

When does corporate social responsibility drive customer participation?

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When does corporate social responsibility drive customer participation?

Abstract

The prevalence and prominence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) spurs scholars and marketers into investigating its influences on the associated responses of stakeholders. Specifically, customer participation (CP) unfolds the general recognition of CSR. Yet, little attention is paid to understanding whether and when such a customer's proactive engagement is evoked by CSR. Building on the signaling theory and congruence theory, we posit that CSR denotes the altruistic nature of the organization and that customers take note of such credible signal to actuate participation. Results from three studies hint at a positive and pronounced relationship between CSR and CP, in which the CSR-brand fit and self-image congruity augment the effectiveness of CSR as a credible signal, thereby elevating the positive relationship between CSR and CP. Notably, the synergetic interplay of CSR and fit paradigms (i.e., CSR-brand fit and self-image congruity) heightens the effective role of signals in stimulating customers to participate. This study provides theoretical and practical insights into the implementation of CSR strategies to encourage CP.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategy, Organization Behavior*

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