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Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Image of MTN Nigeria Plc

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Abstract: *The study examined the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand image of MTN in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to variables of the impact of economic CSR activities, social CSR activities and environmental CSR activities and brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria. survey research design was adopted to carry out the research work* Abuja metropolis in FCT. *Purposive sampling technique was based on businesses men and women and other customers who use MTN network of sample size was 278 using the Cronbach Alpha method to determine the sample size. Questionnaire was used in order to collect the primary data from the individual customers. With the aid of ordinary least square regression analysis, the data were analyzed and the result showed that economic activities, social activities and environmental activities had a significant impact on brand loyalty with significant level of 0.04, 0.00 and 000 respectively. The study therefore concludes that CRS has a significant impact on brand image of MTN. The study recommends that management of MTN could find a way to innovate their economic responsibility practices by further engaging in these initiatives to enhance a brand image. This will lead to an increased customer base and finally increased profitability. Also, it recommends that MTN managers should undertake more morally justified CSR initiatives which will help to strengthen community welfare and their brand image. Finally, environmental protection programs should be developed. These programs can include recycling, procuring environment-friendly materials for use with MTN logo, engaging distributors and suppliers who are known to be environment friendly and creating products that do not pollute the environment.*

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, economic CSR activities, social CSR activities, environmental CSR activities, brand image

INTRODUCTION

Business organizations operate in a given environment characterized by dynamism, complexity and uncertainty. Thus, managers have taken into consideration the interests of many external public (stakeholders and society) in the performance of their organization's duties. More than ever before, stakeholders demand that business functions in a responsible way. Business responsibility and its relationship to the community in which it operates and seeks to serve are more important than ever. There is a growing consensus that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has crossed the line from being business jargon to becoming a critical business function. This is demonstrated both in academic circles, with dozens of empirically based studies and analyses published, and in managerial practice by the rising importance and publicity given to social responsibility issues (Dawood, 2019).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is attracting a lot of interest and attention in the competitive world market. The importance of CSR may also be revealed in the fact that firms are spending millions on CSR (Abugre and Anlesinya, 2019). However, CSR is an active contributor to building a good reputation and brand equity. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept that has gained steam around the world. Moreover, globalization has opened the door to a variety of challenges for governments all over the world. This has resulted in a growing visibility and corporate citizenship, as well as the opening of the door for an abstraction known as Corporate Social Responsibility, which requires companies to play a part in the advancement of society. CSR has become unavoidable in today's environment, and it plays a critical part in the efficacy of corporate branding (Alam & Islam, 2021).

Branding image has been a critical concern for many businesses in recent years. Each organization's most valuable asset is its brand, which is evaluated in terms of Brand Equity. Companies can better their Brand Equity by marketing their products in more unique and easily recognizable ways, charging higher prices and maintaining high quality standards.

Statement of the Problem

A critical analysis of firms in in Nigeria reveals that many organizations do not rely on the concept of CSR and whether it might have effect on its activities, high sales turnover, increased consumers' patronage and brand image. However, despite high customer's patronage of the firm, corporate social responsibility activities are still not apprehended in some part of country.

Among the benefits that CSR may provide to a company, financial success is the most crucial for shareholders. From a business perspective, some researchers argue that CSR can improve the competitiveness of a company (Cathrine, 2019; Giang, et al. 2022; Cherono and Maende, 2022; Wagana and Kabare, 2015). The relationship between a firm's CSR and its brand image has been the subject of lively debate. Despite that, various researchers have analysed the relationship between CSR and brand image, there are mixed results with regard to the benefits of such an analysis. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of corporate social responsibility on brand image of MTN in Abuja. Other specific objectives are to:

i. examine the impact of economic CSR activities on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja.
ii. identify the impact of social CSR activities on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja.
iii. determine the impact of environmental CSR activities on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja

Based on the set objectives, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

H0$_1$: Economic CSR activities have no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja.
H0$_2$: Social CSR activities have no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja.
H0$_3$: Environmental CSR activities have no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja.

The findings of the study will be beneficial to the management of MTN as it would highlight how corporate social responsibility programs would impact on their brand image. The company will employ new strategies and programs that could lead to greater impact on brand image. This study focuses on the impact of corporate social responsibility on brand image of MTN in Abuja. Corporate social responsibility is measured by economic, social and environmental activities while brand image is measured by brand loyalty. The study was centered in Abuja as the case study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept is fast becoming an important subject of discussion in a myriad of business and academic corridors as a tool for modern business management. (Lindgreen, et al. (2016), reported that most businesses are making serious attempts to define and integrate CSR concepts into their operations, as it is often considered the ethical side of corporate accountability and management. Holme and Watts (2000) define CSR as an ongoing effort initiated by businesses to encourage ethical behaviour aimed at promoting quality work-life balances and prosperity of the local community and society within which the organization bases its operations. Amin-Chaudhry (2016) consider it to be the self-regulation of activities. Carrol (1991) argues that for firms to be socially responsible, they must consider the environmental and legal consequences of their activities. These companies take the long-term wellbeing of the public into consideration and implement business activities with the aim of meeting, and even exceeding legal and environmental expectations. Marsden (2001) reports that socially responsible corporations develop profitable businesses by considering both positive and negative impacts on the environment and society.

Rupp et al. (2006) rally around the general description of voluntary actions taken by firms to improve social and environmental conditions; the firm's willingness to respond to issues pertaining to the economic, technological and legal environment to achieve social, environmental benefits in addition to economic benefits which is the premise of traditional businesses. CSR as a commercial strategy began in the United States in the 1960s and progressively has become popular worldwide (Blowfield & Murray, 2014). The European Commission defines CSR as an enterprise's responsibility for its impact on society (Moon, et al., 2012). The above definitions lead to the identification of basic tenets of CSR, which include attention to stakeholders, social dimension, economic dimension, voluntary dimension and attention to the environment. It pertains to enterprises undertaking responsibilities that are way beyond the scope of basic business relationships (Martinez et al.,2016).

Economic Activities

Economic CSR is an essential instrument for firms to segregate their products and services from those offered by their business rivals besides boosting their brand image. Maldonado-Guzman et al. (2017) focuses on how a business can grow and generate profits by benefitting the community and our society. This means that firms which make profits through benefiting the society and continuously enhancing its business activities for sustainability will always receive a positive brand equity from its stakeholders. Economic corporate social responsibility promotes brand image since it involves job creation, technological advancement, fair payment system for employees, being profitable, provision of quality products and creation of excellent and safe working environment (Goswami & Prajapati, 2019).

Social Activities

Social activities are concerned with ensuring there is fair treatment of all stakeholders, enforcement of code of conduct, pursue of morally correct decisions and adherence to standards. Organizations exercises social responsibility with good entities by its clients when equated to those that were solely focused on marketing and sponsorship activities. Social CSR boosts the brand image of an organizational body. Thus, social CSR is a master plan by which business entities utilizes their resources in order to create a good brand equity that guarantees them sustainable corporate rapport with their stakeholders (Manyange, 2013)

Environmental Activities

Dawood (2019) also noted that environmental CSR involving reduction of degradation of natural resources for corporate use, ensuring that the production process is environmentally friendly and enhancing products to be ecological boosts the corporate brand image which is an indicator of brand image. Creel (2012) noted that when a good public image of an entity is created as a consequence of the entity getting involved in preserving the environment, consequently leads to its customers being happy, the employees ends up being satisfied and costs are reduced. Firms employing environmental CSR initiatives are able to create distinctive competitive advantages over its competitors in terms of being able to access new market opportunities, gaining trust from investors and having a good reputation

Concept of Brand Image

Brand loyalty is clients' propensity to pick an item or a business among different items for a particular need (Novo, 2004). The idea of brand image has a rich history in the advertisement writings going reverse to the nineteen fifty. For the most part, brand icon capacities characterize item used by customers with separate association's putting fort has of aggressive contributions. The Meanings of brand image series as of extremely wide common near additional particular, for example, likening brand by the thought to brand’s contained identity similar to the implications related through them. Martineau (1958) propose meanings of brands appear to be adequately enveloping, yet sufficiently succinct, to define image within helpful manner promoting examination. The finds that brand is an draw round idea that suggests customers purchase brands used for their bodily characteristics and capacities or implications joined by the brand. Portrays stocker flection while mortal made out utilitarian character also mental characteristics. Such implications are appended to an administration during mix individual knowledge, correspondence with other individuals, and promotion. This will be the combination of folks' implications connected through an administration mark that effects conduct to brand, with publican related essential parts advising, inducing, and reminding. In total, administration brand reflection is the customer's mind photo product made because of brand-related boosts ((including, but not confined to, publicizing stimuli).

The image of an organization creates and develops over the long run and for the most part relies on organization's identity and unmistakable projects, their execution and how group saw its behavior. Reputation implies when an organization effectively fulfill the desire of a few partners (Fombrun, 1996) contend a decent repute to empower organizations toward indict far above the ground costs, pull in superior people or financial specialists with the ability to build simple contact to resources market.

Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is the position that demonstrates how likely a customer may turn to other brands, especially when that brand creates a change in the price or other aspects of product (Seyed Javadein & Shams, 2007). Brand loyalty can be defined as the customer's positive attitude towards a brand, the brand's commitment and his intention to continue to purchase that brand in the future.

Theoretical Review

In theoretical review, this research will review four major theories namely Stakeholder Theory, configurational, Corporate Social Performance Theory and Triple Bottom Line Theory.

Stakeholder Theory

This theory was introduced by Freeman (1984), and it defines a stakeholder as an individual or group of individuals who are affected by the decisions of business leaders (Friedman & Miles, 2002). This theory is a management tool used in explaining and determining the expectations of stockholders. Donaldson and Preston (1995) present this theory as a key instrument that contributes to management literature base on its value to descriptive and empirical research, its instrumental power, and its validity. The theory has since been expanded in the modern business environment to encompass the notion that through the creation of economic values, managers have the opportunity to build stronger relationships with parties both inside and outside an organization (Tilt, 2016). Wang et al. (2016) acknowledge the use of stakeholder theory in relation to studies on corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Van Limburg, Wentzel, Sanderman, and van Gemert-Pijnen (2015) posit that studies exploring stakeholders first gained widespread attention from organizational managers and business ethics that became the subject of great interest to scholars and business leaders in the 1970s. In advocating for the theory, the main protagonist, Freeman (1984), highlighted the importance of recognizing businesses as entities that serve to create value for stakeholders. Freeman (1984) inferred stakeholders as individuals or groups of individuals whose way of life is directly affected by the actions of an organization, including, but not limited to customers, employees, investors, suppliers, creditors, public interest groups, and government agencies. Wang et al. (2016) remarked that companies must not adapt CSR initiatives only as a means of managing public relations, instead expound it to ensure societal wellbeing. Ioannou and Serafeim (2015) attested to the need for strong and ethical leadership guidelines to transform companies into socially responsible organizations. Szekely and Knirsch (2005) reported on internal and external drivers of effective CSR adoption and implementation within organizations, noting that internal factors encompass managerial and organizational factors, and external factors encompass stakeholders' demands. This theory will be applied in this study to support the social responsibility aspect of this study.

Corporate Social Performance Theory

The modern definition of corporate social performance (CSP) is credited to the work of Wartick and Cochran's (1985), although there are significant contributors to the development of the theory, including Davis, 1973; Preston & Post, 1975; Frederick, 1978; Carroll, 1979; Freeman, 1984; Wartick & Cochran, 1985; Miles, 1987; and Wood (1991). Instead, key aspects of different conceptual developments have been integrated together to form a means for assessing the impact of a company's operations on different stakeholders. Davis (1973) and Preston's (1978) offered categories for assessing CSP policy but failed to define it. Echewing from making a precise definition of the concept, Carroll (1979) favored a four-dimensional model consisting of social responsibilities, social issues, and philosophies of social responsiveness. Wartick and Cochran (1985) built on these models and defined CSP as "an organization's assortment of principles of social responsibility, processes of social responsiveness, and policies, programs, and observable outcomes in relation to the firm's relationship with the society." This definition showed how stakeholders' competing perspectives could be integrated into a model to enable assessment of their impact.

Triple Bottom Line Theory

The theory was conceived and proposed by Elkington (1994) based on his research paper concerning business strategies for sustainable development that was published in the California Management Review. The theory denotes the environmental, social and economic value of investments accruing out of an organization's financial bottom line that guarantees organizational sustainability (Elkington, 2004). The theoretical model is purposed to precisely value assets and leverage the existing resources in order for the capital to be utilized in an efficient and effective manner (Hammer & Pivo, 2017). Consequently, the three elements of the Triple Bottom line theory are voluntary initiatives undertaken by an entity to enhance the environment, social or economic conditions (Byus, Deis & Ouyang, 2010). These initiatives are essential marketing tools for organizations seeking to boost their image and reputation brand (Jin & Chen, 2014). The environmental CSR dimension entails the organization employing initiatives to curb pollution in the surrounding it is incorporated in and involving the community in promoting environmental conservation in order to limit land degradation and harsh climate changes (Sheth et al., 2011).

Empirical Review

Several studies conducted in CSR and brand image indicates conflicting findings, for instance Tan, et al. (2022) examined the effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand equity and brand loyalty between public and private universities. Additionally, this study compares the direct effect of CSR on brand reputation; brand reputation on brand equity and loyalty; and the role of brand reputation as a mediator between public and private universities. Data were collected from one public and one private university in Malaysia, with 600 questionnaires collected from students of Taylor's University and the University of Malaya, both top private and public universities in Malaysia, respectively. The measurement model and hypothesis testing were assessed using partial least squares - structural equation modelling. The findings showed positive and sig- nificant effects for CSR on reputation, brand equity, and brand loyalty, either directly or indirectly, for private and public universities. There were significant disparities between public and private institutions in the direct and indirect impacts of CSR on brand loyalty, as well as the effects of brand reputation on brand loyalty. This study makes a unique theoretical contribution to the literature by comparing the direct and indirect effects of CSR on brand reputation, brand equity, and brand loyalty between public and private universities; in assessing the mediation role of brand reputation between CSR, brand equity, and loyalty through brand reputation; and in comparing this mediation effect between public and private universities. Furthermore, this research has practical implications for both public and private higher education institutions as they create their branding strategy.

METHODOLOGY

This study presents the methodology adopted for the study on the impact of corporate social responsibility on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja. A survey research design was employed to collect primary data for testing the research hypotheses and answering the research questions. The target population consisted of an infinite number of MTN customers within the Abuja metropolis, particularly in the Central Business District, Wuse Zones, Garki, and Wuse Zone 2. A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for infinite population at 5% level of significance, and purposive sampling technique was used to select businessmen, women, and active MTN network users. Data were collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale, while the reliability of the instrument was confirmed with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.71 to 0.91. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression technique to examine the relationship between economic, social, and environmental CSR activities (independent variables) and brand loyalty (dependent variable).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study examined impact of corporate social responsibility on brand image of MTN in Nigeria with corporate social responsibility as the independent variable and brand image as the dependent variable. The data are presented in the appendix.

Table1: Descriptive Statistics

	BRL	ECO	SOC	ENV
Mean	3.107500	3.422500	3.165000	3.377500
Median	3.210000	3.370000	3.215000	3.335000
Std. Dev.	0.328976	0.118989	0.822375	0.110265
Skewness	-0.831909	1.117306	-0.138064	1.037768
Kurtosis	2.044820	2.303151	1.449334	2.239489
Jarque-Bera	0.613443	0.913181	0.413468	0.814371
Probability	0.735855	0.633440	0.813236	0.665521
Sum	12.43000	13.69000	12.66000	13.51000
Sum Sq. Dev.	0.324675	0.042475	2.028900	0.036475
Observations	262	262	262	262

Source: Authors Computation, 2022 (Eview-9.0)

The summary of the descriptive statistics is captured in table 4. It can be observed that customer loyalty grew by about 3.1%. ECO was found to be 3.42%, SOC was found to grow by 3.37%, and ENV had an average value of 3.16%. The skeweness statistics which was used to show the direction of the normal distribution curve showed that, BRL and SOC had a negative distribution and they all tailed to the left-hand side of the normal distribution curve. Their skewness values gave -0.83, -0.13 respectively. However, ECO and ENV were found to have positive skewness and tailed to the right side of the normal distribution.

The Jarque-berra statistics which was used to show the normality of the data revealed that Brand Loyalty (BRL), ECO, and SOC are normally distributed at 5% level of significance. However, ENV was also found to be normally distributed, but at 10% statistical level.

Statistical Test of Hypotheses

The four hypotheses formulated in this study were tested using the F-statistics. The F-statistics is a test of the overall significance of the entire variables used in the regression model; it is used to denote whether the joint impact of the explanatory (exogenous/ independent variables) actually have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The decision rule for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis for any of these tests will be based on the Probability Value (PV). If the PV is less than 5% or 0.05 (that is PV < 0.05), it implies that the regressor in question is statistically significant at 5% level; otherwise, it is not significant at that level.

Table:OLS Regression Results on CSR and Brand Image

Dependent Variable: BRL
Method: Least Squares
Sample: 262
Included observations: 262

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.212356	0.022989	52.73543	0.0121
ECO	0.113319	0.058207	1.94303	0.0495
SOC	0.542450	0.280098	1.93664	0.0099
ENV	2.853737	0.227271	12.55654	0.0006

R-squared	0.599856	Mean dependent var	3.107500
Adjusted R-squared	0.519569	S.D. dependent var	0.328976
S.E. of regression	0.006828	Akaike info criterion	-7.021867
Sum squared resid	4.66E-05	Schwarz criterion	-7.482146
Log likelihood	17.04373	Hannan-Quinn criter.	-8.031915
F-statistic	12.11533	Durbin-Watson stat	1.924874
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000198		

Source: Authors Computation, 2022 (Eview-9.0)

F-statistic: The F-statistics which is used to examine the overall significance of regression model showed that the result is significant, as indicated by the value of the *F*-statistic, 12.11found to be significant at the 5.0 per cent level. That is, the F-statistic P-value of 0.001 is less than 0.05.

The (R-square)

The coefficient of determination (R-square), used to measure the goodness of fit of the estimated model, indicates that the model is poor in prediction. The (R-square) value of 59.98 shows that corporate social responsibility influence jointly has a fair impact on brand image of MTN in Nigeria. It indicates that about 59.98 per cent of the variation in business startups is explained by corporate social responsibility, while the remaining unaccounted variation of 40.02 percent is captured by the white noise error term. Durbin Watson (DW) statistic was used to test for the presence of serial correlation or autocorrelation among the error terms. The model also indicates that there is no autocorrelation among the variables as indicated by Durbin Watson (DW) statistic of 1.92. This shows that the estimates are unbiased and can be relied upon for policy decisions.

Test of Hypothesis One:

H01: Economic activities has no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria.

From the regression result in Table 4.2, it was observed that the calculated t-value for economic activities is 1.94 and whilst the tabulated (absolute) value is 1.96. Since the t-calculated is less than the t-tabulated (1.94 <1.96) it thus falls in the acceptance region and hence, we reject the null hypothesis (**$H0_1$**) with the value of 0.0495. The conclusion here is that economic activities has a significant impact on brand loyalty.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H02: Social activities has no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria

Mores so, from the regression result in Table 4.2 the calculated t-value for social activities is 1.93 and the critical value is 1.96 under 95% confidence level. Since the t-calculated is less than the critical value (1.93 < 1.96) it also falls in the acceptance region and hence, we reject the second null hypothesis (**$H0_2$**) with the value of 0.0099. Hence, it was concluded that social activities have a significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Three

H03: Environmental activities has no significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria

Lastly, the calculated t-value for environmental activities was found to be 12.55 and also by rule of thumb, the tabulated value is 1.96 under 95% confidence interval levels. Since the calculated t-value for environmental activities was found to be greater than the tabulated value (that is; 12.55> 1.96), we thus, reject the third null hypotheses ($H0_3$) with the value of 0.0006 and concluded that environmental activities have a significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results revealed that economic activities has significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Abuja. These was supported by Amin-Chaudhry (2016), who indicated that economic social responsibility are positively related, and profitable companies are better social players. More so, the study revealed that social activities have significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria. These was in line with studies by Al Mubarak, et al. (2019), whose results showed a statistically significant relationship between corporate social responsibility and the brand image of firms. This was further supported by Choongo (2017) findings which indicated that social responsibility had a positive and significant effect on brand image.

However, the study revealed that environmental activities has a significant impact on brand loyalty of MTN in Nigeria**.** This was in line with studies by Okwemba, Chitiavi, Egessa, Douglas and Musiega (2014), who found that the effect of environmental activities on the financial success of the banks was positive but insignificant effect where the study noted that such activities were salient and there was lack of awareness about their existence among the customers. This was, however contrary to studies by Ganescu and Dindire (2014), who found that environmental responsibility and brand loyalty had a positive correlation because activities like reducing pollution enhanced safety among local communities, consumers of products and employees. This was also supported by Kinoti (2017), whose study showed that green marketing practices, innovativeness, effectiveness, and competitive advantage had a significant effect on brand image.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, economic, social and environmental play an important role in determining brand loyalty of MTN and action among policy makers. This study thus showed that it is possible to conclude that the level of the brand image of services produced by MTN and the level of firm reputation will depend on the adoption and implementation of CSR actions because the CSR activities have positive, significant effects in the brand image through the market preference but they also have the same effects in the loyalty of enterprises because their business associates, clients and consumers acknowledge their own social responsibility. Therefore, it is possible to conclude, with the results obtained, that there is a very close link between CSR activities, the brand image of MTN in Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this study, the research proposes some recommendations for action to be considered and implemented by relevant parties concerned as follows:

i. The study recommends that the management of MTN could find a way to innovate their economic responsibility practices. These practices should be tailored to be effective even with the current economic downturn in Nigeria. By further engaging in these initiatives to enhance a brand image. This will lead to an increased customer base and finally increased profitability.
ii. The research recommends that MTN managers should undertake more morally justified CSR initiatives which will help to strengthen community welfare and their brand image. The customers will appreciate a firm which does not involve in unethical behaviour, especially in the view of making quick profits.
iii. Finally, the study recommends that environmental protection programs should be developed. These programs can include recycling, procuring environment-friendly materials for use with MTN logo, engaging distributors and suppliers who are known to be environment friendly and creating products that do not pollute the environment.

Suggestion for further study

This study sought to find out the impact of corporate social responsibility on image of MTN in Abuja. The study suggests a review of the effect of corporate social responsibility on the performance of other companies in Nigeria. The study also recommends an in-depth review of the challenges that are faced by the companies in developing and implementing the CSR initiatives. The study failed in undertaking legal activities which might be detrimental to brand image.

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