

How and when the proportion of female top managers affects corporate social responsibility perceptions

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Abstract

This research explores whether, and if so, how information about a firm's proportion of female top managers influences consumers' beliefs about a firm's corporate social responsibility. Results from four experiments provide causal evidence that knowledge of a higher proportion of female top managers increases consumers' CSR beliefs. This effect arises because consumers attribute higher communal characteristics to top management teams of firms with a higher (vs. lower) proportion of female top managers. Further, this effect persists when the higher proportion of female top managers is the result of a firm's own goal and when it is the result of a legal gender quota. Finally, this research also demonstrates managerially relevant downstream outcomes. By taking a consumer perspective and providing causal evidence, these findings contribute to the ongoing debate among policymakers, corporate leaders, and scientists about the potential consequences of promoting more women to top management positions.

Keywords: *Female top managers; Gender stereotypes; Corporate social responsibility*

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics