

The Impact of Retailer's Corporate Social Responsibility Activities on Customer Loyalty at Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

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Corporate social responsibility is one of the largest and most growing factors that has a potential impact on the organization's performance in the long term. The main purpose of the study was to identify the impact of retailer's corporate social responsibility activities on customer loyalty. The main objective of the study is to determine the relationship between retailers' corporate social responsibility activities and customer loyalty. The quantitative research method was used for this study, and the data was collected randomly from 100 respondents residing in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The several other factors that were examined in this study to gain a better understanding of the impact of corporate social responsibility activities on customer loyalty were corporate reputation, financial benefits, service quality, transparency, and customer loyalty. The results of this study show that people in young and middle ages give the most positive responses. From this study, there is a strong positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty. From this study, it can be seen that people value those companies that constantly engage in social responsibility and meet people's needs and demands by addressing the basic values, beliefs, and morals of society as a whole.



1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of the business models that helps the company to be socially responsible to its various stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, buyers, unions, and employees. CSR activities are usually profitable for the company, and with the help of other philanthropic programs, the company can help the society to benefit. The business world is changing, and different companies are trying different methods to attract and retain loyal customers. In the same way, customers are looking for companies that conduct business in the most ethical way. CSR activities not only benefit the company, but important and helpful in building a good relationship between companies and customers. Socially capable companies have more benefits, better execution, stakeholder loyalty, and better credit offers (Sindhu, 2017). The main objective of the study is to identify whether CSR has an effect on customer loyalty. For organizations, CSR is the main tool they use to demonstrate their commitment to the environment in which they operate. It is known from previous research that customer loyalty can be influenced by a variety of factors, the most important of which are customer service, price, convenience, rewards, and reputation. Carroll and Buccholtz (2003) stated, the company's increasing CSR efforts have led to society's satisfaction with the company, which translates into less involvement in the conflicts that arise for the company. This shows that CSR has helped to increase trust in the company in terms of overall satisfaction and optimal performance. According to Tanggamani et al. (2022), disclosure of CSR practices in public listed companies in Malaysia has recently been made mandatory. Furthermore, good CSR performance directly affects a company's reputation and financial performance. This research also shows that reputation mediates the relationship between CSR and financial performance, especially corporate profitability.

Therefore, the main objective of the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility on customer loyalty, and considering the other research objectives of this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between retailer's corporate social responsibility activities on customer loyalty.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between retailer's corporate reputation on customer loyalty.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between the financial benefits provided by the retailers on customer loyalty.

H₄: There is a positive relationship between service quality provided by the retailers on customer loyalty.

H₅: There is a positive relationship between the transparency provided by the retailers on customer loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The CSR is the business model which helps companies to be socially accountable and to its stakeholders and the public (Chen, 2020). In reality, the term CSR is a broader term, and it can take various forms depending on the company and industry. In order to remain socially responsible, the company first needs to be accountable to itself, considering all the members of the organization, and then to its stakeholders. One thing then comes out of the implementation of CSR is that companies become more of their users and have successfully grown their

businesses which helps them give back to the society. There is no one significant way to practice CSR in the company, but it is seen that many company CSR activities contribute positively to the economy, public, and the environment (Schooley, 2020). CSR has nothing to do with the size of the business, whether it is small, big, or medium. All types and sizes of firms now practice CSR activities in their businesses but the thing is that medium and small businesses will not have that much funding or their efforts are not being publicized as compared to the larger sized firms. Although CSR is also referred to as one of the company's approach towards corporate governance, and this helps in scrutinizing every part of the business like human resources, manufacturing, supply chain, and operations. The reason CSR is important is due to the fact that a company runs its business in society, and if the customer or the community as a whole does not approve of their business, then won't be able to do it successfully, and overall, they will start losing their business (BDC, 2020).

The objective of CSR endeavours is to maximise the industry's long term satisfactory outgrowth on society while minimizing its antagonistic continuations (Petkus & Woodruff, 1992). The norms of the manufacturers and vendors seeking CSR actions are various and entail businesses as diverse as Apple, Converse, Emporio Armani, and the Gap. Google shows responsibility to the habitat by endowing renewable energy sources and enduring offices. The company's CEO, Sundar Pichai, is also recognized for standing up against civic problems such as discrimination. Customer skepticism about CSR investment results more from the inadequacy of consumer awareness of such factual community litigation outcomes than from the buyer's disbelief of the company's intentions for pursuing such action (Singh et al., 2009). Responding to the consumer needs for more CSR activities and tremendous corporate clarity has been crucial in recent years (Saeidi et al., 2015).

2.1 Ethical Responsibility

The ethical responsibility takes into consideration looking into the aspects of welfare of the employees working in the organization and also the employees of the supplier. Now, here the ethical labor practice for the employees of the supplier correlates to the fair usage of products that potentially meets the certification and meet the other standard fair trade terms (Nafi, 2018).

Whereas to remain fair for the employees of the organization directly signifies giving equal wages, equal pay according to the working hours that meets the labor laws, and appropriate living wage compensation (Krohn, 2018). Also, one thing that the company should also focus on is that while providing or implementing labor practices they it should also covers the fact that there will be no discrimination based on caste, religion, race, gender, or age among the employees, and each of the employees will be given equal rights throughout the organization. There are many organizations that ensure this responsibility is properly addressed. For example: Google gives each and every one of its employees a very good salary package based on their experience, skill and ensures that they are meeting labor laws, and also pay serious attention to their employee well-being.

2.2 Environmental Responsibility

Companies the environmental responsibility generally involves two things: limiting the pollution and reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. A superfluity of company have set up their CSR efforts to minimize the environmental pollution. Environmental CSR involves the appraisal of the company's production ordeals to locate wasteful activities and eradicate them from the business structure (Hernick, 2020). Due to the increase in the issues and problems in the environment the company which is taking this issue as a serious concern and taking steps

in order to reduce the or minimize the levels of pollution also increases their chances in gaining good corporate citizenship by benefitting the society.

2.3 Economic Responsibility

This is the field that is interrelated and mainly targets afflicting balance between the environmental, philanthropic, and business practices. The major concerns for the company in this section is are to ensure that they are able to generate profits and grow substantially while benefitting society and the community. Nowadays, consumers are becoming more logical and sensible in approaching a company, and they do believe that profits should not come from the means of expenses (Walters, 2019). One of the other ways corporation handle the economic responsibility is by ensuring and implementing the most efficient practices so as to reduce wasted capital.

2.4 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty greatly signifies the purchasing power or the spending power, and the customer always has a keen eye on the products and services that are being offered at regular prices and help them save money. In other words, Customer loyalty can be defined as the way customers are more likely to do repeat business with the company and prefers their products and services over those of their competitors. For the firm, this is the biggest challenge ensuring that they carry out successful efforts in maintaining and getting repeat purchases from the customers. It is important to note that the firms that are adhering to the boundaries and practicing CSR activities are taking dominant steps in protecting the issues and interests of the current as well as future generations. This is where CSR actually plays a role in attracting a large number of customers, and it is the fact that the customer will potentially give reward to the organization who are taking steps in CSR and through which the society is getting benefits through indirect means. By generating and maintaining buyer integrity, a corporation develops a long-term, mutual beneficial mutual with its customers. A faithful client base outcomes in a maintainable competitive advantage (Mandhachitara & Poolthong, 2011). By enticing faithful customers, administrators can reduce promotion costs and decrease the impact of price sensitivity. Additionally, a high grade of buyer loyalty outcomes in the recommendations through optimistic word-of-mouth. When the customer feels an emotional attachment with the products and services then there are higher chances and the company is withholding their strong position with 306%, and the customer will endorse such products and services of the company to 26% as compared to those customers who cannot make a sense of emotional attachment with the product (Brad Davis, 2019).

2.5 Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is the most important segment of the business and it is an overall estimation of how the company is held by its internal and external stakeholders by considering its past actions. Because of the corporate reputation, there are many decisions that the stakeholder seeks to decide on regarding the transaction process with particular firm (Walsh & Beatty, 2007). Corporate reputation is anticipated as one of the aspects that discern one corporation from another. Also, it is important to note that reputation for any firm is not built in one single day or with minimum efforts but it is a constant and continuous effort made by the firm and the customer or who plays a crucial role in getting the company to achieve the desired brand recognition by passing information from one individual to another and making sure that it flows along the way (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993). In the study done by Cretu and

Brodie (2009), it was stated that the company that enhances its corporate reputation tends to have a stronger impact on customer value and loyalty.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected through a survey using a structured questionnaire because a structured survey limits the number of possible responses. In addition, the questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part contained five demographic questions. The second part contained the main research questions, which were divided into five categories: CSR, corporate reputation, financial benefits, service quality, and transparency. The questionnaire was randomly distributed to 100 participants, and at the end of data collection, the researcher had 100 responses. All participants participated in the survey on their own initiative and discretion and responded with their own knowledge and understanding of the study conducted by the researcher. All questionnaires were distributed at Tesco in Nilai.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographic Data

The demographic data of the respondents, including gender, education, age, race, and marital status, can be used to determine their primary characteristics. Table 1 shows a summary of the description analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	73.0
	Female	27.0
Education	High School	37.0
	Diploma	23.0
	Bachelor's Degree	27.0
	Master	11.0
	PhD	2.0
Age	Below 18 years	15.0
	18-25 years	71.0
	26-35 years	9.0
	36-45 years	3.0
	45 and above	2.0
Race	Malay	69.0
	Chinese	14.0
	Indian	10.0
	Others	7.0
Marital Status	Single	88
	Married	12

Based on this distribution, it can be determined that there were more male than female respondents. Of the 100 participants, the researcher received responses from 73 males and 27 females. From the collected data, it can be seen that the age group of 18 to 25 years old has the highest percentage of responses with 71%, followed by the age group of under 18 years old with 15% of responses. The results of the different age groups show that most of the responses are from the young population. This shows that the young population is more aware of CSR, has social consciousness, and believes in changing the social community (Cheng, 2019). From

the 100 responses and Table 1, it can be seen that most of the responses came from the Malays participants, which accounted for 69% of the responses, followed by the Indian participants, which accounted for 14%, and finally the Chinese participants, which accounted for 10%. Table 1 also shows that 7% of responses were collected from other countries. From the table above, it can be seen that 37% of the responses were from participants who attended high school. The second highest number of responses came from participants who had completed their bachelor's degree (27%), followed by participants who had completed their graduate degree (23% of total responses). Participants who had a master's degree had the lowest percentage, contributing to 11% of the total responses, and participants who had a doctorate had the lowest percentage, contributing only 2%. Finally, the responses indicate that 88% of the participants were single and only 12% were married.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis is important for every study, and it shows the degree to which the research study can produce same, stable, and consistent result. All the items formed for the purpose of collecting the information were analyzed under IBM SPSS 25 for the reliability analysis.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Corporate social responsibility	0.887	5
Corporate reputation	0.778	5
Financial benefits	0.726	5
Service quality	0.745	5
Transparency	0.848	5
Customer loyalty	0.836	5

According to the reliability testing in Table 2, it is noticeable that the Cronbach alpha value for each variable is greater than 0.7. As Pallant (2020) indicated that the perfect score of Cronbach alpha should be closer to 1 or higher than 0.7, and by checking the value of Cronbach alpha of the overall data, which is 0.829, it is very reliable.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Construct	CSR	CR	FBNTS	SQ	TP	CL
Corporate social responsibility	1	.699**	.179	.409**	.629**	.854**
Corporate reputation	.699**	1	.088	.405**	.790**	.690**
Financial benefits	.179	.088	1	.225*	.223*	.184
Service quality	.409**	.405**	.225*	1	.295**	.428**
Transparency	.629**	.790**	.223*	.295**	1	.528**
Customer loyalty	.854**	.690**	.184	.428**	.528**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 3 it is noticed that all five independent variables (Corporate social responsibility, corporate reputation, financial benefits, service quality, and transparency) shows positive Pearson correlation, and their values are: 0.854, 0.690, 0.180, 0.428, and 0.528. By looking at the Pearson correlation values of all the independent variables it can be said that all the variables are positively significant and correlated to the dependent variable.

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 4, the value of R was 0.876, or 88 percent, indicating a high level of prediction. The coefficient of determination for corporate reputation, financial benefits, service quality, and transparency had a value of 0.767 ($R^2=0.0767$), representing 76.7 percent of the variability of customer loyalty. Consequently, 23.3 percent of the variation in this model could be attributed to other factors. The coefficient values were significant predictors of the independent variables.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.876 ^a	.767	.755	.29866

a. Predictors: (Constant), TP, FBNTS, SQ, CSR, CR

b. Dependent variable: Customer loyalty

At last, the coefficients of the multiple regression analysis were conducted, and the result of the multiple regression analysis is shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Coefficient Value

		Coefficients ^a								
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics		
Model		B	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	.076		.273	.277	.782	-.466	.618		
	CSR	.780	.733	10.113	.000	.627	.934	.471	2.121	
	CR	.323	.326	3.477	.001	.139	.508	.282	3.551	
	FBNTS	.039	.062	1.160	.249	-.028	.105	.875	1.143	
	SQ	.052	.048	.840	.403	-.070	.174	.766	1.305	
	TP	.212	.219	2.564	.012	.376	.048	.340	2.944	

a. Dependent Variable: CL

Table 5 shows that financial benefits and Service quality are the two factors that are not significant for the dependent variable, which is Customer loyalty. Also, Corporate social responsibility (0.000; $p \leq .05$), Corporate reputation (0.001; $p \leq .05$) and Transparency (0.012; $p \leq .05$) are the three most influential factors and show high significance on dependent variable. Apart from that, Table 5 indicated that the study was not multicollinear, as the variation inflection factor (VIF) for each of the five independent variables was less than 10, and the tolerance was greater than 0.1.

From this study, it is clear that CSR is gaining its importance in the market, and the companies that associate themselves with such activities seem to have a better impact on their overall performance. In this study, it is clear that retail businesses CSR has a positive impact on customer loyalty. Based on Brad Davis (2019), it shows that the majority of the global market is occupied by millennials, and they take a larger share of spending power, which will nearly reach \$1.4 trillion by 2020. The importance of CSR is increasing rapidly. The social responsibility potentially helps in promoting social awareness, sensitivity, society's values, and business ethics, and from the study, it can be said that the customers demand and value the

contribution of the firm in conducting their business in the most ethical way, and therefore, this makes it easier for them to work and becomes a part of their profitability.

Furthermore, this study clearly shows that corporate reputation has a direct link to customer loyalty. It is a common belief and understanding of the consumer that if a firm has been able to gain a good corporate reputation in society, then it is easier for the customer to choose that firm and rely on their products and services. Also, the studies done by Helm et al. (2010) show that corporate reputation is an antecedent of customer loyalty, and there has been a significant positive relationship between corporate reputation and customer loyalty. Nowadays, companies are using this to remain competitive in the market. The firm usually gives its core attention to building a strong corporate reputation in the society to which it can potentially serve their products and services. By doing so they are making remarkable identifications of their firm in front of customers.

Next, the financial benefits provided by the retail businesses are not quite good enough for people to consider making repeated purchases. There are factors in the financial benefits, like the way retail businesses provide various opportunities to explore, that will influence the customer to come back and do business with the firm, but when we compare the overall determinants of the financial benefits, it shows the least significant relationship customer loyalty. From this, we can say that factors like financial benefits are not a great contributor to the customer's ability to recognize a brand or a company and make a positive impression about them. It has been seen that there is a lot of competition in the market, and for the firm, it is necessary to know that the cost of retaining a customer is usually 6-7 times lower than the acquiring new customer, which may differ depending on the basis of industry the company is serving. Thus, alone financial benefits will not help the company build a positive relationship with its customers, and potentially, there will be fewer chances for the company to get back their old customers. Therefore, it is important for the business to make a strategic approach plan in order to gain maximum customer loyalty, which must be incorporated with other business functions collaboratively.

On the other hand, researchers have found that the second least positively influencing factor in customer loyalty is service quality. There has been a different opinion about the quality of service offered to its customers. There is a certain dimension in this research study regarding the service quality that makes an agreeable contract of the majority of the customers in responding to the ability of the retail businesses to deliver their promises as set by the standards to their customers. This shows there has been a lack of understanding of the core values and attributes retail businesses should focus on. To make a positive impact on the customer through service quality, the firm must realize the quality measures and the general ideology of approaching customers by exceeding their expectations which can leave them fully satisfied with the firm's available service and positively influence their buying decision. This purely signifies that it is the firm's ability to make a quicker response to customer needs, and along with this, the firm should be in a position to hire the best qualified employees to serve the customers. Also, for the firm, it is important to understand that every business activity has an impact on the customer, and one functionality of the business can change the overall attitude of the customer towards the firm.

Finally, the results shows that there is a positive relationship between transparency and customer loyalty. It is common for the firm to use this factor to make elements like trust, reliability, and honesty more meaningful and addressable to the customers. It is important for the firm to understand the competitiveness of the market they are serving and should realize that the majority of customers these days are becoming more information centric and are

looking for reliable and honest information from the brands. From this research study, it is seen that retail businesses at Nilai are able to create a platform whereby they show a complete flexible approach in showing transparency of the firm regarding relevant information that the customer will look for, and through this, it can have a positive impact on their buying decision. For the firm, it is an easier way to build trust among its potential and targeted customers, and according to a study it is found that 34% of the customers fully rely on the companies they trust the most for the business they do with them (Lee, 2020). By analyzing the results obtained from this research, it is found that there are similar results in which the transparency has created a positive impact on customer loyalty. Therefore, overall, the firm has been able to use this as a way to stand out from its competitors and attract more customers, which will help in building long-term relations.

5. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to find out the impact of retailer's CSR activities on customer loyalty. As we find out in this research study, there are firms that are constantly using CSR as a strategy in their business operations. But it also depends on the organization as to how they execute such activities for the customers and from which they can get benefits in the long run. Despite the fact that CSR is an effective approach to making a brand or company more meaningful to its target customers, there are few companies that can actually get positive results from the conduct of such activities in their operations. From the research retail businesses has embraced the practice of CSR activities consistently. Analyzing the retail businesses at Nilai, is greatly connected with the activities of CSR, which overall shows that the firm gives importance to each and every customer and changes their lives by adhering to quality, which is a great factor in making long-term relationships with the customers. The major challenge that came out of carrying out this research was the web-survey because collecting information from geographical region and there are multiple ethnicities and different opinions that can be influenced by culture, background, and different levels of understanding usually poses a possible threat to getting unexpected results from the participants.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

This paper is completed by the contributions of the authors concerning the following tasks: The introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion, and conclusion have been written by SMHA. Supervision by CM. Adding more points, reviewing, editing, proofreading, and providing technical support are done by HMY and SAH. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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