

Caring or commercializing?: The interplay of communication strategy and consumer engagement on social media during the COVID-19 crisis

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Abstract

Guided by the MAIN model, our study aims to better inform brands in their social media marketing efforts during crises like the recent pandemic. The study guides the choice between prosocial and competitive advertising during such times, investigating their interplay with consumer engagement and its impact on consumer perceptions. We used a 2 (communication strategy: corporate social responsibility vs. corporate ability) \times 2 (social endorsement: high vs. low) \times 2 (comment valence: negative vs. positive) between-subjects experimental design (N = 232). We found significant two-way interactions between communication strategy and social endorsements on source trustworthiness; and comment valence and social endorsements on attitude toward the ad. It was found that both prosocial and traditional competitive advertising may be used successfully depending on the level of social endorsements.

Keywords: *COVID-19, social-media strategy, CSR.*