

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CUSTOMER RETENTION AT SHOPRITE SHOPPING MALL, RING-ROAD, IBADAN

Haveez Omotayo Ahmadu¹

Department of Marketing, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State
Ahmaduhaveez@gmail.com

Adedayo Oluwafemi Samuel²

Department of Business Administration and Management
Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State
femiadedayo6077@gmail.com

Kolade Gloria Modupe³

Department of Business Administration and Management
Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State
samchrist2222@gmail.com

Ogundipe Oluwabukola Titilayo⁴

Department of Marketing
Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State
olubukola.dipe@gmail.com

Jimoh Korede Musiliu⁵

Department of Business Administration and Management
Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and customer retention at ShopRite Shopping Mall at Ring Road, Ibadan, Nigeria. Focusing on how the three key dimensions of CSR (environmental responsibility, community engagement, and ethical practices) influence customer retention and loyalty. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with a sample of 100 regular customers at ShopRite. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire employing a Likert scale format. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed statistically significant positive relationships between community engagement and ethical practices, and customer retention. Environmental responsibility showed a positive but non-significant relationship with customer retention. The regression model indicated that community engagement and ethical practices were significant predictors of customer retention. The study highlights the importance of integrating CSR into business strategies to enhance customer loyalty. Recommendations include strengthening community engagement, highlighting ethical practices, enhancing communication of environmental initiatives, and suggesting avenues for future research.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Retention, Environmental sustainability initiatives, Community involvement programs, Ethical business practices.

Introduction

The world of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has changed dramatically from just an act-of-charity add-on to that of a strategic business management. Internationally, the increasing focus on sustainable development has brought CSR to top of the corporate agenda. Firms around the world are acting on a growing recognition of the need to manage their social and environmental impacts, known in some circles as an age of 'addressingment', due to stakeholder pressure and demanding regulation. Embedding responsible practices in core activities is now essential for long-term survival and competitive edge (Porter & Kramer, 2021).

International concepts and programmes have significantly influenced the global CSR discourse. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have given companies a global model to direct the course of their work towards social good. The growing emphasis on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards also highlight the relevance of CSR for investors and other stakeholders. Such worldwide trend contributes values of transparency and accountability that drive companies to evidence their commitment to ethics and sustainability (United Nations, 2023).

At the national level, numerous governments have taken measures to encourage CSR as part of the global move toward responsible business behaviour. CSR for sustainable development is increasingly becoming recognized in Nigeria for its relevance in mitigating socio-economic problem. The government of Nigeria, in conjunction with several non-government organizations has called for responsible practices from businesses, stressing the importance for transnational corporations to contribute to the country's development objectives (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2022).

The retail industry in Nigeria has grown significantly, and today, shopping centres are common sight in urban streets. These shops are very important to the economy of Nigeria, and provide jobs which in turn contributes to local development. But what they do has a wider impact on society and the environment, hence the importance of CSR. The growing awareness of CSR in Nigerian consumers is affecting their purchasing decisions as consumers prefer businesses which are socially and environmental responsive (Adeleke 2024).

In Ibadan, a major commercial centre in Nigeria, that the presence of shopping malls like ShopRite has been on the increase. These malls bring large numbers of shoppers and they're a significant economic driver in the area. Hence, CSR values are to be adopted in these forms of businesses and needs to be embedded across the

business operations. This is a win not just for the community, but also helps their brand and customer retention.

In spite of the growing recognition of the importance of CSR, many organizations in Nigeria including those in retail business have not incorporated CSR fully into their core business operations. The study focusses on relationship between CSR and customer retention at ShopRite Shopping Mall, Ring-Road Ibadan. More specifically, this study examines the impact of three below CSR pivotal dimensions on customer retention:

- i. To assess how ShopRite's environmental initiatives influence customer loyalty.
- ii. Determine whether ShopRite's community involvement programs influence repeat purchase.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between ShopRite's ethical business practices and store preference.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is broadly characterized as commercial endeavors focused on stakeholders and social initiatives (Varadarajan et al. 1988). According to Kotler et al. (2005), CSR was then focused and developed to focus on economic development, and is defined as an enterprise's commitment to improving social welfare by contributing and using discretionary resources. Bowen (2013) described CSR as the central focus of all concerns based on three dimensions: the environment, the economy, and society. Previous study has identified the positive effects and roles of CSR on firms. Furthermore, CSR assists firms to prevent severe financial problems and obtain various benefits such as higher employee contentment, stronger customer trust, and less rigorous regulatory regulations (Arian, Sands et al. 2023, Kim et al. 2021, Nguyen et al 2021).

Customer Loyalty

A consumer's behavioral intention to maintain a consistent and long-term relationship with a service provider is referred to as customer loyalty (Singh et al. 2000). The importance of client loyalty to business services comes from the benefits it brings. First off, obtaining new clients is always more expensive than keeping current ones (Chiou et al. 2006). Second, customer service costs are low because setup costs are amortized over time, and loyal consumer profits increase over the length of the relationship (Chiou & Droge, 2006). Lastly, loyalty brings a competitive advantage based on a stable customer base (Kotler et al. 2009; Khan et al. 2022). Customer loyalty refers to a consumer's intention to maintain a constant and long-term relationship with a service provider (Singh et al. 2000). Client loyalty to company services is important because of the benefits it provides. For starters, acquiring new consumers is always more expensive than maintaining existing ones (Chiou et al. 2006). Second, customer service expenses are minimal because startup

expenditures are amortized over time, and profits from loyal customers grow over time (Chiou & Droge, 2006). Finally, loyalty provides a competitive advantage through a consistent customer base (Kotler et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2022). These interactions with customers may boost the degree of service use and the number of customers served by the organization, thereby bringing financial benefits to the business while offering fresh brands and goods to those around them, assisting in attracting new customers at lower costs (Arslan 2020, Lin et al. 2022). Client loyalty is becoming an increasingly crucial aspect for firms seeking to assure continuity in operations and long-term development (TulcanazaPrieto et al. 2022). In addition, various other factors have been discovered in prior research publications to influence customer loyalty, including gender, education level, and income (Henrique and de Matos 2015; Gong and Yi 2018; Klopota et al, 2014).

Environmental responsibility

A company must demonstrate environmental responsibility through its proactive efforts to decrease its environmental impact while working to protect nature according to modern CSR standards. The implementation of sustainable practices by businesses includes three main actions which are decreasing carbon emissions and waste reduction through circular economy systems and natural resource protection (Sharma & Vredenburg, 2021). Businesses now use eco-friendly technologies together with sustainable supply chain management systems to achieve environmental sustainability (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2022). Organizations need to disclose environmental information to stakeholders while actively involving them in environmental discussions to prove their genuine dedication (Lyon & Maxwell, 2023). Organizations that focus on environmental stewardship protect nature while building positive brand image and drawing in customers who care about environmental issues (Aguinis & Glavas, 2024).

Community Engagement

As part of CSR, Community involvement to companies means to its desire or effort to develop sustainable relationships with communities surrounding the local environment in which a company operates. This would include actively listening to local needs, collaborating with community development projects, and forming collaborations with community organizations (Brammer et al., 2021). Community engagement that works, means giving back to the local community (e.g., helping job-creating businesses like small sustainable farms, health care programs, and schools) to ensure community members prosper (Lee & Park, 2022). It also stresses on open, honest and joint-problem solving communications to ensure that business operations are in line with community values as well as beneficial to the communities (Jamali & Karam, 2023). Firms that emphasize community

engagement not only improve their social license to operate, but also gain trust and a positive reputation among local residents (Carroll & Shabana, 2024).

Ethical Practices

The ethical side of CSR shows that not only should corporations provide funds and do free work to the society, but also, they should be legally good and natural. This includes promoting an ethical decision-making culture, developing effective compliance programs and maintaining fair labor practices throughout the supply chain (De George, 2020). Companies are also assumed to respect human rights, refrain from engaging in bribery and corrupt businesses as well as conduct responsible marketing and advertising (Crane & Matten, 2021). Moreover, ethical conduct includes honest discussions with your stakeholders, responsibility for your conduct, and a dedication to establishing trust by acting ethically on a continual basis (Trevino & Nelson, 2022). By adopting ethical conduct, a company improves its image, retains its stakeholders, and creates a more equitable and sustainable environment for its industry (Schwartz, 2024).

Underpinning Theory

Over the past thirty years, Corporate Social Responsibility has garnered significant interest among scholars and business analysts, who have recognized it as a multifaceted construct. First, our conceptual model is supported by two major theories: the resource-based view and stakeholder theory. Current research is theoretically supported by these two theories. Several prominent academics have examined Freeman's (1983) stakeholder model in order to integrate marketing and social response (Frow & Payne, 2011; Hillebrand, Driessen, & Koll, 2015). Stakeholders always react favorably to CSR initiatives in the cutthroat world. Customer loyalty results from this favorable reaction. Stakeholder theory states that businesses must take into account the interests of all parties with an interest in the company, with customers being one of the most significant stakeholders (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008). Stakeholder theory, according to Donaldson and Preston (1995), needed to be more formal and precise in order to explain the connections between consumer reactions and corporate social responsibility. The stakeholder approach holds companies accountable to all stakeholders, including suppliers, customers, the government, and the community, in addition to stockholders (Polonsky, Maignan, Ferrell, & Ferrell, 2005).

Furthermore, a resource-based perspective contends that the firm's competitive position is a result of its resources (Alvarez and Busenitz, 2001). Both tangible and intangible organizational resources are important assets that could strengthen the business and give it a competitive edge (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014). The resource-based framework of competitive advantage in the global context was

covered by Fahy (2002). According to earlier studies, CSR as a strategic approach will produce long-term competitive advantages (Barney, 1991).

According to McWilliams and Siegel (2010), CSR initiatives can be utilized as a long-term competitive advantage. Therefore, in terms of whether businesses are interested in CSR initiatives to satisfy customers, the resource-based view supports our conceptual model (Barney, 1991). Stakeholder and resource-based theories are used in this study to support the current conceptual model for two primary reasons. Primarily both of these theories have provided theoretical and empirical support for the idea that corporate social responsibility initiatives affect behavioral outcomes through underlying mechanisms. Stakeholder theory, for example, explains the significance of each stakeholder in a relationship with the organization; as a result, corporate leaders take the stakeholders into account prior to planning (Jensen, 2001; Russo & Perrini, 2010). From the perspective of the stakeholder, the performance of the organization is always influenced by the interests of the individual stakeholder (Freeman, 1994; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Furthermore, a resource-based perspective bolstered the theoretical foundation of empirical and conceptual research (Das & Teng, 2000), which aids in gaining an organization's competitive edge since a business requires all resources for its operations (Barney, 2001). Moreover, the CSR conceptual framework should clearly reflect the use of stakeholder and resource-based theories. CSR has been a widely discussed subject among policy makers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses, as a result of the growing global demand for sustainable development goals, a sustainable economy, and a sharing economy (Matten & Moon, 2020). Numerous studies have confirmed that CSR can be implemented in various ways, such as by fulfilling stakeholder requirements, elevating corporate reputation, and affecting consumer behavior (Martinez et al., 2016; McWilliams & Siegel, 2011).

Empirical Review

The research carried out by Leonidou et al. (2020) has shown that consumers are placing more and more importance on the eco-friendly practices of companies when making their purchase decisions and a company that by all means is environmentally friendly will have a greater customer loyalty. Moreover, study conducted by Suki (2021) pointed out that customers will continue to be loyal to brands that participate in sustainable waste management and energy conservation practices. These findings indicate that the implementation of environmentally friendly measures by ShopRite, such as recycling programs and energy-efficient operations will result in customer retention in Ibadan which is good for business. The study conducted by Lee and Shin (2022) demonstrated that consumers regard a company as more trustworthy and socially responsible if it is actively involved in community development projects. This perception results in customer loyalty, which in turn leads to customer retention. Also, Jamali and Karam (2023) research

found out that local sourcing and community engagement initiatives create a bond with customers and make them identify with the brand, which leads to higher customer loyalty. These research works are the proof that ShopRite's participation in the community especially in areas like supporting local suppliers and investing in community projects is likely to build customer relationships deepen loyalty and retention rates will grow in Ibadan market. Empirical research has consistently shown that ethical business practices significantly contribute to customer retention. Research by Schwartz (2024) indicated that customers are more likely to remain loyal to brands that uphold ethical standards, such as fair pricing and transparent operations. A study by Crane and Matten (2021) also emphasized that customers are increasingly sensitive to ethical considerations and that companies with strong ethical reputations experience higher customer loyalty. These findings suggest that ShopRite's commitment to ethical practices, including fair pricing and transparent business operations, would likely enhance customer trust and contribute to higher retention rates in Ibadan.

Methodology

With the usage of Cochran's formular, the sample size was estimated at around 385. Nonetheless, due to the practical reasons and targeting particular group of population, this study enrolled 100 regular customers who have made at least 2 purchases per month. This was considered an adequate amount of data that yielded useful information in the context of the current investigation. The data was obtained through a structured questionnaire that questioned the customers regarding their perception of corporate social responsibility at ShopRite which encompasses the following areas; environmental responsibility, community engagement, and ethical practices, and the resulting effect on their desired retention of the customers. To measure attitudes and perceptions, the measurement instrument used the Likert scale format. Descriptive statistics was used to summarise and interpret the responses as statistical analysis was based on regression techniques. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of customers outside the stud in order to identify and remove any ambiguities or inconsistency, which were bound to be found. The concept of content validity was supported by close examination of the literature and using human knowledge of subject matter experts in validating that the questionnaire was accurate enough to reflect its intended constructs. The concerns on ethics were monitored during the research. The participants were made aware of the aim of the study and no coercion was used in order to take part in the study. The data obtained was treated in a discreet manner and was only utilized for the purpose of the study.

Analysis of Data Collected

		Coefficients ^a					
		Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error		Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.628	.466		3.494	.001	
	Environmental_Responsibility	.157	.097	.154	1.618	.109	
	Community_Engagement	.202	.079	.246	2.556	.012	
	Ethical_Practices	.287	.098	.273	2.917	.004	

a. Dependent Variable: Customer_Retention

Source: SPSS V_27 Output

Multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to find the relationship between the ethical practices, environmental responsibility, and community engagement as predictive of customer retention. The outcomes of the analysis are provided in the table below. The intercept was found to be significant ($B = 1.628$, $t(96) = 3.494$, $p = .001$). The customer retention had a strong positive predictor variable of ethical practices ($B = .287$, $t(96) = 2.917$, $p = .004$). Another important predictor also appeared to be community engagement ($B = .202$, $t(96) = 2.556$, $p = .012$). Contrary to this, environmental responsibility was not an important predictor of customer retention ($B = .157$, $t(96) = 1.618$, $p = 1.099$). These results suggest that both ethical practices and community engagement are important in customer retention but environment responsibility does not show statistically significant results in this model.

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.664	3	2.888	9.795	.000 ^b
	Residual	28.308	96	.295		
	Total	36.972	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer_Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical_Practices, Environmental_Responsibility, Community_Engagement

Source: SPSS V_27 Output

Results of the analysis of variance prove that the total regression model was statistically significant as the F-statistic was 9.795 with a p-value of less than .001. As a result, at least one of the predictive variables, which are ethical practices, environmental responsibility, or community involvement, played an important role in the prediction of customer retention. The regression sum of squares which is 8.664 is a measure of the amount of customer retention wave that can be explained

by the model, and the residual sum of squares which is 28.308 is a measure of the amount of customer retention wave that cannot be explained by the model.

Discussion of Findings

This paper examined the connection between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and customer retention in ShopRite Shopping Mall in Ring-road, Ibadan, in three aspects of corporate social responsibility, which included the environment responsibility, community engagement, and ethical practices. The results portrayed that there was positive statistically significant relationship between these CSR dimensions and customer retention. In particular, the findings demonstrated that the community engagement and ethical practice were prominent predictors of customer retention and environmental responsibility were positive but not significant, respectively. The positive relation found between community engagement and customer retention is highly significant, which can be compared with a similar study conducted by Carroll and Shabana (2010) and Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) who hold that, the more customers feel the business is a good citizen and participates in the social welfare of the local community, the more likely they will stay loyal to the organization. The presence of ShopRite in the local development projects, the provision of services to the local suppliers, and the development of jobs in Ibadan might be the factors which lead to favorable customer attitudes and enhance customer loyalty. The good positive correlation between customer retention and ethical practices also confirms existing literature (Maignan, 2001; Mohr et al., 2001). Shoppers are becoming more aware of the moral aspects of their buying behaviors and are willing to promote corporate social responsibilities through ones that act lawfully with their conscience, justice, and openness. Customers have the potential trust in the fair prices, ethical sourcing, and transparent efforts of ShopRite to emphasize its business processes and consequently form long-term relationships. Environmental responsibility had a positive correlation with retention of customers, but this was not significant in the current research. This conclusion is different with certain past studies (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006; Cone Communications, 2017) where inferences indicate a more significant correlation between environmental programs and customer loyalty. A reason behind such outcome may be that in the particular scenario in Ibadan, environmental concerns are not a major factor of customer selection as yet. Alternatively, not enough customers know about the green activities of ShopRite, which implies that more effective communications and exposure of these activities will be required. The total regression model had an explained variance of 23.4% in customer retention which implies that other variables which were not incorporated in this study would have contributed to the same. These may be the quality of the product, the price policy, customer experience, the atmosphere in the store, the competitive products.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence to support the fact that corporate social responsibility initiatives, particularly those that involve community engagement and ethics have statistically significant positive relationship with customer retention in Shoprite Shopping Mall, Ibadan. The results thus highlight the need to cover CSR in the basic strategic framework of firms to achieve enhanced customer loyalty and establishment of sustainable growth paths. Although the outcomes represented by the environmental responsibility indicators showed a positive tendency, more scholarly research is needed to illustrate its exact effect on customer retention in this specific context.

Based on the results of this research, the following suggestions are proposed:

Community Engagement: ShopRite should not only maintain but also extend its community engagement activities, concentrating on the programs that solve the community issues of Ibadan. As a result, it could involve collaborations with local organizations, provision of education and healthcare initiatives, and being a major player in community events.

Emphasize Ethical Practices: ShopRite can assure its customers of ethical business practices by making the communication of such practices visible and clear. This can be done by product transparent labeling, publishing fair sourcing policies, and conversing with customers about the company's pledge to ethical behavior.

Environmental Initiatives Communication: ShopRite should take steps to communicate more effectively their environmental initiatives. Thereby it may include in-store installation, social media campaigns, and partnership with ecological institution to enlighten the people on the company's pledge to eco-friendly practices.

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