

BRAND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: HOW LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES IMPACT CONSUMER PERCEPTION

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Cite as:

cornudet Camille, Michel Géraldine (2021), BRAND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: HOW
LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES IMPACT CONSUMER PERCEPTION. *Proceedings of the European
Marketing Academy*, 50th, (94707)

Paper from the 50th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, May 25-28, 2021



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Abstract

To satisfy their consumers in their quest for meaning, brands are communicating more and more about their social responsibility. However, this approach is often seen as greenwashing. In this context of suspicion, brands use three main legitimation strategies (authorization, rationalization, and narrativization) to convey their social responsibility efforts. How do these legitimation strategies influence consumers' perception of a brand's social responsibility? What is anthropomorphism's role? How can individual characteristics influence the perception of a brand's social responsibility? To answer these questions, we carried out a between-subjects experimental design (n=465) that shows the positive influence of legitimation strategies on the perception of brand social responsibility. Our results also highlight the mediating role of anthropomorphism, which amplifies the influence of legitimation strategies on how brand social responsibility is perceived. Finally, our study shows that the more a consumer is empathetic, the less influence legitimation strategies will have on the perception of brand social responsibility.

Keywords: *legitimation strategies; brand social responsibility; anthropomorphism*

Track: Product and Brand Management