

How and when a pandemic affects consumers responses towards business actions:
Cross-cultural insight into the theory of dyadic morality

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Abstract

This study draws upon the theory of dyadic morality to study consumer responses toward corporate social irresponsibility (CSI). The effects of perceived CSI on felt harm are proposed to follow two paths: a direct path and an indirect path mediated by negative moral emotions. Harm then affects consumer action tendencies toward the company. Hypotheses are tested in experimental studies, with random samples of adults in four countries: US (N=180), Norway (N=161), Italy (N=174) and Kenya (N=225). The findings suggest that felt negative moral emotions (contempt, anger, and disgust) bolster perceived harm caused by a company to its employees under a pandemic and result in negative action tendencies toward the company. Trust in science is found to regulate evocation of negative moral emotions in consumers upon perception of CSI where those who trust more in sciences experienced stronger negative moral emotions than those who trust less in science. The findings hold across four countries.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics