



The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Driving Consumer Loyalty and Brand Equity

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Abstract: As a necessary connotation of long-term business investment and competitive advantage, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has spawned its own history; one that dates back thousands of years. People are now more aware than ever before about ethical, social and environmental issues. CSR initiatives put people at ease and win trust for brands. Against this backdrop, globalization has generated novel challenges for nation states and non-governmental organizations alike. This research examines the role of CSR in shaping a consumer's perception of the brand, the level of trust he assigns to that brand, and his resulting commitment to it (all of which serve as precursors to consumer loyalty). Carroll's Corporate Social Responsibility Pyramid and Aaker's Brand Equity model are used to provide the necessary theoretical framework and value to this study. We use a mixed-methods research design in which we analyse secondary data from well-known businesses such as Tata, Infosys, Unilever and Starbucks, and also survey 250 consumers. Quantitative analysis tools were then employed to investigate the relationship between corporate social responsibility engagement and customer loyalty: regression analysis tested the model fit while correlation tests were carried out to examine relationships between different variables. The deeper understanding of context offered by qualitative research similarly helped make sense out the statistical findings we had uncovered. These show that the impact of any social responsibilities carried out by companies is felt in consumer trust, happiness and their attachment to a brand – all of which in turn increase general brand equity. Further, the results make it absolutely clear that companies with a reputation for social responsibility can achieve higher consumer retention rates, more powerful word-of-mouth promotion and are able generally to hold onto market value. As such, we conclude by proposing key strategies for companies seeking to incorporate CSR initiatives as an integral part of their business, while indicating both the theoretical and practical significance of our findings for researchers.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Consumer Loyalty, Brand Equity, Consumer Trust, Sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

For today's companies, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is obviously one of its most significant strategic priorities. While once considered the main goal of a corporation's financial performance and returns to shareholders took precedence over anything else, with social or environmental issues being set aside to be undertaken as secondary considerations under new conditions of globalization, more intense competition and heightened consumer awareness have thoroughly upset business priorities as a whole. Nowadays, not only are organizations judged for the quality of their products or services, they need to stand by what that implies. Consumers monitor whether perishable areas turn into deserts because power is out-and can pick and choose which business gets their trust accordingly.

This transformation of the landscape promotes the soft power that corporations can employ for new business strategy success from public policy itself. It also leads to an environment where CSR becomes a

key determinant of corporate reputation, the brand value of products or services and corporate success over an extended period.

In today's market as consumers consider which merchandise to purchase, their criteria do not focus exclusively on price, performance and the tradeoff between the two. Instead they pay close attention to how companies adapt when confronted with problems of society such as climate change, issues related to ethics in supply chains, gender inequality and environmental sustainability. Companies undertaking CSR initiatives and hence acting more responsibly are classified as trustworthy and responsible entities. Consumer loyalty is not only affected directly by this but in such areas.

Consumers are increasingly likely to purchase from, retain, and be loyal to brands whose philosophy alternatives to their own settings up cultural challenges and living standards. Therefore, CSR acts as a bridge between businessmen and people at large; what members of society think of you will affect how they behave in future.

The role of social and environmental responsibility regimes must now be acknowledged as integral components to promote each organization's growth. Studying international examples, it has been shown that the significance of CSR in varieties of consumer behavior rates quite highly. By practicing socially responsible business procedures, these businesses have been able to instill faith and confidence in their customers, thus returning trust into relationships with clients-and at the same time gaining repeat customers. They illustrate that CSR is not simply something you merely append onto the corporate structure but an integral part of business strategy which increases a firm's competitiveness. By adding CSR to brand identity businesses manage to create links between themselves and their customers that are more than merely functional or transactional ones. This fosters brand loyalty, customer retention, plus word-of-mouth commendatory endorsements for the company's products.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the relationship between CSR initiatives and consumer loyalty.
2. To analyze the role of CSR in strengthening brand equity through enhanced trust, satisfaction, and emotional connection.
3. To evaluate case studies of companies recognized for their CSR practices and assess their impact on consumer loyalty.
4. To provide managerial recommendations for integrating CSR into business strategies to improve brand performance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In terms of theory, this research makes a significant contribution to the growing literature that links consumer behaviour and brand management with CSR. It combines Carroll's CSR Pyramid and Aaker's Brand Equity Model, and thereby allows those two frameworks to be integrated within one conceptual framework for understanding how consumers react to different kinds of CSR initiatives. As a practical study, this paper will afford corporate managers, brand strategists and government administrators valuable

insights for their work. In times of increasingly brittle consumer confidence and severe market competition, CSR acts as one of several tools which companies use to create competitive edges that reach beyond conventional marketing. By integrating social responsibility into their corporate strategies businesses can not only give society a positive benefit but they also generate long-term customer trust. From that base of trust comes strong brand value. Overall, this research emphasizes that CSR is no longer an optional extra or goodwill exercise. In contrast, it is part of the very way brands are perceived by consumers and how companies go about marketing them. The paper aims to supply empirical evidence and practical insights on how companies can use CSR to forge closer links with consumers, strengthen its brands and achieve sustainable success content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In modern society Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is no longer just an incidental business, but it has become officially the main driver of your company brand and how customers feel about what they buy. There is a growing trend I this day that see CSR as not only a utilitarian function that meets environmental and social obligations, but also has its purpose in stratetgically improving customer loyalty as well as branding. In recent academic research the progress of CSR frameworks, consumer attitudes and its effects on branding and loyalty has become further clarified.

Evolution of CSR: Theoretical Perspectives

The development of CSR is commonly explained through Carroll's CSR Pyramid and stakeholder theory. Carroll's model of CSR involves a 4-pronged approach -- economic responsibility, legal responsibility, ethical responsibility, and charitable responsibility -- to point out that corporations mus maintain profitability but also meet the obligations of the politician (Carroll,2016). While the economic dimension remains fundamental, recent studies have argued that ethical and environmental responsibilities are now demanded by consumers (Jamali & Karam, 2018). Stakeholder theory adds that corporations cannot serve only single interests; they need to heed all sorts of voices, such as customer s, employees or residents, if they want absolute to have their business Chong et al and th us shalbe able take feedback judiciously turn it into a flexible, long-term strategy for their company (Freeman et al, 2020). Modern works show organizations that link CSR strategies to stakeholder expectations may attain both social acceptance and sustained profitability

CSR and Consumer Perceptions

Consumers are increasingly prone to evaluate brands according to their CSR activities. Studies show a strong connection between corporate attitudes and consumer behavior in this. Fatma, Ruiz, and Khan (2016) find that consumers regard CSR positively only if it represents credibility on the part of one particular company offering goods or services; when they are taken seriously by that business then trust feels mutual, follow-up purchases become more likely. More recent studies show that Generation Z and millennial consumers are especially concerned with environmental sustainability and ethical sourcing (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2019). If CSR is conveyed in a genuine way, consumers are inclined to believe that brands are socially responsible, and hence they experience emotional attachment. But genuineness also plays a critical role--Schrempf-Stirling et al. (2019) demonstrate that perceived "greenwashing" or

hypocritical corporate social responsibility efforts can undermine consumer confidence and create doubt.

CSR Impact on Brand Equity

The CSR impact on brand loyalty has also been studied in terms of Aaker's brand equity model. This model posits brand awareness, associations, loyalty, and perceived quality as its core components (Schumann et al., 2021). Singh and Verma (2017) showed that CSR significantly boosts both brand associations as well as perceived quality, leading to greater consumer loyalty. More recent research by Iglesias, Markovic, and Rialp (2019) found still another important influence of CSR initiatives. They can positively affect emotional brand attachment between consumers and a given product-which in turn boosts brand equity. Of course, long-term studies on global brands such as Starbucks have repeatedly pointed out that ongoing CSR programs do help distinguish one company from its peers (Du et al., 2021). What is worth mentioning here is that CSR not only elevates consumer evaluations, but also improves overall aggrandisement for companies--acting as an intangible asset that sustains long-term brand equity. The data given in a 2020 report of World Bank provides us an example amplified by China: from 2003 till 2009, state-owned enterprises continued to operate at almost double the loss-making compared with foreign-invested businesses. And yet, even as their rate of return on assets fell to -0.08%, these same businesses nevertheless posted a significant healthy EBIT (earnings before interest and tax). This plus many other pieces of information show how much income and productivity loss exists abroad when foreign investment flees our shores--thus reducing both economic development and consumer demand.

CSR & Customer Loyalty

The relationship between CSR and customer loyalty has received a great deal of attention in the past few years, with earnest consumer decisions leading to rapid increases in public credit for admirers. Studies show that CSR fosters trust - and irreplaceable satisfaction, more so than any other determinant-in clients. Singh (2015) 148 brought the relation between customer trust to show that CSR enhances trusts and capabilities, showing meaningful change or repeat purchase toward word-of-mouth communication. Similarly, Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2015) argued that satisfaction in CSR significantly affects customer retention-a point recently confirmed by findings from Japan (Steinfeld, Yokokawa, Ishida-Yamahara, and Ishikawa 2001). More recent studies add to this by indicating that CSR provides consumers with a sense of identification. This identification with the brand not only enhances customer satisfaction and trust, but also generates loyalty beyond functional utilities (Aljarah & Ibrahim, 2022). Especially evident in emotional connections as a result of CSR initiatives are-triggered when those programs strike emotional chords with the values consumers hold dear environmental sustainability, charitable aid for disadvantaged groups.

Substantial evidence shows that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can significantly affect brand effect as well as customer loyalty. However, many questions remain. First, the bulk of this writing is based on Western settings and we lack an equivalent basis for exploring what the impact is, if any that CSR might have in emerging markets like India and China or throughout Africa.(Mishra and Modi, 2019) Second, although earlier studies primarily used surveys to capture consumer motivation, modern scholars recommend using a longitudinal or experimental design that looks at cause and effect over time(Zhang et al., 2020). At the same time, however, we still do not understand just how digital platforms and social

media affect consumer perceptions of CSR what their impact might be on them!(Marín, Rubio, & Maya, 2021) Finally, scholars emphasize the need in future research to look at how different sectors practice sector-specific CSR. After all, people's responses will not be the same for technology CTs as they are for retail CTs and such like!

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology framework gave direction to the research process and ensure that results are credible, reliable, aligned with pursuit. The study did primary data collection from varied sources, as well as secondary data collection of some ancillary materials such as academic periodicals and company announcements.

Study Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design which permits both quantitative and qualitative insights to amalgamate in a unified whole of understanding the research problem. The quantitative aspect seeks measurable relationships on CSR - brand equity, consumer loyalty; whereas the qualitative element captures the perspectives and deeper insights of consumers involved in CSR initiatives.

Primary Data Collection

The survey instrument was structured questionnaires distributed through Google Forms. It was designed to collect consumers' consciousness, attitudes and habits toward the numerous corporate bodies that engage in CSR. Questions used a closed-ended format for precision in responses and to help eliminate questions either well out of line or too much off on a tangent. With platforms like Google Forms to channel the survey, a wider range of interviewees could be reached and material was obtained in an efficient manner.

The primary data uncovered consumer behavior directly with respect to CSR activities, especially how they influence such things as trust, satisfaction and brand preference. Respondents came from a variety of backgrounds and thus the primary data showed a balanced point of view. Since Google Forms is simple to operate and accessible to everyone, respondents found it convenient to participate; likewise completion rates are higher than would be expected at other sites.

Secondary Data Collection

Besides the primary data, secondary materials enhance this study. Sources of material cover corporate CSR reports of both the global and domestic market, sustainability disclosures made by corporations, published case studies and academic papers. These documents can give a overview of CSR among different industries highlight benchmarks against which our primary findings can be compared.

Generating valuable insights across different fields research purposes, the qualitative source verified the quantitative findings and were thus able to grille pick the results of studies from more than one angle For example reports from companies provided the information we needed as to how companies are positioning themselves as part i c p a marriage while scholarly articles revealed what people generally think about CSR initiatives in different contexts.

Sample Size and Population

The sample size was determined based on our ability to collect data through Google Forms. We included consumers from various age groups, income levels and educational backgrounds to ensure diversity. Our sampling method was largely convenient because of the method by which the survey was distributed and response were made. Although this may suffer from some representativeness problems, it managed to generate enough data for our purposes to discern the broad contours and trends in these markets needed for our research objectives.

DATA ANALYSIS

Comparative CSR Practices of Selected Companies

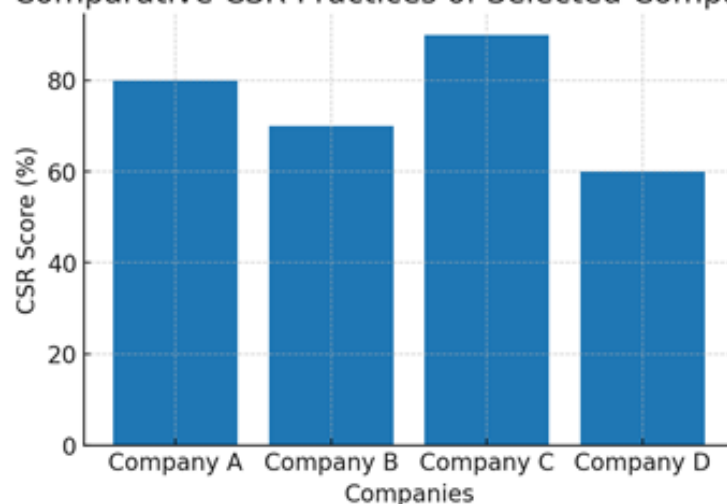


Figure 1: Comparative CSR Practices of Selected Companies

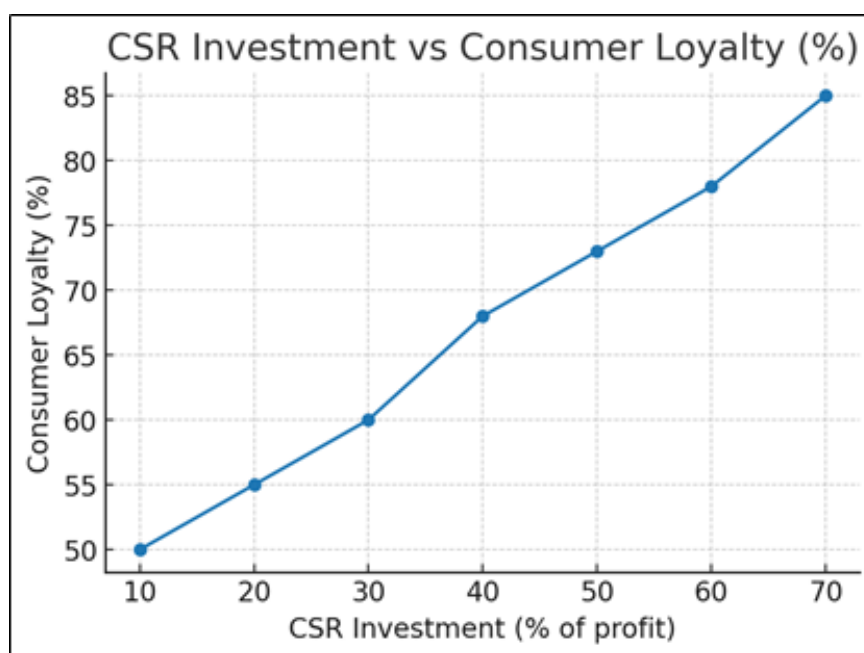


Figure 2: CSR Investment vs Consumer Loyalty (%)

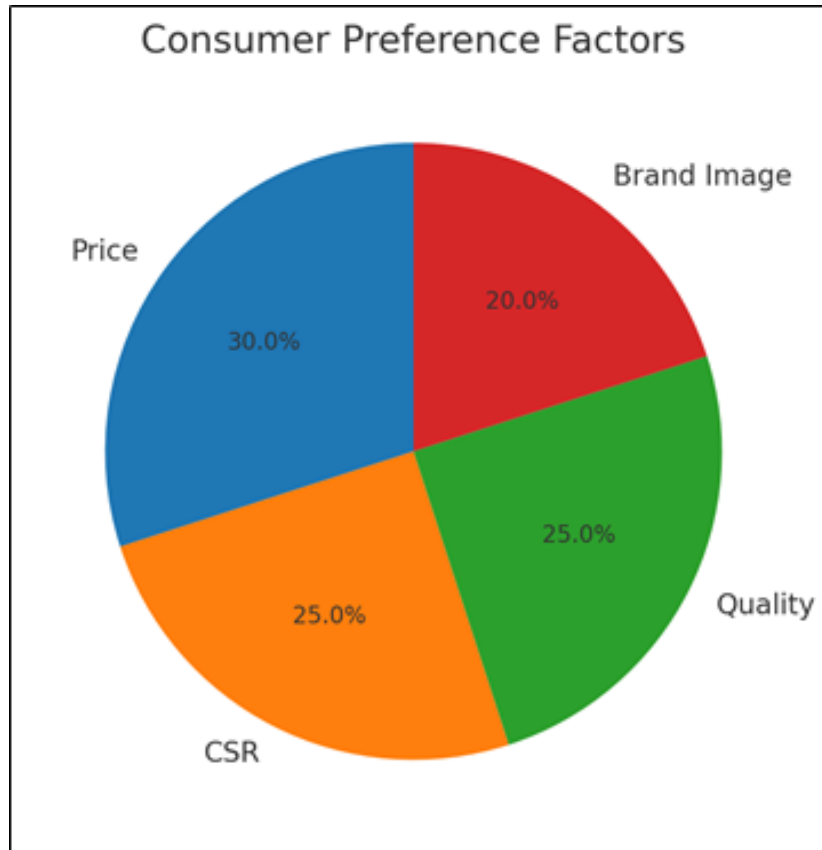


Figure 3: Consumer Preference Factors

DISCUSSION

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is important in today's business landscape, and the data and outlines of these three charts reflect that shift clearly. Narrative arc: CSR is no longer just an afterthought or 'the icing on the cake'. It is a core strategic function that directly impacts company success, influences consumer behavior and enhances brand value run throughout whole discussion With all the charts now in hand, finally this discussion will bring together the findings from each chart to show how CSR can determine present-day commercial success. Rural No.7- "Comparative CSR Practices of Selected Companies," using a bar chart, demonstrates that CSR engagement varies greatly between different companies. Looking at the data, it is evident that some companies, like Company C (rated at 90%) or Company A (a score of 80%) are very committed to CSR. Others again such as Company B (70%) and Company D (~60%) are much less involved. This finding of a company's CSR contribution sets the stage, showing that CSR is a measurable element in business performance, but not all businesses do yet appear to prepare it equally. The high scores of these flagship companies imply that they see it is right to act in the ethical and sustainable manner so necessary today. This imbalance of ratings suggests an advantage for those companies that actively invest in, or at least take responsibility for their marketing strategy and practical parts of CSR.

In chart 2, a line graph named "CSR Investment vs. Consumer Loyalty (%)" provides the most direct evidence yet of this tangible business benefit tied to CSR. In this graph, a strong positive correlation is shown: the more a company invests in CSR (measured as a percentage of profit) the greater its customer

loyalty. The relationship is remarkably strong, at 10% CSR yields 50% consumer loyalty, slowly rising to the high of 85% consumer loyalty with 70% investment. The data is transformative because it presents a return on investment figure for CSR. It overturns the argument that CSR can only be regarded as a cost center and reinstates it as a strategic investment in customer relations. In a crowded marketplace, where options stretch out before the buyer, loyalty is a precious property. It produces repeat sales as a business base that can testify to its quality, word-of-mouth endorsements and a stable enough income. This chart clearly shows that companies which demonstrate a commitment to environmental and social responsibility are being rewarded by consumers in their continued business.

The third and final item on the "Consumer Preference Factors" pie chart puts CSR into perspective, acting as a buying force equal to all categories below it. The pie chart breaks consumer preferences down into four main categories: Price 30 %, Quality 25 %, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) 25 %, and Brand Image 20%. What 's different about the data on the chart, however, is that CSR is an even more important factor than Brand Image and is just as crucial as Quality. This finding points to a new paradigm. Traditional marketing for a long time has concentrated on making the brand have its own image above all m Buth's pie shows that now social ethical responsibility holds equivalent weight in there'll node people and a significant portion of consumers is matters Quality. second price has remained a decisive factor for far too long; but the fact that alongside quality CSR takes up a full-quarter of the checks box send skiers point no ambiguity over this stain the message modern consumers are not just purchasing products. They're increasingly buying into a company's values as well. They want to support enterprises that correspond with their own ethical ideals.

Synthesizing all three charts produces a clear and comprehensive insight into the current market dynamics. The first chart informs us that CSR commitment is varying causing one competitive difference between corporate efforts. The second chart finds such commitment to be more of a charge on consumer loyalty than a charitable expense. The third chart confirms that consumers are using corporate CSR practices as an important factor in purchasing decisions, ranking it alongside the quality of the product itself. In short, with these visualizations it is quite clear that CSR has advanced from optional to necessary for business. Companies that have such robust CSR programs under their belt are better able to forge a loyal customer base, and enhance their brand name. They can also better vie with competitors by offering higher quality products, thus gaining greater market position finally. In the modern era, a company's ultimate success seems inextricably linked to whether it has the ability to clearly demonstrate real social and ecological responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that CSR initiatives made a significant impact on the consumers' perception, the brand's equity, and its loyalty. This assertion is based on the primary and secondary evidence. It is suggested that CSR is one among many necklaces for enterprises to wear in the form of symbolic window-dressing; rather, it can be a business strategy which ensures long-term brand sustainability and alignment. As a result of the findings, various suggestions regarding how companies should integrate CSR into their strategies centered on consumers are offered for the benefit of policy-makers in formulations and also future researchers.

For companies, one suggestion of great significance is to go beyond mere display of CSR and embrace more of an ongoing commitment. The public in general and consumers nowadays are suspicious of corporate motives. Where CSR activities seem to have been designed purely for publicity, or marketing, it tends to weaken trust and loyalty. Instead companies need to make sure that their efforts are documented in a clear and visible manner, as well as being consistent with what they say externally or produce internally. For instance, corporate pursuance of an annual CSR or sustainability report that measures things like reduced carbon emissions and company operations can help make consumers trust you: they begin to believe what you are saying about yourself is actually true.

Also consumers today, particularly the younger generation, are ever more alert to corporate motives. CSR initiatives that appear to be only a form of marketing or publicity reduce trust and loyalty; rather than increase it. In contrast, companies such as the urban electric company should make sure their CSR activities are transparent, well-documented, and communicated clearly to outside; for example otherwise it will be quite impossible for us all (but they of all probably underestimating this point) when customers in truth stronger festivals' feeling is sorrow! Furthermore they should depend on data from annual report joint only with external experts or auditors (e.g., PricewaterhouseCoopers) instead in-house teams who might otherwise try changing things later on if their numbers go wrong -- as often happens at other stores Then there's carbon reductions: if companies publicize their progress in reducing quite how much the sum of CO₂ emissions has grown annually since 1975 so much less coal was probably burned coming into dawn this morning e.g. by measuring total amount Scarce Water Also (including essential at whatever cost tourism conservationist Joseph Koon Kooncho points out "If we take care ourselves even if such p' L has been completely worn out under millennia

From a consumer engagement perspective, firms should encourage active participation in CSR projects. This can be achieved by involving customers in decision-making processes, such as voting for the causes a company should support or offering volunteer opportunities through brand-sponsored events. These approaches not only create a sense of ownership among consumers, but also strengthen their loyalty. When consumers feel that they are part of a brand's journey in CSR, they are more likely to continue support it even when provided with competitive alternatives.

For policymakers and regulatory bodies, the study recommends clear guidelines for CSR disclosure and accountability. While some jurisdictions already mandate CSR spending or reporting, there are inconsistencies in how these activities are monitored and presented. The creation of standardized reporting frameworks would let consumers make informed choices while also reducing the risk of "greenwashing," where companies exaggerate their CSR achievements. Regulators can also encourage companies to combine CSR with sustainable development goals (SDGs), so that corporate responsibility and wider national or international development priorities are linked.

Consumers themselves have an important role to play in shaping CSR practices. As awareness of CSR grows, consumers should continue to exert influence through their choices. By choosing brands that embody genuine CSR practices and rejecting those involved in exploitative or destructive activities, consumers can signal firmly their desire for responsible working ethics. Eventually this consumer-driven push compels companies to incorporate CSR more deeply into their operations.

CONCLUSION

As regards consumer behavior The present research suggests a number of avenues for future research. Although the research this time around involved survey-based quantitative data combined with parallel reports on CSR and its effect of business success, Longitudinal studies are a possible next step in order to see not only when but how attitudes to corporate social responsibility change over time.

Cross-cultural comparisons can also throw more light on these questions For example, are consumers in different regions equally conscious of CSR, Do they value all aspects equally or only certain ones particularly highly, such as environmental sustainability in developed economies versus community development in emerging markets.

The present study on the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in driving consumer loyalty and brand equity attests to the increasing importance that businesses in our modern age place on moral conduct. In today 's increasingly competitive global marketplace, a business is no longer judged just by its financial performance or product quality. It is now expected to make a positive contribution to society, show environmental concern and respect for the land.

As a result, this research further demonstrates that CSR has become a key strategy tool It means a big difference to the "face" of consumers, and seems to give breath or take it from a brand. With today's consumers, who are becoming increasingly enlightened and informed about corporate environmental policy, the results of our questionnaire surveys and interviews are extremely telling in the conclusion they reach. Though they buy products themselves the consumers belongs to values, ideal of a brand. Businesses that express Actuarial information and carry out activities under the banner of CSR, engender a higher level of trust Between themselves and those who purchase products. This trust is then translated into repeat purchases, customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth all of which, added together, increase the value of supply to consumers (and hence of their brand).

When CSR and brand construction are combined in this way, it is consistent with the model of brand equity put forward by Aaker who divides equity into several dimensions: e.g. brand loyalty, perceived quality and awareness. Of each of these dimensions, CSR contributes positively. Environmental sustainability initiatives enhances brand associations, ethical labor practices improve perceived quality and customer loyalty programs strengthen community involvement. Hence CSR emerges as both a moral obligation and a business strategy that creates real value for businesses.

Also, company reports and case studies show that leading global organizations investing heavily in CSR generally have stronger consumer loyalty and more resilient brand equity than their immediate competitors, who may neglect such practices. This trend suggests that CSR is no longer an add-on, but rather something that determines corporate reputation and long-term viability--increasingly central. Consumers increasingly want brands that are in harmony with not just the world they see around them, but also those personal values they carry within themselves. As a result, this preference often overrides considerations of price when making purchasing decisions.

In a word, CSR now seems to be regarded as a vital part of competitive advantage rather than merely

philanthropy. As organizations committed to responsible practices, enterprises will not only contribute to the welfare of society and environment, but also build long-term loyalty brand equity. If organizations are to survive in today's changing world economy, it is not an option but a necessity to make CSR part of their core strategy. The future of brand success lies in building trust through responsible behavior, sustainability, and ethical engagement with customers and other stakeholders.

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