The effects of internal and external CSR on employees'
online ambassadorship intentions.
Exploring the differences.

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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming ever more important part of organizational conduct due to its strategic value for achieving a wide variety of beneficial outcomes through improving the relationships between the organization and its stakeholders. The underlying mechanisms through which internally and externally directed CSR initiatives (ICSR and ECSR) are interpreted at the individual level however, remain understudied. At the same time, the increasing importance of employees owed to their emergence as credible sources of organizational information urges scientists and practitioners to gain a better understanding of the organizational and individual factors that could drive online ambassadorship behaviors. Drawing from theoretical developments in social identity theory (SIT) the current study identifies organizational identification as a central mechanism linking the socially responsible organizational initiatives with the online ambassadorship intentions of employees. It further argues employees evaluate internal and external CSR differently in accordance to the differing self-enhancement needs these organizational actions satisfy – through perceived internal respect (PIR) and perceived external prestige (PEP) respectively. Finally, building on the understanding of PEP as a superior predictor of organizational identification, the study suggests that ECSR practices would impact online ambassadorship intentions more strongly in comparison to ICSR initiatives. An online survey was conducted amongst 151 representatives of the general working population. It was designed to measure employees' levels of perceived CSR, their levels of organizational identification, the external prestige and internal respect they derive from being organizational members, and the extent to which they would be willing to engage in online ambassadorship behaviors. The results obtained indicated that contrary to hypothesized, ICSR initiatives predict online ambassadorship intentions significantly better that ECSR practices. Further analyses supported the findings by providing additional insight regarding the different ways through which internal and external CSR are perceived and interpreted at the individual level.

KEYWORDS: Corporate social responsibility, Online ambassadorship, Organizational identification, Perceived internal respect, Perceived external prestige

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The expectations and demands that society holds towards the business are growing due to the increased prominence of various environmental and social issues such as climate change and inequality (McKinsey, 2019). Thus, over the past few years there has been a notable growth of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices employed by different organizations as CSR has become a central topic of discussion throughout the world of business. More than 8000 companies have joined the UN Global Compact - a mechanism encouraging the development and implementation of socially responsible policies (United Nations Global Compact, 2014) and 93% of the world's largest companies report on their CSR policies and initiatives (KPMG, 2017).

Academic interest in the topic has also raised and many scientists have devoted their efforts to studying the various antecedents and outcomes of CSR. Aguins and Glavas (2012) found that the existing literature on CSR predominantly focuses on the institutional and organizational (macro) level of analysis. Thus, through decades of academic research the relationships between CSR and various organizational level outcomes such as financial performance (Margolis, Elfenbein, & Walsh, 2009), consumer behavior (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), investment intentions (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006), and the attraction and retention of talent (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008) have been well documented. As a result CSR is increasingly been seen and treated as an important strategic asset for organizations.

In order to gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving these and other similar outcomes, scholars have been trying to understand CSR from the perspective of the individual. Despite the recent rapid increase in academic interest however, micro (individual) level CSR research still remains largely misrepresented in academia (Glavas, 2016, Radic & Glavas, 2019). What is more, much of the individual level analysis done on CSR has concentrated primarily on external stakeholders and in particular, on the customers (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Sen et al., 2006). A prominent perspective on the topic draws from social identity theory and emphasizes the customer-company identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Lichtenstein, Drimwright, & Braig, 2006; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Organizational identification (OI) presents a central concept in these studies. It refers to the development of a cognitive link with an organization, developing a perception of belongingness to an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). It presents a major point of scientific interest as it can cause a variety of company-

favoring attitudes and behaviors (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Those can include product purchase, emotional attachment and loyalty, amongst other (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010).

It is important to note however, that other important stakeholder groups such as the employees have been largely overlooked by micro level CSR research despite their essential role in any company. In today's fierce business environment the ability to attract, motivate and retain highly skilled and talented workers presents an important competitive advantage. Never before have employees been so instrumental for the way their organizations are seen by outsiders. In today's interactive communication environment, dominated by SNS and driven by user-generated content, official organizational channels are far from the only sources of information shaping the public view of a company. Apart from being essential in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the company's stakeholders, employees are increasingly seen as credible sources of organizational information through their use of social networking sites (SNS) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) platforms (Dreher, 2014). In that sense, employees are capable of influencing their organization's reputation like never before, thus becoming powerful organizational ambassadors (Dreher, 2014). Although academic attention has focused on the content (van Zoonen, Verhoeven, & Vliegenthart, 2016) and consequences (Dreher, 2014) of online ambassadorship, less is known about the organizational and individual factors driving such behaviors. Previous research has associated online ambassadorship with organizational identification (van Zoonen, Bartels, van Prooijen, & Schouten, 2018), however, to the knowledge of the writer, it hasn't been studied in relation to particular organizational level antecedents, let alone in in the context of CSR.

Although the positive relationship between the CSR of a company and the levels of organizational identification of its employees is well documented (Hameed, Riaz, Arain, & Farooq, 2016; Kim et al., 2010), we still have limited understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which CSR is perceived and interpreted at the individual level and of how these processes influence employees' behavior. What is more, scientists categorize CSR initiatives based on whether they are directed at internal or external stakeholder groups. External CSR (ECSR) comprises activities targeting societal and environmental issues that mainly benefits stakeholders external to the organization (Brammer, Willington, & Rayton, 2007). Internal CSR (ICSR) on the other hand aims to improve the internal stakeholder's physical and psychological well-being (Scheidler, Edinger-Schons, Spanjol, & Wieseke, 2019). There is scientific evidence that employees perceive internally and externally directed CSR differently (El Akremi, Gond, Swaen, De Roeck, & Igalens, 2015), suggesting that their interpretations and responses might also vary depending on the target group. And while both

ECSR and ICSR can facilitate the organizational identification of employees, this happens through different underlying mechanisms - namely the employees' perceptions of external prestige (PEP) proceeding from ECSR initiatives and their perceptions of internal respect (PIR) stemming from ICSR activities (Hameed et al., 2016). Organizational identification has shown to be a strong predictor of various employee work-related attitudes and behaviors (Riketta, 2005) including online ambassadorship (Van Zoonen et al., 2018). Since CSR initiatives influence the OI of employees differently depending on whether they are externally or internally directed - through PEP and PIR respectively, it can be expected that there might be consequent discrepancies in employees' behavioral responses and intentions. To the knowledge of the researcher however, there is no empirical evidence for such differences. In their research on the varying effects of ICSR and ECSR on organizational identification, Hameed et al. (2016) acknowledge this gap in academic knowledge and suggest that future studies should focus on possible differences in particular behavioral responses. In an attempt to answer this call the current research will focus on online ambassadorship as an instance of a particularly beneficial behavioral outcome. In particular, it will try to contribute to the existing body of academic literature by exploring whether employees' online ambassadorship intentions are influenced differently by internal and external CSR initiatives by examining the different ways through which these organizational actions are perceived and evaluated at the individual level. The proposed research question of the current academic work can therefore be formulated as follows:

RQ: To what extent do internal and external CSR differ in their effects on employees' online ambassadorship intentions?

1.1 Relevance

Providing a comprehensive answer to the research question of the current research would add to the existing body of academic knowledge in a few ways. Firstly, it will contribute to the micro-level CSR research by attempting to provide empirical evidence for an association between the socially responsible practices of organizations and particular responses from employees' behalf. Next, drawing form social identity theory developments the research will examine the underlying mechanisms through which such a relationship might be established, in an attempt to expand our understanding of the ways CSR is interpreted at an individual level, especially in relation to one's perceptions of internal respect and external prestige. Additionally, it will try to address the gap in CSR literature highlighted

by Hameed et al. (2016) by documenting the varying effects internal and external CSR might have on employees' behavioral intentions. Furthermore, it will attempt to contribute to the previous knowledge on organizational-supportive behavior by looking for empirical evidence that would link online ambassadorship intentions to a particular organizational-level antecedent – CSR. In the process, a better understanding of the underlying motivations of employees to engage in such behaviors will be sought.

The findings of the current research could further be useful to organizations for understanding and achieving the communication and ambassadorship potential of their employees. They would also throw more light on the non-financial benefits internal and external CSR initiatives can bring, allowing managers to elaborate more diverse and effective CSR strategies.

1.2 Chapter outline

The chapters of the current work will introduce the reader to all steps undertaken to provide a comprehensive answer to the research question. Chapter two, will explain the theoretical rationale behind the research by introducing and discussing relevant theoretical developments and empirical findings regarding the role of self-enhancement needs in the development of organizational identification and the evaluation of organizational attributes. It will highlight the importance of the perception of respect and prestige for one's self-concept and sense of belongingness and present internal and external CSR as sources of such perceptions. Finally, it will propose psychological pathways through which ICSR and ECSR affect online ambassadorship. Chapter three discusses the methodological approach to finding a meaningful answer to the research questions. It details the elaboration of the online questionnaire by proposing reliable scales for the measurement of the main concepts of interest. Chapter four presents the results from all statistical analyses conducted and briefly interprets them in relation to the hypothesized outcomes. Based on this, the proposed hypotheses are either accepted or disregarded. The final chapter of the current work provides an interpretation and a thorough discussion on the meaning of the results in accordance to the research question. It further draws implications for previous theoretical developments and attempts to give theoretically-bound explanation for the unexpected results. Ultimately, the text offers a comprehensive answer of the research question, based on the findings of the research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Online ambassadorship and organizational identification

The development of Web 2.0 and the increasing integration of social networking sites (SNS) in our private and professional lives have changed the information and communication landscape leading to important implications for businesses. Thus, organizational information, news, opinions and experiences, positive or negative, authentic or fake, can instantaneously spread throughout the world to more than 3 billion active social media users. In the interactive SNS environment driven by user-generated content, official organizational representatives and communication channels are far from the only online source of information that shapes the public perceptions of any organization. External stakeholders' perceptions and evaluations of the organization's social performance are often influenced by the satisfaction expressed by employees of that organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Furthermore, customers increasingly seek information regarding organizations, their products and services through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) sources such as SNS (Gruen, Osmonbekov & Czaplewski, 2006). In that context, because they are familiar with an organization's culture, practices and business conduct, employees are perceived as sources of organizational information of high credibility (Dreher, 2014). The influence of their online behaviour in outsider's perceptions of the organization has further reinforced their position as critical stakeholders.

Previous research has identified various organizational benefits associated with employees' use of social media and in particular with their online ambassadorship behaviours. Organizational ambassadorship on the behalf of employees can be considered a form of organizational citizenship behavior in that it is a discretionary behavior, not explicitly acknowledged by the formal reward system that ultimately aims to benefit the organization (Organ, 1988). In the context of the current study, organizational ambassadorship represents a form of positive communications comprised of but not limited to disclosing and promoting positive organizational information to external audiences. For example employees might engage in positive word of mouth with their networks, communicating their positive attitudes and experiences with the organization.

 In an online context employee ambassadorship might include activities such as publishing positive opinions regarding the employing company or its brands in the form of publications or comments, increasing the reach of organizational messages by sharing them; recommending the company's products and services through eWOM; portraying the organization as an attractive place to work, etc. (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017). Furthermore,

through employees' online ambassadorship, certain organizational attributes and characteristics such as values, practices, culture and achievements become visible to various key stakeholder groups such as existing or potential customers, shareholders, business partners, community members and future employees (Dreher, 2014). Employees can thus help establish and reinforce these relationships, enhance the company's reputation and ultimately contribute to the organizational goals, taking the role of powerful organizational ambassadors (van Zoonen et al., 2018). Employees' use of SNS has therefore emerged as an important aspect of the reputation management of any organization. Although research interest in the field is growing, there is still a need to gain a more profound understanding of the organizational and individual factors as well as the underlying mechanisms behind them that serve as antecedents for employee engagement in online ambassadorship behaviours.

 One concept that has been associated with various employees' work-related attitudes and behaviours and with online ambassadorship in particular is organisational identification (Riketta, 2005; van Zoonen et al., 2018). Organisational identification (OI) is theoretically based on social identity theory (SIT) which builds on the understanding that the self-concept is defined not only in terms of the unique idiosyncratic characteristics of the personal identity but also includes one's social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). According to SIT scholars Tajfel and Turner (2004) people tend to classify themselves in relation to various social categories or groups such as age, gender, ethnicity, organizational belonging, etc. that serve to simplify and order the social environment. In this process of social identification, one fuses with the social category and sees themselves akin to the other members of the group, attributing important group traits to the self (Kippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). This system of social categories one perceives themselves as belonging to acts as a reference for their own place in society and represents the basis for their social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

 Social identity theorists have acknowledged organizations as important groups for social categorization and have therefore defined organizational identification as: "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) of which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). The stronger this sense of belonging, the more of the organization's characteristics, values and interests one integrates into their own self-conception. The group's interests are seen as self-interests and individuals are naturally driven to contribute to them. Organizational identification has thus been related to "attitudinal and behavioral support for the organisation" (Patchen, 1970, p.155). Accounting for the various ways it can benefit organizations, online ambassadorship has been introduced as a particular form of

behavioral support associated with OI (van Zoonen et al., 2018). Considering employees' awareness of their role in shaping the organizational reputation through their online activity (van Zoonen, van der Meer, & Verhoeven, 2014), online ambassadorship activities such as the sharing of favorable company-related content on social media present employees with opportunities to act in their respective organization's best interest and contribute to the organizational goals. When employees think that they can contribute to the organizational success, they are willing to undertake ambassadorship behaviors on SNS (Sakka & Ahammad, 2020).

As already discussed, online ambassadorship behaviors can be very beneficial for companies but in order to gain a deeper insight of the antecedents of such behaviors, it is important to also account for the benefits they can bring to those engaging in them - the employees. Fiesler, Meckel and Ranzini (2015) argue that when an organization forms a valuable part of one's self-concept, it is likely that it also forms a part of their online identity. Furthermore, the SNS environment presents its users with abundant opportunities for social comparison which is related to, amongst many others, one's self-evaluation and affiliation needs (Vogel, Rose, Roberts & Eckles, 2014). Thus, expressing belongingness to a company on social media through the sharing of positive information about it for example, can be seen as a form of self-expression and self-presentation, a strategic construction of a positive social image (Gonzalez & Hancock, 2011). In that sense, gaining a more profound understanding of the comparative nature of social identification and reflecting on its implications for organizational identification and online ambassadorship would throw light on what motivates employees to engage in such behaviors.

Tajfel and Turner (2004) introduced the notion that social identification is "to a very large extent relational and comparative" (p. 283). Individuals define themselves through the social categories they belong to relative to people belonging to different social categories. One is defined as *better* or *worse* than members of other groups, *young* is only meaningful in relation to *old* (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). A central pillar of social identity theory is the assumption that people are intrinsically driven to maintain or enhance their self-esteem in their strive for a positive self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This extends to their need to maintain a positive social identity and is an important consideration when discussing any form of social identification. Social groups and the membership in them come with certain meanings attached to them - either positive or negative. Considering the comparative nature of social identification, positive social identity is rooted in the favourable evaluations one makes about the social groups they belong to as compared to other referent groups. An

individual's social identity is fostered when they perceive the social categories they identify with to be positively differentiated from comparable groups or categories (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In organizational context this often happens through the evaluation and comparison of company attributes like values, practices and other characteristics. When an organization is perceived to have attractive attributes and characteristics, those identifying with it may incorporate such positive qualities into their own self-definitions (Dutton et al., 1994). Hence, organizational membership becomes a valued part of one's self-conception. Ashforth and Mael (1989) argue that the desire for self-definition and enhancement of the self-concept drives, at least partially, the process of organizational identification. The more distinctive and favorable the attributes of a company appear and the higher evaluation these receive (by members or outsiders), the greater the social value of belonging to it and the more attractive it is for people to identify with.

As previously mentioned, social media provides its users with opportunities to express important aspects of their identities but also strategically present such aspects. It is likely that in their strive for self-enhancement employees try to manage the impressions others form of them by selectively promoting positive self-relevant information (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2013). They can for example present themselves as members of a successful and socially responsible working organization. Thus, aware of their influence of organizational reputation, employees might seek to increase the salience of positive organizational attributes and practices through online ambassadorship behaviors, contributing to the favorable evaluations members of their social networks form with regards to the respective company and improving its social standings. This way employees can derive pride from being a part of a valued and respected company while also benefiting from positive external evaluations "spilling over" to them as organizational members and fostering their self-esteem (van Zoonen et al., 2018). It can be assumed therefore, that online ambassadorship behaviors may serve as a way to pursue organizational goals but also as a tool of self-presentation and self-enhancement.

2.2 CSR and organizational identification

Considering the relationship between organizational identification and online ambassadorship, it can be expected that distinctive and valued organisational attributes that foster employees' OI and positive sense of self would also influence their online ambassadorship behaviours. An organizational attribute that has been linked with various positive organizational attitudes and behaviors including organizational identification and

organizational citizenship behaviors is corporate social responsibility (CSR; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). CSR is considered a set of various voluntary practices and initiatives on the behalf of an organisation that are undertaken to promote social good and the welfare of different stakeholder groups (Farooq, Rupp, & Farooq, 2017). The CSR conduct of an organization might include a large variety of activities including but not limited to philanthropic giving, environmental sustainability programs, diversity and inclusion policies, community development, volunteering and providing professional development opportunities (Rupp & Malloy, 2015) It is therefore likely that CSR initiatives are highly valued and respected, especially considering the rising demands and expectations of society in relation to environmental and social issues. Thus, CSR can be viewed as an important characteristic which employees take into consideration when evaluating the distinctiveness and attractiveness of an organisation (Farooq et al., 2017). There is scientific evidence that corporate social responsibility is a particularly important organizational attribute associated with OI (Hameed et al., 2016), even more so than other relevant characteristics such as market- and financially-based performance (Carmeli, Gilat & Waldman, 2007). As previously discussed one's identification with an organization is strengthened when they perceive it to add to the continuity of their self-concept, provide them with a sense of distinctiveness and enhance their self-esteem (Dutton et al., 1994). In that regard CSR can serve as a point of favourable comparisons with referent organizations contributing to one's sense of distinctiveness. Kim et al. (2010) argue that the distinctiveness an organization achieves through acting in a socially responsible manner can be a factor in the development of organizational identification by the employee. Additionally, associating with an organization whose focus goes beyond the immediate business interest and that demonstrates concern with social issues and the well-being of various stakeholders, provides employees with opportunities to integrate some of these positive qualities into their self-definitions, contributing to an increased self-esteem. Furthermore, employees weigh the social value of their affiliation with a company through their beliefs of how outsiders view it (Dutton et al., 1994). Outsiders' perceptions of an organization provide employees with information on how they and their behaviors as organizational members are likely to be perceived and evaluated in society. When company attributes are well-regarded and respected by outsiders, as are CSR practices, one sees greater social value in their organizational belonging which strengthens their organization identification. As the OI and the associated positive qualities and evaluations become more salient, they contribute to one's positive social identity and ultimately strengthen their self-concept. Thus, by providing one with senses of self-

distinctiveness and heightened self-esteem from belonging to a socially responsible organization, CSR fosters one's organizational identification and enhances self-concept through increasing the salience of the socially valued identity. This suggests further alignment between one's interests and behaviors with those of the socially responsible organization, creating conditions and incentives for one to engage in online ambassadorship behaviors. The current research therefore hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 1a. CSR positively influences online ambassadorship intentions.

Hypothesis 1b: Organisational identification mediates the relationship between CSR and online ambassadorship intentions.

It is important to acknowledge that any discussions of the micro-level effects of corporate social responsibility is very much dependent on the particular classification of CSR utilized (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). As the current study is focused on the behavioral intentions of employees, it is worth noting that they have shown to differentiate between internally and externally directed CSR (El Akremi et al., 2015). For these reasons, the current study will undertake the perspective introduced by Brammer et al. (2007) that categorizes CSR practices in terms of whether they are directed at internal stakeholders - ICSR - or at external stakeholders - ECSR. The *Internal CSR* of a company comprises policies and initiatives aimed at improving the physical and psychological well-being of its employees and staff. These might include activities related to the health and safety of employees, their personal and professional development and work-life balance (Hammed et al., 2016). *External CSR* on the other hand is concerned with societal and environmental problems and causes relevant to various external stakeholders (Brammer et al., 2007). They comprise practices such as, amongst many others, charity, environmental protection, sustainability and community development. This categorization is very important from an employees' standpoint because the employees themselves are the intended beneficiaries of ICSR initiatives, while ECSR practices are directed primarily at external stakeholders. Thus, ICSR tends to be perceived by employees as self-focused and ECSR - as others-focused (Hameed et al. 2016). Therefore, there might be differences in the ways internal and external CSR influence employees' attitudes and behaviors, including organizational identification.

The understanding that individuals use their membership in or association with various social categories and groups to define their self-conceptions is central in the social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Driven by their intrinsic strive to maintain and enhance the

self-concept, people are attracted to identify with groups that project positive qualities and characteristics on them. Thus, by assessing the central, distinctive and enduring characteristics of an organization, people form their judgement of its attractiveness (Dutton, 1994). The group engagement model proposes that there are two types of status evaluations one makes when assessing the attractiveness of an organization that serve as antecedents of social identification - internal (self-) evaluations and external (reflected) evaluations (Collier and Esteban, 2007; Tyler & Blader, 2003). Considering that CSR has been argued to be a particularly important organizational attribute employees account for in evaluating the attractiveness of companies (Carmeli et al., 2007), it should be perceived and interpreted in relation to those same status evaluations. The first type of assessment suggests that organizational identification is affected by evaluations one makes regarding their own status within an organisation (internal or self-evaluations). Thus, self-focused internal CSR have shown to influence OI primarily through a mechanism referred to as perceived internal respect (PIR) which is based on those self-evaluations (Hameed et al. 2016). The second type - reflected evaluations - build on the perceptions one forms about the social status of their organisation or in other words - how outsiders view the organisation (Kim et al., 2010). Others-focused external CSR therefore contributes to OI primarily via *perceived external prestige (PEP)* comprising of external evaluations (Farooq et al., 2017).

2.3 Internal CSR and online ambassadorship

Respect is a particularly important concept in social psychology as it has been associated with both the well-being of individuals and the performance of collectives (Huo & Binning, 2008). It has been defined as "(perceived) worth accorded to one person by one or more others" (Spears, Ellemers, Doosje, & Branscombe, 2006, p. 179). Respect or more precisely the perceptions of respect are of great importance for social identification where one interprets others' attitudes, behaviors and judgments as an evaluation of their own status and self-worth within a particular social context and uses this information when assessing the attractiveness of a particular social group or category. These perceptions are commonly referred to as *perceived internal respect (PIR)* in organizational psychology. PIR reflects how employees think they are viewed by their employing organization and its members. Employees who feel valued and respected in their organisations benefit from higher self-esteem and maintain a positive view of themselves (Farooq et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is scientific evidence that perceptions of respect successfully fulfill the universal human needs

for belonging and status (Huo & Binning, 2008), and are therefore positively related to organizational identification (Fuller et al., 2006).

Although perceived respect is a subject of one's own judgments, it ultimately emerges from the treatment they receive from others – in organizational context it is based on signals coming from the working environment. The evaluations one makes regarding their self-worth and status within the company are often cued by organizational characteristics, policies and practices (Farooq et al., 2017). Hence, organizations themselves can be sources of perceived respect through policies and practices that demonstrate concern for the needs, interests and well-being of employees. Internal CSR activities that are primarily aimed at improving the physical and psychological well-being of employees and are often focused on their career and personal development can therefore signal employees that they are valued and respected within the organization and that their interests and well-being are a major concern for the company (Hameed et al., 2016). Career growth opportunities for example, often encouraged through ICSR initiatives such as professional development programs and trainings, have been associated with employee perceptions of respect (Fuller et al., 2006). Furthermore, when one sees themselves as a member of a valued group or collective, they form a bond with those they share the valued social identity with, which strengthens the sense of belonging (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Therefore the impression that the collective as such and all its members are valued, commonly referred to as generalized respect, is another important antecedent of organizational identification related to ICSR practices. ICSR thus fosters organizational identification by contributing to one's sense of self-worth and self-esteem, enhancing their sense of belonging to a valued group, and helping them maintain a positive personal identity. (Tyler & Blader, 2002).

What is more, when an organization strongly contributes to one's positive self-concept, they tend to integrate it as a part of their online identities (Fieseler et al., 2015), making it more likely for one to express this important part of their identity through their SNS activity by sharing self-relevant organizational information for example, which would suggest higher online ambassadorship intentions. Additionally, stronger levels of organisational identification affect employees' determination to pursue organisational goals and act in the group's best interest (van Zoonen et al., 2018). Being aware of their potential to contribute to the organizational reputation (van Zoonen et al., 2014), one might share self-relevant positive organizational information on social media, thereby facilitating the positive evaluations others form with regards to the company and its members, thus supporting the organization's best interest while satisfying their own self-enhancement needs.

Hypothesis 2a: Perceived ICSR positively influences online ambassadorship intentions through the mediating effect of organisational identification

Hypothesis 2b: Perceived internal respect mediates the relationship between perceived ICSR and organisational identification.

2.4 External CSR and online ambassadorship

Social identity theorists propose that the second type of evaluations that individuals make when assessing the attractiveness of a social category concern the group's prestige (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tyler & Blader, 2001). Because individuals use their membership in social groups to define their self-concept, these evaluations of the status of the social category are of key importance for the process of social identification. Perceived external prestige reflects the evaluations one makes about "the extent to which organizational outsiders view the firm in high regard or esteem because of positive, socially valued characteristics of the organization" (Fuller et al., 2006, p. 819) and is used to assess the social value of belonging to an organization (Dutton et al., 1994). How outsiders view the organization gives information to employees of how outsiders are likely to view them as members of that organization. Belonging to an organization that possesses socially valued characteristics makes individuals believe that those positive traits are transferred to them as organizational members. PEP enhances employees' self-concepts and self-worth especially when they believe that the organization they identify with is viewed as prestigious and distinctive (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Prestige is thus related to one's intrinsic motivation to maintain a positive social identity (Tyler & Blader, 2003). In fact, PEP has been distinguished as the most important antecedent for organizational identification by social identity theorists Ashforth and Mael (1989).

Farooq et al. (2017) argue that perceptions of organizational prestige are cued by organizational attributes and characteristics that are likely to be valued by outsiders. When a company demonstrates favorable qualities and engages in benevolent behaviors, its employees are likely to perceive that this would increase the status and reputation of the company in the eyes of outsiders. External CSR practices in particular reflect qualities that are recognized and respected in the society (Hameed et al., 2016) and improve the reputation of the organizations undertaking them. Philanthropy and community development for example have shown to enhance the views that outsiders hold of the company engaged in them (Brammer & Millington, 2005). Furthermore, the principal beneficiaries of any externally-focused CSR initiatives are the organization's external stakeholders – the same groups whose opinions

matter for employee's perceptions of organizational external prestige. Hence, ECSR practices are likely to signal employees that their company has a positive reputation, is valued and perceived as distinctive and prestigious by outsiders. This would in turn increase one's PEP, contribute to their sense of self-worth, and ultimately help them enhance their social identity. Pratt (1998) argues that one develops a positive social image if the organization they belong to is engaged with social causes. Employees thus form strong identification with organizations they perceive to be socially responsible (el Akremi et al., 2015).

As already discussed, OI has been associated with group-supportive behaviors on the behalf of the employees. These behaviors might include acting in the organization's best interest or pursuing organizational goals through distributing favorable organizational messages and information to online audiences as a means to positively influence the attitudes and behavioral intentions of external stakeholders. It can therefore be expected that ECSR initiatives that serve as a source of perceived external prestige to employees would be related to such group supportive behaviors and in particular to online ambassadorship. Furthermore, because employees' sense of self is at least in part derived from their organisation's social status, it is expected that they would engage in behaviours that aim to enhance it. Thus, by sharing favorable organizational information and showcasing the company's socially valued and distinctive characteristics and behaviors online, one might contribute to the positive reputation and prestige outsiders attribute to the firm. Contributing to the company's social status can in turn foster one's own social identity through what is described as a spillover of positive evaluations. This is in line with previous findings suggesting that employees are motivated to engage in online ambassadorship at least in part by their self-enhancement needs (van Prooijen & Wirtz, 2019; van Zoonen et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 3a: Perceived ECSR positively influences online ambassadorship intentions through the mediating effect of organisational identification.

Hypothesis 3b: Perceived external prestige mediates the relationship between perceived ECSR and organisational identification.

Previous research in the organizational justice and citizenship literature has proposed that when employees observe organizational actions, their judgments, attitudes and behavior are impacted by both who the source and target of the organizational action are (Lavelle, Rupp, Manegold, & Thornton, 2015). In the case of internal and external CSR the source of the action is the same - the organization. What differs is the target of those organizational

actions - internal or external stakeholders. Therefore, the differing targets of ICSR and ECSR practices might be instrumental in the formulating of employees' attitudinal and behavioral responses to such activities. Furthermore, the fact that ECSR and ICSR differ in the mechanisms through which they affect employees' organisational identification suggests that there might be differences in employees' behavioral responses to such practices. In that regard, Farooq et al. (2017) have undertaken a "target similarity" approach to exploring employees' behavioral responses to ICSR and ECSR, suggesting that internally and externally directed organizational actions impact organizational identification differently - through internal (PIR) or external (PEP) status evaluations, which in turn leads to internally or externally directed behavioral responses respectively. Their research provides empirical evidence that the organization-supportive behavior of employees whose organizational identification has primarily been built from perceptions of ECSR and external prestige may differ from the organization-supportive behavior of employees who primarily formed their OI under the influence of ICSR and perceived internal respect. In particular, their findings suggest that ECSR has a greater impact on externally focused employee behaviors as compared to ICSR. That is, when employees' self-definitions have benefited from identifying with an organization of high external prestige, they are naturally driven to engage in externally focused behaviors that aim to protect and enhance the external prestige of the organization as a way to maintain and foster their positive self-concept. Following these findings and building on the understanding that social media audiences – the primary targets of online ambassadorship behaviors – often include both personal and professional contacts and comprise people one has met at various times and domains of their life (Fieseler et al., 2015), the current research hypothesizes that ECSR initiatives would have a stronger influence on online ambassadorship as compared to ICSR initiatives.

Hypothesis 4: The effect of perceived ECSR on online ambassadorship intentions is stronger than that of perceived ICSR.

The proposed conceptual model of the current research can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model
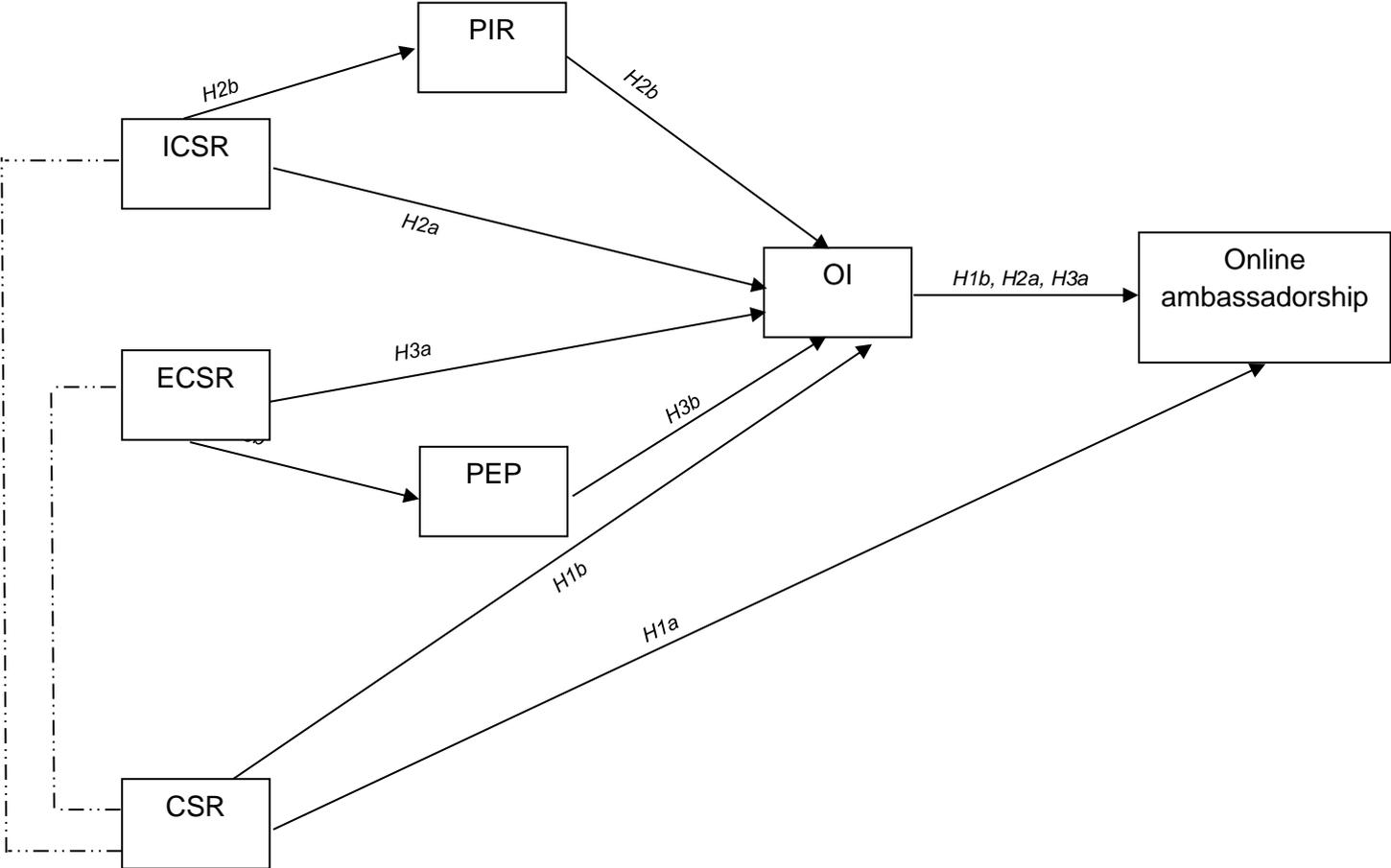
3. Method

The main goal of the current study is to examine relationship between the socially responsible practices and initiatives of an organization and the attitudes and behavioral intentions of its employees. In particular, it focuses on the differences, if there are any, between the effects of perceived ICSR and perceived ECSR on the online ambassadorship intentions of workers, while accounting for the mediation effects of their organizational identification on the relationships. Secondly, it aims to provide explanation of such possible differences by considering the different underlying mechanisms that mediate the effects of perceived ICSR (perceived internal respect) and ECSR (perceived external prestige) on organizational identification. Having in mind that the current research is concerned with the relationships between multiple variables and the mechanisms mediating these relationships, a quantitative approach was undertaken as it would allow for the exploration of the presence, direction and size of the effects between the independent and dependent variables of interest through the implementation of statistical analyses (Babbie, 2011).

The particular method used is a survey as it is widely accepted to be a suitable method for measuring people's attitudes, experiences and behaviors in the social sciences (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003, Matthews & Ross, 2010). What is more, an online survey consists of standardized questions, which reduces the possibility of ambiguous interpretations of the concepts of interest from respondent's behalf (Babbie, 2011). Additionally, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting strict social distancing measures pushing employees to work from their homes rather than in the offices, the method of online survey was particularly appropriate to reach the target participants. The survey itself was developed and executed using the survey-creation software Qualtrics.

3.1 Sampling and procedure

Since the current research is examining the outcomes of CSR on a micro level and the focus is on particular psychological processes, the identified units of analysis are individuals and more precisely – individuals who are employed as of the time of participation. The circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and their disruptive impacts on organizational life led to complications in convincing any of the initially targeted European-based multinational corporation to support the research project by granting permission to reach out to their employees on a company-wide basis. As a consequence of this, an alternative sampling strategy had to be elaborated. Thus, representatives of the general

working population were recruited through a convenience sampling method – snowball sampling. It is therefore important to acknowledge that due to the nonprobabilistic nature of the sampling technique, meaning that members of the target population weren't presented with an equal chance to participate, the results of the current research cannot be generalized to the target population at large (Tenzek, 2017). Nevertheless, in order to overcome possible common response pattern the sample was drawn from a variety of sample seeds. A link to the online survey was sent to a set of initial respondents of different social backgrounds and spheres of occupation via email, accompanied with a cover letter introducing the respondents to the research and its purposes, ensuring them of the anonymity and confidentiality of results, and highlighting the voluntary nature of participation. Those initial respondents or "sample seeds" would then forward the email and cover letter to their working colleagues. Furthermore, the link to the questionnaire was published on various SNS, where it was further distributed by volunteers through sharing it with their respective personal and professional networks. Thus, as recommended by Morgan (2008) it was intended to increase the diversity of the sample through voluntary collaboration with individuals of diverse social and cultural backgrounds, working occupations, and contact networks.

A total of 245 respondents engaged with the survey. Of them 55 (22.4%) only completing it partially and were excluded from the sample. Of the remaining 190 respondents 39 (20.5%) did not match the sampling criteria of being currently employed and were therefore excluded from the sample. Thus, the final sample consisted of the valid responses of 151 currently employed individuals. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 58 years ($M = 29.09$, $SD = 8.51$). The majority of respondents (55.6%) have identified as female while 43.0% - as male. One participant (0.7%) self-classified as gender neutral and another one have preferred not to disclose their gender identity. Participants in the survey represented a total of 26 nationalities with the majority being Bulgarian (53.0%). Other prominent nationalities include French (8.6%) and Dutch (7.9%). Regarding respondents' education, 70 of them (46.5%) have obtained a Master's degree, while almost as many - 67 (44.4%) had earned a Bachelor's degree. The time participants have been working for their current employer ranged from 0 to 32 years ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 6.52$). Of the 151 participants, 147 (97.4%) currently have a social media account while four (2.6%) reported not having one.

3.2 Measures

The main variables of the current research were presented following the order of mediation. After responding to an initial filter question, participants were introduced to

questions regarding their perceived ECSR and ICSR, perceived external prestige and internal respect, the extent to which they identify with their employing organization and their online ambassadorship intentions. Demographic questions were positioned at the end of the questionnaire as recommended by Babbie (2011).

Perceived ECSR. Employees' perceptions of their employers' external CSR was measured on a 6-item scale, adapted from Turker's (2009) 17-item CSR scale that has shown strong internal consistency reliability in previous research on CSR perceptions (Farooq et al., 2019, Hameed et al., 2016). The items utilized have been classified in the original scale as "CSR to social and non-social stakeholders" (Turker, 2009), and represent statements describing organizational activities aimed at improving the well-being of the society at large, protecting the natural environment and employing a sustainable approach in the business operations. Items from the original scale measuring legal obligations weren't included as the conceptualization of CSR employed in the current research suggest voluntary organizational actions. Furthermore items that may tap into both internal and external CSR such as "*Our company encourages its employees to participate in voluntary activities*" have been dropped as well. A sample item utilized in the current research is: *"Our company participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment".* Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements about their organizations' ECSR on a 7-point likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Perceived ICSR. The organizational ICSR perceived by the employees was measured adapting 5 items from the same 17-item scale developed by Turker (2009). All items have been originally classified as *"CSR to employees"* and cover organizational practices and policies concerned with the internal stakeholders' well-being, fair treatment and development opportunities thus corresponding to the operational definition of ICSR utilized in the current study. All items have been presented as statements with respondents being asked to indicate the level of their agreement or disagreement on a 7-point likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). An example item is: "*The management of our company is primarily concerned with employees' needs and wants*"

Because ECSR and ICSR represent two aspects of the same concept (CSR), ensuring the unidimensionality of the measurement instruments was needed. For this purpose, the 11 Likert-scale based items were entered into a factor analysis with Principal component extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .89, suggesting that the data was suitable for a factor analysis. Furthermore,

Barlette's test of sphericity indicated sufficient correlations between the items X^2 ($N = 151$, 55) = 906.66, $p < .001$. As expected, the items loaded onto two factors, corresponding to the two major types of CSR that are of interest to the current research – ICSR and ECSR. These resulting factors explained 65.6% of the variance in perceived CSR. Additionally, both scales were subjected to reliability analysis in order to verify their internal consistency reliability. Item loadings and the scales' internal consistency reliability scores can be observed in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Different aspects of Corporate social responsibility. Item loadings on a two factor principal component solutions

Item	External CSR	Internal CSR
The organization I work for implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment	.767	
The organization I work for makes investments to create a better life for the future generations	.827	
The organization I work for supports non-governmental organizations working in problematic areas	.718	
The organization I work for contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of the society	.834	
The organization I work for participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment	.827	
The organization I work for targets a sustainable growth which considers the well-being of future generations	.840	

The organization I work for has policies that encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers		.681
In the organization I work for the management is primarily concerned with employees' needs and wants		.781
The organization I work for implements flexible policies to provide a good work and life balance for its employees		.768
In the organization I work for the managerial decisions regarding the employees are usually fair		.794
The organization I work for supports employees who want to acquire additional education		.660
Cronbach's alpha	.91	.83
Eigenvalue	5.51	1.70

Following the reliability analysis, three new variables were computed, representing the mean average score of each of the predictor variables – ECSR ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 1.38$), ICSR ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.06$) and CSR ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.09$).

Perceived external prestige. A six-item scale adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992) will be used to measure perceived external prestige. The original scale has previously been used in various works (Van Prooijen & Wirtz, 2019, Hameed et al. 2016; KIm et al. 2010) with strong internal consistency reliability. Items were presented as statements with an example being: *"Most people value the organization I work for"*. Responses varied from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The strong internal consistency reliability of the measurement instrument was verified via a reliability analysis ($α = .89$). The mean average score of all items of the scale was then computed into a new variable – PEP ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.09$)

Perceived internal respect. Perceived internal respect has been assessed with 5 items adapted for the context and purposes of the current research from Tyler and Blader's (2001) 7-item scale. A similarly modified scale has previously been utilized by Farooq et al. (2017)

with high internal consistency reliability. An example item is: *"What I do is respected within the organization"*. An additional item, borrowed from Eisentberger, Cummings, Armely and Lynch's (1997) scale of perceived organizational support was added to reflect employees' perceptions of the importance of their well-being for the organization they work for: *"The organization I work for cares about my well-being"*. All 6 items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). A Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was performed to explore the dimensionality of the resulting 6-item scale, KMO = .89, X^2 (N = 151, 15) = 506.52, p < .001. As expected, they loaded onto a single factor, explaining 64.7% of the variance in employees' perceptions of internal respect. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was found to be strong (α = .87). The average score of the scale was later represented in a newly created variable – PIR (M = 5.37, SD = 0.99).

Organizational identification. The scale used to measure organizational identification was comprised of 5 items (derived from Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; and Leech et al., 2008) that have previously been used in Van Prooijen and Wirtz (2019) with strong internal consistency reliability. They were presented in the form of statements and an example item is: "*I feel a bond with the organisation where I work. In order to better capture the aspect of "oneness" that is central to the concept of organizational identification, one item adapted from Mael & Ashforth's (1992) widely used OI scale has been added: "When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say "we" rather than "they"*. Respondents were invited to respond using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). All 6 items were entered into a factor analysis with Principal component extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00), KMO = .88, X^2 (N = 151, 15) = 695.86, p < .001. The resulting model explained 72.4% of the variance in organizational identification. As intended, items loaded onto a single factor labeled Organizational identification. A reliability analysis demonstrated the strong internal consistency reliability of the measurement instrument α = .92. Consequently, a new variable representative of the average score on the OI scale was computed – Organizational Identification (M = 5.34, SD = 1.20).

Online ambassadorship intentions. Employees' intentions to engage in online ambassadorship behaviors were measured using four items preceded by the sentence *"How likely is it that you would…"* adapted from Van Prooijen & Wirtz (2019). Responses range from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). An example item includes: *"...recommend the products or services of the organization you work for on social media?"*. The items used reflect the aspects of employee advocacy on SM, introduced by Cervellon and Lirio (2017)

and more precisely – "positive employee word of mouth", "employee endorsement" and "employee sharing". All 4 items were entered into a factor analysis with Principal component extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (>1.00), KMO = .83, X^2 (N = 151, 6) = 423.29, p < .001. The resulting model explained 78.9% of the variance in Online ambassadorship intentions As intended, items loaded onto a single factor labeled Online ambassadorship. Furthermore, the scale demonstrated a strong internal consistency reliability α = .91. Following the reliability analysis, the average s core of the scale was computed into a new variable – Online ambassadorship intentions (M = 4.93, SD = 1.71).

Demographics. Apart from the independent and dependent variables and mediators, demographic data were gathered in order to elaborate a more detailed description of the sample. Furthermore, such data would allow exploring any potential influence that the demographic characteristics might have on the effects studied, and evaluate any differences between sub-groups of the population. Thus, questions regarding the respondent's age, gender, nationality and educational level were added at the end of the questionnaire. Furthermore, participants have been asked about how long they have been working for their current employer as organizational tenure has previously been associated with organizational identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Dutton, 1994).

3.3 Data preparation

Missing data. Before proceeding with the hypothesis testing, the data was screened for missing or erroneous observations. Automatically gathered personal data such as IP address and location was deleted from the dataset in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. During this screening process, it was noticed that there were 14 missing values on one of the demographic variables – age. Based on previous research, it could be expected that age is correlated with the outcome variables of the current research – organizational identification (Hameed et al., 2016; Riketta, 2005) and online ambassadorship intentions (van Prooijen & Wirtz, 2019). Having this in mind, including age as a control variable would lead to the exclusion of 14 observations from the regression analyses - 9.2% of all responses, which could considerably affect the results of the analyses. In order to avoid this, a Little's MCAR test was performed to determine whether the missing data was appropriate for the implementation of data imputation techniques. The MCAR test showed that the data was indeed missing completely at random, p = .707, suggesting that data imputation is appropriate. Expectation-maximization analysis was conducted, where missing age values were predicted based on organizational tenure scores. Age and organizational tenure have

shown to be strongly correlated, $r = .86$, $p <.001$, which guarantees greater accuracy of the predictions.

Assumptions for data analysis. Furthermore, in order to be appropriate for the statistical analyses required for the hypotheses testing, the data gathered has to meet a certain set or prerequisites. In the particular case of linear regression and mediation analyses, these include the assumptions regarding the normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, autocorrelation and multicollinearity (Pallant, 2013). An important consideration for the current research is that visualizing the main variables of interest on histograms and conducting Shapiro-Wilk tests for all of them demonstrated that the main variables were not normally distributed. The assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were of the data were met as the P-P Plot visualizations of the standardized residuals of all variables appeared to be distributed along the line, suggesting linearity. Furthermore, the scatterplot visualizations of the standardized residuals and standardized expected value of each variable of interest appeared to have the shape of a rectangular, indicating homoscedasticity. The variables were tested for autocorrelation and multicollinearity during the regression analyses of the models, where all variables showed values close to 2 on the Durbin-Watson test which indicates lack of autocorrelation. Additionally the VIF values of all variables were below 2, suggesting lack of multicollinearity.

3.4 Validity and reliability

In order to ensure the validity of the measurements, each of the key concepts was measured through theory-based indicators derived from previous research intended to measure multiple aspects of the concept of interest. As already discussed in section 3.2, all items from each of the scales were subjected to factor analyses with Principal component extraction and Varimax rotation matrix based on Eigenvalues (>1.00). The KMO values of all analyses was very high, in the range between .80 and .90, indicating the adequacy of the sampling size to reliably extract factors (Field, 2009). Furthermore, in all cases the items loaded as expected with item loadings ranging between .660 and .928, suggesting a strong correlation between all items and their respective factors. These results confirm the construct validity of the measuring instruments.

The internal consistency reliability of the scales, that is the correlation between the items constructing the scales for each of the key concepts of the research (Field, 2009), was tested for by conducting a separate reliability analysis for each of the scales used. This way

the correlation between the items constructing each of the major concepts of interest was measured. The Cronbach's alpha values for each of the key variables can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Results from the reliability analyses

Scale	Cronbach's α
External CSR	.91
Internal CSR	.83
Perceived external prestige	.89
Perceived internal respect	.87
Organizational identification	.92
Online ambassadorship intentions	.91

Note. N = 151

The results from the reliability analyses indicated that all scales used to measure the main concepts are of high internal consistency reliability, α's > .80. The scales can therefore produce reliable data for the statistical analyses.

4. Results

Correlation analysis. Before proceeding with the hypothesis testing, a correlation matrix was generated to observe the relationships between the independent, dependent and mediator variables in the conceptual model. As demonstrated in Table 4.1, all relationships between predictors and criterions, predictors and mediators, and mediators and criterions are significant and moderate to strong with a single exception. The relationship between ECSR and PIR appears to be weak ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), which is not anticipated to affect any further analysis. The results from the correlation matrix further verify the lack of multicollinearity as no relationships exceed .9.

Table 4.1
Means, Standard deviations and Correlations between variables

Measure	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Online ambassadorship intentions	4.93	1.71	-						
2. Organizational identification	5.34	1.20	.58*	-					
3. CSR	5.19	1.09	.43*	.55*	-				
4. ECSR	5.03	1.38	.35*	.41*	.93*	-			
5. ICSR	5.39	1.06	.41*	.59*	.80*	.52*	-		
6. PEP	5.42	1.09	.45*	.60*	.60*	.51*	.55*	-	
7. PIR	5.37	0.99	.37*	.63*	.46*	.29*	.58*	.47*	-

*Note. N = 151. *p < .001*

Control variables. Ahead of examining the relationships between the predictors, mediators and criterions in detail, it was tested whether any of the demographic variables could affect the dependent variables. Particular focus was put on the effects of age and organizational tenure as previous research has suggested that these variables could impact both organizational identification (Dutton, 1994; Hameed et al., 2016) and online ambassadorship intentions (van Prooijen & Wirtz, 2019). A correlation analysis confirmed that age is positively linked with both OI ($r = .23$, $p = .004$) and ambassadorship intentions ($r = .17$, $p = .033$). Organizational tenure also showed to be associated with both OI ($r = .26$, $p = .001$) and online ambassadorship ($r = .17$, $p = .039$). Additionally, ANOVA analyses demonstrated that organizational identification was not significantly influenced by neither the respondents' gender identity ($p = .374$), nor by their achieved level of education ($p = .128$). The other outcome variable – online ambassadorship – also demonstrated no significant relationship with participants' gender ($p = .552$) or educational level ($p = .552$). Consequently, all further analyses controlled for the effects of age and organizational tenure in order to rule out any alternative explanations for possible significant relationships between the predictor and outcome variables.

4.1 The effects of perceived CSR on online ambassadorship intentions

Examining the effects of general CSR. A first step in the analysis was to explore the relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and their online ambassadorship intentions. Although the correlation matrix already demonstrated such association, it did so without controlling for the effects of age and organizational tenure. For that purpose an ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis was performed, where CSR, age and tenure were entered as predictors and online ambassadorship intentions was the outcome variable. The regression model was found to be significant $F(3,147) = 11.82$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .19$. Perceived CSR showed to be a significant predictor of ambassadorship intentions, having a moderate positive effect on it, $\beta = .41$, $p < .001$. As such, the higher the perceptions of the employees regarding their organizations' socially responsible practices, the higher their willingness to engage in ambassadorship behaviors online. Neither age ($\beta = .11$, $p = .445$) nor organizational tenure ($\beta = -.02$, $p = .897$) had significant effects on ambassadorship in the presence of CSR. As a consequence hypothesis 1a, suggesting that CSR would have positive effects on online ambassadorship was confirmed.

Comparing the predictive effects of ICSR and ECSR. Hypothesis 4 of the current research proposed that the effect of perceived external CSR on online ambassadorship intentions is stronger than that of perceived internal CSR. In order to address this assumption, an OLS multiple regression analysis was conducted with ECSR, ICSR, age and tenure included as predictors and online ambassadorship included as an outcome. Results of the analysis can be observed in Table 4.2. The overall regression model was shown to be significant, $F(4,146) = 10.16$, $p < .001$. The model was therefore useful for predicting online ambassadorship intentions, although its predictive powers were mediocre with 22% of the variance in ambassadorship being explained by it, $R^2 = .22$. Furthermore only perceived ICSR ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) was found to be a significant predictor of online ambassadorship, while the standardized regression coefficient of ECSR was not significant, $\beta = .14$, $p = .129$. The effects of age and tenure were also not significant (p's $> .250$). Consequently, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

Table 4.2 Results of the multiple regression analysis with online ambassadorship intentions as an outcome

|	β	p
Control variables		
Age	.16	.270
Organizational tenure	-.33	.821
Independent variables		
Perceived ICSR	.35	< .001
Perceived ECSR	.14	.129
R^2	.22	
F	10.16	< .001

Note. N = 151

4.2 The mediating effects of organizational identification

Following theoretical developments in organizational psychology it was proposed in hypothesis 1b that the relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and their intentions to act as organizational ambassadors online is mediated by the extent to which they identify with their organizations. In order to test this hypothesis, a mediation analysis had to be performed using the PROCESS macro plug-in developed by Hayes (2013) for SPSS. The

95% confidence interval of the analysis was generated with 5000 bootstrap samples as recommended by MacKinnon, Coxe and Baraldi (2012).

The model used CSR as a predictor, ambassadorship as a criterion and organizational identification as a mediator, while controlling for the effects of age and organizational tenure. The overall model was found to be significant, $F(4, 146) = 19.96$, $p < .001$, explaining 35% of the variance in online ambassadorship, $R^2 = .35$. As seen in Figure 2, the analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between CSR and online ambassadorship with no mediator present, b = 0.65, p < .001. Additionally, the analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between CSR and OI, $b = 0.57$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the results showed that the unstandardized regression coefficient between OI and ambassadorship intentions was also significant, $b = 0.69$, $p < .001$. The direct relationship between CSR and ambassadorship, with the effects of OI, age and tenure being controlled for, proved to be significant, $b = 0.26$, $p = .042$. The indirect relation between CSR and ambassadorship through OI was significant, $b = 0.39$, CI95% = [0.21; 0.57]. These results indicate that organizational identification mediates the relationship between CSR and ambassadorship partially. Hypothesis 1b was therefore accepted.

Figure 2. Mediation model of the relationship between CSR and online ambassadorship intentions with OI as a mediator
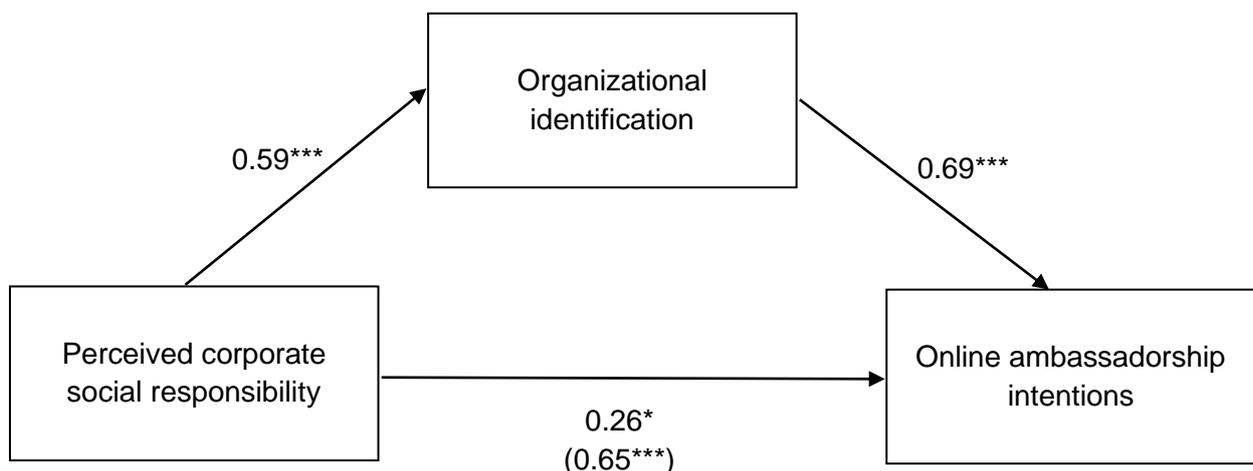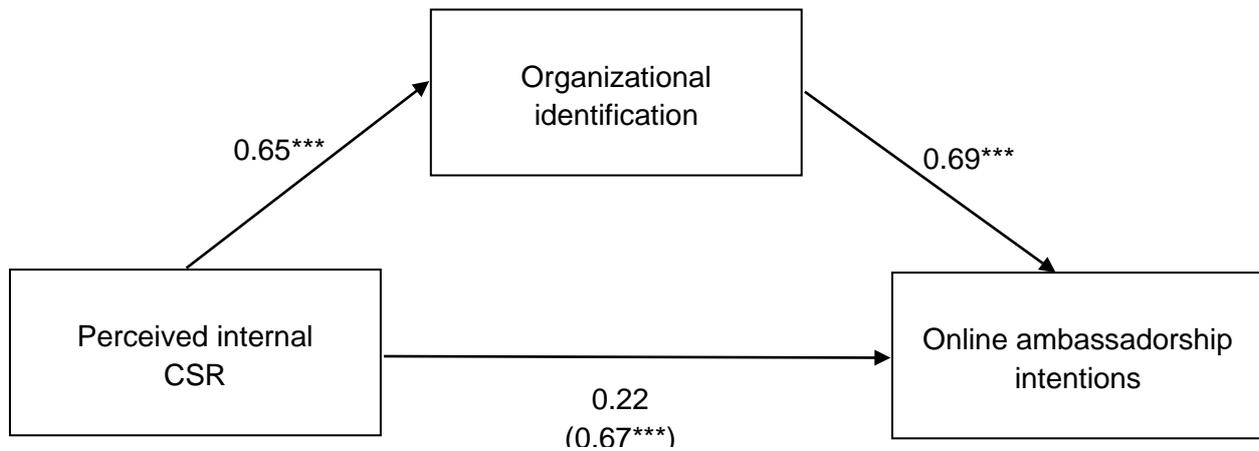

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationship between perceived CSR and online ambassadorship intentions as mediated by OI. The unstandardized regression coefficient between CSR and ambassadorship without controlling for OI is in parenthesis. $N = 151$, $p^* < .05$, $p^{**} < .01$, $p^{***} < .001$

In order to test hypotheses 2a and 3a, the mediating role of OI in the relationships between the employees' perceptions of each of the major types of CSR (internal and external) and online ambassadorship intentions had to be examined. Before proceeding with the mediation analysis however, an important consideration needed to be made. Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed that an intervening variable effect can only be classified as a mediation effect if there is an established statistically significant relationship between the predictor and the criterion. However, the OLS multiple regression analysis conducted to compare the effects of ICSR and ECSR on online ambassadorship in the previous section (see Table 4.2) revealed that only ICSR has a significant positive relationship with the criterion. Considering that the relationship between ECSR and online ambassadorship did not meet the criteria for significance, any potential intervening effect that OI could have on this relationship cannot be deemed a mediation effect. In other words, OI cannot mediate the direct association between ECSR and online ambassadorship if no such association is present in the first place. Therefore, hypothesis 3a of the current research suggesting that ECSR affects online ambassadorship intentions through the mediation effect of OI was rejected.

Considering that the relationship between ICSR and online ambassadorship proved to be statistically significant, the mediating effects of OI on it could be examined. For that reason, a PROCESS mediation analysis was performed with the same bootstrapping parameters. The mediation model proposed OI as a mediator between ICSR and ambassadorship, while controlling for the effects of age and tenure, and proved to be significant, $F(4, 146) = 19.41$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .35$. As observed in Figure 3, the analysis indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between ICSR and online ambassadorship with no mediator present, b = 0.67, p < .001. Furthermore, the unstandardized regression coefficient between ICSR and OI was also significant, b = 0.65, p < .001. Additionally, the results demonstrated a statistically significant positive association between OI and ambassadorship intentions, b = 0.69, p < .001. Thus, the more employees perceive their organizations to be engaged in internal CSR, the more they identify with that organization and the more they are willing to engage in organization-supportive behavior online. However, the model revealed that there was no significant direct relationship between ICSR and ambassadorship when controlling for the effects of OI and covariates, b = 0.22, p = .099. Conversely, the indirect relation through organizational identification was significant, b= 0.45, CI95% [0.24, 0.67], indicating that OI fully mediates the relationship between internal corporate social responsibility and online ambassadorship intentions. Hypothesis 2a was therefore accepted.

Figure 3. Mediation model of the relationship between ICSR and online ambassadorship intentions with OI as a mediator

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationship between perceived ICSR and online ambassadorship intentions as mediated by OI. The unstandardized regression coefficient between ICSR and ambassadorship without controlling for OI is in parenthesis; $N = 151$, $p^* < .05$, $p^{**} < .01$, $p^{***} < .001$

4.3 The mediating effects of PIR and PEP

Building on established developments in social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, 1994) the current research hypothesized that the relations between internal CSR and organizational identification, and external CSR and OI are mediated by different underlying mechanisms – perceived internal respect (PIR) and perceived external prestige (PEP) respectively. Once again, before conducting the mediation analyses aimed at examining the mediating effect of PIR on the relation between ICSR and OI (hypothesis 2b) and the mediating role of PEP on the association between ECSR and OI (hypothesis 3b), the presence of significant relationships between the predictors and the criterion needed to be confirmed (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For that purpose an OLS multiple regression analysis was conducted with ECSR, ICSR, age and organizational tenure as predictors and OI as an outcome variable. This analysis could also provide evidence on whether the lack of a significant relationship between ECSR and online ambassadorship could be attributed to the association between ECSR and OI. Results of the analysis can be observed in Table 4.3. The regression model was found to be statistically significant, $F (4, 146) = 24.41$, $p < .001$, and responsible for 40% of the variance in reported organizational identification ($R^2 = .40$). The results of the model demonstrated that only ICSR ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$) was a significant

predictor of OI, while ECSR did not have a significant effect in the model (β = .08, p = .341). The control variables also didn't have significant effects on OI (p's > .350).

**Table 4.3** Results of the multiple regression analysis with organizational identification as an outcome

	β	p
Control variables		
Age	.12	.359
Organizational tenure	.10	.441
Independent variables		
Perceived ICSR	.54	< .001
Perceived ECSR	.08	.341
R^2	.40	
F	24.41	< .001

Note. N = 151

Building on the fact that ICSR demonstrated to have a significant positive relationship with OI, the mediating effects of PIR on that association could be examined. For that reason, another PROCESS macro mediation analysis was performed where ICSR was entered as a predictor, OI - as the criterion, and PIR as the mediator. The 95% confidence intervals of the analysis were once again obtained with 5000 bootstrap samples. The analysis controlled for the effects of age and organizational tenure as these variables have earlier been identified as significantly associated with the outcome variable. The mediation model (Figure 4) examined the assumptions of H2b. The model proved to be statistically significant, $F(4, 146) = 36.27$, $p < .001$, and explained 50% of the variance in reported organizational identification, $R^2 = .50$. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between perceived ICSR and perceived internal respect, $b = 0.53$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship between PIR and organizational identification was also revealed, $b = 0.49$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that the higher the levels of perceived ICSR amongst employees, the more respect and sense of self-worth they derive from their organizational membership, and the stronger they identify with that particular organization. Additionally, when controlling for the impact of PIR and covariates, the unstandardized regression coefficient between ICSR and OI remained significant, $b = 0.40$, $p < .001$. However, it was reduced as compared to the total effect of ICSR on OI, when no mediator was introduced in

the model, $b = 0.65$, $p < .001$. These results indicate mediation, which was confirmed by the statistically significant indirect effect of ICSR on OI through PIR, $b = 0.26$, CI95% [0.13, 0.40]. It can thus be concluded that perceived external respect partially mediates the relationship between internal CSR and organizational identification. Hypothesis 2b was therefore confirmed.

Figure 4. Mediation model of the relationship between ICSR and OI with PIR as a mediator
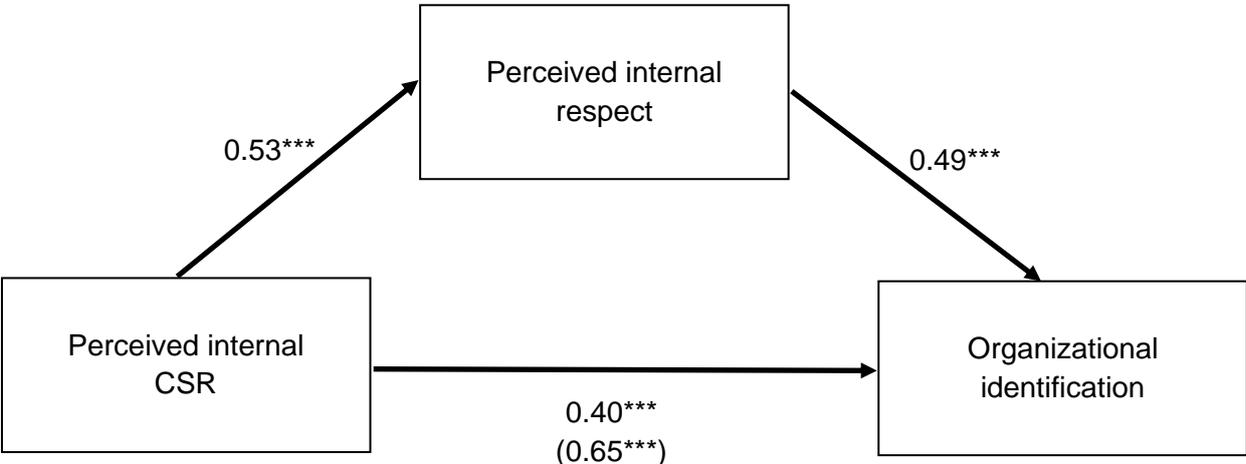
Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationship between perceived ICSR and OI as mediated by PIR. The unstandardized regression coefficient between ICSR and OI without controlling for PIR is in parenthesis; $N = 151$, $p* < .05$, $p** < .01$, $p*** < .001$

As the results from the multiple regression analysis (Table 4.3) demonstrated that the relationship between ECSR and OI wasn't significant, meaning that any intervening effects of perceived external prestige on that relationship cannot be defined as a mediation effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986). PEP cannot mediate the effect of ECSR on OI if no such effect is present in the first place. Hypothesis 3b suggesting that ECSR influences OI through the mediating effect of PEP was therefore rejected.

4.5 Additional findings

After conducting all necessary analyses to test for the assumptions stated in the hypotheses of the current study, a series of additional analyses was performed in order to look for possible explanations for the rejection of hypothesis 4, where results indicated that

perceived ECSR not only was not a better predictor of ambassadorship intentions than perceived ICSR, but did not even have a significant effect on the outcome.

The surprising finding that ECSR doesn't have a significant direct effect on OI as opposed to ICSR gives only partial understanding of the problem. If anything, it raises more questions considering the supposed relationship (visible in the correlation matrix in Table 4.1) between ECSR and perceived external prestige, a concept that has been distinguished as the most important antecedent for organizational identification by social identity theory pioneers Ashforth and Mael (1989). A closer review of the correlation matrix however revealed that perceived internal respect showed a slightly stronger positive correlation with OI ($r =.63$, $p < .001$) as compared to PEP ($r = .60$, $p < .001$). To examine these results in greater depth, an OLS multiple regression analysis was performed where PEP, PIR, age and organizational tenure served as predictors and OI as criterion. This analysis could also provide a possible explanation for the lack of a statistically significant relationship between ECSR and OI. The model was found to be significant, $F (4, 146) = 41.13$, $p < .001$, while explaining 53% of the variance in reported organizational identification, $R^2 = .53$. Both PEP and PIR proved to have significant effects on OI at $p < .001$. The effect of PIR however was slightly stronger ($\beta = .43$) than that of PEP ($\beta = .38$) contrary to theoretically based expectations.

Considering these results and the central role of OI in predicting online ambassadorship intentions, another multiple regression analysis was executed in order to test whether online ambassadorship intentions are better predicted by perceived external prestige or perceived internal respect. The significant regression model, $F (4, 146) = 11.67$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$, demonstrated that the predictive power of PEP on online ambassadorship was greater ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) than that of PIR, $\beta = .20$, $p = .016$, despite that PIR showed to be a stronger predictor of OI than PEP in the previous analysis. These findings as well as the fact that OI demonstrated to be responsible for just 33% of the variance in online ambassadorship intentions in an OLS simple regression, $F (1, 149) = 74.09$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .33$, indicate the existence of additional factors influencing ambassadorship intentions.

Considering the significant effects of PIR on both OI ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) and online ambassadorship ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), it couldn't explain the lack of significance in the relationships between ECSR and those same outcomes. However, the results of the correlation matrix revealed another clue that could help gain a better understanding of the ways CSR affects organizational identification, especially in the context of the group engagement model. The matrix showed that, as expected PEP is significantly correlated with

ECSR ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). However, it also demonstrated an even stronger correlation with ICSR, $r = .55$, $p < .001$. If the effect of ECSR on PIR in the presence of ICSR proved to not be statistically significant, this could give an explanation about ECSR's relationship with OI and online ambassadorship. To find out more, another multiple regression analysis was performed in order to test which type of CSR is a stronger predictor of perceived prestige. ICSR and ECSR were entered as independent variables, while PEP was the outcome. The results can be seen in Table 4.4. The model was found to be significant, $F(2, 148) = 43.78$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .37$. While both predictors showed significant effects on the outcome at $p < .001$, the effect of ICSR was greater, $\beta = .39$, as compared to the effect of ECSR, $\beta = .31$. Thus, perceived internal CSR showed to be a better predictor of perceived external prestige than perceived external CSR.

Table 4.4 Results of the multiple regression analysis with perceived external prestige as an outcome

	β	p
Independent variables		
Perceived ICSR	.39	< .001
Perceived ECSR	.31	< .001
R^2	.37	
F	43.78	< .001

Note. N = 151

On one hand, these findings from the analysis suggest that the relationship between ICSR and OI might be mediated by both PIR and PEP. This assumption was tested through a mediation analysis performed via PROCESS macro with the already established bootstrapping parameters. Both PIR and PEP were entered as mediators, while age and tenure were controlled for. The mediation model (Figure 5) proved to be significant, $F(5, 145) = 36.43$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .56$. ICSR showed to affect both PIR ($b = 0.53$) and PEP ($b = 0.56$) significantly at $p < .001$. Furthermore, results demonstrated that both PIR ($b = 0.41$) and PEP ($b = 0.33$) affect OI significantly at $p < .001$. The direct effect of ICSR on OI remained significant in the presence of the two mediators, $b = 0.25$, $p = .004$. Results indicate that mediation occurred both through PIR and PEP. The indirect effect via respect was significant, $b = 0.22$, CI95% [.10; .36] and slightly greater than the one via prestige, $b = .19$, CI95% [.09; .31].

Figure 5. Mediation model of the relationship between ICSR and OI with PIR and PEP as mediators
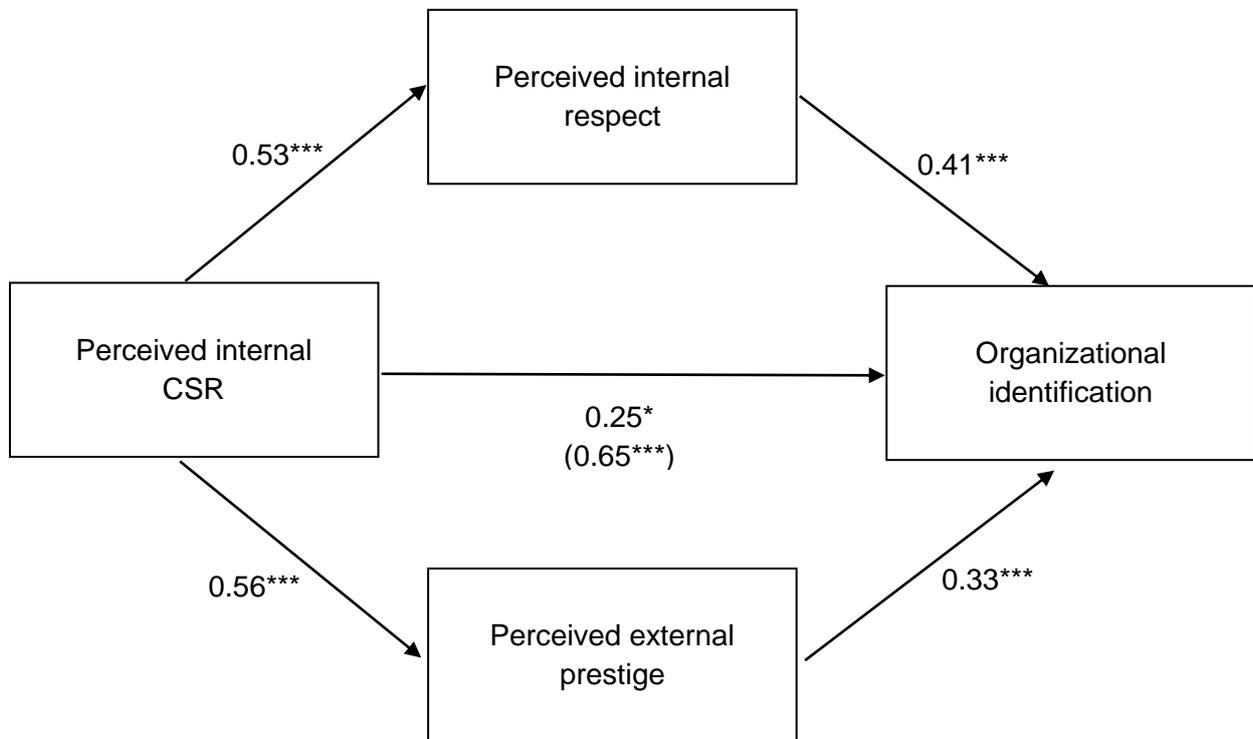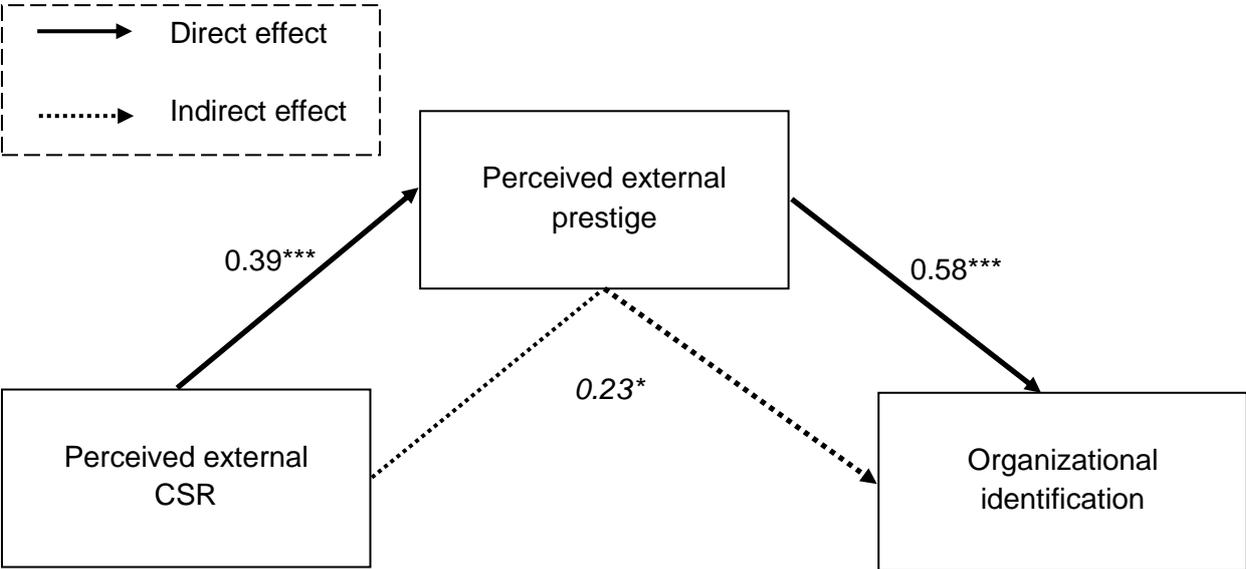

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationship between perceived ICSR and OI as mediated by PIR and PEP. The unstandardized regression coefficient between ICSR and OI without controlling for PIR and PEP is in parenthesis; $N = 151$, $p^* < .05$, $p^{**} < .01$, $p^{***} < .001$

On the other hand, the results from the multiple regression analysis (Table 4.4) revealed that although ECSR was not the strongest predictor of PEP, it still had a significant positive effect on it. Considering PEP's significant positive effects on OI documented earlier, this is an indication of an indirect effect between ECSR and OI. Mathieu and Taylor (2006) explain that indirect effects are a separate type of intervening effect, whereby the predictor and criterion, in this case ECSR and OI respectively, are not related directly, but are indirectly associated through their significant relationships with a linking mechanism, in this case - PEP. With regards to the indirect effect, Preacher and Hayes (2004) argue that the indirect effect between two variables can be significant even when there is no evidence for a significant direct effect between these variables. The authors also propose that the indirect

effect can be estimated using a simple mediation model, where the indirect effect would equal the product of the regression coefficients between the predictor and the mediator and between the mediator and the outcome. For that reason, another PROCESS mediation analysis was performed with ECSR as the predictor, OI as the outcome and PEP as the mediator. The 95% confidence intervals of the analysis were once again obtained with 5000 bootstrap samples. The analysis controlled for the effects of age and organizational tenure as these variables have earlier been identified as significantly associated with the outcome variable.

The second mediation model (Figure 6) focused on the mediation effects of perceived external prestige on the relationship between external CSR and organizational identification, following the assumptions of hypothesis 3b. The model was found to be significant F (4, 146) = 24.06, $p < .001$, explaining 40% of the variance in OI, $R^2 = .40$. The results demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between ECSR and PEP, $b = 0.39$, $p < .001$. The analysis also revealed a significant positive relationship between PEP and OI, $b = 0.58$, $p < .001$. These findings indicate that the higher the employees' perceptions of the externally focused CSR initiatives of their company, the more prestigious they believe that being a member of that organization is, and the stronger they identify with the organization as a result. The indirect effect of ECSR on OI through PEP proved to be significant, $b = 0.23$, CI95% [0.14, 0.33]. These findings indicate that external CSR indirectly affects organizational identification through its association with perceived external prestige.

Figure 6. The indirect effect of ECSR on OI through PEP

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients for the indirect effect of ECSR on OI through PEP. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect is in italics, CI95% [0.14; 0.33]. $N = 151$, $p* < .05$, $p** < .01$, $p*** < .001$

It should be noted however that no indirect effect of ECSR on online ambassadorship through OI can be examined in a similar fashion, as only the criterion (online ambassadorship) has a significant direct association with the linking mechanism (OI), while the predictor (ECSR) is only indirectly related to OI.

5. Conclusion

In times of increasing consciousness towards a variety of social issues, society's expectations to businesses are also on the rise. As a result more and more companies are incorporating corporate social responsibility in their conduct. Such practices have led to a variety of beneficial outcomes for the organizations, including the building and enhancement of meaningful relationships between them and their key stakeholders (Bhattacharya, Korschun & Sen, 2009) . The current research is focused on studying the ways in which organizational CSR, both internal and external, is perceived by one of these stakeholder groups of increasing importance – the employees. In today's information and communication landscape shaped by the interactive nature of SNS and driven by user-generated content, the audiences' preferences for authentic dialogue have turned employees into influential sources of organizational information (Dreher, 2014). These circumstances have created opportunities for employees to support their organizations' interests through ambassadorship behaviors such as electronic word of mouth (van Zoonen et al., 2018). If companies are to successfully adapt to these novel realities, the academic understanding of the antecedents of such behaviors – both at organizational and individual level – needs to be expanded. The current study aimed to contribute to the current body of academic knowledge by examining whether employees' online ambassadorship intentions are affected differently by the internal and external socially responsible practices of their employers. Furthermore, it tried to justify such behavioral differences by exploring the underlying mechanisms through which ICSR and ECSR are interpreted at the individual level.

To start with, the results of the research demonstrate that CSR has a positive effect on online ambassadorship intentions. That is, the perceptions of employees regarding the socially responsible practices of their employers have a positive effect on their willingness to engage in ambassadorship behaviors online. The more employees believe their employers are invested in CSR, the more they are likely to distribute positive organizational information online. This finding is valuable in that it provides empirical evidence for the relationship between particular organizational policies and activities and concrete responses from employees' behalf in the form of behavioral intentions. Considering the various benefits online ambassadorship can bring to the organizations (Dreher, 2014), these findings contribute to the organizational-level CSR research in that they suggest a possible relationship between CSR and a positive non-financial organizational outcome. What is more, the study indicated that different types of CSR can influence individual-level responses differently. In

particular, the findings surprisingly demonstrated that perceived ICSR had a significantly greater impact on online ambassadorship intentions as compared to ECSR, revealing that ECSR did not in fact have a significant relationship with the outcome, thus giving an initial answer to the research question of the current paper. These results are in line with previous research suggesting that employees differentiate between internally and externally directed CSR initiatives (El Akremi et al., 2015), and that their judgements and attitudes towards organizational actions are at least in part formulated under the influence of the target of that organizational action (Lavelle et al., 2015). Of course, gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which ICSR and ECSR differ in their effects on online ambassadorship intentions, as well as providing an explanation for the surprising findings, would require engaging in a careful examination of the different pathways through which ICSR and ECSR are interpreted at an individual level.

5.1 The mediating role of organizational identification

Organizational identification has been prominently discussed in academia as an important outcome of corporate social responsibility (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). That is, employees consider the CSR of an organization to be an important factor when evaluating the benefits that being a member of that organization brings to their self-concepts. The concept has further been identified as a prominent antecedent of eWOM by recent studies (van Prooijen & Wirtz, 2019; van Zoonen et al, 2018). Building on theoretical developments in social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and empirical findings in the fields of organizational psychology and corporate communications (Farooq et al., 2017, Hameed et al., 2016; van Zoonen et al, 2018), the current research utilized organizational identification as the main mechanism explaining the association between the company's CSR and the ambassadorship intentions of its employees.

The data revealed that organizational identification fully mediates the relationship between internal CSR and online ambassadorship intentions. On the other hand, as already discussed ECSR showed no significant effects on ambassadorship intentions. This means that neither ICSR nor ECSR have immediate effects on electronic word of mouth. Instead, the more employees perceive their company to be involved in promoting the well-being of internal stakeholders, the more value they derive from belonging to that company, and the more they integrate their roles of company members in their self-definitions. This way employees not only enhance their self-concepts through ascribing positive qualities to themselves, but also become more willing to pursue organizational goals through engaging in

ambassadorship behaviors. This is in line with the prominent SIT understanding that social identification is driven by the perceived attractiveness of the particular social group/category in terms of the contributions its attributes and characteristics make to one's positive self-concept (Dutton et al, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 2004).The results indicate that ICSR practices and policies are perceived, evaluated and interpreted by employees with regards to the benefits they bring to one's social identity and sense of self. In that regard, the differences between the significant positive effect of ICSR on the online ambassadorship intentions and the lack of such impact of ECSR on the same outcome, can be attributed to the different extent to which these activities affect employees' organizational identification.

5.2 The mediating effects of PEP and PIR

Drawing from the group engagement model (Tyler, Blader, 2001; 2003) the current research utilized two types of status evaluations that contribute to one's social identity to explain possible differences in the effects of ICSR and ECSR on employees' organizational identification – evaluations of the status of the organization and evaluations of one's own status within the organization. These assessments correspond to the two differing mechanisms through which internal and external CSR have shown to influence organizational identification in previous research. Perceived internal respect has previously been associated with internal CSR activities and has demonstrated to be a strong predictor of organizational identification (Fuller et al., 2006; Hameed et al., 2016). Perceived external prestige on the other hand has been discussed as the most important antecedent of organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, 1994) and has been proven to mediate the relationship between ECSR and OI (Farooq et al., 2017, Kim et al., 2010).

ECSR. The results from the analysis revealed that externally directed corporate social responsibility policies and practices do not have a significant direct impact on employees' organizational identification. It is important to acknowledge that this finding rejects the hypothesized mediating effect of perceived external prestige. PEP can have no mediation effect when ECSR and OI aren't significantly related in the first place (Baron & Kenny, 1984). Instead, the results revealed that external prestige served as a linking mechanism, through which the employees' perceptions of ECSR indirectly affected their sense of organizational belonging. These findings indicate that employees assess ECSR initiatives in relation to the social prestige such activities attribute to the organization they belong to. That is, the more a company is involved in external CSR, the more its employees believe this company to be prestigious, and the more beneficial they see belonging to this company to be

for their self-concepts as a result. This is in line with SIT developments highlighting the central role of prestige in evaluating organizational attractiveness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, 1994). The results further corroborate with the findings of a great deal of existing micro-level CSR research (Farooq et al., 2017; Hameed et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2010) This makes sense since ECSR comprises a variety of voluntary practices aimed at contributing to promoting social good and in general reflect qualities and values that are widely prized and respected within society. The organizations engaging in such practices are therefore likely to be valued and held in high regard by outsiders, which translates into a higher and more prestigious social status. Belonging to a prestigious company can therefore enhance employees' self-concepts by fostering their sense of self-esteem and pride, which would in turn lead to stronger identification.

     ICSR. The data analysis demonstrated that internal CSR practices are positively related to employees' perceptions of internal respect, matching the results observed in previous micro-level CSR research (Farooq et al., 2017; Hameed et al., 2016). These findings correspond to the expectations as ICSR includes initiatives aimed at improving employees' health and well-being and providing development opportunities, all of which indicate to employees that their interests are taken into consideration by the employer, meaning that they are valuable and respected members of the organization. This is very much consistent with the organizational psychology literature on perceived organizational respect indicating that when one feels important and respected they hold a more positive view of themselves and benefit from higher self-esteem (Huo & Binning, 2008). Therefore, belonging to an organization where one feels respected is rewarding and beneficial for one's sense of self-worth. The results of the current study revealed that employees' perceptions of the internally directed CSR policies and practices do affect the extent to which they identify with their organization and that this relationship is partly mediated by the respect employees perceive from such practices. Such results correspond to previous research on the topic (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). However, the current research proposes that although ICSR practices are interpreted in relation to the perceived respect they bring to employees, there are also other mechanisms through which these practices can benefit one's social identity.

     Additional findings indicated that the internal CSR practices of organizations are also evaluated in the context of their impact on the social prestige of the organization. That is, employees believe that the more their companies are involved with their well-being, the more these firms would be perceived as prestigious within society. Although unexpected, such a finding is not a precedent (Farooq et al., 2017) and makes sense. On one hand, the ways in

which companies treat and take care of their employees can be seen as an indication for the extent to which these companies adhere to the social norms in that particular regard (Jones, Willness & Madey, 2014). Thus, companies that go beyond what is required by law and treat their employees with respect may be seen as prestigious and desired places to work for (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2008), as opposed to organizations that violate the social norms with regards to fair and ethical treatment of their employees. What is more, an organization's internal CSR policies may signal to outsiders what is the organization's stance on wider social problems. Thus, internal diversity and inclusion programs might serve to address the greater social issues of inequality and discrimination. Consequently, it can be expected that such policies would be valued throughout the society, contributing to the organization's high social standing. This can be expected to further enhance employees' organizational identification through the mechanism of perceived external prestige. Therefore, when perceiving and evaluating their organization's internal CSR policies and practices, one's self-concept benefits from both being a valued member of the organization, and from being a member of a valued organization, which ultimately leads to a stronger identification. This assumption was confirmed by the results from the analysis that demonstrated that the relationship between ICSR and OI is mediated simultaneously by the employees' perceptions of internal respect and external prestige. The current research therefore contributes to the existing understanding of the ways in which internally directed CSR initiatives are evaluated and interpreted by employees at individual level in that it provides empirical evidence that ICSR is subjected to both internal (self-) and external (reflected) status evaluations.

5.3 The differing effects of ICSR and ECSR on organizational identification

As suggested earlier, the differences between the significant positive impact of internal CSR on online ambassadorship intentions and the lack of significant effect of external CSR on the same outcome can be attributed to the different extent to which these initiatives affect employees' organizational identification. Drawing from developments in social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tyler & Blader, 2001), the findings of the current research further suggest that any differences in the effects that internal and external CSR have on employees' organizational identification can be at least partly contributed to the different pathways in which the organizational identification is achieved, and ultimately to the varying ways in which employees perceive and interpret such practices and initiatives.

Having this in mind, internal CSR was found to have a significantly stronger effect on organizational identification as compared to external CSR. That is, ICSR practices are

perceived by employees to contribute more to the attractiveness of that organization in terms of the benefits one can derive from their organizational membership as compared to ECSR practices. This finding was somewhat surprising considering that ECSR was found to exert its indirect effect on organizational identification through the linking mechanism of perceived external prestige - often viewed as the most important antecedent of OI by prominent SIT scholars (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, 1994). A possible explanation to this could be the latter finding that perceived ICSR is interpreted by employees through both PIR and PEP, thus providing organizational members with a wider range of self-enhancement opportunities. The current research however provides empirical evidence that deviates from the established theoretical understanding of the mechanisms through which CSR practices are interpreted at the individual level. Furthermore, the study tries to propose an alternative explanation for the observed discrepancies.

As proposed, the differences in the extent to which external and internal CSR initiatives influence employees' sense of belongingness to an organization may be explained by the different mechanisms through which this influence is achieved. And more precisely, by comparing the importance of perceived internal respect and perceived external prestige for employees' organizational identification. The data analysis indicated a possible explanation in that employees' levels of organizational identification were more heavily influenced by their perceptions of respect than by their perceptions of prestige. Thus, being a valued member whose well-being and interests are respected proved to be more important for employees and the sense of belongingness they develop to the organization than the reflected prestige they derive from being a member of a company whose values and conduct are highly regarded in society. The perceptions of internal respect in organizational context are thus proposed as more beneficial for one's social identity and self-concept. These findings contradict the scholar vision of prestige as the main contributor of organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994), but are in line with the findings of Farooq and colleagues (2017) who empirically demonstrated that identification is primarily driven by respect under certain circumstances. The current work contributes to the social identity literature in that it challenges the common understanding of perceived external prestige as the main antecedent of organizational identification. More precisely, it provides empirical evidence documenting the greater effect of perceived internal respect on employees' sense of belonging.

It should be noted however, that these results of the current study might have been affected by the environment of vulnerability and uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic. In times like these, the perceptions of being a respected member of a group might

gain additional value to internal stakeholders, especially when they are signaled by internally directed CSR initiatives that aim to improve their health and well-being of employees. Since these additional factors fall beyond the scope of the current research, they have not been controlled for during the data analysis. A broader discussion of the possible ways in which the results have been affected can be found in the chapter "Limitations and future research".

Although the positive relationship between ICSR and perceived external prestige had already been established at an earlier stage of the analysis, additional findings can help better understand the stronger effects of ICSR on organizational identification. The data indicated that employees' perceptions of external prestige are more strongly affected by their perceptions of the internal rather than the external CSR of their organizations. These results are counter intuitive because the perceptions of external prestige reflect employees' beliefs of the way outsiders view their organization (Fuller et al., 2006). In that sense, although internally focused CSR initiatives signal the organization's benevolence towards the employees, reflect characteristics that are highly valued in society and potentially indicate the organizational stance on wider social issues, they are usually much less visible to outsiders than externally focused initiatives. A possible explanation for that inconsistency might be that employees derive information about how outsiders view their company's CSR through different media channels and word of mouth (Smidts et al., 2001), while information regarding the internal practices of organization is much more accessible than before on SNS. What is more, CSR has been associated with the attraction and retention of talent (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008), suggesting that information regarding the company's internal CSR practices might be purposefully revealed to outsiders.

The main objective of the current research was to examine the extent to which internal and external corporate social responsibility initiatives differ in their effects on employees' online ambassadorship intentions. It was found that online ambassadorship intentions are affected to a significantly greater degree by perceived ICSR. While neither ECSR nor ICSR affect eWOM directly, ICSR proved to achieve its influence through the full mediating effect of organizational identification, while ECSR demonstrated to be only indirectly related to the employees' sense of belonging. Any differences in the effects of ICSR and ECSR on ambassadorship intentions could therefore be attributed to the different extent to which these practices influence OI, owed to the varying underlying mechanisms through which ICSR and ECSR contribute to the employees' sense of belonging. In that regard, ECSR was found to indirectly affect one's organizational identification through its significant relationship with one's perceptions of external prestige. ICSR on the other hand was found to influence the

extent to which employees identify with their employing organizations through their perceptions of both external prestige and internal respect. What is more, ICSR was further identified as a better predictor of both PEP and PIR as compared to ECSR, which serves to justify its significantly stronger effects on employees' sense of belonging, and ultimately on their online ambassadorship intentions.

5.4 Practical implications

The findings of the current research also suggest valuable implications for the organizational practice. Considering employees' emerging role as authentic sources of organizational information of high credibility (Dreher, 2014), even more so than official organizational channels (van Zoonen & van der Meer, 2015), they can play an important role in any company's communication strategy. In that sense, the understanding of the antecedents of online ambassadorship behaviors may indicate to managers and communication specialists how to influence such behaviors. Creating appropriate conditions that would facilitate the employees' sense of oneness and belongingness to the organization could stimulate their willingness to engage in positive word of mouth online. The results of the current study indicate that creating an environment of respect where employees feel valued and taken care of is one path through which these behavioral outcomes can be facilitated.

Furthermore, increasing the visibility of internally directed CSR practices to external audiences might further foster employees' organizational identification since these are considered sources of external prestige by internal stakeholders. This could also be potentially beneficial for organizations in terms of the attraction and retention of talent (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2008; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008).

Additionally, the better understanding of the ways employees' perceive, interpret and respond to internal and external CSR initiatives could help corporate affairs specialists in the planning and execution of CSR strategies. The results demonstrated that the benefits of ICSR practices go beyond the immediate improving of the working environment and extend to the shaping of a positive organization online presence.

5.5 Limitations and future research

The current restach has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, it should be noted that the results of the study cannot be generalized as the sample might have not been representative of the general employee population. This can be attributed to the choice of sampling technique, in particular - snowball sampling. Due to the circumstances

surrounding the COVID-19 global health crisis and unavailability of publicly available employee records, and the limited financial and operational resources of the researcher, the application of a random sampling technique was not feasible. However, following the recommendations of Morgan (2008) it was intended to increase the diversity of the sample through drawing the participants from a set of varying sampling seeds. That is, the initial respondents were employees of different ages and social backgrounds, working in different industries in 4 different countries. What is more, an invitation for participation in the research was published on SNS, where it was further distributed by volunteers to their respective networks.

Second, it is worth noting that the cross-sectional design of the current study prohibits the inference of causality between the variables of interest. This would only be possible through the use of a different research design. Future research might therefore consider applying longitudinal and experimental approaches in order to infer any causality in the relationships between different types of CSR and employees' online ambassadorship behaviors.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the quantitative survey employed in the current research relied exclusively on self-reported data. This brings its own limitations as it can lead to social desirability bias (Moorman & Podsakoff, 1992). In order to minimize such potential bias in the data, the purposes of the research were explained in a message accompanying the invitation and the respondents were assured of the anonymity of their participation and confidentiality of the results, as recommended by Podsakoff, MacKinzey, Lee and Podsakoff (2003). Nevertheless, self-reported questionnaires are considered a valid source of data in organizational behavior research (Spector, 1994). This is especially relevant for the current research that intended to measure the individual perceptions and behavioral intentions of employees. It should be acknowledged however, that employees' perceptions might have been influenced by external circumstances that the current research couldn't control for. In particular, the data gathering process took place between April 24 and May 24 of 2020. During that time the world was trying to fight the pandemic outbreak of SARS-CoV-2. As a result, people had to change their everyday lives to minimize the risks presented by the disease. Most prominently, social distancing measures were undertaken by the majority of affected nations, forcing people to limit their face to face interactions with others outside of their households for weeks. Although the immediate and long-term consequences of this ongoing event will be hard to measure, it is certain that it has created an environment of uncertainty and vulnerability affecting most of us, if not everyone. It is possible that in times

like these, employee's sensitivity is heightened with regards to the internally directed CSR practices of their employers and in particular to those concerning their health and well-being. In that sense, it is important for future research to examine whether similar results would be observed in normal circumstances.

Next, considering that ICSR demonstrated to be a greater source of both internal respect and external prestige for employees, it would be interesting for future studies to examine whether ICSR practices would also be considered more important indicators of the organization's attractiveness by prospective employees. Additionally, the current research might serve as an important step towards differentiating between the effects of internal and external CSR on employees' behavioral responses. Online ambassadorship is only one of many organization-favoring outcomes that are associated with one's organizational identification. In that sense, similar differences could be observed with regards to other outcomes such as job satisfaction or increased productivity.

Finally, previous research has indicated that the pathways through which one's organizational identification is built in the context of CSR might differ according to their individualistic or collectivistic orientation (Farooq et al., 2017). Thus, individuals with high individualistic orientation build their sense of belonging primarily through internal CSR via respect and those with high collectivistic orientation do it primarily through external CSR and prestige. Therefore, in the light of the finding that internal CSR is a significantly better predictor of online ambassadorship intentions as compared to external CSR, it would be interesting for scientists to observe whether the online ambassadorship intentions of employees are affected by their orientation with regards to individualism/collectivism.

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Appendix A

Appendix A – Online survey

Welcome!

Dear respondent,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey which is a part of a Master thesis research project at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The purpose of the research is to study some of the perceptions employees hold about the organizations they currently work for.

Please be assured that the survey is anonymous and any information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. The whole survey should take no more than 10 minutes to fill in.

Should you need any additional information regarding the survey or have any recommendations about it, please don't hesitate to contact me, Emil Hadzhiev, at 540404eh@student.eur.nl

Please click the arrow to begin.

(By clicking the arrow you agree to   take part in this survey)

1. Are you currently employed?

- o   Yes
- o   No

2. To start with, you will be presented with some statements regarding the socially responsible practices of the organization you work for. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to an organization's commitment to integrate social and environmental concerns in its business operations and in its interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

The organization I work for implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment.

- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for makes investments to create a better life for the future generations.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for supports non-governmental organizations working in problematic areas.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of the society.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree

- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for targets a sustainable growth which considers the well-being of future generations.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

3. Here you willl be introduced to some additional statements related to the CSR practices of the organization you work for. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

The organization I work for has policies that encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree

- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

In the organization I work for the management is primarily concerned with employees' needs and wants.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for implements flexible policies to provide a good work and life balance for its employees.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

In the organization I work for the managerial decisions regarding the employees are usually fair.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for supports employees who want to acquire additional education.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

4. This section introduces statements about how other people perceive the organization you work for. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

The organization I work for has a good reputation.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

Most people have a positive view of the organization I work for.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

Most people value the organization I work for.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree

- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The organization I work for is perceived as a prestigious place to work.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The organization I work for is considered one of the best.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Employees from other organizations would be proud to work for my organization.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5. Here you will be presented with a few statements about your standing within the organization you work for. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

What I do is respected within the organization I work for.

- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

I am a valued member of the organization I work for.

- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

My ideas are respected within the organization I work for.

- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

My contribution to the work is valued within the organization I work for.

- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree

- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

Others within the organization I work for think it would be difficult to replace me.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

The organization I work for cares about my well-being.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree
- o Agree
- o Strongly agree

6. In this section of the survey you will be introduced to some statements about how connected you feel to the organization you work for. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I feel a bond with the organization I work for.
- o Strongly disagree
- o Disagree
- o Somewhat disagree
- o Neither agree nor disagree
- o Somewhat agree

- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel solidarity with the organization I work for.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel committed to the organization I work for.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel that it is worthwhile belonging to the organization I work for.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I feel good about belonging to the organization I work for.
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree

- o Neither agree nor disagree

- o Somewhat agree

- o Agree

- o Strongly agree

When I talk about the organization I work for, I usually say "we" rather than "they".

- o Strongly disagree

- o Disagree

- o Somewhat disagree

- o Neither agree nor disagree

- o Somewhat agree

- o Agree

- o Strongly agree

7. This section will introduce statements about your willingness to share positive information about the organization you work for on your social media accounts (such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn). Please indicate how likely it is that you would...

Like a social media post that the organization you work for has shared?

- o Very unlikely

- o Unlikely

- o Somewhat unlikely

- o Neither likely nor unlikely

- o Somewhat likely

- o Likely

- o Very likely

Share a social media post by the organization you work for?

- o Very unlikely

- o Unlikely

- o Somewhat unlikely

- o Neither likely nor unlikely

- o Somewhat likely

- o Likely

o   Very likely

Post positive social media messages about the organization you work for?

- o   Very unlikely
- o   Unlikely
- o   Somewhat unlikely
- o   Neither likely nor unlikely
- o   Somewhat likely
- o   Likely
- o   Very likely

Recommend the products or services of the organization you work for on social media?

- o   Very unlikely
- o   Unlikely
- o   Somewhat unlikely
- o   Neither likely nor unlikely
- o   Somewhat likely
- o   Likely
- o   Very likely

8. What is your age?
- o   Text input

9. What is your gender?
- o   Male
- o   Female
- o   Other (please specify) – *text input*
- o   I prefer not to answer

10. What is your nationality?
- o   Text input

11. How long have you been working for your current employer?
- o   Text input

12. Do you currently have a social media account (for example, on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn)?

o Yes

o No

13. What is your highest completed educational level?

o Primary education

o Secondary education

o College/ HBO

o University - Bachelor

o University – Master

o University – PHD

o Other

14. Is there anything you want to add after completing the survey? Please add any additional comments below:

o Text input

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded. You can now close this window.