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CONSUMER AWARENESS AND FEEDBACK TOWARDS PURCHASE INTENTION OF CSR RELATED PRODUCTS USING SEM

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has presumed a new meaning in today's competitive world. CSR has extended the boundaries of the firms into the society. This article investigates the consumer's awareness and feedback towards purchase intention of CSR related products using primary data. **Design:** This is done by testing the hypothesis using the Structured equation modeling (SEM). In this study CSR awareness, Consumer Feedback, Purchase intention, CSR benefit are the latent variables. In each latent variable there are three or four statements (observed variables) that measures the latent variable. In this study CSR awareness and Consumer feedbacks are the Exogenous latent variable. Purchase intention and CSR benefits are the Endogenous latent variables that are influenced by the model directly or indirectly. **Findings:** As a result of the research analysis, it has been observed that established model has acceptable fit indices. Positive consumer feedback, more awareness on CSR initiatives will lead to Ethical Purchase intention that would benefit the Society and the Organisation. There is a slight difference among male and female consumers with regard to CSR awareness. There is a huge difference among age groups with respect to CSR awareness. **Managerial Implications:** This research would be an insight for managers who facilitate and allocate resources as well as manpower for CSR initiatives. The general view is that the consumers are still not aware about the CSR initiatives taken by the organization. Managers need to identify different modes of communicating their CSR actions to the consumers and emphasis on the consequence that would occur if not done. **Original/value:** This paper examines the awareness and feedback of Consumers towards CSR initiatives that makes them purchase the products associated with CSR. This study also emphasis on the benefits of the CSR initiatives by the MNCs.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, ethical purchase intention, consumer awareness, consumer feedback.

1. INTRODUCTION

The BCSD-World Business Council for Sustainable Development has defined that the main purpose of a business is to provide goods that are affordable and to provide good services to the society which will lead to economic and community development. This purpose is related to the various challenges present in our society, such as climate change, poverty, pollution, unemployment, natural disaster and so on. These problems have to be taken care for the development of the society. The companies cannot focus only on the generation of short-term profit for its shareholders, they have to build up a strong community trust for the company and maintain a healthy environment (Manzoni, J. et al. 2006) by taking corporate social responsibility (CSR). Most of the companies have started presenting new socially responsible initiatives in an attempt to satisfy stakeholders and show that they are concerned about the world (Cravens & Piercy, 2013). This development is seen as one of the most essential corporate developments since the start of the new era (Barnea & Rubin, 2005). The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is vital for attaining growth. (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). India is the first country to enact the mandatory minimum CSR spending law and the rules came into effect from 1 April 2014 (Companies Act, 2013), but still there is low CSR awareness level towards customers. Much needs to be done to change the attitude and behavior of the customers towards CSR initiatives.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONSUMERS AS STAKEHOLDERS

A Company which is socially responsible should initiate the concerns and satisfy the demands of their stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jones, 1995; Maignan, Ferrell & Hult, 1999; Waddock, 2000) who could be affected either directly or indirectly by the activities of the corporate in terms of consumers, merchandiser, shareholders and regulators (Freeman, 1984). What is the reason for the consumers to act in an altruistic way such as monetary contributions towards NGO's, funding or donating for preservation of environment? One reason is to make human experience warmth and uplift their living condition (Andreoni, 1990). Consumers are the most important stakeholders of companies in the process of exchange marketing (Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Hunt & Vitell, 1992). However, there is not enough research on the relationship between the activities of CSR and consumer's preferences, their intentions and their attitudes towards buying the product. Additionally, the research on the responses of consumers towards CSR related products are minimal. This paper highlights the question as to how consumers would respond to the activities of CSR, when would they do this and why would they respond.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

The perspective of the stakeholders is promising to gradually gain increase and now the corporates have come under tremendous pressure to showcase their CSR activities in every country of operation. This effort of the corporates would make them good corporate citizens of the country (Pinkston & Carroll, 1994). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained immense popularity and the term CSR is used by the corporates, practitioners and academicians (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Handelman & Arnold, 1999; Osterhus, 1997). It is highly recommended that the activities of CSR be considered as the entry point to do business in the 21st Century (Altman, 1998). Elaborating on Carroll's (1998), the different phases of corporate citizenship are economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic segments. Lantos (2001, 2002) prefers to reject the Philanthropic CSR but include the economic, legal and ethical components. Corporates are these days obligated towards fulfilling the legal, economic and ethical responsibilities not only for the shareholders but also for the employees, consumers and society on the whole (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

There are similar studies on the literature of marketing and management on the behavior of consumers. The Anglo Saxon writing depicts the behaviour of consumers dating back to the 1970's and most of the literature refers to the writings of Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968) on the social responsible personality of the traditional society. The studies were mostly focused on the demography, then socio graphic and finally psycho graphic areas to find the most appropriate consumer areas where marketing efforts can be taken on a large scale. (Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Brooker, 1976; Kinnear & Taylor, 1973; Kinnear, Taylor & Ah med, 1974; Mayer, 1976; Webster, 1975; Scherhorn & Grunert, 1988). The theory on Attribution states that first individuals are silent spectators of events and later they comment as well as provide a reason and description of the event (Kelley and Michela, 1980). It is the cognitive process through attribution theory that proposes the consumer outcome. Many studies on consumer behavior is attributed with the cognitive function of the information processing process. As an example Dean

(2003) studied the perception of consumers with regard to donations of corporate and interlink between the donations and the social responsibility of the organizations. The behavior and the intention of the people depend on the action of the organizations. There are certain scholars who have tested and found that CSR promotion influences consumer's perception and intention (Becker Olsen et. al, 2006), and that the responses of consumers towards the sponsorship is fit as a part of corporates (Becker Olsen and Simmons, 2002). Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) studied the corporate initiatives and the connection between the initiatives taken by the corporates and its societal effect (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Previous research ascertained the effects of attribution towards corporate social responsibility on the responses of the consumers (Ellen et al., 2000; Dean, 2004). The Researchers have highlighted that the processing of consumer information had benefited the pioneers (Alpert & Kamins, 1995; Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1989; Kardes & Kalyanaram, 1992). The initiatives taken for CSR would encourage the consumers and create a good perception which in turn would improve the morale of the organization (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Gurhan-Canli & Batra, 2004; Berens et. al, 2005; Matute-Vallejo et. al, 2011; Shauki, 2011). Certain researchers have found that CSR acts a product attribute for customers (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Du et al, 2007; Auger et al, 2008; Matute-Vallejo et al, 2011). The practical results of previous researchers have proved that the consumers perception level on CSR has direct and positive effect on the company's evaluation process (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Ricks, 2005). Hence for this study the author has taken Product association and Company Evaluation as Consumer Feedback variable. The purpose of the research is to create a theoretical framework to analyze that some CSR activities result in positive outcomes where as other don't.

3. OBJECTIVES

1. To achieve an understanding of what CSR means to Consumers
2. To examine the consumer feedback towards CSR initiatives

4. HYPOTHESIS FRAMING

Hypothesis was framed to test the objectives. Hypothesis was framed to find if there is relationship between CSR awareness and Purchase intention and CSR Benefit. Hypothesis was also framed to examine the relationship between Consumer feedbacks and Purchase intention as well as Benefit. Alternative hypothesis is formulated to analyse if there could be a difference among age groups with respect to Purchase intention and CSR Benefit. Hypothesis is also formulated to analyse if there could be significant difference among male and female with respect to Purchase intention and CSR Benefit.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

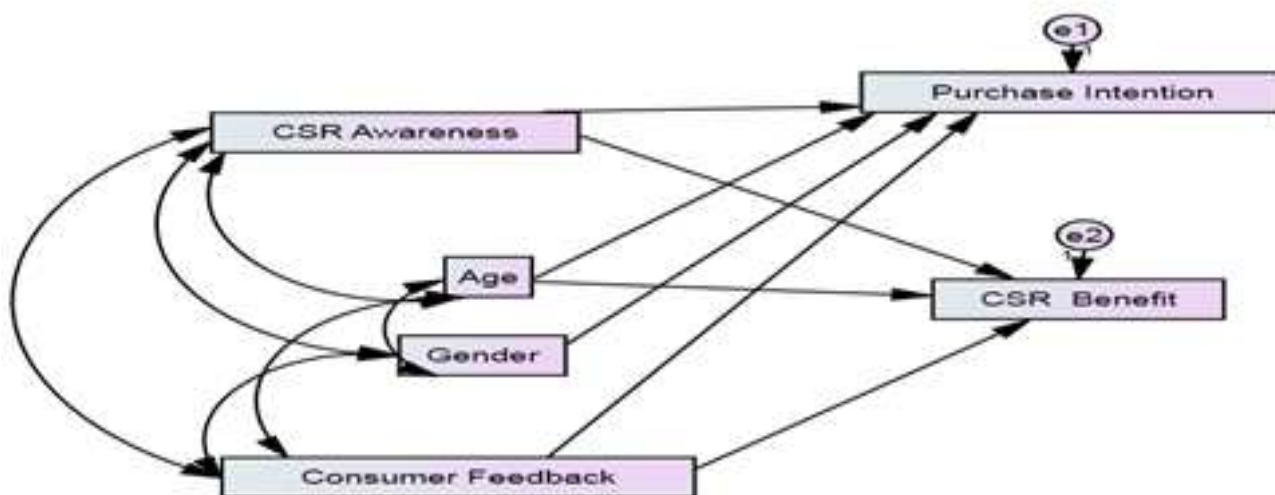
This SEM model is tested using empirical data collected from a sample of 375. Among 375 samples 349 contained usable data. Convenient Sampling is used in this study for collection of data from shopping mall visitors of Chennai metropolitan city. The data was collected in phoenix mall and Forum Vijaya mall which is the largest mall in Chennai. Phoenix mall has a largest retailer super store Big Bazaar. Forum Vijaya mall has SPAR, which is a famous retail Super store. The questionnaire was given to the participants and if any difficulty in reading the author would read and give a clear explanation to the participants of the survey. Once the questionnaire was answered every item of questions were checked.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

SEM analysis is used to analyse the hypothesis (Hancock and Freeman 2001; Kline 2005). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) uses multivariate analyses of data, which evaluates a series of inter-related dependence relationships simultaneously. In the measurement instrument, the variables are classified as latent and observed variables. The variables that are not observed directly are called latent variable. The scores that are measured are called manifest variables or observed variables and variables are the underlying factors of the SEM constructs. In this study CSR awareness, Consumer Feedback, Purchase intention, CSR benefit are the latent variables. Each latent variable there are three or four statements (observed variables) to measure the latent variable. There are Exogenous and Endogenous latent variables. Exogenous latent variables are also named as independent variables. For the study the CSR awareness and Consumer feedbacks are the exogenous latent variable. Purchase intention and CSR benefits are the Endogenous latent variables that are influenced by the model directly or indirectly. The SEM constructs was used to test whether the model is fit using the following measures: CMIN, CMIN/df, RMSEA, RFI,CFI, NFI (normed fit index), and TLI. To determine that the model is fit the acceptable measures of SEM constructs need to be achieved (Hair et al.1998; Kline 2005).

7. FIGURES AND TABLES

FIG 7.1



Source: Author's own model

ONE WAY ANOVA

TABLE 7.2.1: ANOVA					
CSR Awareness					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	580.378	3	193.459	24.570	.000
Within Groups	2716.408	345	7.874		
Total	3296.785	348			

TABLE 7.2.2: MULTIPLE COMPARISONS
Dependent Variable: CSR Awareness

	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	P value
Tukey HSD	18-24	25-34	-1.79267*	0
		35-44	-3.88759*	0
		45 and above	-2.4023	0.131
	25-34	18-24	1.79267*	0
		35-44	-2.09492*	0
		45 and above	-0.60963	0.943
	35-44	18-24	3.88759*	0
		25-34	2.09492*	0
		45 and above	1.48529	0.542
	45 and above	18-24	2.4023	0.131
		25-34	0.60963	0.943
		35-44	-1.48529	0.542

* Significant mean difference at 0.05 level.

The one-way ANOVA has indicated that there is a significant difference among age groups as related to the CSR mean. There is a great difference among all four age groups (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45 and above) as the p value is < 0.05. The F value is (3, 345) = 24.50 p = 0.001. Since the null hypothesis was rejected Post hoc test was used. The researcher had used Post hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) to find the mean score for the age groups. The age group of 35-44 (M= 15.5, SD= 2.4) is slightly different from the age group of 45 and above (M= 14.0, SD=.1) and from 25-34 (M= 13.39). The highest mean difference (3.8759) is between the 18-24 and 35-44 age groups with regards to CSR awareness.

TABLE 7.2.3: LEVENE'S TEST

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
CSR Awareness	Equal variances assumed	10.296	.001	.781	347	.435	.25842
	Equal variances not assumed			.798	342.715	.426	.25842

As the P value (0.001) is < than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5 % level of significance. This shows that there is a slight on CSR awareness between male and female. Based on the Mean score, Male consumers (13.5 %) are slightly better than Male consumers (13.2 %) with regard to awareness of CSR initiatives by the MNCs.

MODEL FIT SUMMARY

TABLE 7.2.4: CHI SQUARE

Model	NPAR	X ²	DF	P	X ² /DF
Default model	19	.189	2	.910	.095
Saturated model	21	.000	0		
Independence model	6	238.797	15	.000	15.920

In SEM comparatively a small chi-square value supports the proposed theoretical model being tested. In this model the value is 0.189 and is small compared to the value of the independence model (238.797). Hence the X² value is good.

Even though the X² seems good, it is also appropriate to check the value of divided by df (Wheaton et al; 1977) as the X² statistics are mostly sensitive to the size of the samples i.e. the model could be rejected as the sample size increases, hence chi-square (X²) divided by df is suggested to be a metric that as a good fit (Bentler and Bonnett, 1980). It is suggested that the metric does not exceed 5 for models with good fit (Bentler, 1989).

For current model, as shown in table was $\frac{X^2}{df} = 0.095$ (X² = 0.189; df = 2), suggesting acceptable model fit as the P value (0.910) is > than 0.5. This suggests that the model is accepted.

The other different model-fit measures are mentioned below:

TABLE 7.2.5

Fit statistics of the Measurement model		
Fit statistic	Recommended	Obtained
X ²	-	0.189
df	-	2
X ² significance	p > 0.5	0.910
X ² /df	< 5.0	0.095
GFI	> 0.90	1.000
AGFI	> 0.90	0.998
NFI	> 0.90	0.999
RFI	> 0.90	0.994
CFI	> 0.90	1.000
TLI	> 0.90	1.061
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.001
RMR	< 0.10	0.006

In the above mentioned table the GFI - Goodness of Fit index is 1.000 which is above the recommended value of 0.90. AGFI - Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index achieved here is 0.998 which is above the recommended value of above 0.90. The values of NFI - The Normal Fit Index, RFI - Relative Fit index, CFI - Comparative Fit index and TLI - Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) are 0.999, 0.994, 1.000, 1.061 respectively which is greater than recommended level of above 0.90. RMSEA is 0.001 and is well below the recommended limit of 0.08. The RMI - Root Mean Square Residual is also well below the recommended limit of 0.10 at 0.006. Here it is interpreted that the model given an explanation on the correlation which is within the average error of 0.084. This can be interpreted as meaning that the model explains the correlation to within an average error of 0.084 (Hu and Bentler, 1990). Hence this model shows an overall acceptable fit. Fit model shows that the alternative hypothesis is accepted which proves that there is a significant relationship between CSR awareness and Purchase Intention as well as CSR benefit.

8. FINDINGS

The findings in this paper contribute to the available literature on CSR awareness and Purchase Intention. The study also brings insight into the available CSR literature. If Consumers are more aware on the CSR initiatives by the MNCs they would showcase ethical Purchase Intention which has been suggested by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). This relationship would occur when the whole sample is used. In this study there is a slight difference among male and female consumers with regards to CSR awareness. There is also a great difference among age groups with regards to CSR awareness. Previous researchers have investigated the

impact of CSR on the consumers buying intention as well as product evaluation with the use of experimental methodology (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Ehrlich & Irwin, 2005). Though these studies establish a causal relationship between variables, the consumers reaction towards CSR in real situation is not evaluated. This research examines the Consumer feedback towards the ethical Purchase Intention and benefits of the CSR initiatives. There is a significant relationship between CSR awareness and Purchase Intention as well as between CSR awareness and Benefits of CSR initiatives. There is an association between Consumer feedbacks to Purchase Intention and CSR benefits. This research may be useful to the top level management who facilitate and allocate CSR initiatives within the organizations. The study reveals that in general consumers are ignorant of the initiatives taken by the organization. As consumers become more aware of ethical behaviors, their motivation is increasingly toward a balance between personal and social benefits (Roy, 1994; Hemingway and MacLagan, 2004). Managers should look for better way to communicate their CSR initiatives and actions towards society. They should stress on the consequences that might occur when these initiatives are not taken.

9. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This indicates that dilemmas and debates about CSR conceptualizations can be resolved with a contract that CSR initiatives always generate positive outcomes irrespective of the initiatives (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2009; Blomgren, 2011). This study examines the relationship between Consumer's demography and Consumer CSR feedbacks. There is a slight difference among male and female consumers with regards to CSR awareness. There exists a major difference among age groups with respect to CSR awareness. This article discovers consumer's responses to CSR and results confirm that there is a positive link between CSR and consumers' Corporate Evaluation (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Ricks, 2005), Product Association (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001) and Purchase Intention (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Berens et al., 2005; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). As Structured Equation model is fit, there exist a positive association between CSR awareness and Purchase Intention and also between CSR awareness and Benefits of CSR initiatives. The association between Consumer feedbacks to Purchase Intention and CSR benefits is strong. If the awareness to CSR increases, the consumers would Purchase the CSR related products more. Both the society and the organization is benefited through CSR initiatives. In addition, spending for CSR initiatives is an investment that will yield good will and result in positive outcomes. (Sirly and Lamertz, 2007; Callan and Thomas, 2009). Future research can be done extending this study into different consumer samples (e.g. students, consumers with different socio-economical status) and ethical contexts (e.g. Other CSR activities done by different industries,) Comparisons can be made within different consumer groups and also CSR initiatives by different industries (eg Automobile, IT/ITES, Manufacturing). Also research can be done on Consumer emotions towards CSR initiatives.

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