

A STUDY ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IN TIMES OF COVID-19

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the various definitions and descriptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); elaborating upon the scope of corporate social responsibility in India by studying the deployment of CSR practices over the last few years. From the perspectives of ethics, legality, and corporate responsibility, this paper investigates the reasons why some CSR initiatives implemented by various businesses fall short. While these activities may not necessarily have violated the law's letter, the spirit of them must be considered. We contend that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant opportunity for businesses to shift toward more authentic CSR and contribute to the solution of pressing global social and environmental issues. We also talk about some possible ways that the pandemic could change consumer ethical decision-making. In our discussion of marketing, we outline how we believe the pandemic will alter not only the context of marketing but also the way businesses approach their strategic marketing efforts. The paper is concluded by identifying several potential research themes and directions.

Keywords: Covid-19, Corporate social responsibility, Marketing, Consumer ethical decision making, Marketing philosophy, Business ethics.

Introduction

This article is based on the pandemic and people adhering to social distance measures as "responsible citizens." With online meetings with colleagues, research students, and, of course, quite "dauntingly" online teaching, academics like us are learning to adapt to a new reality and way of working (and life, though the boundary is reduced during lockdown). In addition, we must perform this task without prior instruction or warning. Taking advantage of the lockdown to reflect on something we value the most in our research—in our case, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and marketing—is probably one of the most important ways to cope with it without compromising mental or physical health.

The world has changed, that much is certain. Covid-19, like other global calamities with global repercussions, has the potential to alter our perspectives on the world, our thinking, and our daily lives. The economic and social changes brought about by a pandemic-driven lockdown will be a cultural legacy that will last a lifetime in our and future generations' memories, despite the human tragedy of lost lives, broken families, and scarred communities. The pain is personal, emotional, psychological, societal, economic, and cultural; and it will leave scars.

According to (Euronews, 2020) It is likely that Covid-19 will have an impact on the global economy that has not been seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic is probably one of the most significant environmental shifts in modern marketing history. This could have a significant impact on

corporate social responsibility (CSR), consumer ethics, and fundamental marketing philosophy. Due to the widespread lockdowns and social distance measures implemented worldwide, the short-term effects of Covid-19 are felt immediately and effortlessly. The pandemic is already predicted to have profound long-term effects on the economy, society, politics, and culture, regardless of how it ends. The pandemic's potential impact on CSR and marketing philosophy is the subject of our preliminary thoughts in this paper. We will talk about how CSR affects CSR opportunities and trends as well as consumer ethics. We will concentrate on its potential effects on fundamental marketing ideas, marketing context, and marketing strategy in terms of marketing.

Concerning CSR, Covid-19 presents difficulties for businesses and organizations. According to reports, some businesses and retailers have attempted to profit from the crisis. In the UK, for instance, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the country's competition regulator, established a special taskforce to crack down on businesses profiting from the pandemic by inflating prices or making false product claims (Butler, 2020a, 2020b). Companies' commitment to CSR and ethical business practices has unavoidably been put to the test as a result of this crisis. Some may argue that the outbreak's short- and long-term financial strains may have significantly pushed businesses to pursue short-term gains, sometimes even through fraud and misconduct, and to reduce long-term CSR investment. This is likely due to a lack of resources and increasing pressure to survive.

Fortunately, we have observed that a number of businesses have not only resisted unethical business practices during this crisis but have also actively participated in a variety of CSR activities, particularly those that can assist in the fight against the virus immediately. Those with a more thoughtful and savvy approach to CSR stand to benefit greatly from the current pandemic's numerous significant opportunities. For instance, manufacturing companies in the United Kingdom transformed their factories to produce things like hand sanitizer, ventilators, personal protective equipment, and so on. Some of these companies donated these items rather than selling them. Vodafone, a telecoms conglomerate, made free access to unlimited mobile data available to many of its pay-per-use customers and upgraded its vulnerable pay-per-use customers to the free unlimited data offer (BBC, 2020a). In the UK, supermarkets have given Easter eggs and other general food to food banks and charitable organizations, and they have designated opening hours specifically for the elderly and NHS workers. In order to train volunteers to call the elderly in the UK during the lockdown, the UK tea brand PG Tips collaborated with Re-engage, a charitable organization whose mission is to address issues of social isolation and loneliness among older people (Jones, 2020). To support charitable causes, businesses gave away their initial commercial campaign airtime. Over time, banks waived interest on overdrafts. The list goes on and on.

Customers and the general public have high expectations from leading brands, particularly their favored brands, regarding their efforts to combat the virus during the current crisis, so a company's genuine and authentic CSR will strengthen that relationship. Customers would be proud of their brands if they donated equipment and money to their employees and helped them through the crisis. During times of crisis, the brand-consumer relationship may be more meaningful and long-lasting than during times of "peace." As a result, the Covid-19 pandemic presents excellent opportunities for businesses to actively engage with their CSR plans and strategies. However, the pandemic has driven many businesses out of business, if not completely bankrupt. Understanding what motivates some businesses to be more ethical and socially responsible is becoming increasingly important, particularly when resources are limited and survival is in jeopardy. What are the governance and institutional factors?

To alleviate the imminent pressure, governments around the world have established economic assistance packages, particularly for small businesses and hospitality/tourism/travel/hospitality businesses. Companies should be encouraged to adhere to ethical business practices and fulfill their CSR obligations to their various stakeholders by these measures. There is also evidence to suggest that senior leadership plays a crucial role in this regard during times of crisis and uncertainty.

The business case for CSR, particularly in the medium and long term, is, however, a prominent post-coronavirus issue that has returned. Businesses become more susceptible to extraordinary external forces as a result of the pandemic, such as the pandemic's black swan event. What are the implications for CSR given the predicted greatest depression since the Great Depression in the 1930s and the increasingly turbulent and volatile business environments? Will businesses put more money into CSR, or will they give in to pressure from the business to

succeed now? In the face of increasing threats to their survival, how can business leaders be persuaded of the significance of CSR? There may be two opposing perspectives and predictions regarding this. Due to the fact that businesses must concentrate on their core operating business in order to survive in the short term, it may, on the one hand, discourage them from investing in CSR. On the other hand, the development of CSR has been facilitated by shifts in environmental forces, such as the 1970s oil crisis.

As a result, a more optimistic perspective holds that the Covid-19 pandemic will, in the long run, accelerate post-pandemic CSR development as a growing number of businesses realize that achieving a delicate balance between profitability and harmony with its various stakeholders is essential to their long-term survival and development. The question of whether or not to invest in CSR is probably less relevant and pressing than the question of how to invest in CSR to achieve the social/environmental and economic goals that are mutually beneficial and interdependent. We will learn that "we are all in this together" from the pandemic, which will undoubtedly raise people's expectations for businesses to be more socially responsible. As a result, we can imagine that businesses that have strong CSR commitment, efficient CSR strategies, and successful implementations will thrive in the post-pandemic period. Greenwash, pinkwash, and empty promises will no longer stand up to closer scrutiny from consumers and the general public.

According to Ford and Richardson (1994) and Trevio (1986), traditional frameworks of ethical decision-making emphasize the joint impact of personal and situational/contextual factors. Consumer personality traits, moral values, moral identity, implicit morality beliefs, and so on are examples of personal factors. Issue characteristics, social influences, group and intergroup dynamics, and so on are examples of situational/contextual factors. As an unprecedented situational and contextual factor, the Covid-19 pandemic has significant repercussions for consumer ethical decision-making during the pandemic and possibly after the pandemic. Due to lockdowns and other social distancing measures, many consumers are confined to their homes during the pandemic and only have limited access to the internet. During crises like the current pandemic, consumer decision-making can be irrational, as evidenced by the worldwide stockpiling of food, medicines, products for hygiene and sanitation, and even toilet paper. Some may contend that panic buying (including According to Lufkin (2020), stockpiling is the perfectly rational behavior of consumers in times of crisis with a high level of uncertainty like this one. Nevertheless, it appears that self-interest and feelings of fear, rage, and anxiety currently dominate consumer decision-making. The supermarkets have been compelled to take measures like rationing and establishing extended hours for senior citizens and key employees as a result. However, during the pandemic, consumers have demonstrated a variety of altruistic behaviors, such as resisting panic buying and purchasing groceries for residents who are in a vulnerable position (such as those over 70) (Guardian, 2020). As a result, this crisis provides an excellent opportunity to examine the interaction between personal and situational/contextual factors that influence consumer ethical decisions. These factors include contextual factors, such as the nature and ongoing situations of the pandemic, as well as personal factors, such as personality differences, rationality, and consumer emotions like fear, anxiety, animosity, and hope.

The pandemic has provided consumers with the opportunity and time to consider the fundamental meaning of consumption as well as the effects of their consumption on others, society as a whole, and the environment. Prior to the pandemic, consumers in the developed world had taken it for granted that they could easily meet their basic needs, like food and shelter, with a wide range of products and services. In fact, customers were "spoilt" by "choice overload." In addition, according to Maslow (1943), consumers' pursuit of goods and services that can support their higher social (such as self-esteem and social belonging) and self-actualization needs drives consumption. Customers were shocked by the idea—and even the very real possibility of it—that their basic requirements—such as food and other necessities—could not be met. While basic consumer needs are likely to be met in the developed world, there will be some shifts in how consumers appreciate and value those needs being met. It also alters consumers' perceptions of how to fulfill higher social and self-actualization needs. In the sense that consumers consciously reflect on how to consume and make product/brand choices to be more responsible to themselves, others, society, and the environment, there is likely to be a significant shift toward responsible and prosocial consumption.

The pandemic is teaching consumers that our decisions about products and brands have an impact on everyone else, so we should be aware of them. Based on their responsible consumption and prosocial product/brand choices,

consumers will be more likely to judge themselves or others to form a fundamental evaluation of their self-concepts (consumer identity) (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). To put it another way, consumers' responsible and prosocial behaviors will more likely satisfy their higher levels of social and self-actualization needs. The pandemic will cultivate a distinct consumer segment that places an emphasis on instinctive and hedonic gratification, despite the fact that responsible and prosocial consumers will grow in number. For many consumers, the Covid-19 pandemic is a collective trauma that has harmed them physically, emotionally, and mentally. Some customers are able to deal with it by using a coping mechanism that makes them feel more compelled to go after the pleasant experience that meets their emotional and sensory needs. A higher level of perceived uncertainty about the future will make it less desirable to delay gratification in this regard. Both segments have implications for marketing, particularly socially responsible marketing, which should aim to encourage socially responsible consumption and resist the temptation to exploit consumers' need for instinctive, hedonic gratification.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented pressure on businesses, often to the point where the company's survival is at stake. A company's commitment to CSR will be put to the test under these circumstances, and employees' perceptions of CSR are likely to improve (positively or negatively, depending on how the company behaves). As a result, the pandemic has created organizational conditions that make it easier to investigate the underlying connection between key employee outcomes and perceptions of CSR. The influence of CSR perceptions on affective commitment has been the subject of previous research (George et al., 2020), organizational pride and performance (Asante Boadi et al., 2020), and intention to leave and engagement at work (Lin and Liu, 2017). An underlying mechanism for how CSR perceptions influence employee outcomes is proposed in this study, which also investigates the impact of CSR perceptions on two other important employee outcomes—organizational identification and job embeddedness.

The global economy was greatly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had an impact on profits and profitability rarely seen outside of major recessions. This extremely difficult time for businesses has tested their commitment to ethical business conduct and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (He and Harris, 2020), making it difficult for businesses to strike a balance between the interests of their own business and those of stakeholders (Antwi et al., 2021). Due to a lack of resources and increasing pressure for survival brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak, we might expect some businesses to pursue short-term gains and reduce long-term CSR investment under these extraordinary pressures. However, the pandemic also presents businesses with an opportunity to shift toward more authentic CSR and contribute to the urgent resolution of global environmental and social issues (He and Harris, 2020; Mahmud and other, 2021; Qiu and co., 2021). The current study, which aims to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on CSR investment and the response of individuals' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace, is framed by this potential conflict of priorities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses are employing a variety of downsizing strategies, including layoffs, to deal with massive profit losses. As a result, a lot of jobs disappeared from the job market, causing uncertainty and unrest among organizations' employees. As a result, managing an organization during the severe COVID-19 pandemic had never been more difficult. According to Yao et al., it is defined as "the combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job." It has been discovered that job embeddedness has a positive impact on important work-related behaviors like job performance (Ali et al., 2004, p. et al., 2021), initiative (2021), job satisfaction (Ampofo et al., 2021) and novel conduct (Amankwaa et al., 2021). As a result, employees may be able to use their skills to avoid layoffs and increase retention with an increase in embeddedness, which may also assist businesses in overcoming the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The antecedents of job embeddedness, such as job characteristics, have been examined by some researchers (Rahimnia et al., 2019), adaptability on the job (Chan et al., (Akgunduz and Sanli, 2016), employee advocacy, and perceived organizational support, further research is required. The present study responds to Bambacas and Kulik's (2012) call for research into how HR practices affect job embedding, which is consistent with the idea that CSR and HRM are strongly linked. We test the hypothesis that organizational identification serves as the psychological mediator between CSR and job embeddedness by examining how employees' perceptions of CSR affect their job embeddedness.

CSR can be viewed as having various aspects related to the target stakeholder, consistent with the emphasis on various stakeholders. In this study, we take into account corporate social responsibility (CSR) for the benefit of

employees, customers, society, and the government (Turker, 2009b). According to Ghosh and Gurunathan (2014), employees' perceptions of CSR in relation to society and customers had a positive impact on their job embeddedness, which in turn had a negative impact on employees' intentions to quit. However, these authors did not take into account any psychological mechanisms underlying the connection between CSR and job embeddedness when considering job embeddedness as a mediating variable. In general, there hasn't been much research into these kinds of mechanisms in the literature on job embeddedness. This void can be filled with the assistance of this study.

We propose that organizational identification, based on social identity theory, is a crucial psychological mechanism that underpins the connection between CSR and job embeddedness. We proposed that the groups to which we belong are a crucial source of pride and belonging, and that the company we work for is a particularly significant group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). As a result, we anticipate that employees will identify with the organization, feel a greater sense of belonging within it, and consequently become more embedded in it if they perceive their organization as demonstrating CSR. This psychological process between job embeddedness and its antecedents has not been empirically examined. Kiazad et al.'s meta-analysis and theoretical expansion of job embeddedness (2015) did not use any psychological constructs in their analysis, but they did include organizational antecedents related to high-performance work practices and non-organizational characteristics that provide embedding resources (such as attributes of the immediate extended family and community). As a result, the current study builds on previous work by measuring organizational identification and job embeddedness in a Chinese context.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandates that businesses align their managerial strategies with the triple bottom line (economic, social, and environmental objectives; Banks and McLennan, 2019). Schaltegger et al., have shown that successful CSR activities can improve a company's financial performance and increase its value (2019; Hameed and others, 2020). Stakeholder theory, which contends that taking into account the values of other stakeholders is an essential and implicit requirement for conducting business (Freeman, 1994; Freeman and other, 2004; Du and co., 2010; Niazi and co., 2012). CSR can be thought of in terms of different dimensions relating to distinct stakeholder groups because the various stakeholders have distinct needs and expectations of the company. The ways in which an organization's CSR strategies define and engage stakeholders determine the extent to which it acknowledges its responsibility to society (Hameed et al., 2019; Qiu and co., 2021). Diverse stakeholder groups are reflected in the variety of CSR definitions. This study uses Turker's (2009b) definition of CSR, which suggests that CSR has four dimensions: CSR with employees, CSR with society, CSR with customers, and CSR with the government. In the following sections, we provide a definition of these dimensions and hypothesize their connections to job embeddedness and organizational identification.

Marketers have also emphasized the advantages of recognizing and encouraging meaningful customer value, satisfaction, and loyalty evaluations. Indeed, the credo of customer sovereignty, which aims to encourage positive customer interpretations and reflections of product offerings, has served as the foundation for numerous Marketing 101 modules and consultant-driven initiatives and careers for half a century. Mid-pandemic consumers, on the other hand, were frustratingly constrained by limited choice, product accessibility, and immediate demand and were not motivated by considered evaluations of various brands, long-term value, or future loyalty reflexions. In some ways, the COVID pandemic was more the case of consumers' pandemic-driven tunnel vision of panic buying and hoarding (Lewis, 2020), whereas, possibly in the future, marketers will be rebuked and castigated for their of hypermetropia (the opposite of myopia) during such crises for failing to focus on the want-satisfying attributes of their products. Marketing myopia is when marketers over-focus on the physical characteristics of their products and short-sightedly overlook Studies that look back at this kind of behavior and how companies handle crises will undoubtedly shed a lot of light on these issues. Theorists and practitioners of post-pandemic marketing are likely to confront a radical new landscape and significantly altered customers. Good and bad experiences influence opinions, beliefs, values, habits, and behaviors; Sadly, all of these will have been profoundly affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. Prior to Covid, marketers were preoccupied with how effectively and efficiently they could extract value from customers in the form of customer loyalty, market share, and customer equity. After the pandemic, metrics like customer lifetime value, share of customers, and customer equity that were previously thought to be indisputable are likely to be seriously questioned. It seems unlikely that these metrics will be completely ignored, but marketers and customers will probably tailor and supplement them.

Core marketing concepts have undergone and will continue to undergo modifications, which will reflect the turmoil that Covid-19 brought to the marketing environment. When compared to global lockdowns and extensive state interventionism on a scale not seen in a millennium, recessions, downturns, wars, revolutions, earthquakes, and volcanoes appear to be minor blips.

Organizational marketing microenvironments have experienced a tsunami of change that is greater than any previous fluctuations or reverberations. Social distancing and compelled lockdowns have changed the way businesses operate, necessitating significant adjustments to operations and structures. During the lockdown, the global supply chain was largely severed, and the majority of industries and sectors' local supply chains were stretched to breaking point. From being referred to as "white van pests" and "damned nuisances," distribution companies are now hailed as national saviors by consumers, who are sometimes literally starving for goods (SIRC, 2020; cf. 2020 Hatchman). Restaurants all over the world switched from serving fine dining to serving takeout; According to Whitbread, 2020, fast-food delivery service expanded to include both supermarket shopping and delivery. In contrast to earlier efforts, which took months or years, today's advertising and media companies must develop campaigns and responses in a matter of days. New theories and solid insights will be based on the lessons learned from public safety campaigns and other social marketing efforts. Additionally, competition's context has altered. Customers, publics, and governments all had to work together for the common good during the pandemic, and in some cases they were even forced to.

Fundamental shifts occurred in the macromarketing environment, which will have long-lasting effects. The global economy has been profoundly impacted economically. Covid-19 measures reduced the impact of austerity regimes by closing entire sectors, forcing industries to move almost exclusively online, and fundamentally altering consumer spending. Prior to lockdowns, online entertainment and connectivity companies thrived on massively increased demand, and grocery retailers in particular saw unprecedented sales. The rebound and waves of fluctuating demand and supply will likely continue for many years in other industries, such as the housing and automotive sectors. In almost all countries, political ideologies underwent radical shifts that severely imposed on previously cherished ideas like market economics and freedom of movement. The state took over many industries in many countries, and this will have long-term repercussions for economies across the world. Technologically, despite politicians hailing the Internet as a lifesaving medium (quite literally in virus-tracking nations, particularly in Asia) (The Japan Times, 2020), technology was widely used to replace human interaction. As a result, commentators in the media have suggested that the pandemic resulted in the adoption of technology for twenty years within twenty-four hours. Scientists, modelers, and researchers were given immediate funds to pursue vaccines, antibody testing, and virologic modeling, putting science and technology front and center. Socially, Covid-19 has altered and will continue to alter the mindsets and philosophies of individuals, groups, managements, and governments. People's perceptions of themselves, others, organizations, nature, and the universe have changed culturally. Long-term scenario planners and futurologists have long worked to highlight the potential for such dramatic and tragic events to affect the world, despite the fact that few were able to predict when they would occur (Malaska, 2000). Marketers ought to be at the forefront of investigating, elucidating, and responding to such shifts in our society and culture, despite the fact that the precise nature of such shifts in our culture and society is unknown.

It will be interesting to see to what extent market-oriented businesses responded more effectively and efficiently than production- or product-oriented businesses. To educate, control, and manage essential services, demand—supply, and public behavior in the middle of the pandemic, governments and agencies quickly adopted market driving strategies. Research done after the pandemic will, without a doubt, focus on how different strategic orientations helped or hindered how organizations responded (especially in terms of how quickly they responded). Production orientations and strategic flexibility were required during a time of unprecedented demand, and organizations that are able to respond quickly will likely gain an advantage over competitors after the pandemic.

The market after Covid-19 is fundamentally different, regardless of the most appropriate strategic orientation. The exponential increase in the use of online communication and change is an important aspect of this. During lockdowns, at least briefly, a very fast-growing medium was completely dominant (or at least prevailing). The shift was instantaneous and significant across all sectors and industries. It is debatable whether this change is reversible or merely accelerated an existing trend.

The study's main finding is that CSR is now seen as an all-encompassing business strategy because of performance considerations and pressure from stakeholders. Activities related to the fight against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which would reap indirect benefits from the operating segment in which businesses operate, have taken precedence over the predetermined planned framework of CSR. The majority of attention has been paid to the corporate processes, motives, and outcomes of such efforts, making it clear that the focus has been somewhat skewed.

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