relevance of visual attention as an important moderator that affects attitudes and behavioral intentions toward the brand through CRM communication in social media. Third, we employ two methodological perspectives: (a) eye-tracking is used to examine consumers' visual attention patterns; (b) an e-survey measures consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward social media-based CRM campaigns. By using two methods, the study aims to provide a more holistic understanding of consumers' behavioral intentions in the specific context of fast-food restaurants. The remainder of the study is structured as follows. First, the theoretical framework is discussed, and the research hypotheses are developed to explain how consumers pay visual attention to CRM posted on social media. Next, the study methodology is explained, and the model is empirically tested. Last, the conclusions, limitations, future research lines, and managerial implications are presented.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

2.1 | CRM, trust, and cause participation

Corporate image refers to consumers' perceptions of a company resulting from previous interactions during the consumption process and/or based on company-related messages (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Consumer trust in the company has been defined, from a cognitive perspective, as the combination of beliefs about the company, in terms of competence (i.e., rendering a professional and quality service), honesty (i.e., providing reliable and realistic information to the consumer), and benevolence (i.e., the company's good intentions toward its customers, Flavián et al., 2006). The behavioral component of trust is a consequence of consumers' cognitive perceptions about the company (Casalo et al., 2007). Commitment-trust theory (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994) proposes that trust is the basis for successful customer-company engagement in which the company acts as the trustee, and

the consumer as the trustor. Van Der Merwe and Puth (2014) added ethical behavior to the three-dimensional conceptualization of trust based on competence, honesty, and benevolence.

Studies have confirmed the relationship between CSR perceptions and corporate reputation (e.g., Bianchi et al., 2019), although the mechanisms through which this relationship operates need further examination. Moreover, Lin and Lu (2010) confirmed the relationship between corporate image and trust; this relationship can be extended to the CSR image created through the company's CRM and other social activities. A positive CSR image has been related to higher levels of consumer satisfaction, trust, and identification with hospitality services (De Leaniz et al., 2019). When consumers trust in the company's ability to perform in accordance with socially responsible principles, they are willing to behave toward it favorably (Ramesh et al., 2019), and engage in long-term, mutually profitable relationships (De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020). Hence,

H1: *A better corporate image favors a higher level of trust in fast-food restaurants*

Consumers may support causes in different ways, for example, through purchasing local products, allocating a proportion of the product price to the cause, or directly collaborating financially with the association supporting the cause. No matter the approach, corporate credibility is the key factor explaining consumer intention to participate in the cause (S. Y. Lee et al., 2019). Based on the theory of planned behavior, Treiblmaier and Pollach (2006) argued that consumer trust in an organization predicts donation intention. Providing interactive and detailed information about the initiatives promotes trust in the organization, which leads to higher donation intention and positive WOM communication about the company's actions (Feng et al., 2017). Trust is also a determinant factor in donations made through crowdfunding (Zhang et al., 2020). Hence,

H2: *The higher the consumer's trust in fast-food restaurants the higher his/her cause participation*

Personal values influence consumers' actions toward the company, assessment of its strategic decisions, and impact on ethical consumption behavior (Bigné et al., 2009). Baskentli et al. (2019), based on moral foundations theory, argued that individuals' moral values influence the support they give to CSR initiatives that match their cultural principles. Individuals displaying prosocial behaviors, which involve supporting CSR in a business context, are motivated by concerns for their self-image (Choi & Seo, 2017). Kuokkanen and Sun (2020) suggested that when CSR decisions and consumer concerns with societal issues are congruent, this promotes consumer identification with the company. Yun et al. (2019) found that consumer's attitude toward a brand, along with their attitude toward a cause, predicts CRM compatibility perceptions. Cause participation depends on the consumer's perceptions of corporate motives: when consumers attribute intrinsic motivations to the company, that is, when they believe it honestly wants to carry out CSR activities without self-interest, this is perceived favorably (Hur & Kim, 2017). Personal costs that consumers face in being involved in a cause affect their prosocial behaviors, and eventually modify cause participation intention (Howie et al., 2018). Therefore,

H3: *CSR support has a positive relationship with cause participation in fast-food restaurants.*

2.2 | Effects of trust on consumer advocacy and intention to share on social media

Consumer advocacy includes behaviors that favor companies, including positive WOM communication, resilience to company-directed negative inputs and intention to financially contribute to the company (Xie et al., 2019). Advocacy toward a company or its products can be manifested in two dimensions: the social and the physical. Social advocacy takes place when consumers recommend the company's products or activities to others (e.g., through social media); physical advocacy is reflected in the consumption of the company's products and any other items featuring the company's name, brand, and/or logo (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified mutually beneficial company-consumer cooperation and interactions as consequences of trust. Exercising consumer advocacy has been defined as a way of cooperating (Fullerton, 2011). Positive relationships with companies promote consumer advocacy in the online setting, in the shape of eWOM. Trust has been identified as one of the relational factors that foster consumer advocacy (Bhati & Verma, 2020). CSR influences the consumer's trust in the company, which promotes advocacy behaviors and recommendation intention (Nguyen & Pervan, 2020). In the tourism industry, destination trust has been shown to be one of the antecedents of destination advocacy and loyalty (Kumar & Kaushik, 2017). The relationship between trust and consumer advocacy has been shown also in the context of the use of virtual reality technologies in restaurant settings (Farshid et al., 2018): experiential trust in a virtual reality setting leads to consumers advocating the experience (Wu et al., 2019). Therefore,

H4: *Consumer trust in fast-food restaurants has a positive relationship with consumer advocacy*

Consumer advocacy includes actions taken to defend the company or improve its image in the eyes of other consumers. One way to advocate is by spreading positive word-of-mouth, either offline or online; hence, consumer advocacy is strongly linked to intention to post online. Online sharing via social media is a way for consumers to demonstrate their brand advocacy (VanMeter et al., 2018). In fact, in previous studies about fast-food restaurants, the number of "shares" of social media posts have been used as the indicator of consumer advocacy (Sashi et al., 2019). Even consumers who are not open to offline advocacy may exhibit the behavior if they are highly attached to a particular social network (VanMeter et al., 2018). Therefore,

H5: *Consumer advocacy has a positive relationship with intention to share CRM posts about fast-food restaurants on social media*

2.3 | Moderation effects of visual attention

Visual attention has been described as a proxy of interest and preference, particularly when measured through eye-tracking (for a

review, see Orquin & Wedel, 2020), in various fields including tourism services (for a review, see Scott et al., 2019). The variations in viewer attention paid to social media content are explained by selective exposure theory (Aruguete & Calvo, 2018): applied to the social media context, users seek, and pay greater attention to, content which fits their values and preferences. The attention capture and transfer model (Pieters & Wedel, 2004) explains which mechanisms capture and transfer attention when stimuli are being viewed in printed ads based on eye-tracking. In particular, selective visual attention derives from top-down factors related to the individual and his/her attentional processes, and bottom-up factors, which are related to the characteristics of the advertisement viewed. This model has been also extended to social media content (Bigné et al., 2020). Based on the top-down path, those elements in CRM posts that match consumers' beliefs are given more attention, remembered for longer and shape their consequent actions. Therefore, we adopt such model for identifying the main drivers of visual attentions measured through eye-tracking data.

Attention-based marketing focuses on the explanatory power of visual attention on consumer behavior and company performance (Orquin & Wedel, 2020). The eye-tracking metrics provide rich data for analyzing gaze but also about what elements attract attention of the elements of a stimulus and the revisits to such elements, namely, areas of interest (AOI). Among them, the most popular ones are time to first fixation (TTFF), fixations count, total fixation duration, and number of revisits, whose definitions are detailed in the methodological section. Visual attention measured through eye-tracking has been related to consumer variables such as involvement, attitude toward companies, and ad recall (Aribarg et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2019). Previous studies have found a relationship between the visual attention paid to product information in online stores and attitudes toward products (Hwang & Lee, 2018). An online experiment by Khachatryan et al. (2018) linked visual attention paid during impulse buying and purchase intention. Ad preference and visual attention have also been correlated (Scott et al., 2016). In this study, we propose that the different levels of visual attention paid to the

informational cues in CRM posts lead to varied effects in the relationships between consumer beliefs, perceptions, and behavioral intentions.

RQ1. Does visual attention moderate the relationship between corporate image and consumer trust in fast-food restaurants?

RQ2. Does visual attention moderate the relationship between consumer trust in fast-food restaurants and cause participation?

RQ3. Does visual attention moderate the relationship between CSR support and cause participation for fast-food restaurants?

RQ4. Does visual attention moderate the relationship between consumer trust in fast-food restaurants and consumer advocacy?

RQ5. Does visual attention moderate the relationship between consumer advocacy and intention to share posts about fast-food restaurants?

The direct and moderating hypothesized effects are depicted in Figure 1

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Design and stimuli

The data for the study were obtained through an experimental design. A fast-food (hamburger) restaurant was chosen as the study context. Fast-food restaurants are one of the most iconic forms of globalization. Zion Marketing Research (2020) predict that the global fast-food and quick-service restaurant market will grow by \$63.25 billion during 2020–2024, progressing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 12% during the period. These restaurants have spread rapidly to major cities all over the world in response to the changing habits of urban consumers: convenience, time saving, low price, extensive menus, and service speed (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2019). Despite their importance, fast-food restaurants are usually stigmatized as offering unhealthy, low-quality products; they use CRM to counteract this negative stereotype (Choi & Seo, 2019). The experimental restaurant name was invented to avoid brand bias.

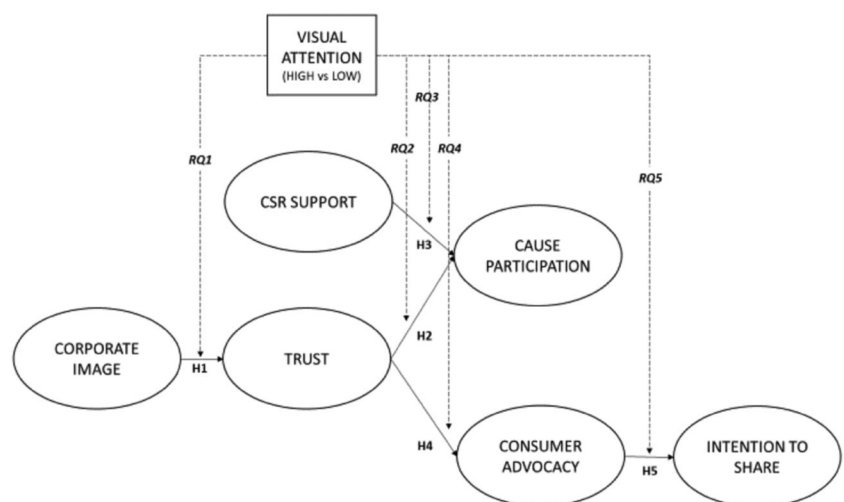


FIGURE 1 Research model. Direct and moderating effects

Time exposure was controlled at 45 s to obtain standardized data for the analysis. The participants received an economic reward after the experimental session.

Since we aimed to focus on visual-based social media, we chose Instagram as it is the leading photo-sharing social network, and it is expected to get 1.2 billion Instagram users worldwide in 2023 (Statista, 2021). The stimuli were Instagram posts about a CRM initiative carried out by the restaurant. Instagram was chosen as the study context because it generates stronger information sharing-based relationships than Facebook, deeper emotional relationships than Twitter (Phua et al., 2017). Each stimulus contained an image on the left-hand side, the caption explaining the CRM initiative on the right-hand side, and an anonymous user's negative comment on the post and, in those with company responses, a reply by the company. To measure the visual attention to each component of the Instagram post, we created five AOIs (see Appendix A): the image (AOI_{IMAGE}), the Instagram profile name of the restaurant (AOI_{NAME}), text placed next to the image with information about the CRM initiative (AOI_{CAPTION}), the user's response to the post (AOI_{USER}), and the company's reply to the user's response (AOI_{COMPANY}).

3.2 | Data gathering

The data for the study were obtained combining two different methods: (i) neurophysiological measures of visual attention through ET technology recorded during the visualization of the stimulus, (ii) an online survey. Participants' visual attention was recorded using device-mounted eye-tracking equipment available at the lab. The eye-tracking hardware used was a Tobii X2-30 Compact Eye Tracker (sample rate = 30 Hz), which has been shown to have a very high level of accuracy (0.4°) and precision (0.32°). To minimize distractions, the procedure was carried out in an evenly lit, widely spaced out room, where the participants were physically separated from the researcher and the monitoring station by a small wall. The software used for eye-tracking process was iMotions 8.1. (iMotions, 2020). Any results which the software showed to have tracked less than 90% of the subjects' visual behavior were discarded.

The online survey was completed by the participants during the experiment, immediately after exposure to the stimulus. Questions to retrieve attitudinal, behavioral, and sociodemographic data were posed using SurveyMonkey. The scales used to measure the constructs were adapted from previous literature on restaurant and social media settings, ensuring content validity. They are presented in Table 1. The experiment was performed in a European university's eye-tracking laboratory facilities (*at this stage the name is omitted to preserve anonymity*). All participants explicitly gave their consent to participate in the study and to use their data for this study; consent was granted through a consent form approved by the ethical committee of the University of Valencia.

The content of the Instagram posts was split into the five AOI already mentioned (see Appendix A). Each area of interest captures one specific element of the post and allows an accurate measurement of each one. Visual attention to each of the five AOI was measured using four eye-tracking metrics: TTFF, total fixation duration, number of revisits, and

fixation count. These are included in the fixation-based metrics category; they provide data about the moments when, and places where, the eye stops to process information cues in the stimulus. TTFF is the time elapsed until the eye first stops at a particular element. Total fixation duration is the aggregate fixation time given to a specific point. Revisits calculate the number of times that the eye comes back to a specific cue. Fixation count is the number of fixations made on an element of the post. The choice of these metrics is based on the eye-mind assumption, which proposes there is direct connection between what humans look at, and the cognitive processing of the information that point contains (Just & Carpenter, 1980). Therefore, shorter TTFFs represent the visual saliency of an object, whereas longer fixation times, and greater number of revisits/fixations, indicate the viewer is paying more attention to a specific cue (King et al., 2019).

3.3 | Sample

The initial sample consisted of 128 participants recruited in Valencia, Spain; 123 responses were finally considered valid for the analysis. The impact of missing data on reliability and validity is insignificant because of the relatively large sample size. The sample included 60 males and 63 females, of which 40 were between 18 and 24 years, 26 between 25 and 34, and 57 between 57 and 60; 33 were students, 14 were self-employed, 69 were employed and 7 were unemployed. A mixed sampling method was used to recruit the sample: 100 were recruited by a specialist marketing research company, and another 28 through the snowballing effect (to obtain a larger sample). The total sample is representative of the city, which has approximately 700,000 inhabitants. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to check for variability in the results between both groups, but no significant differences were detected for any of the study variables.

4 | RESULTS

To test the direct effects hypotheses we used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3.3.3. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out, using the consistent PLS algorithm, to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Content validity is supported based on the literature review. The convergent validity and reliability results are presented in Table 2. The standardized loadings of all the indicators were above 0.6, and the average standardized loadings were above 0.7 in all cases. The average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion (a minimum of 0.5). Regarding reliability, the Cronbach's α exceeded the .7 threshold proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), and the composite reliability values were greater than 0.6 for all variables (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

No discriminant validity problems (see Table 3) were identified. The HTMT ratios were less than 0.9 for all combinations of variables (Teo et al., 2008). Moreover, the cross-loadings showed that none of the indicators had greater loads in other factors. After applying

TABLE 1 Measurement scales

Construct	Authors	Indicators
Corporate image	Pope et al. (2009)	The restaurant Hamburguesería Grill has good products The restaurant Hamburguesería Grill is well managed The restaurant Hamburguesería Grill is involved in the community The restaurant Hamburguesería Grill responds to consumer needs The restaurant Hamburguesería Grill is a good company to work for
Consumer trust	Flavián et al. (2006)	The information offered by the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill is sincere and honest This restaurant Hamburguesería Grill is concerned with the present and future interests of its customers This restaurant Hamburguesería Grill has the necessary resources to successfully carry out its activities
Consumer advocacy	Melancon et al. (2011)	I try to get my friends and family to buy the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill's products and services. I seldom miss an opportunity to tell others good things about the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill. I would defend the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill to others if I heard someone speaking poorly about the organization. I would bring friends/family with me to the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill because I think they would like it.
Intention to share	C.S. Lee and Ma (2012)	I would share CRM posts of the restaurant Hamburguesería Grill in social media in the future I would share CRM posts contributed by other users I would share social media CRM posts regularly
CSR support	Ramasamy et al. (2010)	I would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible company I consider the ethical reputation of businesses when I shop I avoid buying products from companies that have engaged in immoral actions I would pay more to buy products from companies that show care for the well-being of our society If the price and quality of two products are the same, I would buy from the firm that has a socially responsible reputation
Cause participation	Folse et al. (2010)	I think this cause-related marketing campaign is a good idea. I would be willing to participate in this cause-related marketing campaign I would consider purchasing from Hamburguesería Grill to help the cause It is likely that I would contribute to this cause by getting involved in this cause-related marketing campaign.

Abbreviations: CSR, corporate social responsibility; CRM, cause-related marketing.

bootstrapping with 5000 resamples, all factor loadings were found to be significant at a $p < .001$ level.

4.1 | Direct effects

After confirming the measurement validity and reliability, the structural model was estimated. The results of the structural model evaluation and direct hypotheses testing can be seen at Table 4. The adjusted R^2 values for the model's factors are well above the minimum threshold of 0.1 set by Falk and Miller (1992). The Q^2 statistics for all the dependent latent variables were positive, thus the research model has predictive validity with respect to all its variables.

The hypotheses testing confirmed all the proposed direct effects. The effects of corporate image on trust (H1, $\beta = .649$, $p < .001$), trust on cause participation (H2, $\beta = .563$, $p < .001$), CSR support on cause participation (H3, $\beta = .284$, $p < .01$), trust on consumer advocacy (H4, $\beta = .651$, $p < .001$), and consumer advocacy on intention to share (H5, $\beta = .557$, $p < .001$) were all positive and significant.

4.2 | Moderation effects

A multigroup analysis was performed with SmartPLS 3.3.3, using Henseler's multigroup analysis (MGA) nonparametric significance test. This test compares group bootstrap estimates obtained from all bootstrap

TABLE 2 Measurement model

Factor	Indicator	Standardized loadings	p value	t value	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Corporate image	ci1	0.795	***	18.461	0.805	0.808	0.865	0.563
	ci2	0.783	***	14.676				
	ci3	0.700	***	11.888				
	ci4	0.784	***	13.552				
	ci5	0.683	***	10.043				
Consumer trust	tru1	0.912	***	47.413	0.769	0.843	0.865	0.685
	tru2	0.899	***	40.651				
	tru3	0.645	***	7.330				
Consumer advocacy	adv1	0.873	***	22.719	0.907	0.919	0.934	0.781
	adv2	0.926	***	63.947				
	adv3	0.866	***	34.408				
	adv4	0.869	***	29.321				
Intention to share	sha1	0.947	***	80.190	0.933	0.949	0.957	0.881
	sha2	0.944	***	64.707				
	sha3	0.926	***	42.164				
CSR support	csr1	0.725	***	8.284	0.797	0.812	0.860	0.553
	csr2	0.818	***	14.656				
	csr3	0.629	***	5.324				
	csr4	0.764	***	9.397				
	csr5	0.768	***	10.792				
Cause participation	cp1	0.851	***	24.919	0.904	0.905	0.933	0.777
	cp2	0.875	***	35.633				
	cp3	0.890	***	31.994				
	cp4	0.908	***	49.349				

Note: Convergent validity and reliability.

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CA, cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; CSR, corporate social responsibility.

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 3 Measurement model

Factor	Corporate image	Consumer trust	Consumer advocacy	Intention to share	CSR support	Cause participation
Corporate Image						
Consumer trust	0.793					
Consumer advocacy	0.773	0.735				
Intention to share	0.423	0.480	0.589			
CSR support	0.201	0.141	0.092	0.094		
Cause participation	0.623	0.659	0.740	0.651	0.347	

Note: Discriminant validity (HTMT ratios).

Abbreviation: CSR, corporate social responsibility.

TABLE 4 Direct hypotheses testing

Hypotheses testing	Standardized β	t value
H1: Corporate Image -> Trust	0.649***	8.873
H2: Trust -> Cause Participation	0.563***	6.915
H3: CSR Support -> Cause Participation	0.284**	3.475
H4: Trust -> Consumer Advocacy	0.651***	10.292
H5: Consumer Advocacy -> Intention to Share	0.557***	7.276

Note: R2 (Trust) = 0.421; R2 (Advocacy) = 0.424; R2 (Cause) = 0.407; R2 (Share) = 0.310 Q2 (Trust) = 0.276; Q2 (Advocacy) = 0.322; Q2 (Cause) = 0.302; Q2 (Share) = 0.262.

** $p < .001$; *** $p < .01$.

samples: this shows significant differences, at the 5% level, between path coefficients across two groups, if the associated p -value is lower than .05 or higher than .95 (Sarstedt et al., 2011). In our case, two groups were created for the results of the eye-tracking (ET) metrics: HIGH for those who displayed visual attention above, or equal to, the median, and LOW for those with figures below the median. Before the moderation analysis was carried out, the invariance of the measurement instrument was examined using MICOM. First, configural invariance was confirmed as both groups of ET metrics followed the same factor structure, with the same number of factors and indicators in each construct. Metric invariance and scalar invariance were calculated through a permutation test (5000 permutations), and both were validated for the relationships under study.

The results depicted in Table 5 showed that the ET measurements of AOI_{IMAGE} and AOI_{COMPANY} had significant moderating effects on the model relationships. Taking AOI_{IMAGE}, a significantly stronger relationship between corporate image and trust (RQ1; p value difference = .220, $p < .05$), and between consumer advocacy and intention to share (RQ5; p -value difference = .273, $p < .05$), were demonstrated, with more revisits to the image. Participants who fixated more times on the image (RQ2; p -value difference = .268, $p < .05$) and spent more time viewing the image (RQ2; p -value difference = .273, $p < .05$) showed a stronger impact of trust on cause participation. Participants who spent less time looking at the image are more likely to engage in cause participation due to their attitude toward CSR support (RQ3; p -value difference = -.341, $p < .05$). No differences were found between the groups for visual attention paid to AOI_{CAPTION} or AOI_{USER}. In terms of AOI_{COMPANY}, individuals who spent less time looking at the company's responses developed a stronger relationship between trust and consumer advocacy (RQ4; p -value difference = -.352, $p < .05$).

5 | DISCUSSION

All the direct effects of the research model were validated. H1 was accepted, which suggests that a good corporate image, that is, when the restaurant is customer-centered, has a good product range and cares about the community in which it operates, coincides with higher consumer trust. Similarly, H2 was confirmed, that is, those consumers who

TABLE 5 Moderation effects

	Path coefficient		Confidence interval (95%)		Path coefficient difference (HIGH vs. LOW)	p-value difference	Henseler's MGA	Status
	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW				
Research questions (AOI1)								
RQ1: Corporate Image -> Trust (REVISITS)	0.795	0.576	0.665, 0.865	0.363, 0.735	0.220	.035		yes
RQ2: Trust -> Cause Participation (FIXATIONS)	0.722	0.455	0.601, 0.834	0.161, 0.669	0.268	.042		yes
RQ2: Trust -> Cause Participation (TIME SPENT)	0.719	0.446	0.599, 0.827	0.165, 0.660	0.273	.032		yes
RQ3: CSR Support -> Cause Participation (TIME SPENT)	0.118	0.439	-0.328, 0.269	0.139, 0.621	-0.341	.043		yes
RQ5: Consumer Advocacy -> Intention to Share (REVISITS)	0.732	0.459	0.591, 0.824	0.236, 0.647	0.273	.021		yes
Research questions (AOI5)								
RQ4: Trust -> Consumer Advocacy (TIME SPENT)	0.495	0.848	-0.357, 0.777	0.731, 0.901	-0.352	.021		yes

Abbreviations: AOI, areas of interest; MGA, multigroup analysis.

trust the company will be highly likely to get actively involved in the CRM cause, for instance by purchasing the company's products. H3 was also accepted, confirming that consumers interested in social causes, who consider CSR when purchasing, and give preference to products produced by socially responsible entities, also participate in causes highlighted in visual-based social media posts. H4 was also accepted, confirming that the higher is the consumer's perception that the restaurant is competent, benevolent, and honest, the more (s)he will be willing to encourage friends and relatives to consume its products and spread positive eWOM about its activities. H5 was also validated, which suggests that those consumers who act as advocates of companies, and defend them from negative information provided by other consumers, develop the intention to share positive CRM-based posts on their social network profiles

Of even greater interest were the results of the analysis of the four eye-tracking variables (TTFF, total fixation duration, number of revisits, and fixation count) of the post's AOIs (designed to identify any moderating effects of visual attention on the direct relationships). With respect to RQ1, the more the consumer revisits the image after looking at other informational cues, the stronger will be the effect of corporate image on trust. Regarding RQ2, the greater the attention paid to the image the more likely it will be that the viewer will trust the firm's activities, which leads to intention to actively participate in the cause. This is the case also with total fixation duration time spent looking at the image; more time spent looking at the image is associated with greater intention to participate in the cause by, for instance, purchasing more products from the restaurant. As to RQ3, cause participation, more time spent looking at the image has a detrimental effect on prosocial consumers, who probably dismiss the idea as the image does not provide them with any data about the company's contribution to the cause; this is provided in the text. As to RQ4, it was found that those who spent less time looking at the company's response to the negative criticism are more prone, because they trust it, to defend the company. This result shows that, contrary to logic, company replies to negative comments do not result in greater customer advocacy. The examination of RQ5 showed that consumers who revisited the image are also those who defend the firm (and talk positively about it to others), and are more likely to do so by sharing this particular post, which indicates that visual attention to the image embedded in the post has a positive effect on intention to share.

6 | CONCLUSION

6.1 | Theoretical contributions

This study provides further knowledge about the role of the visual attention paid to CRM content posted on visual-based social media. In addition to analyzing visual attention as a dependent variable (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2019), we showed its importance as a moderator variable on consumer trust, advocacy, cause participation, and intention to share CRM posts. Important findings relate to how images correspond to the increase in trust between consumers and companies, and in cause participation intention among those who trust the

restaurant. Intention to share is also high among those who are willing to defend and support the firm. Contrary to prior expectations, part of the textual elements in the posts were also found to be of importance. This might be interpreted as consistent with Pieters and Wedel (2004), who found attention transfer from pictorial elements to text elements.

The conclusions of this study can be applied to three main theoretical streams. First, to the theory of selective exposure (Aruguete & Calvo, 2018), by clarifying the effects of visual attention and cognitive elaboration on consumers of CRM campaigns in social media, where there is the possibility to combine pictorial and textual information with user interaction. Consumers who pay more attention to pictures about the CRM initiative derive more positive perceptions from the post. Furthermore, they place greater trust in the company, to develop intention to participate in the cause and to share the post in social media. Second, the study also contributes to trust-commitment theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In particular, we concluded that the visual content on social media is important for generating consumer trust based on perceptions of corporate image. This article contributes to the CRM triad model (Heider, 1946; Yun et al., 2019), explaining the effects of consumer attitude toward the company (consumer's trust) on cause participation, which becomes stronger when attention paid to the image is higher. Nonetheless, when attention paid to the company response is greater, the effects of trust on consumer advocacy decrease. Even though it may seem contrary logic, we find a possible explanation in previous studies arguing that, in social media and due to the abundance of information, heuristic processes reduce the credibility of firm-generated content in comparison to individual users' generated content (van Zoonen & van der Meer, 2015). Third, by examining CRM posts in visual-based social media we provide insights into CRM persuasion literature (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2019). Our research supports the importance of images for enhancing trust, cause participation and intention to share. Finally, from a methodological viewpoint, we contribute by using eye-tracking techniques to minimize bias and obtain objective measurements of visual attention (Orquin & Wedel, 2020), specifically in a visual-based social media, in this case, Instagram.

6.2 | Practical implications

The results of the study should be of interest to different groups of practitioners, including fast-food restaurant managers and online community managers. Furthermore, recommendations are extendable to different social media tools, as the possibility to combine images, text, and user interaction are available in a wide variety of formats. We provide advice for two stages of CRM strategy, formulation (deciding on the cause, how to contribute, and communication strategy) and implementation (how to present CRM activities appropriately in social media), following the results of other studies (i.e., Nanda & Banerjee, 2020) to take advantage of opportunities that social media provide to foster consumer advocacy and sharing CRM

information. First, the importance of CRM for developing consumer trust, advocacy, and intention to share posts makes the choice of cause and visual and textual stimuli crucial: correct decisions in these aspects can develop a caring and concerned corporate image. Companies must associate with causes with which consumers can easily feel identified (Kuokkanen & Sun, 2020). Second, the image chosen to present the post matters. Our findings suggested that it is important to use trust-enhancing images, as this increases consumers' donation intentions. We suggest that companies use images that show the beneficiaries displaying positive emotions, as this triggers empathy and fosters positive attitudes toward the initiative and the company (Lundqvist & Ohman, 2005).

6.3 | Limitations and future lines of research

This study has some limitations, which can be used to direct future research into CRM in social media. First, the experiment was carried out using static images, which loses the more realistic behavior displayed in field experiments. Future studies might use free-to-navigate spaces that better capture interest in particular CRM stimuli. Second, only behavioral intentions, that is, not actual behaviors, were measured. Future experimental designs should incorporate incentives that allow consumers to make an actual donation to the cause and/or to share the Instagram post. Third, only the desktop version of Instagram was used, as the experiment was desktop PC-based. Due to the large numbers who download the Instagram App it would be interesting to recreate the experiment using mobile devices such as tablets and/or smartphones. Fourth, even though the study is based on two sources, namely, self-reported and eye-tracking, cross-sectional data were retrieved out of both. Future studies may address this issue by obtaining longitudinal data to establish causality in the theoretical relationships.

This study may stimulate the opening of other promising avenues for future research. First, we suggest that future studies should combine survey and eye-tracking data with other neurophysiological indicators (e.g., facial reading and electroencephalography); this might provide even greater understanding of the perceptual and emotional reactions to CRM stimuli and, thus, identify if they cause different attitudes and behaviors. Second, we encourage researchers to examine whether the consumer's social-cause involvement is a mediator/moderator of the relationships between CRM perceptions and attitudes/behaviors. Third, our model should be replicated with other product and restaurant types, such as durables and/or products/services with high-customer involvement.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Authors elect to not share data.

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APPENDIX A

Heatmap and AOIs in the Instagram Post.

