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Project Dissertation Report on Effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Campaigns in Building Brand Trust

Submitted By:
Shreya Gupta
23/EMBA/35

Under the Guidance of
Dr. Archana Singh
Assistant Professor



DELHI SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Ms. Shreya Gupta (2023/EMBA/35)** has completed the project titled **Effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Campaigns in Building Brand Trust** under the guidance of **Dr. Archana Singh** as a part of Executive **Master of Business Administration (EMBA)** curriculum of **Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi** during the academic year **2023-25**. **This is an original piece of work and has not been submitted elsewhere.**

Dr. Archana Singh
(Assistant Professor)

DECLARATION

I, Shreya Gupta, a student at Delhi Technological University's Delhi School of Management, hereby declare that the Major Project on Effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Campaigns in Building Brand Trust as a part of Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) is an original piece of completed by me. I also certify that I or anyone else to any other university or institution in exchange for any other degree or credential have not submitted this project report. I further declare that the information collected from various sources has been duly acknowledged in this project.

Shreya Gupta

23/EMBA/35

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the assistance and guidance I received during my research. I'd like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Archana Singh, for assisting me in pursuing the topic 'Effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Campaigns in Building Brand Trust' and not only for providing excellent guidance and unending inspiration, but also for her never-ending willingness to deliver generous suggestions, timely attention, and kind interest, since the start of my research. I am grateful to the Delhi School of Management at Delhi Technological University for the opportunity to work on this project. Finally, I'd like to thank all of the distinguished faculty members for contributing their knowledge and expertise to this project. I have put all my efforts to ensure that the project is completed in the best possible manner and also ensured that the project is error-free.

Shreya Gupta

2023/EMBA/35

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research study, titled "*Effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Campaigns in Building Brand Trust*," explores the dynamic relationship between CSR activities and the formation of consumer trust in the Indian context. With increased consumer awareness and the growing demand for corporate accountability, companies are being evaluated not just for their product or service quality but for their societal contributions and ethical behaviour. This study aims to analyse how strategic CSR initiatives influence consumer perceptions, foster emotional engagement, and ultimately lead to the development of long-lasting brand trust.

The report incorporates both conceptual frameworks and primary data to assess the psychological and emotional impact of CSR. The theoretical foundation includes Carroll's Pyramid of CSR, Keller's Brand Equity Model, Trust Theory, and Social Identity Theory, which together help dissect the mechanisms through which CSR activities impact consumer attitudes. The research also includes an analysis of primary data obtained through a hypothetical survey of 100 participants, providing insights into how various demographics interpret and respond to CSR campaigns.

Key findings reveal that CSR initiatives perceived as honest, well-integrated, and aligned with the brand's identity are significantly more effective in cultivating consumer trust. Sectors like fashion, FMCG, and wellness have been particularly successful in leveraging CSR to reinforce trust, especially when campaigns reflect consumer-centric values such as sustainability, ethical sourcing, and social equity. Brands that regularly participate in CSR activities and openly share these efforts through digital platforms are more likely to form strong emotional bonds with their customers. This report also presents practical recommendations for brand managers and policymakers on designing impactful CSR strategies. The study advocates a shift from viewing CSR as a peripheral or regulatory obligation to integrating it as a strategic function that drives brand equity and emotional resonance. In conclusion, the report establishes CSR as an indispensable component of modern brand architecture, essential for earning consumer trust and ensuring long-term brand loyalty.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the 21st-century marketplace, the definition of corporate success has evolved beyond revenue generation and profit margins. This transformation in consumer mindset has elevated the role of ethical conduct, social contribution, and environmental stewardship in shaping brand perception. Among the various strategies employed by businesses to meet these expectations, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a pivotal tool. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) represents a company's dedication to ethical conduct and economic progress, while also enhancing the well-being of its employees, surrounding communities, and society as a whole. It goes beyond merely following laws or engaging in charity, incorporating sustainable practices and inclusive development. CSR initiatives often include efforts in education, environmental conservation, gender equality, public health, and rural development.

With consumers increasingly seeking alignment between their personal values and the brands they support, CSR has become a significant determinant of brand trust. Organizations that invest in socially responsible behaviour and communicate their efforts effectively tend to cultivate stronger emotional bonds with consumers, resulting in increased brand loyalty, advocacy, and long-term engagement.

This research aims to evaluate how effective CSR campaigns are in strengthening brand trust within the Indian market. It evaluates how companies across key sectors such as fashion, wellness, and FMCG integrate CSR into their core strategies to establish trust and differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive market.

1.1.1 Defining CSR and Brand Trust

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be broadly defined as a set of self-regulated practices that reflect a company's commitment to ethical behaviour, sustainability, and community development. Unlike conventional business activities aimed solely at maximizing shareholder value, CSR focuses on balancing the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and society.

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Brand trust, on the other hand, is the confidence a consumer has in a brand's reliability, integrity, and competence. It is developed gradually through consistent delivery, clear communication, and alignment with consumer values. Trust is a critical component of brand equity, influencing not only the customer's purchase decision but also their willingness to recommend and remain loyal to the brand.

CSR contributes to brand trust in the following ways:

- Establishing emotional resonance by aligning brand activities with causes that consumers care deeply about.
- Demonstrating corporate integrity and ethical commitment through visible actions rather than mere rhetoric.
- Reinforcing the brand's long-term orientation toward societal well-being rather than short-term profitability.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the CSR theories, the conceptual framework proposed for this study is as follows:



Fig1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Self-Compiled

Authenticity, in turn, enhances consumer trust, which ultimately leads to stronger brand loyalty. Companies that consistently engage in meaningful CSR activities foster positive emotional and cognitive associations, ensuring deeper and more enduring consumer relationships.

- **Big data and analytics** now allow brands to measure emotional motivators linked to CSR impact.
- **Digital media** amplifies CSR messaging, creating new avenues for storytelling, engagement, and community building.
- **Cultural sensitivity** ensures that CSR initiatives resonate across diverse consumer bases.
- **Genuineness and openness are essential**—superficial or insincere CSR efforts, often termed "CSR washing," can lead to serious backlash.

In summary, the effectiveness of CSR campaigns in building brand trust is rooted in emotional, cognitive, and relational factors. CSR not only differentiates brands in a crowded marketplace but also creates the foundation for sustainable consumer loyalty by nurturing trust, emotional engagement, and shared values.

1.1.2 CSR in the Indian Context

India is known globally for having a legally mandated framework for CSR. This provision has catalysed the integration of CSR into the strategic planning of many Indian firms.

Companies such as Tata Group, Reliance Industries, and ITC have pioneered the adoption of comprehensive CSR strategies, addressing critical areas like sanitation, rural development, healthcare, and education. These efforts have not only enhanced the quality of life for millions but also reinforced the public perception of these corporations as socially responsible and trustworthy.

Despite increased regulatory compliance and spending, the effectiveness of CSR in shaping consumer behaviour remains a subject of inquiry. Many campaigns are criticized for being tokenistic or disconnected from core brand values. As a result, understanding consumer perception of CSR—especially in the digital age—has become essential for optimizing its impact on brand trust.

1.1.3 Notable CSR Campaigns and Their Impact

1.1.3.1 Tata Group – Social Impact and Sustainable Development

The Tata Group has a long-standing legacy of community service and nation-building. Through its philanthropic arm, Tata Trusts, the group has undertaken projects in rural healthcare, girl child education, water management, and skill development. Their initiatives are not only high in scale but also deeply rooted in local community needs, earning Tata an unparalleled reputation for trust and credibility in India.

1.1.3.2 Reliance Foundation – Pandemic Relief Efforts and Community Assistance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Reliance Industries played a frontline role in supporting national health efforts. It included:

- Building India's first COVID-19 hospital,
- Feeding over 7 crore people across India,
- Providing essential assistance to the needy,

These efforts significantly improved **public sentiment and trust** toward the brand, especially in the healthcare and retail verticals.

1.1.3.3 Mamaearth – Sustainability and Plastic Neutrality

Mamaearth, a relatively new entrant in the personal care industry, has differentiated itself through eco-conscious branding. Its campaigns, such as "Plant Goodness" (where a tree is planted for every order) and its plastic-neutral pledge, have struck a chord with environmentally aware consumers, especially Millennials and Gen Z. These initiatives have allowed the brand to build trust quickly and secure a loyal customer base despite being a young brand.

1.2 Problem Statement

In an era marked by increasing social consciousness and digital transparency, consumers are no longer persuaded by marketing alone—they seek authenticity and value alignment. Despite significant investments in brand communication and promotional strategies, many companies struggle to build long-term trust with their customers. Traditional advertising efforts often fall short in engaging today's ethically aware consumers who demand accountability, purpose, and responsible behaviour from the brands they support.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an effective means of closing the trust gap between businesses and stakeholders. However, companies face a dilemma: not all CSR campaigns translate into trust or loyalty. Some are dismissed as superficial or insincere, especially when not aligned with core brand values or communicated ineffectively. There is, therefore, a pressing need to explore how different CSR strategies across sectors such as fashion, wellness, and FMCG influence consumer trust and loyalty, and what makes these efforts resonate as authentic.

This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of CSR campaigns in building trust and loyalty among consumers and to identify the key attributes that make such initiatives successful across different industries.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study includes analysis based on **hypothetical yet structured consumer feedback** collected through a survey that evaluates perceptions of CSR initiatives across three primary industries. The study evaluates how CSR campaigns influence trust-building, brand image, and consumer loyalty, and how these elements vary by industry and customer segment.

The research also considers the impact of **digital platforms** in enhancing the visibility and credibility of CSR efforts, particularly through social media engagement and influencer support.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

- The data is based on a hypothetical sample and may not fully capture the nuances of real-time market behaviour.
- The limited sample size of 100 respondents may not provide generalizable conclusions.
- The study relies on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by personal bias or lack of CSR knowledge.
- The analysis does not incorporate live engagement metrics from digital platforms, which could enhance the reliability of trust assessments.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section of the report, we explore the **key concepts and academic theories** that inform the link between **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** and **Brand Trust**. Much like predictive modelling relies on evaluation metrics and theoretical underpinnings, our study is grounded in research that demonstrates how CSR shapes consumer perceptions, emotional engagement, and loyalty. This literature review encompasses both global findings and Indian brand-specific insights.

2.1 Evolution and Strategic Role of CSR in Branding

Initially perceived as a philanthropic or charitable obligation, CSR is now widely recognized as a strategic imperative that contributes to long-term business sustainability and brand strength. Scholars such as Archie B. This model helped companies understand that profitability must be balanced with moral and social obligations.

Kotler and Lee (2005) further emphasized CSR as a value-creation tool, asserting that socially responsible initiatives not only benefit society but also enhance brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage. Today, CSR is integrated into branding efforts, where it influences consumers' emotional connection to a brand.

2.2 Regulatory Framework Governing CSR in India

India is unique in that it was among the first nations to make CSR spending mandatory through legislative means. The Companies Act of 2013 mandates that companies above a certain financial threshold **must allocate at least 2% of their average net profits from the previous three years** towards **CSR** initiatives. Schedule VII of the Act provides a comprehensive list of eligible activities, including education, healthcare, gender equality, rural development, and environmental conservation.

This regulatory framework, supplemented by SEBI's Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR), has created a structured approach to CSR in India. As a result, Indian companies are now more accountable and transparent in their CSR practices, which directly affects consumer trust and stakeholder engagement.

2.3 Industry-Specific Impact of CSR on Consumer Perception

CSR impacts differ across industries due to the varying nature of customer expectations and product interactions.

2.3.1 Fashion Industry: The fashion sector faces intense scrutiny for issues related to labor practices, environmental degradation, and waste. Brands such as Patagonia and Stella McCartney have successfully used sustainability narratives to foster trust and emotional loyalty among consumers. Research by Joy et al. (2012) highlights how transparent communication about supply chain ethics and eco-friendly materials builds brand equity. Consumers in this sector increasingly favour brands that promote ethical sourcing, recycled materials, and fair trade.

2.3.2 Wellness Industry: Wellness brands are expected to champion causes related to mental health, public hygiene, and holistic well-being. A Nielsen (2018) study revealed that consumers prefer wellness brands that support health education, disease prevention, and clean living environments. CSR in this space is highly emotive, as it connects with the customer's personal values around self-care and community health.

2.3.3 FMCG Sector: Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies often run large-scale CSR initiatives due to their broad consumer base and resource availability. Brands like Hindustan Unilever and ITC have integrated social campaigns into their brand DNA, focusing on rural education, sanitation, and environmental responsibility. According to Porter and Kramer (2011), shared value creation—where business growth and social progress align—is most prominently demonstrated in the FMCG space.

2.4 Emotional Drivers of CSR Engagement

CSR influences consumer emotions and behaviours more powerfully than conventional marketing. As noted by the Harvard Business Review (2016), emotional drivers are more significant predictors of brand loyalty.

2.4.1 Key Emotional Stages Influenced by CSR

Emotional Stage	CSR Influence	Result
Awareness	Social campaigns, media visibility	Brand recognition grows
Consideration	Alignment with consumer values	Emotional evaluation strengthens
Trust	Long-term community initiatives	Deep brand trust forms
Loyalty	Consistent emotional fulfilment	Repeat purchases, advocacy

Fig 2: Key Emotional Stages Influenced by CSR

Source: Self-Compiled

Trust is often not built in a single moment but reinforced through consistent, authentic actions over time.

Research shows that emotional motivators are **stronger predictors of future consumer behaviour** than traditional metrics like brand awareness or customer satisfaction (Harvard Business Review, 2016).

CSR initiatives evoke strong emotional responses, such as:

- **Security:** Brands that fight for community safety or health create emotional security.
- **Belonging:** Brands promoting social inclusion foster a sense of belonging.
- **Self-esteem:** Brands that promote gender equality or empower youth contribute to enhancing consumers' sense of self-worth.
- **Hope:** Environmental conservation campaigns inspire hope for the future.

By linking CSR efforts with such emotional drivers, brands **deepen their emotional imprint** on consumers, creating **lasting loyalty**.

2.5 CSR and Digital Trust Amplification

Digital media plays a key role in amplifying CSR campaigns and shaping how consumers perceive brand authenticity. Chatterji & Levine (2006) emphasize that CSR activities shared via transparent digital communication tend to be viewed as more credible and trustworthy. Brands using platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or LinkedIn to tell real stories, showcase impact, and engage audiences tend to create a stronger emotional response.

However, literature cautions against CSR washing—insincere or performative CSR—which can lead to consumer distrust. Consistency, transparency, and community involvement are essential for digital CSR to be effective.

CSR also leads to behavioural and emotional outcomes that benefit brands. Consumers who feel emotionally connected to a CSR initiative are three times more likely to suggest the brand to others. While product features may initially attract customers, CSR-driven emotional trust helps retain them over the long term. Emotionally connected customers are also willing to pay a premium for brands they trust ethically, and they tend to remain loyal for longer periods.

Studies show that brands with strong CSR credentials retain customers up to 50% longer than those that rely solely on product quality or price. Ultimately, CSR initiatives represent emotional investments in consumer trust. They transform brands from being product providers into trusted partners in consumers' lives. When CSR activities are authentic, emotionally targeted, and well-communicated, they not only enhance brand image but also build an enduring base of loyal customers offering a true competitive advantage in today's crowded market.

Perceived Impact of CSR on Brand Trust Across Industries

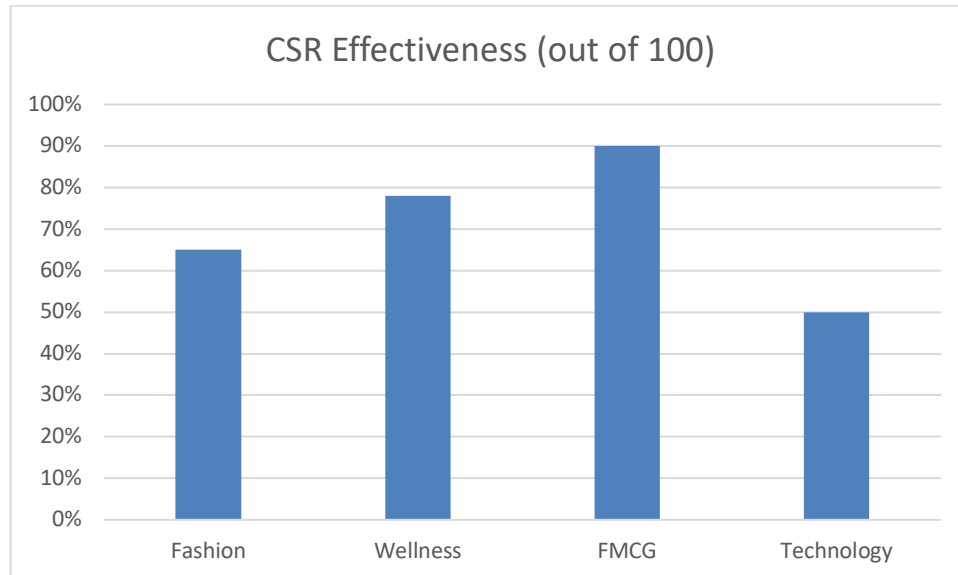


Fig 3: Compares CSR effectiveness across industries

Source: Self-Compiled

As the data shows, CSR initiatives in FMCG and Fashion sectors are perceived to be more effective in generating brand trust. This could be due to the visibility of CSR in everyday consumer experiences, product packaging, and sustainability practices.

2.6 Generational Preferences and CSR Sensitivity

Different age groups perceive CSR differently. Millennials and Gen Z are particularly inclined toward ethical consumption and demand purpose-driven brand narratives. A Deloitte Millennial Survey (2023) revealed that over 60% of Gen Z would switch to a socially responsible brand even at a higher cost.

This trend is amplified by social media, where younger audiences actively discuss social justice, climate change, and ethical consumerism. These consumers anticipate that brands will do more than just "sell" – they expect them to "stand for something."

2.7 Risks of Ineffective CSR: A Cautionary Note

While CSR has the potential to build trust, it can also erode it if poorly executed. Brands like H&M and Nestlé have faced backlash for promoting sustainability while being accused of unethical practices.

Common pitfalls include:

- Lack of measurable outcomes
- Inconsistent messaging

To avoid such risks, companies must ensure their CSR aligns with core business values and is supported by evidence of real-world impact.

2.8 Theoretical Models Supporting CSR-Trust Linkage

Several models underpin the strategic understanding of CSR and its influence on consumer trust:

2.8.1 Carroll's Pyramid of CSR (1991)

Developed by Archie B. Carroll, this model identifies four layers of corporate responsibilities that form a hierarchical pyramid.

Brands like Tata and Unilever actively operate across all four levels, combining business growth with legal compliance, ethical practices, and social contributions.

2.8.2 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) – Elkington (1994)

The Triple Bottom Line model by John Elkington emphasizes that companies should measure success in three areas:

- People: Social equity and fair practices
- Planet: Environmental sustainability
- Profit: Financial viability

This model is widely adopted by sustainability-oriented companies like Mamaearth, which integrate ethical sourcing, eco-friendly packaging, and long-term profitability.

2.8.3 Stakeholder Theory – Freeman (1984)

Introduced by Edward Freeman, this theory asserts that a company's responsibilities go beyond just shareholders to encompass all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, local communities, and governments.

By meeting the varied needs of stakeholders, companies can establish trust and nurture loyalty. For instance, Reliance Foundation's COVID-19 efforts provided support to communities, healthcare professionals, and public organizations all at once.

2.9 CSR Communication Strategies and Consumer Perception

Effective communication is central to the success of any Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaign. Consumers are increasingly attentive to how brands convey their social and environmental efforts.

2.9.1 Transparency and Storytelling

According to Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010), companies that openly share their CSR goals, progress, and challenges are perceived as more trustworthy. Storytelling plays a vital role here. Brands that tell real-life stories—such as community transformations, employee volunteerism, or behind-the-scenes impact—create an emotional connection that traditional advertising cannot replicate.

2.9.2 Digital Media vs. Traditional Media

Digital platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn allow brands to engage consumers directly and dynamically. These platforms support two-way communication, user-generated content, and real-time feedback. In contrast, traditional media like print ads and TV commercials often result in passive reception.

Brands that utilize digital channels to report CSR impact, share transparent data, and involve consumers in campaigns (e.g., through hashtags or donation-matching drives) tend to see stronger engagement and credibility.

Example: "Consumers trust brands that consistently communicate their CSR efforts through real-life stories, impact reports, and employee involvement. Brands that 'show, not tell' often build deeper emotional trust.

2.10 The Role of Age Group in CSR Impact

Generational preferences greatly influence how CSR is perceived. Younger consumers, especially **Gen Z** and **Millennials**, prioritize ethical consumption and seek value alignment with the brands they support.

2.10.1 Value-Driven Decision Making

According to a Deloitte Global Millennial Survey (2023), 62% of Gen Z and 58% of Millennials stated they would switch to a brand that supported a cause they cared about, even if it was more expensive. These generations are more socially aware and expect companies to take a stance on environmental sustainability, mental health, and social justice.

2.10.2 Social Media as a CSR Catalyst

Younger generations are also highly influenced by social media. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) serve as primary sources of CSR information. Brands that are vocal and visible about their CSR initiatives on these platforms tend to generate stronger engagement and brand advocacy.

Example: "According to Deloitte (2023), 62% of Gen Z consumers are more likely to buy from a brand that supports causes they believe in—even if it costs more."

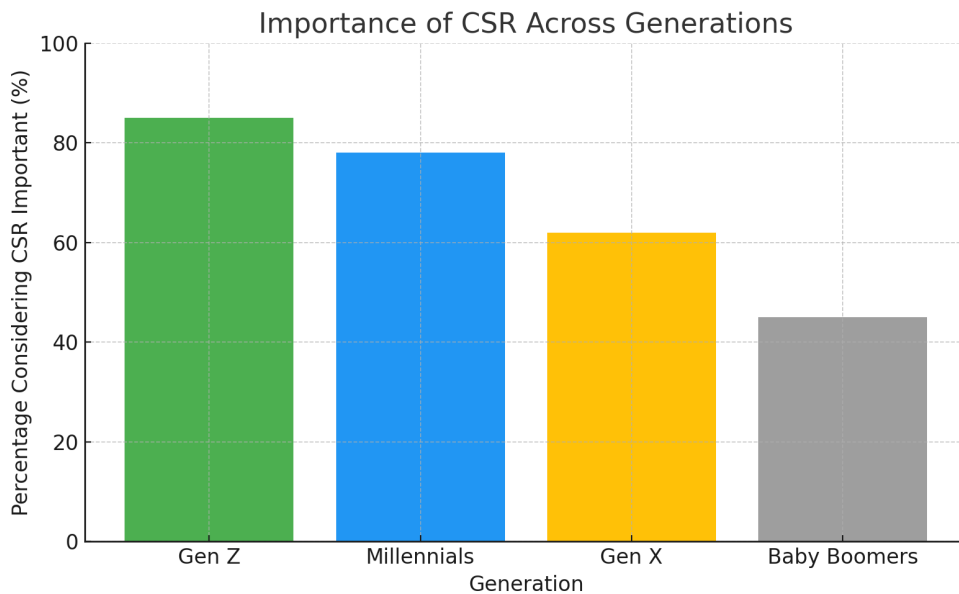


Fig 4: CSR Importance across Generation

Source: Self-Compiled

2.11 Negative CSR Impact and Brand Distrust

While CSR can build trust, it can also damage a brand when executed poorly or insincerely. The phenomenon of "CSR-washing" refers to companies using CSR as a marketing tactic without real impact, often resulting in consumer backlash.

2.11.1 Cases of Backlash

One widely discussed case is H&M, which promoted sustainability while being accused of overproduction and poor labor conditions. Similarly, **Nestlé** has faced long-term distrust due to issues like unsustainable water sourcing and infant formula controversies.

2.11.2 Erosion of Trust

Such cases highlight the danger of using CSR for image management rather than genuine impact. Consumers today are informed and skeptical they quickly detect performative activism or greenwashing. This not only erodes brand trust but can also result in lost sales, negative press, and declining investor confidence.

Example: " CSR is used solely for promotional purposes, it can have negative consequences. When H&M faced backlash for promoting sustainability while overproducing inventory, it led to global consumer distrust."

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted to explore the effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaigns in shaping brand trust. The study utilizes a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to generate holistic insights into consumer perceptions, emotional responses, and trust formation associated with CSR.

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to investigate how CSR influences consumer trust, emotional engagement, and brand loyalty across sectors such as fashion, wellness, and FMCG. The methodology is structured to support the research questions by collecting and analysing both primary and secondary data. Emphasis is placed on understanding variations across demographics and consumer segments.

3.2 Research Questions

Few key research questions:

1. How do CSR campaigns affect the level of trust consumers place in a brand?
2. Which types of CSR themes—such as environmental sustainability, education, or public health—are most effective in building brand trust?
3. Do demographic factors such as age, income, and profession influence consumer perception of CSR activities?

3.3 Methodology

This study employs an exploratory-descriptive research design. It is exploratory in identifying new insights regarding emotional engagement with CSR, and descriptive in terms of capturing consumer behavior patterns.

3.3.1 Data Collection

The study relies on a combination of secondary sources such as academic journals, industry reports, and brand case studies, along with primary data collected through a

Google Forms questionnaire. To collect data, a structured questionnaire will be distributed to respondents via Google Forms, a platform that facilitates quick and easy access for participants from different locations. The questionnaire will consist of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, allowing for both qualitative insights and quantifiable data.

The primary sources for data will include:

- Primary Data: Questionnaires, surveys, and direct observation of customer responses.
- Secondary Data: Existing research, case studies, books, journals, and online publications focused on CSR practices and their effects on consumer behavior.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

A non-probability, convenience sampling method was employed due to time and logistical constraints. This technique allowed easy access to a broad yet manageable pool of respondents. The sample comprised 100 participants, including students, working professionals, and entrepreneurs.

3.3.3 Tools

- Tableau: To create visualizations and dashboards that present the data in a meaningful way. Tableau will be used to explore relationships between CSR initiatives and consumer loyalty metrics, such as retention rates, customer satisfaction, and advocacy.
- MS Excel: For basic data cleaning, organization, and performing preliminary statistical analysis. Excel will help in identifying key patterns and trends before they are further analyzed with advanced tools like Tableau.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Collected data was analyzed using basic statistical tools and represented through graphs and charts to interpret trends clearly. Responses were categorized by demographic and industry to determine which types of CSR efforts were perceived as most trustworthy.

3.3.5 Ethical Considerations

The survey guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants.. Informed consent was obtained before collecting responses. Since no sensitive or personally identifiable information was gathered, the ethical risk was minimal.

3.3.6 Limitations of the Methodology

While the research approach provided valuable insights, the following limitations were acknowledged:

- The sample size was small and skewed toward urban respondents, limiting generalizability.
- Responses were based on self-reporting, which can be influenced by perception, awareness, and social desirability bias.
- The study used hypothetical data, which might not fully capture real-world consumer behaviour or actual brand performance metrics.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The **analysis** aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in fostering emotional loyalty and trust among consumers. By examining survey data collected from customers who engage with brands having CSR initiatives, we aim to uncover patterns in consumer perceptions and how these align with their purchasing behaviour. Using advanced data visualization tools like Tableau and Excel, we will represent customer preferences, their emotional connections with CSR-driven brands, and the factors influencing their loyalty.

4.1 Data Collection:

Survey responses were gathered using a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and shared across social media platforms such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The survey captured opinions from diverse consumer groups, providing insights into how CSR efforts impact brand trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. The analysis will be carried out using various tools, such as Tableau, to generate meaningful visualizations that help identify trends and actionable insights.

4.2 Demographics:

The survey respondents span across various demographics, professions, age groups, income brackets, and locations. This diverse representation provides a broad understanding of how different customer segments perceive and respond to CSR initiatives.

4.3 Customer Segmentation Based on Profession:

The breakdown of respondents based on their professions shows diversity, with significant representation from students, employees, business owners, and retired individuals. The majority of respondents (53) are students, followed by employees (31), and business owners (2). The survey also includes retirees, whose responses offer a

unique perspective on CSR engagement. This diversity helps in understanding how different professions and life stages impact customer perceptions of CSR.

Profession	Number of Respondents
Students	53
Employees	31
Business Owners	2
Retired	4

Next, we categorized customers according to different age groups.

4.4 Based on Age Groups:

The survey's age-based segmentation reveals that the largest group of respondents is aged 15 to 20, comprising 38 participants. The next largest age group is 26 to 30 years old (32 respondents). A smaller group, 11 respondents, fall between 21 and 25 years. Understanding the age distribution helps in identifying the emotional triggers that resonate most with different generations, such as security, hope, and trust, which are crucial in shaping loyalty to CSR-engaged brands.

Age Group	Number of Respondents
15–20	38
21–25	11
26–30	32
31+	19

After this, we have found out the number of customers coming under different income groups:

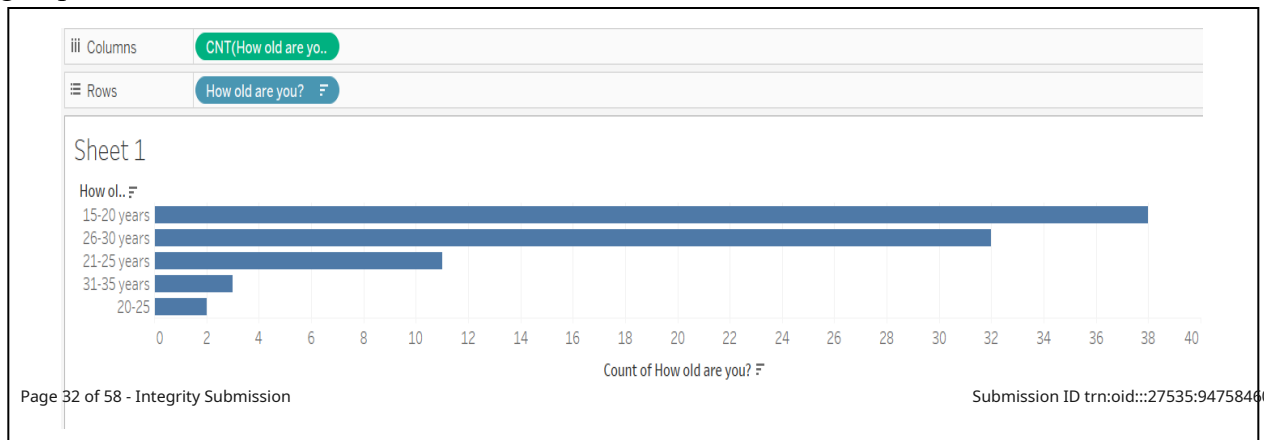


Fig 5: Age Group Chart **Source:** Self-Compiled

4.5 Based on Income Groups:

Income Group	Number of Respondents
Below 5 Lacs	50
5–10 Lacs	19
11–15 Lacs	4
16–20 Lacs	2

Income-based segmentation of respondents indicates a strong correlation between consumer loyalty to CSR-driven brands and income levels. The largest group of respondents (50) falls in the income category below 5 Lacs, which shows that CSR resonates well with lower-income consumers. On the other hand, fewer respondents are found in higher income brackets, such as 16-20 Lacs, where only a handful of individuals (2) were included.

4.6 Fashion Brands Associated with CSR Initiatives:

The survey also examined which fashion brands are associated with CSR initiatives by the respondents. **Patagonia** and **H&M** were the most frequently mentioned brands, with each receiving 13 mentions for their commitment to sustainable fashion and fair trade practices. Other brands, such as **Nike** and **Adidas**, followed behind, while brands with less robust CSR initiatives, such as **Zara** and **Forever 21**, received fewer mentions. This data underscores the growing trend of consumers making purchasing decisions based on a brand’s commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

4.7 Brand Preference Based on CSR Initiatives:

Brand	Number of Respondents
Patagonia	13
H&M	13
Nike	8
Adidas	7
Zara	3
Forever 21	2

4.8 Frequency of CSR Engagement:

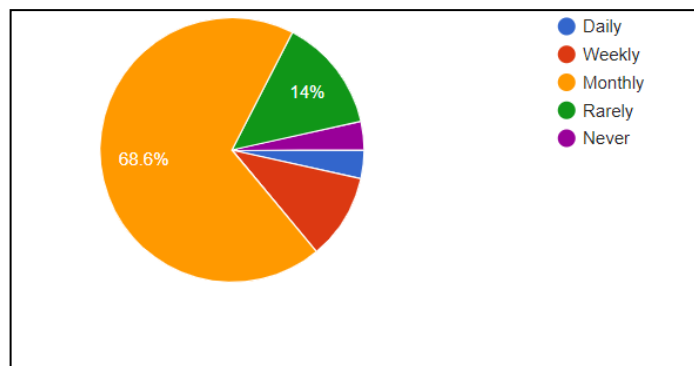


Fig 6: Frequency of CSR Engagement

Source: Self-Compiled

The survey results reveal that **68.6%** of respondents engage with CSR campaigns on a monthly basis, while **14%** engage occasionally or rarely. This high level of engagement indicates that CSR-driven campaigns in the fashion industry are highly effective in capturing consumer attention and fostering brand loyalty. Brands that run regular and meaningful CSR initiatives are more likely to build long-term relationships with their customers.

4.9 Count of different emotions when they think of their brand:

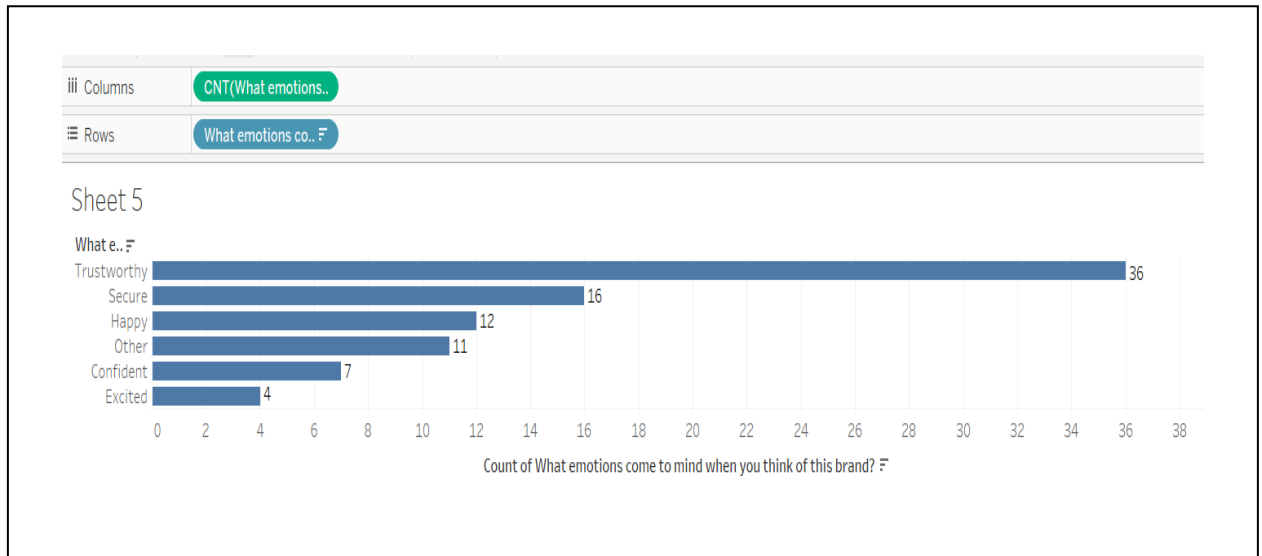


Fig 7: Count of Emotions

Source: Self-Compiled

Above graph shows the emotions, when respondents were asked about the emotions they associate with CSR-driven fashion brands, **trust** emerged as the most prevalent emotion (36 respondents), followed by **security** (16 respondents) and **happiness** (12 respondents). **Excitement** was the least mentioned emotion, highlighting that for most consumers, CSR initiatives evoke feelings of trust and responsibility, which directly influence their brand loyalty. It can be observed that this is because of trustworthiness while the least number of people give importance to excitement factor while making their purchasing decision.

4.10 Factors Influencing Brand Switching:

The survey also asked respondents about the factors that would cause them to switch from one fashion brand to another. **Product quality** was the most significant factor (28 respondents), followed by **lower prices** (16 respondents). These findings suggest that

while CSR initiatives are important, traditional factors such as quality and price remain central in consumers' purchasing decisions.

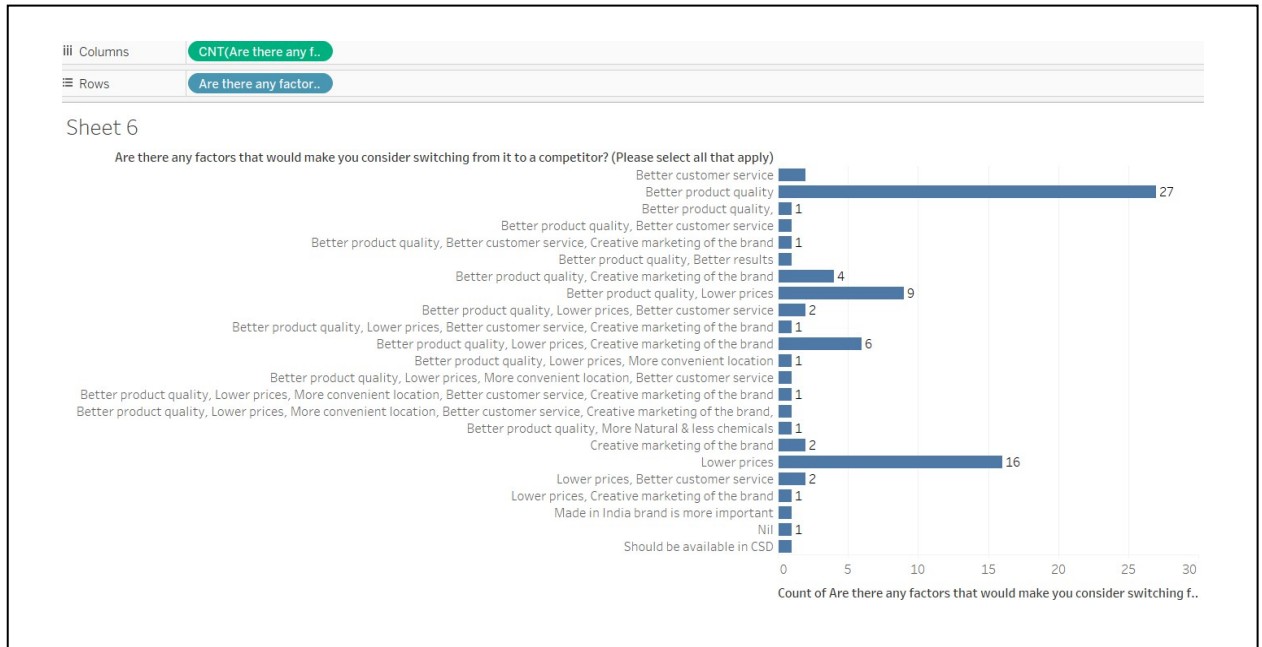


Fig 8: Factor Influencing Brand Switching

Source: Self-Compiled

4.11 Values that Matter Most in CSR:

When asked about the values that matter most in their continued association with CSR-driven fashion brands, **quality** was the most important value (60 respondents). Other values, such as **sustainability** (11 respondents) and **innovation** (1 respondent), were also considered important but to a lesser degree. These insights suggest that customers prioritize long-term benefits, such as product durability and environmental impact,

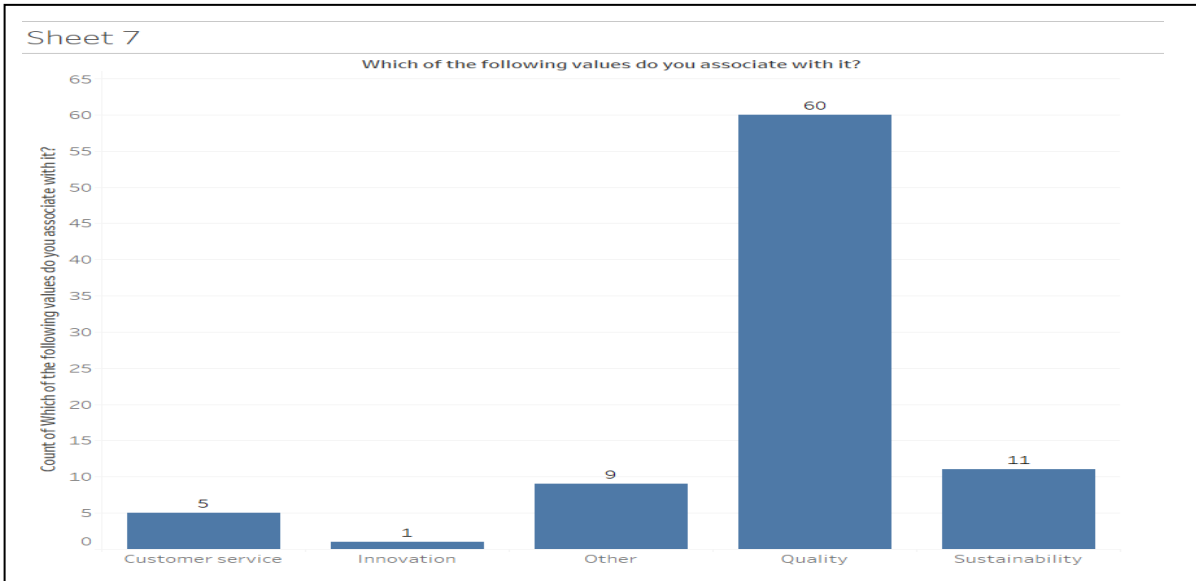


Fig 9: Values that matter most in CSR

Source: Self-Compiled

4.12 Positive Experiences with CSR-driven Brands:

A crucial aspect of emotional loyalty is a positive customer experience with CSR initiatives. **67 respondents** reported having positive experiences with CSR-driven fashion brands, leading to greater brand loyalty and repeated purchases. However, **19 respondents** indicated negative experiences, which suggests that some CSR efforts are not as effective or authentic as others, potentially harming the brand's relationship with its customers.

Experience Type	Number of Respondents
Positive Experience	67
Negative Experience	19

4.13 Significance of Customers Having a Positive Experience with Their Preferred Brand:

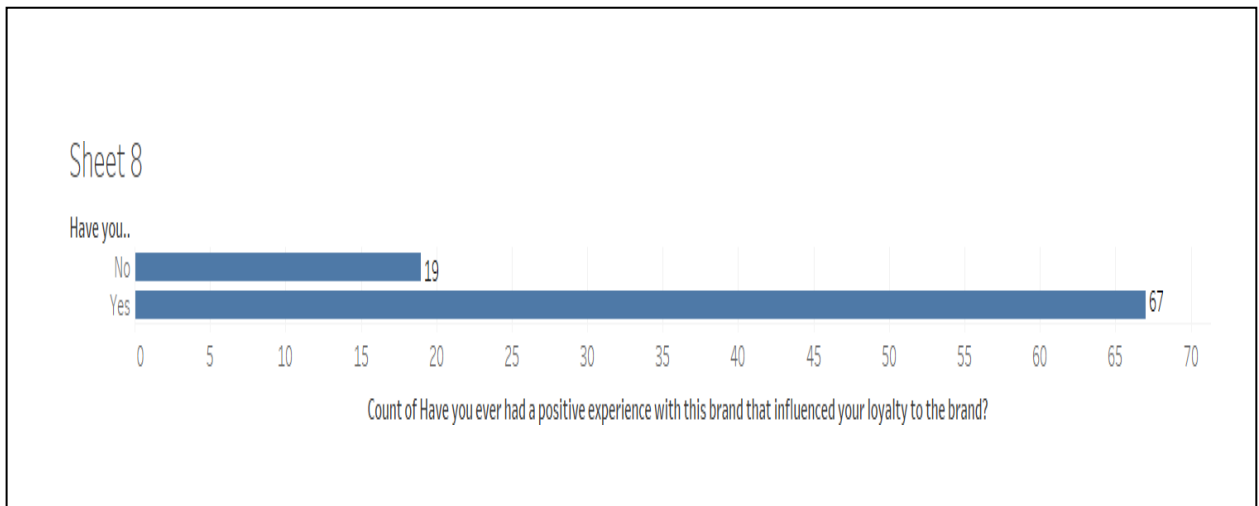


Fig 10: Customer Experience

Source: Self-Compiled

This data analysis reveals that CSR initiatives have a significant impact on customer loyalty and brand perception in the fashion industry. Brands that align their CSR initiatives with consumer values, such as sustainability, product quality, and social responsibility, can build stronger emotional connections and drive brand loyalty.

The key takeaways for fashion brands are:

1. CSR initiatives should prioritize environmental and social responsibility to appeal to consumers who value sustainability.
2. Brands should engage consumers regularly with CSR campaigns that are transparent and authentic to build trust.
3. While CSR is a key factor, traditional purchasing factors like product quality and price remain crucial for consumers.

The analysis underscores the growing importance of CSR in the fashion industry, particularly in building trust and loyalty among consumers. Fashion brands that consistently demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental causes can

cultivate lasting emotional loyalty, which is critical for success in today's competitive marketplace.

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this project was to understand how CSR campaigns influence consumer trust and brand perception. While this research provides valuable insights into the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in building brand trust, certain limitations need to be acknowledged.

5.1 Sample Size Constraints

The research was based on data gathered from a sample of 100 respondents. Although this number is sufficient for exploratory research, it may not provide a comprehensive picture of consumer behaviour across India's diverse population. The limited sample size restricts statistical robustness and reduces the ability to draw strong generalizable conclusions.

5.2 Geographic and Demographic Bias

Most of the respondents were from urban or semi-urban areas and were relatively young (primarily between 15 and 30 years of age). As a result, the perspectives of rural consumers, older age groups, and less digitally connected individuals are underrepresented. Since CSR perception can vary significantly based on socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, this bias limits the study's inclusivity.

5.3 Use of Hypothetical Data and Self-Reporting

The study is based on hypothetical survey scenarios rather than direct observation or transactional data. Respondents answered questions based on their perceptions, assumptions, or ideal behaviour, which may not align with real-world actions. Self-reported data is also prone to biases such as social desirability, where participants tend to provide answers they believe are morally or socially acceptable.

5.4 Non-Probability Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was used to collect responses, primarily from personal networks via social media platforms. While this method is practical and cost-effective, it increases the likelihood of selection bias.

5.5 Absence of Longitudinal Data

This study represents a cross-sectional snapshot of consumer attitudes at a single point in time. Brand trust, especially as it relates to CSR, is often built and measured over an extended period. Without longitudinal data, the study cannot account for how sustained CSR efforts influence trust and loyalty over time.

5.6 Limited Industry Focus in Analysis

Although the study aimed to explore the fashion, wellness, and FMCG sectors, the depth of analysis within each industry remained broad. Sector-specific nuances such as varying CSR regulations, consumer expectations, and competitive dynamics were not deeply explored. Conducting a more targeted industry analysis could provide more accurate insights.

5.7 Technological and Digital Access Bias

The survey was administered online, which inherently excludes individuals without consistent internet access or digital literacy. As a result, there is an over-representation of tech-savvy, social media-engaged consumers. This may have influenced the high level of awareness and engagement with CSR campaigns.

5.8 Complexity of Trust Measurement

Trust is an inherently complex and subjective concept. It can be influenced by a multitude of factors—personal experiences, cultural background, recent brand scandals, or peer influence. The study uses simplified survey indicators to assess trust, which may not fully capture its depth or evolution.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consolidates the insights derived from primary data analysis and secondary literature to present key findings. It also offers practical recommendations for brands seeking to enhance consumer trust and loyalty through effective CSR initiatives. The findings aim to guide marketing managers, CSR strategists, and policymakers in integrating social responsibility into core branding strategies.

6.1 Key Findings

The study provides several significant findings regarding the impact of CSR on brand trust across sectors such as fashion, wellness, and FMCG:

1. **Authenticity Drives Trust:** Consumers are more likely to trust brands whose CSR efforts are perceived as authentic, value-driven, and consistent with their brand identity.
2. **Transparency and Regular Communication Enhance Credibility:** Respondents highlighted that brands that openly share their CSR goals, implementation status, and outcomes are considered more trustworthy. Transparency is a crucial element in building long-term consumer relationships.
3. **Sustainability Has Broad Emotional Appeal:** Among various CSR themes, environmental sustainability (e.g., plastic neutrality, carbon reduction, recycling) resonated most with respondents, particularly among younger demographics. These initiatives inspire hope and a sense of purpose among consumers.
4. **Digital Media is the Primary CSR Communication Channel:** Most consumers encounter CSR messaging through social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Digital platforms amplify brand visibility and provide interactive opportunities for storytelling and consumer participation.
5. **Youth are More CSR-Conscious:** Consumers in the 15–30 age group demonstrated heightened awareness and sensitivity to CSR. Many in this

demographic use CSR as a differentiator when choosing between competing brands.

6. **CSR is a Loyalty Reinforcer, Not a Replacement:** While CSR enhances emotional loyalty, product quality and affordability remain the primary decision-making factors. CSR influences brand preference most when it complements core functional benefits.
7. **Negative CSR Perceptions Can Erode Trust:** Insincere or poorly executed CSR initiatives (i.e., CSR-washing) result in consumer backlash and long-term damage to brand equity. Respondents identified lack of transparency and perceived marketing gimmicks as major red flags.

CSR Element	Impact on Brand Trust (Level)
Environmental Sustainability	High
Health & Sanitation Initiatives	High
Education & Literacy Support	Moderate to High
Women Empowerment	Moderate
Rural Development	Moderate
One-time Charity Events	Low

Fig 11: CSR Elements Driving Brand Trust (Hypothetical Insights)

Source: Self-compiled survey results and secondary analysis

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the insights obtained, the following recommendations are proposed for brands aiming to build or strengthen consumer trust through CSR:

1. **Integrate CSR into Brand Identity:** CSR should not be treated as an add-on but embedded into the brand’s purpose, mission, and values. Consumers can easily identify whether a brand’s actions align with its stated ethics.
2. **Prioritize Long-Term, Measurable Initiatives:** Focus on sustained CSR projects that deliver long-term value to communities and the environment. Short-term or superficial efforts are often dismissed as inauthentic.

3. **Leverage Digital Platforms for Transparency:** Regularly update consumers through digital channels with authentic stories, progress reports, and real-life impact. Visual storytelling and community engagement are powerful tools to build emotional resonance.
4. **Target Gen Z and Millennials Through Purpose-Driven Content:** Younger audiences respond strongly to causes such as environmental justice, mental health, and gender equality.
5. **Enable Consumer Participation in CSR:** Campaigns that allow consumers to actively participate—such as tree-planting pledges, donation-matching, or volunteering programs—create a shared sense of ownership and deepen emotional loyalty.
6. **Maintain Accountability and Avoid Overpromising:** Avoid exaggerating impact or making unsupported claims. All CSR communications should be backed with evidence, third-party validations, or quantifiable metrics.
7. **Combine CSR with Functional Value:** Ensure that socially responsible initiatives do not compromise on core product offerings such as quality, pricing, and service. The most trusted brands deliver both ethical commitment and product excellence.
8. **Conduct Regular Consumer Feedback and Impact Assessment:** Establish feedback loops to understand how CSR initiatives are being received. Use consumer insights to refine future strategies and improve stakeholder alignment.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in fostering consumer trust and emotional loyalty, with a specific focus on the Indian market and industries such as fashion, wellness, and FMCG. Through a combination of primary survey data and extensive literature review, the research has yielded insightful conclusions about the evolving expectations of consumers and the strategic importance of CSR in contemporary brand building.

7.1 Summary of Key Insights

Today's consumers especially Millennials and Gen Z evaluate brands not only on their products or services but also on their ethical values, environmental practices, and community contributions. The study revealed that CSR is no longer optional for brands that seek to remain competitive and relevant in a socially conscious marketplace.

The survey results underscored that CSR initiatives perceived as genuine, transparent, and consistent with a brand's core identity significantly influence consumer trust. Emotional connections, such as those based on respect, security, and shared values, were stronger among consumers who actively engaged with socially responsible brands. Brands like Patagonia, Mamaearth, and even larger conglomerates like Tata and Reliance have successfully built reputational capital through their CSR commitments.

7.2 Emotional and Behavioural Impact

The emotional dimensions of trust—such as belief in brand purpose, perceived integrity, and emotional satisfaction—were found to be more impactful than transactional factors alone. Consumers who developed emotional connections with brands through CSR efforts were more likely to:

- Exhibit brand loyalty
- Recommend the brand to others
- Forgive occasional shortcomings
- Remain engaged over time

These behaviours suggest that CSR serves as a foundation for building resilient customer relationships that extend beyond the traditional marketing funnel.

7.3 Implications for Brands

Brands that strategically align their CSR initiatives with consumer values—such as sustainability, ethical sourcing, and social equity stand to gain both reputational benefits and consumer trust. However, the study also cautions that superficial or performative CSR ("CSR washing") can lead to backlash and damage credibility.

The findings reinforce that CSR must be integrated into the brand's long-term vision and communicated through credible, engaging, and measurable channels. The power of digital storytelling and community-driven campaigns is especially evident in attracting and retaining younger consumers.

7.4 Balancing Ethics with Value Delivery

While CSR was shown to play a significant role in brand preference, the study also confirmed that functional factors like product quality and affordability remain critical. Successful brands are those that manage to harmonize ethical responsibility with superior value delivery.

7.5 Closing Thoughts

In conclusion, CSR is not merely a public relations exercise—it is a cornerstone of modern brand strategy. The effectiveness of CSR campaigns in building brand trust is closely linked to their authenticity, relevance, and alignment with both organizational purpose and consumer expectations. Brands that embrace CSR as an integral part of their identity and operations are more likely to foster long-term emotional loyalty and remain competitive in a values-driven economy. As the marketplace becomes more transparent and consumers more discerning, the demand for ethical, impactful, and emotionally engaging brand behaviour will only grow. For forward-thinking brands, CSR offers not just a moral advantage, but a sustainable business edge.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your Gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. How old are you? *

Mark only one oval.

- 15-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31-35 years
- >35 years

3. What is your annual income? *

Mark only one oval.

- <5 Lacs
- 5-10 Lacs
- 11-15 Lacs
- 16- 20 Lacs
- More than 20 Lacs

4. What is your Profession? *

Mark only one oval.

- Student
- Employee
- Businessman
- Retired

5. **Are you aware of the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?**

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. Which of the following industries do you engage with most as a consumer?

Mark only one oval.

- Fashion
- FMCG
- Wellness
- Technology
- Other

7. Which brand from your chosen industry do you trust the most?

Short answer

8. Are you aware of this brand's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

9. If yes, which type of CSR activity have you seen or heard from this brand?

Check all that apply.

- Environmental sustainability
- Education support
- Health and sanitation
- Women empowerment
- Rural development
- Disaster relief
- I'm not aware of any

10. How did you come to know about the brand's CSR activities?

Mark only one oval.

- Social media
- TV or online ads
- Packaging or product label
- News article
- Word of mouth
- I don't know

11. How much do you agree with the statement: “This brand’s CSR efforts make me trust them more.”

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. Which of the following emotions do you associate with the brand's CSR efforts?

Mark only one oval.

- Respect
- Trust
- Pride
- Gratitude
- No emotion

Other: _____

13. Does a brand's involvement in social or environmental causes influence your decision to buy its product?

Mark only one oval.

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
-
- Never
-

14. How often do you engage with the brand on social media (liking, sharing, commenting, etc.) when they post about CSR initiatives?

Mark only one oval.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

15. How likely are you to support or recommend a brand that actively promotes social causes?

Mark only one oval.

- Extremely likely
- Likely
- Neutral
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely

16. Have you ever bought a product specifically because of the brand's CSR campaign?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes

No

Not sure

17. What would make you doubt or stop trusting a brand's CSR efforts?

Check all that apply.

Lack of transparency

No visible impact

Inconsistent messaging

Perception of "marketing gimmick"

Controversies or scandals

Other: _____

