

# Make me happy, make it credible – the effect of CSR message framing on online brand engagement

CSR framing  
impacts on  
brand  
engagement

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Received 14 January 2023

Revised 15 March 2023

Accepted 31 March 2023

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The objective of this study is to investigate the differential impact of gain versus loss message framing on the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communications in eliciting online brand engagement within the hospitality industry. Furthermore, this research aims to examine the extent to which evoked happiness and message credibility mediate the relationship between CSR message framing and online brand engagement, as these mediating factors have not been thoroughly examined in the existing academic literature.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study utilizes a between-subjects experimental design to test an integrative research framework, which is grounded in message framing theory and the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), in order to examine the interrelationships among the various constructs of the study within a coffee shop context on Facebook.

**Findings** – The findings of this study indicate that gain framing is a more powerful predictor of online brand engagement than loss framing. A mediation analysis supports the assertion that the effects of CSR framing communications on online brand engagement are mediated by evoked happiness and message credibility. Specifically, when the CSR message was framed in a positive (gain) manner, it was perceived as more credible and evoked more happiness, leading to increased online brand engagement. Additionally, the study's results provide empirical evidence for the notion that the happiness elicited by brand messages enhances their credibility, leading to further online brand engagement.

**Originality/value** – This research makes a novel contribution to the literature by investigating the distinct effects of message framing on online brand advocacy and examining the complex interrelationships that modulate consumer engagement within the context of the hospitality industry.

**Keywords** Message framing, CSR communications, Evoked happiness, Message credibility, Online brand engagement

**Paper type** Original article

## 1. Introduction

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) denotes a company's commitment to fulfilling its social obligations. It has been shown to impact corporate image (Brown and



The authors thank the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (PID2020-113469GB-I00), the Junta de Castilla y León and the European Regional Development Fund (Grant CLU-2019-03) for the financial support to the Research Unit of Excellence Economic Management for Sustainability (GECOS).