

**The impact of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customers' satisfaction and commitment: the moderator role of corporate image**

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## **The impact of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customers' satisfaction and commitment: the moderator role of corporate image**

### **Abstract**

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This research aims to study the effect of corporate social responsibility on consumer satisfaction and commitment on the one hand and to determine the moderating role of the corporate image on the other hand. A quantitative survey was conducted with a sample of convenience of 300 Tunisian students. The results show that the corporate social responsibility influences positively consumer satisfaction and commitment. Furthermore, this study confirms the moderating role of the corporate image.

**Key Words:** corporate social responsibility, customer satisfaction, customer commitment, corporate image, moderating role

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## **L'impact de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises sur la satisfaction et l'engagement des consommateurs : rôle modérateur de l'image de l'entreprise**

### **Résumé**

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Cette recherche a pour objectif d'étudier l'effet de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises sur la satisfaction et l'engagement des consommateurs d'une part et de déterminer le rôle modérateur de l'image de marque d'autre part. Une enquête quantitative a été menée auprès d'un échantillon de convenance de 300 étudiants tunisiens. Les résultats montrent que la responsabilité sociale des entreprises influence positivement la satisfaction et l'engagement des consommateurs. De plus, cette étude confirme le rôle modérateur de l'image de l'entreprise.

**Mots-clés :** responsabilité sociale des entreprises, satisfaction, engagement, image de l'entreprise, rôle modérateur

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## **Managerial Summary:**

Francés and Tomàs (2019) have defined the CSR as: “*a set of positive and proactive managerial actions that the company carries out in order to identify and meet the consumer’s needs, and in relation to the company’s responsible behavior*”. In fact, corporate social responsibility actions can lead consumers to change their purchasing behavior, to pay more for socially responsible products and to punish deliberately companies deemed irresponsible or that they don’t respond their needs. Duo to the emergence of societal marketing approach and the imperatives of sustainable development, the CSR notion has become a pertinent domain of research.

However, this research analyses how consumers perceive the corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions realized by retailing firms. Our results show that the perceived CSR actions influence positively consumer satisfaction and consumer commitment. Furthermore, findings of our research indicate the positive relationship between the satisfaction and the commitment. Indeed, our research demonstrates the moderating role of corporate image in the relationship between the CSR and consumers ‘responses. The main theoretical implication of this study is to have contributed to a better understanding of the importance of the CSR to boost consumers ‘responses and as well as the integration of corporate image as moderating variable.

In addition, on the managerial level, this present research allows to propose a new operational mode to marketing practitioners and managers to take into account the CSR strategy as a key to enhance and to improve customer satisfaction and customer commitment. Moreover, the CSR may consider an effective tool to maintain a dyadic relationship between companies and consumers. The CSR activities or initiatives tend to rise favorable consumer’s responses which enables to achieve the corporate performance, increased sales and profits. The CSR policy plays an important role in competitive advantage. This study can be also useful for marketers to assess the effect of the satisfaction on customer commitment towards organizations. Besides, the investment in CSR activities is viewed as a strategy for many companies to build a positive corporate image which create the differential advantage. Therefore, customer responses towards CSR activities plumb to growth evaluations of corporate image.

# **The impact of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customers' satisfaction and commitment: the moderator role of corporate image**

## **Introduction:**

Our current society is influenced by the multiplication of social and environmental obstacles (natural disasters, climate change, child labor...) linked to the phenomenon of the globalization of trade and industrial activities which favor the development or the appearance of a postmodern society characterized by the evolution of values, needs or behaviors of consumers. The concerns of ethics, sustainable development and social responsibility have been at the heart of marketing debates in recent years (Hetzl and Volle, 2003). Furthermore, the taking into account of social responsibility in the management of companies has considerably developed in recent years and has highlighted in its normative perspective the duty of organizations to take into consideration environmental and social parameters both in their operations and their long-term development policies (Persais, 2002). Certainly, in an era where the survival and development of companies are constantly threatened by acute competition and an unstable economic, ecological, political and social environment, this organization can no longer consider its objectives without diagnosing the effect of its actions on its customers, society and the environment (Bibb and Kourdi, 2004; Lindgreen, Swaen and Johnston, 2008). Indeed, the corporate social responsibility is an important strategy of the dialogue between companies and their stakeholders (Francés and Tomàs, 2019). The goal of this paper is to identify how the perceived CSR influences on customer satisfaction and customer commitment. As a secondary goal, our research aims to investigate the relationship between the customer satisfaction and the customer commitment. Finally, we determine the moderating role of corporate image.

## **1. Literature Review and hypothesis development:**

### *1.1 Definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):*

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has known since 1990s an increasing managerial interest followed by an important scientific and academic interest. In fact, the name CSR comes from the European Commission and essentially signifies the commitment of organizations to improve society and to protect the environment (Ghali, 2015). Although many researches has focused on defining the concept of the CSR. McWilliams, Siegel and Wright (2006) stipulate that “.... *there is no strong consensus on a definition for CSR*”. Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) define the construct of CSR as: “*a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society*”. However, Van Doorn and al (2017) remind us that: “*CSR can include business practices as diverse as cash donations to charity, equitable treatment of workers, and an environmentally friendly production policy*”. According to Carroll and Shabana (2010), the concept of the CSR can be defined as: “*the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development working with employees, their families, the local community, and society to improve their quality of life, in ways that are both good for business and good for development*”. Within the framework of an instrumental vision, CSR was mainly approached from the angle of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). The CSR notion is conceptualized as a construct demonstrating the relationship between companies and society (D'Aprile and Mannarini, 2012). More precisely, the CSR is all of the company's activities and commitments related to perception of its society or stakeholder's obligations (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Whereas, several studies (Carroll, 1991; Mohr, Webb and Harris, 2001;

De los Salmones, Crespo and Del Bosque, 2005; Hassan and Ibrahim, 2012, Shin and Thai, 2015) have distinguished between four components like economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities. Therefore, the economic dimension refers to companies to achieve productivity, profitability and especially the economic wealth. The legal dimension is concerned about formal rules, regulations, laws and political aspects. The ethical component refers to moral principles, standards, norms and values. While the philanthropic responsibility encompasses voluntary or philanthropic activities allowing to increase the welfare and the development of society.

### 1.2 *CSR and customer satisfaction:*

First of all, from a cognitive perspective, satisfaction is seen as a process of evaluation and comparison. As a result, Oliver (1981) argues that satisfaction is the result of “*a subjective comparison of the product expected and received*”. In the marketing literature, many authors (Fornell and al, 2006; Oh, Hong and Kim, 2013) emphasize that customer satisfaction is a key element of the business strategy that enables long-term profitability. As part of our research, Chung and al (2015), Shin and Thai (2015), Jermisittiparsert and al (2019) stipulate the existence of a positive and significant relationship between the perceived CSR and the customer satisfaction, which allows us to announce the first hypothesis:

## **H 1: The perceived CSR has a positive impact on customer satisfaction**

### 1.3 *CSR and customer commitment:*

Morgan and Hunt (1994) have suggested that the commitment is: “*an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely*”. Depending on Bartikowski and Walsh (2009), social responsibility as a component of corporate reputation focused towards customers is related to commitment. In the same order of ideas, Lacey and Kennett-Hensel (2010) have tested the relationship between the consumer perceived CSR and customers’ commitment. So the following hypothesis is proposed:

## **H 2: The perceived CSR has a positive effect on customer commitment**

### 1.4 *Satisfaction and commitment:*

Previous research has linked consumer satisfaction to consumer commitment (Garbarino and Jonnson, 1999). In fact, more consumers are satisfied to companies, more they are committed in the relationship with organizations (Oliver 1999, Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000, Szymanski and Henard, 2001). In this sense, we expect that customers’ satisfactions are related to customers’ commitment. Due to this reasoning, the following hypothesis is formulated:

## **H 3: Customer’s satisfaction positively influences customer’s commitment**

### 1.5 *The moderating effect of corporate image:*

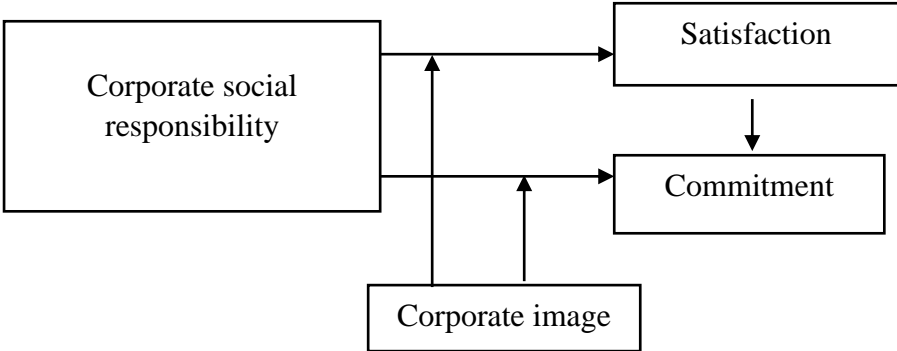
Nguyen (2006) defined the corporate image as: “*consumer's response to total offerings and is related to business name, architecture, variety of products/services, tradition, ideology, and to the impression of quality communicated by each person interacting with the organization*”. As well as, according to Barich and Kotler (1991), the corporate image is an association of impressions and attitudes that people have towards an organization. Gotsi and Wilson (2001) suggested that the concept of corporate image is: (a) the equivalent of reputation; (b), a crucial element within reputation, or (c), a large notion that encloses reputation. Precedent studies exhibit that having a good corporate image and reputation can furnish an organization

a distinctive and a credible aspect, also a more effective form of differentiation and the root of a competitive advantage (Chung and al, 2015). Even though, Chattananon and al (2007) claim that a corporate communications and a societal marketing program can engender favorable consumer attitudes towards corporate image. As a consequence, the hypothesis predicts:

**H 4/a: Corporate image moderates the relationship between the CSR and customer satisfaction**

**H 4/b: Corporate image moderates the relationship between the CSR and customer commitment**

**Figure 1: Conceptual model**



**2. Methodology:**

In order to confirm or refute these hypotheses mentioned above, a quantitative study was carried out with a convenience sample of 300 Tunisian students. The data is collected through a questionnaire which is administrated on line in social networks. This survey includes four constructs such as the perceived CSR, customer satisfaction, customer commitment, corporate image and as well as demographic information. The perceived CSR scale was assessed with five items derived from previous researches by Pérez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2014), Maignan, Ferrell and Ferrell (2005). The customer satisfaction was evaluated with three items drawn from anterior study of Kaur and Soch (2012). Indeed, the customer commitment was estimated using six items derived from the scale of Patterson and Smith (2001). The latter measured a scale of corporate image based on three items used in Ishaq (2012), Yeo, Goh and Tso (2011). All items used in this research were developed on a five-point Likert type scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

**Table 1: Sample profile**

Demographic variables		Frequency	Rate
Gender	Male	98	32.7%
	Female	202	67.3%
Age	Under 20	52	17.3%
	From 20 to 25	185	61.7%
	From 25 to 30	63	21%
Educational level	License	41	13.7%
	Master	186	62%
	PhD student	73	24.3%

### 3. Analysis and Results:

#### 3.1 Exploratory factor analysis:

In order to purify the measures and to test their dimensionality, exploratory factor analysis was adopted through SPSS software. The results from the principal component analysis show that the KMO index indicates an acceptable value close to 1 (CSR= 0.861; customer satisfaction= 0.602; customer commitment= 0.857; corporate image= 0.732). Thus, the item “5” of the scale of customer commitment is eliminated due to the low value of communality. Indeed, the Bartlett’s sphericity test is significant at a risk of 5% which leads to a good factorable solution. The reliability was assessed with the Cronbach alpha which reflects the internal consistency of the items belonging to each construct. In fact, the alpha coefficient for each variable exceeds the recommended level of 0.6 (CSR= 0.907; customer satisfaction= 0.757; customer commitment= 0.900; corporate image= 0.853).

#### 3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis:

The reliability and convergent validity was estimated using a confirmatory factor analysis via AMOS software. The results of CFA show that the reliability was evaluated using the coefficient of Joreskog for the overall constructs are above 0.7. Moreover, the values of convergent validity are acceptable because they are greater than 0.5. (CSR: Rho of Joreskog= 0.798; Pvc= 0.721/ customer satisfaction: Rho of Joreskog= 0.848; Pvc= 0.824/ customer commitment: Rho of Joreskog= 0.914; Pvc= 0.847/ corporate image: Rho of Joreskog= 0.824; Pvc= 0.783).

#### 3.3 Model Fit:

The model fit allows to determine the quality of the theoretical model with empirical data. The results of the adjustment indices are satisfactory. In fact, the parsimony index is considered acceptable CMIN/DF= 3.037 which is less than the recommended level of 5. Indeed, the absolute indices GFI= 0.913; AGFI= 0.972 are greater than 0.9. The residuals RMSEA= 0.063 is less than 0.10 and the RMR is close to 0 (RMR= 0.078). Furthermore, the comparative indices such as CFI= 0.947 and NFI= 0.924 are above 0.9. Thus, our overall model is well adjusted.

### 4. Hypotheses testing:

The structure equation modelling (SEM) leads to test hypothetical relationships. As can be seen in table 2 all the research hypotheses are confirmed and significant because the student test is greater than 1.96. However, we conducted the multi-group analysis (MGA) in the estimation of moderating variable (corporate image). The multi-group analysis allowed comparison between paths assessing of high corporate image (n=210) and low corporate image (n=90). As shown in the table 3, the MGA indicates that the perceived CSR significantly and positively influences consumer’s responses for both low and high corporate image. The path coefficient highlights that the influence of the perceived CSR on customer reactions is very important for highly corporate image ( $\beta=0.880$  /  $\beta=0.965$ ) than the low corporate image ( $\beta=0.431$  /  $\beta=0.581$ ).

**Table 2: Hypothesis testing**

Paths	T value	Result
Customer satisfaction <-----CSR	8.139	Accept
Customer commitment<----- CSR	6.693	Accept
Customer commitment<-----Customer satisfaction	4.831	Accept

**Table 3: Test of the moderating role of corporate image**

Causal relationship	Std.coefficient		T value		Contrast
	Low	High	Low	High	
Customer satisfaction <-----CSR	0.432	0.880	3.809	6.181	Supported
Customer commitment<----- CSR	0.581	0.965	4.505	7.744	Supported

**5. Discussion:**

This research presents the study of CSR as a variable that allows to influence customer responses such as satisfaction and commitment. In addition, the corporate image is added as a moderating variable in the relationship between the customer's perceptions of CSR and consumer's reactions. With regard to the effect of CSR on customer satisfaction is confirmed, which coincides with previous studies likely Chung and al (2015), Shin and Thai (2015), Jermstiparsert and al (2019). Thus, the CSR activities allow to improve the customer satisfaction. In fact, according to Jermstiparsert and al (2019), "*the CSR is one of the important factors to increase the customer satisfaction*". Moreover, the CSR has a positive impact on customer commitment. The results are coherent with anterior researches (Lichenstein, Drumwright and Braig, 2004; Lacey and Kennett-Hensel, 2010). Therefore, the CSR contributions have the ability to boom the customer's commitment level towards the organization. Indeed, the link between customer satisfaction and customer commitment was found positive and significant. This verdict is in accordance with the proposal of Szymanski and Henard (2001). This research attempts that when consumers are satisfied, they are more committed towards organizations. Finally, it was investigated that the corporate image has a moderating role between the perceived CSR and consumer's responses. These findings are consistent with the study of Chung and al (2015). As a consequence, the CSR can ameliorate the customer satisfaction and commitment through corporate image. The corporate image may reinforce the customer responses to a corporate social responsibility.

**Conclusion, contributions, limitations and future researches:**

The concept of CSR has known since a few years a strong infatuation. It is thus frequently used as one of the answers to the problem of sustainable development. In fact, the CSR is a multidisciplinary concept because it has been dealt with in several fields for instance economic, management and marketing. Indeed, the results obtained go in the same direction as those recommended by Chung and al (2015), Shin and Thai (2015) who showed the power of CSR in the formation of consumer responses such as customer satisfaction and customer commitment. The findings have also indicated the moderating role of corporate image. In the light of a theoretical and methodological approach adopted and as well as the results of our research, we will then present the implications, the limits and finally with the future paths of research. The main theoretical implication of this paper is to have contributed to a better knowledge and to deepen understanding of the concept of CSR which provides customer's reactions both satisfaction and commitment and also the insertion of corporate image as a moderating variable. Although, on the managerial level, our study allows us to conclude that the implementation of CSR strategy into companies oriented towards customer's perspective as a relationship marketing tool which leads to the improvement of the satisfaction and commitment of consumers to the organization. Furthermore, the CSR is considered to be a root of competitive advantage due to their ability to influence the consumer's reactions which is one of the principle aim in the domain of marketing. The CSR efforts permit to uphold and to upgrade operational efficiency, firm performance and increased sales. In addition, the corporate image can be a positioning criterion for the company. Despite these theoretical and managerial



contributions, there are some limitations that ought to be presented. First, other variables are not highlighted which will be relevant or useful in our conceptual model. Second, this study has the limitation of taking into account the concept of CSR as a one-dimensional variable. However, these limits may be future researches. In fact, it is wise to take into account other variables in the conceptual model such as trust, attitude, loyalty. This work also opens us another perspective of research into use a multidimensional construct of CSR in order to test the effect of each component on the rest of variables of our research. Lastly, future research should consider that a qualitative study is important to analyze in depth the impact of the perceived CSR on customer satisfaction and commitment.

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## Appendix 1: Scale of constructs

Construct	Authors	Items
<b>CSR</b>	Maignan, Ferrell and Ferrell (2005)  Pérez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The company has established procedures to respond to all consumer social, environmental, ethical, etc., complaints.</li> <li>-The company behaves honestly with consumers.</li> <li>-The company has employees that offer comprehensive social, environmental, ethical, etc., information to consumers about their products or services.</li> <li>-The company uses consumer satisfaction as an indicator to improve the service.</li> <li>- The company is constantly striving to know and meet the social, environmental, ethical, etc., consumers' needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Satisfaction</b>	Kaur and Soch (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The policy of CSR of this firm meets my expectation.</li> <li>-Overall, I am satisfied with CSR activities of this firm.</li> <li>-Overall, I am satisfied with product and service of this firm.</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment</b>	Patterson and Smith (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overall, I am committed to this company.</li> <li>- I will strive to help the company.</li> <li>-A new company would strive more to achieve my goals and be more beneficial for me.</li> <li>- My relationship with the company is something I try to keep indefinitely.</li> <li>- I am patient with the company when it makes a mistake.</li> <li>- I work hard to keep my relationship with the company.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate image</b>	Yeo, Goh and Tso (2011)  Ishaq (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This firm has an overall clean reputation.</li> <li>-This firm is open to consumers.</li> <li>-This firm has good transparency.</li> </ul>