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What makes people willing to comment on social media posts? The roles of interactivity and perceived contingency in online corporate social responsibility communication

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ABSTRACT

Interactivity is an important concept in the study of online social processes. Two experiments tested how interactivity influenced people's willingness to comment on social media and their perceptions of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts. Across two operationalizations of interactivity (presence/absence of replies, high/low degree of reference to earlier messages), interactivity led to greater perceived contingency, which led to greater willingness to comment and more positive CSR perceptions. Results advance the interactivity effects model by demonstrating that (a) perceived contingency plays a crucial role in interactivity effects, (b) language intensity moderates the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment, and (c) perceived contingency is fostered only by companies' interactive messages and not consumers' interactive messages.

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Interactivity; corporate social responsibility; perceived contingency; willingness to comment; corporate stakeholder perceptions

The concept of interactivity has, over the years, played a central role in the way researchers have understood web-based phenomena (Sundar et al., 2016). Various overlapping definitions and constituent components of interactivity have been offered, including but not limited to “two-way communication,” “control,” “synchronicity,” and “responsiveness” (Liu & Shrum, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988). These definitions and components can be classified into two broad categories: the functional view, which refers to interactivity as the availability of tools that allow people to control/manipulate a communication medium (e.g., the appearance of a website), and the contingency view, which refers to interactivity as the semantic interrelatedness of messages (Sundar et al., 2015). Across both views and across social contexts, numerous benefits of interactivity have been found, such as greater credibility of a message or a company (Go & Bortree, 2017), more positive brand image (Voorveld et al., 2013), and greater patronage intention (Lou et al., 2021).

Although research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has examined the influence of interactivity on outcomes such as people's attitudes or the extent to which

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companies fulfill the ideals of stakeholder engagement (e.g., Etter, 2013; Lee & Park, 2013), relatively less attention has been given to the study of how interactivity can influence people's willingness to comment (i.e., how interactivity can motivate more future interaction) on a social media post or an online forum. When interactivity and its effects on willingness to comment (or intent to speak out in offline situations) were studied, they were more often examined in the context of political participation in civil society (e.g., Wise et al., 2006) rather than in the CSR context.

Yet, CSR is increasingly becoming political as movements like Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and Voting Rights Alliance are pressuring corporations to not only take a stance but change their governance and employment structures (Frankel et al., 2021). Increasingly, companies perform the roles of political actors in a social landscape that has blurred the boundaries between profit-making and political/moral consciousness (Morsing, 2017). Scholars have argued that it is through stakeholder-involved CSR communication in its various forms, including via social media, that companies demonstrate engagement with and commitment to issues of human rights, fair employment practices, and sustainability agendas, and in so doing gain legitimacy and improve their CSR reputations (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Stohl & Stohl, 2017). It is important, then, for CSR researchers to borrow a concept—willingness to comment—from the online political sphere, to examine how individual stakeholders or ordinary citizens can be motivated to participate in CSR-related interactions on social media and beyond.

This paper presents two studies about how interactivity (as conceptualized under the contingency view) can lead to greater perceived contingency, which then results in (a) increased willingness to comment on a CSR-related social media post and (b) more positive perceptions of a company's CSR efforts. The paper first explores the contingency view of interactivity through the lens of Sundar et al.'s (2015) interactivity effects model, highlighting the crucial role of perceived contingency and its relevance to CSR communication. The two studies are then described in detail.

Interactivity

Interactivity as a message attribute

The studies described in this paper adopted a *contingency view* of interactivity, which refers to the degree to which later messages refer to earlier messages, as well as the way in which interconnected messages influence attitudes and behaviors (Rafaeli, 1988; Sundar et al., 2015). Unlike a functional view of interactivity, which is about the technological features of a medium, a contingency view of interactivity emphasizes the relational and content attributes of messages (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). To evaluate interactivity under the contingency view, the message chain should ideally be at least three messages long (Rafaeli, 1988; Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997). The first message about a topic is necessarily a declarative statement, or one-way communication: It does not refer to previous messages and provides a new topic. If a subsequent message is a reply to the first message (as opposed to being a new declarative statement on a separate topic), then there is reactive communication. However, Rafaeli (1988) argued that pairs of reactive messages do not necessarily go far enough to be conversationally meaningful. For example, an unsophisticated chatbot would only provide replies based on the last

message that a user typed, but fail to consider the overall context of the chat or the joint meaning of all previously exchanged messages. The result is most likely a non-interactive and frustrating chat experience. It is therefore only after the third (or later) message that interactivity can be properly assessed: Has one's interaction partner taken into account and referred to things that were said previously?

Adopting the contingency view of interactivity, a company's reply to social media users' comments on its CSR-related social media post is important. The original social media post that a company makes can be considered as the first message (one-way communication). User comments that refer to the original post contribute toward reactive communication. Following that, if the company replies to one or more user comments, address any concerns therein, and simultaneously refers to its original post, then it can potentially create an interactive reply that refers to earlier messages. It seems, therefore, that the contingency view of interactivity is commensurate¹ with CSR concepts like two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, 2001) or the stakeholder involvement strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Many studies have found that exchanging (contingency-based) interactive messages resulted in positive outcomes. For example, Lee and Park's (2013) experiment found that participants evaluated a company that replied to users on its website/blog (i.e., the interactive condition) as more trustworthy and more committed to stakeholder relationships than a company that did not reply to users (i.e., the non-interactive condition). Lou et al.'s (2021) experiment found that among customer service representatives who exhibited sympathy, those who referred to earlier messages by the customer (i.e., who were interactive) were rated as more competent than representatives who did not refer to earlier messages (i.e., who were non-interactive).

These studies showed, within an organizational communication context, that displaying interactivity—when defined strictly as a message attribute—can benefit a company. However, different people may have different interpretations of the same message or message cue (R. Hayes et al., 2016). As such, scholars (e.g., Sundar et al., 2015) have argued that it is important to also examine the psychological perception of interactivity as a mechanism that explains how interactivity as a message attribute can result in outcomes such as more favorable attitudes.

Perceptions of interactivity

Individual differences in media literacy levels, cognitive capacities, and expectations of technology can contribute to substantial variation in how different people perceive the same technological function online, and this can affect the way people process messages (Fox & McEwan, 2017). Accordingly, Sundar et al.'s (2015) interactivity effects model proposed that different types of interactivity (e.g., message interactivity, modality interactivity, or source interactivity) have their unique associated psychological mechanisms, all of which lead to greater engagement and other downstream cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

Most importantly for the present purposes of studying message interactivity, Sundar et al. (2015) argued that “the critical mechanism of message interactivity is perceived contingency” because “when users perceive that the system [or another human using the system] is contingently responding to them, they tend to be more engaged with

the website, which can carry over to other outcome variables” (p. 56). Accepting this line of argument implies that the real variable of interest is the psychological outcome (e.g., perceived contingency) that is affected by a message attribute (e.g., interactivity).

Research has shown that there are indeed meaningful empirical differences between interactivity and people’s perceptions of interactivity. Under the functional view of interactivity, Thorson and Rodgers’s (2006) experiment found that interactivity (i.e., presence/absence of a feedback button on a political candidate’s website) predicted only participants’ attitude toward the website, but perceived interactivity (e.g., “I could communicate directly to the candidate if I wanted to”) predicted attitude toward the website, impression of the candidate, and voting intentions. Under the contingency view of interactivity, Bellur and Sundar (2017) conducted a study in which a chatbot, when in different experimental conditions, varied the extent to which it was interactive (i.e., referred to messages that a user previously uttered). The perception of this behavior, termed perceived contingency, was also measured (e.g., “The website’s responses were related to my earlier input”). Results showed that perceived contingency mediated the relationship between interactivity and outcomes like website appeal and content quality, among other things. In other words, chatbots that more extensively referred to users’ earlier utterances led to greater perceived contingency, which in turn led to more positive evaluations of website appeal and content quality. However, when testing for the total effects, (i.e., when perceived contingency was taken out of the regression equation), the influence of interactivity on the outcome variables was non-significant. Taken together, across both the functional and contingency views of interactivity, and across different contexts, there is empirical evidence that actual interactivity and the perception of interactivity are two distinct constructs.

From a more macroscopic perspective, the attempt to delineate interactivity and perceived contingency is a reflection of different classes of research claims, as categorized by O’Keefe (2003). According to O’Keefe’s (2003) typology, Class I research claims are about the relationship between a psychological state and an outcome. Studies that used perceived contingency as a predictor for various outcomes, but did not include interactivity in the model (e.g., Voorveld et al., 2013), fall under this category. Class II research claims are about the relationship between a message manipulation and an outcome. Studies that used interactivity as predictor, but did not include perceived contingency in the model (e.g., Lee & Park, 2013), fall under this category. Class III research claims are about the effect of a message manipulation on an outcome, via a mediating psychological state. Sundar et al.’s (2015) interactivity effects model, as well as its associated empirical studies (e.g., Bellur & Sundar, 2017; Sundar et al., 2016), belong to this third class of research claims.

Two aspects of O’Keefe’s (2003) Class III research claims deserve special mention. First, O’Keefe argued that there is no need for a message manipulation check when making Class III research claims because the manipulation check is equivalent to the psychological state that is theorized as a mediator. If the message manipulation does not lead to the theorized psychological state, then the mediation model will not be empirically supported. Second, testing a mediation model does not preclude the testing of the main effect (or total effect) of a message manipulation on an outcome. Apart from the mediation model, a separate total effect model that excludes the mediator

can still be tested to find out the main effect of a message manipulation on an outcome. These two aspects of Class III research claims influenced some decisions in the results section of the present paper and will be revisited later.

Willingness to comment and CSR perceptions

Willingness to communicate is a concept that has been studied by interpersonal communication scholars long before the internet boom of the 1990s, given that communication is highly integral to building and maintaining interpersonal relationships (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990). The concept has been mostly studied as a trait-like variable, sometimes under different names such as shyness or reticence, although situational reasons for unwillingness to communicate – such as fear of public speaking—have also been identified (McCroskey & Richmond, 1990).

Research in interpersonal online communication has found that because much of online communication is asynchronous (save for live video interactions) and because online communication involves fewer nonverbal cues than face-to-face communication, individuals can take their time to strategically compose their self-presentations when online (Walther, 1996). The greater control people have over their self-presentations online (as compared to face-to-face situations) can make people feel less self-conscious and more willing to communicate their self-presentations on digital platforms (Forest & Wood, 2012).

Whereas willingness to communicate is important in online interpersonal communication because it is essential for self-presentation and building relationships (among other things), willingness to communicate is important in CSR communication for vastly different reasons.

Willingness to communicate—or given the present concerns regarding commenting on companies' social media CSR posts, *willingness to comment*—is essential to CSR because it is an ethical necessity. Numerous CSR scholars have made arguments commensurate with this view. For example, Stohl and Stohl (2017) argued that:

The affordances of the contemporary media environment enable knowledge and demands accountability of corporate activity in ways never possible before, generating a sense of community and a trove of information that can be used by the human rights activist community to connect issues of CSR with human rights. (p. 118)

Similarly, Capriotti (2017) claimed that social media can be used as tools “to promote dialogue and interaction with stakeholders, to facilitate the negotiation processes and the commitment among the different parts to obtain consensus and mutual benefits” (p. 205). Palazzo and Scherer (2006) also proposed that the ideals of deliberative democracy should be brought to the CSR realm and that it is through communication that the decisions made by companies are legitimized. These arguments may be overly idealistic, but they are moral rather than empirical. Even though online CSR talk often falls short of the full communicatory potential of social media (Capriotti, 2017), it is normatively desirable that people should be more willing to comment on companies' social media CSR posts: society potentially benefits if people make sure companies uphold human rights; companies potentially benefit if they gain legitimacy.

A separate, but relatively more pragmatic reason why willingness to comment is important is that commenting is a form of user engagement. Companies want people to care about what they post on social media, including their CSR messages, and ideally join in the conversation (Etter, 2013; Saffer et al., 2013). In an online interpersonal communication context, people are often assumed to be willing to comment because they are motivated to form social relationships (Walther, 1996). However, these reasons do not lend themselves well to a CSR context. Although CSR scholars have discussed the strategy of building relationships with stakeholders online (Capriotti, 2017), the sort of relationship that a company has with its stakeholders clearly does not have the same level of intimacy or individualized, idiosyncratic knowledge found in an interpersonal relationship (see Walther, 2019). In this sense, willingness to comment in CSR contexts is very different from willingness to communicate in interpersonal settings.

By testing the interactivity effects model (Sundar et al., 2015) in a CSR context, we asked: Can message interactivity or its predicted psychological outcome, perceived contingency, engender greater willingness to comment on a company's social media CSR post? The answer has implications for CSR communication and the interactivity effects model. Overall, interactive messages make the contents of a message chain more coherent, which should engender greater perceived contingency (Bellur & Sundar, 2017). As perceived contingency increases, the message chain should make more sense holistically, and simultaneously, the company sends a signal that it is sincere and committed to engaging with stakeholders (Saffer et al., 2013; Sundar et al., 2015). These factors potentially increase people's willingness to comment on a CSR-related social media post just as they do in other contexts.

For example, in one experiment (Wise et al., 2006, Experiment 2), participants were instructed to view a fictitious "ratemyprofessors.com" website that was populated with several made-up comments that were either interactive or non-interactive, operationalized under the contingency view, as whether later comments referred to earlier comments or not. Fictitious time-stamps on the comments also showed that the comments were made with a fast response rate (short amount of time between each comment) or a slow response rate (long amount of time between each comment). Results showed that participants felt more willing to comment on the discussion when comments were interactive than when comments were non-interactive, but only when the response rate was slow, ostensibly because participants did not feel rushed into making a comment.

However, there is one caveat to studying the relationship between interactivity, perceived contingency, and willingness to comment: Willingness to comment is, on its own, uninformative of people's attitudes towards the company's CSR efforts. According to Sundar et al.'s (2015) interactivity effects model, interactivity and perceived contingency lead to more positive attitudes. As a way to test the model's applicability to a CSR context and to complement willingness to comment as another outcome variable, the present studies also tested the effects of interactivity and perceived contingency on an attitudinal measure: CSR perceptions (i.e., perceptions of a company's CSR efforts; see Gavin & Maynard, 1975). Hence, we predicted that:

*H*₁: Greater interactivity leads to greater perceived contingency.

*H*₂: Perceived contingency mediates the relationship between interactivity and willingness to comment, such that greater interactivity leads to greater perceived contingency, which in turn leads to greater willingness to comment.

*H*₃: Perceived contingency mediates the relationship between interactivity and CSR perceptions, such that greater interactivity leads to greater perceived contingency, which in turn leads to more positive CSR perceptions.

Comment valence and language intensity

Although encouraging greater willingness to comment is important morally as a way to protect human rights and companies' legitimacy (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Stohl & Stohl, 2017), the reality is that online incivility is prevalent (Hutchens et al., 2015). Indeed, hostile comments on social media can detrimentally affect the perception of discussion quality and other outcomes (Hwang et al., 2018). Given the unfavorable outcomes associated with online hostility, will people still be willing to comment on a CSR post that has already attracted hostile comments even though perceived contingency may be high? Put differently, do message characteristics associated with hostile behavior, such as comment valence and language intensity, moderate the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment? Some research in this area suggests the answer may be "yes." In a content analysis of news discussions on social media, Ziegele et al. (2014) found that negative comments were less likely to receive a reply than positive comments. In a separate interview, interviewees "perceived that responding to negative comments might not stimulate meaningful discussions" (Ziegele et al., 2014, p. 1119). Taken together, these results led to the following prediction:

*H*₄: Valence of consumers' comments moderate the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment, such that existing negative comments engender less willingness to comment than existing positive comments.

Additionally, the valence of social media users' comments is expected to be influential in shaping other people's attitudes because user comments are typically immune to manipulation by the companies they describe, and therefore appear less likely to be tainted by companies' self-serving motivations (Walther et al., 2009). However, it is unclear if the perception that a company is replying contingently to consumers (i.e., perceived contingency) will lead to better or worse CSR perceptions depending on the valence of consumers' comments. It is possible that when a company replies interactively to consumers, perceived contingency is high, and because the company is perceived to have adequately addressed any comments, the valence of consumers' comments is not very important. But when a company does not reply to consumers, perceived contingency is low, and because the company is not perceived to have responded adequately, the valence of consumers' comments plays a bigger role in determining CSR perceptions. Testing a potential boundary condition (i.e., a moderator) for the effect of perceived contingency on an attitudinal outcome (i.e., CSR perceptions) advances Sundar et al.'s (2015) interactivity effects model and also informs companies as to whether replying interactively to positive or negative consumer comments is better for CSR perceptions.

*RQ*₁: Does the valence of consumers' comments moderate the relationship between perceived contingency and CSR perceptions?

Another factor that can moderate the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment or CSR perceptions is *language intensity*, which is “the degree to which [a] speaker’s attitude toward a concept deviates from neutrality” (Bowers, 1963, p. 345). There are several ways to operationalize language intensity, including using modifiers that signal extremity such as “very” for intense messages and omitting the modifier for non-intense messages, manipulating the frequency of events by using “always” for intense messages and “sometimes” for non-intense messages, or manipulating the certainty of outcomes by using “will” for intense messages and “may” for non-intense messages (Bradac et al., 1979).

There are a couple of reasons why highly intense language, even if positively valenced, may make people less willing to comment on social media. First, intense language may violate people’s expectations (M. Burgoon et al., 2002), and as a result people may not know how to respond well to comments with intense language. Second, intense language may appear incompatible with deliberative ideals like rational reason-giving (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004), so people may deem contributing to a conversation with intense messages as unmeaningful. Therefore, it is possible that despite high levels of perceived contingency, intense language can dampen people’s willingness to comment:

H₅: Language intensity of other consumers’ comments moderates the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment, such that existing intense comments engender less willingness to comment than existing non-intense comments.

However, it is unclear whether language intensity, even if they violate expectations or fall short of deliberative ideals, will combine with perceived contingency to influence CSR perceptions.

RQ₂: Does the language intensity of other consumers’ comments moderate the relationship between perceived contingency and CSR perceptions?

Study 1

Method and sample

Interactivity was operationalized as whether a company replied in a contingent manner to consumers’ comments or did not reply. This operationalization followed the experimental designs by Go and Bortree (2017) as well as Lee and Park (2013), which built on Rafaeli’s (1988) conceptualization of an interactive message as one that refers to at least two earlier messages. Participants were shown a company’s fictional Instagram post that included the company’s CSR message, fictitious consumer comments, and a possible fictitious company response. Study 1 used a 2 (consumer comment valence, i.e., whether fictitious consumers agreed/disagreed with a company’s Instagram post) \times 2 (consumer language intensity, i.e., whether fictitious consumers comments were intense / non-intense) \times 2 (reply interactivity, i.e., whether the company replied/did not reply to fictitious consumers’ comments) between-subjects experimental design.

Participants were recruited from Amazon MTurk and were paid \$2 for completing the study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 69 ($M = 36.9$, $SD = 9.9$). About 59.0% of participants identified as male and 41.0% identified as female. White participants comprised 78.1% of the sample, Black participants 11.8%, Hispanic/Latinx participants 4.2%, Asian

participants 1.3%; the rest indicated mixed ethnicity. All participants were based in the U.S. Participants who failed attention checks ($n = 63$) were excluded from the analyses, leaving a total of $N = 306$ participants. Participants took on average 9 min 55 s to complete the study.

Participants were randomly assigned to view a fictitious Instagram post by one of four companies: Ferrero Rocher, Hershey's, Mars, or Nestlé. The four companies are all well-known for the chocolates they produce and appear on RepTrak's list of 100 most reputable companies for CSR (Ferrero #19, Hershey's #55, Mars #69, Nestlé #71; Reputation Institute, 2019). To begin, participants were asked to respond to baseline measures regarding their attitudes toward the company they were assigned. Participants then received a fictitious Instagram post addressing the CSR activities of the company they were assigned. After reading the stimuli, participants answered a series of questions described below.

Stimuli

The stimuli, which were entirely fictitious, were comprised of Instagram posts that had some comments. Each Instagram post featured a photo of children in a classroom, and its caption was about how the company contributes to the environment, supports local communities, and helps children succeed. Each Instagram post also contained two fictitious consumer comments. Both fictitious consumer comments either agreed with the company using intense language (e.g., "Love what you're doing for these communities!!"), agreed with the company using non-intense language (e.g., "Looks good"), disagreed with the company using intense language (e.g., "These are very broad statements to make it seem like they're philanthropic when in reality they're just another GREEDY corporation"), or disagreed with the company using non-intense language (e.g., "But they still care about profits ..."). The company either replied to the two consumer comments or did not reply. See [Online Supplemental Materials](#) for the full stimuli texts.

Measures

The first dependent variable, *willingness to comment*, was measured using three original items on a 7-point semantic differential scale: *unwilling/willing*, *unlikely/likely*, and *reluctant/eager*, McDonald's $\omega = .97$ [95% CI: .96, .97]. The second dependent variable, *CSR perceptions*, was measured using 12 original items that cover various dimension of CSR like the environment, employees, communities, and organizational governance. The company was rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale on items such as "The company cares for the environment," "The company takes care of its employees," "The company gives back to society," and "The company's management is accountable;" $\omega = .96$ [95% CI: .95, .97]. The mediator, *perceived contingency*, was measured using five items adapted from Sundar et al. (2016), such as "Messages sent by the Instagram users and by the company seemed interconnected with each other" and "In the interaction between the company and the Instagram users, later messages recounted the relatedness of earlier messages." The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), and again had high reliability, $\omega = .91$ [95% CI: .90, .93].

As the study used actual companies, participants' preexisting opinions of the company they read about were measured with two questions *before* they saw the stimuli. One question asked, "Have you heard anything positive about [company name]?" Possible responses were: definitely yes (coded as +2), probably yes (+1), probably not (0), and definitely not (0). Another question asked, "Have you heard anything negative about [company name]?" Possible responses were: definitely yes (−2), probably yes (−1), probably not (0), and definitely not (0). The codes in parentheses were later summed up to create a single *prior attitude* score ($M = .54$, $SD = 1.00$), which was entered into analyses as a control.

The manipulation check for language intensity required participants to rate the two fictitious consumers' comments collectively on two 7-point semantic differential items: *not at all intense/highly intense* and *not emotional/highly emotional*. The two items ($r = .78$) were combined to form an intensity score. A *t*-test showed that the intense comments ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.13$) and the non-intense comments ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.79$) were indeed perceived differently, $t(304) = 6.37$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .73$.

Results

See Online Supplemental Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all measured variables. Confirmatory factor analysis results for willingness to comment, CSR perceptions, and perceived contingency can be found in the online supplemental materials. Across the four companies, analyses of variance (ANOVAs) showed that willingness to comment did not differ, $F(3, 302) = .17$, $p = .92$, and that CSR perceptions did not differ, $F(3, 302) = .88$, $p = .45$. Analyses were therefore collapsed across the four companies.

Willingness to comment

To test H_1 , H_2 , H_4 , and H_5 , a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 16 (second stage moderated mediation) of A. Hayes's (2018) PROCESS. In the model, reply interactivity was the predictor (company did not reply = 0, company replied = 1), willingness to comment was the outcome, perceived contingency was the mediator between reply interactivity and willingness to comment, consumer comment valence (negative valence = 0, positive valence = 1) and language intensity (low intensity = 0, high intensity = 1) were moderators between perceived contingency and willingness to comment, and prior attitude was a control (see Figure 1).

The model containing the path from reply interactivity to perceived contingency was significant, $R^2 = .26$, $F(2, 303) = 52.33$, $p < .001$. Controlling for prior attitudes, perceived contingency was higher when the company replied interactively than when the company did not ($b_1 = 1.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$), supporting H_1 . The model containing the path from perceived contingency to willingness to comment was also significant, $R^2 = .34$, $F(7, 298) = 22.26$, $p < .001$. Perceived contingency predicted willingness to comment ($b_2 = .85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .30$). In other words, as participants perceived greater interconnectedness in the messages exchanged between the company and other fictitious consumers, their own willingness to comment increased. Perceived contingency mediated the relationship between reply interactivity and willingness to comment at all levels of both moderators.

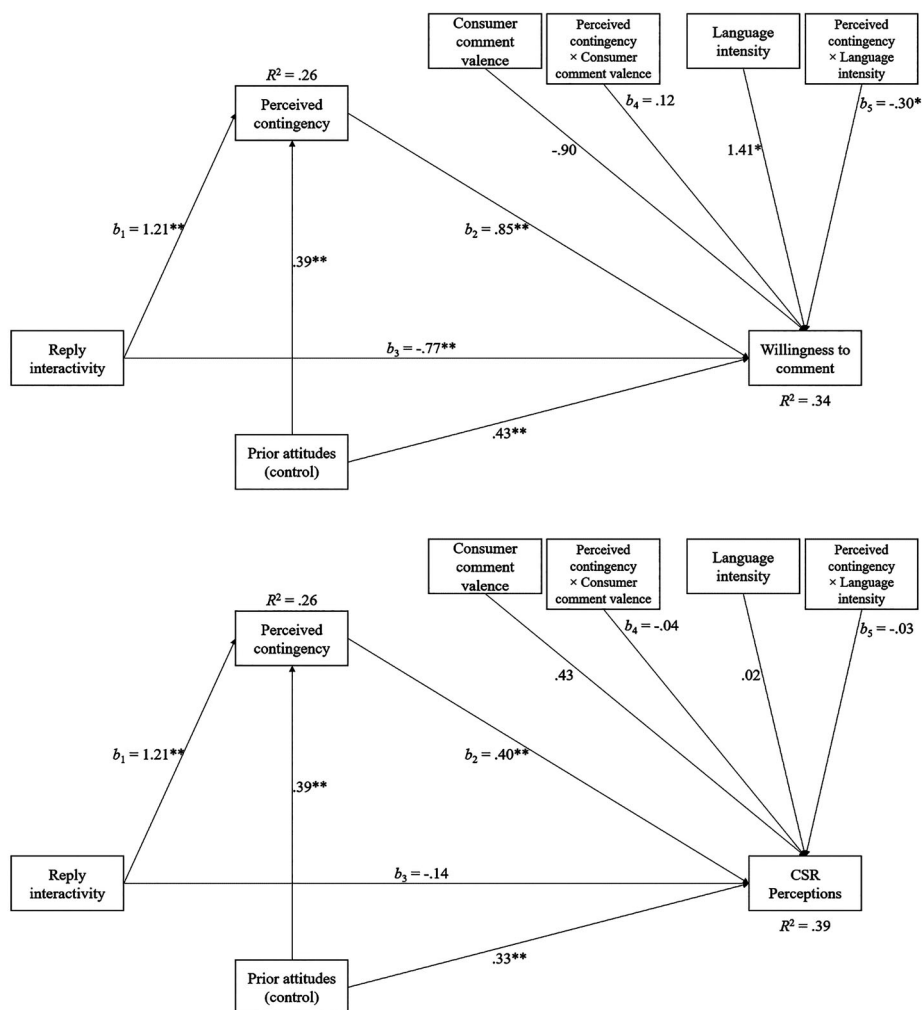


Figure 1. Statistical diagram for Study 1, Note: $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$.

When language was non-intense and comment valence was negative, indirect effect = 1.02, $SE_{bootstrapped} = .18$, $95\% CI_{bootstrapped} = [.67, 1.38]$. When language was non-intense and comment valence was positive, indirect effect = 1.17, $SE_{bootstrapped} = .18$, $95\% CI_{bootstrapped} = [.83, 1.53]$. When language was intense and comment valence was negative, indirect effect = .66, $SE_{bootstrapped} = .20$, $95\% CI_{bootstrapped} = [.29, 1.06]$. When language was intense and comment valence was positive, indirect effect = .81, $SE_{bootstrapped} = .17$, $95\% CI_{bootstrapped} = [.48, 1.15]$. In all, participants perceived greater interconnectedness of messages (i.e., perceived contingency) when the company replied to fictitious consumers than when the company did not reply, and this perception of greater message interconnectedness then resulted in greater willingness to comment. Therefore, support was also found for H_2 .

Unexpectedly, the direct effect of reply interactivity on willingness to comment was negative and significant ($b_3 = -.77$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$), indicating a suppression effect:

If the influence of perceived contingency was partialled out, participants were less willing to comment when the company replied to fictitious consumers than when the company did not reply. Greater elaboration of this suppression effect is provided in the discussion section. As for the total effect model, reply interactivity did not influence willingness to comment when excluding the mediator (perceived contingency) and when controlling for language intensity, consumer comment valence, and prior attitude ($b = .12, p = .58$).

For H_4 , consumer comment valence did not moderate the effect of perceived contingency on willingness to comment ($b_4 = .12, p = .37$). Consumer comment valence did not moderate the mediation effect (index of partial moderated mediation = .15, bootstrapped 95% CI: $-.17, .48$).

As for H_5 , language intensity moderated the effect of perceived contingency on willingness to comment ($b_5 = -.30, p = .027, \eta_p^2 = .02$). There was moderated mediation: The mediation effect was stronger when language was non-intense than when language was intense (index of partial moderated mediation = $-.37$, bootstrapped 95% CI: $-.72, -.05$). At low levels of perceived contingency, participants were *less* willing to comment when fictitious consumers used non-intense language than when fictitious consumers used intense language; but at high levels of perceived contingency, participants were *more* willing to comment when fictitious consumers used non-intense language than when fictitious consumers used intense language. Thus, when a company did not reply to the consumer comments, participants were more willing to comment when other consumer comments were intense, but when the company did reply to consumer comments, participants were more willing to comment when consumer comments were less intense (see Online Supplemental Table 2).

CSR perceptions

To test H_3 and address RQ_1 and RQ_2 , Model 16 of A. Hayes's (2018) PROCESS was again employed with the same variables as before, except that the dependent variable was CSR perceptions instead of willingness to comment (see Figure 1). Results for the model containing the path from reply interactivity to perceived contingency were identical to those described in the previous analysis regarding H_1 ; controlling for prior attitudes, perceived contingency was higher when the company replied than when the company did not ($b_1 = 1.21, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .20$).

The model containing the path from perceived contingency to CSR perceptions was significant, $R^2 = .39, F(7, 298) = 27.10, p < .001$. As perceived contingency increased, CSR perceptions became more positive ($b_2 = .40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .31$). Perceived contingency mediated the relationship between reply interactivity and CSR perceptions at all levels of consumer comment valence and language intensity (see Online Supplemental Table 2). When language was non-intense and comment valence was negative, indirect effect = .48, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .11, 95\% \text{ CI}_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.28, .70]$. When language was non-intense and comment valence was positive, indirect effect = .43, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .11, 95\% \text{ CI}_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.24, .66]$. When language was intense and comment valence was negative, indirect effect = .44, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .09, 95\% \text{ CI}_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.27, .64]$. When language was intense and comment valence was positive, indirect effect = .39, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .10, 95\% \text{ CI}_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.20, .60]$. That is, participants perceived greater interconnectedness of messages (i.e., perceived contingency) when the company

replied to fictitious consumers than when the company did not reply, and this perception of greater message interconnectedness resulted in participants having more positive perceptions of the company's CSR efforts. Therefore, H_3 was supported.

The direct effect of reply interactivity on CSR perceptions non-significant ($b_3 = -.14$, $p = .219$). As for the total effect model, reply interactivity led to greater willingness to comment when excluding the mediator (perceived contingency) and when controlling for language intensity, consumer comment valence, and prior attitude ($b = .30$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$).

For RQ_1 and RQ_2 , there was no evidence that language intensity (index of partial moderated mediation = $-.04$, bootstrapped 95% CI: $-.24, .17$) or consumer comment valence (index of partial moderated mediation = $-.05$, bootstrapped 95% CI: $-.25, .16$) moderated the mediation effect ($b_4 = -.04$, $p = .57$; $b_5 = -.03$, $p = .65$; see Online Supplemental Table 2).

Study 1 discussion

Results showed that a company's interactive reply to fictitious consumers' comments on the company's CSR-related social media post made the overall interaction seem more interconnected. This perceived contingency, or interconnectedness of messages, then led to more favorable CSR perceptions and increased people's willingness to comment on the post (especially when the fictitious consumers' comments were non-intense). Interactivity presumably (a) enhanced the overall coherence of the interaction, which makes it easier for people to comment in a meaningful way, and (b) signaled sincerity or commitment on the part of the company, thereby boosting people's CSR perceptions of the company.

The moderating effect of language intensity on the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment showed that the more an interaction was perceived as highly contingent, the more non-intense consumer comments were effective at engendering willingness to comment than intense consumer comments. In other words, when civility and good sense prevail—that is, with non-intense, civil messages and coherent, contingent messages—people are more willing to participate in the conversation by commenting. This result is commensurate with the ideals of deliberation, which emphasizes the importance of civility and mutual respect during discussions (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Conversely, when perceived contingency was low, intense consumer comments were more effective at engendering willingness to comment than non-intense consumer comments. This suggests that when messages are not very coherent, metaphorical online “shouting” in the form of intense comments was more effective at encouraging commenting.

Rationale for Study 2

Although Study 1 operationalized interactivity as the presence or the absence of a reply by a company, it is alternatively possible to operationalize interactivity as a reply that makes either more or fewer references to earlier messages (J. Burgoon et al., 1999; Lew et al., 2018). This alternative operationalization is more nuanced than the operationalization of interactivity in Study 1, and potentially presents a higher bar for an empirical test of the interactivity effects model (Sundar et al., 2015) within a CSR context.

As such, the aim of Study 2 was to test whether another operationalization of interactivity would still engender what Sundar et al. (2015, p. 56) called the “critical mechanism” of the interactivity effects model: perceived contingency. Unlike in Study 1, in which the company either replied to the fictitious consumers’ comments or did not reply, in Study 2 the company always replied to the fictitious consumers’ comments. However, in Study 2, the company’s reply had varying degrees of relatedness to comments made by the fictitious consumers. Hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , and H_3 are still relevant in Study 2; they will be tested again under the new operationalization.

However, replying with reference to earlier messages is not something that comes under the exclusive purview of a company. Just as companies can reply to consumers’ comments with varying degrees of reference to those comments (company content interactivity), consumers can also reply to a company’s CSR post with varying degrees of reference to the original post (consumer content interactivity). Therefore, two message sources—the company and the consumers—can potentially influence perceived contingency (see Rafaeli, 1988). As perceived contingency is an assessment of the interconnectedness of all messages in a message chain, two conditions potentially need to be fulfilled for high perceived contingency to be attained: (a) a company’s reply to consumers’ comments should refer to earlier messages (high company content interactivity) and (b) consumers’ comments should refer to earlier messages (high consumer content interactivity). Therefore, we predicted:

H_6 : The relationship between company content interactivity and perceived contingency is moderated by consumer content interactivity, such that company content interactivity should lead to higher perceived contingency if consumer content interactivity is high than if consumer content interactivity is low.

Study 2

Method and sample

Study 2 used a 3 (consumer content interactivity: fictitious consumers make low interactivity comments/make high interactivity comments/ask high interactivity questions) \times 2 (company content interactivity: low interactivity company reply/high interactivity company reply) between-subjects design.

Participants in Study 2 were also based in the U.S., recruited on Amazon MTurk, and compensated with \$2. Their ages ranged from 18 to 73 ($M = 35.9$, $SD = 11.2$). About 59.0% of participants identified as male and 38.0% identified as female; the rest declined to answer the question. White participants comprised 69.9% of the sample, Black participants 11.7%, Asian participants 8.1%, Hispanic/Latinx participants 4.3%; the rest indicated mixed ethnicity. Participants who failed attention checks ($n = 76$) were excluded from analysis, leaving a total of $N = 369$ participants. Participants took on average 9 min 18 s to complete the study.

Stimuli

The photo and caption that made up the company’s original Instagram post remained the same, but the two fictitious consumers’ comments and the company’s fictitious reply were changed. In Study 2, the fictitious consumers’ comments had low interactivity in relation to the post (e.g., “Chocolate makes people happy”), had high interactivity in

relation to the post (e.g., “It’s nice to read something like this, but I do wonder how genuine it is”), or asked high interactivity questions about the post (e.g., “This sounds great but how do we know you’ve helped build thriving communities?”). The company always replied to the two fictitious consumers, but the company’s reply either weakly referred to or strongly referred to the fictitious consumers’ comments. The low interactivity company reply was consistently: “If you have any feedback, you can reach us at [fictitious website address],” regardless of the fictitious consumers’ comments. The high interactivity reply referred to the two fictitious consumers’ comments, and therefore it differed slightly depending on condition. See Online Supplemental Materials for the full stimuli texts.

Measures

Measures for willingness to comment ($\omega = .96$ [95% CI: .95, .96]), CSR perceptions ($\omega = .97$ [95% CI: .96, .97]), and perceived contingency ($\omega = .91$, [95% CI: .89, .92]) were the same as those used in Study 1. Prior attitude towards the company was also calculated in the same way as in Study 1. Following O’Keefe (2003), no manipulation check was needed as the mediator, perceived contingency, had the same psychological function as a manipulation check.

Results

See Online Supplemental Table 3 for means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for all measured variables. Confirmatory factor analysis results for measured variables can also be found in the online supplemental materials. Across the four companies, ANOVAs showed that willingness to comment did not differ, $F(3, 365) = 1.15, p = .33$, and that CSR perceptions did not differ, $F(3, 365) = .97, p = .41$. Analyses were therefore collapsed across the four companies.

Willingness to comment

To test H_1 , H_2 , and H_6 , a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 7 (first stage moderated mediation) of A. Hayes’s (2018) PROCESS. In the model, company content interactivity was the predictor (low interactivity company reply = 0, high interactivity company reply = 1), willingness to comment was the outcome, consumer content interactivity (low interactivity comments = 0, dummy codes created for the high interactivity comments and high interactivity questions) was a moderator between company content interactivity and perceived contingency, perceived contingency was the mediator between company content interactivity and willingness to comment, and prior attitude was a control (see Figure 2).

The model containing the path from company content interactivity to perceived contingency was significant, $R^2 = .23, F(6, 362) = 17.74, p < .001$. Controlling for prior attitudes, as company content interactivity increased, perceived contingency also increased ($b_1 = 1.20, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .21$), supporting H_1 . In other words, perceived contingency was higher when the company gave a reply that referred to the fictitious consumers’

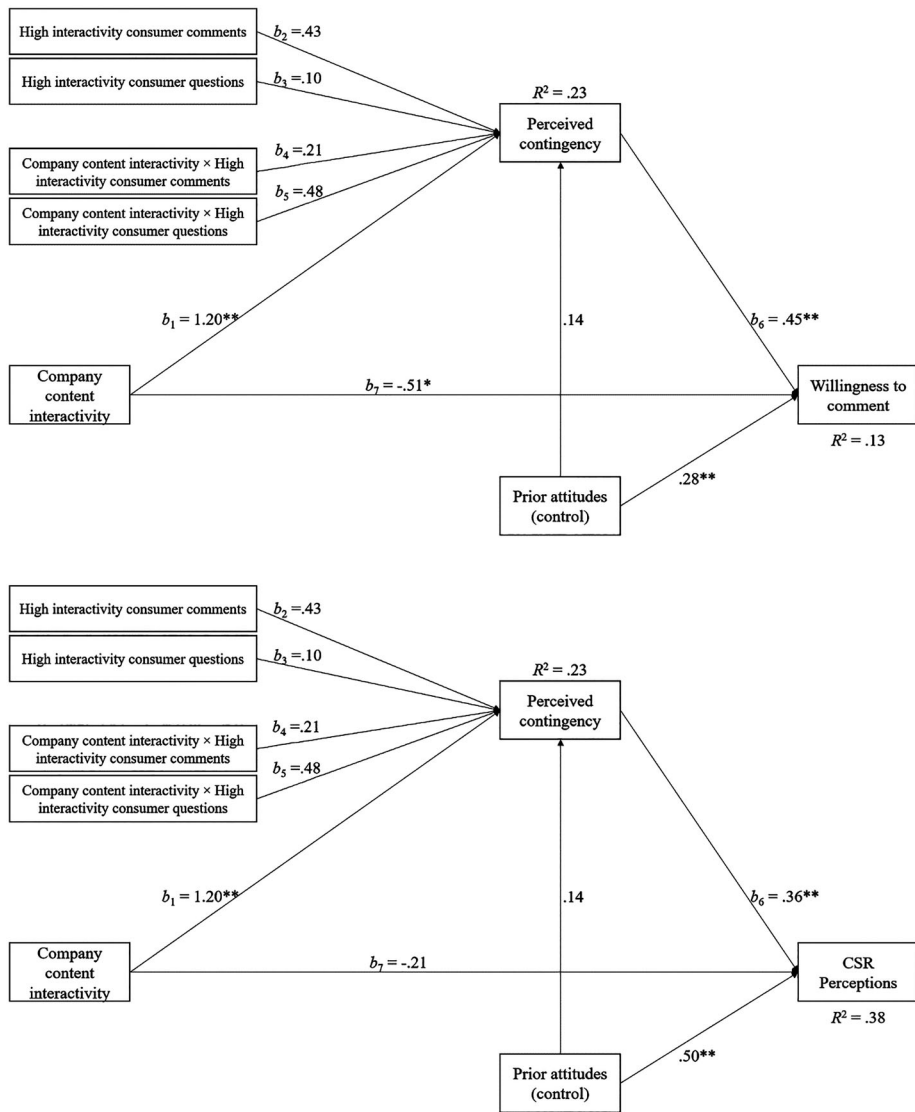


Figure 2. Statistical diagram for Study 2, Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

comments than when the company gave a generalized, non-specific reply (see Online Supplemental Table 4).

However, when compared to the low interactivity consumer comment, high interactivity consumer comments ($b_2 = .43, p = .086$) and high interactivity consumer questions ($b_3 = .10, p = .701$) did not result in significantly greater perceived contingency. Additionally, consumer content interactivity did not interact with company content interactivity when comparing high interactivity consumer comments vs. low interactivity consumer comments ($b_4 = .21, p = .568$) and when comparing high interactivity consumer questions vs. low interactivity consumer comments ($b_5 = .48, p = .193$). This means that the interactivity of the fictitious consumers' comments did not influence how participants perceived the interconnectedness of the messages exchanged between the company

and the fictitious consumers. As consumer content interactivity (i.e., the interactivity of fictitious consumers' comments) did not moderate the relationship between company content interactivity and perceived contingency, H_6 was not supported.

The model containing the path from perceived contingency to willingness to comment was significant, $R^2 = .13$, $F(3, 365) = 18.03$, $p < .001$. As perceived contingency increased, willingness to comment increased ($b_6 = .45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$). Perceived contingency mediated the relationship between company content interactivity and willingness to comment at all levels of the moderator. When fictitious consumers made low interactivity comments, indirect effect = .54, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .16$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.26, .88]$. When fictitious consumers made high interactivity comments, indirect effect = .63, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .15$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.36, .94]$. When fictitious consumers asked high interactivity questions, indirect effect = .75, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .16$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.45, 1.09]$. Across all conditions, when the company's replies referred to fictitious consumers' comments, participants perceived the messages that were exchanged between the company and the fictitious consumers as more interconnected, which then led to an increase in participants' willingness to comment. Therefore, H_2 was supported.

The direct effect of content interactivity on willingness to comment was again unexpectedly negative and significant ($b_7 = -.51$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$), indicating a suppression effect: If the influence of perceived contingency was partialled out, participants were less willing to comment the more the company's reply referred to earlier messages. Greater elaboration of this suppression effect is provided in the discussion section. As for the total effect model, content interactivity did not influence willingness to comment, when excluding the mediator (perceived contingency) and when controlling for prior attitude, ($b = .13$, $p = .53$).

However, there was no moderated mediation effect: Compared to low interactivity consumer statements, high interactivity consumer statements (index of moderated mediation = .09, bootstrapped 95% $CI = [-.24, .42]$) and high interactivity consumer questions (index of moderated mediation = .21, bootstrapped 95% $CI = [-.11, .56]$) did not produce stronger or weaker mediation effects. What fictitious consumers said did not influence perceived contingency, and also did not influence participants' willingness to comment.

CSR perceptions

To test H_3 , a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using Model 7 of A. Hayes's (2018) PROCESS. The same predictors, mediators, and moderators were used as in the previous analysis, but the dependent variable was CSR perceptions instead of willingness to comment (see Figure 2). Results for the model containing the path from company content interactivity to perceived contingency were identical to those described in the previous analysis regarding H_1 and H_6 ; controlling for prior attitudes, perceived contingency was higher when the company gave a reply that referred to the fictitious consumers' comments than when the company gave a generalized, non-specific reply (see previous subsection for b_1 to b_5 results).

The model containing the path from perceived contingency to CSR perceptions was significant, $R^2 = .38$, $F(3, 365) = 73.70$, $p < .001$. Perceived contingency predicted CSR

perceptions ($b_6 = .36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$). As participants perceived that the messages exchanged between the company and consumers were more interconnected, perceptions of the company's CSR effort became more positive. Perceived contingency mediated the relationship between company content interactivity and CSR perceptions at all levels of the moderator. When fictitious consumers made low interactivity comments, indirect effect = .54, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .16$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.26, .88]$. When fictitious consumers made high interactivity comments, indirect effect = .63, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .15$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.36, .94]$. When fictitious consumers asked high interactivity questions, indirect effect = .75, $SE_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .16$, 95% $CI_{\text{bootstrapped}} = [.45, 1.09]$. Overall, when the company's replies referred to what fictitious consumers commented, participants perceived the messages exchanged between the company and the fictitious consumers as more interconnected, which led participants to have more positive perceptions of the company's CSR efforts, supporting H_3 (see Online Supplemental Table 4).

The direct effect of content interactivity on CSR perceptions was not significant ($b_7 = -.21$, $p = .067$). As for the total effect model, content interactivity led to greater willingness to comment when excluding the mediator (perceived contingency) and when controlling for prior attitude ($b = .30$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$).

There was no moderated mediation effect: Compared to low interactivity consumer statements, high interactivity consumer statements (index of moderated mediation = .07, bootstrapped 95% $CI = [-.19, .34]$) and high interactivity consumer questions (index of moderated mediation = .17, bootstrapped 95% $CI = [-.08, .44]$) did not produce stronger or weaker mediation effects. What the fictitious consumers said did not influence perceived contingency, and also did not influence participants' perceptions of the company's CSR efforts.

Study 2 discussion

Study 2 replicated the results from Study 1, but by operationalizing interactivity as the degree of reference to earlier messages rather than as the presence/absence of a reply. Results showed that when a company replies interactively to consumers' comments on social media, as opposed to replying non-interactively, people viewing the interaction perceived greater contingency (i.e., interconnectedness of messages), and were subsequently (a) more willing to comment on the post and (b) had more positive perceptions of the company's CSR efforts.

Although perceived contingency is, in theory, influenced by all the messages within an interaction (Rafaeli, 1988; Sundar et al., 2015), results showed that in the present context, perceived contingency was influenced only by the company's messages, but not consumers' messages. Speculatively, this may be because in a CSR context, it is the companies—not the consumers or the individual social media users—that are the target of evaluation. Commenting may be worthwhile only if a company is perceived to send interactive messages that are contingent on earlier messages, but not if a company sends non-interactive messages that may be scripted or are tangential to the interaction. In the social media environment, where relatively anonymous individuals sometimes troll or flame as they please (Hutchens et al., 2015), it is possible that people accord less weight to comments made by individual consumers than replies by a company when making assessments about the company. As a result, a company's

messages have more influence than consumers' messages when it comes to creating a sense of perceived contingency, which subsequently affects willingness to comment and CSR perceptions.

General discussion

Drawing from the contingency view of interactivity, and considering outcomes relevant to CSR, two studies tested the effect of interactivity on willingness to comment and CSR perceptions, as mediated by perceived contingency. Across the two studies, there was clear evidence that greater interactivity led to greater perceived contingency, which in turn led to greater willingness to comment on a social media post and more positive perceptions of a company's CSR efforts. As a whole, our results supported Sundar et al.'s (2015) interactivity effects model and demonstrated its applicability to two different operationalizations of interactivity: presence/absence of a reply and more/fewer references to earlier messages.

A crucial component in the interactivity effects model is perceived contingency, which is theorized as the mechanism between interactivity and other cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral outcomes (Bellur & Sundar, 2017; Sundar et al., 2015, 2016). Comparing the results between the mediation models and their corresponding total effect models for the outcome of willingness to comment reveals important nuances. In both studies, the mediation models showed that perceived contingency mediated the relationship between interactivity and willingness to comment. However, the total effect models showed that if perceived contingency was excluded from the regression equation, the effect of interactivity on willingness to comment was non-significant. Taken together, these results support the assertion in the interactivity effects model that the psychological mechanism of perceived contingency is cardinal.

However, in both studies, interactivity had a significant effect on CSR perceptions even in the total effect models, which excluded perceived contingency. Although the mediation results for the CSR perceptions outcome still supported the interactivity effects model, it remains unclear under what circumstances perceived contingency is absolutely essential—the present studies were inconclusive with respect to this. As such, future research may attempt to delineate the effects of interactivity from the effects of perceived contingency.

Although the findings that pertain to the interactivity effects model can ostensibly be generalized to other digital contexts, other findings seem relatively more unique to a CSR context. In Study 1, language intensity of consumers' comments moderated the relationship between perceived contingency and willingness to comment, such that the more an interaction was perceived as contingent, the less likely intense (versus non-intense) consumer comments fostered willingness to comment. Assuming that commenting is normatively desirable for its potential to highlight human rights abuses or to legitimize corporate decisions (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Stohl & Stohl, 2017), companies can reply to calm, civil comments by social media users to bring about greater willingness to comment on their own CSR posts.

Of course, willingness to comment is but one component among many that are needed for genuine stakeholder involvement (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Willingness

to comment is a critical first step for online stakeholder involvement, but the content of comments and the organizational policies in place to encourage good-faith message exchanges are equally important. For example, CSR communication principles such as inclusion (whether all relevant stakeholders are involved), openness (issues discussed should not be limited by a company), tolerance (acceptance of alternative points of view), empowerment (allowing stakeholders to influence a conversation), and transparency (publicizing information regarding a conversation and its outcomes) are also vital to meaningful stakeholder involvement (Golob & Podnar, 2011). Future research may study whether these CSR communication principles combine with message interactivity (from the contingency view of interactivity) or with technological features of social media platforms, websites, and apps (from the functional view of interactivity) to influence not only willingness to comment, but the overall quality of the messages exchanged. To this end, ideas from political deliberation—such as the extent to which decisions are justified, communicatory processes are dynamic, and mistakes are corrected—are potentially useful constructs with which the quality of interactions can be assessed (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004).

Another finding that is potentially unique to a CSR context was found in Study 2, as company content interactivity—but not consumer content interactivity—predicted perceived contingency, suggesting that participants based their perceptions of the interconnectedness of messages only on messages sent by the company. As previously mentioned, this finding may be due to the CSR context, in which the company is the target of evaluation rather than the consumers. More importantly, this finding reflects another difference between interactivity and perceived contingency. In Rafaeli's (1988) conceptualization, interactivity (as a message attribute) is produced by the degree to which *all* messages in a message chain referred to earlier messages. Yet, Study 2 found that perceived contingency (as a psychological state) depended on the perceived interconnectedness of *some* messages, namely, those sent by the company. This suggests that in certain contexts, such as those related to CSR or organizational communication, particular sources of messages may be accorded greater weight in people's perceptions of contingency than others. As such, future research can test if the relationship between interactivity and perceived contingency may be moderated by message source.

One limitation of the present studies is that it is unclear why the direct effect of interactivity on willingness to comment was suppressed (i.e., significant in the reverse direction as compared to the mediation path; see Rucker et al., 2011). In other words, after partitioning out the effect of perceived contingency, interactivity led to less willingness to comment. In more general terms, a company replying interactively leads to greater willingness to comment—but only when there is perceived contingency; when perceived contingency is absent, replying interactively seems to lead to less willingness to comment due to an unmeasured suppressor variable. Speculatively, the suppression may be due to a sense of closure or finality after the company had replied interactively to the fictitious consumers. Participants could have thought, for example, "The company has already replied, what more can I say?" This reason is commensurate with Ziegele et al.'s (2014) argument that people were more willing to comment at the beginning of discussions, because earlier comments have greater potential to frame the discussions than later comments. That is, it is plausible that people are willing to comment only if they can shape or add something unique to the discussion. Therefore, future studies can test if

the perceived potential for substantial contribution suppresses the relationship between message interactivity and willingness to comment.

Finally, the present studies were conducted using a U.S. sample that was predominantly White. Discretion should be exercised when attempting to generalize the findings to other cultures that may have different norms surrounding commenting on social media or different expectations of companies' CSR communication.

In the contemporary online environment, where the corporate use of interactive social media platforms is ubiquitous and demands for CSR communication are increasing, it is more important than ever for researchers to investigate the complex relationships among communication dynamics and CSR-related outcomes. This study is a first step in uncovering more nuanced approaches to the relationship between interactivity, online social dynamics, CSR, and stakeholder perceptions of a company.

Note

1. The core idea of exchanging interrelated messages may have implications beyond the narrow contexts in which these ideas were originally conceptualized. For a broader perspective, see Weick (1979), who proposed that double interacts (comprising acts and interacts) form the "stable building blocks" (p. 110) of organizational communication.

Data availability statement

The data underlying this article will be shared on reasonable request to the corresponding author. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of California, Santa Barbara (approval number: 5-19-0848).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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