

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATRONAGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE NIGERIAN CEMENT INDUSTRY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

More pressures are being mounted on businesses day-in-day-out on why they are not doing more than they currently do in solving societal problem where their business are located. The involvement of business in such activities however raises business cost. While some have argued that business involvement in social matters pays in some sort. This study was carried out to test the influence of Corporate social responsibility on organisational patronage in the Nigerian cement industry. Using primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires administered on 75 construction project managers across various construction sites in the study area, and analysed using descriptive statistics like percentages and other statistical packages, the study shows that CSR indeed has a positive relationship with patronage. The findings have implication for marketing managers in particular and business managers in general.

The paper concludes with implications for managers and suggestions were further given for further studies.

**KEYWORDS:** Corporate, Performance, Organisation, Social Responsibility, Patronage

### **INTRODUCTION**

Scholars and practitioners are increasingly focusing their attention on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), because of its significant impact on organization's economic and financial performance (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2008). Companies are increasingly incorporating social responsibility as an important aspect of corporate management (Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008). Corporate social responsibility refers to the "obligations that companies have to integrate environmental and social parameters into their *modus operandi* and long-term development policies" (Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008, p.7; Persais, 2002). Increasingly, society expects businesses to have an obligation to the society in which they are located, to the people they employ, and their customers, beyond their traditional bottom-line and narrow shareholder concerns (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Carroll, 1979; Jones, 1980).

CSR became a critical issue for organizations after financial scandals (e.g., Enron affair), social problems (e.g., poor working conditions in developing countries), and environmental disasters (e.g., Prestige shipwreck) which increased pressure on corporations through increased media coverage and increased transparency requirements (Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008). Thus, organizations are increasingly investing resources to demonstrate their commitment, ethical outlook, and responsible behaviour in this area (Martinet & Reynaud, 2000).

Researchers have established that CSR programs indeed have a strong influence on consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards products and companies (Berens, van Riel, & van Bruggen, 2005; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Extant

research has also focused on the influence of CSR on brand image and consumer trust (Wessels, 2003; Kennedy, Ferrell & Le Clair, 2001), brand loyalty, firm's economic performance, and corporate success (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004; Reichheld & Schefer, 2000). Prior studies also reported that CSR activities help to build company reputation, which also indicates company's involvement in providing quality services/products (Swaen&Chumpitaz, 2008). Customers often use corporate reputation to assess products, with positive reputation resulting in higher perceptions of product/service quality (Olson & Haddock, 1971; Shapiro, 1983). Researchers and practitioners now understand the value of company's social actions and its impact on driving consumers' purchasing decisions along with the traditional criteria of price, quality and service (Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008).

Extant research has provided substantial evidence that customer perception of corporate social responsibility influences customer responses to products (Brown & Dacin, 1997), attitudes towards products (Berens, van Riel & van Bruggen, 2005), identification with a particular company (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), consumers' behavioral intentions and actual behaviours (switching behaviour; consumer defection; repeat patronage and recommendation intentions) (Vlachos et al., 2009).

Corporations have often been charged with engaging in CSR not only to support worthy causes but as a promotion mechanism to enhance their company/brand image to attract customers (Ellen et al., 2006). Recent research has focused on customer perceptions of corporate motives and its influence on consumer evaluations of the product/company (Vlachos et al., 2009). Therefore, prior studies have mostly investigated the influence of organizations' engagement in CSR initiatives on consumer attitudes and behavioural intentions, perceived quality of products/services, and firm value and performance (Lee & Park, 2009; Swaen & Chumpitaz, 2008).

This positive link of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to consumer patronage is spurring companies to devote greater energies and resources to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. In other words, the lure of greater consumer profits has contributed significantly in recent years to the strengthening of the business case for corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity, shifting the debate about corporate social responsibility (CSR) from "whether" to "how." Notably, however, a clear articulation of the "how" question is not a straightforward matter. Moral imperatives notwithstanding, business leaders are struggling with the appropriate goals guiding the formulation and deployment of corporate social responsibility initiatives that will reap the greatest benefits for their companies. They are also, at the same time, realizing the concomitant and urgent need to measure the returns to various corporate social responsibility programs. To this end, many companies are beginning to embrace practices such as social audits, corporate social reporting, and the triple bottom line. While considerable amount of research has been done examining CSR's impact on consumer attitudes and behaviours, several answers remain unanswered. Moreso, since most studies lack empirical support and in other cases findings are mixed, (Vlachos et al., 2009) scholars have called for more empirical work in this area as. Therefore, this study was carried out to further test the proposed relationships between CSR programs and organizational patronage.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In today's competitive and dynamic business environment, several emerging factors are prominent with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) being a veritable tool available at managers' disposal in shaping a desired end for organizations. Various views on corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been expressed over the years, with Bowen's (1981) view expressed in his 1953 publication of *Social Responsibilities for the Businessman*, reportedly considered by many as definitive on the subject (Lee, 2008: 53). Most authors argued in favor of CSR, despite the lack of

consensus on what it really meant. However, Friedman (1962) promoted a contrary viewpoint by asserting that “businesses had no other social responsibility than to make as much profit as possible”.

McGuire (1963:144), while agreeing that economic concerns are important to businesses, argued that “the idea of social responsibilities supposes that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations, but also certain responsibilities to society which extend beyond these obligations”. Other considerations in CSR definition exist. One of which is Carroll’s (1979:498) four-part definition of CSR which encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of any given organization; namely:

- Be profitable (economic),
- Be obedient to laws and regulations (legal),
- Do what is right, fair and just (ethical), and
- Be good corporate citizens (philanthropic / discretionary).

Most corporate organizations in Nigeria subscribe to the four parts but feel more obligated to the economic and philanthropic. Visser (2006) argued against Carroll’s CSR model, and postulated CSR practice as a socio-cultural product that reflects the society and people in which the corporate bodies operate. Chandler (2001) argued that ‘while there is no universal definition for CSR, it generally refers to transparent business practices that are based on ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities and the environment’. Thus, beyond making profits, companies are responsible for the totality of their impact on people and the planet.’ This is tantamount to saying that beyond profit, corporate bodies need to address issues of importance to the people and the environment.

Mate (2002) sees Corporate Social Responsibility as having five themes (human rights, worker rights, environmental impact, community involvement, and supplier relations & monitoring). These themes reflect in company’s core values and impinge on its policies, strategies, decision-making and operations. In addition, different corporate entities tend to come with their own concepts of CSR which is reflected in their core values and their CSR interventions.

According McWilliams and Siegel (2001:118), CSR refer to situations where a firm carries out “actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law.” This definition sees CSR as voluntary actions by a corporate entity pursuant of social good. The manner in which a company manages its economic, social and environmental relationships, as well as those with different stakeholders, in particular shareholders, employees, customers, business partners, governments and communities determines its impact. CSR interventions hence involves the investment of the firm’s resources in *pro bono* work, philanthropy, support for community education and health, and protection of the environment that are seen as parts of the company’s social performance (Wood, 1991).

Discussing the motives for pursuing CSR, Jones (1995) argued that companies involved in transactions with stakeholders on the basis of trust and cooperation are motivated to be honest, trustworthy and ethical because there are high returns to such behaviour. Dwelling further on this argument, Fombrun and Shanley (1990: 233) demonstrated that the reputation of the firm is affected by its socially responsible behaviour. This implies that a firm should consider CSR as an element of its corporate strategy. Some authors (Bagnoli and Watts, 2003; Baron, 2001; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) assert that firms engage in “profit-maximizing” CSR. That is, companies behave in a socially responsible manner because they anticipate some benefits from these actions. Such benefits may be a social license to operate which, in troubled

regions, minimizes the down-times as results of shutdowns, shut-ins and lock-outs. Other potential benefits of CSR include enhancement of reputation and goodwill which further the ability to retain customers in spite of price hikes. These benefits are deemed to compensate for the extra costs incurred in implementing CSR.

Prior to the 1990s, corporate entities in Nigeria viewed their primary duty as the maximization of shareholders wealth in line with Berle and Means (1932) and Friedman (1962). However, beginning from the 1990s, corporate citizenship dimension of corporate social responsibility began to emerge in Nigeria. Davenport (2000: 2), states that "corporate citizenship became a commonly used term by practitioners" in the 1990s; and this is true for Nigeria. Prior to this time, companies in Nigeria did not appreciate need to enhance their reputation through the practice of CSR. The tempo for the implementation of CSR activities gathered momentum, especially among the oil companies, with the internationalization of the conflict between the Ogoni people and the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in 1992 (Kretzman, 1995). The Ogoni-SPDC's crisis led to a shift in companies' attitude to CSR in Nigeria. Most companies have since realized the potential impact of CSR on corporate reputation, safety of corporate assets and corporate performance (Lewis, 2003: 356; Garone, 1999).

CSR plays a vital role in taking commercial brands out into the commercial marketplace with a theme that is appealing to the sense and sensibility of the modern consumer. CSR is therefore a valuable tool that marketers can use to market their brand with equal panache and commercial effectiveness. The modern consumer understands CSR that much more intimately (Harish Bijoor, 2008). Marketers who ignore the responsibilities to other stake holders face the prospect of a devalued corporate image and or legal reprisal. To meet the responsibilities effectively organizations must address the concerns in the development of marketing strategy (Robin, Donald & Reidenbach, 1987).

CSR has an important role to play especially in building up trust in the minds of the consumers. In an emerging market where consumers are looking for functional products which last longer and accelerated obsolescence is not a problem like in developed markets, the consumer perception about the company brand assumes significance. A company which builds the image of producing quality products that last longer though they may not be on the cutting edge of technology will actually be able to gain strategic advantage in emerging economies. Firms all over the world are beginning to grasp the importance of intangible assets, be it brand name or employee morale. Only firms that have gained the goodwill of the general public and are ideal corporate citizens will be able to develop these intangible assets into strategic advantages (Edenkamp, 2002: 16).

Companies are beginning to realize the fact that in order to gain strategic initiative and to ensure continued existence, business practices may have to be molded from the normal practice of solely focusing on profits to factor in public goodwill and responsible business etiquettes (Raynard and Forstater, 2002). Corporate social responsibility is arguably the most important thing on any brand marketer's mind. It's important because studies increasingly show that consumers will spend their money on brands that reflect their values and concerns. It's such a shame to see companies doing great CSR work then failing to use it to boost brand reputation and sales. In today's world, mainstream consumers look out for ethical/sustainable/responsible brands.

CSR practically has the same effects as advertisements, because it sheds a *positive light on a brand or product*. That is why CSR can also be seen as an expression of marketing. Many companies use CSR as a tactic to gain public support for their presence in global markets, helping them sustain a competitive advantage by using their social contributions to provide a subconscious level of advertising (Fry, Keim & Meiners, 1986: 94).

Many companies use CSR as a way to burnish their image, generate brand equity, and increase employee loyalty. In this era of global competition, declining brand differentiation, and increasing media clutter, companies are going beyond the conventional marketing mix to incorporate corporate-level intangible assets such as their identities and reputations and the goodwill associated with being a good corporate citizen into their marketing initiatives in efforts to gain sustainable competitive advantages. A company considered socially responsible can get benefit both by its enhanced reputation with the public as well as its reputation within the business community. Social action programs create favourable public image (Rashid and Ibrahim, 2002).

## **EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATRONAGE**

Many surveys developed at an international level suggest that a positive relationship exists between a company's CSR actions and consumers' reaction to that company and its product (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004). Similarly, on the findings of the Millennium Poll on CSR, Environics International conducted the 2002 CSR Monitor involving sample groups of 1,000 citizens from twenty five different countries. The results of the research show that one third of the consumers actively reward ethical corporate behaviour and in contrast punish the unethical one. In addition, thirty per cent (30%) of shareholders declared that they would sell off their shares in a company that acted in a socially irresponsible way; even if the earnings were important.

Brown and Dacin (1997) showed that a negative image of CSR can damage the consumer's valuation of a product or a service while in contrast a positive CSR image can improve product evaluations. Hence, CSR can create the context where the consumer develops purchase intentions because he/she has a positive image for the company. A survey conducted by Creyer and Ross in 1997 highlighted the way consumers think about corporate responsibility issues and the factors that influence their purchase decisions. Among others, consumers reported that they expect corporations to behave ethically; they included the ethicality of a firm as one of the key factors they take into account when purchasing and they are ready to reward ethical actions by paying higher prices for a product from an ethical company. In the same direction, the UK TGI survey for 2002 indicated that sixty-seven per cent (67%) of respondents agree with the statement 'it is important that a company acts ethically.

One of the few studies that focused on students' attitudes towards CSR was conducted by the Pathfinder Research Group which worked on the responses of 772 students in eight countries (Goodmoney, 2011). Eight in ten students said they were trying to recycle on campus and seven in ten preferred products and packaging that was environmental safe while fifty-eight per cent (58%) reported their willingness to pay slightly more for these kinds of products. Likewise, a survey involving over 1,000 students worldwide revealed that CSR is one of the important issues that students take into consideration when forming an impression about a corporation (Globescan, 2010). The same research also indicates that CSR has a crucial role in the students' future employment decisions as one in two students claim that they would not apply for a job with an irresponsible company. It is notable, that especially the North American and the West European students engage CSR actively in their purchase decisions as the majority claims to have punished a company that behaved in a socially irresponsible manner.

In contrast to the above arguments however, we can find evidence suggesting an opposite view.

It has been argued that consumers do not feel strongly about corporate ethics, which can be illustrated by three

factors (Brown, 2003). Firstly, if social responsibility was an important issue; the market share of most ethical brands would not be so small (only few of the ‘ethical’ brands take a share in the market of over 3 per cent (2004).

Similarly, whereas in a research by Brown in 2002, some seventy-five per cent (75%) of the sample of UK consumers had boycotted a brand or chosen to purchase a brand stating as a criterion the way the company behaves, a significant number of consumers did not include ethics in the reasons that made them take such decision.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	75	100
	Female	0	0
Nationality	Nigerian	71	94.66
	Others	4	12
Qualification	Bachelors	14	18.66
	Diploma/Technical Cert.	19	25.33
	WASSCE and below	42	56.0
Years of Experience	1-5 years	11	14.66
	6-10 years	20	26.67
	10 years above	44	58.67

**Source:** Authors computation

Furthermore, as the research of Carrigan and Attalla (2001) demonstrates, consumers will purchase in an ethical way only if it is convenient to them and they will not incur any extra cost in terms of added price or loss of quality. Yet, although more than half of the respondents of the Cone/Roper (1994) study stated that they are willing to pay more for a product or service whose company support a cause they care about; only the one fifth reported having bought a product or service over the past twelve months for the same reason (Simon 1995). Moreover, only twenty six per cent (26%) could recognize from a list a company as “most socially responsible” and only eighteen per cent (18%) could name a “least responsible” one, although the list included firms with sizeable differences in their social responsibility status. However, the general aim of this study is to bridge the gaps in empirical findings on corporate social responsibility and customer’s patronage.

## HYPOTHESIS 1

**H1:** There is no significant relationship between corporate social responsibilities and customers’ attitude

**H2:** Corporate Social responsibility does not have any influence on level of organizational patronage.

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the co-relational survey design. The co-relational survey design method is a systematic inquiry in which the scientist/researcher does not have direct control on the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred. This survey method is appropriate for this study because it is effective in giving an accurate description of a phenomenon. This study examined the nature of the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility and patronage in Nigeria cement industry in terms of nature of CSR, relevant activities and the perceived contribution to organizational patronage. In order to reach this objective, authors adopted a well-developed a questionnaire with few research questions and interviews administered on building/construction project managers and senior brick-layers. By nature of the research and the respondents, we met them on their various work sites in Ikorodu, Ikorodu Local Government area in Lagos state.

This is because the area is known for many development works around the area which offer many springing communities. The questionnaire measures the views of the surveyed respondents regarding CSR, brands of cement they use and their preference for the brands based on their views of CSR activities of the manufacturers since they possessed fundamental exposure and experiences in constructions. The questions were kept at minimum to avoid long work stoppage and retain the interests of the respondents. Thus we used a five point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The questionnaire includes two aspects; the first aspects deals with the extent to which the respondents are aware of the CSR activities developed by the manufacturers while the second aspects test the extent of their agreement to the various statements designed to establish the nature of the relationship that exist between corporate social responsibility and patronage.

In all we surveyed one seventy five (75) respondents. The data obtained was analyzed using regression analysis and percentage distributions table.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive statistics in table 1 above shows that 100% of the respondents are males, there was no female. Similarly, majority of the respondents possessed an average work experience of ten years in the construction industry. About 91% of the respondents are Nigerians while only 9% are non-Nigerians. Education wise, a large number of the respondents representing 56% did not receive formal education; only about 25% have technical education while about 18% have Bachelors degree. On the respondents view of the concept CSR, a whopping percentage constituting about 79% of the total respondents view CSR as a set of philanthropic activities a company carries out voluntarily.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.578 <sup>a</sup>	.712	.502

a. Predictor (constant), Customer's perception of CRS

b. Dependent variable: Customer's Attitudes

**Table 3: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	T	Sig.
1 Regression	24.253	3	1.418	0.868	3.638	.001
Residual	51.918	69	28.010			
<b>Total</b>	<b>76.171</b>	<b>72</b>				

a. Predictor (constant), Customer's perception of CRS significant (P<0.05)

b. Dependent variable: Customer's Attitudes

**Table 4: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
1 (Constant)	3.500	.962	
Customer's perception of CRS	.101	2.120	.148

a. Dependent variable: Customer's perception of CRS

From table 2 above, the coefficient of correlation  $R = 0.578$  implies that there is a positive relationship between customer's perception of corporate social responsibility. The  $R^2 = 0.712$  indicates that customer's perception of corporate social responsibility account for about 71.2% effect on customer's attitudes towards the company and its products. Thus, we can deduce that there is a significant relationship between customer's perception of corporate social

responsibility and their attitudes toward an organization. The finding corroborates Bitner (1992) who reported that human behaviour is influenced by the physical setting and the organization's physical setting influences customer and employee behaviours. Customers seek evidence of the ultimate quality of the intangible service by observing the tangible elements (physical surroundings).

Do corporate social responsibilities influence customer's patronage?

**Table 5: Summary of Regression**

ANOVA						
	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F	P	Remarks
Regression	24.121	2	.696	10.507	0.000	*
Residual	54.779	70	19.462			
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.890</b>	<b>72</b>				

Significant ( $P < 0.05$ )

The above table shows that corporate social responsibility alone account for 56.8% of the total customer's patronage ( $R^2 = .568$ ). This implies that corporate social responsibility effectively influence customer's patronage in business organization. In other words, customers buy the product of the companies they patronize based on the perception of the discharge of the CSR by the vendors. Therefore, we can deduce that corporate social responsibility stimulate and encourage customers to patronize the products and services of any business organizations.

The finding upholds Brown and Dacin (1997) who submitted that a negative image of corporate social responsibility can damage the consumer's valuation of a product or a service while in contrast a positive corporate social responsibility image can improve product evaluations.

## DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This study was designed to examine the impact of corporate social responsibility on organizational patronage. The first research question reveals that customer's perception of corporate social responsibility account for about 71.2% effect on customer's attitudes towards any business organization. The finding corroborates Bitner (1992) who reported that human behaviour is influenced by the physical setting and the organization's physical setting influences customer and employee behaviours. Customers seek evidence of the ultimate quality of the intangible service by observing the tangible elements (physical surroundings).

Furthermore, the study establishes that corporate social responsibility alone account for 56.8% of the total variance in customer's patronage. The finding upholds Brown and Dacin (1997) who submitted that a negative image of corporate social responsibility can damage the consumer's valuation of a product or a service while in contrast a positive corporate social responsibility image can improve product evaluations. Hence, corporate social responsibility can create the context where the consumer develops purchase intentions because he/she has a positive image for the company. The finding tallies with Globescan (2010) reported that the North American and the West European students engage CSR actively in their purchase decisions as the majority claims to have punished a company that behaved in a socially irresponsible manner.

## CONCLUSIONS

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained wide recognition and attention of today's business managers as they are now integrating it into the general business and corporate strategy. Although Friedman (1970) and his disciples had declared business has no 'business' solving societal problems, they should rather make more profits for their business owners. This study however shows that as a matter of fact, corporations can actually achieve this end by intensifying and integrating CSR into strategies as some earlier scholars have argued that CSR itself is only a marketing gimmick used in winning favors of the organizational public.

Therefore, managers business of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will have no choice but to implement corporate social responsibility (CSR). Like any successful management strategy, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) process needs both high level management vision and support, and buy-in at all levels of the company. Furthermore, customers' are sensitive not only to a firm's responsibilities toward them, but also to its legal/ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. When they perceive an organization as "bad citizens" regarding such dimensions, they decrease their affective, normative and continuance bonds toward them. To foster an affectively and normatively customer's patronage business organizations must care about how their customer's perceive their corporate social responsibility.

In view of the above discussion on the impact of corporate social responsibility on customer's patronage, the researcher has come up with the following recommendation:

- That corporate social responsibility should be given priority by all organization in order to promote corporate image and goodwill of the organization.
- Corporate social responsibility should be well defined and strategically designed in order to create competitive advantage for the organization.
- The needs of the society should be identified before embarking on the corporate social responsibility so that the perception of the populace towards it will be positive.
- Corporate social responsibility enhance patronage thus, it is advisable for organization especially industrial organizations to invest in corporate social responsibility.

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