

Article

The Role of Generativity in the Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumer Behavior

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Abstract: Although research has theoretically and empirically linked corporate social responsibility (CSR) to consumer responses, understanding the different paths that link CSR to loyalty is still limited. A new pathway for this understanding comes from the idea that generative consumers, or those committed to the well-being of future generations, may be inclined to patronize companies engaged in CSR activities. This research addresses the question of how consumer generativity moderates the effect of CSR on consumer behavior through two studies. Study 1 shows how generativity influences purchase intention. Study 2 demonstrates that while a company's commitment to CSR affects both generative and nongenerative consumers, the effect is greater for the former. This moderating role of generativity of the effect of CSR on purchase intention suggests the utility of considering generativity as a relevant consumer segmentation criterion.

Keywords: CSR; sustainability; generativity; consumer behavior

1. Introduction

The idea that business has a social role is well-established in western societies [1]. Policy makers, citizens, and companies are paying increasing attention to corporate social responsibility (CSR), in particular the effect of CSR on consumer behavior [2]. Prior research has demonstrated that CSR initiatives influence consumer behavior through multiple paths, including company evaluation and consumer–company identification [3]. However, understanding how CSR influences loyalty and other behavioral outputs is still limited [4]. Our goal with this research is to show that generativity, as a personality trait, can contribute to fill that gap in the CSR literature.

In everyday life, many people consider the well-being of future generations in their purchases. Many goods and services serve, totally or partially, the purpose of leaving some kind of legacy. Goods such as houses, works of art, jewelry, family pictures, and organic products all have an impact on future generations, as do services such as children's education, legacy websites, and life insurance. Some companies have taken this consumer concern with future generations into consideration in their marketing activities. For example, Johnson & Johnson's mission statement (www.jnj.com) is "We have a responsibility to take care of our planet and preserve its beauty, resources and strength for future generations".

Erikson [5] defines generativity as the commitment to future generations, and research in psychology has well-studied the antecedents (e.g., altruism) and consequences (e.g., individual well-being) of this concept [6,7]. Generative individuals are concerned about leaving a positive legacy. Some products—whether they are goods or services, durable or ephemeral, cheap or expensive—may be meaningful in the future and, therefore, better suited for creating a legacy than others. Even supporting companies with pro-environmental behaviors can be perceived as contributing to a

legacy of values. Generative consumers, or individuals concerned about future generations, tend to patronize companies committed to CSR that try to maximize positive impacts on society [8]. The analysis of generativity in CSR contexts constitutes a theoretical contribution, given the gap in the literature, but should also be of help to managers in their efforts to be more efficient in their CSR and marketing decisions.

The goal of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of the effect of CSR on consumer purchase decisions through the analysis of consumers' concern about their influence on future generations (i.e., generativity). To fulfill this aim, we conducted two studies (Figure 1). In Study 1, we show that generativity influences purchase intention. In Study 2, we illustrate how generativity also moderates the extent to which a company's engagement in CSR practices influences generative consumers' purchase intentions. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings.

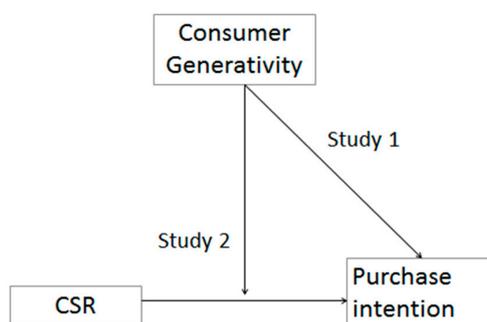


Figure 1. Framework and studies.

2. Consumer Generativity and Transcendent Products

With the aim of adding to Erikson's [5] definition, Kotre [9] describes generativity as the desire to outlive the self by "generating an enduring personal legacy". In their integrative model, McAdams and de St. Aubin [10] define generativity as the concern with and commitment to the well-being of future generations, to be achieved through actions geared toward passing a positive personal legacy to those generations.

Generativity is linked to the intention of leaving a legacy, an idea intimately connected with image maintenance and trying to control how one will be remembered [11]. All human beings leave some sort of legacy, but how they accomplish that legacy may vary in terms of content and context (culture). Hunter and Rowles [12] describe three types of legacy: biological legacy, material legacy, and the legacy of values. Accordingly, generativity can be satisfied not just through procreation but also by leaving a material legacy or a legacy of values. Generative consumers can buy products to leave a legacy and/or express values through their purchase behavior [13]. This behavior can be explained, at least partially, by the consumers' preference for buying products that may offer a sense of consumer connectivity [14]. In this context, the mode of ordering of connectivity is of fundamental importance, with the establishment of a connection between those who are concerned about next generations and those who offer products that take into account the well-being of next generations (e.g., consumers that buy fair trade products and companies that produce and market those products as a CSR activity). This is represented in Figure 1.

Despite its potential to contribute to an explanation of consumer behavior, the relationship between consumer generativity and preferences for products remains underexplored. If generative consumers are committed to future generations and therefore aspire to leave a positive legacy, they must be interested in products that help them build that legacy. Goods, services, and behaviors—whether material or intangible, durable or ephemeral—that can be transmitted to future generations (as material possessions, values, or information) have something in common: a long-lasting or transcendent meaning. For example, Urien and Kilbourne [15] show that individuals who score high

on generativity are more likely to have ecofriendly intentions and more environmentally responsible consumption behaviors.

Follow and Jobber [16] joined the concept of generativity and transcendence, and define self-transcendence as a set of values that reflect the extent to which they motivate people to transcend selfish concerns and promote the welfare of others, close and distant, and of nature. For the authors, self-transcendence includes values reflecting benevolence, a concern for the welfare of people, with whom one is in frequent personal contact, and universalism, encompassing a broader concern for all people and nature. Moreover, self-transcendence is proposed by Hansen [17] as a negative antecedent of attitudes toward online grocery shopping, but the results show no relationship between the two variables. Shouten et al. [18] use the concept of “transcendent customer experiences”, and they demonstrate that these experiences contribute in significant ways to customer relationships with the brand and the brand community.

Belk et al. [19] approach the concept of transcendence by describing how certain products can acquire special significance for a consumer. Williams and Harvey [20] identify some transcendent experiences and characteristics as feelings of overcoming the limits of everyday life and creating a sense of timelessness. Belk [21] summarizes transcendence as “going beyond the limits”. Accordingly, transcendent products are those whose significance goes beyond the temporal limits of their mere functional nature or the user’s own existence. These products are more suitable for creating a legacy. Therefore, consumers will perceive some products and behaviors (e.g., environmentally friendly products, collector’s items, jewelry, works of art, photos) as more transcendent than others. Generative consumers, concerned about the well-being of future generations, will thus be more interested in such products than nongenerative consumers. We therefore propose the following:

H1: Generative consumers will show a higher purchase intention than nongenerative consumers for transcendent products.

3. Study 1

3.1. Pretest

We ran an exploratory study to determine whether consumers perceive some products as more transcendent than others. This pretest was carried out in two stages. Stage 1 consisted of a meeting with five marketing experts. They were told to use the Merriam–Webster’s dictionary [22] definition of transcendence—“extending beyond the limits of ordinary experience”—to list 10 products or activities, 5 high in transcendence and 5 low in transcendence. The experts were then shown all 50 products and asked to evaluate each one according to the statement “this product is very transcendent”, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (“I totally disagree”) to 7 (“I totally agree”). We discarded 16 products with the highest standard deviation, which left 34 products and activities. Stage 2 consisted of a self-administered questionnaire distributed to a sample of 50 students recruited from a large European university (average age = 23 years; 43% female). The 34 products selected during stage 1 were shown to the respondents in random order. They rated the transcendence of the products as in stage 1.

The results showed that consumers assign different transcendence scores to different products and consumer activities. The average transcendence score was 4.07; the most transcendent product/activity was “having a child” ($M = 6.38$), and the least transcendent product was “ice cream” ($M = 2.14$). Transcendence scores were consistent with those provided by the experts.

This pretest also showed that transcendence is an attribute independent of other features traditionally used to classify products, such as price, tangibility, and durability. Among products/activities whose transcendence is high and those whose transcendence is low, we found cheap and expensive items, both goods and services, and durable and nondurable items. We also found several examples of products or consumer activities that belong to the same product category (broadly defined, such as the category “cars”) but which had significantly different transcendence scores: the Honda electric car ($M = 4.05$) scored higher than a Porsche ($M = 2.26$; $t = 8.11$, $p < 0.001$), writing a book

($M = 4.50$) was rated more transcendent than writing a blog ($M = 3.56$; $t = 5.51$, $p < 0.001$), and buying a house was rated more transcendent ($M = 5.82$) than renting a house ($M = 5.03$; $t = 3.73$, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm that transcendence is an attribute that can be used for product differentiation to match a particular market segment's interest in transcendence.

3.2. Method and Results

A generalizable sample of 238 respondents, recruited from a market research institute's online panel and randomly assigned to one of the six treatments, participated in the study (mean age = 36 years; 51% female). Respondents were informed that we were conducting research on consumer preferences. After reading an introduction, they saw a list with 12 products chosen from the list of transcendent products obtained in the pretest. We measured the dependent variable, purchase intention, by asking respondents to rate their degree of agreement with the statement "I would like to buy/do" for each of the products/activities presented, using a 7-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree"). Then, we averaged the 12 answers to obtain a measurement of the dependent variable purchase intention. We measured the independent variable, generativity, afterward, using McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) adapted scale of 9 items (e.g., "I try to pass along knowledge I have gained through my experience", "I feel as though my contributions will exist after I die"). The items were also rated on a 7-point scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree"). We used a median split to separate respondents into generative ($N = 122$) and nongenerative ($N = 116$) groups; the mean for the generative group ($M_G = 5.07$) was significantly greater than the mean for the nongenerative group ($M_{NG} = 3.63$; $t = 19.32$, $p < 0.001$). Cronbach's alpha tests showed that the scales were reliable ($\alpha > 0.88$). The results showed that purchase intention for transcendent products was higher for generative consumers than for nongenerative consumers ($M_G = 4.57$, $M_{NG} = 3.94$; $F(1, 237) = 25.55$, $p < 0.01$), in support of H1. Consumers highly concerned with the well-being of future generations are more interested in transcendent products than those less concerned with it. This first study served to demonstrate the main effect of consumers' generativity on purchase intention. However, while this is true for transcendent products, opportunities to improve the purchase intention for these products may also come from what the company does in terms of actions that may be linked to the well-being of future generations (i.e., CSR activities). Study 2 shows this joint effect.

4. Study 2: Consumer Generativity and CSR

Grayson and Hodges [23] define CSR as actions an organization takes in an effort to assume responsibility for the impact of its activities on customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, communities, and other stakeholders, as well as on the environment. But the concept of social capital helps to better explain why companies implement CSR activities. Putnam [24] (p. 19) defined social capital as "connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them... that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions". In other words, social capital shows that the subjects involved in a relationship jointly promote value-added collaboration not only based on a mechanical coordination, but also through transparency and mutual effort and benefit distribution. If companies and consumers are aware of this social capital, the former will be willing to engage in CSR, and the latter to participate in the social network.

Companies implement CSR policies to increase goodwill and improve their reputations [25], increase profits [26], and enhance their corporate identity attractiveness [27]. Previous research has focused on how consumers react to CSR [1,28,29]. Findings show the effect of CSR on consumer responses, such as customer attitudes toward the product [30], positive product and brand evaluations [31], consumer-company identification [3], consumer loyalty [30], customer donations [32], and consumer satisfaction [33], e.g., behaviors such as the one is represented in Figure 1.

Even more, and independent of the main effects of interest for the company (specific benefits), CSR activities also influence consumers' sense of well-being [8]. As Garriga and Melé [34] note,

CSR contributes to build a better society by doing what is ethically correct. This CSR output is clearly consistent with the desire to leave a positive legacy, the main goal generative consumers share. Empirical findings show support for this relationship. For example, Giacalone et al. [35] find a positive relationship between consumer generativity and sensitivity to CSR. Moreover, the positive impact of CSR on purchase intention has been well-studied [29,36,37], while understanding how CSR affects generative consumer purchase intention needs further attention.

We propose that if consumer sensitivity to CSR is correlated with generativity, and an organization's commitment to CSR increases purchase intention, it is reasonable to assume that when consumers perceive a company as engaging in CSR activities (i.e., when consumers view a company as having a greater commitment to CSR), generative consumers will show higher purchase intention than nongenerative consumers (moderating effect, Figure 1). The reasoning behind this effect is that the output of the company CSR activity (e.g., social causes, environment) will contribute to the goal of generative consumers to leave a legacy for future generations. Thus:

H2: The positive effect of CSR associations on purchase intention will be greater for generative consumers than for nongenerative consumers.

4.1. Method

Study 2 relied on a 2×2 between-subjects experiment. We manipulated product transcendence to be either present or absent, as was company commitment to CSR. We created four flyers, one for each condition. A questionnaire was sent randomly to individuals from an online panel. The e-mail stated our affiliation with a European university. To avoid any influence on the respondents' answers, we gave no explanation of the purpose of the survey. The link included in the e-mail randomly presented one of the four flyers and a self-administered questionnaire. We obtained 476 valid questionnaires (51% male, aged 18 to 62 years, with an average age of 27).

To design the flyers, we went back to Study 1 and selected two similar products with different transcendence score: a seven-day stay in the Sun & Beach Resort (a nontranscendent product) and a seven-day biking trip along the Way of St. James (a transcendent product) ($M_{S\&B} = 3.11$, $M_{St.James} = 4.03$; $t = 4.48$, $p < 0.001$). The Way of St. James, or "El Camino", is the ancient pilgrimage route to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain. Thousands of people from all over the world set out each year to travel the Way. Most of them bike the pilgrimage route for nonreligious reasons: travel, sport, or simply the challenge of weeks of walking or biking. Many consider the experience a spiritual adventure that removes them from the hustle and bustle of modern life. The flyer for this trip stated: "The Way of St. James is a meaningful journey: culture, adventure, challenge, and solitude that will provide life-long memories and experiences to be shared". The flyer for the Sun & Beach Resort trip stated: "The Sun & Beach Resort: good weather, nice beaches—a perfect place to rest and enjoy yourself, 365 days a year". The price and length of both trips were the same.

To manipulate company commitment to CSR, we used two fictitious travel agencies with different CSR orientations. The flyer from the company engaged in CSR activities stated: "As a travel agency, the company is committed to sustainable development ... ". The flyer from the company not engaged in CSR activities stated: "The company aims to be the leading travel company ... ". These statements were taken from real corporate websites (<http://www.viajeselcorteingles.es>). The terms "transcendence" and "social responsibility" never appeared on the flyers.

Four hundred seventy-six Spanish individuals answered the questionnaire, which was sent with a flyer and reflected one of the four experimental conditions: transcendent product and company committed to CSR ($N = 111$), transcendent product and company not committed to CSR ($N = 115$), nontranscendent product and company committed to CSR ($N = 110$), and nontranscendent product and company not committed to CSR ($N = 140$). The questionnaire collected information related to purchase intention (five items; [31]), attitude toward the product (six items; [38]), product transcendence (three items, e.g., "I believe this trip is transcendent"), attitude toward the company (three items; [39]), and CSR associations (four items; [40]). We also asked for CSR attributions—that is, respondents'

beliefs about why companies engage in CSR activities (five items; [41])—as a control variable because they can enhance consumer responsiveness to a company’s CSR activities [42]. Finally, we measured both respondents’ level of support for CSR (three items; [33]) and their generativity (scale from Study 1; [43]). All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree”; 7 = “strongly agree”). Product transcendence and CSR associations appeared at the end of the questionnaire.

Cronbach’s alpha tests showed that the scales were reliable ($\alpha > 0.88$). Reliability of the measures was also assessed using the composite reliability index and the average variance extracted index (AVE). For all the measures, both indices were higher than the evaluation criteria of 0.60 and 0.50, respectively [43], as shown in Table 1. Additionally, an application of the procedures suggested by Fornell and Larcker [44] showed acceptable convergent and discriminant validity for the scales. Convergent validity was assessed by verifying the significance of the *t*-values associated with the parameter estimates (Table 1). All *t*-values were positive and significant ($p < 0.01$). Also, as a first test of discriminant validity, we determined whether the correlations among the latent constructs were significantly less than one. The Φ -matrix (correlations between constructs) is provided in Table 2. Evidence of the scales’ discriminant validity was found, as none of the confidence intervals of the Φ -values (\pm two standard errors) included the value of one [45]. We also verified that the average variance extracted by the underlying construct was larger than the shared variance with other latent constructs. This condition was satisfied, which further supports the discriminant validity of the measures. In summary, all of the scales were found to be both internally consistent and discriminately valid and, as such, gave us confidence to proceed with an estimation of the structural model.

Table 1. Constructs and measures.

	λ^*	<i>t</i>	Mean	s.d.	ρ	AVE
Purchase intention					0.89	0.62
My willingness to buy this trip is high	0.78	19.65	3.61	1.51		
I would buy this trip	0.85	22.44	3.49	1.58		
If I were to buy a trip like this, I would choose this product	0.75	18.41	3.61	1.58		
I would buy this product	0.81	20.82	3.18	1.54		
If a friend was seeking this type of product, I would recommend buying this product to him/her.	0.77	19.32	3.78	1.57		
Attitude toward the product					0.91	0.65
I think this is a good product	0.86	23.07	4.37	1.47		
I think this is a high quality product	0.83	21.95	4.10	1.45		
I think this product is better quality than other similar products	0.65	15.62	3.84	1.38		
I think this is an attractive product	0.87	23.63	4.33	1.60		
I think this is a nice product	0.76	19.09	4.21	1.56		
This product gives me a nice feeling	0.87	23.44	4.55	1.62		
Transcendence					0.88	0.71
I believe this is a transcendent product	0.85	22.09	3.74	1.75		
I think this product goes beyond material experience	0.88	23.36	4.11	1.86		
I sense that this product can go beyond my own personal existence	0.80	20.33	3.40	1.82		
CSR					0.89	0.68
This company is committed to the environment.	0.77	19.27	3.83	1.54		
This company is concerned about a better present with policies favorable to workers.	0.75	18.67	3.81	1.46		
This company is socially responsible in the long-term	0.89	24.26	3.97	1.35		
This company is responsible with society	0.89	24.20	3.97	1.38		

Table 1. Cont.

	λ^*	t	Mean	s.d.	ρ	AVE
Attributions					0.86	0.67
The company is really committed to CSR	0.85	21.13	3.72	1.20		
Their owners believe in this cause and values.	0.67	15.55	4.77	1.17		
The company will get more customers by making this offer.	0.76	19.09	5.07	1.31		
The company doesn't feel society in general expects it.	0.87	23.44	3.77	1.10		
They don't take advantage of the cause to help their own business.	0.64	14.43	4.47	1.26		
CSR Support					0.89	0.73
I agree with those companies that develop active policies on environmental issues	0.86	22.56	4.99	1.70		
I support companies that promote the integration of minorities	0.87	23.02	5.43	1.59		
I like companies that make donations to social causes	0.83	21.46	5.36	1.62		
Generativity					0.83	0.51
I have made things that have had an impact on others	0.62	14.15	4.06	1.58		
I think that, after death, I will be remembered for a long time	0.58	13.02	4.15	1.65		
I usually offer to volunteer to work in social organizations	0.50	10.84	3.13	1.61		
I try to be creative in most of the things I do.	0.50	10.89	4.76	1.50		
I have the responsibility to improve the neighborhood where I live	0.57	12.63	3.34	1.58		
I feel as though my contributions will exist after I die.	0.77	18.55	3.49	1.69		
I think society should be responsible for providing food and shelter to homeless	0.56	7.57	5.00	1.66		
Other people say that I am a very productive person	0.59	13.34	4.60	1.36		
I think my contributions will exist after I die	0.79	19.47	3.73	1.57		
Goodness of Fit Statistics						
$\chi^2(390) = 1051.41$ ($p = 0.00$); CFI = 0.97; NFI = 0.95; NNFI = 0.96; GFI = 0.86; SRMR = 0.055; RMSEA = 0.063						

* Standardized values.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix.

	PI	AP	TR	CSR	AT	SU	GE
Purchase Intention (PI)	1						
Attitude Product (AP)	0.63 (0.03)	1					
Transcendence (TR)	0.46 (0.04)	0.60 (0.03)	1				
CSR	0.59 (0.03)	0.44 (0.04)	0.37 (0.04)	1			
Attributions (AT)	0.34 (0.04)	0.37 (0.04)	0.28 (0.04)	0.30 (0.04)	1		
CSR Support (SU)	0.22 (0.05)	0.33 (0.05)	0.20 (0.05)	0.37 (0.04)	0.22 (0.04)	1	
Generativity (GE)	0.28 (0.05)	0.37 (0.05)	0.28 (0.05)	0.24 (0.05)	0.29 (0.05)	0.20 (0.05)	1

4.2. Results and Discussion

We checked the manipulation through analyses of variance. Analyses showed that we successfully manipulated product transcendence and company commitment to CSR. Respondents perceived the Way of St. James trip as more transcendent than the Sun & Beach Resort trip ($M_{\text{St.James}} = 4.50$, $M_{\text{S\&B}} = 3.06$; $F(1, 474) = 111.64$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, respondents reported higher CSR associations with the company whose flyer mentioned CSR activities than for the company whose flyer did not ($M_{\text{CSR}} = 4.31$, $M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 3.54$; $F(1, 474) = 50.06$, $p < 0.001$). A company's perceived CSR stance did not affect product transcendence ($M_{\text{CSR}} = 3.86$, $M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 3.66$; $F(1, 474) = 1.79$, $p = 0.19$). In addition, consumers' attitudes toward the trips to the Sun & Beach Resort and to the Way of St. James were not significantly different ($M_{\text{S\&B}} = 4.16$, $M_{\text{St.James}} = 4.31$; $F(1, 474) = 1.69$, $p = 0.20$), and we found the same lack of significant difference for attitudes toward the companies ($M_{\text{CSR}} = 4.72$, $M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 4.70$; $F(1, 474) = 0.026$, $p = 0.87$). These results showed that the sample liked both companies and both products similarly and that only the two variables we manipulated (transcendence and CSR) varied.

We then divided the respondents into nongenerative consumers and generative consumers, using a median split. The resulting mean composite of generativity scores showed significant differences between the two groups ($M_{NGC} = 3.19$, $M_{GC} = 4.80$; $F(1, 474) = 759.91$, $p < 0.001$). We tested H2 through an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with purchase intention as the dependent variable; consumer generativity, product transcendence, and company commitment to CSR as independent variables; and consumer support of CSR as a covariate (Table 3).

Table 3. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) results for the whole sample: Purchase intention.

Source	df	F	p
Intercept	1	189.90	0.001
CSR support	1	11.74	0.001
Generativity	1	15.70	0.001
Transcendence	1	2.11	0.15
CSR	1	38.09	0.001
Generativity × Transcendence	1	6.40	0.05
Generativity × CSR	1	4.76	0.05
Transcendence × CSR	1	0.50	0.49
Generativity × Transcendence × CSR	1	0.21	0.66
Corrected model	8	11.42	0.001

The interaction effect of consumer generativity and company's CSR activities on purchase intention was significant ($F(1, 467) = 4.76$, $p < 0.05$), confirming H2 (Figure 2). When the flyer included information about a company's CSR activities, purchase intention was higher for generative consumers than for nongenerative consumers ($M_{GC} = 4.29$, $M_{NGC} = 3.53$; $F(1, 467) = 21.49$, $p < 0.001$). However, when the flyer did not include any reference to the company's CSR stance, the two consumer groups did not significantly differ in their purchase intention ($M_{GC} = 3.29$, $M_{NGC} = 3.06$; $F(1, 467) = 1.19$, $p = 0.28$).

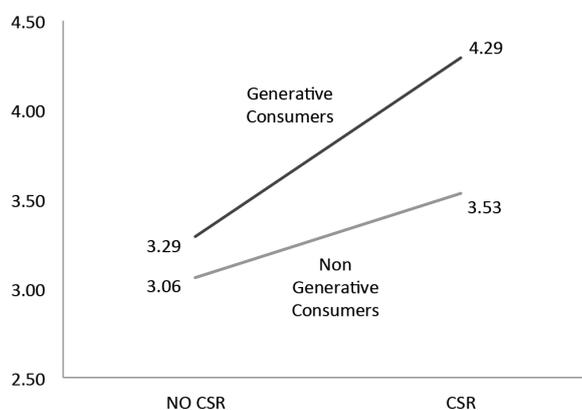


Figure 2. Purchase intention: Generativity and CSR.

The covariate, consumer support of CSR, showed a positive effect on purchase intention ($F(1, 467) = 11.75$, $p < 0.001$). Generativity also increased purchase intention ($F(1, 467) = 15.70$, $p < 0.001$), while product transcendence did not affect purchase intention significantly ($F(1, 467) = 2.11$, $p = 0.15$). However, we found a significant interaction between these two variables ($F(1, 467) = 6.40$, $p < 0.01$). This interaction is consistent with the findings in Study 1. Generative consumers showed higher purchase intention than nongenerative consumers for the transcendent product, the Way of St. James trip ($M_{GC} = 4.08$, $M_{NGC} = 3.22$; $F(1, 467) = 25.05$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, generative consumers and nongenerative consumers showed similar levels of purchase intention for the nontranscendent product, the Sun & Beach Resort trip ($M_{GC} = 3.51$, $M_{NGC} = 3.33$; $F(1, 467) = 0.50$, $p = 0.48$).

We also confirmed previous findings [22] for the positive influence of company commitment to CSR on purchase intention ($M_{\text{CSR}} = 3.94$, $M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 3.18$; $F(1, 467) = 38.01$, $p < 0.001$). CSR activities influenced purchase intentions of both nongenerative consumers ($M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 3.06$, $M_{\text{CSR}} = 3.53$; $F(1, 467) = 9.59$, $p < 0.005$) and generative consumers ($M_{\text{CSR}} = 4.29$, $M_{\text{NoCSR}} = 3.29$; $F(1, 467) = 39.00$, $p < 0.001$). These results, in addition to the ones commented two paragraphs above concerning the significant difference in purchase intention between generative and nongenerative consumers when the flyer also refers to CSR activities ($F(1, 467) = 21.49$, $p < 0.001$) and the lack of difference when the flyer does not include that information ($F(1, 467) = 1.19$, $p = 0.28$), confirm that the two lines shown in Figure 2 are not parallel and, therefore, that the increase in purchase intention is higher for generative consumers than for nongenerative consumers.

We had no expectations of the interaction effect of product transcendence and company commitment to CSR on purchase intention. This effect was not significant ($F(1, 467) = 0.49$, $p = 0.48$), nor was the three-way interaction among generativity, product transcendence, and company commitment to CSR ($F(1, 467) = 0.20$, $p = 0.65$).

We then considered only the respondents who received the flyers with a reference to CSR activities undertaken by the company ($N = 221$). We divided this subsample into two groups, using a median split. We called respondents with negative CSR attributions *skeptics* (i.e., consumers who do not believe that companies that claim to value CSR are truly committed to it; $N = 102$) and those with positive CSR attributions *believers* (i.e., consumers who do believe that companies that claim to value CSR are truly committed to it; $N = 119$). The mean score of CSR attributions significantly differed between the two groups ($M_{\text{Skep.}} = 2.76$, $M_{\text{Beli.}} = 4.74$; $F(1, 212) = 316.17$, $p < 0.001$).

We ran an ANCOVA with purchase intention as the dependent variable and consumer generativity, product transcendence, and CSR attributions as independent variables, while consumer support of CSR served as a covariate (Table 4). The results showed that the covariate, support of CSR ($F(1, 212) = 8.79$, $p < 0.01$), and CSR attributions ($M_{\text{Skep.}} = 3.46$, $M_{\text{Beli.}} = 4.35$; $F(1, 212) = 12.83$, $p < 0.001$) were significant variables in predicting purchase intention. Generativity was significant ($F(1, 212) = 12.13$, $p < 0.001$), as was its interaction with product transcendence ($F(1, 212) = 5.36$, $p < 0.05$). However, neither product transcendence ($F(1, 212) = 1.77$, $p = 0.19$) nor the interaction of generativity with CSR attributions ($F(1, 212) = 1.11$, $p = 0.30$) was significant.

Table 4. ANCOVA results for generative individuals: Purchase intention.

Source	df	F	p
Intercept	1	96.33	0.001
CSR support	1	8.79	0.01
Generativity	1	12.13	0.001
Transcendence	1	1.77	0.19
CSR attributions (skeptics/believers)	1	12.83	0.001
Generativity × Transcendence	1	5.36	0.03
Generativity × CSR attributions (skeptics/believers)	1	1.11	0.30
Transcendence × CSR attributions (skeptics/believers)	1	4.30	0.04
Generativity × Transcendence × CSR attributions (skeptics/believers)	1	0.97	0.33
Corrected model	8	8.59	0.001

A surprising result for this subsample was the significant interaction between product transcendence and CSR attributions ($F(1, 212) = 4.30$, $p < 0.05$). Product transcendence did not affect purchase intention when the company engaged in CSR activities and consumers were CSR believers ($M_{\text{S&B}} = 4.35$, $M_{\text{St.James}} = 4.35$; $F(1, 212) = 0.11$, $p = 0.74$). However, consumers who were CSR skeptics showed lower purchase intentions for nontranscendent products than for transcendent products ($M_{\text{S&B}} = 3.27$, $M_{\text{St.James}} = 3.72$; $F(1, 212) = 5.68$, $p < 0.05$) when the company engaged in CSR activities (see Figure 3). Therefore, the variable product transcendence is relevant not only when considering consumer generativity but also when considering consumers' CSR attributions. Product

transcendence increases purchase intentions of both CSR skeptics and generative consumers. Finally, the three-way interaction among generativity, transcendence, and CSR attributions was not significant ($F(1, 212) = 0.97, p = 0.33$).

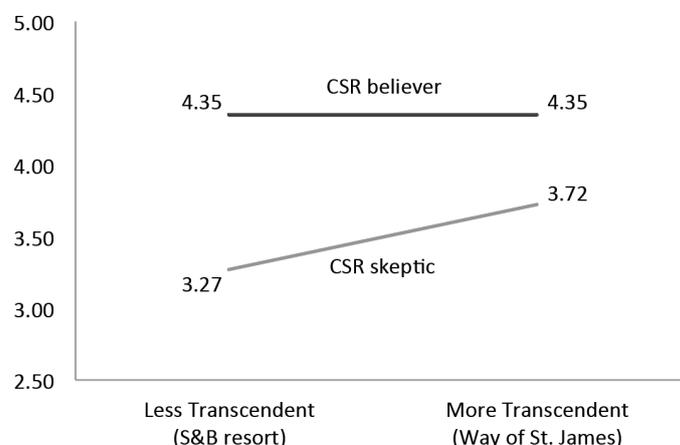


Figure 3. Purchase intention when the company undertakes CSR activities: Product transcendence and CSR attributions.

In summary, the results from Study 2 confirm H2 as well as the results from Study 1, while also explaining how generativity influences consumer behavior related to CSR. We found that while a company's commitment to CSR affects both nongenerative and generative consumers, the increase in purchase intention is higher for generative consumers than for nongenerative consumers. This means that generative consumers (because they are concerned about future generations, buy life insurance, invest in high-quality education, and purchase sustainable products) are even more sensitive than nongenerative consumers to CSR initiatives.

When consumers make decisions that involve companies with a high commitment to CSR, purchase intentions are higher for believers than for skeptics. Product transcendence interacts not only with generativity but also with CSR attributions. When consumers are skeptical about CSR activities, product transcendence becomes an asset (e.g., even if a company advertises that it sells paper produced with raw materials from sustainable forests, CSR skeptics will prefer recycled paper to regular paper manufactured by the company). In contrast, CSR believers are indifferent to product transcendence (e.g., CSR believers will value the company's recycled and regular paper equally).

5. Conclusions, Limitations, and Further Research

This research contributes to a better understanding of the CSR effects on consumer behavior. Although research has linked CSR to consumer responses both theoretically [8] and empirically [39,46], understanding the different paths that link CSR to purchase intention is still limited. With this research, we show how consumer generativity moderates those CSR effects. Generative consumers are more affected by CSR associations than nongenerative consumers.

To show the influence of generativity and CSR on consumer behavior, this research delves further into the concepts of generativity and product transcendence. The findings indicate that some consumers (generative) prefer transcendent products while others (nongenerative) are indifferent to this attribute. This research introduces a new criterion for product-classification schemas and finds that consumers perceive different levels of transcendence in products. This result is consistent with previous literature. For example, Harrington [47] affirms that "society needs transcendence" and that consumption has become, for many, a vehicle of transcendence, while Price et al. [48] refer to transcendence when affirming that many consumers attempt to control the values they transmit as a

legacy when they consider bequeathing cherished possessions. By leaving a legacy, many consumers endeavor to achieve symbolic immortality and/or influence the future lives of others.

Company commitment to CSR, which influences both generative and nongenerative consumers, has a more general impact on purchase intention than product transcendence. This seems reasonable both because there is greater awareness of CSR than of product transcendence and because it is easier to convey information about CSR activities than about product transcendence, which is an intangible attribute. Most business leaders believe that CSR is an economic imperative in today's marketplace and make efforts to engage in and publicize CSR activities.

This research also contributes to the CSR literature through the analysis of consumers' CSR attributions. The motives behind a firm's CSR activity are seldom discussed [49]. However, academics and marketers must begin to understand the effects of CSR initiatives on consumer perceptions of companies' motivations to develop CSR activities. In line with this, Study 2 shows that purchase intention is higher when CSR attributions are positive (believers), independent of product transcendence. However, when consumers are skeptical about CSR activities, product transcendence becomes an asset. This result about individual motivations to purchase transcendent products complements the research about green procurement in the private sector developed by Apolloni et al. [37]. They develop a framework identifying drivers, barriers and the performance of the adoption of green procurement. There is a need for further scholarly research in the adoption of green supplier selection criteria in the procurement process.

From a managerial perspective, marketers of companies with consolidated CSR activities should begin treating generativity as a significant consumer segmentation criterion. In addition, transcendence is an important attribute for product differentiation that, jointly with CSR, can contribute to the company positioning strategy [50] and the performance in sustainable strategy formulation [51]. Consumers view transcendent products as "having a long-lasting influence" and "having meaning for the future", associations that are shared with the CSR activity implemented by the company. Marketing managers can enhance the perception of a product's transcendence by communicating the long-term impacts of the inputs, production process, and consumption associated with that product. For example, Olympus's slogan "Your vision, our future" is more transcendent than Nikon's "at the heart of your image". Moreover, companies can increase product transcendence through redesign and by modifying the attributes. Many car manufacturers are focusing on reducing carbon dioxide emissions, making the product more transcendent because it has a positive effect on others and protects the environment. Other companies are creating products that last longer. The furniture company Vitsoe takes a stand against planned obsolescence by creating durable products and communicates this position with the eloquent slogan, "living better with less that lasts longer". Its products not only "have a long-lasting influence" and "meaning for the future" but are also good for the environment because they generate less waste (i.e., the products can contribute to CSR associations).

Further research could complement this study in many ways. First, the pretest is basically exploratory. New studies could use larger samples to test the concept of product transcendence with greater validity. Second, the fact that a large percentage of people in the sample were in their thirties and that most were college graduates may have created a bias in the results. A more diverse sample would contribute to reduce that bias. In addition, the concept of generativity may vary according to cultural context, and therefore the results may have been affected by where we collected the data. Cross-cultural studies would contribute to a better understanding of this context effect. Alternative scales of generativity, like the recently developed by Lacroix [52] and Lacroix and Jolibert [53], could be used for these studies to check the robustness of the construct.

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