

Corporate Social Responsibility and Customer-Based Brand Equity

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Abstract

Modern conditions for the development of market relations are characterized by a significant increase in globalization, which causes the liberalization of capital flows and significantly increases competition in world markets. In order to successfully operate and continue its development in this or that market, the company must actively fight for customer loyalty. The main objective of the study is to assess the influence of the company's CSR policy on customer loyalty to the «Activia» brand and increase the brand value for the consumer. The result showed that the main satisfaction level of the sample is quite high; almost 70% of respondents can recognize the «Activia» brand among other competing brands; and it was clear that the enterprise should pay more attention to CSR activities to persuading its customer based brand equity.

Keywords: Activia Brand; Customer-Based Brand Equity; Corporate Social Responsibility; Loyalty.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility initiative creates benefits for companies in term of increasing consumer identification with the company; customer identifies his or her perception about the company (Esmailpour & Barjoei, 2016).

A well-thought-out and well-established system of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) allows companies not only to make a positive contribution to social well-being and environmental stability, but also contributes to increasing the effectiveness and stability of business. Proper implementation of CSR is one of the most important steps in the formation of a positive image of the company by all stakeholders. Increasing customer loyalty and increasing brand value are some of the motivations for companies to implement social activities.

Thus, the implementation of a competent policy in the field of corporate social responsibility leads to an increase in such a component of the company's business reputation as the loyalty of its stakeholders. In turn, this indicator can serve as a basis for the formation of competitive advantages that are so necessary for any company, regardless of the scope of its activities.

Studies of the impact of corporate social responsibility on the brand's consumer value and consumer loyalty to the brand are quite a new and relevant topic. The study links the company's efforts in the field of CSR, the consumer appeal of the brand and the degree of brand loyalty. This is the first study of the brand «Activia», which studies and compares Russian and European consumers.

The purpose of this research is to describe and analyse the CSR customer perception and attitudes towards «Activia» brand. The study researches the general consumer perception of the brand «Activia», the degree of satisfaction with the brand, the level of quality, the priorities for choosing a brand. For that, the study is focused on general customer's preferences and attitudes towards «Activia» brand. In order to address the research problem, a survey was conducted with a total sample size of 136. To meet the objectives of the study was chosen as methodology an exploratory descriptive analysis.

This paper is structured in four sections, after the introduction. In the second section, it was made literature review where it was write information about corporate social responsibility, customer-based brand equity, brand equity and customer loyalty. In the third section, it was made research methodology where it was writing about objective of the study, description of data collection and description of data analysis. The four part presents and analyse the results; it includes customer profile and the descriptive analysis. The fifth part of the work include conclusions, limitations and future research.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a term that has collected re-established consideration in an inexorably worldwide economy despite the fact that it is an idea that has been around for no less than fifty years (Morrison & Bridwell, 2011). CSR can be portrayed as a conviction that companies have a social obligation past immaculate benefit. In that capacity, companies ought to utilize a basic leadership procedure to make more than budgetary progress on the supposition that CSR is fundamental to an ideal long haul methodology (Morrison & Bridwell, 2011).

Corporate social responsibility is an open and transparent business practices; it is the method based on moral values and respect to staff, community and environment. Corporate social responsibility is scheduled because it is the result of stable values for society in general and for shareholders more specifically (Meshkani & Rahmati, 2013).

Today, enterprises realize that CSR is inseparably connected to their notoriety and brand personality (Ahearne, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2010). Corporate Social Responsibility, the idea that organizations have an obligation regarding their effect on society past a limited financial one, is spreading over the globe (Preuss, Barkemeyer, & Glavas, 2016). For instance, sets of accepted rules - as a standout amongst the most across the board CSR apparatuses - have been embraced by well more than 90 for every penny of the biggest organizations in major created markets, for example, the United States or the United Kingdom (Preuss, Barkemeyer, & Glavas, 2016).

From the crude assets to the post consumption stages, it is presently for the most part perceived that partnerships can be focuses of basic consideration for activities once viewed as outside their conventional limits of duty (Schrempf-Stirling, & Phillips, 2016).

Corporate social obligation is characterized as an idea where by organizations coordinate their social and ecological worries in business operations and in their cooperation with their partners on an intentional premise. This definition is stipulated by the EU Commission. Corporate social duty is isolated into inside and outer (Niazi, Haider, & Islam, 2012). Corporate social obligation additionally can be utilized as a technique to expand representative resolve and fulfilment, enhance maintenance, and help enlist new workers (Greel, 2012). More prominent worker spirit can prompt expanded efficiency. Higher degrees of consistency can decrease preparing costs identified with new workers, expanding their effectiveness and lessening their expectation to absorb information of adjusting to positions (Greel, 2012).

The literature describes CSR look into as a corporate action and circumstance, which is trailed by considering social commitments or its base shareholders (Niazi, Haider, & Islam, 2012). Because of the constructive outcomes of interest and the part of CSR and the negative impacts of CSR mishandle, most organizations today concentrate on issues of CSR and effectively take an interest in CSR exercises. Jones (2005) in the cyclic model of brand value expresses that the brand value comes about because of innovative connection amongst brand and its clients, i.e. more acknowledgment of clients' desires, higher worth of brand value. The social duty is as one desire, which is referred to more than different variables (Meshkani & Rahmati, 2013).

Customer-Based Brand Equity and Brand Equity

Keller (1993) and Kotler and Keller (2015) distinguished Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) as the differential influence that brand learning has on shopper reactions to promoting movement regarding that brand. Since CBBE is firmly identified with showcasing, were received Keller's definition to recognize the idea of brand value in this review. As per Keller, CBBE ought to be dealt with as a different build, and brand-related develops ought to be viewed as the forerunners to, or go between of CBBE. Along these lines, Keller (1993) distinguished five intellectual predecessors that can influence CBBE either specifically, or in a roundabout way through brand identity a) brand awareness, b) brand association, c) perceived brand quality, d) brand image, and e) brand reputation. Brand awareness is the probability that a brand name will strike a chord and the straightforwardness with which it does as such. Brand association is characterized as anything that helps somebody to remember the brand. Perceived brand quality is characterized as a subjective fulfilment at the far-reaching quality or acknowledgment level against the item or administration offering under such brand to purchasers. Brand image is the state of mind, contemplations, and sentiments of a man toward a specific thing or question. Brand reputation is an aggregate portrayal of a past activities and results that depicts the brand's capacity to convey esteemed results to multiple stakeholders (Liao, Wu, Rivas, & Ju, 2016).

The fundamental customer-based brand equity hypothesis utilized as a part of this thesis is Keller's CBBE pyramid and its brand building blocks as a way to examine customers' preferences of a brand. Keller speaks to four imperative strides brand equity building, each of which is dependent upon effectively accomplishing the destinations of the past one: (1) Ensure identification and a relationship of the brand in clients' brains (brand awareness), (2) Establish the totality of brand meaning in the psyches of customers by deliberately connecting a large group of unmistakable and immaterial brand relationship with specific properties (brand meaning), (3) Elicit the best possible client reactions to this made brand identification and brand meaning (mark reactions), (4) Convert brand responses to make an exceptional, dynamic loyalty relationship amongst customers and the brand (brand relationships). These four stages speak to the proactive conduct that organizations need to lock in. Mark building comes from measured customer conduct to satisfy their covered needs (Peltola, 2014).

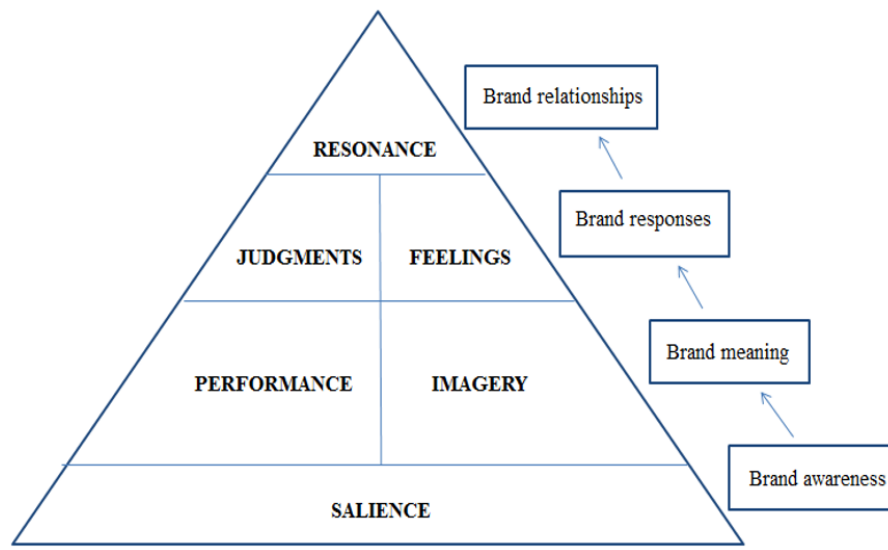


Fig. 1: Customer-based brand equity pyramid.

Source: Peltola (2014, p.19).

The 1980s denoted a defining moment in the conception of brands. Management came to understand that the foremost resource of an organization was in certainty its brand names. A few articles in both the American and European press managed the revelation of 'brand value', or the money related estimation of the brand. Truth be told, the rise of brands in exercises which already had opposed or were remote to such ideas (industry, keeping money, the administration segment, and so forth) vouched for the new importance of brands. This is affirmed by the significance that such a large number of wholesalers place on the advancement of their own brands (Charsetad, & Abdolvand, 2013).

It is just as of late that everybody has understood that its genuine esteem lies outside, in the brains of potential clients. In July 1990, the man who purchased the Adidas organization abridged his reasons in one sentence: after Coca-Cola and Marlboro, Adidas was the best-known brand on the planet (Calvo-Porrall, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, & Levy-Mangin, 2015).

Farquhar (1990) characterizes Brand Equity as the additional esteem that a brand conveys to a specific item or administration, and brings up that Brand Equity is that arrangement of advantages and liabilities connected to a brand, its name or image, that join or reduction the esteem given by an item or administration to the organization or its clients. Then again, Keller (1993), characterizes Brand Equity as the promoting impacts or results that collect to the item or administration with its image name, contrasted with the results if a similar item or administration did not have a brand name. Taking after Aaker (1991), Brand Equity is conceptualized as the arrangement of advantages and liabilities connected to a brand, its name or image, which upgrades or reductions the esteem given by an item or administration to the company and its customers. As per Keller's model (Keller, 1993), Brand Equity happens when the customer knows about the brand and holds some great, solid and unique brand associations in memory (Calvo-Porrall, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, & Levy-Mangin, 2015). Brand equity is the differential preference and answer to marketing effort that a product acquires because of its brand identification (Datta, Ailawadi, & van Heerde, 2017).

Brand equity characterized as the additional esteem given to any item through brand. In 1989 Farquhar portray the brand equity as the additional esteem which a given brand gives a product. In straightforward words, monetary importance of brand equity is the estimation of a brand to firm, an estimation of a brand

perceives by the firm and a brand an incentive from customer point of view or client based significance brand equity as the brand value an incentive for the client which become visible from advertising basic leadership viewpoint Improvement in the apparent esteem and attractive quality that a brand name grant on an item (Niazi, Haider, & Islam, 2012; Sanaz, & Xu, 2015).

A few meanings of brand equity show up in the earlier writing, for example, the additional esteem enriched by the brand to the item' for a customer (Farquhar, 1990), or the differential impact of brand knowledge on buyer reaction to the promoting of the brand (Keller, 1993). The general agreement proposes that brand equity is the autonomous impact of the brand in the consumer's choice procedure, known as the brand halo effect (Srinivasan, 1979). Such brand equity emerges when a shopper holds positive, solid relationship in memory, for example, positive feelings (Keller, 1993). Estimations of brand equity utilize two primary methodologies: direct and indirect (Christodoulides, & De Chernatony, 2010). Aberrant methodologies measure brand equity through the precursors and results of brand equity, for the most part with idle factors and basic condition displaying. Yoo and Donthu (2001) propose a brand equity creation handle show, maybe the most generally utilized circuitous approach, which underpins the presentation of brand equity in a worldwide mental process however can't appraise brand equity directly. Besides, Yoo and Donthu's approach is a developmental measure of brand equity (Arnett, Laverie, & Meiers, 2003). A tireless exchange of developmental estimations (Bagozzi, 2007; Howell et al., 2007) questions their dependability; a few creators suggest never again utilizing developmental estimations (Edwards, 2011; Hardin, & Marcoulides, 2011). Guide approaches endeavour to gauge brand equity by concentrating on customers' inclinations. For Jourdan (2002), brand equity estimations in view of conjoint examination offer three preferences, by (1) giving individual estimations of brand equity, (2) obviously recognizing the utility joined to the item from the utility connected to the brand, and (3) segregating the effect of the brand. Park and Srinivasan's (1994) approach offers a well-known direct estimation of brand value.

Customer Loyalty

In the marketing literature, you can find quite a lot of concepts related to the term "loyalty". In 1923, the first attempt was made to determine loyalty to the brand (Jacoby, & Chestnut, 1978) on the part of consumers. The definition of loyalty was extremely simple like a consumer loyal to a brand is a person who buys your brand in 100% of cases (Jacoby, & Chestnut, 1978). Other authors subsequently defined "loyalty" and as a pattern of preference for one brand at each purchase of a product (Busch, & Houston, 1985).

Loyalty in most cases is associated with re-purchase. The consumer follows the re-purchase scheme, because it is this brand that is well suited to its needs or because it forms a personal commitment to the brand. According to Schlueter (1988), the commitment to the brand can also be a consequence of its emotional impact on the consumer or its impact on consumer self-esteem. Other authors, along with the emotional component of loyalty, indicate the presence of a rational component of it (Gemble, Stone, & Woodcock, 2002). This is expressed in the fact that the consumer can be betrayed simultaneously by several competing companies.

Aaker defines loyalty as "a measure of consumer loyalty to the brand" (Aaker, 1991, p.39). In his opinion, loyalty shows what the degree of probability of switching the consumer to another brand, especially when it is undergoing changes in price or some other indicators. With increasing loyalty, the tendency of consumers to perceive the actions of competitors decreases (Aaker, 1991).

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to describe and analyse how the company's a CSR activities are persuading its customer based brand equity. For that, the study is focused on general customer's

preferences and attitudes towards «Activia» brand. To achieve the objective there will be conduct of carrying out questionnaires in the places where the target is most likely to appear online and offline.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (O₁): The perception of «Activia» brand product is positive.
- (O₂): To ascertain the brand recognition of the asset among consumers.
- (O₃): What is the probability that the brand «Activia» will be recommended.

The Data Collection was carried out by survey. The survey contains two parts of questions: questions about personal data and questions about the «Activia» brand. The first block of questionnaire questions gives characteristics of this sample. The second set of questions is aimed at finding out the respondents' opinion on the impact of the concept of CSR on loyalty to the «Activia» brand and on gathering information about the perception of this brand. For answers were used Likert scale, format of a typical five-level Likert item, Strongly disagree (1 point) until Strongly agree (5 points). In total were received 136 surveys from Russian respondents and all rest of the world. Questionnaire was applied in Russia and in Portugal and were collected by social networks, e-mail. In this sense, it was used a nonprobability sampling.

The General Words to describe the Corporate Social Responsibility Customer Perception in this research work is composed by the follows groups (four latent variables):

- 1) Associated Brand Characteristics (ABC);
- 2) Customer's Expectations (CE);
- 3) Brand Recognition (BR);
- 4) General Brand's Characteristics (GBC).

For measuring reliability of the scale for each group that belongs to the Corporate Social Responsibility customer perception, there are three methods: test-retest, alternative forms and internal consistency (Smith & Albaum, 2013). In this research it was used the internal consistency method using the Cronbach's alpha. According to the result of test (Table 1), Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.90 for each group that shows reliability of questions is very good, as is possible to observe in the follow table. Also for the CSR customer perception it was achieved a high reliability, where is possible to say that the reliability of the questionnaire, for these groups, is very good.

Table 1: Reliability of each group that belongs to CSR Customer Perception

Groups	Item	Alpha de Cronbach	Reliability (Smith & Albaum, 2013)
Associated Brand Characteristics	16	0,966	Very good
Customer's Expectations	15	0,970	Very good
Brand Recognition	13	0,946	Very good
General Brand's Characteristics	9	0,943	Very good
CSR customer perception	53	0,986	Very good

To performed all statistical information and to give the answers to the main objective of study and the specifics objectives it was applied some statistical techniques. In order to analyse demographic profile of respondents will be used descriptive analysis, which will show absolute and relative frequencies. To answer the specific objectives, it will be used frequency analysis and mean and standard deviation.

Presentation of the Results

Customer Profile

In the follow table is presented the profile of the respondents that belong to the sample (n=136). People who answer to questionnaire are from Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Brazil, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Greece, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea Democratic People's Republic, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

A total of 136 respondents participated in the study. According with the results presented in Table 2 is possible to observed that 64 (47.1%) from Russia and 72 (52.9%) from other countries. The final sample consisted of 136 participants, with 64 participants from the Russia - 38 males (60%) and 26 females (40%) and 72 respondents from the all of rest of the world - 32 males (45%) and 39 females (54%) and 1 other (1%). Most of the respondents were from Bachelor degree - 39 (28.7%) respondents, Master degree - 26 (19.1%) respondents and University degree (Specialitet) - 25 (18.4%).

Table 2: Profile of the respondents

Variables	n	%
Nationality		
Russia	64	47.1
Rest of the World	72	52.9
Total	136	100.0
Gender		
Female	65	47.8
Male	70	51.5
Other	1	0.7
Total	136	100.0
Academic qualification		
1. Less than high school	1	0.7
2. High school	21	15.4
3. Vocational school/college	13	9.6
4. Bachelor degree	39	28.7
5. University degree (Specialitet)	25	18.4
6. Master degree	26	19.1
7. PhD degree	10	7.4
8. Others	1	0.7
Total	136	100.0

Descriptive Analysis

As represented on the Figure 2, and for the question “Which of the following words would you use to describe «Activia» brand products?” According with the answers it was possible to observe that the main words that the people use to describe «Activia» brand products were Useful (69 that corresponds to 22.3%), High Quality (62 that corresponds to 20.1%) and Good value for money (47 that corresponds to 15.2%). This means that people have a positive attitude towards the «Activia» brand.

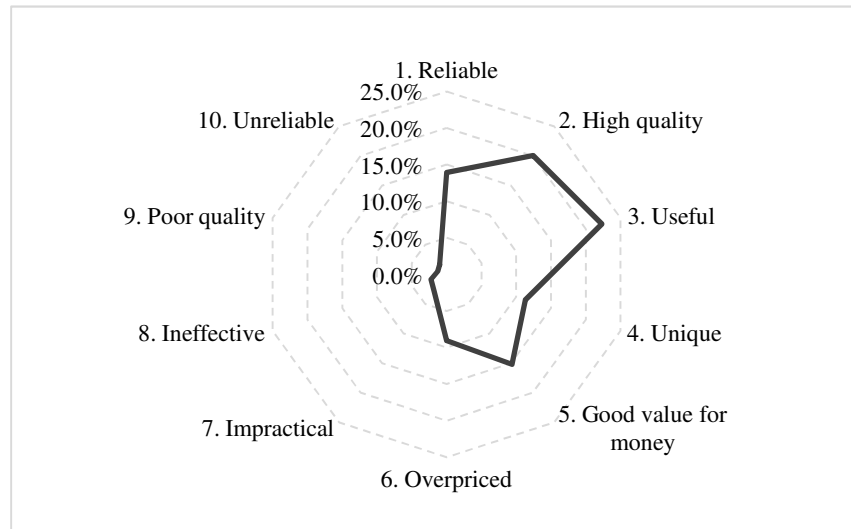


Fig. 2: Words to describe brand

The next step of the work is focused on reviewing research objectives. To answer to the O_1 : “*The perception of «Activia» brand product is positive*” also know the performance value on the institution part mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated. For all the attributes, mean score is more than 3 points (theoretical reference), which shows according to customer perception is important. The perception of the «Activia» brand is positive once its achieve Mean 3.37 points and standard deviation 0,8553 points. It means that people who answer to questionnaire has positive perception for Associated Brand Characteristics related with «Activia» brand.

To answer to the O_2 : “*To ascertain the brand recognition of the asset among consumers*”, mean, standard deviation and share of people agreeing with the statements were calculated. The mean for questions “I can recognize the «Activia» brand products among other competing brands” is 3.77 points (SD = 1.174) and 3.62 points (1.132); 69% and 63% of the sample respectively agreed with this statement. Thus, the brand has a high level of recognition of the asset among the consumers’ respondents.

To response to this specific objective O_3 : “*What is the probability that the brand «Activia» will be recommended*”, mean, standard deviation (SD) and share of people likely to recommend the products were calculated. The mean for questions “How likely is it that you would recommend «Activia» brand products to a friend or colleague?” is 3.56 points (SD = 1.002) 60% of the sample will likely recommend «Activia». Thus, according with the results, the brand has a high level of probability of recommendation.

Based on the previous results and for each of the objectives set, it can be concluded: that perception of «Activia» brand product is positive, for respondents. The brand is recognizing among the consumers; there are probability to recommended the brand «Activia». The respondents are satisfied with the brand «Activia»; the level of perception of the quality of the brand «Activia» is high; the satisfaction with the

ratio of the price of «Activia» brand products is positive; and, the «Activia» brand is likely to be the first choice.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

Studies of the impact of corporate social responsibility on the brand's consumer value and consumer loyalty to the brand are quite a new and relevant topic. The study links the company's efforts in the field of CSR, the consumer appeal of the brand and the degree of brand loyalty. This is the first study of the brand «Activia», which studies and compares Russian and European consumers.

For quite a long time the estimation of an organization was measured as far as its structures and land, and after that its unmistakable resources (plant and equipment). It is just as of late that everybody has understood that its genuine esteem lies outside, in the brains of potential clients.

In the present conditions, when the market offers a large number of the same type of services, goods, services, approximately at the same price and the same quality, the existence of a customer loyalty program is perhaps the main argument in the competition. The development of the loyalty program is relevant for almost all companies, regardless of the scope of their activities, from the stage of development and sales. In a difficult economic situation, the need for companies to support, customer loyalty program is simply necessary.

It is possible to see that there is direct link between CSR of the company, its reputation and loyalty of consumers. If the companies develop the CSR strategy and invest in it means, that the opinion of consumers concerning a brand improves. This research proved that there is a direct strong dependence between CSR activities and Customer-Based Brand Equity perceived by customers.

The sample size of selection imposes the first limitation for the done work: sample presented only by 136 respondents (64 from Russia and 72 from rest of the world) they might not be sufficiently representative of consumers in general. Respondents answered 63 questions, which concerned (Associated Brand Characteristics, Customer's Expectations, Brand Recognition and General Brand's Characteristics). After analysis, it possible to say that the main satisfaction level of the sample is quite high. It is clear which issues need improvement and which ones work well. It is necessary to pay attention that almost 70 % of respondents can recognize the «Activia» brand among other competing brands. It became clear that company should pay more attention to CSR activities to persuading its customer based brand equity.

It is suggesting a future analysis for get new information about it: it could be interesting develop a new survey only for these students, with the objective to understand what they would like to change in order to improve their satisfaction level. Future research lines is including Corporate Social Responsibility of entire company not only one brand.

The customer is the most effective determinant of corporate behaviour, and this is the reason why the CSR focus should be on the consumer. Consumer Social Responsibility is the true Corporate Social Responsibility.

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