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Exploring the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on Mar- keting Stability

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in enhancing marketing stability, emphasizing its impact on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and competitive advantage. Through a systematic review guided by the PRISMA framework, the study analyzes secondary data from academic articles, industry reports, and real-world case studies, including companies such as Starbucks, Patagonia, and The Body Shop. The research is grounded in key CSR theories, including Stakeholder Theory and the Triple Bottom Line, to explore how ethical and sustainable practices influence business performance.

The findings reveal that genuine CSR efforts are critical in fostering stronger relationships with socially conscious consumers, driving loyalty, and establishing long-term market stability. However, challenges such as greenwashing and diverse stakeholder expectations highlight the need for transparency and alignment with organizational values. By integrating CSR into strategic marketing initiatives, businesses can not only meet societal demands but also achieve sustainable growth. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of CSR's importance in modern marketing and provides practical insights for organizations aiming to implement effective and ethical CSR strategies.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Marketing Stability, Consumer Trust, Brand Loyalty, Sustainable Business Practices, Stakeholder Theory, Triple Bottom Line, Greenwashing, Ethical Marketing, Strategic CSR Integration

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be explained as incorporating societal concerns into business operations as an organizational management ethos that evolved from the pure profit-making business model. Traditionally, CSR referred to the practice where companies undertook philanthropic activities, often viewed more as acts of benevolence than strategic management initiatives (Coelho et al., 2020, p.1536). Over the last few decades, this idea has expanded significantly, requiring ethics to be at the heart of business practices.

Based on Hajibaba et al. (2019, p.1394), this evolution reflects emerging global social awareness, where business organizations are seen not just as trading entities but as social institutions with critical responsibilities toward their societies and environments. Consequently, CSR is integral to organizational reputation, brand value, and resilience, particularly in the marketing mix, where strategic alignment with social expectations is pivotal in fostering trust and loyalty.

The transformation of CSR reflects changing customer and shareholder awareness alongside increasing demands for businesses to conduct operations responsibly and sustainably. Historically, firms often focused solely on financial performance, neglecting their activities' social and ecological consequences (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p.4). However, contemporary consumers, investors, and stakeholders expect companies to demonstrate ethical behaviour and sustainable practices. Ethical consumerism has amplified this shift, with consumers favouring firms that adopt environmentally friendly approaches and demonstrate social accountability (Kutaula et al., 2024, p.652).

Moreover, the investment community has compounded this trend by emphasizing the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics. Based on Paruzel et al. (2020), companies with strong CSR strategies are expected to be more safeguarded and likely to create sustainable value (p. 4). These shifts underline CSR's importance as a marketing tool for addressing evolving market demands and meeting the expectations of a socially aware buyer.

Nevertheless, integrating CSR with marketing strategies poses significant challenges. According to Mu and Lee (2023, p.2), one such challenge lies in reconciling profit motives with ethical imperatives, which sometimes results in "greenwashing." This practice, where companies claim environmental responsibility without substantive actions, undermines trust and exposes marketing to risks threatening its stability (Ghitti et al., 2023, p.906). Modern consumers, who are increasingly discerning, can differentiate between authentic and superficial CSR efforts, and this awareness can either strengthen or erode brand trust.

Moreover, the global nature of modern business introduces additional complexities, such as navigating cultural, social, and legal differences when implementing CSR strategies across diverse markets. Companies must address these variations carefully to maintain authenticity and relevance. The problem with failing to meet these varied requirements is that companies compromise customer appreciation besides deteriorating brand value. Managers must also be aware of the growing attention from regulatory agencies and non-governmental organizations, enhancing the importance of CSR records' transparency and compliance with the standard.

Awareness of these dependencies and the need to develop a broad conception of how CSR can be integrated into the company's marketing initiatives is crucial for companies or entrepreneurs who look for long-term success in the constantly shifting business environment where societal concerns are increasingly prominent. By effectively addressing these challenges, organizations can establish strong consumer trust, improve market stability, and position themselves as leaders in socially conscious business practices.

1.2 Problem Statement

Corporate Social Responsibility in the context of marketing is one of the strategic and analytical activities that help companies interested in making marketing strategies more stable through sustainable management of corporate social responsibility as a value, not just a temporary trend but a constant form of businesses' behaviour. According to Ramzan et al. (2021), who consider CSR useful for branding and customer attachment, CSR management offers drawbacks that reduce the value (p. 3). One of these significant challenges concerns the need for CSR programs to be more valid and credible. As Latapí et al. (2019, p.5) explain, this misalignment creates a disconnection between expectations and the products. It impairs the consumers' trust in the brand, thus threatening the stability of the position achieved by the brand on the market. However, the paradox of today's consumer is that consumers are much more knowledgeable and can differentiate between a mere PR stunt and a real commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Another substantial challenge comes from the diversity of stakeholders with incompatible expectations. For instance, while one group of stakeholders may prioritize a company's environmental impact, another may emphasize labour practices or financial returns (Zhang & Liu, 2023). For instance, whereas one public member cared most about the effects of automobiles on the environment, another may have cared most about the car's contribution to human rights causes or fair use of labour.

While investors may be interested in CSR programs' contribution to company financial returns overall, regulatory agencies may easily be interested in compliance with the law (Ramzan et al., 2021, p. 6). This diversity of expectations complicates the

formulation of CSR strategies that simultaneously address all stakeholder concerns. Moreover, the absence of standard metrics for evaluating CSR outcomes compounds the difficulty of implementation. Businesses need help to measure and communicate the effectiveness of their initiatives, which is critical for transparency and accountability. This lack of norms often leads to inconsistency in CSR reporting, further undermining trust.

The ever-changing and unpredictable nature of social, economic, and environmental contexts amplifies the challenge. According to Masud et al. (2019), this is not ideal for business organizations, especially when comparing the consistency of their CSR endeavours and marketing turbulence from one time to the next. For example, a particular type of CSR activity can create a positive response in one market or, at some time, may have an inverse effect in another market or at another time because of the variation in culture, income level, or perceived image.

Moreover, Ramzan et al. (2021) add that digital and social media have increased pressure on implementing CSR activities, as people can quickly point out and condemn businesses for their failures or inconsistencies. It added that exposure and responsibility require more attention and disclosure from companies regarding CSR since any mistake results in more harm and a decline in consumers' trust (Macca et al., 2024, p. 3; Paruzel et al., 2020). Thus, this research aims to establish the context and dynamics of the relationship between CSR and marketing stability concerning the requisite CSR best practices and the issues that CSR-implementing companies face.

1.3 Research Objectives

Consequently, this study aims to investigate the relationship between CSR and marketing stability, focusing on the ethical aspect of CSR and its implications for sustainable business performance. This research seeks to establish and analyse the relationships between CSR implementation and business marketing efforts, emphasizing the subsequent positive effects on the business's image, customer retention, and stability.

To meet this objective, the research identifies and assesses the factors that affect the outcomes of CSR activities, emphasizing the alignment of factors that can improve

brand image and trust among consumers and the general stability of the market. Moreover, the study analyses the business ethics that may be valued within the sphere of CSR, such as the problem of greenwashing, the issue of achieving both profitability and being a socially responsible company, and the problem of meeting the various stakeholders' expectations.

Another significant goal of this study is to evaluate the impact of CSR on society, specifically on environmental, social, and ethical responsibilities. The study shows how reasonable CSR efforts can help attain these other aims of society, hence emphasizing CSR as a management tool beyond profit-making. Thus, positive CSR consequences underline businesses as change-makers and direct attention to harmonizing business practices with societal values and requirements. This focus on societal benefits is significant considering the increasing calls for companies to generate profits for stakeholders and act socially and environmentally responsibly.

Finally, this research offers managerial implications to businesses to help them understand how to address the concerns of CSR integration into marketing strategies. Some of the issues that are important in this perspective include determining how to avoid the pitfalls of 'window dressing' in CSR implementation, establishing and using appropriate measures of effectiveness for CSR programs, and making sure that the overall CSR strategies fully reflect the essence of the company's values and planned vision. In this regard, the research hopes to present these objectives and make valuable contributions to the existing knowledge in the CSR and marketing literature areas. Thus, the study intends to contribute to the ongoing discussion on advancing the field by providing practical recommendations for complex and frequently contentious issues related to CSR and marketing strategies.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study defines the connection between CSR and marketing stability. Its principles are drawn from foundational CSR theories: Stakeholder Theory, Triple Bottom Line, and Social Contract Theory (see Figure 1). These theories collectively illustrate how CSR impacts consumers, brands, and marketing communication effectiveness, offering a basis for understanding its role in stabilizing markets.

CSR provides a lens through which the ethical dimensions of business practices can be examined, offering systematic insights into their influence on marketing stability. This framework facilitates an exploration of social concerns relevant to ethical business practices while underscoring CSR's significance in ensuring marketplace reliability. By situating CSR as a strategic marketing instrument, the framework positions it as integral to creating viable and sustainable business models that resonate with stakeholder expectations.

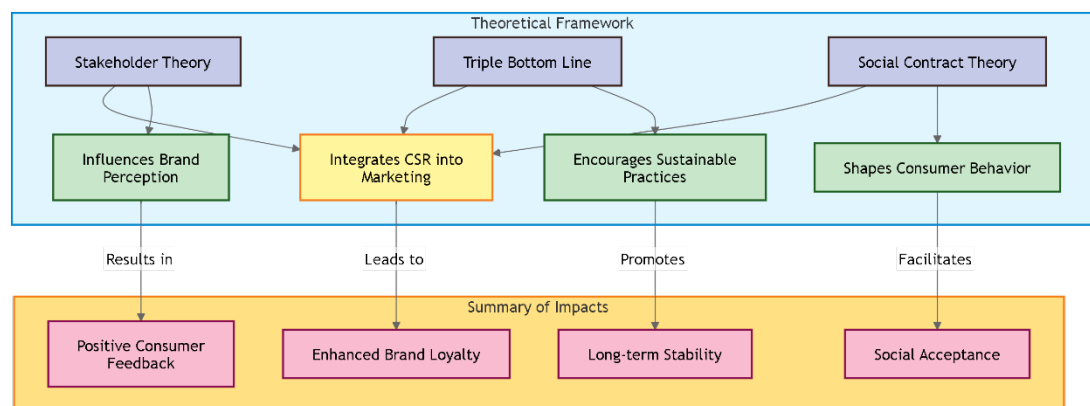


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Each theory contributes uniquely to understanding CSR's relationship with brand perception, consumer loyalty, and market stability. Stakeholder Theory focuses on balancing diverse stakeholder needs, emphasizing the importance of trust-building efforts like TOMS' One-for-One model and Starbucks' ethical sourcing programs. Triple Bottom-Line Theory emphasises the correlation of economic, social, and environmental objectives, as demonstrated by Patagonia's sustainability work and IKEA's circular economy strategy. Social Contract Theory stresses businesses' ethical responsibilities, as demonstrated by Ben & Jerry's activism in addressing social justice issues.

Fundamentally, the theoretical framework also supports CSR as a dynamic and evolving concept. As consumers become more aware of greenwashing risks, transparency and authenticity become key. To overcome these challenges, CSR initiatives are conducted to guarantee that these marketing activities do not simply maintain or stagnate but also improve consumer trust and loyalty. Integrating these theories enables the framework to capture a systemic view of how CSR affects marketing stability in competitive markets.

1.5 Research Questions

These are the research questions that this study aims to answer that help to respond to the key questions that relate to CSR and stability of marketing:

1. How does the integration of CSR initiatives impact marketing stability?
2. How do consumer perceptions and behaviours toward CSR initiatives affect marketing stability?

These research questions are intended to capture the complex and nuanced nature of the interplay between CSR and marketing stability with consideration of the ethical considerations involved in CSR. Through response, the study seeks to give a detailed and broad perspective on how businesses can enhance CSR to foster long-term success while using an evaluation of the ethical issues likely to be encountered in the process.

The questions also aim to uncover other related aspects of CSR; in particular, the concept attempts to call for ethical business practices to augment marketing stability while positively impacting society. Thus, the study draws attention to how CSR may serve as an influential force in charting a business's ethical and profitable future. Answering the above research questions, the study aims to provide notable information on how companies can effectively incorporate CSR in their marketing strategies, growth, and development and help enrich the pool of knowledge regarding CSR's significance in current business.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The theoretical implication of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the relationship between CSR and marketing stability for business organizations, marketing professionals, and policymakers. By addressing this relationship, the study advances knowledge about CSR's essence and its sustainable integration with strategic marketing management to achieve organizational sustainability goals. It also explores the ethical dimensions of CSR, offering insights into how ethical practices can foster marketing stability. These findings provide actionable guidelines for firms seeking to effectively incorporate CSR into their marketing strategies.

Moreover, this research study is expected to contribute to understanding the role played by the consumer perspectives and actions on the influence of CSR on marketing stability. To understand the consumers' perception regarding CSR activities, the proposed study relies on the expertise and insights of marketers, making them feel valued and integral to the study. This understanding helps businesses adopt suitable CSR communication strategies that create value for consumers, enhance business reputation, and support market stability.

Furthermore, this study is significant for extending the theoretical and empirical knowledge of CSR and marketing from the ethical perspective of CSR implementation. The research also helps fill the gaps in the existing literature on CSR by identifying the key issues that firms are likely to face in practice while trying to adopt CSR initiatives that would benefit society while enhancing organizational value.

This contribution is precious today as increased emphasis is being placed on companies to demonstrate their commitment to the social responsibilities of the business enterprise. Overall, this research intends to support practical CSR applications, help fill the identified gap and contribute to the current knowledge of the relationship between CSR and marketing stability. It also gives businesses a fundamental framework to address CSR's ethical and consumer-related concerns and realize sustainable marketing benefits.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature review section highlights the state of past studies about CSR and its effects on marketing stability. This review aims to map the current research within the existing literature and highlight themes, missed opportunities, and controversies pertinent to the questions addressed in this thesis. This chapter starts with the historical development of CSR. Then, it looks at the place of CSR in the current business environment before focusing on the relationship between CSR and marketing stability.

2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, initiated by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, avers that people classify themselves and others, as well as their surroundings, into different groups. This classification influences their behaviour and self-perception, as individuals seek a positive self-image through group affiliation (Paruzel et al., 2020, p. 4). This concept is more applicable in CSR as any firm that extends its core organizational values to match those of the consumer makes them feel they are part of a community. When a brand's CSR activities align with consumers' social identities, it enhances consumer attitudes and strengthens customer loyalty (Huo et al., 2022, p. 4712).

Paruzel et al. (2020) delve deeper into the role of CSR in fostering a shared ideological identity between companies and their stakeholders. For instance, when a company actively champions environmental causes, it fosters a sense of belonging among consumers who identify with these values. This emotional connection increases consumer trust and makes stakeholders feel more connected and involved. Importantly, in the face of negative publicity, this shared identity can inspire loyal consumers to defend the brand (Paruzel et al., 2020, p. 5).

Furthermore, Social Identity Theory's influence on employee engagement is extended by well-communicated CSR initiatives. These initiatives play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging among employees, instilling a strong sense of purpose and

mission, and significantly boosting their morale and motivation. As noted by Chen et al. (2021, p. 8276), 'Employees often take pride in their organizations, and their identification with their firm's prosocial activities enhances their self-esteem.' This sense of belonging leads employees to view their job as an extension of their social identity, fostering a deep understanding of purpose and positively impacting job performance and retention (Chen et al., 2021, p. 8278).

The benefits of Social Identity Theory for marketing stability are significant. A solid social identity between a brand and its consumers encourages customer loyalty, advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth (Du et al., 2022, p. 4). This dynamic creates a stable base of repeat customers, reducing the need for constant customer acquisition efforts and promoting long-term marketing stability. Therefore, integrating Social Identity Theory into CSR strategies is beneficial and essential for sustainable business practices. Companies should carefully design their CSR initiatives to resonate with the social values and identities of their consumers, employees, and other stakeholders, ensuring authenticity and alignment to maximize positive outcomes.

2.2 Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL), developed by John Elkington in 1994, goes beyond the bottom-line perspective. It considers the social and environmental bottom lines to explain a business's performance. As Mendes et al. (2021, p. 244) explain, the TBL framework encourages companies to evaluate their performance based on three pillars: revenue, consumers, and the environment. This approach to CSR focuses on balance, for it claims that a business must be financially prosperous, socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable. Proponents of the TBL approach reported that organizations can use the TBL to back up culture and the environmental area while simultaneously generating profit (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 247; Nogueira et al., 2023, p. 3).

When using the TBL framework associated with the concept of stability, it becomes clear that economic interests should not dominate over social and environmental ones – these are important to designing more sustainable and prolonged types of development. The first element of economic value has been retained; under the TBL

framework, a firm's financial performance must be sustainable rather than deleterious to social and environmental systems. Through this approach, firms understand that strategic management of the three routes causes substantial positive impacts on overall brand equity, consumer loyalty and employee satisfaction (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 247). Hence, such notions as fair employment practices and community participation should be introduced into company and competitive models to harmonize sustainable business management with economic and social goals.

The environmental component of the TBL leads organisations to request less severe effects on the environment and supports the improvement of environmental conservation. Nogueira et al. (2023) observe that organisational stakeholders who use TBL are inclined to be trailblazers in efficiently utilising input in business production, for instance, reductions in wastage and production of green products (p. 3). Adopting these measures helps corporations' fit regulation requirements and customer demands and create leaders in the inimitable crusade for a sustainable world. Sustainability goes beyond considering what needs to be done to minimise possible punitive measures; it means embracing the notion that protecting natural resources is actually in society's best interest as well as the business organisations that depend on them.

The third is social performance, which looks at the business's impact on the entities it contacts, workers, consumers, and society. The last of these is the stakeholder dimension of TBL, which requires those companies to act ethically, ensure that their workers have access to resources to help them achieve good health and ensure that the standard of living of all communities where the companies operate is raised. Mendes et al. (2021, p. 248) thus assert that organizations that integrate social values into the firm's strategy gain the support of stakeholders, as the company trusts them. Besides the positive impact on the company's image, the focus on the social aspects helps to optimize the work process and create a dedicated and efficient team, which is essential for sustainable development.

Applying the TBL perspective assists organizations in operating in the global environment of contemporary business that is drilled with the demand for ethically appropriate actions from consumers, investors, and other regulators. By integrating the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, organizations can improve the organizational

capital and the stakeholder value beyond the recorded profit. In agreement with authors such as Mendes et al. (2021, p. 247) and Nogueira et al. (2023, p. 4), this integrated perspective for the management of a company enables organizations to compete effectively in a challenging environment in which sustainability and ethical principles cannot and should not be ignored as sources of competitiveness. Despite coming up with a new perspective of what it means to be a successful business, the TBL approach charters a course for the company, and it can help spread wealth or success more aptly in the social and environmental systems.

The practice of TBL is not just a theoretical concept but a vital tool in the modern business environment, and this version emphasizes its practical relevance (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 247). Adopting the TBL approach supports businesses in balancing economic, social, and environmental goals, ensuring long-term sustainability and competitive advantage (Nogueira et al., 2023, p. 3). This perspective demonstrates that the TBL is not merely about compliance or theoretical ideals but is essential for businesses looking to operate responsibly and successfully in today's global market (Masud et al., 2019, p. 456).

2.3 Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory, which stems from the philosophical works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, proposes that businesses, much like individuals, operate within the framework of societal consent. This theory suggests that companies have a social responsibility to act in ways that benefit the public. Seabright et al. (2021) explain that corporations, like individuals, rely on the approval and acceptance of the public to maintain their operations and legitimacy. As a result, they are morally obligated to engage in activities that promote the public's well-being (Seabright et al., 2021, p. 3). Based on this premise, increased focus is placed on the expectation that the various corporations should go out of their way and work hard to ensure that they generate worthwhile returns in social and environmental areas of concern that benefit the different stakeholder groups.

Looking at CSR, the social contract theory focuses on the concept of legal maximizing and the need for business entities to seek what is legally and socially responsible and

appropriate. For instance, the business has to check that it is not causing harm to the environment while dealing with workers treat them fairly. When companies adhere to ethical and legal requirements, they earn credibility from their constituents, which makes them stable in their market operations. This trust, in return, leads to repeatedly patronizing customers and investors, which is essential for the sustainability of businesses in the long run (Seabright et al., 2021, p. 3).

Furthermore, the social contract theory underscores the reciprocal relationship between corporations and society. When companies fulfil their social responsibilities, they gain public support, which can translate into competitive advantages. Businesses that commit to ethical practices often enjoy higher consumer trust, resulting in positive consumer attitudes and behaviours. These consumer attitudes directly influence a company's market stability, as customers will likely remain loyal to brands, they perceive as responsible and trustworthy the theory is important in practical marketing strategies since it reveals how compliance with ethical obligations affects the buyer's behaviour, brand loyalty, and marketing stability (Seabright et al., 2021, p. 4).

Therefore, adopting the social contract theory into CSR measures seeks to bring the business actions into parity with the ethical and legal means and enhance the market stance of a firm. Acknowledging and adapting to the change in stakeholder expectations provides a good foundation for businesses to apply CSR to create and sustain market trust. Closeness with societal values guarantees that companies hold relevancy within the existing market structure, supporting competition within their brand in a socially sensitive market.

2.4 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory was proposed by R. Edward Freeman in 1984 and has since been considered a core of CSR and business ethics. In this theory, firms have many responsibilities beyond the financial rewards of their shareholders. According to Valentinov and Chia (2022, p.762), firms are accountable to other important stakeholder groups such as employees, customers, suppliers, Indigenous people, and the natural

environment. According to the Stakeholder Theory on CSR, the firm ought to create value out of these groups, not only for the shareholders.

Paying attention to the significant number of needs and interests of various stakeholders would help businesses find a balance between making money and meeting social and ethical obligations. This balanced approach, in turn, helps improve a company's image and build a loyal base of customers, boosting profitability and sustainability accordingly. Valentinov & Chia (2022, p. 769) asserted that it makes profits and sustainability achievable.

2.5 CSR as a Strategic Marketing Tool

CSR has evolved from an ethical compliance value to one that adds value to businesses and is highly relevant to strategic marketing. When companies incorporate CSR into fundamental marketing initiatives, organisations improve the brand reputation of products, increase customer allegiance and stand out in an overcrowded market (Latapi et al., 2019, p. 3). This conjunction of CSR with marketing is not a mere celebration of how CSR can help create a reputation but an appeal to which the marketing stimuli can point to a new generation audience, proposing a relevant value proposition that could stay for the long term.

For instance, companies like Patagonia and Toms have successfully embedded CSR within their marketing mix, positioning themselves as socially responsible entities and attracting consumers who prioritize sustainability. Their commitment to environmental and social causes, reflected in their product lines and marketing campaigns, has built a loyal customer base, enhanced brand equity, and expanded market reach (Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2).

More importantly, CSR acts as insurance coverage within the marketing strategy. Du et al. (2022) argue that market risk management is more manageable for companies that use CSR as a marketing strategy. They are typically better placed to deal with market risks like consumer boycotts or negative publicity. This kind of CSR

strategically averts the negative impacts of these risks and sustains customer trust and loyalty, which is crucial for marketing stability (Du et al., 2022, p. 4). This helps to calm the audience down about the function of CSR as a protective mechanism in marketing.

Integrating CSR into marketing transcends enhancing a company's reputation and harmonizes with broader societal values and sustainability principles. For instance, as Mendes et al. (2021) contend, CSR initiatives that mirror ethical consumerism are likely to cement long-term customer loyalty and stabilize a brand's market position as consumers increasingly inclined towards brands that mirror their values (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 248).

Therefore, CSR should be leveraged entirely for strategic marketing using sustainability theories such as the TBL and the stakeholder theory. The Triple Bottom Line underlines that the monetary gain and the bottom lines of society and the natural environment should also be considered. By contrast, the Stakeholder Theory argues that the focus should be on the interests of all the company's stakeholders. These theories prove that CSR initiatives must embrace financial performance and social and environmental objectives to gain a wide range of effective and sustainable marketing results (Valentinov & Chia, 2022, p. 769). In this way, the approaches developed effectively respond to the requirements for creating marketing initiatives that are suitable and genuine in their business application and view socially beneficial consequences.

2.6 CSR in Modern Business Practices

While earlier CSR was only part of the organisational practice, with the sustained increase in competition, CSR is now an organisational necessity or strength more than a business improvement plan. Today, business organisations operate in environments that warrant legitimacy from consumers, employees, investors and other regulatory agencies, which call for high ethical behaviour and accountability (Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2; Masud et al., 2019, p. 3). Such pressure has made many firms incorporate CSR into their businesses, where it can be used as a tool for compliance and competitive advantage.

One practical approach business adopt is aligning their CSR policies with their organizational vision and objectives. By integrating CSR into their core strategic decision-making processes, companies can systematically address social, environmental, and ethical concerns (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7; Zhang & Liu, 2023, p. 4). For instance, many organizations set measurable goals related to environmental sustainability, equal employment opportunities, and prohibiting sweatshop labour from demonstrating their commitment.

In reality, these strategic CSR plans incorporate developing and monitoring the achievement of ecological conservation and ethical management objectives. While organisations achieve these targets, they integrate their business model and marketing with societal standards, promoting constant operation. Such integration points out that CSR is not only an idea but a reality since it represents an essential aspect that determines the future stability and the view of contemporary organisations by the public. Alongside these policies, CSR also integrates into the company's marketing mix.

It also entails publicizing their CSR activities using communication avenues to support their brand image and set themselves apart from the rest of the market. For example, organizations with a reputation for being involved in relevant CSR activities ensure that they incorporate these in their commercial messages, social media accounts, and company profiles (Macca et al., 2024, p. 3). It not only assists in formulating a favourable brand image within the market but also assists in developing trust and commitment from the buyers, who are more sensitive toward the ethical aspects of the brands they wish to purchase.

Additionally, CSR has become one of the decision criteria for attracting an investor due to the research that shows investors prefer to invest in companies with high CSR rates (Du et al., 2022, p. 4; Masud et al., 2019, p. 6). It has developed a new concept for investment called socially responsible investment, where the investor arrives at the investment decision considering the gains it would cause in society. In such a case, enterprises possessing an effective CSR system are more essential, bearing financial risks and do not negatively influence economic sustainability in the end.

2.7 Connection between CSR and Marketing Stability

Examining the relationship between CSR and marketing stability will establish the following interconnections and relationships. CSR can significantly affect marketing stability because it equates to better brand identity, customer confidence, and devotion. Today's Customers are more careful when choosing the brands to support and want them to have social responsibilities at their workplaces (Kutaula et al., 2024, p. 660). Thus, those companies implementing CSR into their marketing mix will undoubtedly attain a permanent position in the market.

Improving brand image is the first CSR area that helps support marketing stability. Consumers continually place their trust and patronage in these firms, which is vital for the stability of the markets (Coelho et al., 2020, p.1540). Consumers and the public are more likely to have positive attitudes towards firms and products considered socially responsible. Also, CSR can assist companies in standing out in a saturated market where competition is increasing regularly. Companies should promote their CSR activities because consumers who are conscious about the products they buy are selective and tend to prefer environment-friendly firms (Kutaula et al., 2024, p. 660; Masud et al., 2019, p. 3). Such differentiation is often strategic and can be helpful in customer acquisition and retention, resulting in a competitive edge for the companies. Besides, they can drive customer loyalty and advocacy through brand identification facilitated by CSR activities.

However, the idea of CSR's influence on marketing stability has some hitch. Companies' CSR activities must be authentic and reflect the company's values. Otherwise, companies may be accused of greenwashing, meaning consumers are made to believe that firms are undertaking adequate CSR activities (Ghitti et al., 2023, p. 908; Mu & Lee, 2023, p. 13). It can be very damaging to brand image and problematic for marketing consistency. For this reason, the authors encourage companies to be more open and genuine in their CSR practices while avoiding greenwashing.

2.8 Definition of Marketing Stability

Marketing stability is the ability of a company to run effective marketing strategies over time, insensitive to external or internal market fluctuations. This concept is crucial in developing sustainable engagement with customers, building brand trust, and recognising the competitive edge (Gong et al., 2023). Marketing stability elements include customer loyalty, brand reputation, adaptability to shifts in the market, and the alignment of long-term business goals. Accordingly, its safeguard effect provides robust and trust-based relationships between businesses and their stakeholders to ensure they face volatile market dynamics.

Marketing stability assumes a dimensional character in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It stresses business and marketing ethics as a foundation for consumer trust and continuity. As Resnik (2020) suggests integrating CSR into marketing serves as an identification criterion and a brand strength booster amidst heightened competition. Nevertheless, although there are always risks of greenwashing and scepticism, companies demonstrating a genuine commitment to CSR can mitigate these risks and ensure a stable and loyal customer base.

In this research paper, marketing stability is defined as a firm's capacity to maintain its market position and brand value using consistent and ethical marketing practices. That includes using CSR initiatives as a strategic tool to reconcile positions while also conforming to societal values and stakeholder expectations. This study draws from secondary data to examine the theoretical and functional foundations of marketing stability, concentrating on how companies accomplish this via CSR-motivated methods.

2.9 Consumer Perceptions and Behaviours towards CSR Initiatives

CSR goals and people's feelings should be considered to understand the possible effectiveness of the CSR strategy for providing stability in the marketing field. Social consciousness is gradually rising among consumers, who are likely to be associated with products and brands that embrace ethical ideals (Hajibaba et al., 2019). This shift in consumer behaviour means that CSR has become relevant in consumers' decision-

making as they prefer to purchase from firms with a socially responsible culture (Gomes et al., 2023, p. 2).

As the findings have revealed, current consumers may not only appreciate and purchase brands with an initiative-taking CSR approach but also expect these brands to openly disclose their CSR activities and their positive impact on society and the environment (Kutaula et al., 2024, p. 660; Macca et al., 2024, p. 12). For instance, consumers are more likely to buy from firms that seek to embrace environmentally friendly activities, firms that support fair trade practices, or those with social responsibility activities. Such trust and support can lead to higher sales and customer loyalty, along with better word of mouth, thus beneficial for marketing stability.

However, it is worth noting that consumer perceptions of CSR can also be coloured by scepticism or cynicism. Other consumers may be sceptical and less likely to trust the information provided by companies regarding their CSR because they regard such information as a mere gimmick. Even more so, this scepticism can be exacerbated by countless examples of greenwashing when the companies are first accused of overstating or outright lying about their CSR activities (Coelho et al., 2020, p.1536). Mitigating this risk requires genuine CSR activities aligned with the organization's vision and mission and implemented consistently.

Nevertheless, consumers' attitudes toward organizations' CSR activities are not equally positive and may differ depending on cultural, demographic, and personal factors. For instance, research has established that millennials and Gen Z consumers are willing to pay a premium for products that support CSR programs compared to older generations (Gomes et al., 2023, p. 4; Oke et al., 2023, p. 5). In the same way, some consumers in geographically defined markets may attach more importance to certain CSR aspects or issues, be they environmental or human rights. Perceiving these shifts in the consumer's demeanour is crucial for companies to address their target markets and create marketing sustainability through CSR.

2.10 Ethical Issues in CSR

Ethical concerns are inseparable components of CSR and are one of the critical factors in the CSR–marketing stability linkage. CSR ethical issues involve a broad spectrum of aspects, such as governance, workplace relations, environmental responsibilities, and reporting. All these are crucial to enabling CSR initiatives to be efficient and appropriate in addressing social justice and environmental conservation (Fink et al., 2022, p. 620).

A critical aspect of CSR is the phenomenon of false advertising, or greenwashing, in which a company may give off the impression of caring for the exact issues it ignores or is only slightly working on. Greenwashing is a deceptive marketing practice that falsely perceives a company's environmental responsibility. It not only negatively impacts CSR efforts but also brings into question the authenticity of CSR initiatives and decreases consumer trust, which, in turn, puts the marketing stability of a company at stake (Ghitti et al., 2023, p. 908; Mu & Lee, 2023, p. 13). Thus, the companies are advised to be sincere and truthful in their CSR activities, and their actions should be responsible for any harm done.

Another critical ethical dilemma that ties up CSR is the best way to harmonize profit maximization objectives with social and ecological accountability. CSR strategies are not just a method for corporations to contribute to their profitability and competitiveness but also a powerful tool for contributing to the common good (Latapí et al., 2019, p. 7; Paruzel et al., 2020, p. 7). When the promotional activity also has the effect of selling some product, there can be conflicts of interest between revenue generation and ethical guidelines. Managers are in a dilemma trying to manage this tension while ensuring their CSR efforts are sincere rather than just a marketing strategy. Moreover, ethical concerns with CSR implementation involve stakeholders like employees, suppliers, and the public.

Thus, companies need to be more strategic about their CSR activities. It is not just about ticking boxes or meeting regulations but about accommodating the needs and rights of all stakeholders (Kutaula et al., 2024, p. 663). These include fair wages and

working conditions, diverse and inclusive policies, and sustainable procurement. Solving these ethical questions is a matter of choice and necessity. It's what helps CSR become more stable and contribute to improvements in its marketing.

3 METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This research undertakes an all-round methodological approach aimed at estimating the effect of CSR on marketing stability. Using only secondary data makes the research systematic, guaranteeing that findings are accurate and replicable. Secondary data sources were selected for their ability to provide rich, diverse insights into CSR practices across industries, with a specific focus on the case companies Patagonia, TOMS, Ben & Jerry's, Starbucks, and IKEA.

These firms were chosen because of the commendable CSR and relevant best practices in their marketing that inform stability evaluations. Chasing such a systematically developed flow, based on the PRISMA guidelines, which contain Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, provides for the methodological stringency of the study (Silva, 2024, p. 4). The PRISMA framework enhances the process of finding specific articles based on the specified criteria.

The initial data collection phase involved a systematic search of databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR. Keywords including 'CSR practices,' 'brand loyalty,' 'consumer trust,' 'marketing stability,' and 'corporate ethics' were used in the search. Filters were set to limit articles to peer-reviewed journals, case studies, and industry reports published between 2019 and 2024. These parameters enabled the accumulation of recent, high-quality studies relevant to the research objectives. To optimize the search, Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to link score words, increasing the search's specificity (MacFarlane et al., 2022). Thus, 150 articles were found during the first step of the literature search.

Both inclusion and exclusion criteria were established in detail to involve the high relevance and quality of the sources involved. Only those articles featured CSR's role in building brand loyalty and/or consumer trust and/or marketing stability. Case

companies were given preference where studies for research were concerned to ensure that research objectives were met. On the other hand, articles were rejected if insufficient methodological information was reported, if they had not been published in scientific journals, or if the articles discussed other themes related to CSR unrelated to the consumer effect, such as employee satisfaction. This selection process is visually summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram below:

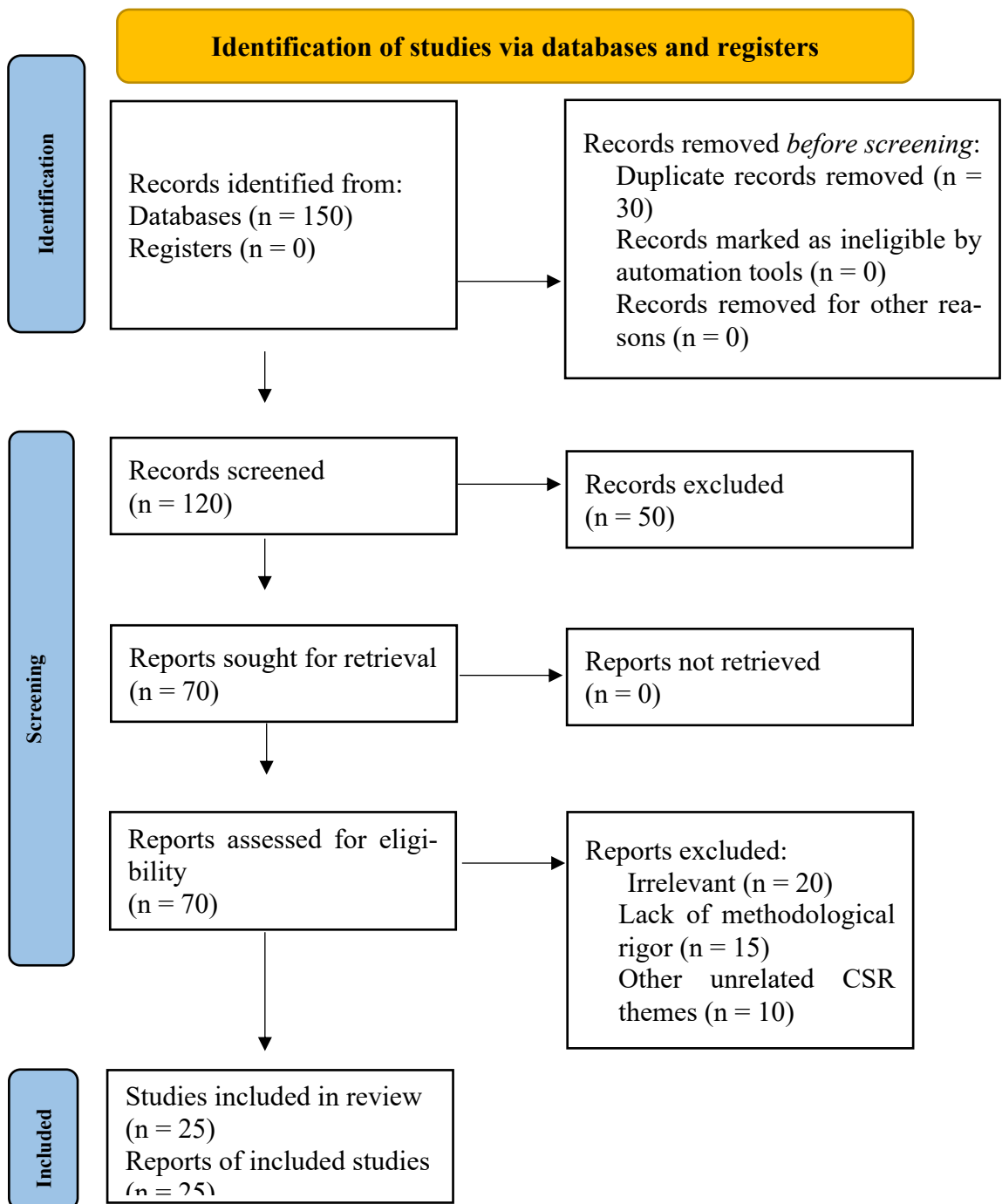


Figure 2. PRISMA flowchart diagram showing the steps in identification, selection, and inclusion of the articles.

To provide a clearer understanding of the studies included, Table 1 summarizes the key articles selected for analysis. This table highlights the type of study, key findings, and their relevance to the research objectives.

Author(s)	Title	Type of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Research
Affandi & Ramadini (2023)	The Body Shop's CSR strategy using reusable packaging	Case Study	Highlights CSV's role in sustainable business practices and customer engagement.	Explores environmental CSR strategies and customer loyalty in retail.
Chen, C.-C., et al. (2021)	Role of CSR and corporate image during crises	Empirical Study	Demonstrates CSR's importance in enhancing corporate image and trust during crises.	Links CSR to marketing stability and consumer trust.
Coelho, R., Jayantilal, S., & Ferreira, J. J. (2023)	Social responsibility's impact on financial performance	Literature Review	Finds a positive correlation between CSR initiatives and financial outcomes.	Highlights CSR's potential for profitability and stability.
Deep, G. (2023)	Influence of CSR on consumer behavior	Empirical Study	Discusses how CSR activities shape consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions.	Highlights ethical business practices' role in fostering trust and loyalty.
Faizah, S. I., & Husaeni, U. A. (2019)	Economic empowerment of poor women in Indonesia	Case Study	Explores CSR initiatives targeting poverty alleviation and economic inclusion.	Highlights broader social benefits of CSR.
Fink, M., et al. (2022)	Ethical orientation and research misconduct in business research	Theoretical Study	Examines autonomy and competition's implications for ethical behavior.	Highlights ethical dimensions of CSR in research.
Ghanbarpour, T., & Gustafsson, A. (2022)	CSR and financial gains from a customer perspective	Empirical Study	Demonstrates CSR's contribution to satisfaction,	Supports CSR's role in enhancing customer satisfaction

			loyalty, and competitive-ness.	and financial perfor-mance.
Ghitti, M., Gianfrate, G., & Palma, L. (2023)	Impact of greenwash-ing on CSR	Empiri-cal Study	Explores how misleading CSR claims undermine trust and credibility.	Highlights the im-portance of transpar-ency in CSR commu-nications.
Gomes, S., et al. (2023)	Gen Z's willingness to pay for green prod-ucts	Empiri-cal Study	Discusses engaging envi-ronmentally conscious consumers through CSR.	Highlights opportu-nities for businesses targeting Gen Z.
Hajibaba, H., et al. (2019)	Improving stability of market segmentation analysis	Method-ological Study	Provides insights into techniques enhancing con-sumer segment under-standing.	Offers data analysis techniques applicable to CSR research.
Huo, C., et al. (2022)	CSR's impact on sus-tainable purchase in-tentions	Empiri-cal Study	Models the influence of CSR on brand trust, loy-alty, and sustainable pur-chasing.	Demonstrates CSR's role in influencing consumer behavior.
Ismail, H., et al. (2021)	Application of GRI principles in CSR disclosure	Litera-ture Re-view	Examines frameworks for measuring CSR transpar-ency and accountability.	Provides tools for evaluating CSR com-munication.
Kharabsheh, B., et al. (2023)	Trends and directions in CSR research	Theoret-ical Study	Identifies emerging themes and challenges in CSR.	Offers comprehen-sive insights into evolving CSR prac-tices.
Kutaula, S., et al. (2024)	Ethical consumerism in emerging markets	Empiri-cal Study	Explores CSR initiatives' appeal to ethically con-scious consumers.	Enhances brand repu-tation and loyalty in emerging markets.
Latapí Agudelo, M. A., et al. (2019)	History and evolution of CSR	Litera-ture Re-view	Traces CSR's conceptual and practical development.	Provides historical context for modern CSR strategies.

Lee, J.-E., & Yang, Y. S. (2022)	CSR performance feedback	Empirical Study	Highlights feedback's role in improving CSR initiatives.	Demonstrates mechanisms for enhancing CSR effectiveness.
Macca, L. S., et al. (2024)	Consumer engagement with CSR on social media	Empirical Study	Examines Facebook and Instagram's roles in promoting CSR.	Demonstrates social media's impact on consumer engagement.
Mahalakshmi, S., et al. (2024)	IKEA's eco-friendly marketing efforts	Case Study	Highlights sustainability's importance in marketing.	Demonstrates CSR's role in enhancing brand reputation.
Mahmood, A., & Bashir, J. (2020)	Transforming brand reputation into brand equity	Empirical Study	Explores CSR's role in building brand equity and competitive advantage.	Highlights CSR's financial and reputational benefits.
Oke, A., et al. (2023)	Millennials' willingness to pay for ethical services	Empirical Study	Explores CSR's influence on consumer loyalty in hospitality.	Highlights CSR's impact on purchasing behavior in hospitality.
Ramzan, M., et al. (2021)	Effects of CSR on financial performance in banking	Empirical Study	Provides evidence of CSR's financial benefits and increased inclusion.	Demonstrates CSR's financial impacts in banking.
Shin, S., et al. (2023)	CSR assurance messages in social media marketing	Empirical Study	Explores assurance messages' impact on consumer trust and engagement.	Highlights CSR's role in enhancing trust via social media.
Wai, C. K., et al. (2021)	Implications of CSR failures in crises	Case Study	Examines Volkswagen's diesel dupe crisis and CSR's role in crisis management.	Highlights genuine CSR's importance in
Zhang & Liu (2023)	The impact of corporate social responsibility on financial performance and brand value	Empirical Study	Demonstrates CSR's positive impact on financial performance and brand value.	Supports business case for CSR initiatives.

Table 1: Summary of Key Articles Included in the Analysis

3.1 Web-Based Searches and Interviews

On top of the PRISMA-guided database search, supplementary web-based searches were made to obtain more information and resources such as interviews and expert opinions. These searches were carried out using CSR-related terms such as CSR activities, case companies, and industry-specific practices. The website-based approach broadened the resources by including direct perspectives from corporate managers and practitioners, which led to a more accurate view of CSR and its impact. The following table summarizes the additional sources obtained through web searches and interviews

Author(s)	Title	Publication	Summary	Relevance
Balch, O. (2023, October 24)	Patagonia CEO on leading a company with a Cause	Raconteur	Highlights Patagonia's commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility.	Provides insights into the integration of cause-driven missions into business operations.
Beard, A. (2021, January 13)	Why Ben & Jerry's speaks out	Harvard Business Review	Examines Ben & Jerry's approach to social activism and its alignment with business strategy.	Highlights corporate advocacy's role in building consumer trust and loyalty.
Behrman, G. (2023, October 17)	ESG Next: An Interview with Starbucks' Michael Kabori	NationSwell	Discusses Starbucks' ESG initiatives, including ethical sourcing and community impact.	Provides practical examples of CSR implementation in large corporations.
Ben & Jerry's (2023, January 26)	Take action for climate justice	Ben & Jerry's	Details Ben & Jerry's climate justice initiatives and advocacy for environmental policies.	Demonstrates integration of CSR into brand identity and consumer engagement.
Birch, K. (2024, March 1)	Interview: IKEA's Ingka Group on becoming a circular business	Sustainability Magazine	Discusses IKEA's transition to a circular business model,	Highlights practical implementation of circular economy principles in CSR strategies.

			emphasizing sustainability strategies.	
IKEA (2024)	Making 100% renewable electricity a reality	Inter IKEA Systems	Details IKEA's commitment to renewable electricity in operations, reducing its carbon footprint.	Illustrates environmental sustainability as part of CSR strategy.
McGrath, K. (2021, August 29)	Shoes for social impact: An interview with TOMS' CSO	Global Research and Consulting	Explores TOMS' buy-one-give-one model and its impact on communities and consumer perception.	Demonstrates how social impact drives brand loyalty and responsibility.
Starbucks Corporation (2020, February 28)	C.A.F.E. practices: Starbucks approach to ethically sourcing coffee	Starbucks Stories	Highlights Starbucks' ethical sourcing and sustainable production practices.	Demonstrates the role of ethical sourcing in building consumer trust and a responsible brand.
The Interview (2020, March 17)	Corporate Social Responsibility Professional interview	Offbeat Career Interviews	Features a CSR professional discussing challenges and benefits of CSR initiatives.	Provides professional perspectives on CSR's strategic importance and benefits.
TOMS (2024)	Our story	TOMS	Highlights TOMS' social impact initiatives and history of addressing social issues.	Demonstrates CSR's integration into business practices and reputation building.

Table 2: Summary of Key Resources from Web-Based Searches

3.2 Data Analysis

NVivo was used to perform thematic analysis of the derived qualitative data collected from secondary sources. This process started with the exportation of data into NVivo, where all the textual content was arranged for analysis congruency (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7). Using open coding, the data were analyzed and divided into

segments that were then categorized into codes, including Authenticity, Transparency, and Consumer trust. The categories were subjected to axial coding to determine interconnections and relationships, leading to more extensive dimensions.

From the tools that the software provided, such as word frequency and text search queries, the actual thematic contents that emerged in the patients' narratives were sought to improve the analysis level. The identified themes were then used to develop thematic maps to illustrate the themes' connection to CSR practices. This approach ensured that the authors had solid foundations as a systematic and replicable framework to examine the impact of CSR activities on marketing stability and consumer opinion.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

To these, the study kept with ethical considerations by ensuring all secondary data sources were well accredited to the original data source. Proprietary or sensitive information that would violate the ethical guidelines governing secondary research were not used. Data reporting was also done with great emphasis on the ability of the reader to cross-check the results independently. Moreover, gender bias was controlled, and efforts were made to collect data from various sources to reduce the probability of dominance of any particular gender perspective. These measures all worked to reassert the credibility and ethical integrity of the research initiative.

Overall, this research methodology fits well with its theoretical foundation, which amalgamates stakeholder theory, the triple bottom line, and social contract theory. Consistent with these theoretical underpinnings, the systematic secondary data analysis focuses on the strategic function of CSR in market stabilization. Thus, with themes such as consumer trust and brand loyalty, this methodology aligns with the research questions and objectives, thereby providing for congruent narrative throughout the present paper.

4 DISCUSSION ON CSR'S ROLE IN ENHANCING MARKETING STABILITY

CSR activities have increased the pace and become a determining influence on brand loyalty differentiation and sustenance in the current market. As consumers become more sensitive to social issues, their purchasing decisions reflect their perceptions of firms' ethical and social conduct (Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2). Corporate social responsibilities can significantly contribute to brand identity, as they leave an optimistic brand image consumers are willing to resonate with (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020, p. 4).

For example, a firm is environmentally responsible by ensuring it reduces its carbon footprint or runs a campaign to recycle its products because customers consider these issues necessary to patronise the firm. The phenomenon also creates a positive perception of the company and its products, igniting loyalty and long-term patronage (Kharabsheh et al., 2023, p. 5; Zhang & Liu, 2023, p. 9). Furthermore, given the tsunami of information available to the consumer and the consumer's increased awareness of corporate actions, CSR is a chief factor that can set a brand apart. CSR's emotional attachment is even more vital as it creates a positive attitudinal and evaluative response, and an attachment based on shared values and ethical concerns.

CSR influence on brand loyalty can be illustrated in the following ways. One case is The Body Shop, a cosmetics company that bases its behaviour on ethical considerations. The company does not use animals to test its products and, in some cases, buys some of the materials used in its production through fair trade. It strengthens the assumption that through the implementation of a robust CSR policy within the company, there is a respondent loyalist population with similar beliefs and an affinity for these policies (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7). For example, while the customers of The Body Shop buy the organisation's products, they also act as brand ambassadors, which suggests a high level of brand loyalty that arises from value convergence (Af-fandi & Ramadini, 2023, p. 5).

Likewise, such firms as Patagonia that promote environmental protection have helped create a customer base by ensuring that their business models reflect the environmental issues of their target market. According to Cohune (2019), using sustainable materials in producing products and the company's 'Worn Wear' campaign to reuse garments make sense to consumers who care about the environment (p. 5). Not only do these efforts help to strengthen customer relationships, but they also contribute to promoting brand image through responsible environmental management (Cohune, 2019, p. 16). By demonstrating what CSR can achieve, these examples stress how it can improve consumers' identification and, thus, brand loyalty.

As presented in Table 3, the results compare the influence of different CSR activities on brand loyalty within different industries. For instance, consumers highly trust Body Shop and Starbucks regarding their ethical and socially responsible purchasing approach, while Patagonia and IKEA associated sustainable measures create brand loyalty. Both TOMS and Ben & Jerry's are more invested in advocacy, thus appealing to social justice and charitable strengthening loyalty. By reviewing these examples, one can appreciate how varied approaches to CSR advance customer allegiance and brand development across all industries.

Company	CSR Initiative	Industry	Observed Impact on Brand Loyalty	Supporting Sources
The Body Shop	Cruelty-Free Products, Fair Trade Sourcing	Cosmetics	Strong brand loyalty due to alignment with ethical values.	(Affandi & Ramadini, 2023)
Patagonia	Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Practices	Apparel	A commitment to environmental causes drives high brand loyalty.	(Cohune, 2019)
TOMS	One-for-One Campaign (Shoes for the Needy)	Footwear	Enhanced brand loyalty through social impact and charitable giving.	(Hessekiel, 2024); (McGrath, 2021)
Ben & Jerry's	Advocacy on Social Issues (Climate Change, Racial Justice)	Food & Beverage	Strong consumer loyalty is driven by alignment with social justice values.	(Huo et al., 2022)
Starbucks	Ethical Sourcing Practices (Fair Trade Coffee)	Food & Beverage	Increased brand trust and loyalty due to commitment to ethical sourcing.	(Starbucks Corporation, 2020); (Behrman, 2023)
IKEA	Sustainability (Renewable Energy, Sustainable Sourcing)	Retail	A commitment to sustainability and social responsibility drives high brand loyalty.	(Mahalakshmi et al., 2024)

Table 3: Comparative Table of CSR Impacts on Brand Loyalty

However, it should be remembered that CSR strategies are also a potential threat to brand identity if managed insincerely. The latest trend among buyers is cynicism regarding corporations that indulge in greenwashing—a phenomenon where organisations present themselves as environmentally sustainable without genuinely being so (Mu & Lee, 2023, p. 4). If consumers perceive a company's CSR as fake or a mere marketing ploy, they lose trust in the firm. Volkswagen's emission scandal is a prime example of how perceived deception in CSR can undermine consumer loyalty. By cheating on emissions data, Volkswagen not only faced legal consequences but also significantly damaged its reputation and eroded the trust of its consumers.

The case of Volkswagen is particularly relevant to the discussion as it demonstrates the dual-edged nature of CSR: while it can enhance brand loyalty when implemented authentically, insincere practices can lead to severe reputational harm. Furthermore, Volkswagen's case underscores the necessity for CSR to be accurate, consistent, and deeply integrated with the firm's business model to reinforce trust and stability. Without authenticity, CSR efforts risk destabilising brand identity, resulting in a prolonged loss of consumer confidence and market position (Wai et al., 2021, p. 218).

4.1 CSR's Role in Building Customer Trust

Marketing stability hinges on consumer trust, a key element that CSR significantly fosters. Trust emerges as a pivotal factor influencing consumer decisions in an industry flooded with similar products from various producers. CSR activities play a crucial role in building consumer trust, as they reassure the public about the company's standards, ethical values, and compliance measures. This emphasis on the impact of CSR on consumer trust is intended to make the audience feel the significance and power of CSR in the business landscape (Chen et al., 2021, p. 2; Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2).

In this way, when consumers feel protected or that a certain company is socially responsible, they can feel secure knowing that such a company is acting on their behalf. This is especially true for industries where product differentiation is not critical, and consumers' decisions are based on their confidence in a particular brand (Huo et al., 2022, p. 4712). When companies act in a position representing ethical values in society, businesses achieve a certain level of reliability and continuity in customer relations.

It is easy to draw examples of how CSR has been instrumental in developing customer trust. Starbucks, an American multinational coffeehouse, has been acclaimed for its ethical sourcing strategy and social responsibility as a business venture. Even with coffee beans, Starbucks ensures they come from fair trade farmers, establishing trust with their consumers. Customers always prefer a brand that engages them with an open

account of the sources of its products and goes the extra mile to source the products from the right channel (Starbucks Corporation, 2020).

It translates into customer loyalty as consumers are assured that their money is spent on a company with the correct ethical standards (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7). Thus, Starbucks' cautious and open approach to its supply chain management, accompanied by its attempts to enhance the quality of life of the coffee growers, has strengthened the company's image as a reputable and credible store, which in turn has led to stable sales and a consistent customer base.

Further, another division of CSR activities related to society and its improvement helps build customer trust in the product. When businesses sponsor local community events, promote education, or get involved in a social issue other than a commercial one, they portray that they do not exist solely to earn money but also to be part of the solution. For instance, a company that supports environmental causes or invests in sustainable practices can also build trust with consumers who value these initiatives. This is exemplified by Patagonia, a company known for its environmental activism, which has built a loyal customer base among environmentally conscious consumers (Kharabsheh et al., 2023, p. 5; Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2).

Notably, Ben & Jerry's awareness of climate change and Black Lives Matter enhanced consumer trust in the company (Ben & Jerry's, 2023). A particular company's CSR strategies are expected to align with the values of consumers who, in turn, relate to and strengthen their belief in the company brand (Huo et al., 2022, p. 4712). Ben & Jerry's management is conscious of social justice issues, even if they are sensitive to many consumers. Standing by their values despite controversy has created brand loyalty (Chiou, 2024). Such CSR activities are equally important because they help establish and maintain customer trust over time. Consistency in actions and clear communication regarding such activities are essential.

However, creating and sustaining customer trust through CSR is challenging; it must be consistent and transparent. Organisations need to embrace CSR programs not as public relations gimmicks but as essential processes that need to be integrated into

their day-to-day operations. Regular information on CSR initiatives and their results is vital to strengthening customer loyalty (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 251).

4.2 CSR as a Differentiation Strategy in Competitive Markets

In today's cutthroat global markets, CSR has assumed a vital role as a differentiation tool that can help a brand stand out. Consumers have raised the bar about what they feel is worthy of their patronage by demanding not only well-made products but products that were made sustainably as well (Gomes et al., 2023, p. 3; Huo et al., 2022, p. 4716). It has become essential as the world focuses on ethical and sustainable business practices; hence, CSR has become a crucial factor in brand differentiation. Implementing CSR as a strategic management concept means that firms that adapt CSR to the strategic management framework can position themselves as offering goods and services to socially aware consumers, thus occupying a niche in a competitive market (Kharabsheh et al., 2023, p. 4). This differentiation is beneficial where the products are relatively similar, and businesses must seek other ways of holding consumers' attention.

In addition, implementing CSR into a brand's communication can lead to a stronger emotional connection with the consumer. When a brand has a favourable social or environmental connotation, it caters to consumers who wish to express their personality when purchasing. When consumers identify a brand with such beliefs, they are likelier to remain loyal and recommend it to others (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7; Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2). To sum it up, implementing CSR can help a brand move from being just another contender in a market segment to a market maker with a relevant social mission of changing things for the better — which is a competitive weapon that operates above and beyond product differentiation and delivers the lowest prices.

4.3 Comparative Analysis and CSR as a Differentiation Strategy

4.3.1 TOMS

A comprehensive comparative analysis of key case studies highlights the unique and impactful CSR initiatives undertaken by each company: An excellent example of CSR as a differentiation strategy can be illustrated in the fashion industry by TOMS' shoes and other similar products. According to McGrath (2021), TOMS' "One for One" is a laser-beam focus in the footwear industry on CSR-driven differentiation. This initiative gives the company an opportunity to provide a direct and impactful way of doing social good (Hessekiel, 2024). The company gifts needy children a pair of shoes for every pair they sell.

TOMS has successfully used this innovative approach to raise its brand image as a socially conscious organization. This campaign has enhanced consumer loyalty and boosted the company's standing in a competitive marketplace. Accordingly, TOMS' CSR efforts demonstrate how a CSR strategy can be streamlined to become part of a business strategy while still delivering profit and brand equity.

4.3.2 The Body Shop

Over the years, The Body Shop has become a trailblazer in corporate social responsibility among beauty businesses. As Affandi and Ramadini (2023) explain, the company is well known for its stance against animal testing and devotes itself to animal-free and sustainable practices in every aspect of production. Nevertheless, these are also the types of initiatives that ethical consumers demand and that differentiate The Body Shop as the leader in eco- and socially responsible beauty products.

The company's strong CSR initiatives have brought authenticity and transparency to customers' eyes and helped build its loyal customer base. Along with the brand reputation focus on fair trade sourcing and community engagement, the company has solidified a major point of competitive advantage within the oversaturated beauty market.

4.3.3 Ben & Jerry's

Ben & Jerry's has shown a strong commitment to social justice, a social conscience, and environmental sustainability. According to (Huo et al., 2022), on top of making the brand associated with quality sneakers, the company has positioned itself as a brand that cares about societal well-being, something it has demonstrated through activism over various issues, from racial equality to climate change to fair trade sourcing (Chiou, 2024). Consumers are looking for purposeful products, and these efforts match what they want.

Effectively, the company has successfully embedded these values in its business operations to make itself a socially responsible brand. Instead, CSR has the potential to provide meaningful competitive differentiation for a product segment that is dominated by a relatively homogeneous low-priced competitor: the food industry.

4.3.4 Starbucks

Likewise, firms in the food and beverage sector, such as Starbucks, have embraced CSR to gain a market edge by advocating for fairly traded products and environmentally friendly production. This has been achieved in the form of Starbucks Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices (Starbucks Corporation, 2024). Ethical sourcing initiatives like these guaranteed farmers fair payment, therefore supporting sustainable agricultural practices. Based on Behrman (2023), such efforts are in step with consumer expectations that brands be transparent and environmentally responsible.

Social responsibility has enhanced Starbucks's brand image as a leader in socially responsible business. By incorporating themes of sustainability, fair trade, and community development, Starbucks has differentiated itself in the competitive food and beverage industry and created long-term brand loyalty.

4.3.5 IKEA

IKEA's CSR approach revolves around sustainability and resource efficiency in the circular economy. On the environmental stewardship side, the company pursues programs like product recycling and renewable energy investments, and that, as it turns out, is a good thing as consumer demand for eco-friendly practices continues to rise (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024). Essentially, this commitment to adopting this equality has enabled IKEA to remain ahead of the competition by being a brand that makes the combination of affordability and sustainability. As Mahalakshmi et al. (2024) clarify integrating CSR into their core business model only makes an already reputable firm even more responsible and innovative in the retail field.

The comparative analysis demonstrates how, because of their CSR activities, these companies have proven themselves able to differentiate themselves in their respective markets and that values-driven practices can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty as well as create long-term brand stability.

4.3.6 Challenges in Using CSR as a Differentiation Strategy

However, the case also reveals that CSR, a common differentiation strategy, needs fixing. Those involved in CSR must be extra careful to ensure that the CSR programs are genuine and reflect their company's image. That is why if the company's CSR programs and initiatives are not viewed as genuine or inconsistent with its operations or products, it harms its image (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7). For instance, sustainability in fast fashion may include still using manufacturing processes that could be better for the environment. As a result, such fashion brands lose credibility. This misalignment between CSR communication and the company's operations ultimately result in consumers switching to other brands, negatively impacting the intended effect of CSR on consumers.

Moreover, CSR holds more potential as a differentiation strategy only to the extent that a firm can signal its CSR initiatives credibly and consistently. Today's consumers are wiser and avoid products labelled as being friendly to the environment but are, in

fact, just being marketed in that way. To this end, CSR practices must be adopted, seen, and documented. It entails the management's commitment to CSR practice, reporting on CSR performances, and embracing stakeholder relations. If managed well within these challenges, CSR can be used to build a meaningful and sustainable competitive advantage for firms (Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2). In contrast, if not effectively managed, the converse can lead to scratches to the organisational brand and loss of the consumer base.

4.4 Risks Associated with CSR in Marketing

As appealing as CSR is for establishing customer loyalty, enhancing customer trust, and providing a competitive advantage, it has some risks that must be well managed. Another threat of CSR in marketing is that organisations can engage in greenwashing, that is, in overstating or even lying about their actions to respond to their responsibility and thus appeal to consumers.

Greenwashing is a hazardous practice that could lead to a lot of brand reputation loss if the consumer feels the company is lying to them. This risk brings to light the issue of authenticity in CSR communication. This risk highlights the contention that CSR communication should be genuine. There is a need to make sure that CSR declarations and statements of a company are supported by concrete actions that can be proven. Failing this, a company may face a loss of consumer confidence, the company gets bad publicity, and consumers switch to other brands.

It is most acute when customers are very conscious of the environmental and social concerns within the specific industry. For instance, the fashion industry has recently faced backlash for greenwashing its brands. Companies have been selling what they branded as 'sustainable' fashion collections. At the same time, their general operations remain as environmentally unfriendly as before.

Businesses must appreciate that customers are becoming more intelligent and can quickly note incongruence between a firm's CSR and organisational performance. In such cases, the backlash is often immediate and negative; companies that have received public scorn for greenwashing their products (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson,

2022, p. 7; Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2). This negative perception makes consumers develop a negative attitude toward the product, leading to low sales and long-term consequences for the brand. Thus, companies must oversee the implementation of their CSR programs and their publicity to eliminate the potential for allegations of greenwashing.

One of the threats that come with CSR in marketing is that the stakeholders may need to approve of the social or environmental causes selected by the company. Another challenge observed in CSR initiatives is that they usually take a side of social issues that are likely to divide people. For example, those who embrace LGBTQ+ or climate change may experience boycotts from some customers or political players. This backlash can come in the form of boycotting the brand, which reduces the sales of the products, negative media coverage that puts the brand's reputation and image in a bad light, and even legal suits against the company, which can be costly. Firms must assess the risks in their CSR activities and be ready for the backlash that may occur (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 7; Kharabsheh et al., 2023, p. 5). It means considering where the difficulties may lie and having a comprehensive crisis communication plan to deal with any repercussions.

However, CSR may fail to generate the expected ROI when the undertakings have not aligned with the organisational strategic goals. Despite CSR being beneficial in improving the company's reputation and customer base, the downside is that it could be more costly in terms of resources, time, and effort (Coelho et al., 2020, p.1536). These initiatives must be implemented into the company's business model, or the consumers respond positively to deliver the expected value.

For instance, a company that spends a large amount of money in launching a CSR campaign, which generally has a positive message but needs to communicate the impact of the project, can experience a small consumer response in the form of improved brand reputation or sales (Lee & Yang, 2022, p. 2; Hajibaba et al., 2019). This calls for the integration of CSR activities with the business's strategic plan, as well as the efficient communication of the same to the consumer. For this reason, managers should be able to assess the possible returns on investment that are likely to be realised on any CSR program so that the program in question is consciously fashioned to realise some

business goals while at the same time striving to improve the standard of the society and the earth.

Even though CSR has significant benefits in the form of increased brand loyalty, increased customer trust, and a means to stand out from the competition, there are risks associated with CSR that need to be considered. In the context of CSR as a marketing tool, firms face the problems of greenwashing, adverse stakeholder reactions, and the desire to reap positive ROI. If managing directors keep their CSR communications transparent, genuine, and relevant to the business strategy, these risks can be minimised while CSR benefits can be fully utilised. Thus, CSR in marketing can be deemed successful only if the company can successfully incorporate the concept of social responsibility into its strategic management plan and successfully translate it to the customer.

5 SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF CSR

Current CSR activities have considerably eased social needs such as poverty, education, health, and community development. Kharabsheh et al. (2023) argue that when companies are committed to CSR, they develop policies that ensure that disadvantaged communities gain access to basic needs, leading to better living standards.

For example, Starbucks has acted to assess its devotion to societal welfare through access to a Community Store Initiative, which works based on economic necessities and business cooperation. The projects are designed to help neighbourhoods with financial problems by improving the availability of job opportunities and providing dedicated spaces for local events. These stores directly offer employment while contributing to community and profitable social programs, such as youth employment training and educational programs. The provision of locations to hold local communities has vast impacts on society as they foster a sense of belonging and improve engagement. CSR is integrated into the central business processes because the company thus guarantees that its activities have a lasting and positive effect on society (Starbucks Corporation, 2024).

Besides Starbucks, Patagonia is a perfect example of how corporate social responsibility can have a societal impact through the company's commitment to ecology and community development. Among other things, Patagonia runs 1% for the Planet, where 1% of its turnover is spent on environmental works (Cohune, 2019). These initiatives not only benefit the environment but also help fund grassroots organisations carrying out sustainability programs.

The initiatives by the firm have direct and indirect impacts on society by improving the quality of life of residents through environmental wellness programs while enabling other organisations to complete similar projects. Patagonia has successfully integrated CSR into business practices, demonstrating a continuing positive impact on both local and global communities.

Similarly, The Body Shop, it has also focused on community empowerment by supporting fair trade programs that help deprived communities. Using Community Trade programs to source ingredients has given opportunities for marginalized groups in the sense that they can be self-sufficient and improve their living conditions (Affandi & Ramadini, 2023). The initiative has played a pivotal role in the construction of social amenities in marginalized areas. The firm's prioritisation of ethical sourcing promotes human welfare by uplifting various communities. This approach shows how CSR initiatives can play a part in the realization of both social justice and economic development, thereby improving the lives of underprivileged people.

companies like Starbucks, Patagonia, and The Body Shop transmit a direct vision of how CSR initiatives may solve various societal problems, from an environmental perspective to economic empowerment. In this regard, their work highlights the more general aspect of CSR as a tool to advance justice and improve society's welfare.

5.1 The Role of CSR in Environmental Sustainability

Environmental concerns also highlight that the efforts envisioned as CSR initiatives are becoming vital to every corporate strategy since companies care about preserving the environment for future generations. It has become standard practice for many organisations to implement measures like emission reduction, efficient disposal of waste, and protection of resources (Zhang & Liu, 2023, p. 4). The case of Patagonia can give

one recent, rather vivid example – the clothing manufacturer company that actively discusses environmental issues.

One novel strategy adopted by Patagonia so far is the "Worn Wear" campaign, which encourages extending clothes' lives through repair or donation rather than dumping (Cohune, 2019, p. 16). The initiative focuses on reducing textile waste while championing consumerism by influencing customers when making purchasing decisions. The company has a direct impact on society as the online tutorials and hosting of repair events encourage customers to participate actively in sustainability. Moreover, for every dollar of sales, the company gives one per cent to support local environmental groups to preserve the earth's environment. This commitment to sustainability also helps improve Patagonia's brand image and create a benchmark for similar companies.

Another notable example is IKEA, which has developed a broad sustainability plan to combat global climate change and support renewable power. IKEA's actions include buying solar and wind energy to be climate-positive by 2030 (IKEA, 2024). It also has implemented a new concept known as a circular economy business model that involves designing products that can be reused, refinished, or recycled (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024, p. 148). They are clear examples of how CSR can be incorporated as a strategic organisational strategy for improving the environment; companies develop projects that protect the environment and are successful in the market with a growing number of environmentally aware consumers.

5.2 CSR and Economic Development

CSR activities are also crucial to improving the economic well-being of both local and global economies as they generate employment, encourage the growth of small businesses, and support local enterprises. Employers who fund CSR projects mainly undertake actions that enhance economic development within the affected societies. For example, Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has played a significant role in creating awareness of economic development at the microfinance level (Faizah & Husaeni, 2019, p. 889). Since it is aimed explicitly at offering microcredit to those individuals who cannot count on regular financial resources, especially women with low income, Grameen Bank has managed to help millions of people become

independent and able to find jobs (Faizah & Husaeni, 2019, p. 891). This model has been emulated in different nations, making CSR more capable of catalysing economic advancements for all countries.

Besides microfinance, CSR endeavours can also enhance the expansion of fair trade, thus guaranteeing rightful remunerations to the producers in Third World countries. For instance, Fair-trade certification for products ensures that farmers and workers receive reasonable wages, work under safe conditions, and enhance their quality of life and that of their communities (Fair-trade International, 2024).

Starbucks, one of the biggest supporters of fair trade, has assisted coffee farmers, particularly those from the developing world, improve their economic status by buying fair-trade coffee (Starbucks Corporation, 2020). It helps promote environmentally sound agriculture and contributes to eliminating poverty and reducing inequality in some of the most affected Southern countries.

5.3 Measuring the Societal Impact of CSR

Evaluating CSR programs is never easy, and the process involves the consideration of different metrics and models for identifying the simplicity, efficiency, and sustainability of these programs for societal benefit. Maldonado and Corbey (2016) briefly mention one of the most popular measurement frameworks – the Social Return on Investment (SROI) - that measures the social, environmental, and economic impact of CSR initiatives in monetary terms.

Effectively, SROI offers a systemic picture of CSR intervention and helps identify areas and causes most likely to reap maximum social gains when supported and funded by corporate entities (Maldonado & Corbey, 2016). For instance, a company sponsoring education programs may apply SROI to ascertain the annuity rate return on the reduced literacy levels, such as employment opportunities and poverty eradication among its target populace.

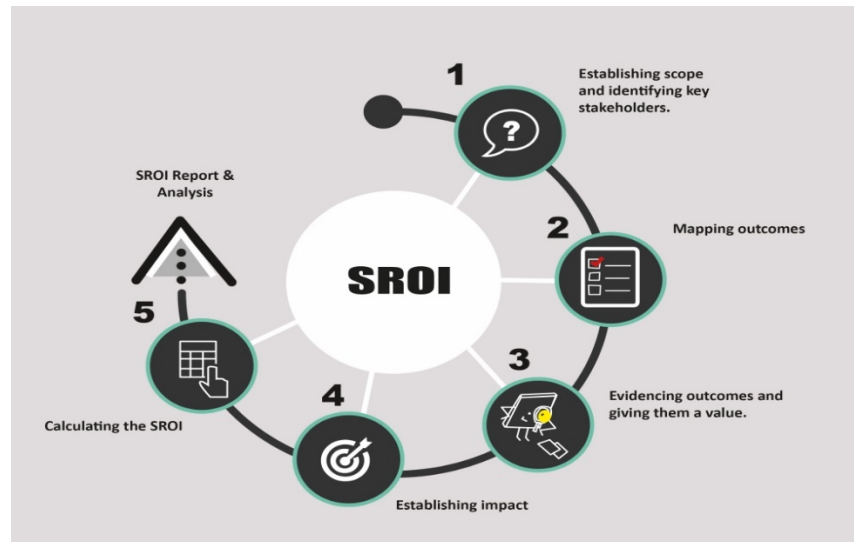


Figure 3. (Getty Images, 2024)

Another way of assessing the external impacts of CSR is the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, which are reporting checklists that companies use to report on their sustainability. The GRI standards help organisations report on CSR impact to demonstrate the efficiency of business practices to interested parties (Ismail et al., 2021, p. 4). However, despite these frameworks, it is still hard to assess the extent of CSR impact on society because intangible benefits encompassing better quality of life, social cohesiveness, and environmental management cannot be easily measured.

Furthermore, the influence of CSR measures remains unpredictable (Nogueira & Hain, 2023, p. 3). It greatly depends on the (external) environment in which the sustainable activities are being performed, highlighting the importance of properly controlling and monitoring CSR activities to impact society positively.

In summation, this chapter provides the most detailed engagement with the treatment of the social effects of CSR and includes cases to support the discussion. This chapter gives a well-thought-out view of how CSR helps achieve overall social usefulness, environmental protection, and economic growth by explaining the positive impact of specific CSR activities on society. Thus, the discussion on the evaluation of CSR and the corresponding societal impact speaks about the general difficulties and potentials facing companies when assessing CSR's effectiveness of applied initiatives, underlining the need for constant amperage as a significant aspect of CSR.

6 ETHICAL ISSUES IN CSR IMPLEMENTATION AND MARKETING

6.1 Integrating CSR with Marketing Strategies

Integrating CSR considerations in marketing plans and actions is challenging for many enterprises and entails a significant moral concern. While social cause marketing through CSR can improve a company's image and association with socially responsible values, the issue is how sincere and authentic these CSR crusades are. Managers and companies face the dilemma of championing their CSR activities to consumers without coming across as capitalising on social cause-related issues that may lead to consumer cynicism and backlash (Deep, 2023, p. 73; Zhang & Liu, 2023, p. 4).

However, controversies regarding the treatment of its workers and detrimental effects on the environment cast doubt on their initiatives. It has been debunked with the question of ethics as to whether these companies are changing for the better or whether their CSR is just a façade. Additionally, excessive promotion of CSR efforts as a marketing gimmick dilutes the value of such CSR initiatives and makes them just mere advertisements rather than socially beneficial endeavours (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson, 2022, p. 6; Shin et al., 2023). Thus, firms should pay close attention to how CSR is incorporated into marketing communications by avoiding greenwashing, maintaining consistent messages, and demonstrating a sincere commitment to the promoted causes.

In addition, it is also important to elaborate on how the CSR and the marketing strategies are integrated, including the need to ensure that the CSR programs fit the corporate values and the business goals. The assertion is that when CSR initiatives are linked with a company's core business, they are much more credible with consumers and other interested parties. For instance, TOMS Shoes based its entire strategy on giving a pair of shoes to children in need for each pair sold as a CSR activity coupled with a marketing and sales tactic (Hessekiel, 2024; TOMS, 2024).

The given approach also promotes social change and improves the brand reputation and sales with the target audience, which is conscious of the role of brands in

influencing society. However, such integration requires constant review to ensure that the CSR initiatives stay consistent and are perceived as insincere by the public (Macca et al., 2024, p. 3; Paruzel et al., 2020). Concerning the external environment, the business entities involved must also communicate with the stakeholders to understand their expectations and attitudes towards CSR and ensure that the process enhances both the positive impact on society and the efficiency of marketing communication.

6.2 Balancing Profit-Making with Ethical Responsibilities

CSR activity involves navigating ethical dilemmas because the established objectives prescribed by the company and legal requirements are occasionally opposed and require the company to choose the lesser of two evils. Companies are self-serving; however, CSR encourages companies to make decisions that will improve the welfare of customers and the environment, even if it means incurring short-term losses.

Some of these balances lead to ethical decision-making since initiatives that reduce short-term profits are avoided (Kutaula et al., 2024, p 660; Lee & Yang, 2022, p 2). For example, Patagonia's values, which include using recycled material and being an environmental activist, cost quite a lot of money in the production line. They have been beneficial for the ethical business toolbox, but in the meantime, these changes can slightly decrease the profit margin but create long-term customer loyalty and market differentiation.

The idea of attaining both profits and ethical success also requires decision-making whenever goals appear to be adversative. For instance, the coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices entail Starbucks having to weigh ethical sourcing and other options. Being able to pay and provide an adequate price for coffee farmers, commit to buying sustainably grown coffee, though it brings additional expenses, benefits the company's image and attracts consumers who value the company's fairness. The above strategic alignment shows that ethical responsibilities can form a sustainable strategic asset that provides added value to brand equity and repeat patronage (Starbucks Corporation, 2024).

In the same way, TOMS do a great job of trying to strike a perfect balance between profitability and social responsibility with its one-for-one company strategy. Promising a new pair of shoes for every pair sold to an individual in society escalates operational costs, though this may have mid- and long-term gains.

Nevertheless, it is in harmony with TOMS' mission to create socially responsible shoes that reflect a connection between consumers and the company and improve its position in the market's niche. Thus, TOMS has achieved its goals by focusing on the long-term benefits it brings to society, proving that profitability can exist hand in hand with ethical obligations, further strengthening TOMS' position as a socially oriented brand (Hessekiel, 2024).

Another good example to analyse is the case of The Body Shop. Ethical efforts, such as cosmetics not being tested on animals and sourcing materials from fair trade, demonstrate that spending on ethical value can set a brand apart, especially in a closely knit sector. Although these commitments may add cost to the business, there is a favourable churn with the image and values that consumers hold, thus enhancing their loyalty and revenue-profits in the long run (Affandi & Ramadini, 2023).

Moreover, it is submitted that investors and shareholders have a role in how firms address these two goals SRI or investing that considers Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues is a practice that emerged due to growing concerns about ethical business. For instance, using renewable energy in IKEA and sustainable procurement complies with these four pillars, showing that ethics improves organisational sustainability and fiscal returns. Through less dependence on non-renewable materials, IKEA serves its shareholders 'need for sustainable development and becomes a pioneer of global corporation responsibility (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024).

Collectively, these cases show that it is possible to increase profitability and positively impact the environmental and social spheres if a company gets it right. Firms that adopt CSR into their strategic framework can note that ethics gain a competitive advantage, customers endorse products, and businesses achieve higher profitability due to CSR (Resnik, 2020). These case studies show that making profits and being socially responsible demands great sensitivity, closer cooperation with stakeholders, and sustained commitment to the social and natural environment.

6.3 Criticisms and Controversies Surrounding CSR

6.3.1 *Greenwashing and Ethical Violations*

One of the most critical and much-debated topics in the realm of CSR is greenwashing, in which consumers read a fairy tale about the environmental friendliness of a product or service being marketed. It is indeed a disgraceful and deceptive strategy that affects the image of companies, yet it masks the actual CSR activities in society. For instance, the company Patagonia communicates very powerfully on its environmental policies, and therefore, for any brand, it means that one has to use absolute honesty when it comes to such aspects lest they be regarded as mere 'greenwash'. Even when it supports noble causes such as conservation or recycling, the slightest perceived infraction could create a problem as companies are increasingly pressured to prove their CSR responsibility (Cohune, 2019).

Likewise, The Body Shop has established its operations based on an ethical supply chain and an anti-cruelty policy, which appeals to customers. Still, if such claims are supported by deeds or acknowledging seals, such as Fair Trade, the company may succeed in credibility. Thus, for consumer trust to be preserved, the authenticity of the company and its actions and promotion of CSR should be supported by the quantifiable and easily checkable impact. For instance, LEED or Fair-Trade certifications are fundamental evidence of CSR strategies and optimal ways to distinguish genuine CSR efforts from these marketing strategies.

The effects of greenwashing are not limited to propaganda damage alone, as envisioning it simply as harmless propaganda would be a gross mistake. It skews the information environment and hampers responsible companies striving to correct the problem to receive the attention they deserve. For example, IKEA makes commitments regarding the People & Planet Positive strategy more understandable for consumers through reporting about the store's utilisation of renewable energy sources and improved resource efficiency. IKEA's example of reporting on advancement and issues demonstrates how CSR targets must be combined with truthful actions to promote

consumer confidence when the public closely monitors the issue (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, consumers are more sensitive about identifying the truthfulness of such statements. They are willing to consult third-party certifiers and non-profit organisations monitoring corporate sustainability reports. Due to pressure from environmental activism groups, firms such as Starbucks, which constantly promotes its C.A.F.E. Practice, should ensure they do not become involved in greenwashing. The company further substantiates its supply chain reports and not less than independent auditors to support its business. With integrated supply chain management, the company has listed its stake in ethically sound business strategies (Starbucks Corporation, 2024).

6.3.2 Exploitation of CSR for Marketing Gain

Another emerging problem is that organisations use CSR mainly for marketing purposes, which erodes the value of genuine efforts and the public's trust. Engaging stakeholders and acting on CSR responsibilities remain valuable tools for addressing social and environmental issues, but many organisations focus more on image rather than substance. For instance, TOMS show that it is possible to escape this trap by linking CSR with the firm's core valued proposition, as argued below. Accused of generalising the effects of its campaigns, TOMS has constantly striven to improve its campaigns; these should always meet the actual needs of society and should show the exact effects of the campaigns.

However, The Body Shop has adopted CSR by linking its opposition to animal testing and using fair trade products with the brands. It also guarantees that its CSR initiatives will be accepted as helpful and not as a way to gain profit from the people. However, organisations whose actions do not match their marketing communication messages, for instance, organisations involved in producing health products and associated with the fast food industry, will be seen as hypocritical. For example, Behrman (2023) indicates that Starbucks has ensured that conflicts about ethical sourcing do not arise in any operations tier and vice versa because of an integrated system that harmonises its sustainability narratives with its operations.

They also explain the anti-CSR sentiments by stressing the relevance of harmony in CSR orientations and marketing communication. Essentially, companies can employ CSR in good faith; for example, Ben & Jerry's is focused on social justice issues. That is why lovers of novelties and progressive changes support Ben & Jerry's because their values are similar to the company's actions. This signals the positive correlation between increased brand loyalty and CSR. Business organisations can use CSR for promotional purposes without negatively affecting their ethical business functioning (Ben & Jerry's, 2023).

6.4 The Role of Corporate Governance in Ensuring Ethical CSR

6.4.1 Corporate Governance Structures Supporting CSR

Nowadays, CSR heavily depends on corporate governance as it is responsible for correctly and fairly implementing CSR programs. Sound management structures afford the guidance necessary for CSR to complement an organisation's value proposition, vision, and strategic direction. For instance, the company has integrated CSR into its governance by presenting its governance policy in the People & Planet Positive strategy, which includes goals and key performance indicators for sustainability. This strategy focuses on renewable energy, resource efficiency and ethical sourcing; it demonstrates how governance structures may direct CSR initiatives to practical, tangible objectives and results (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024).

In the same way, corporate governance supports CSR, Starbucks also incorporates CSR into its sustainability reporting and independent audits for its C.A.F.E. Practices. This ensures that all company activities are transparent and ethical regarding sourcing and working. Through its integrated CSR into its governance structures, Starbucks shows how organisations may be credible and gain stakeholders' confidence (Starbucks Corporation, 2024).

Other recommendations of good practice in corporate governance are also aimed at integrating CSR responsibilities within organisational performance targets. Companies like Patagonia, which prioritises environmental advocacy, demonstrate how

aligning executive incentives with sustainability goals can drive organisational commitment to ethical practices. This alignment ensures that decision-makers have an understanding of the need to choose between the profitability of an organisation and the welfare of society and the environment in particular.

In addition, engagement with stakeholders is one of the non-negotiable aspects of corporate governance regarding CSR. Explaining how a company's actions can meet a range of stakeholders' needs, Mitchell shows that businesses may achieve their goals by improving organisational communication with employees, customers, and investors. For instance, Ben & Jerry's organisation involve stakeholders to ascertain its social justice values' match with the consumers'. This improves the company's CSR efforts and builds its relationship with its community (Ben & Jerry's, 2023).

6.4.2 Best Practices in Corporate Governance for Ethical CSR

Measures that should be taken in ethical CSR practices include effective policies, accountability systems, and evaluation and enhancement procedures. The clear and detailed CSR policies that are a basis for the company's commitments, goals, and strategic actions serve as a basis for ethical and practical action (Masud et al., 2019, p. 7; Seabright et al., 2021, p. 5).

These policies should be communicated clearly to the employees and the public, and expectations must be created that make them responsible and accountable to the public. For instance, IKEA's People & Planet Positive concept outlines the company's sustainable development objectives, and the measures implemented to achieve the goals, which enables all the stakeholders to understand the measures to be taken clearly.

Other critical practices include using suitable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to guarantee that CSR activities achieve their intended objectives and are ethical. Implementing key performance indicators (KPIs) and audits allows for monitoring performance, assessing success and failures, and ensuring that specific responsibilities are met (University of London, 2024). For example, IKEA has long been using the People & Planet Positive sustainability roadmap, which provides yearly disclosure of the

company's management of energy consumption, waste, and recycled materials; as shown in reports by (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024). Such a level of analysis and disclosure improves stakeholders' trust and offers significant information for improvement and further development of CSR activities.

In addition, a strong organisational commitment to ethics and responsibilities is necessary for maintaining CSR initiatives in organisations. It means the employees, teams, and departments within an organisation are trained and motivated about the CSR strategy, promoting and rewarding ethical choices, and embracing socially responsible targets. Some businesses have incorporated philanthropy and volunteerism as part of their corporate social responsibility programs, including the 1-1-1 model, where the company contributes one per cent of its equity, products, and employee hours to charities, as practised by Salesforce. This model represents a potentially significant measure of social action and provides employees with a profound sense of sharing accountability and Devon Code principles throughout the corporate environment.

6.4.3 Future Trends in Ethical CSR

Contemporary and emerging trends in CSR are more complex and interconnected solutions implemented through new technologies to solve complex and evolving problems. Another example is the enhancement in circular economy practices, where organisations develop product designs and organisational structures with minimum wastage (Latapí et al., 2019, p. 6).

For example, the case of IKEA shows how companies are at a timescale of power and moving towards a circular economy, as seen by its attempts to remove waste from production and consumption. IKEA also shows that sustainable business practices and environmental responsibility can become milestones for the retail industry when the company offers products that can be reused or recycled (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024).

Another new direction is the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives within CSR. Organisations are realising that the fight for DEI is not only a matter of moral duty but also a way to increase organisational effectiveness and

creativity (Sharma & Kumar, 2021, p. 464). Furthermore, incorporating modern technology like blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) has enhanced the modality and openness of corporate social responsibilities. In supply chain management, blockchain can alleviate unfair labour practices by automatically tracing the origin of products and materials (Shkalenko & Nazarenko, 2024, p.6).

For instance, there are blockchain applications where the food industry uses the supply chain to approach the consumer and provide trustworthy information about food items' origin and production environments. In line with this, AI also enhances resource and energy consumption efficiency and minimises environmental effects (Sharma & Kumar, 2021, p. 463).

For instance, Starbucks uses blockchain in its supply chain to increase convenience for consumers by showing where their coffee comes from. Likewise, other autonomously controlled systems help firms minimise energy usage and its effect on the environment (Behrman, 2023). The following innovations show how technology also supports the improvement of CSR program impact and persuasiveness (Starbucks Corporation, 2024).

The following technological creations are how businesses advance in effectively implementing and monitoring ethical CSR programs. It has been forecasted that CSR will occupy a more significant position in marketing management as consumers become more conscious of social and environmental issues. They incorporate CSR into the organisation's strategic identity to establish competitive advantages and strengthen brand-customer relationships.

Specifically, Millennials and Gen Z consumers exhibit tremendous advocacy for brands that support their values, leading to high consumption of value-centric marketing based on brand ethics (Gomes et al., 2023, p. 4); Oke et al., 2023, p. 2). Some ideal examples of this process are companies like Ben & Jerry's that openly fight for social justice and try translating these values into their products and advertisements, shaping a dedicated audience with progressive values (Ben & Jerry's, 2023).

Additionally, the surge in technological applications – mainly social media – helps enhance the significance of CSR campaigns as it allows companies to communicate CSR messages to customers and society (Macca et al., 2024, p. 3; Ramzan et al., 2021). It also enables more involvement and engagement in CSR activities, including crowd-funding for relevant causes or group environmentalism. For instance, the advocacy of #OptOutside, an advocacy by REI, an outdoor equipment company that urged people to go outside rather than shop during black Friday, helped the company to gain support and boosted the conversation rate among potential consumers as the campaign is a true reflection of a brand message that consumers appreciate.

Moreover, the demand for higher levels of reporting, along with timely accountability on disclosure and implementation of CSR practices and policy standards, may also be enhanced through increasing regulatory and industrial requirements. ESG data is becoming more prevalent among investors and other groups as a benchmark for company performance, impacting capital investment and value.

Therefore, enhancing solid and moral CSR principles in marketing communication has a consumer appeal but simultaneously meets the expectations of investors and regulators to ensure companies' long-term success in today's complex business environment. Finally, CSR is on the right path to transition from a mere add-on feature of marketing communication to becoming a significant component that defines brand stories, consumer connections, and enduring corporate sustainability processes.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Interpretation of Findings

This study reinforces the theoretical assertion that CSR can contribute significantly to marketing stability. Kharabsheh et al. (2023) identify CSR as a critical driver of brand equity, customer confidence, and market resilience. The findings align with this perspective, suggesting consumers increasingly support socially and environmentally

responsible brands. This consumer behaviour underscores the theory of ethical consumerism, as Gomes et al. (2023) described, and emphasises that CSR is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic element influencing brand preference.

At the same time, this research reveals nuances in CSR's effectiveness as a competitive marketing strategy, depending mainly on the perceived authenticity of CSR initiatives. This observation builds on the argument by Lee and Yang (2022), who posit that CSR functions as a unique selling proposition in saturated markets. However, the present study reveals that CSR strategies are effective depending on the company's strategic orientation and the level of believability of CSR communication. Gomes et al. (2023) and Oke et al. (2023) have discussed misconceptions or doubts regarding insincere or untrue CSR activities. By focusing on the positive perception of CSR processes, this research advances the understanding of how businesses can attain marketing stability and consumer trust.

Furthermore, this study validates several foundational theories in CSR. Stakeholder Theory is affirmed through the finding that meeting the needs of consumers, employees, and broader communities can strengthen brand loyalty. Similarly, the research supports the social contract theory, showing that ethical corporate conduct raises consumer confidence and a company's reputation. The Triple Bottom Line concept is also acknowledged, strengthening the understanding that sustainable business prosperity is achieved with the help of shared, natural, and financial capital.

Additionally, this research broadens the application of marketing stability theories by incorporating CSR as a central element. While marketing stability has traditionally been measured through brand familiarity and market position, this study underscores the role of CSR in fostering long-term emotional connections between brands and consumers. This finding resonates with Social Identity Theory, which explains how consumers inclined toward brands that reflect their values, particularly those with a robust CSR ethos (Valentinov & Chia, 2022, p. 769).

The work aligns CSR with the overall conception of marketing stability while identifying the latter as a significant approach to stemming market fluctuations that threaten brand consistency. Integrating CSR into an organisation's operations creates a hedge against market forces, develops brand-loyal customers, and increases their confidence.

7.2 Practical and Societal Implications

According to the study, there is strong support for organisations to consider CSR more as being integrated into the overall marketing strategy as opposed to a mere appendage. For example, Ben & Jerry's and Patagonia etch an example of how genuine CSR activism can inform customer's perceptions and build brand image. According to Chiou (2024) and Cohune (2019), CSR efforts must be transparent, authentic, and fully incorporated into a company's operations to avoid damaging greenwashing charges. Championed third-party assurance and sustainability reporting give certain credibility to business reports or sustainability items and can help consumers make decisions.

Moreover, the research highlights the value of internal ethics committees in overseeing CSR initiatives. These committees can ensure that CSR strategies align with organisational values, address ethical concerns, and avoid practices such as greenwashing (Mendes et al., 2021, p. 247; Nogueira et al., 2023, p. 3). Stakeholder engagement emerges as another critical factor, as it enables companies to adapt their CSR efforts to meet consumer expectations effectively. For instance, IKEA shows how engaging stakeholders will increase sustainability goals and improve CSR and corporate image (IKEA, 2024).

CSR also broadly impacts society, especially in its Environmental and Social Responsibility. Not only does it help build a better image of their business, like that of IKEA, which aims to become climate-positive by 2030, but the companies are also playing their part towards fighting climate change. These examples show how CSR can effect longitudinal change whilst firmly entrenching organisational values into processes (Mahalakshmi et al., 2024). Likewise, attempts to reduce infringement on rights by using trade and community-based programmes shall help to emancipate socially neglected groups to develop and progress.

As another pillar of CSR, environmental concern acknowledges the need for more sustainability-friendly economic practices. That is why such brands as Patagonia and The Body Shop show that by using eco-friendly sourcing and reducing waste, a company can meet consumer desire for sustainable practices. For instance, a sustainable business model will assist in avoiding wastage and quickening the worth of goods and

products, as illustrated along the circle economy from Patagonia intended for remanufactured materials (Cohune, 2019). These efforts benefit the environment and the growth of brand popularity among environmentally conscious customers.

Regarding environmental innovation, these companies reveal how CSR might be entwined with advanced capabilities, such as producing products from recycled materials. Effectively, these initiatives show how CSR can extend solutions to some global issues while adopting tenders that are conscious of sustainability (Cohune, 2019). Overall, CSR is a versatile tool that can advance social change, establish corporate image, and promote long-run profit-making simultaneously.

7.3 Reliability and Credibility

To ensure reliability, the data collected and analysed in this study closely adhered to proper quality data methodologies. Reputable databases like Scopus, Web of Science and JSTOR were used to select secondary data sources such as peer-reviewed Journals, industry reports, and case studies. The research uses diversified sources from across various industries—such as retail, food and beverage, and apparel—to keep a balanced and consistent view. With this, the paper reduces the risk of bias and improves the possibility of results reproducibility. To maintain the credibility, transparency and authenticity were considered throughout the research process. For instance, the use of citations and referencing of information from several reputable sources helped arrive at valid conclusions.

Rooted in Stakeholder Theory, Triple Bottom Line, and Social Identity Theory, the study offered a structured and well-established basis for analysis. The frameworks to which these were grounded were also based on widely accepted academic principles. In addition, all research findings are benchmarked against existing literature to establish their validity and coherence in the broader perspective of CSR research. In addition, ethical issues, including green scepticism and conflicts of interest, have been discussed in the significance of profit and company responsibility. By stressing actual CSR activities consistent with organisational principles, this study underlines the need to sustain ethical standards when it comes to marketing stability and consumer confidence.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequently, this research has comprehensively analysed the link between CSR and marketing stability while identifying the following significant research implications that would benefit the business world while expanding the existing body of knowledge. One conclusion is that promoting CSR measures improves brand reputation and customer trust as long as they are relevant to the audience.

The study also supported the idea that consumers are knowledgeable today and do not believe in fake or phoney CSR campaigns. Furthermore, the research identified that CSR can be a crucial weapon in the competitive market for brands that seek to create a clear value proposition that meets the needs of consumers who embrace the principles of sustainable development. Still, CSR as a competitive advantage-motivating strategy is only possible when these programs are organically incorporated into organizational operations.

Further, the study pointed out the fact that there needs to be more focus on the issues of transparency and accountability in CSR, as pointed out by the fact that companies that regularly report their CSR initiatives as well as their CSR performances are more likely to retain the consumers' trust, and hence the markets, deploy in the long run. CSR initiatives directly influence marketing stability by fostering trust, loyalty, and competitive advantage. The research demonstrated that strategic, authentic CSR practices—aligned with stakeholder expectations—help stabilize brand reputation and consumer relationships over the long term.

The study also revealed that consumer perceptions of CSR initiatives are shaped by their authenticity and transparency. Positive consumer behaviour, such as loyalty and advocacy, is driven by genuine CSR efforts that resonate with their values. On the other hand, greenwashing or insincere CSR activities can erode trust and destabilize markets. These findings emphasize that CSR is more than a moral obligation; it is a core business strategy capable of driving sustainable growth while addressing consumer demands for ethical and transparent practices.

Based on the research findings, several practical implications exist for businesses that want to adopt CSR into their marketing communication. First, firms must be clear that CSR is not a mere tactic used to create a positive image of the company but a core component of its image, which should be reflected in its activities.

Businesses must avoid 'greenwashing' as customers prefer to spend their money on companies with an authentic and sincere interest in CSR. It involves transitioning from seeing CSR as an extra-curricular activity to becoming a core strategy within the strategic matrix of the company. Besides, companies must be accountable for their CSR initiatives by timely reporting their activity and performance. It also fosters consumer trust, which is critical for achieving marketing stability since marketing requires this.

Businesses should also involve customers, employees, and the public in formulating CSR strategies to ensure the goals align with the business's social and environmental responsibility. In this way, by adopting the above-discussed practices, companies can help themselves obtain the benefits from CSR, establish closer contacts with the consumers, give the companies a competitive advantage, and consider CSR a valuable tool for further business success.

Thus, this research has several significant implications for advancing knowledge about CSR and its effect on marketing stability. Using theories including Stakeholder Theory, Triple Bottom Line, and Social Identity Theory as a framework, the study offers a theoretical foundation for examining the effects of CSR projects on consumer behaviour and market conditions. These results also reflect the theoretical theories that CSR is a significant determinant of brand commitment and consumer trust, providing the needed empirical backing.

In addition, the study further shows how CSR can be used effectively to gain competitive advantage amidst stiff competition in most industries. This contribution is timely, given the emerging trend of ethical consumerism and the rising concern for transparency and accountability from the business fraternity. It also examines authenticity in CSR, which provides an enriched perspective of how consumers respond to CSR activities. This finding may be helpful for academics exploring the dynamics of businesses and their stakeholders concerning CSR and marketing stability.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Concerning the aspects discussed on the relevance of CSR in the contemporary business world, CSR is no longer an afterthought but a crucial factor that business entities must consider. CSR also holds high significance in the present world, where consumers, investors, and regulators are more vocal about their expectations and do not support companies engaging in undesirable activities. Firms that have integrated CSR as part of their operation strategies are in a better place to gain and maintain the consumers' trust and stand out in the market competition.

Thus, as the business environment changes, CSR's importance in influencing consumers' perceptions and stabilizing the markets should increase. Therefore, CSR and, by extension, marketing stability in the longer run is possible when companies effectively and genuinely involve their stakeholders, communicate their CSR activities, and establish sustainable, meaningful commitments towards society and the environment. As this study has indicated, CSR is more than a mere corporate responsibility; it is a core business management tool capable of addressing social issues and enabling organizations to compete successfully in the contemporary marketplace.

The study has revealed the connection between CSR and marketing stability and exposed specific research opportunities. Hence, one suggestion is to examine the long-term implications of CSR for marketing stability across various industries and locations. Other researchers could explore how cultural, economic, and regulatory factors affect the outcomes of CSR programs across different countries.

Moreover, the existence of CSR research themes can be investigated about how novel technologies, including blockchain or artificial intelligence, can improve the efficiency or transparency of CSR projects. These technologies have the potential to provide companies' consumers with a variety of reports and communication of CSR activities in a veritable, timely manner. There is research potential in examining CSR's internal effects on companies regarding how these programs affect employees, corporate culture, and organizational efficacy. A deeper insight into how CSR generates internal benefits might allow a better appreciation of its function in developing sustainable

business models. Lastly, future research could explore issues related to implementing CSR in SMEs since these firms have different contexts and constraints than large organizations.

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