

The Impact of Shared Social Responsibility on Brand Attitude

A Case Study of the Luxury Goods Industry

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Abstract

In recent years, the luxury goods industry has confronted mounting challenges amidst a declining market and heightened consumer scrutiny. Traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices by luxury brands, intended to enhance brand image, have often elicited skepticism from consumers due to perceived hypocrisy or tax benefits exploitation. This skepticism stems from the inherent tension between luxury brands' elitist values and the egalitarian ideals promoted by CSR. As such, the luxury goods industry seeks innovative CSR approaches that resonate positively with consumers.

To address this issue, the present study investigated the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) strategies on luxury brand attitudes. Adding to the methodology, this research employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a questionnaire survey as the primary data collection tool. The study focused on a population of approximately 50,000 residents in Nanning, China, who have purchased luxury products within the past year. A sample group of 600 participants was selected through purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in age, gender, occupation, and income levels.

The study compared the effects of traditional CSR versus SSR strategies on luxury brand attitudes, incorporating measures of cognitive fluency, consumer involvement, and power distance belief. Data analysis was conducted using data statistical analysis software, employing reliability and validity tests, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and mediation and moderation analysis. The findings revealed that SSR strategies exert a more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes than traditional CSR methods. Cognitive fluency and consumer involvement emerged as significant mediating variables, elucidating the mechanisms through which SSR enhances brand attitudes. Furthermore, individuals' power distance beliefs were found to moderate the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes, amplifying the favorable effects of SSR over traditional CSR as power distance beliefs increase.

By utilizing a rigorous research methodology, this study contributes to the understanding of how luxury brands can engage in socially responsible activities that resonate

positively with consumers, ultimately fostering enhanced brand attitudes and mitigating the challenges associated with the CSR-luxury paradox. The findings offer practical insights for luxury brands seeking to develop effective CSR strategies that align with their brand values while fostering favorable consumer perceptions.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Shared Social Responsibility, Brand attitude of Luxury Brands

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has garnered significant attention from both academic researchers and practitioners, especially within the context of the luxury goods industry. Traditionally, CSR has been viewed as a means for companies to demonstrate their commitment to ethical, legal, environmental, and philanthropic endeavors. For luxury brands, however, engaging in CSR activities has proven to be a particularly challenging endeavor due to the inherent tension between their exclusive brand positioning and the egalitarian values espoused by CSR (Torelli et al., 2012). This tension, often referred to as the "CSR-Luxury Paradox," arises from the conflict between luxury brands' emphasis on exclusivity, hedonism, and elitism, and the universal public interest and social welfare aspects prioritized by CSR (Torelli et al., 2012; Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). Consequently, luxury brands face skepticism from consumers who perceive their CSR efforts as hypocritical or motivated by ulterior motives (Stecklow, 2005; David et al., 2005).

One such innovative approach is Shared Social Responsibility (SSR), a collaborative model that emphasizes the joint participation of consumers and companies in achieving social or environmental goals. SSR involves consumers directly in decision-making processes related to charitable donations and brand activities, fostering a sense of co-ownership and collaboration in CSR efforts. By enhancing transparency and perceived positive intentions behind luxury brands' social initiatives, SSR aims to mitigate consumer skepticism and strengthen brand attitudes.

In this study, SSR plays a crucial role in understanding how luxury brands can effectively engage in socially responsible activities that not only align with their brand values but also foster more favorable consumer perceptions. Specifically, SSR offers a unique opportunity to explore how consumer involvement and shared decision-making can moderate the relationship between CSR strategies and brand attitudes, ultimately addressing the challenges associated with the CSR-Luxury Paradox.

To address this paradox, researchers and practitioners have sought innovative CSR approaches that better align with luxury brands' unique brand strategies. One such approach is Shared Social Responsibility (SSR), which involves consumers in decision-making processes related to CSR activities, fostering a sense of co-ownership and collaboration (Gneezy et al.,

2010). SSR strategies, by empowering consumers to participate in determining the beneficiaries and amounts of charitable donations, aim to mitigate the skepticism surrounding traditional CSR efforts and enhance the perceived authenticity and transparency of luxury brands' social initiatives.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential benefits of involving consumers in CSR activities. For instance, Gneezy et al. (2010) found that allowing consumers to set their own prices for goods or services involved in CSR initiatives (known as Pay-What-You-Want pricing) improved perceptions of fairness and increased donations. Similarly, other research suggests that involving consumers in CSR efforts can lead to more positive brand attitudes (Hildebrand et al., 2017). However, there is a dearth of research specifically examining the impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes, particularly within the context of the CSR-Luxury Paradox.

The current study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the effect of SSR strategies on luxury brand attitudes. Drawing upon social identity theory and stakeholder theory, this research examines how SSR initiatives, through the mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement, can positively influence luxury brand attitudes. Furthermore, the study explores the moderating influence of power distance belief, a cultural value variable that represents individuals' attitudes towards power hierarchies and inequality (Hofstede, 1984, 2001). By doing so, this study seeks to provide insights into how luxury brands can effectively engage in socially responsible activities that resonate positively with consumers, ultimately fostering enhanced brand attitudes and mitigating the challenges associated with the CSR-Luxury Paradox.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Compare the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) and traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies on luxury brand attitudes.
2. Investigate the mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement in the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes.
3. Explore the moderating effect of individuals' power distance belief on the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes.
4. Contribute to the academic literature by enriching the understanding of how SSR can mitigate the "CSR-Luxury Paradox" and provide practical guidance for luxury brands to engage in socially responsible activities that enhance their brand attitudes.
5. Identify effective strategies for luxury brands to integrate SSR into their overall marketing mix and achieve both social and commercial success.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: SSR strategies have a more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategies.

Hypothesis 2: Cognitive fluency plays a mediating role in the impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes.

Hypothesis 3: Consumer involvement acts as a mediator in the influence path of SSR on luxury brand attitudes.

Hypothesis 4: Power distance orientation moderates the relationship between SSR and luxury brand attitudes, such that the positive influence of SSR on luxury brand attitudes intensifies as power distance orientation increases, relative to traditional CSR strategies.

Research Framework

The research framework serves as the conceptual backbone underpinning the entire investigation into the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) on luxury brand attitudes. It outlines the key variables and their intricate relationships, facilitating a systematic examination of the research problem.

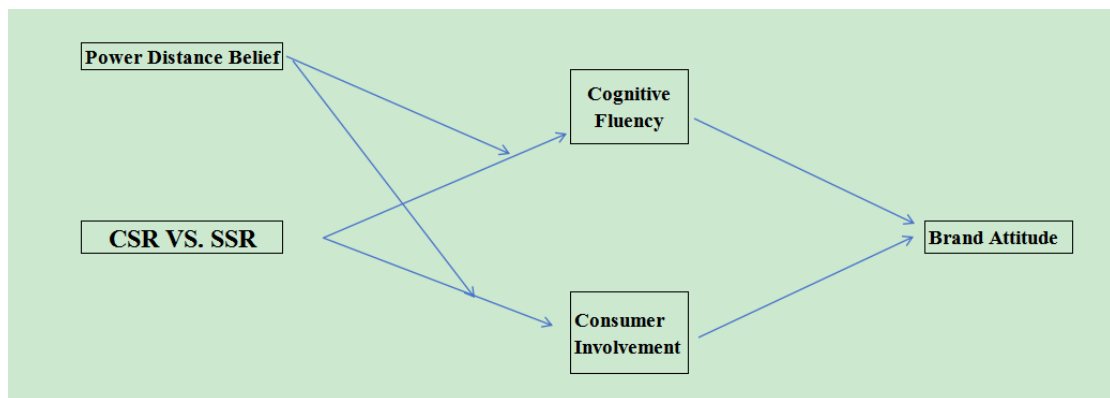
At the heart of this framework lie the independent variables, which represent the CSR strategies employed by luxury brands. Specifically, the framework contrasts traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies with Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) strategies. Traditional CSR strategies are primarily driven by companies, with the brand solely determining the beneficiaries and uses of charitable donations, whereas SSR strategies involve consumers in these decision-making processes, fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.

Two mediating variables are central to the framework: cognitive fluency and consumer involvement. Cognitive fluency refers to the ease with which consumers process information related to the CSR activities, impacting their evaluations of the brand. Consumer involvement, on the other hand, encapsulates the degree of personal relevance and willingness to engage with the brand's CSR initiatives. These two variables transmit the effect of the independent variable (CSR strategy type) onto the dependent variable (luxury brand attitude).

Furthermore, the framework acknowledges the potential moderating influence of power distance belief (PDB), a cultural value variable that reflects individuals' attitudes towards power hierarchy differences. PDB acts as a regulator, amplifying or diminishing the relationships within the model, offering insights into how cultural values can shape the reception of SSR strategies and their subsequent impact on luxury brand attitudes.

In summary, the research framework provides a comprehensive structure for exploring the multidimensional effects of SSR on luxury brand attitudes. By integrating the independent, mediating, and moderating variables, the framework enables a rigorous examination of the

proposed hypotheses, shedding light on how SSR can enhance brand perceptions and mitigate the challenges associated with the CSR-luxury paradox.



Research Methodology

Population and Sample Group

1. Population

The population of interest for this study comprises approximately 50,000 residents in Nanning, who have purchased luxury products within the past year (according Nanning luxury consumption report released by Nanning government). These individuals represent a diverse group spanning various age groups, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, but they share a common interest in luxury goods and are likely to be informed or engaged with corporate social responsibility (CSR) and shared social responsibility (SSR) initiatives undertaken by luxury brands. Given the focus on luxury consumption, this population tends to skew towards younger, more affluent, and urban individuals who value quality, exclusivity, brand prestige, and align their purchasing decisions with their personal beliefs and social consciousness.

2. Sample Group

Taking into account statistical rigor and practical feasibility, this study determined a sample size of 600 through calculation. Based on a target population of approximately 50,000 residents in Nanning who have purchased luxury goods within the past year, statistical formulas were applied, referencing the standard error method to ensure a margin of error no greater than 5% at a 95% confidence level (Cochran, 1977). Additionally, considering the burden of practical operations, statistical power, budgetary and time constraints, as well as anticipated data loss, a final sample size of 600 was chosen. This was done to ensure accuracy of the results while achieving broad representativeness and generalizability of the research.

The Scope of Variable

Independent Variables

Shared Social Responsibility (SSR): An innovative corporate social responsibility strategy that emphasizes the joint participation of consumers and companies in social responsibility activities, such as jointly deciding the specific use of charitable projects and commodity prices.

Traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (Traditional CSR): A corporate social responsibility strategy that is primarily led by companies, with companies deciding the specific use of charitable projects and commodity prices, and consumers not directly involved in the decision-making process.

Dependent Variable

Brand Attitude: Consumers' overall evaluation of luxury brands, including recognition, favorability, attractiveness, trust, and preference towards the brand.

Mediating variables

Cognitive Fluency: The ease with which consumers process brand information, reflecting their processing experience of brand information. High cognitive fluency contributes to positive evaluations of brands by consumers.

Consumer Involvement: The level of personal relevance and willingness to participate in brand activities among consumers. High involvement indicates that consumers are more engaged and willing to participate in brand activities.

Modulating variables

Power Distance Belief (PDB): Individuals' views and values regarding power hierarchy differences within organizations. Consumers with different power distance beliefs may have varying reactions to brand activities and corporate social responsibility strategies.

Research Questions

Drawing upon the discussions in the previous section, it becomes evident that luxury brands face a unique challenge in balancing their pursuit of social responsibility with maintaining their exclusive brand image. The existence of the "corporate social responsibility-luxury paradox" highlights the inherent tension between the values espoused by luxury brands, centered on elitism, hedonism, and exclusivity, and the egalitarian, universalistic values emphasized by corporate social responsibility (CSR). While luxury brands strive to demonstrate their commitment to society through CSR initiatives, these efforts often face skepticism from consumers who perceive them as hypocritical or motivated by ulterior agendas.

The introduction of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) as a novel CSR strategy provides a potential avenue to address this paradox. By involving consumers in the decision-making process related to charitable donations and brand activities, SSR aims to enhance the authenticity and perceived positive intentions behind luxury brands' social initiatives. However, research on the efficacy of SSR in the luxury goods industry remains limited, and its impact on brand attitudes remains poorly understood.

This lack of understanding gives rise to several research questions that warrant investigation:

Question1: How does SSR compare to traditional CSR in its impact on luxury brand attitudes? Given the inherent tensions within the CSR-luxury paradox, it is imperative to

examine whether SSR can mitigate consumers' skepticism and enhance brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategies.

Question 2: What are the underlying mechanisms that explain the impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes? Specifically, do mediating variables such as cognitive fluency and consumer involvement play a role in shaping brand attitudes towards SSR initiatives?

Question 3: How does the individual's power distance belief moderate the impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes? Recognizing that individuals differ in their acceptance of power hierarchy, it is crucial to examine how this cultural value orientation influences the effectiveness of SSR strategies.

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing insights into the potential of SSR as an innovative CSR strategy for luxury brands. Specifically, it seeks to examine the comparative effectiveness of SSR vis-à-vis traditional CSR, explore the underlying mechanisms that shape brand attitudes towards SSR, and understand how individual differences in power distance belief moderate these relationships.

Research Instruments

1. Experiment Design

This study has meticulously designed three experiments, all conducted through the questionnaire method, to systematically investigate the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) strategy on luxury brand attitudes. These three experiments are the pre-test, experiment 1, and experiment 2, each with specific objectives and procedures.

2. Pre-test Design

The primary goal of the pre-test is to examine the effectiveness of the manipulation of the independent variable (i.e., traditional CSR and SSR strategies). In the pre-test, participants are randomly assigned to two groups: one group receives the stimulus of the traditional CSR strategy, while the other group receives the SSR strategy stimulus. Both groups are shown advertisements of specific luxury brands implementing the respective strategies. Subsequently, a questionnaire survey is conducted to assess participants' perceptions of these brand activities, verifying the success of the independent variable manipulation.

3. Experiment 1 Design

experiment 1 aims to validate Hypothesis 1, which states that SSR strategy has a more positive impact on luxury brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategy. Similar to the pre-test, participants in experiment 1 are also randomly assigned to the traditional CSR and SSR groups and are shown advertisements of luxury brands implementing the strategies. However, the focus of experiment 1 is to measure participants' attitudes towards the displayed brands, collecting data through questionnaires to verify the superiority of SSR strategy in enhancing brand attitudes.

4. Experiment 2 Design

The design of experiment 2 is more comprehensive, aiming to validate Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. Specifically, experiment 2 not only repeats the procedures of experiment 1 to reconfirm the main effect (Hypothesis 1) but also delves into the mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement in the SSR strategy's influence on brand attitudes (Hypotheses 2 and 3), as well as the moderating role of power distance belief (Hypothesis 4). Therefore, in experiment 2, in addition to measuring brand attitudes, measurements of cognitive fluency, consumer involvement, and power distance belief are also included to thoroughly analyze the impact mechanism of SSR strategy.

Through these three carefully designed experiments, this study aims to systematically and thoroughly explore the multidimensional impacts of SSR strategy on luxury brand attitudes, providing new insights and empirical support for luxury brands in practicing corporate social responsibility.

5. Scale Design

The scales employed in this study primarily draw from established and validated instruments from both domestic and international sources. Specifically, the measurements for the manipulation of the independent variables, CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and SSR (Shared Social Responsibility), utilize traditional and mature scales related to CSR by Dacin and Brown (1997) and Herpen et al. (2003) for their common features. The distinguishing characteristics of SSR, which set it apart from traditional CSR, are measured based on the concept and essence of SSR as proposed by Gneezy et al. (2010).

For the dependent variable, brand attitude towards the target brand, the study relies on research by Homer (1990). The mediating variable of cognitive fluency is measured using the scales developed by Alter and Oppenheimer (2009). The measurement of consumer involvement, another mediating variable, references the scale by Laurent and Kapferer (1985). The moderating variable, power distance belief (PDB), is assessed based on the study by Wang et al. (2018), where the average score of the three items represents the level of PDB, with higher scores indicating higher PDB levels and vice versa.

All scales in this study adopt a 5-point Likert scale, allowing participants to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. This standardization ensures consistency and comparability across various measurements.

Table 1 : Summary of Variable Scales

Variable	Scale Items	Reference Source
CSR Strategy Type (Traditional CSR / SSR)	Common Features: 1. The brand actively participates in charitable donations and public welfare through this	Dacin and Brown (1997), Herpen et al. (2003)

Variable	Scale Items	Reference Source
	activity. 2. The activity demonstrates the brand's social responsibility. 3. The brand activity contributes to society.	
	1. Distinguishing Features: Consumers' purchase directly reflects their support for the beneficiaries. 2. Consumers can fully express their willingness to participate in social responsibility activities. 3. This brand activity emphasizes shared social responsibility between consumers and the brand, rather than solely the brand's responsibility.	Gneezy et al. (2010)
Brand Attitude	1. I think this brand is excellent. 2. I have a lot of good feelings towards this brand. 3. I think this brand is very charming. 4. I think this brand is very trustworthy. 5. I like this brand very much.	Homer (1990)
Cognitive Fluency	1. I feel it is easy. 2. I feel it is clear. 3. I feel it is smooth. 4. I feel it is relaxed.	Alter and Oppenheimer (2009)
Consumer Involvement	1. I am very interested. 2. I feel very happy. 3. I can well express myself. 4. I exercise or assume a lot of power and risk.	Laurent and Kapferer (1985)
Power Distance Belief (PDB)	1. Inequality among people can be naturally accepted. 2. People of lower power should be dependent on those of higher power. 3. Social hierarchy is very important.	Wang et al. (2018)

Data Collection

This study carefully designed and published online questionnaires through the Wenjuanxing platform, while leveraging social media channels such as WeChat to widely disseminate the questionnaire links to collect the required data. To ensure the relevance and

validity of the sample, we set clear recruitment criteria: participants must have a history of luxury consumption, encompassing various domains such as luxury brand fashion, bags, automobiles, jewelry, liquor, watches, perfumes, and cosmetics. This screening condition was placed prominently as the first question in the questionnaire, preventing ineligible participants from proceeding further, thereby ensuring the precision of the sample.

During the data collection process, we attracted approximately 600 eligible consumers to participate. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide basic demographic information, including but not limited to gender, age, education level, occupation category, and monthly disposable income. The collection of this information aimed to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the sample distribution and exclude irrelevant factors that might interfere with the research results.

To further enhance the quality and reliability of the questionnaire data, we incorporated multiple preventive measures into the questionnaire design. These included setting a minimum answer time limit to ensure participants had sufficient time to read carefully and respond thoughtfully; inserting attention check questions to identify casual or uncommitted responses; and limiting the types of devices used for answering to reduce errors potentially introduced by device variations. Through these measures, we strive to ensure that every questionnaire data collected truly and accurately reflects the opinions and attitudes of the participants.

To mitigate the potential bias introduced by specific brands or product types, we curated a diverse range of experimental materials across our pre-experiment, experiment 1, and experiment 2. Specifically, participants were exposed to advertisements from esteemed luxury brands Prada, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton each selected for their high visibility, substantial consumer base, and current adoption of mass marketing strategies and CSR initiatives, thereby contextualizing them within the "CSR-Luxury Paradox."

To further reduce the confounding effects of product variability, we incorporated diverse product categories within each brand context. For instance, the pre-experiment featured a baseball cap from Prada, experiment 1 showcased a silk scarf from Chanel, and experiment 2 utilized a pendant from Louis Vuitton. This approach aimed to neutralize the potential influence of product type on our findings, enabling a more focused examination of the impact of CSR strategies on luxury brand attitudes.

Data Analysis

For the rigorous analysis of questionnaire data collected from the pre-experiment, experiment 1, and experiment 2, we employed the data statistical analysis software statistical software. Our analytical approach encompassed multiple methods to comprehensively validate the research hypotheses.

Firstly, descriptive statistics were utilized to characterize the sample distribution and analyze control variables. This step was crucial in understanding the demographic profile of our participants and ensuring the robustness of our findings.

Secondly, the reliability of our measurement instruments was assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ensuring that the scales used in the study were internally consistent and reliable.

To establish the validity of our constructs, we conducted both KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, followed by factor analysis. These procedures verified that our variables were appropriately measured and meaningfully related.

In testing the manipulation of our independent variable (CSR strategy type), we applied independent samples t-tests to confirm that the experimental groups differed significantly as intended.

To examine the primary effect of SSR strategy on luxury brand attitude, we utilized one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). This method allowed us to statistically compare mean differences between groups and assess the significance of SSR's impact.

Further, we leveraged the data statistical analysis software to conduct Bootstrap analyses. Specifically, Model 4 was employed to test the mediating effects of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement, elucidating the mechanisms through which SSR influences brand attitudes. Additionally, Model 7 was used to explore the moderating role of power distance belief, examining how individual cultural values alter the SSR-brand attitude relationship.

By integrating these diverse analytical methods, we comprehensively validated our hypothesis model and arrived at conclusive insights into the impact of shared social responsibility on luxury brand attitudes.

Result

The results of this study provide robust empirical evidence to support the proposed research hypotheses and objectives. The study employed a series of experiments using questionnaire methodology to investigate the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) on luxury brand attitudes.

Hypothesis 1: SSR strategies have a more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategies.

The findings of the study confirmed Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that SSR strategies exert a more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes than traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. Specifically, participants in the SSR condition reported significantly higher brand attitude scores compared to those in the traditional CSR condition. This supports the argument that involving consumers in decision-making processes related to charitable donations and philanthropic activities can alleviate skepticism and enhance positive perceptions of luxury brands engaging in social responsibility (Torelli et al., 2012; Gneezy et

al., 2010). Torelli et al. (2012) identified the inherent tension between luxury brands' elitist values and the egalitarian ideals of CSR, which often leads to consumer skepticism. Meanwhile, Gneezy et al. (2010) demonstrated the effectiveness of involving consumers in CSR activities through their study on Shared Social Responsibility (SSR), showcasing how such collaboration can foster greater trust and positive evaluations.

Hypothesis 2: Cognitive fluency plays a mediating role in the impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes.

To test Hypothesis 2, the study assessed the mediating role of cognitive fluency in the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes. The results indicated that cognitive fluency significantly mediates the positive impact of SSR on brand attitudes. Participants who engaged with SSR strategies reported higher levels of cognitive fluency, which in turn led to more favorable brand attitudes. This suggests that the ease with which consumers process information related to SSR initiatives contributes to their positive evaluations of luxury brands.

Hypothesis 3: Consumer involvement acts as a mediator in the influence path of SSR on luxury brand attitudes.

The study also examined the mediating role of consumer involvement in Hypothesis 3. The results confirmed that consumer involvement significantly mediates the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes. Participants who felt more involved in the SSR initiatives, expressed higher levels of consumer involvement, leading to more positive brand attitudes. This underscores the importance of fostering a sense of participation and engagement among consumers to enhance luxury brand perceptions.

Hypothesis 4: Power distance orientation moderates the relationship between SSR and luxury brand attitudes, such that the positive influence of SSR intensifies as power distance orientation increases.

Finally, to test Hypothesis 4, the study examined the moderating effect of power distance belief (PDB) on the SSR-luxury brand attitude relationship. The results showed that PDB significantly moderates this relationship, amplifying the positive effects of SSR among individuals with higher power distance tendencies. Specifically, as power distance orientation increased, the positive impact of SSR on luxury brand attitudes intensified compared to traditional CSR strategies. This indicates that individuals who accept hierarchical differences in power and status are more receptive to SSR initiatives and perceive luxury brands engaging in these activities more favorably.

In summary, the results of this study support all four proposed hypotheses and the research objectives. By demonstrating the superiority of SSR strategies over traditional CSR methods in enhancing luxury brand attitudes, the findings contribute to the mitigation of the CSR-luxury paradox and offer practical insights for luxury brands seeking to effectively engage in socially responsible activities. The mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer

involvement, as well as the moderating effect of power distance belief, provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which SSR influences luxury brand perceptions.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

The primary impetus behind this study was to address the persisting challenges faced by luxury brands in gaining positive consumer evaluations through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, particularly amidst the prevalent "CSR-Luxury Paradox." The study aimed to evaluate the potential of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR), an innovative CSR approach that emphasizes collaboration between consumers and brands, in mitigating this paradox and fostering enhanced brand attitudes. Specifically, it sought answers to three core questions: (1) How does SSR compare to traditional CSR in its impact on luxury brand attitudes? (2) What are the underlying mechanisms explaining the influence of SSR on brand attitudes, particularly the roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement? (3) How does individual power distance belief moderate the effects of SSR on luxury brand attitudes?

The empirical results, derived from meticulously designed experiments involving 600 participants from Nanning, China, reveal compelling insights. Firstly, SSR strategies were found to exert a significantly more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategies, as evidenced by a higher mean brand attitude score for the SSR group ($M = 3.865$) versus the traditional CSR group ($M = 3.524$) in experiment 2. This finding directly addresses the first research question and underscores the potential of SSR as an effective means for luxury brands to improve their image.

Furthermore, the study uncovers the critical mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement in the SSR-brand attitude relationship. Both variables were found to fully mediate the positive effects of SSR, as reflected in their significant and positive coefficients in the mediation analysis. This discovery illuminates the mechanisms through which SSR indirectly enhances brand attitudes by making information processing easier and increasing consumer engagement, thereby addressing the second research question.

The third research question regarding the moderating influence of power distance belief is also robustly supported by the data. Specifically, as power distance belief increases, the positive impact of SSR on brand attitudes intensifies, compared to traditional CSR. This finding highlights the importance of cultural values in shaping consumer responses to CSR initiatives and suggests that SSR may be particularly effective among individuals with high power distance beliefs.

Managerially, these findings carry significant implications. Luxury brands can leverage SSR strategies to not only improve their brand attitudes but also address consumers' skepticism towards traditional CSR efforts. By inviting consumers to jointly decide on the beneficiaries and pricing of charitable projects, brands can foster a sense of co-ownership and

collaboration, thereby enhancing trust and transparency. Moreover, the findings underscore the need for luxury brands to consider cultural values in designing CSR activities to ensure maximum impact.

In conclusion, this study represents a significant advancement in our understanding of how SSR can mitigate the CSR-Luxury Paradox and contribute to the body of knowledge in the fields of CSR and luxury brand management. The practical insights offered by this research can guide luxury brands in developing innovative CSR strategies that resonate positively with consumers, ultimately enhancing their brand attitudes and societal contributions.

Discussion

The current study has aimed to explore the impact of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) on luxury brand attitudes, contrasting it with traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. This section seeks to improve upon the existing discussions by more clearly demonstrating how this study aligns with or differs from prior research, thereby enhancing its reliability and credibility.

Consistency with Prior Research

Firstly, the study's findings align with previous research that highlights the challenges faced by luxury brands in gaining positive consumer evaluations through CSR initiatives due to the inherent tension between their elitist values and the egalitarian ideals of CSR (Torelli et al., 2012). Our results support the notion that traditional CSR efforts, which often lack direct consumer involvement, may be perceived as hypocritical or motivated by ulterior agendas, thereby fostering skepticism among consumers (Sen et al., 2001; Miyazaki et al., 2005).

Moreover, the study is consistent with research suggesting that involving consumers in CSR activities can enhance brand attitudes by fostering a sense of co-ownership and collaboration (Gneezy et al., 2010). Our findings confirm that SSR strategies, which emphasize shared decision-making between consumers and brands, exert a more positive influence on luxury brand attitudes compared to traditional CSR strategies. This is in line with the argument that SSR can address the limitations of traditional CSR by making intentions and impacts more transparent and credible (Gneezy et al., 2010).

Differences from Prior Research

While previous studies have explored the impact of CSR on brand attitudes, there is a research gap in understanding the specific effects of SSR in the luxury goods industry (Wong & Dhanesh, 2017). The current study contributes to this area by systematically investigating the mechanisms through which SSR influences luxury brand attitudes, introducing cognitive fluency and consumer involvement as mediating variables. This approach differs from prior studies that primarily focused on the direct effects of CSR on brand attitudes.

Furthermore, the study delves into the moderating role of power distance belief, which has received limited attention in the context of SSR and luxury brand attitudes. By

examining how cultural values shape consumer responses to CSR initiatives, our findings offer new insights into the complexity of these relationships. Specifically, we demonstrate that individuals with higher power distance beliefs exhibit an intensified positive response to SSR strategies, compared to traditional CSR, highlighting the importance of cultural values in designing effective CSR activities.

Recommendations

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for both luxury brands and scholars alike. Firstly, this research offers luxury brands a novel and superior approach to engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities that can effectively influence brand attitudes. Specifically, the adoption of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) strategies, where consumers are invited to jointly determine the beneficiaries and monetary amounts of charitable donations, can help mitigate consumers' skepticism towards traditional CSR initiatives.

Luxury brands often face the challenge of balancing their exclusivity and elite branding with socially responsible actions. Traditional CSR approaches are often met with accusations of "hypocrisy" or manipulation, leading to negative brand evaluations. The SSR strategy, by involving consumers in decision-making processes related to CSR, can enhance perceived authenticity and transparency, thereby improving brand attitudes. This, in turn, can lead to increased brand loyalty, trust, and ultimately, sales.

Moreover, the study reveals that SSR strategies positively impact luxury brand attitudes through two mediating mechanisms: cognitive fluency and consumer involvement. By improving cognitive fluency and increasing consumer involvement, SSR initiatives can foster more favorable brand associations and evaluations. This suggests that luxury brands should design their CSR programs in a manner that prioritizes consumer engagement and ease of processing information related to their social responsibility efforts.

Furthermore, the study underscores the moderating role of power distance belief in the relationship between SSR strategies and luxury brand attitudes. As individuals with higher power distance beliefs tend to respond more positively to SSR initiatives, luxury brands can tailor their CSR campaigns to appeal to this segment of the population. By leveraging cultural values such as acceptance of hierarchy and inequality, luxury brands can amplify the positive effects of SSR on brand attitudes.

In the post-pandemic era, luxury brands are facing unprecedented challenges related to economic downturns and shifting consumer preferences. By adopting SSR strategies, luxury brands can demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and sustainability, thereby enhancing their brand image and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) ratings. This, in

turn, can contribute to the synchronized development of luxury brands and society, fostering a more positive perception of these brands among consumers.

In summary, the implications of this study highlight the potential of SSR strategies to overcome the limitations of traditional CSR approaches and positively influence luxury brand attitudes. By involving consumers in decision-making related to CSR, luxury brands can enhance cognitive fluency, increase consumer involvement, and appeal to individuals with higher power distance beliefs. These efforts can ultimately lead to improved brand attitudes, loyalty, and profitability for luxury brands in the competitive marketplace.

Future Research

The current study contributes to the literature by exploring the effects of Shared Social Responsibility (SSR) on luxury brand attitude and shedding light on the mediating roles of cognitive fluency and consumer involvement and the moderating role of power distance belief. However, several avenues remain open for future research to further expand our understanding of SSR and its implications for luxury brand management.

Diversification of SSR Strategies: The current study focuses on a specific form of SSR, where consumers participate in determining the purposes and pricing of charitable donations. Future research could investigate various manifestations of SSR, such as co-deciding donation proportions, modes of giving, or timing of contributions. A more comprehensive exploration of SSR strategies would enable a deeper understanding of their differential effects on brand attitudes and consumer behavior.

Contextual Factors: The study examines SSR in the context of three well-known luxury brands and specific product categories. Future research could extend this work by examining SSR across a wider range of luxury products (e.g., jewelry, cars, travel experiences) and price points. Additionally, cross-cultural studies would be valuable in assessing the generalizability of the findings across different cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Long-term Effects: The present study measures immediate effects of SSR on brand attitude. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of SSR on brand loyalty, customer retention, and brand equity. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how SSR strategies evolve over time and how they influence consumers' ongoing perceptions and behaviors towards luxury brands.

Additional Mediators and Moderators: While cognitive fluency, consumer involvement, and power distance belief are important variables, other factors may also play a role in the SSR-brand attitude relationship. Future studies could examine the effects of brand personality, consumer values, or prior brand experiences as potential mediators or moderators. Understanding these additional dynamics would offer a more nuanced view of how SSR strategies affect luxury brand perceptions.

Integration with Marketing Mix: Future research could explore how SSR strategies integrate with other elements of the marketing mix (e.g., product design, pricing, promotion, and distribution). By examining how SSR interacts with other marketing strategies, brands could develop comprehensive and synergistic approaches to balancing social responsibility with brand growth and profitability.

Quantitative and Qualitative Complements: While the current study relies primarily on quantitative methods, future research could employ a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, experiments, and in-depth interviews. Qualitative data would provide rich insights into consumers' perceptions, motivations, and attitudes towards SSR strategies, complementing the quantitative findings and offering a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

In summary, future research on SSR strategies in luxury brand management presents exciting opportunities to build upon the current study's findings. By exploring various SSR manifestations, contextual factors, long-term effects, additional mediators and moderators, integration with the marketing mix, and complementary quantitative and qualitative methods, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of how luxury brands can effectively leverage SSR to enhance their brand attitudes and societal contributions.

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