



**28th International Conference  
on Corporate and Marketing Communications**

## **Conference Proceedings**

*Valuing Diversity in Corporate and Marketing Communications:  
Towards an Inclusive Corporate and Market Environment*

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## Foreword from the conference organisers

Dear CMC2024 attendees, dear readers of these conference proceedings,

it was a great pleasure to host the 28<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communications at the University of Vienna. The 2024 conference theme “Valuing Diversity in Corporate and Marketing Communications: Towards an Inclusive Corporate and Market Environment” brought together great minds – researchers and practitioners – to discuss current issues on diversity, equity and inclusion in our field, as well as other topical issues in corporate and marketing communications.

Valuing diversity in corporate and marketing communications is crucial in today’s globalized and interconnected world. Companies promoting diversity and inclusion in their communication with stakeholders not only demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility; they also benefit in terms of brand reputation, customer loyalty, and employee engagement. In marketing communications, diverse representation and inclusive messaging can help to build stronger connections with a wider range of customers, which may ultimately lead to increased sales and market share. By also acknowledging and valuing diversity in their communications with employees, companies can foster a positive and inclusive work culture in which each individual is respected, thereby creating a sense of belonging. Overall, incorporating diversity into corporate and marketing communications is not only a responsible approach but also a smart business strategy.

These conference proceedings present the latest research on the topics of diversity in corporate, workplace and marketing communications. The volume furthermore addresses a variety of other topical areas ranging from sustainability communication, cultural aspects in advertising, crisis communication and complaining, to AI and platform communication and theory and methods related discussions. The presentations of the various research findings stimulated lively discussion during the conference, and we hope that reading the abstracts of these papers will continue to inspire readers.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the presenters, attendees and helpers who made this conference a resounding success. Let us continue to foster collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing to navigate the ever-evolving field of corporate and marketing communications.

With kind regards,

Professor Sabine Einwiller

Dr. Ingrid Wahl

Conference Co-Chairs

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## Sustainability, Self-Identity and Generations: The Influence of CSR Communication on Employer Brand Attractiveness

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**Keywords:** CSR communication, employer brand attractiveness, sustainability self-identity

In the fiercely competitive landscape of talent acquisition, companies face intensified struggles to attract and retain skilled professionals. Amid this competition, the social performance of companies emerges as a pivotal tool in the war for talent (Duarte et al., 2014).

In the pursuit of cultivating an appealing employer brand, HR and marketing experts play pivotal roles. They guide aligning the brand with the company culture and endeavor to comprehend what aspects of the organization as an employer should be effectively communicated to the public. However, understanding how candidates select their future employer and the role of individual personality aspects in this process is equally imperative. Current trends indicate that candidates, particularly the younger generation, prioritize values such as human rights, diversity, and inclusion, offering guidance to companies on shaping their image (Gallup, 2021). A Gallup survey highlights the preferences of Generation Z and Millennials, emphasizing the importance of ethical leadership and a diverse and inclusive workplace, indicative of a broader need for ESG (environmental, social, and governance sustainability performance) considerations (Gallup, 2021; Lian Liu & Nemoto Naoko, 2021).

Scholars widely affirm the positive impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the employer brand, as supported by research (Alshathry et al., 2017; Biswas & Suar, 2016; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). This influence, in turn, plays a critical role in the attraction and

retention of employees. Notably, CSR is discussed as a potent signal conveying information about the employer and its managerial practices. Furthermore, it serves as an identifier of a shared social group and values between the organization and potential candidates, marking it as a pivotal factor contributing to employer attractiveness (Bustamante et al., 2021). From a marketing perspective, highlighting CSR initiatives becomes paramount, emphasizing the importance of effectively communicating these socially responsible practices to bolster the overall employer brand.

The goal of this research study is to explore the complex world of perceived CSR and its impact on employer brand attractiveness, exploring the moderating roles of sustainability self-identity and generational differences. Recognizing the pivotal role of CSR in talent acquisition, our research scrutinizes the dimensions of philanthropic, ethical, and environmental CSR activities. The conceptual model of this research study is presented in Figure 1.

An online survey, facilitated through the Qualtrics tool and using non-probability sampling method, was conducted targeting the entire working population in Lithuania, encompassing individuals aged 18 to 65 (the official retirement age in Lithuania). The data collection occurred over the initial three weeks of April 2023. Participants were required to rate sustainability self-identity questions initially. Following this, they were prompted to think of a specific organization they would consider as a potential employer and note down its name to maintain clarity while rating subsequent statements. Subsequently, respondents were asked to evaluate 23 statements, forming two constructs—perceived CSR and employer attractiveness. An attention check question was strategically incorporated to filter out low-quality participation.

The statistical analysis of the results was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics software. After the removal of incomplete surveys, 201 responses remained for inclusion in the research dataset. It's noteworthy that a significant number of respondents discontinued the questionnaire at the point where they were required to input the name of their potential employer.

The results indicate that while philanthropic and environmental CSR significantly enhance employer brand attractiveness, ethical CSR demonstrates a less pronounced effect. Further, we introduce sustainability self-identity as a potential moderator, probing whether individual values aligning with CSR efforts influence employer brand perception. Contrary to expectations, sustainability self-identity does not emerge as a significant moderator. The outcomes of hypothesis testing are displayed in Table 1.

Additionally, the study investigates generational nuances in the CSR-employer brand relationship, revealing that, despite prevalent stereotypes, different age groups show consistent interest in CSR dimensions. Notably, Generation Z and Baby Boomers, though smaller in the workforce, exhibit comparable engagement with CSR as Millennials and Generation X.

Our findings suggest that companies should strategically prioritize philanthropy and environmental initiatives to bolster employer brand attractiveness. Moreover, the study

challenges assumptions about age-driven preferences, emphasizing the universal appeal of CSR initiatives across diverse generational cohorts.

Regarding the moderating impact of sustainability self-identity on perceived environmental CSR and employer brand attractiveness, the results indicated no statistical significance. This implies that sustainability self-identity does not contribute to this relationship. Prior research suggests that when a company participates in CSR, employees exhibit pro-environmental behavior. Attempting to extend this model to potential employees, van der Werff et al. (2021) explored similar dynamics.

This research paves the way for future explorations into the multifaceted relationships between CSR, employer brand attractiveness, and the complex interplay of individual and generational factors.

Figure 1. Conceptual research model

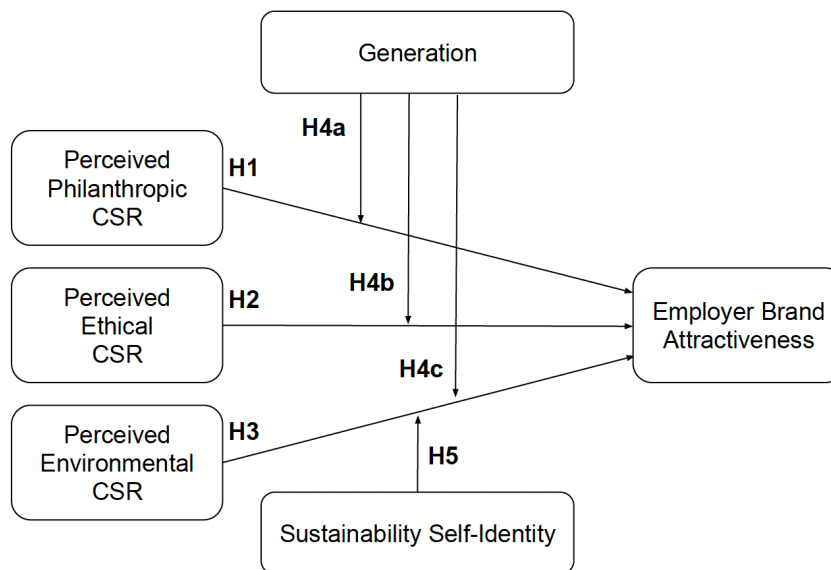


Table 1. Summary of hypotheses testing.

|           |  |               |
|-----------|--|---------------|
| <b>H1</b> | Perceived philanthropic CSR will have a positive impact on employer brand attractiveness.  | Supported     |
| <b>H2</b> | Perceived ethical CSR will have a positive impact on employer brand attractiveness.  | Not supported |
| <b>H3</b> | Environmental CSR will have a positive impact on employer brand attractiveness.  | Supported     |
| <b>H4</b> | Sustainability self-identity moderates the relationship between perceived environmental CSR and employer brand attractiveness. This moderator is more pronounced in people for whom strong environmental CSR is related to a strong employer brand attractiveness. | Not supported |
| <b>H5</b> | Generation moderates the relationship between perceived philanthropic CSR and employer brand attractiveness.   | Not supported |
| <b>H6</b> | Generation moderates the relationship between perceived ethical CSR and employer brand attractiveness.   | Not supported |
| <b>H7</b> | Generation moderates the relationship between perceived environmental CSR and employer brand attractiveness.   | Not supported |

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