

This study proposes a model of how deeply held beliefs, known as 'social axioms, moderate the interaction between reputation, its causes and consequences with stakeholders. It contributes to the stakeholder relational field of reputation theory by explaining why the same organizational stimuli lead to different individual stakeholder responses. The study provides a shift in reputation research from organizational-level stimuli as the root causes of stakeholder responses to exploring the interaction between individual beliefs and organizational stimuli in determining reputational consequences. Building on a conceptual model that incorporates product/service quality and social responsibility as key reputational dimensions, the authors test empirically for moderating influences, in the form of social axioms, between reputation-related antecedents and consequences, using component-based structural equation modelling (n = 204). In several model paths, significant differences are found between responses of individuals identified as either high or low on social cynicism, fate control and religiosity. The results suggest that stakeholder responses to reputation-related stimuli can be systematically predicted as a function of the interactions between the deeply held beliefs of individuals and these stimuli. The authors offer recommendations on how strategic reputation management can be approached within and across stakeholder groups at a time when firms grapple with effective management of diverse stakeholder expectations.

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