

THE PERCEIVED FIT OF INFLUENCERS AND ORGANIZATIONS
IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ISSUES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Influencer-marketing has become one of the most popular and effective strategies used by organizations to reach their target audiences. As a relatively new industry, research on influencer-marketing is growing yet still limited in certain contexts. Specifically, the perceived fit of influencers and organizations is a recent topic of interest that can determine the effectiveness of such strategies and campaigns. While fit has been established as an important factor in successful influencer-marketing, the effect of social issue positioning by organizations and influencers has yet to be examined in terms of its effect on fit. This quantitative study considers the past research on perceived fit in influencer-marketing and applies it to understanding the effect that social issue positioning by organizations and influencers may have on perceived-fit. Perceived fit, consumer purchase intention, and organizational trust are each measured in determining the effect(s) of such positioning on influencer-organization relationships.

Introduction

A March 2020 report on internet influencers concluded that 44% of social media users have unfollowed an influencer's account because of something the influencer said or did, while 24% of users have unfollowed a brand because of an association with an influencer that they dislike (Poelking, 2020). These statistics, along with countless similar insights, suggest that influencers' content and the partnerships extended to influencers by organizations can affect consumer opinions, actions, and perceptions.

Influencer marketing has been an increasingly popular method of product promotion for organizations. The industry, which gained traction in the early to mid-2010s, has nearly doubled in value each year, being worth an estimated 1.7 billion in 2016 to now being worth nearly 10 billion in 2020 (Influencer-marketing Hub, 2020). According to a Media Kix report, mid-tier influencers, those with 50,000 to 500,000 followers, are paid up to \$5,000 per post with an organization or brand (Media Kix, 2019). Those with follower counts of over one million, also known as mega-influencers, can often make \$100,000 or more per post (Conklin, 2020). The cost of influencer-marketing for organizations that want to create a relationship with an influencer through posts can add up quickly. These costs alone make it especially important for organizations and strategic communicators to choose the correct partnerships and strategies to implement when utilizing influencer-marketing.

Extensive research and opinion pieces have focused on the relationship between organizations and their ambassadors, like influencers, since the early 20th century. It is no secret that these partnerships become an extension of organizations, which ultimately becomes a representation of the organization (Singh et al., 2020). The perceived fit of influencers and organization partnerships is often studied to determine product and organization alignment to the

influencer. However, there is a lack of research on the perceived fit of organization and influencer relationships based on both parties' displayed actions on social media regarding various social issues like racial injustices, gender equality, mental health awareness, human trafficking, gun violence, and many more.

Consumer expectations of organizations to engage in social issues in some capacity through traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs or through less traditional forms like organizational advocacy and activism continue to rise (Kim et al., 2019). These expectations do not stop at the organization's display of values through their owned and paid media. With influencers becoming an extension of many organizations, the actions and portrayed values of the influencer, like other organization extensions and relationships, can reflect on the perceptions and reputation of the endorsed organization.

Because of the growth of influencer-marketing and the increasing need for brands as organizations to be aware and engaged in social issues, it will be valuable to examine further the importance, or lack thereof, of organization-influencer fit regarding social issues. Discovering insights from consumers about the topic may influence future organization partnerships and strategies. To further research organization relationships with influencers and their perceived fit through the positions of both parties regarding prevalent social issues, the current state of research on this topic and theoretical applications will be discussed followed by proposed hypotheses and a research method.

Literature Review

Social Media Influencers

Early research on social media influencers (SMIs) describes influencers as third parties who shape consumer attitudes through their content on social media outlets (Freberg, 2010).

However, other research suggests that many types of social media users are considered influencers in their respective ways (Bakshy, 2011). Some, for example, may have no traditional talent or specific interest but gain a following due to popularity, while some have specific, more professional backgrounds in realms like fitness, travel, health, beauty, and more. Overall, SMIs are considered to be consumers themselves who have gained a sizable following in which they provide content to contribute to the consumer experience on social media. SMIs often consist of celebrities, bloggers, and cultural leaders and are arguably considered to be opinion leaders in many spaces (Casaló et al., 2020). SMIs have been studied from multiple angles, including through a focus on the influencers themselves, their relationships with consumers, and their impact on organizations.

Parasocial Interactions. The relationship that exists between SMIs and consumers is often considered to be a parasocial interaction with some traditional relationship factors at play, like an influencer's ability to respond to a consumer's question directly (Coco & Eckert, 2020). The concept of parasocial interactions has been discussed as early as 1956, when it was introduced by Horton and Wohl. The original description is that a relationship is formed between a "performer" that is seemingly intimate to the viewer and the consumer creates beliefs and impressions about that person that lead to similar attitudes and "relationships" that are typically formed towards people in face-to-face interactions (Horton & Wohl, 1956). SMIs provide a similar opportunity for this interaction with consumers as the viewer (consumer) sees extensive content about the influencer's life and interacts with it, while the influencer has a limited view and interaction, if any, with the consumer. Parasocial relationships with influencers can be strengthened through the ability of consumers to respond to influencers through comments and other features (Reinikainen et al., 2020). By sharing continuous, daily content and providing

opportunities for their followers to engage through prompts, the influencer is providing a look into their life that the followers are able to interact with. Organizations utilize the relationship built between influencers and consumers by partnering with them and extending that trust and interest to their organization and product when possible.

Building Trust and Shaping Consumer Attitudes. One of the most significant issues that determines the effectiveness of working with influencers is consumer trust with that influencer and organization. As mentioned in a podcast about the role of influencers in the purchase process by analysts at eMarketer, influencers found trust to be the most influential factor of their work in the consumer purchase process (Droesch & Williamson, 2020). Because influencer credibility leads to higher purchase intentions, it is important for SMIs to build trust between themselves and their followers, which then benefits the organizations that partner with those SMIs.

In order to shape consumer attitudes and gain a trusting follower base, SMIs build trust and relationships with followers through their daily content like posts in the regular feed of sites like Instagram and Facebook. These posts can include multiple photos and videos, descriptive captions, tag relevant users, and more. Instagram and Facebook stories, which include features like polls, creative texts, access to outside links, and the ability to answer follower questions easily and publicly, are also extremely popular for SMIs to use. Influencer stories are often updated hourly or at least a few times a day in most cases, which allows consumers to feel connected to the influencer's daily life. Another popular feature of social media commonly utilized by influencers is long format video features like IGTV, YouTube, and Facebook videos, which allow the influencer to create content that keeps their audience for a longer period of time than most, shorter social media features. Lastly, short-form videos are becoming increasingly

popular with the rise of TikTok. The application allows up to one minute of content that can be edited with filters, music, text, and more. Instagram has recently introduced a competitive feature called Reels that works nearly the same as TikTok in order to expand the variety of content available to creators and followers on the application. Instagram, in particular, is the most common and effective among SMIs and influencer-marketing campaigns, as it is considered to be the number one channel for 89 percent of marketers (MediaKix, 2019).

While many more features are offered by social media sites and applications, those mentioned above are the most widely used among SMIs and consumers. Perhaps the most important feature, especially for strategic communicators, is that the content previously described can be sponsored by organizations. The incorporation of organizations in SMI content provides an opportunity for both the influencer and the organization; however, it also brings about challenges of fit, trust, and authenticity, among others, which are further explored below. Despite the challenges, the increasing popularity of users utilizing organization sponsorships has led to the rise of the influencer-marketing industry.

Influencer-marketing Industry

The rise of the SMI and the simultaneous rise of the influencer-marketing industry has taken place over the past decade as marketers continue to find success in the use of consumers who have extensive followings based on fashion, beauty, inspiration, talent, and more. SMIs are so effective for brands that over 40 percent of marketers' said that between 11 and 25 percent of their digital marketing budget was planned to go to influencer-marketing in 2020 (Linqia, 2020). Due to the high demand for SMIs, many are now represented by agencies who work with brands to pair them with influencers whose followers match the organization's target audience. In 2019, more than 380 of these agencies and service platforms were created to service the demand of

SIMIs for organizations. Now, over 1,100 influencer-marketing agencies in the U.S. dedicated strictly to managing SIMIs and their organization relationships exist, which work similarly to a talent agency for models or singers (Influencer-marketing Hub, 2020). Worth about \$8 billion in 2019, the influencer-marketing industry is expected to continue to rise over the next few years, being worth up to \$15 billion by 2022 (Schomer, 2019).

The influencer-marketing industry has faced its share of challenges in its quick rise to popularity. One of the biggest challenges is that of the transparency of influencers and organizations involved in sponsored content. This challenge not only involves consumers who put their trust in SIMIs, but it also involves government agencies. Due to the modern nature of the Industry, the federal trade commission (FTC) had no specific language on influencer-marketing beyond its original endorsement guidelines established in 1980 and amended in 2009 (Federal Trade Commission, 2020). After thousands of complaints and several specific cases brought to the FTC, the commission released guidelines for influencer-marketing in 2017, which provide specific yet complicated rules for endorsements online to protect consumers from misinformation.

The implementation of FTC guidelines was important to the influencer-marketing industry as they addressed common consumer concerns of transparency from SIMIs. However, the rules also brought about challenges for organizations and influencers to be perceived as authentic even with #sponsored or #ad instantly revealing to consumers that the SIMI is being paid to provide the content and their review (Stubb, 2019). While influencer-marketing is shown to be effective and the industry continues to thrive, much of the research concerning the industry is based on the issue of trust, transparency, or consumer perception of such topics, which can greatly impact the effectiveness of influencer-marketing campaigns. Trust remains one of the top

concerns among the industry, along with source credibility and perceived fit about SMIs, products, and organizations (Droesch & Williamson, 2020).

Endorser-Product-Organization Fit

The topic of fit between endorsers and products or organizations, along with the topic of marketing using celebrities or brand ambassadors, are not new concepts. While influencer-marketing is a new industry, the concept behind it is derived from other successful marketing tactics like celebrity endorsements, product ambassadors, and word-of-mouth strategies. Because of the grounding in past practices, much of the research done prior to the rise of influencer-marketing can be used and applied to similar situations in this new industry, especially those regarding consumer behavior.

Research regarding ambassadors or endorsers often includes the topic of source credibility, which suggests that communication messages and the effectiveness of them are influenced by source qualities like trustworthiness and credibility (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Source credibility is often used in research about endorsers when discussing the product fit with the endorser, which serves as a key variable in deciding if the partnership is a good fit or not (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The credibility of the source in relation to the product or organization directly correlates with consumers' perception of the partnership and can ultimately affect organizational trust and intent to purchase, depending on the correlation. For example, a source with an extensive background in a related field to the product or organization being advertised would lead to an increased level of source credibility.

Another commonly used theory in discussions of endorsers is meaning transfer, which suggests that endorsers bring about certain meanings and attributions to the partnership depending on what cultural meaning the person has (McCracken, 1989). Categories like gender,

age, reputation, power, and attributions like confidence, strength, and sophistication are all considerable factors that can be transferred in creating meaning for a product, brand, or partnership. The original application of meaning transfer referred to celebrities; however, similar insights have been found in the effectiveness of influencer-marketing and in determining if the meaning being transferred is a good fit for the organization (Breves et al., 2019). As culture changes, meaning can shift. This, along with the overarching theory of meaning transfer, can make endorsers that belong to certain cultural meanings transfer those meanings to an involved organization.

In a review of the past fifty years of celebrity endorsements, the theories discussed above contribute to factors like believability, trust, and credibility, which play a large part in creating a good endorser-product fit (Schimmelpfennig & Hunt, 2020). Brand and endorser personality alignment also plays a factor in fit, especially in situations of a long-term relationship between an organization and influencer (Borges-Tiago et al., 2019). Overall, fit has been substantiated as a key determinate of the effectiveness of such partnerships long before SMIs were introduced.

Match-up Hypothesis. Along with source credibility and meaning transfer, the match-up hypothesis can be applied to influencer-marketing strategies when determining the fit between influencers and organizations. Originally introduced in 1990, the match-up hypothesis suggested that an endorser's physical attractiveness would enhance consumer product perceptions only if the product "matched-up" with the conveyed image of the endorser (Kamins, 1990). Since then, the hypothesis has been expanded outside of physical attractiveness to factors like expertise, product-fit, image (beyond physical), and attitude (Friedman & Friedman, 1979; Harmon-Kizer, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020; Till & Busler, 2000).

In most cases, a consumer's perception of the fit of an endorser to the brand or product within certain attributions like credibility, image, and attitude will influence consumer trust and actions. For example, one of the most recent studies that specifically explored influencer-organization fit using the match-up hypothesis found that there was a significant, positive impact on the evaluation of the organization and purchase intentions when influencer-organization fit was more aligned than not (Breves et al., 2019). While this conclusion has been reached using the match-up hypothesis, further examination of the perceived fit of influencers and organizations has yet to be expanded to understand how certain values, like positions on relevant social issues of either the organization or influencer, affect the perception of the relationship for consumers, if at all.

Organizational Trust and Purchase Intentions. Throughout research on fit, influencer-marketing and the aforementioned theories, two of the most prominent measurements considered in scenarios are the effects of the scenario(s) on organizational trust and consumer purchase intentions. As mentioned in the discussion of influencer-marketing, SMIs and organizations face challenges with consumers regarding trust in the influencer, the organization, and the partnership of the two. Trust has long been suggested by researchers as one of the most important factors in successful relationship marketing, which parallels the relationship created between influencers, organizations, and consumers through the influencer-marketing process (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Because of the relevancy of trust in influencer-marketing and the importance of trust in creating relationship marketing, it is important to consider the effect that the intersection of certain positions on social issues taken by organizations and influencers will have on a consumer's trust in an organization.

Similarly, the effect of social issue positioning by organizations and influencers on consumers' purchase intentions is incredibly important. As mentioned in the introduction of this research, influencer-marketing can cost organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars and up to 25 percent of their digital advertising budget each year with the end goal of selling a product or service. If this is the case, understanding how the organization and SMI positioning on a social issue could impact a consumer's desire, or lack thereof, to purchase from the organization is vital to understand. Failing to understand the possible effect of partnering with influencers who share or do not share the organization's position on a social issue could cost the organization a significant amount of marketing dollars, making research on this topic necessary.

To further examine the impact that organization and influencer positioning on certain social issues may have, it is important to assess how brand positioning on such social issues has affected consumer perceptions in past research. The most prevalent topic surrounding this subject is corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the perceived fit of organizations with the social initiatives they take part in.

Perceived Fit & Corporate Social Responsibility. Perceived fit was initially utilized to understand consumer perceptions on new brand extensions from companies that expanded into new ventures under the parent organization. Tauber (1981) defined perceptual fit in the context of franchise extensions as a situation in which "the consumer perceives the new item to be consistent with the parent brand" (p. 40). In further studies of fit, it is established that a high level of fit between the parent organization and extension will lead to positive effects, while a low fit will lead to skepticism (Bridges et al., 2000). However, the concept of perceived fit has since been utilized heavily in researching CSR programs, and perceived fit has now become a key factor in engaging in successful CSR initiatives (Nan & Heo, 2007). Overall, a positive fit

between the two (organization & social initiative) is generally met with positive consumer perceptions and actions about the implementation, while a low-fit situation is met with negative consumer perceptions and actions (Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Along with the importance of fit in CSR, the level of involvement that a company has in CSR is a factor that has been shown to influence consumer opinions like trust and purchase intentions when evaluating an organization. In a 2005 experimental design study, researchers found that organizations that practiced extensive CSR were given positive assessments by consumers on scales regarding purchase intention and company evaluation, while reacting negatively on those scales to organizations with no CSR practices (Mohr & Webb, 2005). These results have been repeated in several studies regarding CSR, which suggest that consumers react negatively or indifferently to organizations that take no action in social responsibility (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2011). Along with academic studies, consumer reports note that 90% of adults in Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) believe companies should take action upon social issues (Porter Novelli, 2019). The suggestions provided from these studies help inform the suggested effects that this study may reveal, specifically regarding consumer reactions to an organization that is not involved in supporting a specific social issue.

As consumer expectations for organizations to engage in CSR continue to rise, all aspects of an organization must be considered when engaging in such initiatives. Whether organizations have a formal CSR program or opt for less traditional forms of CSR like organizational advocacy or activism, consistency is important throughout the organization in order to achieve an authentic message. As mentioned in the discussion of SMIs, influencers often become an extension of the organization when a partnership is created, making the fit of that relationship just as important as the fit of any other initiative for the organization, including those involving CSR or related

topics. Based on previous research, the perceived fit of an organization and influencer based on their respective positions on certain social issues may affect consumer perceptions in the same way that aligned and unaligned values between social causes and organizations affect consumer perceptions.

Considering the importance of the perceived fit of influencers and organizations, organizational trust, and consumer purchase intentions leads to the goals of this research. The match-up hypothesis has suggested that consumer opinions about an organization can be positively influenced when a good match is made between the endorser and organization due to the many factors mentioned like credibility, attractiveness, image, etc., which can also affect organizational trust and purchase intentions. Therefore, an importance of fit between an influencer and organization based on their respective positions on a social issue could be implied. In order to determine the validity of this assumption, the following hypotheses are proposed with the match-up hypothesis, organizational trust, and consumer purchase intentions in mind:

H1: When an influencer and organization both exhibit a strong, supportive position on a social issue, (a) a high level of perceived fit, (b) high purchase intentions, and (c) high trust will be reported.

H2: When an influencer does not exhibit a position on a social issue while the associated organization exhibits a strong, supportive position, (a) a low level of perceived fit, (b) low purchase intentions, and (c) low organizational trust will be reported.

H3: When an influencer exhibits a strong, supportive position on a social issue while the associated organization does not exhibit a position, (a) a low level of perceived fit, (b) low purchase intentions, and (c) low organizational trust will be reported.

H4: When an influencer and organization both exhibit no position on a social issue, (a) a high level of perceived fit, (b) low purchase intentions, and (c) low organizational trust will be reported.

The current literature on influencer-organization fit has suggested that there is an importance of perceived fit between influencers and organizations that affect consumer opinions and purchase intentions. Factors explored have included credibility, attitude, experiences, and others. However, as mentioned, the fit between influencers and organizations in relation to their acknowledged position on a social issue needs to be explored further, specifically through the lens of the match-up hypothesis. In this research, the perceived fit of influencers and organizations, organizational trust, and consumer purchase intentions will be explored through their relationship and respective positions on social issues.

Just as the match-up hypothesis has been used to evaluate levels of fit between ambassadors and brands through different variables, the concept of fit itself is flexible in definition depending on the variables and scenarios at hand. Throughout this literature review, fit is discussed several times in different contexts, but it is important to narrow the meaning of fit for the context of this research and define it operationally. For purposes of this study, the concept of fit, and more specifically perceived fit, will be defined in terms of both Tauber's definition, rooted in consistency, and that of the match-up hypothesis, which can evaluate fit by considering a match-up of aesthetics, credibility, interpersonal connection, values, and more. There is no specific factor that makes up the perfect fit. However, it is the matching up and consistency of several factors at once that allows a fit to be established, as displayed in studies that have utilized the match-up hypothesis (Breves et al., 2019; Harmon-Kizer, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020; Tauber, 1981; Till & Busler, 2000).

Method

In order to investigate the effect that a position on a social issue has on the perceived fit of an influencer and organization, organizational trust, and consumer purchase intentions, this research will utilize a 2 (influencer takes no position on social issue vs. influencer takes strong, supportive position on social issue) x 2 (organization takes no position on social issue vs. organization takes strong, supportive position on social issue) experimental design. Each condition will randomly present respondents with one of eight scenarios describing an organization and Instagram influencer relationship, including their positioning on a social issue.

While there are four hypotheses regarding the independent variables, there will be eight scenarios utilized so that two social issues can be examined in the research. Four scenarios will feature mental health awareness as the social issue at hand, while the other four scenarios will feature racial justice in America. Respondents will be assigned one of the eight scenarios randomly. After the participant is presented with a scenario, a short questionnaire measuring the participant's perception of the fit between the organization and influencer, organizational trust, and purchase intention will follow. A pre-test will be conducted to test the stimuli.

This research will incorporate scenarios based on an organization and influencer specializing in lifestyle and beauty because the category is the most popular among SMI's and consumers (Statista, 2020). Instagram was chosen as the platform for the scenario due to it being the most popular platform in influencer-marketing by a significant margin (MediaKix, 2019). In order to avoid predispositions about an actual organization and influencer that might influence perceptions, a fictitious organization and influencer scenario was created using the names "Organization A" and "Influencer Z." Text-based scenarios were utilized throughout the research to ensure that predispositions and perceptions of the influencer or organization were not

imposed, which could affect results. It is recognized that influencer-marketing relies heavily upon physical attractiveness, which is addressed in the origins of the match-up hypothesis by Kamins in 1990 and has been further explored in several studies. Ultimately, opinions on attractiveness or physical qualities were not variables relative to the core purpose of this study, which is why the researcher opted for text-based scenarios.

In order to increase the generalizability of the research beyond the limitations of one social issue, more than one social issue was chosen to be incorporated in the scenarios. Racial justice and mental health awareness were specifically chosen because market research suggests that they are two of U.S. consumer's top concerns in 2020 and are frequently shared topics on social media (Dubina, 2020). Four hundred respondents from Amazon Mechanical Turk participated in the experiment allowing 50 respondents for each given scenario. Only respondents with active Instagram accounts were able to participate. Each respondent was compensated \$1.00 for completion of the survey. This was made possible by a graduate thesis grant from the Bob Schieffer College of Communication.

The perceived fit of the influencer and organization will be measured by three five-point semantic differential scales derived from Till and Busler (2000), which measured endorser product fit on scales of "does not belong together/belongs with," "does not go together/does go together," and "does not fit together/fits together." Purchase intention will be measured using three five-point semantic differential scales from Yi (1990), which measured purchase intention by "likely-unlikely," "possible-impossible," and "probable-improbable." Finally, organizational trust will be measured using a Likert scale with prompts derived from Veloustsou (2015), which measured organizational trust through questions of credibility, integrity, and trustworthiness. During the data analysis process, the three scales testing each variable will be combined into an

average mean for each variable to interpret the respondents' opinions on the respective variables. Please see Appendix A for survey items and Appendix B for stimuli conditions and scenarios.

For each of these scales, lower ratings are associated with negative responses (i.e., unlikely, impossible, does not belong with, etc.) while higher ratings are associated with positive responses (i.e., extremely trustworthy, credible, likely, does fit together, etc.). The hypotheses for this study refer to "high" and "low" rating of the variables, which will be measured accordingly. When analyzing and interpreting data, low scores (1.00 - 2.49) will be consistent with negative associations to the variables measured, while ratings in the middle of the scale (2.5 - 3.49) are consistent with neither negative or positive opinions about the variables. Finally, higher ratings (3.49 – 5.00) are reflective of a positive opinion or reaction to the proposed question. These scales and interpretations will be utilized to determine if each of the variables is represented as suggested in the hypotheses.

One-way ANOVA tests will be computed to compare the means of each variable across scenarios. Each condition with the same scenario (same influencer and organization position) but different social issue (racial justice or mental health awareness) will be compared through an independent-samples t-test to evaluate if the social issue had an effect upon the results of the dependent variables.

The nature of this research brings about the possibility of intervening variables like differences in answers across genders and predispositions to certain social issues. While these effects may not be entirely avoidable, steps will be taken to address the effect such factors may have had in the analysis of this study. To compare differences in means between men and women upon the dependent variables, respondents shared their gender within the demographic information section of the survey, which was analyzed using a factorial ANOVA. Secondly, the

effect of predispositions on the social issues being utilized was addressed by including a question for respondents referring to their personal position on the social issue at hand. Respondents were able to respond on a five-point semantic differential scale rating their support for the issue from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.” These results were then analyzed using a factorial ANOVA to interpret if respondents' opinions were different across scenarios and to what extent they may have affected the dependent variables being tested.

Results

Pre-Test

A pre-test was conducted to test the stimuli created for this research. To measure the effectiveness of the manipulated variables, including the organization and influencer positions, a manipulation check was conducted in the pre-test of the stimuli.

Sample. A total of 68 respondents participated in the pre-test. Of the 68 participants, 2 did not pass the screener question related to having an active Instagram account, which ended their survey immediately, leaving 66 survey responses (female 79.4%, $n = 54$; male 17.6%, $n = 12$) to analyze. Respondents were recruited through strategic communication courses at a private university and through posts on Instagram and Twitter. The respondents were majority White/Caucasian (85.3%, $n = 58$) while other races (Asian/Pacific Islander 1.5%, $n = 1$; Black/African American 4.4%, $n = 3$; Hispanic/Latino/Latina 2.9%, $n = 2$) had limited representation in the sample. The majority of respondents was between the ages of 20-22 (72.4%, $n = 50$), with ages ranging from 18 years old to 42 years old. Lastly, the majority of participants had either received a high school diploma or GED (44.1%, $n = 30$), while the remaining participants had received a bachelor's degree (44.1%, $n = 30$), were in the process of obtaining a bachelor's degree (4.3%, $n = 3$), or had an associate's degree (4.3%, $n = 3$).

Procedure. Participants followed a link to the survey on Qualtrics. After consenting to participate in the study, respondents were shown one of four scenarios of an organization and influencer partnership and explanations of each of their positions on the social issue of racial justice (See Appendix B). This was followed immediately by the manipulation check items, then led into questions about the dependent variables of perceived fit, purchase intentions, and organizational trust (See Appendix A). In order to measure the effectiveness of the manipulated variables in each scenario, participant responses were grouped by scenario and condition. There were ten manipulation check items to measure the respondent’s understanding of the organization and influencer’s positions on the social issue. Five questions were related to the influencer position, while the other five were related to the organization position. Reliability statistics were computed to ensure that the scales measuring the respondent’s perceptions of the manipulation were dependable. The scales were shown to be reliable (See Table 1).

Table 1

Pre-Test Manipulation Check Scale Reliability Statistics

Scale	<i>N of Items</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived Influencer Position	5	.948	14.95	6.347
Perceived Organization Position	5	.984	15.48	7.689

Manipulation Check. Overall, the scenarios that were utilized to explain the organization and influencer positions on a social issue were successful and effective in the pre-test. Regardless of which scenario and condition were presented to the respondent, the pre-test results revealed that participants comprehended the positions that the organization and influencer

took on the social issue of racial justice. The influencer position was interpreted as weak and unsupportive in scenarios testing H2 & H4 and strong and supportive in scenarios testing H1 & H3. The organization position was interpreted correctly as well, resulting in high means for H1 & H2 and low means for H3 and H4 (See Table 2). A one-way ANOVA was computed to compare the results between each scenario and the interpreted positions of the organization and influencer. All ANOVAs in this analysis were computed with 95% confidence intervals. There was a statistically significant difference between interpreted organization positions within scenarios [$F(3, 62) = 44.50, p = <0.001$] as well as the interpreted influencer positions [$F(3, 65) = 44.5, p = <0.001$].

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of pre-test manipulation check (n = 66)

Interpretation of	Scenario	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Org Position	Both Support Racial Justice	13	4.25	.85
	Org Supports Racial Justice	15	4.85	.32
	Influ Supports Racial Justice	19	2.22	1.02
	Neither Support Racial Justice	18	1.72	.78
Influ Position	Both Support Racial Justice	13	3.86	.93
	Org Supports Racial Justice	15	2.25	.68
	Influ Supports Racial Justice	20	4.11	.84
	Neither Support Racial Justice	18	1.73	.54

Note: Org = Organization; Infl = Influencer

Results. Ultimately, the pre-test served as a successful measurement of the stimuli to be used in the final phase of this research. Beyond the manipulation check items, the pre-test was also reflective of the proposed hypotheses for this research in many ways (See Table 3). Overall, there was a statistically significant difference for all scenarios on the perceived fit scale [$F(3, 62) = 25.80, p < 0.001$], the organizational trust scale [$F(3, 62) = 18.2, p < 0.001$], and the purchase intention scale [$F(3, 62) = 2.85, p = 0.044$].

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of pre-test variables (n = 66)

Variable	Scenario	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived Fit	Both Support Racial Justice	13	3.60	.79
	Org Supports Racial Justice	15	2.52	.54
	Influ Supports Racial Justice	20	2.48	1.05
	Neither Support Racial Justice	18	4.43	.53
Org Trust	Both Support Racial Justice	13	4.26	.49
	Org Supports Racial Justice	15	3.67	.50
	Influ Supports Racial Justice	20	3.17	.75
	Neither Support Racial Justice	18	2.65	.67
Purchase Intentions	Both Support Racial Justice	13	3.59	.81
	Org Supports Racial Justice	15	3.42	.77
	Influ Supports Racial Justice	20	3.42	.99
	Neither Support Racial Justice	18	2.72	1.07

Note: Org = Organization; Influ = Influencer

It was discovered that mean scores reflected the general idea of the hypotheses, but they were not as notably high or low as expected. In many cases, the perceived fit, organizational trust, and purchase intentions were gravitating towards similar or average scores. While no specific problems were found to have caused this gravitation towards an average score throughout scenarios, common experimental design and survey issues like respondent attention, time spent reading the material, and readability were addressed to combat the issue. To address this issue in the final research, a time requirement was implemented while respondents read the scenarios to enhance comprehension and avoid uncommitted survey takers. Following discussions with pre-test survey takers that some questions were difficult to understand, the language used on many questions was altered slightly and optimized for readability within the final experiment.

Main Study

Procedure. Participants were directed from MTurk to a link to the survey on Qualtrics. After consenting to participate in the study, respondents were shown one of eight scenarios reflecting an organization and influencer partnership and explanations of each of their positions on the social issue of either racial justice or mental health awareness (See Appendix B). This was followed immediately by the manipulation check items then led into questions about the dependent variables of perceived fit, purchase intentions, and organizational trust (See Appendix A). The manipulation check performed in the main study was successful, just as it was in the pre-test. The results were omitted from the main study results on the basis of relevancy, repetitiveness, and conciseness. Upon completing the questions, demographic information was collected from the participants. Those who successfully completed the survey received a unique,

randomized code from Qualtrics. This code was then entered into MTurk by the participants to validate their completion and participation.

Respondent Profile. A total of 400 surveys were completed through Amazon Mechanical Turk. One survey was excluded due to incomplete data, so a total of 399 responses were used for data analysis. The majority of participants were White/Caucasian (52.1%, $n = 208$), followed by those identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander (26.1%, $n = 104$), Black/African American (12.8%, $n = 51$), Hispanic/Latino/Latina (3.8%, $n = 15$), Native American (3.0%, $n = 12$), Other (1.3%, $n = 5$), and Prefer not to say/no response (1.0%, $n = 4$). The participants were 66.9% male ($n = 267$) and 32.1% ($n = 128$) female. Four (1.1%) respondents chose not to reveal their gender. Respondent ages ranged from 18 and 71. The majority of participants were between the ages of 25 and 40 (74.7%, $n = 298$). The majority of respondents held formal educations beyond high school. Those who held associates degrees comprised 6.0% ($n = 24$) of the participants while 64.9% ($n = 259$) held bachelor's degrees, 19.3% ($n = 77$) held a master's or doctorate degree, and 8.8% received a high school diploma or GED. One participant had no high school diploma (0.3%), while three (.8%) preferred not to share their education status.

Reliability

Reliability statistics were computed to ensure that the scales measuring each variable were reliable. The scale measuring perceived fit, derived from Till and Busler (2000), measured how well the influencer and organization belonged together, fit together, and went together. The scales were used twice—once in reference to the overall fit (all factors) and once referencing the fit based upon the social issue alone. These six scales were combined to analyze the perceived fit ($\alpha = .878$). Please see Table 4 for complete reliability statistics for each scale. Organizational trust was measured using a scale derived from Veloustsou (2015), which asks respondents to rate

the organization in terms of trustworthiness, credibility, and integrity. These responses were combined as a scale to measure organizational trust ($\alpha = .806$). Lastly, purchase intentions were measured using a scale derived from Yi (1990) measuring how likely, probable, or possible it was for the respondent to purchase from the organization. The purchase intentions of respondents were analyzed by combining these three scales ($\alpha = .813$).

Table 4

Main Study Scale Reliability Statistics

Scale	<i>N of Items</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived Fit	6	.878	22.50	5.116
Organizational Trust	3	.806	11.71	2.395
Purchase Intentions	3	.813	11.47	2.658

H1 - H4 Results

Results of Perceived Fit. To address the dependent variable of perceived fit in H1-H4, a one-way ANOVA was computed. The independent variable of the eight different scenarios was used to measure the difference in fit perceived across each scenario. H1 – H4 propose that high levels of fit will be perceived when both parties (influencer and organization) share the same position on the social issue (H1 & H4) while low levels of fit will be perceived when only one party supports the social issue (H2 & H3).

The results of the one-way ANOVA regarding perceived fit partially supported these hypotheses. As shown in Figure 1, the level of perceived fit coincides with the pattern suggested by the hypotheses, but the mean scores are not as notably high or low as the hypotheses propose

them to be. For example, rather than the perceived fit being low, as suggested in H2 and H3, or high, as suggested in H4, the fit is perceived as average at mean scores of 3.75 (H2), 3.56 (H3), 3.98 (H4). However, the mean score for H1 is perceived as high at a mean score of 4.19, which aligns with H1. The mean scores for all scenarios ranged between 3.4 and 4.2 (See Table 5). The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the perceived fit of the influencer and organization across all scenarios [$F(7, 391) = 6.40, p = <.001$].

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of perceived fit for the condition presenting both parties supporting the social issue ($M = 4.19, SD = 0.64$) was significantly different from the conditions in which only the influencer ($M = 3.56, SD = 0.85$) or organization ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.75$) supported the social issue. There was also a significant difference between the condition in which only the influencer supported the social issue and the condition in which neither party addressed the social issue ($M = 3.98, SD = 0.73$).

The perceived fit was also interpreted through analyzing descriptive statistics. Looking at scenarios relative to H1 alone, the mean of the perceived fit was 4.19 ($SD = .64$). Regarding H2, the mean of the perceived fit in scenarios that presented the organization supporting a social issue while the influencer remained silent was 3.75 ($SD = .75$). The results of H3 (scenarios that presented the influencer supporting a social issue while the organization remained silent) revealed the perceived fit mean to be 3.56 ($SD = .85$). Regarding H4, the mean of the perceived fit in scenarios that presented both parties remaining silent about a social issue was 3.98 ($SD = .73$).

Ultimately, the variable of perceived fit was higher in scenarios of a shared position and support on a social issue between parties while being lower in cases of unaligned support, as predicted in the research hypotheses.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of perceived fit variable (n = 399)

Scenario	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Both Support Racial Justice	50	4.24	.59
Org Supports Racial Justice	50	3.67	.78
Influ Supports Racial Justice	50	3.48	.97
Neither Support Racial Justice	50	3.87	.81
Both Support MHA	50	4.14	.69
Org Supports MHA	50	3.82	.71
Influ Supports MHA	50	3.65	.72
Neither Support MHA	49	4.09	.63

Note: Org = Organization; Influ = Influencer; MHA = Mental Health Awareness

Figure 1. One-way ANOVA graph.

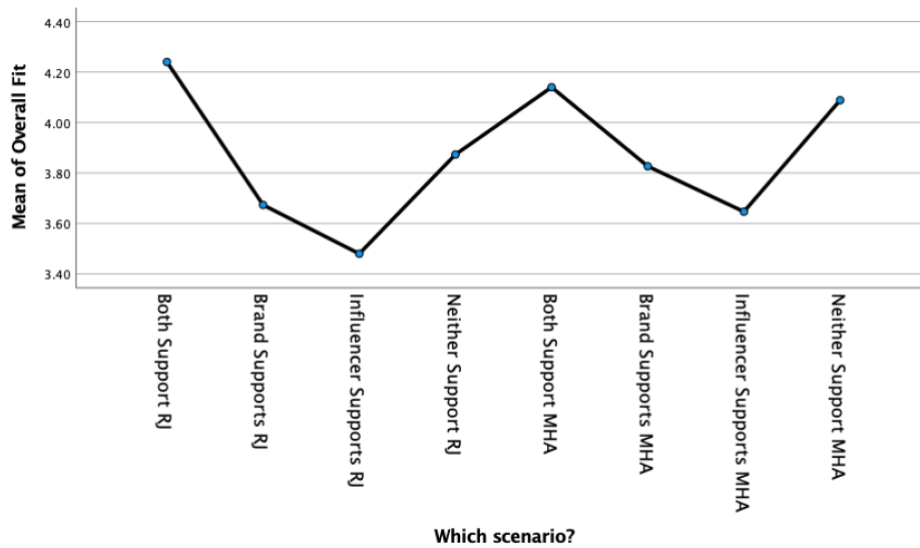


Figure 1. The displayed graph shows the results of the one-way ANOVA for the perceived fit variable among all scenarios. Higher means are associated with scenarios testing H1 & H4, while lower means are associated with scenarios testing H2 & H3.

One question regarding the effect that the positions taken upon the social issue had upon consumer opinions was not included in the scale of perceived fit due to the nature of the question. The question asked respondents how much the social issue positioning displayed affected their perception of the overall fit between the influencer and organization in order to understand the impact of independent variable of social issue positioning upon perceived fit (See Appendix A). Frequency results of the question suggest that in each scenario, the positions on social issues taken by the influencer and brand strongly or somewhat affected the majority of respondent’s perception of their fit as partners (See Table 6). These results suggest that the positions taken upon the social issue contribute in a notable way to respondents’ opinions.

Table 6

Frequencies of Social Issue Effect on Perceived Fit (n = 399)

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Did not affect perception at all	25	6.3
Somewhat affected perception	126	31.6
Very much affected perception	176	44.1
Only factor that affected perception	19	4.8
Unsure	53	13.3

Results of Organizational Trust Variable. To address the dependent variable of organizational trust in H1-H4, a one-way ANOVA was computed. The independent variable of the eight different scenarios was used to measure the difference in trust reported across each scenario. H1 – H4 propose that high levels of trust will be reported when both parties (influencer and organization) support the social issue (H1) while low levels of trust will be perceived when only one party supports the social issue (H2 & H3) or neither supports the issue (H4). The results of the one-way ANOVA regarding organizational trust partially supported these hypotheses.

Similarly to the perceived fit, the level of trust coincides with the pattern suggested by the hypotheses, but the mean scores are not as notably high or low as the hypotheses propose them to be. Along with this discrepancy, there was an outlier among the scenarios. Within the scenario in which only the organization supported mental health awareness (H2), the trust was much higher than expected ($M = 4.1$).

The mean scores for all scenarios ranged between 3.7 and 4.3, which was slightly higher than the average results for perceived fit (See Table 7). The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the organizational trust of the organization across all scenarios [$F(7, 391) = 4.43, p = <.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of organizational trust for the condition presenting both parties supporting the social issue ($M = 4.17, SD = 0.55$) was significantly different from the conditions in which only the influencer ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.85$) supported the social issue or neither party addressed the social issue ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.88$). There was also a significant difference between the condition in which only the brand supported the social issue ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.77$) and the conditions in which only the influencer supported the issue or neither party addressed the social issue.

The descriptive statistics of this variable suggest that organizational trust when compared to results of perceived fit was not as notably influenced by the scenario manipulations (See Table 7). The mean of organizational trust in scenarios relative to H1 was 4.17 ($SD = .55$), indicating that respondents had a high level of trust in the organization when both the influencer and organization share the same support for a common social issue. In H2, H3, and H4, the mean of the organizational trust is predicted to be low. Scenarios that presented the organization supporting a social issue while the influencer remained silent tested H2 and resulted in a mean of 4.03 ($SD = .77$) for organizational trust. The organizational trust measured in scenarios relative to H3 (scenarios that presented the influencer supporting a social issue while the organization remained silent) revealed the mean to be 3.71 ($SD = .85$). Regarding H4, the mean of organizational trust measured in scenarios that presented both parties remaining silent about a social issue was 3.71 ($SD = .88$).

Ultimately, the variable of organizational trust was shown to be higher in scenarios in which both parties supported the social issue and in which the organization supported the social issue. The level of trust was reported to be lower in scenarios in which the organization did not support the social issue. These results differ from the original hypothesis (H2) that predicted organizational trust to be low when the organization supported the social issue, but the influencer did not.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of organizational trust variable (n = 399)

Scenario	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Both Support Racial Justice	50	4.08	.61
Org Supports Racial Justice	50	3.89	.88
Influ Supports Racial Justice	50	3.73	.87
Neither Support Racial Justice	50	3.71	.87
Both Support MHA	50	4.25	.48
Org Supports MHA	50	4.17	.62
Influ Supports MHA	50	3.68	.83
Neither Support MHA	49	3.71	.91

Note: Org = Organization; Influ = Influencer; MHA = Mental Health Awareness

Results of Purchase Intent Variable. To address the dependent variable of purchase intentions throughout scenarios testing H1-H4, a one-way ANOVA was computed. The independent variable of the eight different scenarios was used to measure the difference in purchase intentions reported across each scenario. H1 – H4 propose that purchase intentions will be high when both parties support the social issue (H1) while purchase intentions will be low when only one party supports the social issue (H2 & H3) or neither support the issue (H4). The results of the one-way ANOVA regarding purchase intentions partially supported these hypotheses. The rating of purchase intentions coincides with the pattern suggested by the hypotheses, but the mean scores are not as notably high or low as the hypotheses propose them to be, just as the data reflected in the other two variables.

The mean scores of purchase intention across all scenarios ranged between 3.6 and 4.2, which was slightly higher than the average results for perceived fit and slightly lower than the average results for organizational trust (See Table 8). The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the purchase intentions of participants across all scenarios [$F(7, 391) = 3.49, p = <.001$].

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of purchase intentions for the condition presenting both parties supporting the social issue ($M = 4.14, SD = 0.53$) was significantly different from all other conditions including those in which only the organization ($M = 3.81, SD = 0.88$) or influencer ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.05$) supported the social issue or neither party addressed the social issue ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.92$).

The purchase intentions of each respondent were reported through analyzing descriptive statistics, just as the previous two variables were reported (See Table 8). The mean of purchase intentions in scenarios relative to H1 was 4.14 ($SD = .53$). In H2, H3, and H4, the mean of purchase intentions is predicted to be low. Scenarios that presented the organization supporting a social issue while the influencer remained silent tested H2 and resulted in a mean of 3.81 ($SD = .88$) for organizational trust. Purchase intentions measured in scenarios relative to H3 (scenarios that presented the influencer supporting a social issue while the organization remained silent) revealed a mean of 3.59 ($SD = 1.05$). Regarding H4, the mean of the purchase intentions measured in scenarios that presented both parties remaining silent about a social issue was 3.75 ($SD = .92$).

Ultimately, the purchase intention variable was higher in the scenario in which both parties supported the social issue. Purchase intentions were lower in scenarios in which the

organization and influencer did not share aligned positions or when both did not support the social issue, as predicted in H1-H4.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics of purchase intention variable (n = 399)

Scenario	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Both Support Racial Justice	50	4.11	.55
Org Supports Racial Justice	50	3.66	1.03
Influ Supports Racial Justice	50	3.60	1.12
Neither Support Racial Justice	50	3.75	.85
Both Support MHA	50	4.16	.52
Org Supports MHA	50	3.97	.68
Influ Supports MHA	50	3.59	.98
Neither Support MHA	49	3.75	1.00

Note: Org = Organization; Influ = Influencer; MHA = Mental Health Awareness

Analysis of Gender & Social Issue Predispositions. As discussed in the Methods section of this study, the possibility of intervening variables was considered in the design of this experiment. The results of the factorial ANOVA tests measuring the interaction effect of differing respondent answers based on gender or predisposition to the social issue are presented in Table 8.

Gender

The gender of the respondent did not have a notable effect upon perceived fit and organizational trust as there was not a statistically significant difference between the means for

each variable on the basis of gender (See Table 9). However, there was a statistically significant difference in respondent purchase intentions on the basis of gender. The interaction effect of gender upon the perceived fit [$F(7) = .573, p = .778, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .010$], organizational trust [$F(7) = 1.438, p = .189, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .026$], and purchase intentions [$F(7) = 2.122, p = .041, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .038$] variables reflect that gender did not play a noteworthy role in respondent opinions of perceived fit and organizational trust but may have influenced purchase intentions. These results suggest that purchase intentions of men ($M = 3.90, SD = .79$) and women ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.05$) are impacted in different ways regarding influencer and organization social issue positioning as men displayed high purchase intentions throughout scenarios.

Table 9

Factorial ANOVA results of intervening variable of gender

Dependent Variables	Factors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
Perceived Fit	Gender	2	.310	.734	.002
	Scenario	7	5.297	<.001	.089
	Gender x Scenario	7	.573	.778	.010
Organizational Trust	Gender	2	.472	.624	.002
	Scenario	7	4.576	<.001	.078
	Gender x Scenario	7	1.438	.189	.026
Purchase Intentions	Gender	2	1.763	.173	.009
	Scenario	7	3.831	<.001	.066
	Gender x Scenario	7	2.122	.041	.038

Respondent Predisposition

Regarding the effect of predisposed respondent opinions on the social issues utilized in the scenarios, there was a prominent effect on perceived fit and purchase intention variables, but not upon organizational trust (See Table 10). The interaction effect of the respondent's predisposition to the social issues upon the perceived fit [$F(19) = 2.985, p < .001, \text{partial} = .134$], organizational trust [$F(19) = 1.460, p = .097, \text{partial} = .070$], and purchase intention [$F(19) = 2.790, p < .001, \text{partial} = .126$] variables reflect that this predisposition did not play a meaningful role in respondent opinions of organizational trust but may have played a role regarding perceived fit and purchase intentions.

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed a statistically significant difference in perceived fit between those who strongly supported the issue ($M = 4.03, SD = .92$) and those who somewhat opposed the issue ($M = 3.33, SD = .71$), had no opinion/neutral ($M = 3.63, SD = .98$), or somewhat supported the issue ($M = 3.80, SD = .55$). A statistically significant difference in purchase intentions was found specifically between those who strongly opposed the issue ($M = 2.47, SD = 1.16$) and those who somewhat supported the issue ($M = 3.85, SD = .57$), strongly supported the issue ($M = 3.90, SD = 1.06$), or had no opinion/neutral ($M = 3.64, SD = .97$). These results suggest that respondent opinions on perceived fit and purchase intentions could have been influenced by their predisposed opinion on the issues of racial justice and mental health awareness, particularly if they strongly supported or strongly opposed the social issue.

Table 10

Factorial ANOVA results of intervening variable of social issue predisposition

Dependent Variables	Factors	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
Perceived Fit	Respondent Predisposition	4	2.779	.027	.029
	Scenario	7	5.150	<.001	.089
	RP x Scenario	19	2.985	<.001	.134
Organizational Trust	Respondent Predisposition	4	2.927	.021	.031
	Scenario	7	1.056	.392	.020
	RP x Scenario	19	1.460	.097	.070
Purchase Intentions	Respondent Predisposition	4	1.886	.112	.020
	Scenario	7	2.128	.040	.039
	RP x Scenario	19	2.790	<.001	.126

Note: RP = Respondent predisposition

Independent samples t-tests were computed to further compare the possible effect of the social issue at hand upon each variable. As shown in Tables 11-13 below, there were no statically significant differences between the results of variables on the basis of the social issue presented. Throughout the measurement of each variable, it was found that respondents presented with a scenario involving racial justice did not answer in significantly different manners compared to those presented with a mental health awareness scenario. These results imply that the social issue addressed in each scenario did not intervene with consumer opinions throughout this study.

Table 11

Independent Samples T-Test results for perception of fit (n = 399)

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	<i>MD</i>
Both parties support social issue	.776	98	.440	.100
Org. supports social issue	-1.025	98	.308	-.153
Infl. supports social issue	-.976	98	.332	-.167
Neither supports social issue	-1.478	97	.143	-.215

Note: Org = Organization; Infl = Influencer

Table 12

Independent Samples T-Test results of organizational trust (n = 399)

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	<i>MD</i>
Both parties support social issue	-1.577	98	.118	-.173
Org. supports social issue	-1.784	98	.077	-.273
Infl. supports social issue	.313	98	.755	.053
Neither supports social issue	-.005	97	.996	-.001

Note: Org = Organization; Infl = Influencer

Table 13

Independent Samples T-Test results of purchase intentions (n = 399)

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	<i>MD</i>
Both parties support social issue	-.437	98	.663	-.047
Org. supports social issue*	-1.757	85.35	.082	-.307
Infl. supports social issue	.063	98	.950	.013
Neither supports social issue	.027	97	.978	.005

Note: Org = Organization; Infl = Influencer

*Variances were not assumed to be equal based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

Discussion

This thesis examined how displayed support for social issues from organizations and influencers, whether aligned or unaligned, affected the variables of perceived fit, purchase intentions, and organizational trust. Ultimately, the study demonstrated that a high perception of fit, high level of organizational trust, and high purchase intentions could be expected when both parties support a common social issue while the opposite can generally be expected when differing positions are taken or no positions are taken.

However, as the main study results demonstrate, the means within this research were no lower than 3.56 for each measured variable. While the majority of results were found to be statistically significant, and thus in favor of the hypotheses, it is important to note that the difference in mean scores was not as great as anticipated. The lack of "low" means, which were suggested in multiple hypotheses, lead H2-H4 to be unsupported as they are written. Due to all means related to the hypotheses being above a score of 3.56, the results cannot be classified as

“low” or “high,” as the hypotheses suggest. Instead, the means lead to terminology suggesting results “lower” or “higher” than other scenarios.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

While H2-H4 were not entirely supported, the data collected is consistent with the pattern suggested by the literature review and hypotheses in that levels of fit would be lower when unaligned positions existed and higher when aligned positions were displayed. These results contribute to prior research discussed in the literature review addressing the match-up hypothesis and recent studies measuring the fit of influencers and organizations like that of Breves et al. (2019). H1-H4 also suggested that purchase intentions and organizational trust would be higher when both parties supported a social issue and lower when only one party supported the issue or when neither showed support. These patterns were displayed throughout each scenario, except for one outlier regarding H2 and organizational trust (see organizational trust variable results section and Table 13). The relevancy of trust in influencer and organization relationships, as well as the importance of consumer purchase intentions, were both displayed in the results of this study. While strong conclusions cannot be drawn from these results due to the small difference in means (no more than one point) across variables, the consistency with the suggested effect on variables cannot be overlooked. The implications of this research, while statistically marginal, reveal important consumer opinions about influencer and organization relationships in the context of social issues.

There is evidence that consumers perceive organization and influencer relationships differently based upon the support (or lack thereof) of a common social issue displayed. The research results suggest that consumers perceive the fit of an organization and influencer as weaker when there are unaligned positions on a social issue. When both parties either support the

same issue or collectively disregard the same social issue, a higher level of fit is perceived. These findings indicate that organizations who desire to establish a strong partnership that is consistent with their brand should consider the alignment of their own social issue positions and those of the influencer before moving forward with the partnership. As discussed in the literature review, consistency across organizations and a matchup between the extensions of the organization are vital for creating credibility, consumer trust, and consumer loyalty (Tauber, 1981; Kamins, 1990). These results reinforce the need for organizations to keep consistency and fit top of mind when working with influencers and beyond.

Regarding organizational trust, the results suggested that consumers trust an organization when it supports a social issue alongside an influencer and when only the organization displays a supportive position about the issue. While these results were different than the hypotheses suggested, they reflect that organizational trust can still be obtained or continued even if an organization supports a social issue while the influencer remains silent about it. Ultimately, trust was revealed to be largely in the hands of the organization rather than dependent upon an extension like an influencer. However, it is important to note that trust was higher for a partnership that had both the influencer and organization supporting a common social issue than it was for a scenario in which only the organization supported the issue publicly. These findings suggest that organizations may still retain organizational trust from consumers, even if the influencer is silent, but trust is still highest when both parties support the issue. This is important for influencer-marketing professionals to consider as the risks are weighed when possibly working with an influencer who may not publicly share support for a social issue that the brand is passionate about. It is likely that organizational trust will remain intact or can be obtained in some way, which allows organizations to work with a wider range of influencers. However, the

results confirm past research discussing the importance of CSR, organizational involvement in social issues, and their effects on trust, which was discussed in the literature review (Bhattachara & Sen, 2011; Mohr & Webb, 2005).

The results of this study also suggest that consumers may be slightly less likely to purchase from an organization if both parties do not display support for the common social issue. Taking no position or having unaligned positions brings about lower purchase intentions for the brand. As reflected in the literature review of this study, purchase intentions are a strong determinate of consumer opinions and are extremely important to examine in the context of organization and influencer relationships before strategizing due to the high cost of influencer-marketing (Breves, 2019; Droesch & Williamson, 2020). Studies mentioned in the literature review found that high purchase intentions correlated with aligned influencer and organization fit, which measured effects of factors like physical attractiveness, source credibility, trustworthiness, and more (Breves et al., 2019; Mohr & Webb, 2005). As expected, this study suggests similar results as previous literature based on the respondent results. Purchase intentions rise when an organization and influencer show support for a common social issue and fall when unaligned or no positions are taken. These results are valuable to influencer-marketing specialists and suggest that working with influencers consistent with an organization's social issue positions could have an impact on the return on investment of an influencer.

Overall, this study provides several factors for organizations and influencer-marketing professionals to consider or reevaluate when partnering with influencers. While the study results do not indicate absolute explanations regarding the issue of fit between influencers and organizations, suggestions and cautionary recommendations can be interpreted from the data collected. The relationship between an influencer and an organization can be complex, and many

factors can affect the effectiveness of the partnership. The literature review of this study displays how perceived fit is one of these factors, which can also be influenced by factors such as values, credibility, aesthetic, physical attractiveness, and now, social issue positioning (Breves, 2019; Harmon-Kizer, 2017; Kamins, 1990).

Ultimately, marketing professionals and organizations should evaluate influencer partnerships in a well-rounded manner that includes factors like social issue positioning as it can influence the perceived fit of the partnership, consumer purchase intentions, and organizational trust. Organizations that are interested in creating long-lasting, effective, and consistent partnerships should consider the importance of corresponding social issue positioning between the influencer and organization.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations exist within this study that affect the results and interpretations of the subsequent data. First, the main study survey was distributed to participants that may have had financial motivations rather than direct intentions of sharing their honest opinions and intently participating in the study. The compensation for the survey was also insignificant, especially for a participant pool made up of predominantly highly educated participants. The minimal reward could have affected participant motivation and dedication to the survey.

Regarding the study sample, the majority of respondents were male, which is not reflective of the target audience of beauty influencers, women. By collecting responses from an audience that does not directly align with the industry target audience, the data may not be entirely accurate for the beauty influencer-marketing industry specifically. Significant differences in opinions were displayed between genders regarding the variable of purchase intention, but no significant differences were found otherwise. It is acknowledged that the

difference in purchase intention could have been impacted by the type of product discussed in the scenario (skincare), which is a female-dominated industry and market just as the beauty influencer industry. Future research on this topic, or any topic regarding beauty influencer-marketing, should strive to acquire a sample reflective of the current target audience statistics regarding gender.

The study was designed to be text-based in order to avoid predispositions unrelated to the variables being measured. However, using text-based scenarios throughout each condition brought about several limitations. As mentioned in the study, beauty and physical attractiveness have been found to be significant factors in successful influencer-marketing (Kamins, 1990). Without having this factor present for the scenarios, it is possible that a realistic scenario of an influencer and organization partnership was not able to be interpreted. Social media and influencer-marketing are extremely reliant on visuals, so taking that factor out of these fictional scenarios could have affected consumer reactions to the information. Utilizing text-based scenarios may have also affected the level of attention that respondents gave to the survey. Reading text with no visual components may have been confusing and difficult to comprehend and apply to questions quickly, which could have impacted consumer opinions.

Two different social issues were used in the scenarios to increase the generalizability of the research. However, there are many more social issues that organizations, influencers, and consumers have a passion for that may lead to different opinions. Due to racial justice and mental health awareness being utilized in these scenarios, it may be difficult to generalize the results beyond these respective social issues. Another important limitation to address regarding social issues is consumer opinion. To measure if predisposed consumer opinions about the social issues affected the results, respondents were asked what their personal opinion of the social issue

at hand was. Results indicated that consumer opinion was generally supportive of the issues at hand, which could have influenced results. There is also no guarantee that participants were truthful when responding to this question.

Instagram was utilized as the social platform in each scenario and condition due to its popularity for influencer-marketing. While this is reflective of the current market, Instagram is certainly not the only platform utilizing social media. Further research on this topic should explore if the variables are influenced across different platforms like TikTok, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube.

This experimental design compared organizations and influencers that either strongly supported a social issue or did not share an opinion about the social issue. The study did not explore the possibility of competing opinions between the organization and influencer regarding a social issue. For example, if a brand strongly supports racial justice but partners with an influencer that opposes that social issue, the results of this study could not be applied to interpret consumer opinions. In increasingly polarizing times, future research should investigate the perceived fit and effectiveness of such a partnership.

Lastly, throughout the analysis of this research, the interaction of variables with one another was not measured or computed. Each variable is assumed to be dependent solely based upon the scenario manipulation rather than the interaction of each dependent variable upon one another. Because of this assumption, the study cannot evaluate if, for example, the respondent's perception of fit influenced their rating of organizational trust or intent to purchase. Rather, the study finds if the scenario manipulation affected those variables independently. Future studies expanding upon these findings could study the interactions between each variable to get a more specific understanding of how each variable is affected by the other.

Conclusion

This study tested and examined the effect(s) that social issue positioning can have on the effectiveness of organization and influencer partnerships through measuring variables of perceived fit, organizational trust, and purchase intentions. The findings of this research expand the current literature and research regarding influencer-marketing strategies and the importance of fit between influencers and organizations by introducing the unexplored factor of social issue positioning to be considered when creating a partnership. Ultimately, the results of this study determined that when organizations partner with influencers that share the same position as the organization regarding a common social issue, it can result in the perceived fit of their relationship, organizational trust, and purchase intentions being higher than if the positions were not mutual. Future research on this topic should explore the effects of more social issues and how opposing positions towards the social issues might affect consumer opinions. As this research and the literature throughout this study suggest, strategic influencer-marketing professionals should consider consistency between organizations and influencers on several factors, including social issue positioning, before moving forward with the partnership.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY ITEMS

Questions for scenarios regarding racial justice:

Screening Question (If no, respondent is brought to end of survey)

Do you have an active Instagram account that you use regularly?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Manipulation Checks *(conducted in both pre-test & main study; reported only in pre-test)*

Based on the scenario provided, rate your opinion about Influencer Z's position on racial justice.

(1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree)

1. Influencer Z strongly supports racial justice.
2. Influencer Z is an advocate for racial justice.
3. Influencer Z thinks racial justice is an important social issue.

How concerned do you think the influencer is about racial justice based on the description provided?

1. Not concerned ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Very concerned

To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The influencer displayed a strong, supportive position about racial justice to their followers.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Neither agree or disagree
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

Based on the scenario provided, rate your opinion about Organization A's position on racial justice. (1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree)

1. Organization A strongly supports racial justice.
2. Organization A is an advocate for racial justice.
3. Organization A thinks racial justice is an important social issue.

How concerned do you think the organization is about racial justice based on the description provided?

2. Not concerned ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Very concerned

To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The organization displayed a strong, supportive position about racial justice to its followers.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

Perceived Fit (*The following two questions were combined as one scale measuring perceived fit*)

Based on the scenario provided, rate your perception of the overall fit between Organization A and Influencer Z based on their descriptions. (Scale derived from Till and Busler, 2000)

**For reference, fit is your perception of how well the organization and influencer match together based on many factors like credibility, consistency, interpersonal connection, aesthetic, values, and more.*

1. Does not belong together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Belongs with
2. Does not go together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Does go together
3. Does not fit together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ does fit together

Rate your perception of the fit between Organization A and Influencer Z based only on the social issue presented in the descriptions. (Scale derived from Till and Busler, 2000)

1. Does not belong together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Belongs with
2. Does not go together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Does go together
3. Does not fit together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ does fit together

**The following question was not included in perceived fit scale but was analyzed individually*

To what degree did the positions taken on the social issue affect your perception of the influencer and organization's fit as partners?

1. Did not affect perception at all
2. Somewhat affected perception
3. Unsure
4. Very much affected perception
5. Only factor that affected perception

Trust

Use the following statements to rate your trust in Organization A based on the scenario given. (Scale derived from Veloustsou, 2015)

- a. Organization A is trustworthy (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)
- b. Organization A is credible (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)
- c. Organization A has integrity (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)

Purchase Intention

If you were interested in buying a skincare item from Organization A, promoted by Influencer Z, rate your likelihood to purchase a product from Organization A on the following scales. (Scale derived from Yi, 1990)

- a. Unlikely ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Likely
- b. Impossible ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Possible
- c. Improbable ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Probable

Social Issue Position

What is your position on the social issue of racial justice in America?

1. Strongly oppose
2. Somewhat oppose
3. No opinion / neutral
4. Somewhat support

5. Strongly support

Questions for scenarios regarding mental health awareness:

Screening Question (If no, respondent is brought to end of survey)

Do you have an active Instagram account that you use regularly?

- c. Yes
- d. No

Manipulation Checks

Based on the scenario provided, rate your opinion about Influencer Z's position on mental health awareness (1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree)

- 4. Influencer Z strongly supports mental health awareness.
- 5. Influencer Z is an advocate for mental health awareness.
- 6. Influencer Z thinks mental health awareness is an important social issue.

How concerned do you think the influencer is about mental health awareness based on the description provided?

- 3. Not concerned ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Very concerned

To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The influencer displayed a strong, supportive position about mental health awareness to their followers.

- 6. Strongly disagree
- 7. Somewhat disagree
- 8. Neither agree or disagree
- 9. Somewhat agree
- 10. Strongly agree

Based on the scenario provided, rate your opinion about Organization A's position on mental health awareness. (1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree)

- 6. Organization A strongly supports racial justice (or mental health awareness).
- 7. Organization A is an advocate for racial justice (or mental health awareness).
- 8. Organization A thinks racial justice (or mental health awareness) is an important social issue.

How concerned do you think the organization is about mental health awareness based on the description provided?

- 4. Not concerned ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Very concerned

To what degree do you agree with the following statement: The organization displayed a strong, supportive position about mental health awareness to its followers.

- 4. Strongly disagree
- 5. Somewhat disagree
- 6. Neither agree nor disagree
- 9. Somewhat agree
- 10. Strongly agree

Perceived Fit (*The following two questions were combined as one scale measuring perceived fit*)

Based on the scenario provided, rate your perception of the overall fit between Organization A and Influencer Z based on their descriptions. (Scale derived from Till and Busler, 2000)

**For reference, fit is your perception of how well the organization and influencer match together based on many factors like credibility, consistency, interpersonal connection, aesthetic, values, and more.*

4. Does not belong together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Belongs with
5. Does not go together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Does go together
6. Does not fit together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ does fit together

Rate your perception of the fit between Organization A and Influencer Z based only on the social issue presented in the descriptions. (Scale derived from Till and Busler, 2000)

4. Does not belong together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Belongs with
5. Does not go together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Does go together
6. Does not fit together ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ does fit together

**The following question was not included in perceived fit scale but was analyzed individually*

To what degree did the positions taken on the social issue affect your perception of the influencer and organization's fit as partners?

6. Did not affect perception at all
7. Somewhat affected perception
8. Unsure
9. Very much affected perception
10. Only factor that affected perception

Trust

Use the following statements to rate your trust in Organization A based on the scenario given. (Scale derived from Veloustsou, 2015)

- d. Organization A is trustworthy (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)
- e. Organization A is credible (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)
- f. Organization A has integrity (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)

Purchase Intention

If you were interested in buying a skincare item from Organization A, promoted by Influencer Z, rate your likelihood to purchase a product from Organization A on the following scales. (Scale derived from Yi, 1990)

- a. Unlikely ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Likely
- b. Impossible ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Possible
- c. Improbable ←---1---2---3---4---5---→ Probable

Social Issue Position

What is your position on the social issue of mental health awareness in America?

6. Strongly oppose
7. Somewhat oppose
8. No opinion / neutral
9. Somewhat support

10. Strongly support

Demographics

Which option best describes your gender identification?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Other: _____
- d. Prefer not to say

What is your race?

- a. Asian/Pacific Islander
- b. Black/African American
- c. Hispanic/Latino/Latina
- d. Native American
- e. White/Caucasian
- f. Other (please specify)

What is your age?

- a. Please type a whole number: _____

What is the highest level of education you have received?

- a. No high school diploma
- b. High school diploma or GED
- c. Associate's degree
- d. Bachelor's degree
- e. Master's or doctorate degree
- f. Other: _____

APPENDIX B: STIMULI (SCENARIOS)

Scenarios 1a & 1b: (Aligned positions on social issue)

1a. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **The organization is also extremely dedicated to diversity in their company, products, and media content. As racial injustices in America have resurfaced heavily on social media lately, Organization A has used their Instagram platform to support justice and equality for black people by publicly donating to a fund to fight racial injustices that black people face, posting hundreds of Instagram stories over the past few months on the topic, and sharing several posts in their feed on the topic.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Influencer Z began sharing Instagram stories sharing her support for black people and businesses, as well as promoting racial equality and donating to a relevant cause. Since then, she has shared hundreds of Instagram stories and one feed post full of content supporting the black community.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content, and it is the only skincare organization she endorses.

1b. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **The organization is also extremely dedicated to mental health awareness in their company, products, and media content. As mental health awareness in America has surfaced heavily on social media lately, Organization A has used their Instagram platform to support those in need of mental health assistance by publicly donating to a fund to support mental health awareness, posting hundreds of Instagram stories over the past few months on the topic, and sharing several posts in their feed on the topic.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America, Influencer Z began sharing Instagram stories sharing her support for those struggling with mental health issues, as well as promoting resources and donating to a relevant cause. Since then, she has shared hundreds of Instagram stories and one feed post full of content supporting the awareness and importance of mental health.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content, and it is the only skincare organization she endorses.

Scenario 2a & 2b: (Influencer does not address social issue while organization does):

2a. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **The organization is also extremely dedicated to diversity in their company, products, and media content. As racial injustices in America have resurfaced heavily on social media lately, Organization A has used their Instagram platform to support justice and equality for black people by publicly donating to a fund to fight racial injustices that black people face, posting hundreds of Instagram stories over the past few months on the topic, and sharing several posts in their feed on the topic.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Influencer Z has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and has continued to post her regular content. She has not shared any content about the issue or given any insight into her opinion or stance on the social issue.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their

content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

2b. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **The organization is also extremely dedicated to mental health awareness in their company, products, and media content. As mental health awareness in America has surfaced heavily on social media lately, Organization A has used their Instagram platform to support those in need of mental health assistance by publicly donating to a fund to support mental health awareness, posting hundreds of Instagram stories over the past few months on the topic, and sharing several posts in their feed on the topic.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America lately, Influencer Z has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and has continued to post her regular content. She has not shared any content about the issue or given any insight into her opinion or stance on the social issue.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Scenario 3a & 3b: (Influencer addresses social issue while organization does not):

3a. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Organization A has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and have continued to post their regular content about their organization. They have not shared any content about the issue or given a position of support or opposition to any part of the social issue.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Influencer Z began sharing Instagram stories sharing her support for black people and businesses, as well as promoting racial equality and donating to a relevant cause. Since then, she has shared hundreds of Instagram stories and one feed post full of content supporting the black community.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

- 3b. Organization Description:** Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America lately, Organization A has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and have continued to post their regular content about their organization. They have not shared any content about the issue or given a position of support or opposition to any part of the social issue.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America, Influencer Z began sharing Instagram stories sharing her support for those struggling with mental health issues, as well as promoting resources and donating to a relevant cause. Since then, she has shared hundreds of Instagram stories and one feed post full of content supporting the awareness and importance of mental health.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Scenario 4a & 4b: (Neither influencer or organization addresses social issue):

4a. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Organization A has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and have continued to post their regular content about their organization. They have not shared any content about the issue or given a position of support or opposition to any part of the social issue.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As racial injustices began to surface heavily on social media and through the form of protests in America, Influencer Z has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and has continued to post her regular content. She has not shared any content about the issue or given any insight into her opinion or stance on the social issue.**

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

4b. Organization Description: Organization A is an increasingly popular skincare organization that provides clean, natural skincare to its customers. They have over 300,000 followers on Instagram alone and often work with influencers to promote their products. Their mission is to provide quality skincare to both men and women. Some of their products include face wash, anti-aging creams, body wash, and sunscreen. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America lately, Organization A has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and has continued to post their regular content about their organization. They have not shared any content about the issue or given a position of support or opposition to any part of the social issue.** While Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

Influencer Description: Lifestyle influencer Z has been a social media influencer for several years and has just over 800,000 followers on Instagram. She works with several different organizations like those in the fashion, food, and beauty industries. **As mental health awareness has surfaced heavily on social media in America lately, Influencer**

Z has not spoken or shared about the issue in any context and has continued to post her regular content. She has not shared any content about the issue or given any insight into her opinion or stance on the social issue.

Partnership: Over the past year, Influencer Z has had a close partnership with Organization A, the skincare organization described above. She shares content about the organization and its products several times each month in both her Instagram stories and feed posts. While it is not the only organization she supports and works with, Organization A is by far the organization she works with most in terms of sharing their content. Also, while Organization A works with hundreds of influencers, Influencer Z is one of their top five influencers involved with the organization.

VITA

Macie McCoy was born September 6, 1999, in West Monroe, Louisiana. She is the daughter of Kerry and Theresa McCoy. A 2017 graduate of West Monroe High School, she received a Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communication from Texas Christian University in 2020. She enrolled in an accelerated graduate program during her senior year at the university. Throughout her time at TCU, she held multiple internships for local agencies and was a member of the Epsilon Alpha Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma and the Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta.

She will receive a Master of Science in Strategic Communication in May 2021. While working on her master's degree, she held a teaching assistantship position from August 2020 to May 2021.