

The Influence of Group Heuristics on Corporate Social Responsibility Messages Designed to Reduce Illegal Consumption

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Abstract : Corporate social responsibility projects are suggested to motivate consumers to reciprocate good corporate deeds with their custom. When the projects benefit the ingroup vs the outgroup, such as locals rather than foreigners, the effect on reciprocity is suggested to be more powerful. This may be explained by group heuristics, a theory which indicates that favours to the ingroup (but not outgroup) are expected to be reciprocated, resulting in ingroup favouritism. The heuristic is theorised to explain prosocial behaviours towards the ingroup. The aim of this study is to test whether group heuristics similarly explain a reduction in antisocial behaviours towards the ingroup, measured by illegal consumption which harms a group that consumers identify with. In order to test corporate social responsibility messages, a population of interested consumers is required, so sport fans are recruited. A pre-registered experiment (N = 600) tests the influence of a focused "team" benefiting message vs a broader "sport" benefiting message on change in illegal intentions. The influence of group (team) identity and trait reciprocity on message efficacy are tested as measures of group heuristics. Results suggest that the "team" treatment significantly reduces illegal consumption intentions. The "sport" treatment interacted with the team identification measure, increasing illegal consumption intentions for low team identification individuals. The results suggest that corporate social responsibility may be effective in reducing illegal consumption, if the messages are delivered directly from brands to consumers with brand identification. Messages delivered on the behalf of an industry may have an undesirable effect.

Keywords : live sports, piracy, counterfeiting, corporate social responsibility, group heuristics, ingroup bias, team identification

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