

Give customers a chance to show they care: the role of sympathy and equity in consumer–brand relationship recovery. A latent growth curve modelling approach.

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Abstract

Mainstream branding research suggests that brands should provide strength and guidance during crises, remaining strong for customers and delivering value. This study challenges such assumptions through a longitudinal study using latent growth curve modeling. Our investigation shows that customers' sympathy for a brand aids recovery in the consumer–brand relationship during a crisis, but only for those in communal (vs exchange) relationships. Meanwhile, perceptions of inequitable investment in the brand over time mitigate relationship decline but reduce recovery, depending on relationship norms. This study introduces the concept of brand sympathy and demonstrates its effects in a crisis context while showcasing an innovative use of growth modeling.

Keywords: consumer-brand relationship, brand sympathy, latent growth curve modeling

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