
Guest editorial: Happiness and corporate social responsibility: the role of organizational culture and consumers in a sustainable economy

Guest editorial

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1. Introduction

People have always been interested in happiness. At the start of the 20th century, the scientific discussion was reserved for philosophy, but other scientific disciplines have since become interested in this topic (Rela *et al.*, 2020). Since the beginning of the 21st century, empirical research has focused on happiness mainly in sociology, social and personality psychology and physiology (Núñez-Barriopedro *et al.*, 2020). Today, disciplines such as politics, economics and marketing have a well-developed body of knowledge on happiness to draw on. In marketing, consumer research treats happiness as an emotion within the psychological determinants of consumer behavior (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg, 1996). The distinction between external and internal models of happiness is common to all scientific disciplines. Happiness “from the outside” is a state that depends on external, objective conditions, such as material prosperity or consumption (Yoshida *et al.*, 2021). Happiness “from within” is a state that depends on internal, subjective judgments. Research in business organizations and empirical results of research show that prosperity and well-being should be treated “from within” (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2024). This means that we conceptualize happiness as a subjective phenomenon of internal states that are only partially influenced by objective factors (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2019).

At the same time, the world is immersed in frenetic economic and social change where society demands socially responsible behavior from organizations (Tiwari *et al.*, 2021). Applying a practical management methodology oriented towards happiness can lead our organizations to move towards a more sustainable society. The strategic directions of companies and organizations should maximize the happiness of both their consumers and their human capital as a sustainable source of competitive advantage (Núñez-Barriopedro *et al.*, 2021). This approach by organizations is, in itself, responsible and sustainable. Suppose happiness is understood as a reflection of well-being. Companies must undertake management models where organizational, psychological, communicative or social factors stimulate corporate happiness within organizations (Jiménez-Marín *et al.*, 2021). In the case of the consumer, organizations must be prepared to understand the term happiness as being used interchangeably with subjective well-being, life satisfaction and utility (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2020). In any case, research shows that the happiness of workers and consumers is closely linked to productivity, intrapreneurship, innovation, creativity, satisfaction, loyalty and responsibility (Mompalmer *et al.*, 2011; Onkila, 2015).

Despite all these academic advances, we need to find out more – from this postulate of happiness management and consumer happiness – about developing corporate governance that significantly improves the happy experiences of workers and consumers. Yet little attention has been paid to the social role organizations and corporate social responsibility (CSR) can play in generating happiness in society (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2019; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2017).



In this respect, two fundamental things have to happen. The first is to explore human resources and internal marketing policies to stimulate employees' work performance in a collaborative culture based on commitment, positive psychology and teamwork (Jiménez-Marín *et al.*, 2020). Second, happiness in CSR should be used as a measurement to achieve sustainability and economic, social and environmental responsibility (García-Sánchez *et al.*, 2021), given the importance of proactively promoting happiness in internal and external customers (Zhou *et al.*, 2021).

From this perspective, this special issue entitled *Happiness and corporate social responsibility: The role of organizational culture and consumers in a sustainable economy* has a primary purpose: to show that the intangible resource of happiness will play a key role not only in the transformation of the green economy currently underway but also in forging a corporate image of companies that says they are committed to the passion for work of their human capital and the satisfaction of their customers (Cuesta-Valino *et al.*, 2022). The philosophy is that monetary benefits are not exclusive to the guiding principles of CSR, respect for the environment, emotional consumption and happiness management (Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2021).

This special issue was developed to encourage the development of theories and practices in human resources and internal marketing that stimulate the work performance of employees in a collaborative culture based on commitment, positive psychology and teamwork (Jiménez-Marín *et al.*, 2020). Happiness has an important role in the transformation of the green economy and works to improve the corporate image of companies from the perspective of CSR, emotional consumption and happiness management (Ruiz-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023).

What follows is a brief synopsis of each academic article included in this special issue. We then offer some concluding remarks on the role of happiness and social responsibility in today's society.

2. Synopsis of the special issue contributions

The special issue entitled *Happiness and corporate social responsibility: The role of organizational culture and consumers in a sustainable economy* features 18 accepted publications that were selected by means of a rigorous peer review process from a considerable number of submissions.

For the first time in the happiness management literature, the authors of the paper (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2024), "Purchase intention of fashion brand retailers: a journey through consumer engagement and happiness," show that consumer engagement with the brand and consumer happiness positively influence the purchase intention of fashion brands. This finding has important practical implications for fashion retail managers. One is that consumer happiness is an intangible resource that proactively drives individuals' psychological needs to buy clothes impulsively in a highly competitive environment. Another is that the culture of happiness management promotes consumer happiness as an indicator of brand identity and business success. This paper underwent a double-blind independent review.

Ahumada-Tello and Ramos (2024) designed a statistical multiple regression model that empirically explains the impact of economic incentives, management style, emotional health and research activities on university professors in northern Mexico and their perception of happiness. The authors analyzed the correlation between happiness perception and four independent variables divided into two sets of dimensions: individual dimensions (emotional health and research activities) and organizational dimensions (economic incentives and management styles). The practical implications highlight the importance of promoting happiness perception among professors to improve academic outcomes.

Within happiness and sustainability, the authors of this special issue could not overlook pressing topics such as the potential benefits of entrepreneurship for people with intellectual disabilities (PwID) in improving their life satisfaction. [Barba-Sánchez et al. \(2024\)](#) used a mixed-methods approach in their study, combining questionnaires with interviews involving 37 PwID who recently became entrepreneurs. The findings indicate that PwID with a high entrepreneurial tendency experience positive effects on their life quality, job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction.

Another set of papers focused on CSR. Two of them examined gender-related aspects. [Blanco-Moreno et al. \(2024\)](#) looked at the impact of content marketing on women's happiness – specifically through eudaimonia and hedonism factors – and its influence on desires and actions. Eudaimonia was shown to play a significant role in women's behavior, while hedonism influenced desires. The main implication is that content marketers should consider whether their goal is to create desirability or feasibility in consumers, as content addressing eudaimonia will impact feasibility, while emphasizing the hedonic aspect of happiness will create desirability.

[Castillo-Abdul et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the CSR content of male luxury fashion brands on social media platforms. Through interpretive content analysis of CSR posts, it was found that sustainability, protection of natural spaces and ocean conservation were prominent themes in the brands' CSR content. Videos and photo reels generated the highest interactions, while collaborations with other fashion brands significantly increased reach. This research underscores the role of content marketing strategies.

[Cachero-Martínez et al. \(2024\)](#) investigated the relationship between happiness associated with sustainable purchases in social enterprises (SEs) and consumers' prosocial behavioral responses. The study examined the impact of past purchases in SEs on consumer happiness, satisfaction and indicators of loyalty, such as repurchase intention, word-of-mouth (WOM) intention and willingness to pay more. The paper indicates that sustainable consumption brings happiness to ethical consumers as they fulfill personal needs and contribute to social objectives through their purchases.

[Hindmarsh et al. \(2024\)](#) write about how CSR conditions influence grassroots football club stakeholders in meeting sponsor goals. The study emphasizes shared values, congruity and happiness as key factors. Building strong relationships based on values is shown to be crucial for attracting and maintaining sponsorships. The paper contributes to understanding CSR in grassroots football and highlights the importance of shared values in the sports ecosystem.

Another survey focusing on CSR is offered by [Cordero-Gutiérrez et al. \(2024\)](#). They establish the impact of positive versus negative framing of CSR communications on online brand engagement. Their study finds that positive framing has a stronger effect on brand engagement, mediated by evoked happiness and message credibility – conclusions that have implications for the hospitality industry.

[Galiano-Coronil et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the Twitter communications of responsible companies in Spain in a study that aimed to identify topics and message profiles related to CSR and happiness. Most tweets did not address CSR, but sports and weather proved popular subjects. Conversational-style tweets generated significant public reactions. The study highlights the value of positive communications and social marketing in promoting CSR on Twitter.

[Hatami et al. \(2024\)](#) include corporate volunteering (CV) as part of the CSR that contributes to sustainable happiness in business organizations. Through qualitative interviews and analysis, it was found that CV enables employees to transition from individual to collective mindsets, fostering sustainable happiness. The study emphasizes the need for reflection and managerial support to enhance the impact of CV on employee well-being.

[Mu et al. \(2024\)](#) aim to redefine CSR (CSR) into primary stakeholder-oriented and secondary stakeholder-oriented CSRs from a stakeholder perspective and explore how these

types of CSR influence employees' job satisfaction and happiness management. Findings indicate that both types of CSR positively impact happiness management and job satisfaction, with primary stakeholder-oriented CSR showing a stronger effect. Gender and educational background are found to significantly influence happiness management. Practical implications suggest that firms can enhance competitiveness and sustainability by prioritizing CSR, focusing on employee benefits for primary stakeholder-oriented CSR and allocating earnings to charity for secondary stakeholder-oriented CSR. Moreover, emphasizing CSR practices can foster job satisfaction and socially responsible treatment of employees, ultimately contributing to happiness management.

Also, in the field of CSR and happiness, some works included here conducted a literature review. [Kıymahoğlu and Yetkin Özbük \(2024\)](#) examine the integration of CSR, happiness and corporate sustainability (CS). The findings highlight the importance given to social sustainability and employee-centric CSR initiatives, with most studies emphasizing the hedonic aspect of happiness. The review underscores the need for a comprehensive framework that considers both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness and all pillars of sustainability. It also emphasizes the importance of designing CSR initiatives to enhance happiness among stakeholders and achieve corporate sustainability.

[Martínez-Falcó *et al.* \(2024\)](#) studied the impact of CSR on the sustainable performance of Spanish wineries, analyzing the mediating role of organizational commitment (OC) and consumer satisfaction (CS). The theoretical model was tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with data from 196 Spanish wineries. The findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between CSR and sustainable performance, with OC and CS serving as mediating factors. The paper provides new insights into CSR and sustainability in the wine industry.

[Tosun and Tavşan \(2024\)](#) explored the impact of perceived CSR on consumer happiness and brand admiration, introducing a conceptual model and conducting a survey to analyze the relationships. The findings explain the significant influence of perceived CSR and hope on consumer happiness, which, in turn, affects brand admiration. The study emphasizes the importance of CSR in fostering positive consumer relationships and suggests the incorporation of happiness and hope into CSR initiatives.

[Villena Manzanares *et al.* \(2024\)](#) investigated the impact of effective communication on the implementation of building information modeling (BIM) in project design. Their findings highlight the importance of establishing policies to enhance communication among team members, which leads to improved trust and overall satisfaction. The research accepts the need for further exploration of the relationship between effective communication and the successful adoption of BIM methodology.

Works studying happiness in organizations and public policies also have their place in this issue. In this line, [De la Torre-Torres *et al.* \(2024\)](#) investigated the relationship between promoting workforce happiness and well-being through high-performance work policies (HPWP) and the financial performance of European public companies. The findings indicated no significant impact on profitability, market risk or stock price return. The study suggests that promoting HPWP has no adverse effects on company performance or investor outcomes.

[Núñez-Barriopedro *et al.* \(2024\)](#) examined the relationship between citizens' perceptions of public service performance and the taxes allocated to such services. Her contribution also explores the impact of public service perception on citizens' happiness and satisfaction. Her findings reveal the variables that influence citizens' perceptions and their well-being.

Finally, [Rando-Cueto *et al.* \(2024\)](#) provide a comprehensive review of organizational happiness, combining bibliometric analysis and interviews with key authors in the field. The review emphasizes the importance of happiness management in organizations and its relationship with the organizational environment. Research directions are suggested, highlighting the role of CSR in organizational well-being and employee performance.

3. Concluding remarks

This special issue springs from the lack of scientific literature exploring the importance of the happiness-CSR link in developing an organizational culture that cultivates the subjective well-being of internal customers and consumers in the era of the sustainable economy. One of the reasons for this phenomenon lies in corporate governance, which needs to align with the psychological well-being and job satisfaction of its human capital. Perhaps managers are unaware that an intangible resource called happiness is beginning to reveal itself within their organizations (Robina-Ramírez *et al.*, 2023).

In this line of research, some authors show that happiness is the way to achieve productive and innovative growth of employees and to implement an organizational culture based on the portfolio of CSR, sustainability and happiness management (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, a small number of academics from the International University Happiness Network, of which the editors of this special issue are part, are beginning to investigate happiness as a driver of a sustainable economy. The results of these studies show that, on the one hand, the productive, technological, digital and commercial development of companies requires leaders and workers who navigate toward the virtuous circle of corporate happiness for all their stakeholders (Ravina Ripoll *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, companies should undertake social marketing campaigns to achieve happy consumers. To this end, their corporate image must be based on prosocial happiness and the generation of eudemonic links between customers and companies (Cuesta-Valiño *et al.*, 2023; Ravina-Ripoll *et al.*, 2023).

This special issue aims to expand scientific knowledge of happiness and CSR in the sustainable economy. It puts on the academic table the idea that the existence of these two dimensions in the organizational cultures of companies makes it possible to cultivate the implementation of emerging and social governance models that promote responsible consumption, social marketing and happiness management (Foncubierta-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2020).

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