

Acquiring Corporate Social Responsibility: Spillover of Social Responsibility Perceptions during Brand Acquisitions

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Abstract

This research examines the impact of acquisitions on consumer perceptions of social responsibility of the acquiring firm. The findings from four studies show that although a firm can bolster its perceptions of social responsibility through acquisition, the position of the acquired socially responsible brand as functional or symbolic directly influences the extent to which this occurs. In particular, CSR perceptions of the acquiring firm are weaker when acquiring a symbolic brand, compared to a functional brand. Furthermore, both brand development and acquisition influence CSR perceptions to the same extent for functional brands. For symbolic brands, new brand development (vs. acquisition) benefits CSR perceptions to a greater extent. Findings from the current study also suggest that identity dilution mediates the relationship between brand positioning and CSR perceptions, such that the identity of an acquired symbolic brand is diluted, but not that of a functional one.

Keywords: *CSR; sustainability; acquisitions*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics