ATTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHENTICITY: EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

While recent research demonstrates that consumers are motivated to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic and that these assessments affect their purchasing decisions and behavior, little research has examined whether the search for authenticity applies to other contexts. To address this research gap, we explored employee perceptions of authenticity with regard to their organization's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. Using 24 in-depth interviews, we found that assessing the authenticity of an organization's CSR program was important for employees. Their attributions of authenticity depend on both tangible cues (sustained commitment of resources to the CSR program, and the degree of alignment between elements of the CSR program), and intangible cues (emotional engagement, an ethical core, and embeddedness). Our findings are particularly relevant to marketers given CSR is increasingly linked to brand promises and employees are the target of internal marketing campaigns about CSR programs and are pivotal to the successful implementation of these programs.

References Available on Request.