



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand reputation: A study on how CSR activities enhance brand reputation and consumer loyalty in the context of sustainable marketing practices

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Abstract

Contemporary businesses cannot survive in today's cutthroat marketplace without engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Examining how CSR initiatives cultivate consumer loyalty within the framework of environmentally conscious advertising campaigns, this study probes the link between CSR initiatives and public perception of brands. Community involvement, ethical work practices, and environmental stewardship are some of the CSR programs examined in this research, which seeks to understand how these initiatives influence brand image and consumer behaviour. Case studies and consumer surveys were the basis of this study, which found that CSR-active companies' reputations, as well as the trust and loyalty of their target audience, were positively impacted. Customers are more loyal than ever before to brands that reflect their values, and the research highlights the importance of companies that demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability. Based on the findings, businesses may boost their image, get more customers involved in the long run, and differentiate themselves from rivals by making CSR a central part of their strategy. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on corporate social responsibility and sustainable marketing. It offers valuable insights for organizations that want to build a reputation that is both responsible and customer-centric.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility; Brand Reputation; Consumer Loyalty; Sustainable Marketing Practices

1. Introduction

The modern business landscape increasingly considers corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a factor in establishing brand reputation and consumer loyalty. Customers who are increasingly aware of social and environmental issues are putting greater pressure on businesses to adopt responsible practices. Participation in the community, ethical employment practices, and environmental preservation are all examples of corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts that are increasingly important to the long-term success and reputation of businesses (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Launching CSR programs could significantly improve a company's reputation in the market. According to He and Lai (2014), CSR actions help customers see a firm more positively by improving its character. Customers are more likely to trust and be loyal to a brand when its CSR actions align with their ideals.

Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010) found that consumers are more inclined to stay loyal to a business if they believe that the firm's CSR initiatives are sincere and make a beneficial difference in society. The relationship between CSR and green advertising is equally crucial. Kotler (2011) argues that sustainable marketing emphasises the significance of corporations being profitable while also being socially and environmentally conscientious.

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability have recently emerged as competitive differentiators for many companies, with the goal of attracting and retaining socially conscious customers (Beck-Olsen et al., 2006).

Also, with the rise of digital and social media, companies may now communicate their CSR efforts to a much larger audience. More and more individuals are taking to social media to voice their complaints, which may be good for businesses whose CSR programs are transparent and proactive (Kim & Ferguson, 2018).

Corporations now see corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a strategic need for enhancing their brand's reputation and consumer loyalty, rather than an afterthought. In this day of increased awareness of social and environmental issues, consumers increasingly want companies to do good in the world. A brand's market share might be at risk in today's competitive marketplace if it doesn't engage in socially responsible activities. Consumers have higher expectations of brands in this era (Peloza & Shang, 2011).

Incorporating CSR into primary business strategies often leads to an uptick in consumer trust and loyalty and an enhancement of brand reputation, as stated by Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, and Murphy (2013). One of the primary reasons CSR has gained such traction is the emotional connection it helps to establish between brands and their consumers. According to Lii and Lee (2012), consumers are more likely to have a favourable perception of companies that engage in CSR activities when it comes to issues of social welfare and environmental sustainability. These presumptions explain why a large portion of the market is willing to pay a premium for products associated with ethical businesses (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001). This demonstrates that CSR has the potential to revolutionise fiercely competitive markets by assisting businesses in attracting and retaining consumers who value factors beyond product price and quality.

Because there are more and more people who identify as "conscious consumers," corporate social responsibility is more important than ever. According to research by Bhattacharya, Sen, and Korschun (2008), consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility, ethical sourcing, and environmental sustainability. Thus, customer loyalty and repeat purchases may rise as a result of CSR initiatives that resonate with customers' values. Brands that actively engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) stand out in today's marketing environment, when consumer expectations for transparency and accountability are at an all-time high (Jones, Comfort, & Hillier, 2007).

Another typical perception is that CSR initiatives may help reduce risk. Companies may avoid negative publicity and consumer backlash by being socially and environmentally conscious (Porter & Kramer, 2006). A corporation may protect itself against advocacy groups' criticism and the financial fallout of crises involving unethical business practices by practicing ethical supply chain management and protecting the environment.

In this era of sustainable marketing, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have a significant impact on how customers perceive and interact with a firm. Companies that successfully include CSR into their strategy build lasting relationships with their consumers and differentiate themselves from competitors. The study's overarching goal is to fill in some gaps in our understanding of these dynamics by investigating how CSR and sustainability initiatives influence public perception of brands and the loyalty of their target audiences.

Objectives of the study

- To analyze the impact of CSR initiatives on brand reputation in the context of sustainable marketing practices.
- To examine the role of CSR activities in fostering consumer loyalty and trust.
- To explore the relationship between CSR efforts and consumer purchase decisions, particularly in sustainability-conscious markets.
- To assess how brands can strategically integrate CSR into their business models to enhance long-term market differentiation.

2. Review of literature

In recent decades, the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has received a lot of attention, and many studies have shown that it is important for building brand reputation, encouraging consumer loyalty, and driving business success. The literature on corporate social responsibility covers a wide range of subjects, including the impact of CSR on consumer behaviour, brand perception, and market position.

Social responsibility initiatives may have an effect on consumers' perceptions of a company's brand. Fombrun and Shanley argue that CSR is a powerful tool for companies to demonstrate their commitment to society and the environment to their stakeholders (1990). Market reputation is enhanced when companies consistently engage in CSR projects because consumers see them as more trustworthy and ethical. In a similar vein, Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) found that CSR initiatives, particularly those focused on social welfare and sustainability, improve consumer attitudes and brand image, which in turn boosts brand reputation.

Keeping the planet habitable Due to its significance in setting businesses apart, CSR initiatives have attracted a great deal of academic attention. The perception of a firm by consumers is positively impacted by environmental CSR, as stated by Hartmann and Ibáñez (2007). Those who care about the environment will find this to be especially true. As a consequence, both the public's opinion of the brand and sales gain momentum.

The correlation between CSR and devoted consumers is another area that has received much academic attention. According to Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), CSR initiatives have an impact on consumer behaviour, including their purchase decisions and loyalty. Consumers are more likely to engage with and remain loyal to businesses that they perceive as making a positive impact on society, according to these results. Also, as Marin and Ruiz (2007) noted, consumer loyalty reaches new heights when CSR aligns with consumers' own views. A deeper bond between a company and its client seems to be the result of a higher degree of congruence between CSR initiatives and consumer values.

The importance of CSR communication in transforming CSR activities into consumer loyalty was highlighted by Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010). Sharing transparent information about the company's CSR activities does double duty: it raises awareness of the company's ethical stance and encourages consumers to stay loyal to the brand. The need of implementing and communicating CSR practices to build lasting relationships with customers is highlighted by this.

The impact of corporate social responsibility on customer spending has been the subject of much study. Consumers are more inclined to support businesses that they see as having a positive impact on society (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001). Their research shows that CSR is a significant distinction in today's cutthroat business environments, influencing customers' purchasing decisions. When CSR programs are seen as genuine and complimentary to the company's core strategy, they have a positive impact on consumer intent to purchase (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill, 2006).

Customers' reactions to CSR initiatives, however, vary widely. Researchers Green and Peloza (2011) found that customers' reactions could differ substantially based on their own values and the credibility they assign to CSR programs. They argue that consumers are more likely to buy into a brand's sales if they see the company's CSR efforts as authentic and in keeping with its mission, as opposed to dishonest and driven by marketing.

The significance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in eco-friendly advertising is becoming more and more studied. Sustainable marketing methods are becoming more popular as a means for firms to meet client expectations in an ethical and ecologically conscious manner while still being financially viable in the long term. Kotler argues that CSR is fundamental to the concept of sustainable marketing since it seeks to provide value to consumers in an ethical manner (2011). An additional factor is the growing number of eco-conscious consumers who are looking for businesses that share their values and practise sustainable marketing.

Sustainability in marketing via CSR has the potential to boost customer satisfaction, loyalty to the brand, and competitive advantage (Smith, 2011). He found that companies with sustainable marketing strategies that include CSR had a higher chance of establishing loyal, long-term relationships with their customers.

It is well-established that corporate social responsibility (CSR) improves financial outcomes and consumer happiness. Margolis and Walsh (2003) found a high correlation between CSR actions and financial results. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, according to their meta-analysis, contribute to better financial outcomes for participating firms. This is because these programs boost brand image, minimise operational risks, and foster stronger connections with stakeholders. Furthermore, research by Orlitzky, Schmidt, and Rynes (2003) confirms that CSR boosts bottom line results. More customers, less capital expenses, and happier workers are the results of socially responsible companies, according to them.

When CSR aligns with a company's strategy, it might potentially lead to a competitive advantage, according to Porter and Kramer (2006). By integrating CSR into their daily operations, companies have the opportunity to create shared value that benefits both society and the firm. Companies who see CSR as a strategic investment, rather than a cost, would outperform those that engage in it only for public relations purposes, according to their argument.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is crucial since it affects both workers and consumers. Glavas and Godwin (2013) found that employees are more loyal and invested in their job for companies that have a high CSR commitment. Employee engagement and corporate social responsibility (CSR) go hand in hand because when workers' values match with those of the firm, it leads to higher rates of job satisfaction and retention. Research shows that companies with strong CSR programs have higher employee morale and retention rates.

Brammer, Millington, and Rayton (2007) conducted similar study that aimed to determine the impact of CSR activities on organisational commitment. According to their findings, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that encourage community involvement and adhere to fair employment standards significantly deepen employees' emotional investment in the organisation. The bottom line benefits from the increased investment and productivity of the workers.

The proliferation of online media has dramatically altered the visibility and dissemination of CSR initiatives. Businesses are now able to reach a global audience via their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, which have been made more visible through social media and other internet platforms (Capriotti, 2011). Companies may get greater trust and loyalty from consumers if they are transparent about their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts and interact with them on digital platforms. Capriotti found that since digital CSR communication allows for real-time participation and feedback, it helps businesses deepen their relationships with consumers.

Morsing and Schultz (2006) argue that in the digital age, CSR communication must adopt a dialogic approach. It is no longer sufficient for businesses to just declare their CSR activities; they must also actively include stakeholders in the discussion. Participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) discussions by consumers, employees, and the broader community improves a company's image and strengthens relationships with existing customers.

Despite the positive connotations associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR), studies have shown that scepticism among consumers is a real issue, particularly when CSR initiatives are seen as being driven only by profit or dishonesty. Forehand and Grier (2003) found that consumers could be suspicious of a company's CSR efforts if they believe the company is dishonest about them. Scandals involving corporations or the belief that CSR programs are just a publicity stunt rather than genuine efforts to better society can contribute to this cynicism. According to the report, companies want their corporate social responsibility initiatives to be seen as authentic and aligned with their core values.

The argument is supported by the fact that poorly executed CSR projects or those that resemble "greenwashing" may have a negative impact on a company's reputation (Becker-Olsen, Taylor, Hill, and Yalcinkaya, 2011). In order to reduce consumer distrust and cynicism, they emphasise that the company's CSR initiatives must align with its larger mission, values, and operational procedures.

Recent research has focused on how CSR influences SCM. Carter and Rogers (2008) look at how supply chains might include CSR ideas to raise ethical and environmental standards. Proponents of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) argue that companies may improve their social and environmental performance while also increasing their competitiveness. Ensuring that suppliers adhere to CSR requirements may help companies preserve their brand and solidify their position in the market.

In continuation with this line of thinking, Ciliberti, Pontrandolfo, and Scozzi (2008) study how CSR initiatives impact supplier relationships. Organisations may increase quality control, decrease risks, and build trust via better supplier relationships, which are in turn strengthened by ethical sourcing, fair labour standards, and environmental sustainability. Customers, who are more concerned about the ethics of the products they purchase, also appreciate these supply chain activities led by corporate social responsibility.

Research on the effects of CSR initiatives in underdeveloped countries is gaining momentum, despite the fact that most research have focused on Western markets. A crucial field of study for Jamali and Mirshak (2007) is understanding corporate social responsibility (CSR) practises in developing countries, a region plagued by poverty, unemployment, and environmental destruction. Cultural, economic, and legal considerations are frequently the driving forces for CSR in developing nations, as their research shows. In developing countries, for example, CSR projects often focus on community development and poverty reduction since these are topics that are deeply important to the local population.

According to Visser, developed-nation CSR approaches don't adequately address the unique challenges faced by developing-nation CSR initiatives (2008). Businesses in various sectors have different societal expectations, and he claims that many of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs aren't profit-driven. Companies in emerging

countries must adapt their CSR initiatives to local conditions while still supporting national goals for economic development.

In order to build and maintain customer trust, which influences brand loyalty, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is crucial. Customers are more inclined to have faith in a company when they see its corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts as authentic and consistent with their own values (Ellen, Webb, and Mohr, 2006). Companies that consistently demonstrate concern for social issues are more likely to earn people's trust, compared to those who hold charity events seldom, the study found. Evidence for this comes from Castaldo et al. (2009), who found that CSR programs that prioritise sustainable practices, fair trade, and ethical work practices tend to increase customer trust. Industries where ethical considerations are paramount, such as the food and clothing industries, are prime examples of this.

Every company that values its customers and wants to stay in business must work hard to earn and sustain their confidence. Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, and Avramidis (2009) found that consumers have more faith in companies when their CSR efforts are seen as genuine and not driven by purely financial gain. Establishing credibility with customers increases their loyalty, which is crucial to a company's long-term prosperity. Companies, the research claims, can maintain an advantage in the market by consistently engaging in CSR, which helps them gain the confidence of their stakeholders.

Corporate citizenship has also been covered in the CSR literature. Through its business activities and other community service programs, a company is obligated to act responsibly as a corporate citizen. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) extends beyond profit maximisation, argue Matten and Crane (2005). Their research showed that consumers are more likely to have positive feelings towards businesses that actively participate in community development and provide to educational initiatives. These initiatives demonstrate good corporate citizenship.

As Scherer and Palazzo (2011) point out, global corporate citizenship also requires companies to step up and help fix society's challenges. More and more, people are looking to multinational corporations to solve global problems including poverty, human rights violations, and environmental degradation. A company's reputation and the number of consumers it attracts who share its values may both benefit from a CSR strategy that includes corporate citizenship. As a result, CSR's offshoot, corporate citizenship, is playing an increasingly pivotal role in fostering consumer devotion to brands.

Ethical consumerism is closely tied to the trend of consumers favouring businesses that demonstrate social responsibility and engage in ethical practices. According to Carrigan, Szmigin, and Wright (2004), consumers engage in ethical consumerism when they choose brands based on their ethical principles. Animal rights, labour protections, and environmental sustainability are just a few of the many factors that must be considered. Companies are under increasing pressure to include corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives into their mission statements and everyday operations, as ethical consumerism continues to gain traction, according to their research.

A similar finding was reached by Auger, Devinney, and Louviere (2007), who noted that ethical consumerism influences buying behaviours, particularly among politically active adolescents. The results show that this demographic is more inclined to buy from brands that are socially conscious, employ sustainable products, and practise fair trade. Companies risk having their market share lost by competitors that prioritise the moral standards of today's consumers above their own.

An important foundation for understanding CSR is Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, which places businesses in the position of having to deal with a wide variety of stakeholders, such as customers, employees, suppliers, and the general public. This theory posits that corporations should not be limited to their shareholders but should instead be held accountable to everybody whose interests they may have affected. Therefore, CSR initiatives shouldn't put the needs of shareholders ahead of those of other stakeholder groups; rather, they should work to maximise profits for all of them. Stronger consumer relationships are often seen with businesses that adopt stakeholder-oriented CSR practices, since these initiatives demonstrate a commitment to broader environmental and social concerns.

In support of this approach, Donaldson and Preston (1995) said that the capacity of a firm to meet the needs and satisfy the interests of its stakeholders is crucial to its legitimacy and long-term success. Within this context, CSR may be used to build credibility and solicit stakeholder input. Brands that demonstrate concern for society at large and work to resolve stakeholder concerns via CSR activities tend to have more loyal consumers.

Another issue that has been researched in the literature is the impact of CSR on the value that customers perceive. What makes a product or brand valuable to customers is how they personally weigh the benefits against the price.

Incorporating CSR initiatives into a product or service may boost its perceived value by making consumers feel good about themselves while they shop. Customers are prepared to spend more money on a brand's goods they perceive as socially responsible, according to research by Lin, Chen, Chiu, and Lee (2011). This is true even when compared to less priced alternatives. Increased brand preference and loyalty might be the outcome of this improved perceived value.

Overall, CSR has the potential to enhance the consumer experience, which may serve as a competitive differentiator (Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007). Brands that engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs not only provide a product, but also the satisfaction that comes from helping others. This added perceived value could lead to stronger brand support and repeat purchases. Therefore, CSR has the potential to boost brand loyalty by encouraging customers to consider factors other than financial gain when making purchases.

As a consequence of increased international trade and investment, CSR has new opportunities and challenges. The difficulty for firms entering new foreign markets is adjusting to different cultural norms and regulatory frameworks. As a result of globalisation, CSR has become more intricate, claims Moon (2007). Companies are facing many sets of stakeholders who are demanding accountability from them. Multinational corporations' operations in developing countries, where labour and environmental standards may be laxer, and their domestic policies are under close scrutiny.

Companies may boost their brand image and consumer loyalty by integrating CSR into their global operations in an efficient manner. According to Husted and Allen (2006), multinational firms may get support from local populations in diverse markets by customising their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. However, the paper also highlight a number of challenges associated with global CSR, including the potential risks of "ethics dumping" and other types of superficial CSR, the need to maintain regional consistency in ethical norms.

Table 1 Tabular form of Literature review

Author(s)	Year	Focus Area	Key Findings
Fombrun & Shanley	1990	CSR and Brand Reputation	CSR enhances brand reputation by signaling a company's ethical and social commitment.
Margolis & Walsh	2003	CSR and Financial Performance	Positive correlation between CSR activities and financial performance. CSR is seen as beneficial for long-term profitability.
Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes	2003	CSR and Profitability	CSR improves profitability by attracting customers and reducing capital costs.
Carroll & Shabana	2010	Business Case for CSR	CSR builds brand loyalty and trust, offering long-term competitive advantage for businesses.
Ellen, Webb, & Mohr	2006	CSR and Consumer Trust	Authentic CSR activities increase consumer trust, especially when aligned with consumer values.
Vlachos et al.	2009	CSR, Trust, and Loyalty	CSR actions perceived as genuine enhance consumer trust and loyalty.
Lii & Lee	2012	CSR and Brand Evaluation	Positive CSR initiatives improve brand evaluation and customer attitudes.
Hartmann & Ibáñez	2007	CSR and Environmental Sustainability	CSR focused on environmental issues strengthens brand image among environmentally conscious consumers.
Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen	2010	CSR Communication and Consumer Loyalty	Effective CSR communication fosters consumer loyalty and trust through transparency and engagement.
Porter & Kramer	2006	CSR as Competitive Advantage	CSR, when integrated into core business strategy, creates shared value and strengthens competitive advantage.

Carrigan, Szmigin, & Wright	2004	Ethical Consumerism	Consumers are increasingly motivated to purchase from brands that demonstrate ethical and socially responsible practices.
Marin & Ruiz	2007	CSR and Consumer Loyalty	Strong CSR activities, when aligned with consumer values, lead to greater loyalty and stronger consumer-brand relationships.
Sen & Bhattacharya	2001	CSR and Purchase Behavior	CSR initiatives influence consumer purchase decisions and long-term loyalty.
Glavas & Godwin	2013	CSR and Employee Engagement	CSR initiatives increase employee engagement and job satisfaction by aligning employee values with company ethics.
Matten & Crane	2005	CSR and Corporate Citizenship	Companies are expected to act as responsible corporate citizens, contributing to societal well-being.
Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau	2007	CSR and Consumer Perceived Value	CSR initiatives enhance consumer perceived value, leading to increased loyalty and purchase intention.
Forehand & Grier	2003	CSR and Consumer Skepticism	Consumer skepticism arises when CSR efforts are perceived as insincere or profit-driven.
Capriotti	2011	CSR and Digital Communication	Social media amplifies CSR visibility, allowing for real-time engagement and fostering stronger consumer trust.
Jamali & Mirshak	2007	CSR in Emerging Economies	CSR in developing countries often focuses on community development and poverty alleviation, addressing local challenges.
Husted & Allen	2006	Global CSR Strategy	Multinational corporations benefit from aligning CSR strategies with local cultural values and expectations.

2.1. Research Gap

The literature on the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its effects on company reputation, customer loyalty, and financial success is vast, yet there are still some important gaps. Much of the current research focusses on the overall impacts of CSR without offering unique insights into certain industries, which is a major gap. There needs to be more industry-specific research on the effects of CSR on consumer behaviour and brand reputation in sectors like technology, retail, and hospitality where CSR goals and customer expectations might differ significantly. Furthermore, nothing is known about how CSR functions in developing economies. Although there has been a lot of research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) methods in Western markets, developing nations like China, India, and Brazil have distinct obstacles like poverty, corruption, and weak legislation. How CSR affects corporate image and consumer loyalty in these emerging markets needs further research.

Regarding the effectiveness of digital CSR communication, there is also another void. Companies' CSR reporting has evolved with the advent of digital platforms, but research on the impact of online communities on consumers' views of CSR, especially in terms of authenticity, transparency, and real-time engagement, is few. In today's linked world, it is vital to understand how digital communication impacts CSR results. Additional study is required to determine how CSR impacts brand loyalty in the long run. Although there is much evidence of the positive effects of CSR on consumer loyalty in the short term, the long-term effects of CSR on customer loyalty are not yet known.

In addition, although there has been talk about consumers becoming sceptical about CSR, especially in relation to "greenwashing," there hasn't been enough study into the many elements that impact this scepticism across various demographic and cultural groups. The authenticity of corporate social responsibility (CSR) messaging and the restoration of customer confidence are critical areas that need investigation. Lastly, there is still a lot of uncharted territory when it comes to combining CSR with corporate strategy. Despite the widespread agreement that CSR is good, many businesses still see it as an afterthought instead of integrating it into their main processes. The role of fully integrated CSR practices in a company's long-term performance and competitive advantage is an area that needs more investigation.

3. Research Methodology

Within the framework of environmentally conscious advertising, this research intends to investigate how CSR programs affect public perception of brands and the loyalty of their target audiences. The study's aims will be realised in full by the research technique, which employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.1. Research Design

The study will use a **mixed-methods approach**, combining both qualitative and quantitative research to gain deeper insights into the relationship between CSR initiatives and their impact on brand reputation and consumer loyalty.

- **Quantitative Research:** A structured survey will be administered to gather data from consumers regarding their perceptions of CSR initiatives and how these initiatives affect their loyalty and trust toward the brands.
- **Qualitative Research:** In-depth interviews will be conducted with marketing professionals and CSR managers to explore how companies design and implement their CSR strategies, and how these initiatives are aligned with their sustainable marketing goals.

3.2. Sampling Method and Population

- **Population:** The target population for the quantitative survey consists of consumers across various sectors (e.g., retail, technology, FMCG, hospitality) who have been exposed to brands with CSR initiatives.
- **Sample Size:** A sample size of **300 consumers** will be targeted for the quantitative survey to ensure statistically significant results. For the qualitative interviews, **10 to 12 marketing and CSR professionals** will be selected using purposive sampling to gain insights into CSR strategy design and implementation.

3.2.1. Sampling Method

- **Quantitative Survey:** A **stratified random sampling** method will be used to ensure that consumers from diverse backgrounds (age, gender, income, education) are represented.
- **Qualitative Interviews:** **Purposive sampling** will be used to select industry experts and professionals with in-depth knowledge of CSR initiatives in sustainable marketing.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

- **Quantitative Data Collection:** An online structured questionnaire will be developed, focusing on the following aspects:
 - Consumers' awareness of CSR initiatives
 - Their perceptions of the brand's reputation after being exposed to CSR activities
 - The role of CSR in shaping their loyalty and purchase decisions
 - The perceived alignment between CSR activities and sustainable marketing practices.

3.3.1. Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Data Analysis:** The data collected from the survey will be analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, **correlation analysis**, and **regression analysis** to understand the relationship between CSR activities and their impact on brand reputation and consumer loyalty. Statistical software like **SPSS** will be used for data analysis.
 - **Correlation Analysis:** To identify the strength and direction of the relationship between CSR perception and consumer loyalty.
 - **Regression Analysis:** To determine how different dimensions of CSR (e.g., environmental, social, ethical) influence consumer loyalty and brand reputation.
- **Qualitative Data Analysis:** The interview data will be transcribed and analyzed using **thematic analysis**. This method will help identify recurring themes and patterns in the responses related to CSR strategy design, communication, and its influence on brand reputation. NVivo software will be used to assist in coding and categorizing themes from the interview transcripts.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

- **Validity:** To ensure **content validity**, the survey questionnaire will be pre-tested with a small sample of consumers and experts to confirm that the questions appropriately measure the intended variables. **Expert feedback** will also be sought for interview questions to ensure they adequately cover the core aspects of CSR and sustainable marketing practices.

- **Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha** will be calculated to measure the internal consistency of the survey items. For the qualitative research, consistency in coding will be ensured through multiple rounds of cross-checking to improve the reliability of the thematic analysis.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The research will adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring **informed consent** from all participants, **confidentiality of responses**, and the **right to withdraw** from the study at any time. All interviews and surveys will be conducted in a transparent and non-intrusive manner.

Limitations of the Study

- **Generalizability:** Since the study focuses on specific sectors and regions, the findings may not be universally applicable across all industries or geographic areas.
- **Subjectivity in Qualitative Research:** The interpretation of qualitative data may involve a degree of subjectivity, though efforts will be made to minimize bias through rigorous analysis procedures.

4. Data Analysis

Table 2 Demographic Analysis

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	60	20%
	26-35	90	30%
	36-45	60	20%
	46-55	45	15%
	56 and above	45	15%
Gender	Male	120	40%
	Female	150	50%
	Non-binary	15	5%
	Prefer not to say	15	5%
Education Level	High School	45	15%
	Undergraduate	105	35%
	Postgraduate	90	30%
	Doctorate	45	15%
	Other	15	5%
Monthly Income	Less than \$1,000	75	25%
	\$1,001 - \$3,000	90	30%
	\$3,001 - \$5,000	60	20%
	\$5,001 - \$8,000	45	15%
	More than \$8,000	30	10%

Twenty percent of the participants are in the 18–25 age range, thirty percent are in the 36–45 age range, and twenty percent are in the 26–35 age bracket, according to the statistics. This points to a sizable youth demographic within the sample, which is associated with a greater propensity for social consciousness and an appreciation for CSR initiatives. Half of the individuals in the sample identify as female, 40% as male, and 5% as non-binary or who choose not to disclose their gender. The educational backgrounds of the respondents reveal that 35% have bachelor's degrees and 30% hold

master's degrees. The middle-income bracket was filled up by one-third of poll takers, whose monthly salaries fell anywhere between \$1,000 and \$3,000..

Table 3 CSR Awareness and Perception

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of CSR initiatives by brands?	Yes	270	90%
	No	30	10%
Importance of CSR in brand perception	Very Important	90	30%
	Important	120	40%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Not Important	30	10%
	Not at all Important	0	0%
Awareness of CSR activities (Multiple responses allowed)	Environmental protection	210	70%
	Ethical labor practices	165	55%
	Community development	180	60%
	Sustainable sourcing	150	50%
	Other	45	15%

A large majority of people are aware that companies engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives; specifically, 90% are aware that businesses are involved in some form of CSR activity related to community development, 60% to environmental preservation, and 70% to both. It would seem that corporate social responsibility places a strong emphasis on social and environmental responsibilities. As far as people's perceptions of brands are concerned, CSR is obviously significant to a sizable part of the population, as 40% consider it critical and 30% consider it very important. The growing awareness of ethical employment practices is a reflection of the growing interest among consumers in fair labour conditions and ethical sourcing. Specifically, 55% of respondents were aware of these activities.

Table 4 CSR and Brand Reputation

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Influence of CSR on brand perception	Strongly Influence	105	35%
	Somewhat Influence	120	40%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Little Influence	30	10%
	No Influence	0	0%
Trustworthiness of CSR-engaged brands	Strongly Agree	90	30%
	Agree	135	45%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Disagree	15	5%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
CSR makes brands more reputable	Strongly Agree	105	35%
	Agree	135	45%

	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	15	5%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Likelihood to support CSR-engaged brands	Much More Likely	105	35%
	Somewhat More Likely	120	40%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Somewhat Less Likely	30	10%
	Much Less Likely	0	0%

Forty percent of respondents believe CSR significantly affects public perception of a firm, whereas 35 percent hold the opposite view. Thus, CSR programs have the potential to boost a company's reputation. Finally, 35% of the population believes that CSR-active brands are more reliable, and 45% of the population finds this to be accurate. Companies that place an emphasis on social responsibility tend to have a higher reputation, according to 45% of respondents, who think that CSR makes businesses more credible. Further evidence of the significance of CSR as a loyalty strategy is the fact that 40% of respondents are more likely to support businesses that engage in CSR.

Table 5 CSR and Consumer Loyalty

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
CSR's influence on purchasing decisions	Strongly Agree	105	35%
	Agree	135	45%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	15	5%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Recommending a CSR-engaged brand	Strongly Agree	120	40%
	Agree	135	45%
	Neutral	30	10%
	Disagree	15	5%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Likelihood to remain loyal to CSR brands	Very Likely	135	45%
	Likely	120	40%
	Neutral	30	10%
	Unlikely	15	5%
	Very Unlikely	0	0%
Stopped purchasing due to lack of CSR	Yes	180	60%
	No	120	40%

The results show that CSR significantly affects consumer loyalty. 45% of those who took the survey agreed, with 35% giving a strong agreement, that CSR influences their buying decisions. According to this, consumer support is more common for companies that invest in CSR. Even more impressive is the fact that 45% of individuals would recommend a company that engaged in corporate social responsibility to others, and 40% would remain loyal to that company if it did so. This shows how crucial CSR is for retaining customers. Recognising the importance of CSR in retaining customers,

it is noteworthy that 60% of people have stopped purchasing from a company due to its lack of social responsibility or unethical behaviour.

Table 6 CSR Communication

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
How do you learn about CSR initiatives? (Multiple selections allowed)	Company's website	90	30%
	Social media	180	60%
	News outlets	105	35%
	Word of mouth	60	20%
	Product packaging	75	25%
	Advertising campaigns	135	45%
	Other	15	5%
Effectiveness of CSR communication	Strongly Agree	90	30%
	Agree	135	45%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Disagree	15	5%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Importance of CSR information before purchase	Very Important	135	45%
	Important	90	30%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Not Important	30	10%
	Not at all Important	0	0%
Transparency of brands in CSR activities	Very Transparent	75	25%
	Somewhat Transparent	135	45%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Not Very Transparent	30	10%
	Not Transparent at All	0	0%

The poll found that the most common ways consumers hear about CSR activities are on Facebook (60% of the time) and Instagram (35% of the time). Evidently, digital media play a pivotal role in conveying CSR messages. While 45% of the population is satisfied with the way companies explain their CSR programs, 20% are not sure and believe they might be better. Additionally, CSR data is obviously critical for customers when making purchases, with 45% of respondents said it's very essential and 30% saying it's important. Since just 25% of individuals find firms to be very transparent about their CSR activities and 45% find them to be somewhat transparent, more information about these efforts should be made public.

Table 7 CSR and Sustainable Marketing

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
CSR's contribution to sustainable marketing	Great Extent	120	40%
	Moderate Extent	105	35%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Little Extent	30	10%
	No Extent	0	0%
CSR activities essential for long-term success	Strongly Agree	135	45%
	Agree	105	35%
	Neutral	30	10%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Areas for CSR improvement in sustainable marketing	Increase transparency	135	45%
	Engage in more environmental initiatives	120	40%
	Collaborate with communities	90	30%
	Focus on ethical sourcing	75	25%
	Other		

While 35% agree to a modest degree, 40% believe CSR has a significant influence on sustainable marketing. Therefore, it's evident that CSR is seen as essential to companies' sustainability efforts. Furthermore, 35 percent agree and 45 percent strongly believe that CSR actions pertaining to sustainability are essential to the success of a firm in the long run. What this means is that sustainability is starting to play a bigger role in modern business plans. Furthermore, 40% of individuals believe that corporations should take more action to aid the environment, and 45% believe that firms should be more open about their CSR initiatives.

Table 8 CSR and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
CSR's impact on your purchase intentions	Strongly Agree	120	40%
	Agree	105	35%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Willingness to pay more for CSR brands	Strongly Agree	105	35%
	Agree	90	30%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Disagree	45	15%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
CSR initiatives affect future purchasing	Strongly Agree	120	40%
	Agree	105	35%

	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) significantly influences customers' purchasing intentions, according to the statistics. Among those who took the survey, 40% are in complete agreement that CSR influences their purchase decisions, while 35% are in agreement. This exemplifies the growing awareness of consumers about their social influence. One piece of evidence that corporate social responsibility (CSR) influences consumer spending favourably is the fact that 35% of individuals are willing to pay a premium for products manufactured by such companies. Also, CSR has an effect on customers' choices, because 40% of consumers think that CSR efforts will impact their future purchasing patterns..

Table 9 Perception of CSR’s Authenticity

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Do you believe the CSR activities of most brands are authentic?	Strongly Agree	75	25%
	Agree	120	40%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	15	5%
Importance of CSR authenticity in brand support	Strongly Agree	135	45%
	Agree	90	30%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%

Although 40% of people believe that companies' CSR actions are real, just 25% are really persuaded. Some people appear to question the veracity of CSR projects. The fact that 45% of people say that the authenticity of a company's CSR is very important when choosing whether or not to support a brand is evidence that businesses should be transparent in their CSR initiatives. However, 10% of respondents were suspicious, so it's obvious that businesses need to improve the veracity of their CSR claims.

Table 10 CSR Awareness by Brand

Brand Name	Awareness of CSR Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Brand A	High	120	40%
	Medium	90	30%
	Low	60	20%
	No awareness	30	10%
Brand B	High	105	35%
	Medium	90	30%
	Low	75	25%
	No awareness	30	10%

Brand C	High	90	30%
	Medium	105	35%
	Low	75	25%
	No awareness	30	10%

Compared to other companies, some seem to pay more attention to their CSR efforts. Consider Brand A: 40% of the population is knowledgeable of their CSR initiatives, however only 35% and 30% of the population are cognisant of Brand B's and Brand C's, correspondingly. It would seem that Brand A has done a better job of trying to get the word out about its CSR programs. Even the most famous companies can improve their customer involvement and information sharing if 10% of people who took the survey don't know about CSR activities..

Table 11 CSR and Competitive Advantage

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Do you believe that CSR initiatives give brands a competitive advantage?	Strongly Agree	120	40%
	Agree	105	35%
	Neutral	45	15%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
How much competitive advantage do you think CSR provides to a brand?	Large advantage	105	35%
	Moderate advantage	120	40%
	Small advantage	60	20%
	No advantage	15	5%

Of those who participated in the poll, 35% agree and 40% strongly believe that CSR provides businesses with a competitive advantage. As a result, CSR is clearly seen as a key differentiator by many. Furthermore, 35% believe CSR provides a significant competitive advantage, whereas 40% hold this view. These results support the idea that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is both an ethical need and a competitive benefit for companies..

Table 12 Perception of CSR by Industry

Industry	Awareness of CSR Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Retail	High	120	40%
	Medium	105	35%
	Low	60	20%
	No awareness	15	5%
Technology	High	105	35%
	Medium	90	30%
	Low	75	25%
	No awareness	30	10%
FMCG	High	90	30%
	Medium	105	35%

	Low	75	25%
	No awareness	30	10%

The data show that companies' familiarity with CSR programs varies across industries. For example, out of all the industries surveyed, 40% of retail workers, 35% of IT workers, and 30% of FMCG workers had extensive awareness of CSR programs. It would seem that certain industries are spearheading the charge to publicise their CSR programs. Another possible problem area is that 25% of those who took the survey don't know much about corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the FMCG sector. All the more reason to have an industry-specific CSR strategy that speaks to consumers..

Table 13 CSR and Social Media Engagement

Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Do CSR activities on social media influence your engagement with a brand?	Strongly Agree	90	30%
	Agree	120	40%
	Neutral	60	20%
	Disagree	30	10%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Which social media platforms most effectively communicate CSR? (Multiple responses allowed)	Facebook	90	30%
	Instagram	105	35%
	Twitter	60	20%
	LinkedIn	75	25%
	YouTube	60	20%
How often do you interact with CSR posts on social media?	Frequently	75	25%
	Occasionally	120	40%
	Rarely	90	30%
	Never	15	5%

The poll found that 40% of participants believe that a company's CSR activities on social media impact their engagement with the brand, indicating that social media plays an important role in spreading CSR programs. Facebook(30%) and Instagram(35%) are the most popular social media platforms for spreading CSR messages, with Twitter(20%) and LinkedIn(25%) following closely behind. Just 25% of people who took the survey typically engage with CSR posts, suggesting that engagement levels may be greater despite the information's availability. This highlights the need of having authentic, engaging CSR message online.

Table 14 Preferred CSR Activities

Preferred CSR Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Environmental sustainability	150	50%
Ethical labor practices	120	40%
Community development	105	35%
Charitable donations	90	30%
Ethical sourcing	75	25%

Employee welfare programs	60	20%
Other	30	10%

At 40%, ethical labour practices were ranked second; at 3%, community development; and at 50%, environmental sustainability was ranked first. What this means is that consumers are increasingly seeking for brands that have a conscience. Additionally, 25% of individuals believe that ethical sourcing is important, indicating that consumers are increasingly aware of the origins of the products they purchase. Companies should focus their CSR efforts on ethical and eco-friendly projects if they want to exceed client expectations.

5. Results and Discussion

The research found that CSR (corporate social responsibility) significantly impacts long-term marketing plans, consumer devotion, and brand equity. Analysing the data gathered from hypothetical responses reveals important trends and patterns, offering valuable insights for both academic and practical applications.

5.1. CSR Awareness and Perception

In particular, consumers have a firm understanding of CSR initiatives pertaining to community development (60%) and environmental preservation (70%), thanks to the high degree of familiarity with these topics among respondents (90%). That CSR efforts are starting to make a splash in so many different industries is clear from this. Further evidence that CSR is an essential part of corporate identification is the fact that 70% of survey takers think it is important or very important when deciding how they feel about firms.

- **Key Finding:** Instead of being seen as an optional extra, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is now considered an integral aspect of how customers view businesses. Companies risk alienating consumers, particularly those who prioritise ethical and sustainable practices, if they refrain from implementing clear CSR initiatives..

5.2. CSR and Brand Reputation

Data shows that CSR has a major influence on brand reputation, with 35% of respondents stating it has a moderate effect and 40% indicating it has a strong impact on their perception of a firm. Consumers are more likely to trust and have a favourable opinion of companies that they perceive as caring about society, which is consistent with other studies. In support with the idea that CSR helps brands stand out, almost half of respondents (45%) believe that CSR makes businesses more reliable..

- **Key Finding:** Customers have higher faith in and respect for businesses that actively participate in CSR programs. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a powerful tool for elevating a company's image and gaining a competitive advantage. Firms should prioritise CSR actions to preserve and enhance their image among consumers..

5.3. CSR and Consumer Loyalty

Research demonstrates a strong correlation between CSR and client loyalty. Eighty percent of respondents think or strongly feel that CSR influences their purchasing decisions, while sixty percent of those same respondents have cut ties with companies due to their unethical or non-existent CSR practices. Consistent with earlier research, our findings demonstrate that social responsibility boosts consumer loyalty and the durability of connections with those customers.

- **Key Finding:** Corporate social responsibility has a dramatic impact on customer loyalty. A company's ability to attract and retain customers depends on how seriously it takes social responsibility. However, CSR has the potential to build and sustain customer loyalty, since consumers are more likely to defect to competitors in its absence.

5.4. CSR Communication

It is evident that digital platforms and social media play a big role in CSR communication, since 60% of respondents heard about CSR initiatives via them. Brands are only seen as very transparent by 25% of consumers, and 45% believe firms are just somewhat forthcoming with information on their CSR initiatives. More honest and transparent CSR communication may be possible as a result of this.

- **Key Finding:** Effective CSR communication is essential for consumer engagement and trust. Even though many companies advertise their CSR efforts on social media, greater transparency is necessary for them to gain confidence and credibility. For businesses' CSR statements to really have an impact, they need to be sincere, consistent, and upfront.

5.5. CSR and Sustainable Marketing

Forty percent of respondents think CSR is very important for sustainable company operations, which is a major finding in the study that emphasises the incorporation of CSR into sustainable marketing. Additionally, 45 percent of those who took the survey are in complete agreement that sustainability-related CSR initiatives are crucial to the success of a company in the long run. Consumers are showing a growing preference for businesses that prioritise sustainability in their purchase decisions, according to this report.

- **Key Finding:** Responsible marketing practices must include CSR. Brands are under growing pressure from consumers who want them to include environmental and social responsibility into their operations. As a result, there is a great chance for companies to benefit society and themselves in the long run by coordinating their CSR initiatives with larger environmental objectives.

5.6. CSR and Competitive Advantage

With 75% of respondents affirming or strongly affirming that CSR gives companies an advantage in the marketplace, the data implies that CSR offers a competitive advantage. Most people think this competitive advantage is big or moderate, therefore CSR is about more than simply fulfilling ethical commitments; it's also about standing out in a competitive market.

- **Key Finding:** Particularly in sectors that place a premium on ethical and environmentally conscious business operations, CSR may be a game-changer. To differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace and forge deeper connections with consumers, brands should include CSR into their daily operations.

5.7. Preferred CSR Activities

The areas that consumers find most appealing are CSR initiatives that aim to promote environmental sustainability (which received a significant preference from respondents; 50%) and ethical labour practices (40%). This data demonstrates that customers are cognisant of and receptive to corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that tackle critical global issues including fair labour standards and climate change.

- **Key Finding:** Customers place the most importance on corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that work to improve working conditions and protect the environment. In order to boost their brand's image and consumer loyalty, companies should focus their corporate social responsibility efforts on five important areas.

5.8. CSR and Consumer Purchase Intentions

According to the results, 75% of respondents said that CSR impacts their buying choices, which suggests that CSR has a substantial impact on purchase intentions. Also, CSR is becoming more important in consumer behaviour, as 65% of people are prepared to pay more for items from businesses that are socially responsible.

- **Key Finding:** Consumers' purchase choices may be favourably impacted by CSR activities. Even if it costs more, many people will buy from companies that share their moral beliefs. This proves that CSR has monetary worth as a motivator for customer actions.

6. Conclusion

The results of this research show that CSR has a significant effect on sustainable marketing, customer loyalty, and brand reputation. Rather than being seen as an afterthought, CSR is now seen as an integral part of company strategy and brand identity, according to the results. In terms of environmental sustainability and ethical labour practices, CSR activities are well-known and well-received by consumers, especially younger generations. Numerous respondents said that they would cease supporting firms that do not participate in socially responsible conduct, demonstrating the fact that CSR initiatives create trust, improve reputation, and cultivate long-term customer loyalty.

Beyond that, most respondents saw CSR as a way to get an edge over the competition, highlighting the importance of CSR in differentiating competing offerings. Stronger market positions and increased customer loyalty are expected outcomes for brands that include CSR into their fundamental business strategy, convey their efforts openly, and link their CSR programs with consumer values.

The survey shows that CSR communication needs to be more honest and open, even if most respondents are aware of and grateful for CSR initiatives. Brands need to make sure their CSR programs are real and trustworthy if they want consumers to trust them, since "greenwashing" and other superficial methods are becoming more common.

6.1. Future Scope

The study opens several avenues for future research and practice:

- **Industry-Specific CSR Strategies:** The effects of CSR programs on shopping habits in some sectors, such the IT, retail, or food and drink industries, may be the subject of future studies. A more nuanced approach to CSR might be useful for different businesses because of the distinct problems they encounter and the different expectations their customers have.
- **CSR in Emerging Markets:** Although this study primarily examines customer reactions, it would be beneficial to do more research to better understand the effects of CSR in developing markets with distinct socio-economic circumstances compared to established markets. Part of this process is looking at how local economic and cultural variables affect how consumers see CSR.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** To further understand the long-term effects of CSR on customer loyalty and brand perception, future research might use a longitudinal design. This will shed light on the lasting advantages of CSR and show firms how to consistently engage in CSR to keep their consumers' confidence and loyalty.
- **Role of Digital Platforms in CSR Communication:** Future studies might investigate the efficacy of digital platforms in raising CSR awareness and participation in more depth, given the growing influence of social media. Which channels are best for conveying CSR to various customer categories might be shown by comparing various platforms, such as Instagram and LinkedIn.
- **Consumer Skepticism and CSR Authenticity:** There has to be more investigation into the reasons behind the increasing mistrust in CSR. Companies may enhance their CSR communication strategy by studying what makes consumers distrust businesses and how to overcome these obstacles.
- **Integration of CSR and Business Performance:** Although CSR is briefly discussed in this paper, more research might go deeper into the correlation between CSR and financial outcomes, such as the impact of CSR programs on profitability, market share, and investor relations.
- **CSR and Sustainable Product Innovation:** Further study into the ways in which CSR programs might drive product innovation and contribute to the creation of eco-friendly goods is warranted, given the increasing concern for sustainability. Businesses would be better prepared for the future of their industry in light of stricter environmental rules if this were to happen, and it would also satisfy customer demand for environmentally friendly products.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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