

# Company Corporate Social Responsibility, Credibility, Consumer Empathy and Advocacy Behaviors

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## Abstract

Consumers are increasingly aware of companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR), and these CSR practices perceptions leads to positive customer attitudes and behaviors (Y. Kim, 2017). In this sense, most companies are developing CSR strategies that are more extensive and multifaceted (Suganthi, 2019). Notwithstanding, research needs to be further deepened on how and when customer CSR perceptions influence on his attitudes and behaviors. This work, based on the attribution theory, sheds light on the influence of CSR on consumer behavior by examining the underlying mental procedures that current models tend to ignore. In particular, it try to fill the research gap by analyzing the influence of consumer CSR perceptions on a global behavior -advocacy behaviors-, paying attention on a variable as important as creativity to explain the mechanism that explains the above-mentioned relationship, and considering an intrinsic factor – customers empathy- to explain when those relationships take place.

Company credibility is defined as “the extent to which consumers feel that the firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claims and whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth or not” (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001, p. 235). CSR is a key factor engendering customers' company credibility (Hur et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2017). In terms of attribution theory, consumers infer from a company's and/or brand's behavior, responsibilities, faults or good actions, and the interactions between a company and its consumers are conditioned. Attribution theory can therefore be useful to justify customer credibility toward food companies' CSR practices. Customers who perceive CSR company actions as sustainable, ethical and even philanthropic experience positive perceptions and improved feelings of trustworthiness and expertness toward a company, which provides a good basis for credibility and other positive attitudes (Kim et al., 2017). At the same, time, customers who has credibility in a company due to its CSR practices and the feeling of credibility are more likely to make advocacy behaviors from that company. Advocacy behaviors include transactional and non-transactional benefits of great value, such as intention to buy, positive word-of-mouth or resistance to adverse information about an company (Castro-González et al., 2019).

Additionally, this work hangs on to role of customer levels of empathy, understood as the capability to manage or share the feelings or reactions of others and the process of sharing (Yen & Yang, 2018), to influence customer responses to CSR perceptions.