

The Role of Non-Spatial Cause Proximity in Virtual CSR: An Exploratory Study

Abstract

Virtual corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to firms proactively using social media tools to design and implement CSR activities. Existing research highlighted the significance of spatial cause proximity in CSR campaigns whereas limited knowledge about the role of non-spatial cause proximity in virtual CSR practices. Thus, this paper proposes that consumers cognitively and emotionally feel close to a specific CSR cause, which would strengthen consumer trust in the cause and motivate consumers to engage in virtual CSR. Results revealed that the effect of emotional cause proximity was much stronger than that of knowledge-based cognitive proximity on consumer engagement in virtual CSR. Besides, consumer trust in a specific cause mediated the relationship between these non-spatial cause proximity and consumer engagement in virtual CSR. However, perceived cause proximity and consumer trust in a CSR cause do not influence consumer engagement with the e-retailer who launched the CSR campaign.

Keywords: Virtual CSR, Cognitive cause proximity, Emotional cause proximity, Consumer trust, Consumer engagement