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The Impact of Gender and Agentic-Communal Orientations on Consumer Skepticism about Corporate Social Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Companies are increasingly emphasizing corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, consumers are often skeptical of the sincerity of companies' CSR claims, particularly when the claim comes directly from the company. This research examines how the gender and gender-related characteristics of a company's spokesperson can alleviate CSR skepticism. Study 1 finds that consumers are less skeptical of a company's CSR claim when it is made by a female (vs. male) spokesperson. Study 2 expands on this by finding that female consumers are less skeptical of a company's CSR efforts when they are promoted by a communal spokesperson. In contrast, male consumers are less skeptical of a company's CSR efforts when they are promoted by an agentic spokesperson. These findings should guide companies and their brands in choosing ideal spokespeople for making CSR claims, depending on the target market.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kevin P. Newman received his PhD from the University of Arizona. He is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the Arthur F. and Patricia Ryan Center for Business Studies at Providence College. Kevin uses experimental research techniques to better understand consumer behavior issues relating to corporate social responsibility, ethical branding, moral identity and behavior, self-control, and how consumers cultivate their identities through brands. He has published articles in these research areas at the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Marketing Letters*, and *Psychology & Marketing*.

Rebecca K. Trump received her PhD from the University of Arizona. She is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Sellinger School of Business and Management at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore. Her research expertise is in experimental consumer psychology, particularly focusing on connections between brands and consumers' identities and on consumers' reactions to corporate social responsibility. She has published articles in these research areas at the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Advertising*, *Marketing Letters*, and *Psychology & Marketing*.