

From purpose to pretense: Consumer responses to inconsistent corporate political activities

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Abstract

We study the link between (in)consistent political activities (CPA) and consumer responses in the form of negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) through the mediating effects of corporate hypocrisy and consumer perceived ethicality. To test the proposed hypotheses, Study 1 examines the sentiment of consumers' comments on news articles that reported inconsistent CPA. The results show that when consumers hear about a company's inconsistent CPA, they produce text with negative sentiment online. This is followed by two studies, using an experimental design. In Study 2, where the focal issues were diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the direct link between inconsistent CPA and NWOM is also confirmed, as well as the mediating effect of corporate hypocrisy and consumer perceived ethicality. Finally, Study 3 addresses reproductive rights, where the indirect effect of CPA consistency on NWOM is moderated by CPA authenticity.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics