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Research Article

Reviewing the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives on Brand Image: A Brand Perception Survey

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Abstract

This research study investigates the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand image in the Indian market, focusing on consumer perceptions across major metropolitan cities. With CSR becoming a legal requirement for large companies in India, this study aims to explore how CSR efforts influence brand image, trust, and loyalty. A survey method was employed, gathering data from 500 respondents across the FMCG and automobile sectors. The study uses statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis to identify key CSR factors that significantly shape brand image. Results indicate a moderately strong positive relationship between CSR initiatives and brand image, with environmental sustainability, community welfare, and employee welfare being the most influential CSR factors. The study also reveals that consumers who are aware of a company's CSR efforts tend to perceive the brand more favourably. CSR activities significantly enhance brand trust, loyalty, and corporate reputation, emphasising the need for effective CSR communication. This research provides insights into the growing importance of CSR in shaping brand perception in the Indian context, urging companies to adopt meaningful CSR strategies that align with consumer values for sustained brand success.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Social Responsibility, brand image, consumer perception, environmental sustainability, brand loyalty, India

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved as a fundamental concept for businesses worldwide, directly influencing consumer perceptions, corporate reputation, and brand image. CSR is broadly defined as the voluntary integration of social, environmental, and ethical considerations into a company's business operations to contribute to societal well-being. The growing focus on sustainability and ethical business practices has led to increased expectations from consumers, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies for companies to adopt CSR initiatives (Dawood, 2019). This shift highlights the importance of CSR not merely as a philanthropic endeavour but as a strategic tool for competitive advantage and brand differentiation.

In a globalised marketplace where consumers are increasingly aware of social issues, CSR initiatives provide companies with the opportunity to stand out from competitors. Research has shown that consumers are more likely to support brands that engage in socially responsible practices, such as environmental sustainability, fair labour practices, and community engagement (Kojo, 2016). For instance, a study conducted in Ghana revealed that companies with a strong commitment to CSR initiatives were perceived more positively by consumers, which led to increased brand loyalty and purchasing intent (Kojo, 2016). This underscores the growing importance of CSR in shaping brand image and building long-term customer relationships.

As the influence of CSR on consumer behaviour becomes more evident, companies across industries have increasingly adopted CSR strategies to enhance their brand image. In particular, CSR activities have been found to positively impact brand image by fostering trust, loyalty, and a sense of corporate responsibility among consumers (Thuy & Minh, 2020). For example, a study conducted among Generation Z consumers in Vietnam revealed that CSR efforts by Co.opmart, a popular supermarket chain, significantly influenced the brand's image, especially among younger consumers who value ethical business practices (Thuy & Minh, 2020). This trend reflects a growing consumer demand for transparency and accountability in corporate activities, further solidifying the role of CSR in modern business strategies.

The significance of CSR in brand management is further supported by research indicating its positive effects on corporate reputation and consumer loyalty. In the hospitality industry, for example, CSR initiatives have been shown to enhance both corporate image and customer satisfaction. Aziz (2020) found that city hotels in Klang Valley, Malaysia, that implemented CSR activities experienced improved brand recognition and performance, illustrating the direct correlation between CSR and corporate image (Aziz, 2020). Similarly, Dawood (2019) emphasised that CSR plays a crucial role in shaping brand perceptions, particularly in industries where customer trust and satisfaction are key drivers of success.

CSR initiatives are also recognised for their impact on internal stakeholders, particularly employees. Employee-oriented CSR activities, such as fair treatment, ethical workplace practices, and community involvement, have been found to positively influence employer brand and corporate reputation (Özcan & Elçi, 2020). A study by Özcan and Elçi (2020) demonstrated that CSR activities aimed at employees not only improved their perception of the company's brand but also strengthened the overall brand image in the eyes of consumers. This highlights the dual impact of CSR on both internal and external stakeholders, further enhancing its significance in brand management.

In addition to its positive effects on brand image, CSR has been shown to mitigate risks associated with supply chain disruptions and other external challenges. Singh (2021) found that companies with robust CSR practices were better equipped to manage supply chain risks and protect their corporate reputation during crises. This suggests that CSR can serve as a buffer against negative externalities, helping companies maintain a positive brand image even in challenging circumstances (Singh, 2021).

Moreover, CSR has been linked to the creation of a responsible brand image, particularly when combined with corporate heritage identity. Blombäck and Scandelius (2013) highlighted the importance of integrating CSR communication with a company's corporate heritage to enhance brand responsibility. Their research indicated that CSR communication linked to corporate heritage positively influenced consumers' perceptions of the brand, particularly in terms of responsibility and ethical conduct (Blombäck & Scandelius, 2013). This finding underscores the potential for CSR to not only build a positive brand image but also to reinforce a company's legacy and long-standing commitment to social responsibility.

In conclusion, CSR has emerged as a critical component of brand image management, influencing consumer perceptions, corporate reputation, and customer loyalty across various industries. From enhancing brand recognition in the hospitality sector to building trust among Generation Z consumers in retail, CSR initiatives play a pivotal role in shaping how brands are perceived by the public. Furthermore, CSR's impact extends beyond external stakeholders, as employee-oriented CSR activities contribute to a positive employer brand and corporate reputation. As businesses continue to navigate an increasingly socially conscious marketplace, the integration of CSR into brand strategy will remain essential for sustaining a positive brand image and achieving long-term success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in shaping brand image has been extensively explored across different sectors and geographies. Studies consistently highlight the positive relationship between CSR initiatives and brand perception, suggesting that socially responsible actions by companies can significantly enhance how consumers perceive their brand.

One of the foundational studies in this area is by **Dawood (2019)**, which examined the influence of perceived CSR on brand image, satisfaction, and trust. The study found that CSR positively affected brand image, which in turn enhanced

consumer satisfaction and trust. This comprehensive study used quantitative survey methods and regression analysis to establish that CSR does not directly influence trust and satisfaction but does so indirectly through its positive effect on brand image. These findings emphasise the mediating role of brand image in the CSR-consumer relationship, especially in sectors where trust and satisfaction are critical to maintaining customer loyalty (Dawood, 2019).

Similarly, **Lee and Lee (2018)** analysed how corporate and brand-level CSR initiatives affect brand image and purchase intention. Their research showed that corporate-level CSR activities had a stronger impact on brand image and purchase intention than brand-level CSR initiatives. This study used an experimental design and structural equation modelling to analyse the mediation effect of reciprocity perception between CSR activities and brand image. The findings demonstrated that consumers perceive corporate-level CSR as more genuine and impactful, thereby creating a more favourable brand image (Lee & Lee, 2018).

In the retail sector, **Thuy and Minh (2020)** conducted a study focusing on the impact of CSR on the brand image of Co.opmart, a supermarket chain in Vietnam. Their research targeted Generation Z consumers and used a survey methodology to gauge consumer perceptions. The study revealed that CSR activities significantly improved the brand image among younger consumers, who tend to prioritise ethical and socially responsible business practices. This aligns with the growing consumer demand for transparency and accountability in corporate actions (Thuy & Minh, 2020).

Another significant contribution comes from **Aziz (2020)**, who explored the impact of CSR on corporate image in the hospitality industry, particularly in hotels located in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study demonstrated that CSR initiatives in the form of environmental sustainability and community engagement significantly boosted the corporate image of hotels. The research underscored that CSR could be an effective strategy for enhancing both performance and public perception, especially in service-oriented industries where reputation plays a critical role in customer retention (Aziz, 2020).

In the context of employee-oriented CSR, **Özcan and Elçi (2020)** explored how CSR activities affect employer brand and corporate reputation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Their research used a cross-sectional survey of employees and revealed that CSR initiatives aimed at enhancing employee welfare positively influenced both the employer brand and overall corporate reputation. This study adds to the growing body of literature that recognises the internal benefits of CSR, highlighting how responsible business practices can improve both internal and external brand perception (Özcan & Elçi, 2020).

In another related study, **Blombäck and Scandelius (2013)** explored the role of corporate heritage in CSR communication and its impact on responsible brand image. Using case studies and content analysis, the authors found that companies with a long-standing history could leverage their corporate heritage in

CSR communication to enhance their responsible brand image. However, they noted that corporate heritage alone was insufficient to positively influence brand image unless it was linked to ongoing CSR activities. This finding highlights the importance of integrating CSR into a broader brand communication strategy (Blombäck & Scandelius, 2013).

Kojo (2016) focused on the role of CSR in shaping brand perception in developing markets, particularly Ghana. This study found that consumers in developing markets were highly responsive to CSR initiatives, especially those related to community welfare and environmental protection. Using a survey-based approach, the study showed that companies with strong CSR programs were perceived more favourably, which led to higher brand loyalty and consumer trust. This is particularly relevant in regions where social and environmental challenges are more pronounced, making CSR a powerful tool for brand differentiation (Kojo, 2016).

Lastly, **Lee et al. (2017)** investigated the impact of CSR on customer loyalty in Taiwan's non-life insurance industry. The study found that CSR positively influenced corporate reputation, which, in turn, affected customer loyalty. The authors used a structural equation model to demonstrate that brand image played a mediating role between CSR activities and customer loyalty. Their research underscores the importance of CSR in industries where customer retention is crucial for long-term success (Lee, Chang & Lee, 2017).

While there is considerable evidence supporting the positive relationship between CSR and brand image, much of the existing research has focused on specific sectors or geographies, such as retail, hospitality, and insurance. However, limited attention has been given to the Indian context, particularly in terms of how CSR initiatives influence brand perception across different consumer demographics. This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of CSR initiatives on brand image in India through a brand perception survey. By focusing on India, where CSR is legally mandated for large companies, this research will provide valuable insights into how Indian consumers perceive brands engaged in socially responsible practices. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for companies looking to strengthen their brand image in one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design, employing a survey method to collect primary data from consumers in India. The research aims to understand the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand image across different consumer demographics in the Indian market. Given the legal requirements in India for large companies to engage in CSR, this research is particularly focused on analysing how these initiatives influence consumer perceptions.

The study population consists of consumers from major metropolitan areas, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai. These cities were chosen due to their economic significance and diverse consumer base. The sample size consists of 500 respondents, ensuring a comprehensive

representation of various age groups, income levels, and educational backgrounds. The survey was distributed online through social media platforms and email invitations.

The survey was structured to gather information on consumers' awareness of CSR initiatives, their perceptions of brand image, and how CSR activities influenced their purchasing decisions. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert scale-based questions, ensuring that responses could be quantitatively analysed. Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of a company's CSR efforts on a scale of 1 to 5,

with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree."

The study focuses on large Indian companies in the FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) and automobile sectors, both of which have a strong presence in the CSR domain. These sectors were selected due to their high level of consumer interaction and well-documented CSR activities.

The primary data was collected through an online survey. The details of the data collection source are outlined in the table below:

Source Detail	Description
Survey Platform	Google Forms
Target Population	Consumers from Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai
Sampling Method	Stratified random sampling
Sample Size	500 respondents
Data Collection Period	April 1, 2025 – April 30, 2025
Key Variables Measured	CSR awareness, brand image perception, and CSR influence on purchasing decisions
Questionnaire Format	Closed-ended and Likert scale questions (1–5 rating scale)
Sectors Covered	FMCG and Automobile
Respondent Demographics	Age, income level, and education level
Survey Distribution Channels	Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), email invitations
Incentives Provided	Respondents were entered into a raffle for a chance to win an online shopping voucher.

To analyse the collected data, the study employed **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)** software. SPSS was used to perform both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics, means, and frequencies were calculated to summarise the respondents' demographics and their perceptions of CSR initiatives and brand image.

Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between CSR initiatives and brand image. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength and direction of the association between these two.

variables. A multiple regression analysis was also performed to identify the factors of CSR that significantly influenced brand image. The results of the statistical analyses were interpreted to understand the patterns and trends in consumer perception of CSR activities and their influence on brand image.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings of the survey conducted among 500 respondents in India. The data was analysed using SPSS, and the results are displayed in tables. Each table is followed by an interpretation that explains the key insights.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
18-25	150	30
26-35	120	24
36-45	130	26
46-55	50	10
56+	50	10
Gender		
Male	280	56
Female	220	44
Income Level		
Below ₹50,000	140	28
₹50,000-₹1,00,000	210	42
Above ₹1,00,000	150	30

Interpretation:

The sample population is relatively balanced in terms of age distribution, with the majority falling between the ages of 18 and 45. The gender distribution is also relatively balanced, although slightly skewed towards male respondents. In terms of

income, most respondents earn between ₹50,000 and ₹1,00,000 per month, indicating that the survey targeted middle-income individuals, which is an important demographic in terms of brand perception and CSR awareness.

Table 2: Awareness of CSR Initiatives

CSR Awareness	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Aware of the company's CSR initiatives	350	70
Not aware of the company's CSR initiatives	150	30

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (70%) are aware of CSR initiatives undertaken by companies, indicating a relatively high level of awareness among the consumers surveyed. This suggests that CSR communication efforts by brands are reaching a significant portion of the population. However, 30% of respondents are still unaware of these initiatives, highlighting the need for companies to improve the visibility of their CSR efforts.

Table 3: Perception of CSR's Importance in Brand Image

Perception	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Important	210	42
Important	180	36
Neutral	80	16
Not Important	20	4
Not at All Important	10	2

Interpretation:

A significant portion of the respondents (42%) believe that CSR is "very important" for a brand's image, while another 36% consider it "important." This indicates that CSR is a critical factor in shaping how consumers perceive brands. Only a small percentage (6%) feel that CSR is not important, which suggests that the majority of consumers expect companies to be socially responsible.

Table 4: Influence of CSR on Purchasing Decisions

CSR Influence on Purchase	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Influences	150	30
Somewhat Influences	200	40
Neutral	100	20
Does Not Influence	40	8
Strongly Does Not Influence	10	2

Interpretation:

The data shows that CSR has a strong influence on purchasing decisions for 70% of respondents, either "strongly" or "somewhat." This suggests that CSR initiatives play a critical role in motivating consumers to support certain brands. Only a minority of respondents (10%) believe that CSR does not influence their purchasing behaviour, further reinforcing the significance of CSR in consumer decision-making processes.

Table 5: Perception of Brand Trustworthiness Due to CSR

CSR Impact on Trustworthiness	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Enhances Trust	160	32
Somewhat Enhances Trust	200	40
Neutral	90	18
Does Not Enhance Trust	40	8
Strongly Does Not Enhance Trust	10	2

Interpretation:

A total of 72% of respondents believe that CSR enhances brand trustworthiness, either "strongly" or "somewhat." This indicates that CSR efforts are viewed positively in terms of building consumer trust. Trust is a key component of brand loyalty, and these results suggest that consumers tend to trust brands that engage in socially responsible behaviour.

Table 6: Preferred Types of CSR Activities

CSR Activities	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Environmental Initiatives	180	36
Community Welfare	130	26
Employee Welfare	90	18
Ethical Business Practices	70	14
Philanthropy	30	6

Interpretation:

Environmental initiatives were the most preferred type of CSR activity among respondents, with 36% considering it the most important. Community welfare and employee welfare were also highly valued, reflecting the growing expectation among consumers for companies to prioritise the well-being of the planet and society. This suggests that brands that focus on environmental sustainability and community support are more likely to improve their brand image.

Table 7: Correlation Between CSR Awareness and Brand Image Perception

CSR Awareness	Mean Brand Image Score
Aware of CSR	4.2
Not aware of CSR	3.1

Interpretation:

The results indicate that respondents who are aware of a company's CSR activities tend to have a higher brand image perception, with a mean score of 4.2 compared to 3.1 for those who are not aware. This suggests that CSR awareness positively influences how consumers perceive the brand, making CSR communication a crucial element of brand strategy.

Table 8: CSR's Influence on Brand Loyalty

CSR Impact on Brand Loyalty	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Increases Loyalty	140	28
Somewhat Increases Loyalty	200	40
Neutral	120	24
Does Not Increase Loyalty	30	6
Strongly Does Not Increase Loyalty	10	2

Interpretation:

A significant proportion of respondents (68%) believe that CSR initiatives increase their loyalty to a brand. This highlights the importance of CSR in cultivating long-term customer relationships, as brands that engage in socially responsible activities are more likely to retain their customers.

Table 9: Impact of CSR on Corporate Reputation

CSR Impact on Reputation	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Enhances Reputation	170	34
Somewhat Enhances Reputation	190	38
Neutral	100	20
Does Not Enhance Reputation	30	6
Strongly Does Not Enhance Reputation	10	2

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (72%) believe that CSR enhances a company's corporate reputation. A strong reputation is critical for brand success, and these findings suggest that CSR initiatives play a pivotal role in maintaining a positive corporate image.

Table 10: CSR's Effect on Perceived Product Quality

CSR Impact on Product Quality	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Enhances Quality	130	26
Somewhat Enhances Quality	170	34
Neutral	140	28
Does Not Enhance Quality	40	8
Strongly Does Not Enhance Quality	20	4

Interpretation:

A total of 60% of respondents felt that CSR initiatives positively influenced their perception of product quality, either "strongly" or "somewhat." This suggests that CSR efforts can improve consumer perceptions of a brand's offerings, further enhancing overall brand equity.

Correlation Analysis: CSR Initiatives and Brand Image

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between CSR initiatives and brand image. The results of the correlation analysis are as follows:

Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
CSR Initiatives	0.65	0.001 (p < 0.05)

Interpretation:

The Pearson correlation coefficient of **0.65** indicates a **moderately strong positive relationship** between CSR initiatives and brand image. This means that as companies engage in more CSR initiatives, their brand image is likely to improve. The significance level ($p = 0.001$) indicates that this relationship is statistically significant, with a high degree of confidence ($p < 0.05$). This finding supports the hypothesis that CSR initiatives positively influence consumer perceptions of a brand.

Multiple Regression Analysis: Factors Influencing Brand Image

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the specific CSR factors that significantly impact brand image. The independent variables included in the regression model were various aspects of CSR (environmental initiatives, community welfare, employee welfare, ethical business practices, and philanthropy). The dependent variable was the overall perception of brand image.

The results of the regression analysis are summarised below:

CSR Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	Significance (p-value)
Environmental Initiatives	0.42	0.38	0.002 (p < 0.05)
Community Welfare	0.31	0.29	0.015 (p < 0.05)
Employee Welfare	0.24	0.22	0.031 (p < 0.05)
Ethical Business Practices	0.15	0.14	0.082 (p > 0.05)
Philanthropy	0.08	0.06	0.193 (p > 0.05)

Interpretation:

The regression analysis reveals that **environmental initiatives** (B = 0.42, p = 0.002), **community welfare** (B = 0.31, p = 0.015), and **employee welfare** (B = 0.24, p = 0.031) are the most significant predictors of brand image, as their p-values are below the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. This suggests that companies focusing on these aspects of CSR are more likely to positively influence their brand image.

In contrast, **ethical business practices** and **philanthropy** were not found to have a statistically significant effect on brand image in this sample, as their p-values were above 0.05. This might indicate that, while still important, these factors are less impactful in shaping brand perception compared to other CSR activities.

Model Summary (Multiple Regression)

R	R²	Adjusted R²
0.71	0.50	0.48

Interpretation:

The R² value of **0.50** indicates that **50%** of the variance in brand image can be explained by the CSR factors included in the model. This suggests that CSR initiatives play a significant role in influencing brand image, although other factors not included in the model may also contribute to brand perception.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

initiatives and brand image. As discussed in section 4, the results demonstrate that CSR activities are positively correlated with consumer perceptions of brand image, trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. This section aims to interpret these findings in comparison with the literature review presented in section 2, while also addressing how they contribute to filling the identified literature gap—specifically, the lack of focus on CSR's impact on brand image within the Indian context.

5.1. Comparing Findings with Existing Literature

The results of this study align with the extensive body of research that highlights the positive impact of CSR initiatives on brand image. In particular, the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.65 indicates a moderately strong relationship between CSR initiatives and brand image, which is consistent with earlier findings by Dawood (2019) and Lee et al. (2017). Both studies emphasise that CSR positively influences brand image and consumer loyalty, which supports the notion that socially responsible companies are perceived more favourably by consumers.

The high level of CSR awareness (70%) and its positive impact on brand perception reported by respondents (as reflected in Tables 2 and 7) corroborate the findings of Kojo (2016) and Thuy and Minh (2020), who both noted that consumers in developing markets like Ghana and Vietnam are highly responsive to CSR activities. The results from this study show that Indian consumers also display a high degree of sensitivity toward CSR, particularly regarding the alignment between CSR initiatives and the overall brand image. This adds to the growing consensus that CSR initiatives are vital in influencing consumer behaviour across various emerging economies.

Moreover, the finding that CSR strongly influences purchasing decisions for 70% of respondents (Table 4) echoes the research by Lee and Lee (2018), which showed that CSR activities can significantly affect consumer purchase intention, especially when these activities align with consumer values. The regression analysis further reveals that environmental initiatives, community welfare, and employee welfare are the most significant predictors of brand image, similar to the conclusions drawn by Aziz (2020) in the context of the hospitality industry, where community and environmental engagement play crucial roles in shaping corporate reputation.

5.2. Filling the Literature Gap

While the existing literature provides substantial evidence for the positive relationship between CSR and brand image, much of the prior research has focused on specific sectors and geographies, such as retail and hospitality in markets like the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia. This study aimed to address the gap by focusing on India, a market where CSR has become legally mandated for large companies under the Companies Act, 2013. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into how Indian consumers perceive CSR activities, offering new evidence that Indian consumers—like their counterparts in other emerging markets—are significantly influenced by CSR in their perception of brand image.

Moreover, the literature has not extensively explored the different types of CSR activities that resonate most with consumers in India. This study's focus on environmental initiatives, community welfare, and employee welfare, as the most significant predictors of brand image, fills this gap by offering a clearer understanding of which CSR dimensions are most valued by Indian consumers. As Table 6 shows, environmental initiatives (36%) were the most preferred CSR activity, followed by community welfare (26%) and employee welfare (18%). This indicates that Indian consumers prioritise CSR activities that have a direct and visible impact on society and the environment, a finding that aligns with the conclusions of **Özcan and Elçi (2020)**, who emphasised the role of employee-oriented CSR in shaping employer brand and corporate reputation.

5.3. Implications of Findings

The implications of these findings are significant for companies operating in India, especially those in consumer-facing industries like FMCG and automobiles. First, the strong correlation between CSR initiatives and brand image ($r = 0.65$) indicates that companies must prioritise CSR as a key component of their brand strategy. Brands that fail to engage in meaningful CSR activities risk losing consumer trust and loyalty, as demonstrated by the fact that 72% of respondents believe CSR enhances trust (Table 5).

Second, the fact that environmental initiatives were the most preferred type of CSR activity suggests that companies should invest in sustainable practices that contribute to environmental protection. This finding aligns with global trends where consumers, particularly younger demographics, increasingly demand that brands take responsibility for their environmental impact. As noted in Thuy and Minh (2020), Generation Z consumers are particularly sensitive to environmental issues, and companies that prioritise sustainability are more likely to appeal to this key demographic.

The regression analysis further supports the importance of environmental and community welfare initiatives. Environmental initiatives had the highest impact on brand image ($B = 0.42$, $p = 0.002$), indicating that consumers perceive these efforts as highly valuable. Community welfare and employee welfare also had significant positive effects, further emphasising the importance of CSR initiatives that benefit society at large.

Another key finding is the relationship between CSR awareness and brand image perception (Table 7). Respondents who were aware of a company's CSR initiatives rated its brand image more favourably (mean score of 4.2) than those who were not aware (mean score of 3.1). This reinforces the importance of CSR communication, as brands that effectively communicate their CSR efforts are more likely to enhance their public image. Companies should therefore invest in comprehensive CSR communication strategies to ensure that their initiatives reach a broad audience.

5.4. Broader Implications for Brand Strategy

These findings have broader implications for brand strategy in India and other emerging markets. The positive correlation between CSR initiatives and consumer loyalty (68% of respondents) indicates that brands that engage in CSR are more likely to cultivate long-term customer relationships. As noted by Lee et al. (2017), customer loyalty is a key driver of brand equity, and CSR can be a powerful tool for building this loyalty. Companies that integrate CSR into their core business strategy are likely to see increased brand loyalty, which can translate into higher customer retention rates and long-term profitability.

The results also highlight the importance of aligning CSR initiatives with consumer values. The significant impact of environmental and community welfare initiatives on brand image suggests that companies must be attuned to the social and environmental concerns of their target audience. Brands that engage in token CSR efforts or focus on activities that are not aligned with consumer values may fail to achieve the desired impact on brand perception.

5.5. Significance of CSR in the Indian Market

In the context of India, where CSR is legally mandated for large companies, these findings underscore the importance of meaningful CSR engagement. As the results show, CSR activities not only enhance brand image but also contribute to corporate reputation and consumer trust. For companies operating in highly competitive markets, CSR can be a key differentiator, helping to build a positive corporate reputation and foster consumer loyalty.

Moreover, the legal mandate for CSR in India provides a unique opportunity for companies to engage in strategic CSR initiatives that align with their business objectives. As noted in Kojo (2016) and Aziz (2020), companies that view CSR as an integral part of their brand strategy—rather than a mere compliance requirement—are more likely to reap the benefits in terms of enhanced brand image, customer loyalty, and long-term profitability.

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that CSR plays in shaping brand image in India. The positive correlation between CSR initiatives and brand image, trust, and loyalty reinforces the importance of CSR as a strategic tool for companies seeking to strengthen their brand in an increasingly competitive market. By focusing on CSR activities that resonate with consumers—such as environmental initiatives, community welfare, and employee welfare—companies can build a positive brand image and cultivate long-term customer relationships. These findings contribute to the existing literature by providing new insights into the impact of CSR on brand perception in the Indian context, filling a critical gap in the research.

6. CONCLUSION

The study provides substantial evidence supporting the positive impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand image, as observed in the Indian market. The survey results indicate that a significant majority of consumers are aware of CSR activities undertaken by companies, and these initiatives are strongly linked to positive consumer perceptions of brand image, trust, and loyalty. With a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.65, the relationship between CSR initiatives and brand image is both statistically significant and moderately strong, suggesting that companies engaging in CSR efforts tend to enjoy enhanced brand perception among consumers. This confirms earlier research conducted in other regions, adding to the growing body of evidence that CSR is crucial for modern brand management.

One of the key findings from the study is that specific CSR activities, particularly environmental initiatives, community welfare, and employee welfare, are the most significant drivers of positive brand image. The multiple regression analysis showed that these factors had the strongest influence on how consumers perceive a brand, with environmental initiatives having the highest impact. This suggests that Indian consumers are particularly concerned with environmental sustainability and social responsibility, reflecting broader global trends. Companies that prioritise these areas in their CSR strategies are likely to benefit from improved brand loyalty and consumer trust, as evidenced by the high percentage of respondents who indicated that CSR activities enhance their loyalty to a brand.

Another important finding is that CSR awareness plays a crucial role in shaping brand perception. Consumers who are aware of a company's CSR initiatives tend to rate its brand image more favourably than those who are not aware. This emphasises the importance of effective CSR communication strategies. Companies must ensure that their CSR efforts are visible and communicated clearly to the public to maximise their impact on brand image. This is particularly important in an increasingly competitive marketplace where consumers are looking for brands that align with their personal values and demonstrate a commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

The broader implications of this research extend beyond individual companies to the larger business environment in India. As CSR is legally mandated for large companies in India, the findings suggest that businesses must view CSR not merely as a compliance requirement but as a strategic tool for building brand equity and securing long-term customer loyalty. Companies that invest in meaningful CSR activities, particularly those related to environmental sustainability and community welfare, are likely to enjoy a competitive advantage in terms of brand image and reputation. This is especially relevant in a market like India, where consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the social and environmental impact of their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, the research highlights the growing expectation among consumers for brands to play an active role in addressing societal challenges. The preference for environmental initiatives and community welfare suggests that consumers are looking for brands that contribute to the well-being of society and the environment. This reflects a broader shift in consumer behaviour, where purchasing decisions are no longer based solely on product quality and price, but also on a

company's social responsibility. For businesses, this means that CSR must be integrated into the core of their brand strategy to remain relevant and competitive in the marketplace.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of CSR in shaping brand image and fostering consumer loyalty in the Indian market. Companies that engage in CSR activities, particularly in areas that resonate with consumer values, are likely to benefit from enhanced brand perception and long-term customer relationships. The findings also emphasise the importance of CSR communication in ensuring that these efforts are visible and impactful. As consumers continue to prioritise social and environmental responsibility in their purchasing decisions, CSR will remain a key factor in brand success, both in India and globally. The research provides valuable insights for companies looking to leverage CSR as a strategic tool for building brand equity in an increasingly socially conscious world.

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