The Role Of Consumer Engagement Via Social Media; The Influence Of Corporate Social Responsibility On Consumer Purchase Intention; An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The study explored the dynamic relationship between consumer engagement through social media and (CSR) initiatives, with a specific focus on understanding how CSR practices impact consumer purchase intention. In the era of interconnected digital platforms, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for brands to engage with their audience. Simultaneously, consumers are increasingly valuing companies that exhibit a commitment to social and environmental responsibility. The quantitative analysis investigates the correlation between consumer engagement metrics on social media platforms and the nature of CSR activities promoted by companies. Furthermore, the study explores the moderating role of corporate transparency and authenticity in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR-related social media engagement. The qualitative component involves an in-depth examination of CSR communication strategies employed by select companies, shedding light on the nuances of messaging and the impact on consumer perceptions. By analyzing the content and tone of CSR-related social media posts, the research [1] aims to uncover patterns that contribute to heightened consumer trust and positive purchase intention. The findings of this study revealed valuable insights for businesses seeking to optimize their social media engagement strategies and leverage CSR initiatives to drive consumer loyalty and purchase behavior. As consumers become more socially conscious, understanding the intricate dynamics of how CSR is communicated and received through social media channels becomes imperative for building sustainable and ethical brand-consumer relationships.

Keywords: *Social Media, CSR, Word of Mouth and Viral Marketing, Purchase Intention Emotional Connections and communication strategies.*

Introduction

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Businesses worldwide are implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives as a strategic approach to address significant challenges [7]. Due to the significant influence of the retail business on societal behavior, recent research has mostly concentrated on the strategies used by corporations, particularly those within the retail sector, to achieve this objective. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial aspect of contemporary corporate operations. Individuals are becoming aware of this matter and anticipate that enterprises will engage in it. Due to the emergence of social media, companies now possess an additional avenue to communicate their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to their clients [11]. The positive impact of perceived[2] corporate social responsibility (PCSR) on purchase intention is somewhat influenced by brand mood. The perception of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) significantly influences the attitudes of Generation Y towards a company and their purchasing behavior[13]. Furthermore, it is evident that several researches have examined age groups as a demographic factor, although they have not investigated the impact of consumers' perspectives across various age groups on the market. This highlights the need of investigating the potential impact of various customer generation groups on the accurate prediction of purchase intent. Consumers with a positive attitude are more likely to convert their favorable perceptions into actions, leading to repeated purchases. Social media's role in this process is multifaceted. Brands can leverage social platforms to announce exclusive CSR-related promotions, loyalty programs, or limited-edition products tied to charitable causes, encouraging frequent engagement and purchases. Additionally, the interactive nature of social media allows companies to directly address consumer inquiries, provide product information, and offer personalized incentives, further influencing the frequency of consumer purchases. Furthermore, the narrative of CSR initiatives on social media can directly impact the perceived value of products or services.

Theoretical framework

(CSR), a robust theoretical framework for understanding consumer engagement via social media is imperative for navigating the complex dynamics of contemporary business communication. This proposed framework encompasses various key elements to comprehensively analyze and interpret the interactions between businesses and consumers in the digital landscape. At its core, the Social Media Engagement Framework comprises four essential components. Firstly, it involves scrutinizing the source of CSR communication, discerning whether it emanates directly from the company, influential individuals, or other stakeholders. The second facet delves into the message itself, scrutinizing the content and framing of CSR messages disseminated across social media channels. Simultaneously, the third element involves investigating the strategic selection of social media platforms as channels for CSR communication. Understanding the distinct characteristics and preferences of the target audience forms the fourth aspect, crucial for gauging the efficacy of the communication process. Embedded within this framework are established consumer engagement theories. The Transactional Model of Communication offers insights into the intricacies of the communication process, exploring how companies encode CSR messages; consumers decode them, and the subsequent feedback loop. Concurrently, the Two-Step Flow Theory comes into play, acknowledging the influential role of opinion leaders and social media influencers in disseminating CSR messages and shaping consumer perceptions. Furthermore, the theoretical underpinning draws from Stakeholder Theory, which stratifies stakeholders into primary and secondary categories. Primary stakeholders, including customers, employees, and local communities, are central to the analysis, as their reactions to CSR initiatives significantly

impact the overall engagement dynamics. Secondary stakeholders, in turn, contribute to the broader ripple effects of CSR communication. By synthesizing these components and theories, this theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine the multifaceted nature of consumer engagement via social media in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility. This holistic approach is instrumental for researchers, businesses, and policymakers seeking a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics within this intersection of social media and CSR.

Figure: 01 Theoretical framework

Source: https://www.google.com/url
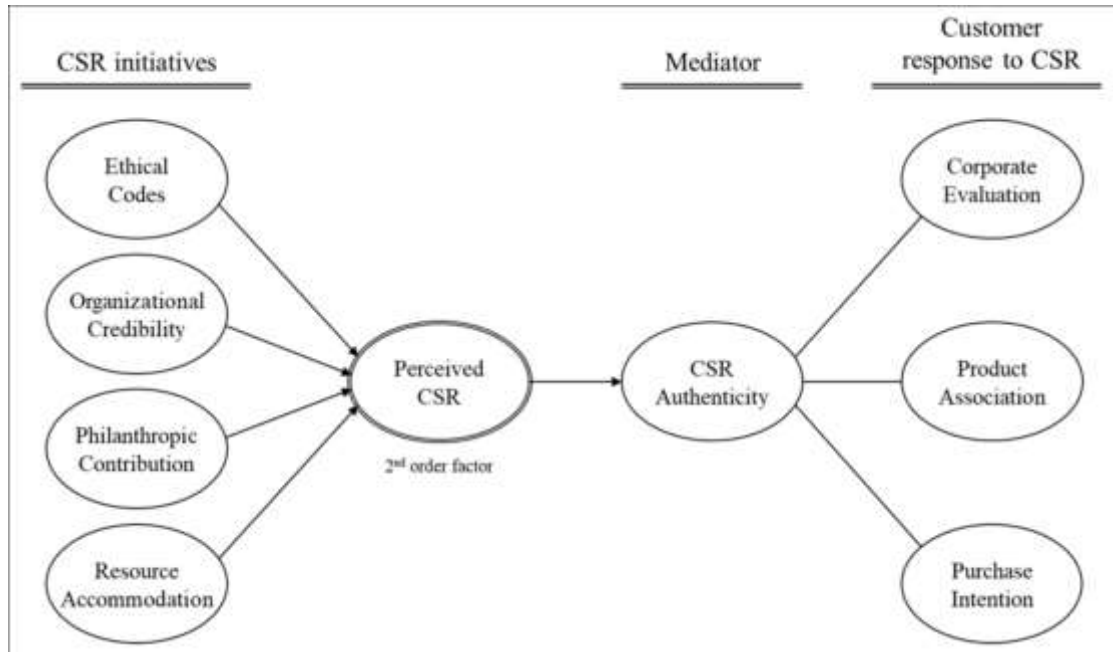
Mediators in the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Attitude toward the company and frequency of purchase act as crucial mediators in the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and consumer behavior. The positive impact of CSR on consumer attitudes toward a company plays a pivotal role in shaping their purchasing decisions. When companies engage in socially responsible practices, it creates a positive perception among consumers, influencing their overall attitude toward the brand. Social media platforms serve as dynamic spaces where companies can effectively communicate their CSR efforts, fostering a positive image and enhancing consumer attitudes.The attitude toward the company serves as a psychological bridge between CSR initiatives and consumer behavior. Social media, being a visual and interactive medium, allows companies to showcase the human side of their CSR initiatives. This can include behind-the-scenes glimpses of charitable activities, employee engagement in community projects, and real-time updates on environmental sustainability efforts. By strategically sharing such content, brands can create an emotional connection with their audience, reinforcing a positive attitude toward the company. Moreover, a positive attitude toward the company cultivated through CSR initiatives contributes to brand loyalty. Social media platforms offer an ongoing channel for companies to engage with their audience, reinforcing positive attitudes, and building a community around shared values. This community aspect, facilitated by social media, contributes to the development of long-term relationships between the brand and its consumers.

Consumers who associate a brand with positive social or environmental impact may be willing to pay a premium for its products. Social media serves as an effective medium to communicate the value proposition associated with CSR, emphasizing the quality, ethical sourcing, and sustainable practices that contribute to the overall appeal of the brand. This, in turn, influences consumers to choose the brand consistently, enhancing the frequency of their purchases. However, it's essential to note that the effectiveness of CSR initiatives in influencing attitudes toward the company and frequency of purchase depends on the authenticity and relevance of these efforts. Misaligned or insincere CSR activities can lead to skepticism and, ultimately, a negative impact on consumer attitudes and behavior. Social media users are quick to identify inconsistencies, making it imperative for companies to ensure that their CSR communications are transparent and genuinely reflect their commitment to responsible practices. Social media acts as a dynamic platform through which companies can effectively communicate their CSR efforts, shaping positive attitudes and encouraging frequent engagement. The interplay of these factors contributes to the overall success of CSR strategies in fostering consumer loyalty, influencing purchasing decisions, and creating a lasting impact on the market. As companies continue to navigate the evolving landscape of consumer expectations, understanding the mediating roles of attitude and purchase frequency becomes essential for building sustainable and socially responsible brand-consumer relationships.

Statement of the Problem

In today's hyper-connected digital landscape, social media has become a pivotal platform for consumer engagement, allowing brands to establish direct and immediate connections with their audience. Simultaneously, there has been a growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR) as consumers increasingly prioritize ethical and socially responsible business practices. Firstly, the extent to which consumer engagement on social media translates into tangible outcomes, such as increased purchase intention, remains unclear. While brands invest substantial resources in cultivating a strong social media presence, the specific mechanisms through which these engagements influence consumer decision-making, particularly in the context of CSR, require deeper exploration. Secondly, the literature lacks a comprehensive understanding of the role and effectiveness of CSR initiatives communicated through social media channels. As companies increasingly integrate CSR into their business strategies, there is a need to examine the nuances of how these initiatives are portrayed and perceived on social media platforms. This includes an assessment of the types of CSR activities that resonate most with consumers and the communication strategies that enhance consumer trust and loyalty. Elements such as corporate transparency and authenticity in CSR messaging may play pivotal roles in shaping consumer perceptions, yet their specific influence requires systematic examination. Addressing these gaps is crucial for businesses seeking to align their marketing and CSR efforts effectively. Understanding the complex dynamics between consumer engagement on social media and the influence of CSR on purchase intention is essential for developing targeted and resonant strategies that not only enhance brand reputation but also drive sustainable consumer loyalty in an era where values and social responsibility play an increasingly prominent role in consumer decision-making.

Research objectives and Design

The quantitative analysis investigates the correlation between consumer engagement metrics on social media platforms (such as likes, shares, comments) and the nature of CSR activities promoted by companies. Furthermore, the study explores the moderating role of corporate transparency and authenticity in enhancing the effectiveness of CSR-related social media

engagement. The qualitative component involves an in-depth examination of CSR communication strategies employed by select companies, shedding light on messaging and the impact on consumer perceptions.

Analysis, Presentation and Results

Opinion of the respondents towards the competency

a. Age group

Consumer engagement via social media is significantly influenced by age group dynamics. Different age cohorts exhibit distinct preferences, behaviors, and communication styles, shaping their interaction with brands on digital platforms. The age is an important factor to influence consumer engagement via social media. Their mean rank for the each statement is compared and the significant different is tested as below.

Table 1: Age group and the opinion on of Consumer Engagement via Social Media

	Statements	Age group	N	Mean Rank	Test	Result
1	Building Trust and Credibility	Young	101	121.02	Chi-Square	2.108
		Middle	76	132.56	df	2
		Old	23	138.43	Sig.	0.078
2	Creating Emotional Connections	Young	101	143.21	Chi-Square	1.167
		Middle	76	134.49	df	2
		Old	23	126.33	Sig.	0.651
3	Enhancing Brand Image	Young	101	154.21	Chi-Square	4.439
		Middle	76	136.08	df	2
		Old	23	129.29	Sig.	0.067
4	Word of Mouth and Viral Marketing	Young	101	145.39	Chi-Square	1.457
		Middle	76	143.67	df	2
		Old	23	139.45	Sig.	0.321
5	Educating and Informing Consumers	Young	101	111.32	Chi-Square	0.198
		Middle	76	137.65	df	2
		Old	23	128.06	Sig.	0.765
6	Feedback and Responsiveness	Young	101	134.36	Chi-Square	3.654
		Middle	76	118.01	df	2
		Old	23	136.31	Sig.	0.156
		Total	200			

The table 1 shows that there is no significant differentiation in the mean ranks of the respondents based on the age group. Consumer Engagement via Social Media is not varying significantly. The calculated Chi-Square values are less than the table values for the degree of freedom 2. The p values are more than 0.05 (not significant at 5% level). Younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, tend to be highly active on social media, embracing visual content, short-form videos, and interactive features. They seek authenticity, personalized experiences, and social causes in the brands they engage with. In contrast, older generations, like Baby Boomers, may prefer more traditional communication channels and value trust, reliability, and product information. Understanding these age-related preferences is crucial for businesses to tailor their social media strategies effectively. By aligning content and engagement methods with the preferences of specific age groups, brands can foster more

meaningful connections, build brand loyalty, and optimize their overall digital marketing efforts.

b.   Gender

The opinion of the respondents towards Consumer Engagement is compared based on their gender. The difference in the mean rank of their opinion is tested with Z values.

Table 2: Gender and the opinion on of Consumer Engagement via Social Media

Statements	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Test	result
Building Trust and Credibility	Male	84	123.28	Z	-0.691
	Female	116	133.34	Sig.	0.389
Creating Emotional Connections	Male	84	146.67	Z	-2.431
	Female	116	134.52	Sig.	0.007*
Enhancing Brand Image	Male	84	129.87	Z	-0.347
	Female	116	145.56	Sig.	0.543
Word of Mouth and Viral Marketing	Male	84	130.34	Z	-0.018
	Female	116	140.65	Sig.	0.763
Educating and Informing Consumers	Male	84	139.32	Z	-0.501
	Female	116	125.29	Sig.	0.568
Feedback and Responsiveness	Male	84	141.65	Z	-0.239
	Female	116	138.10	Sig.	0.767
	Total	200			

The opinion of the respondents towards the opinion on of consumer engagement via social media does not vary according to their gender except the statement Creating Emotional Connections (which has been recognized most by the male respondents at 1% level of significance) and Feedback and Responsiveness. Gender plays a significant role in shaping consumer engagement on social media platforms. Men and women often exhibit different online behaviors, preferences, and expectations, influencing how they interact with brands. Studies suggest that women tend to be more active on social media, participating in discussions, sharing content, and seeking community connections. They may be drawn to content that emphasizes relationships, emotions, and social issues. On the other hand, men might engage more with content related to technology, sports, and factual information. Brands can leverage these insights to tailor their messaging and content strategies to resonate with the specific interests and preferences of each gender. Additionally, the use of visual elements, language tone, and influencer collaborations that align with gender-specific interests can enhance consumer engagement and create a more inclusive online environment. Recognizing and understanding the nuances associated with gender dynamics are crucial for businesses aiming to establish a meaningful and relatable presence on social media platforms.

Discussion

Building trust and credibility are pivotal outcomes of effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and these factors significantly impact consumer purchase intentions. When companies actively engage in socially responsible practices and transparently communicate their commitment to ethical, environmental, or social causes, it fosters a sense of trust among consumers. Transparency in CSR initiatives is a cornerstone for building trust. When brands

openly share information about their CSR activities, detailing the goals, processes, and outcomes, consumers are more likely to perceive the company as genuine and trustworthy. Social media, being a platform that allows real-time updates and direct communication, plays a crucial role in facilitating this transparency. Regularly sharing CSR-related content on social media platforms enables brands to showcase their efforts, answer consumer inquiries, and provide evidence of the positive impact they are making. This transparency creates a bridge of trust between the brand and the consumer, influencing the latter's perception of the company. Moreover, the credibility of a company is bolstered when CSR initiatives align with the brand's values and are consistent with its overall mission. When consumers observe a genuine commitment to social responsibility that complements the core values of the brand, it reinforces the credibility of the company. Social media platforms offer an avenue for brands to not only communicate their CSR endeavors but also to weave these initiatives into the broader narrative of the brand identity. Consistency in messaging and actions across various communication channels, including social media, contributes to a cohesive brand image that resonates with consumers, reinforcing trust and credibility. Another aspect influencing trust is the tangible impact of CSR initiatives. Brands that can demonstrate concrete positive outcomes from their socially responsible actions create a compelling narrative that resonates with consumers. Social media allows for the dissemination of impactful visuals, success stories, and real-time updates, enabling brands to showcase the tangible results of their CSR efforts. This transparency in showcasing results contributes to building trust by providing evidence of the brand's commitment to making a meaningful difference. Consumer perception of a socially responsible brand as trustworthy and credible directly influences their purchase intentions. In a market saturated with choices, consumers often lean towards brands that they perceive as responsible and trustworthy. Trust serves as a crucial factor in the decision-making process, especially in industries where consumers may be skeptical or concerned about ethical practices. The influence of trust and credibility on consumer purchase intentions is further amplified in sectors where competition is intense, and consumers actively seek assurance that their purchases contribute to a positive impact on society or the environment. Furthermore, the influence of trust and credibility extends beyond the immediate consumer. Positive experiences shared on social media, user-generated content, and word-of-mouth recommendations contribute to a brand's reputation. Consumers who trust a brand's commitment to CSR are more likely to share their positive experiences on social platforms, influencing their followers and peers. This organic spread of positive sentiment not only reinforces the brand's credibility but also expands its reach, potentially attracting new consumers who align with the brand's values. Misleading claims can lead to a breach of trust, causing significant damage to a brand's credibility. Social media users are adept at scrutinizing and fact-checking, making it imperative for companies to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of their CSR communications. The impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on consumer purchase intention is intricately linked to the establishment of trust and credibility. Brands that prioritize transparency, align CSR initiatives with their values, and demonstrate tangible positive outcomes foster a relationship of trust with consumers. Social media serves as a powerful tool to communicate these efforts, engage with consumers, and showcase the authenticity of CSR initiatives. As consumers increasingly seek responsible and trustworthy brands, the influence of trust and credibility on purchase intentions becomes a critical factor in shaping the success and sustainability of businesses in the modern marketplace.

Implications

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a crucial factor influencing consumer engagement on social media and, subsequently, shaping consumer purchase intentions. This awareness has led companies to adopt CSR initiatives as a means to connect with their

audience, showcase values beyond profit, and build a positive brand image. One of the key ways CSR influences consumer engagement on social media is through storytelling. Social media platforms provide an ideal space for brands to share their CSR initiatives, showcase their efforts in real-time, and engage with their audience on a personal level. When consumers perceive a brand as socially responsible, it often leads to a more emotional connection, enhancing overall engagement. The implications of CSR on consumer purchase intention extend beyond immediate sales. Brands that prioritize CSR establish long-term relationships with consumers based on shared values. These relationships translate into brand loyalty, with consumers choosing to support socially responsible brands repeatedly. Social media serves as a continuous platform for brands to reinforce their commitment to CSR, update consumers on ongoing initiatives, and showcase the positive impact of their efforts. This consistent reinforcement contributes to a positive brand image, strengthening the brand-consumer relationship and influencing purchase intentions over time.

Conclusion

The authenticity of CSR efforts is paramount in influencing consumer purchase intentions. In the era of social media transparency, consumers are quick to discern whether a brand's CSR initiatives are genuine or merely a marketing ploy. Brands that are authentic in their commitment to CSR and transparent about their impact garner trust and loyalty from consumers. Social media platforms serve as a two-way communication channel, allowing consumers to express their opinions, ask questions, and seek clarification about CSR efforts. Brands that actively engage with their audience in these conversations can build stronger relationships and positively influence purchase intentions. Moreover, CSR initiatives provide content that aligns with the values of socially conscious consumers. Social media users actively seek meaningful and purpose-driven content. Brands that incorporate their CSR activities into their social media content strategy can attract and retain a more engaged audience. Whether it's showcasing sustainability practices, community involvement, or ethical sourcing, CSR-related content adds depth to a brand's online presence and contributes to a positive perception. Influencers who align with brands that share their values regarding CSR can effectively amplify the message to a broader audience. Social media users often trust influencers who are genuine advocates for social and environmental causes, and their endorsement of a brand's CSR initiatives can significantly impact consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. Furthermore, CSR initiatives have the potential to turn customers into brand advocates. When consumers identify with a brand's values and perceive the company as socially responsible, they are more likely to become advocates, spreading positive word-of-mouth on social media. User-generated content, testimonials, and shared experiences related to CSR activities create a ripple effect, reaching a wider audience and influencing the purchase decisions of others within the social network. However, it's essential for brands to be mindful of potential pitfalls associated with CSR communication on social media. Green washing, where a company exaggerates or falsely claims its environmental or social efforts, can lead to severe backlash and damage the brand's credibility. Social media users are quick to expose inconsistencies, and the consequences of misleading CSR communication can be detrimental to consumer trust. The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility on consumer engagement via social media is a multifaceted and dynamic relationship. Brands that genuinely embrace CSR as a core value and effectively communicate their initiatives on social media can foster deeper connections with their audience, positively impact consumer perceptions, and ultimately influence purchase intentions. The power of CSR lies not only in its ability to differentiate a brand in a crowded marketplace but also in its capacity to create a positive societal impact, contributing to a more sustainable and socially responsible business landscape. As consumers continue to prioritize

ethical and purpose-driven consumption, the integration of CSR into social media strategies will play an increasingly pivotal role in shaping the future of consumer-brand interactions.

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