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The Effect of CSR on Brand Equity in the IT Solutions Industry; the Case of Alsale Service Limited

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Abstract:

During the last decades, brand equity has been a priority topic for both practitioners and academics. In accordance with the structural changes in the economic settings caused by the so-called "new economy", corporations being confronted with a shift on perceived business value structure from tangible assets to intangibles. On the other hand firms increasingly are adopting more responsible behaviour towards their societies. In this context, one critical question is to understand how corporate conduct may affect brand equity. The purpose of this study was to find the effect of corporate social responsibility on brand equity. The empirical part is conducted as a quantitative case study. The case company is Alsale Services limited. The empirical data has been gathered using semi-structured questionnaire. A 5-point likert scale was used. The study used a sample of 60 respondents that were randomly chosen from the entire population of staff and customers of the company. The results reveal that consumers' CSR awareness is essential if companies desire to become perceived as responsible. Consumers' CSR awareness, which is their knowledge of companies' CSR targets, can be increased through companies CSR information and responsibility filled marketing messages. The study revealed that all the indicators explaining corporate social responsibility from the perspective of the customers apparently indicated that Alsale Services Limited as a IT Solutions company satisfies its numerous corporate social responsibilities despite the few respondents who indicated the contrary and neutral respectively. The study therefore makes some recommendations to Alsale and to the IT Solutions industry practitioners in general.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

During the late 1980's there was a remarkable shift in understanding of the construction of shareholder value (Knowles, 2008). Prior to that time, tangible assets were mostly regarded as the major source of business valuation and therefore the primary interest for the shareholders. By increasing the global competition, the competitive advantages like technology became more transitory short-lived and the contribution of brands to business owners' long-term value raised (Lindemann, 2004). A good brand keeps the products on shelf for longer period, even years, like Coca-Cola, Disney, IKEA and GE and which are established respectively in 1886, 1923, 1943, and 1978.

Brands can build trust and loyalty within consumers and help them make their purchase decisions faster. In return, this enables companies to develop their equipments, qualities, efficiency in a larger quantity production and lower prices (Keller, 2008). On the other hand registered strong brands can provide a legal shelter from imitations. It is now common knowledge that branding is essential to business success, and brands as a financial intangible asset are regarded as value generators. In other words brands can add value and aggregation of these values builds equity (Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 2003). Although some researchers (Keller, 2003; Jones, 2005; Raggio & Leone, 2007; Salinas, 2009b) distinguished brand value from brand equity and stated that brand value is outcome of brand equity (Keller, 2003), nevertheless the importance of the brand management serves as the basic for creating corporate value. So it is necessary for brands to be valued like other assets a company has.

In the same way, brands create substantial social values in addition to economic values due to increased competition, improved product, process performance and also pressure on business owners to behave in a socially responsible manner (Lindemann, 2004). A shift in the perception of corporate roles and responsibilities also took part with a start in the late 1980's (Tjærnemo, 2001), that has led

to increased expectations on corporate conduct. Businesses are showing more ethical behaviour in their strategies to convince their customers and show their responsibility in recent years. As Vidaver-Cohen and Altman (2000) argues, the ultimate objective of the firm is to maximize wealth of its owners, but in a sustainable way as an active partner in the society. This is a perspective that goes beyond just pure economic aspects (Friedman, 1984). The statement above refers to the increasing concerns about responsibility a company really has toward its stakeholders. It seems that the more ethical awareness companies express, the more credible they are although, their social value is not as much of their economic value clear (Lindemann, 2004).

Social responsibility and sustainability are not new terms in business. Many different views to approach responsibility have been represented in business journals. There can be found many similar terms in the research field: responsibility, corporate citizenship (Matten & Crane 2005), business ethics (Carrigan & Attalla 2001), ethical consumption (de Pelsmacker, Driesen & Rayp 2005), sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Kitchin 2003). However, corporate scandals, environmental issues and resource shortages have put the ethical and political roles of businesses on everyone's agenda (Deigendesch 2009). The trend has been shifting more towards socially responsible wave. As Kapferer (2012) argues that yesterday's trend 'Big is beautiful' has changed to 'Big is responsible' referring to that large companies have taken responsibility programs into account. Responsibility and ethical issues have taken center stage in today's society and as a result companies are increasingly concerned about their ethical image (Brunk & Blümelhuber 2011, 134). Increasing number of companies has included CSR reports on their web sites.

CR practices help businesses to differentiate themselves from competitors and enhance brand equity (McElhaney, 2008). In fact CR ties to brand equity and measuring performance of brands or estimation of brand values merely from financial perspective is not sufficient and assessing the behaviour of brands on other stakeholders is also important. In view of the fact that, CR has a significant role on brand equity, the question is how CR affect corporate image in general and the value of brands in particular.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are different views on the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business: by operating with a CSR perspective, proponents believe that companies are capable of making more long term profit and increasing long term success, while the opponents argue that CSR would only distract firms from the economic role of businesses, namely profit generation (Buhr & Grafström, 2007). Both the proponents as well as the opponents present a list of sound rational reasons do defend their viewpoint. Despite the ongoing debate as to whether or not social responsibilities should be the concern of corporate decision makers, it cannot be denied that corporate social responsibility has been increasingly present in today's world. Research indicates that consumers care about it and that nowadays most consumers expect companies to have fairly high levels of CSR (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000; Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001).

Consumers are very important stakeholders for companies and the success of a company's CSR policy is to a large extent determined by these consumers. Hence, understanding them is critical. Part of understanding these customers relates to trying to find out why they buy from companies which incorporate social responsibilities into their business practices. Green and Peloza (2011) believe that consumers only support firms that engage in CSR, if they receive some kind of value from the exchange. Green and Peloza also point out that consumers usually do not view CSR as one overall impression of a firm, but that they look instead to how each CSR activity can add to their overall value proposition when making a purchase. This seems to indicate that consumers are still more motivated by self-interest than by the interest of society, which is exactly what D'Astous and Legendre (2009) mentioned.

1.3. Research Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between CSR and Brand equity, if any exists. This will help in supporting the research proposition; CSR contributes in creating corporate brand equity.

Other objectives are;

1. To analyze the awareness level of customers about CSR of Alsale Services
2. To identify the types/CSR activities of Alsale services
3. To examine how CSR create brand equity for Alsale services

1.4. Research Questions

1. What is the awareness level of customer about CSR of Alsale Services?
2. What are the types / CSR activities of Alsale Services?
3. How can CSR create brand equity for Alsale Services?

1.5. Significance of the Study

Findings of this study will be in the best interest of marketers because of the following reasons. It will help marketers appreciate the concept of brand equity as being the essential point of focus to commence the communications process. Without brand equity occurring, communication becomes difficult and nearly impossible. For a consumer to buy a product or purchase a service they must first be made aware of its brand. The findings of this survey will also help the society to appreciate the corporate social responsibilities of corporate bodies. It will make the society understand why corporate organizations engage in CSR activities. Finally, the study will serve as a reference point for future researchers who will undertake research on the same topic.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The analysis is solely based on a study of Alsale Services. The study focuses on the corporate social responsibility activities of the company and how it has used these activities to build its equity over the years.

1.7. Organization of the Study

The study explores the CSR practices and the impact of these practices over Brand Equity. Initially, the study is focusing on the introductory areas of CSR, brand equity and review of related literatures. The introductory framework of the study is based on the definitions of major concepts and main questions that are going to address further in this thesis. The first two chapters including literature review throw light on the background researches conducted so far on this topic. It also helps to build the concept of CSR and Brand Equity. The next portion is the defining stage of research design and overall methodology of research that we are using. The success of research is heavily based on its design and methodology, so it has taken a while building the content of this level. A great amount of care has been taken while choosing samples that included one company.

Last but not least, core success is based on the finding of research and how one is analyzed. Analysis and conclusion part are the proof of the real efforts that are actually put in to completing the research. There are a number of things during these two last chapters that justify the honesty and integrity of the research. There is no biasness or personal judgment involved at any point of research, especially during these last two sections. The complete analysis is based on true and fair findings that justify its reliability and validity. All the evidences that are referenced and attained during the research are attached and given at the end of this thesis.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

CSR is basically the relation between a firm and a community. It includes how a firm deals with its suppliers, customers, community, employees and interest groups. In the past few years, the brand was considered not as a part but a separate entity of the goods, according to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000). In the past, brand model was considered to be the brand management team, who create and design all the brand management plans, and brand manager was responsible for that brand and product in a market. This literature looks into the CSR, Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility, Various terminology of CSR, different aspects of CSR, Brand Equity, five dimensions of brand equity theories, stakeholder theory, Freeman vs. Friedman approaches, stakeholder theory in relation to CSR.

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

According to Dawkins (2004) CSR is basically a consistency of firms to act ethically, increasing economic development, and improvement in the lives of their workforce and their families and playing a role in the development of the society. CSR is defined differently in various CSR definitions. According to Davis (1973) firm, on who just follow some of the requirements of law is not called a socially responsible firm. CSR work starts from the point where law ends. CSR is to act as a responsible citizen and fulfill the social requirement of the community.

For the last couple of years, CSR is the most debatable topic, not only in the media but also in academics. CSR importance is increasing with the increase in the global business market and movement of the goods from one country and culture to the other. (Miller & Besser, 2000). According to McGuire (McGuire, 1963 in Carroll, 1979), companies are not only responsible for their legal and financial obligations, but they are also responsible for the society up to certain limits.

Ailawadi and Keller (2004) have commented that any events that the organizations hold for other than, even if partly, their direct financial benefits are also something called Corporate Social Responsibility. McGuire also highlighted the fact that a company is socially responsible if it not only fulfills the monetary and legal requirements but also considers it as a duty to serve the society in some way.

2.2.1. The History of Corporate Social Responsibility

The nature and scope of corporate social responsibility has changed over time. The concept of CSR is a relatively new one—the phrase has only been in wide use since the 1960s. But, while the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations placed on organizations may differ, it is probably accurate to say that all societies at all points in time have had some degree of expectation that organizations would act responsibly, by some definition.

In the eighteenth century the great economist and philosopher Adam Smith expressed the traditional or classical economic model of business. In essence, this model suggested that the needs and desires of society could best be met by the unfettered interaction of individuals and organizations in the marketplace. By acting in a self-interested manner, individuals would produce and deliver the goods and services that would earn them a profit, but also meet the needs of others. The viewpoint expressed by Adam Smith over 200 years ago still forms the basis for free-market economies in the twenty-first century. However, even Smith recognized that the free market did not always perform perfectly and he stated that marketplace participants must act honestly and justly toward each other if the ideals of the free market are to be achieved.

In the century after Adam Smith, the Industrial Revolution contributed to radical change, especially in Europe and the United States. Many of the principles espoused by Smith were borne out as the introduction of new technologies allowed for more efficient production of goods and services. Millions of people obtained jobs that paid more than they had ever made before and the standard of living greatly improved. Large organizations developed and acquired great power, and their founders and owners became some of the

richest and most powerful men in the world. In the late nineteenth century many of these individuals believed in and practiced a philosophy that came to be called "Social Darwinism," which, in simple form, is the idea that the principles of natural selection and survival of the fittest are applicable to business and social policy. This type of philosophy justified cutthroat, even brutal, competitive strategies and did not allow for much concern about the impact of the successful corporation on employees, the community, or the larger society. Thus, although many of the great tycoons of the late nineteenth century were among the greatest philanthropists of all time, their giving was done as individuals, not as representatives of their companies. Indeed, at the same time that many of them were giving away millions of dollars of their own money, the companies that made them rich were practicing business methods that, by today's standards at least, were exploitative of workers.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century a backlash against the large corporations began to gain momentum. Big business was criticized as being too powerful and for practicing antisocial and anticompetitive practices. Laws and regulations, such as the Sherman Antitrust Act, were enacted to rein in the large corporations and to protect employees, consumers, and society at large. An associated movement sometimes called the "social gospel," advocated greater attention to the working class and the poor. The labor movement also called for greater social responsiveness on the part of business. Between 1900 and 1960 the business world gradually began to accept additional responsibilities other than making a profit and obeying the law.

In the 1960s and 1970s the civil rights movement, consumerism, and environmentalism affected society's expectations of business. Based on the general idea that those with great power have great responsibility, many called for the business world to be more proactive in (1) ceasing to *cause* societal problems and (2) starting to participate in *solving* societal problems. Many legal mandates were placed on business related to equal employment opportunity, product safety, worker safety, and the environment. Furthermore, society began to expect business to voluntarily participate in solving societal problems whether they had caused the problems or not. This was based on the view that corporations should go beyond their economic and legal responsibilities and accept responsibilities related to the betterment of society. This view of corporate social responsibility is the prevailing view in much of the world today.

2.2.2. Terminology – Corporate Social Responsibility and Related Themes

2.2.3. Corporate Social Performance

The thought after business communal presentation is the gratitude so that brands have principled compulsions and so that they have to react sensibly to community.

2.2.4. Corporate Social Responsiveness

Capability and procedures of a business to react to communal issues and Corporate Social Responsiveness are referring to this.

2.2.5. Corporate Citizenship

Corporate Citizenship defines the company's sense of accountability towards the society and the surroundings and environment in which it functions, and illustrates possessions and takes sustenance from. Companies articulate this nationality as, during their misuse and contamination lessening procedures, causative instructive and societano agendas, and receive sufficient income on the working possessions (Jones, 2003).

2.2.6. Stakeholder Management

Stakeholders or the citizens who influence or are exaggerated by communal strategies and performances are the focal points, and the director is leaning toward these focal points.

2.2.7. The Common Good

They draw near of the ordinary good quality maintenance for trading, as any extra communal cluster or entity of civilization has to donate to the ordinary high-quality, because it is a fraction of the civilization.

2.2.8. Cause-Related Marketing

"The community connection for Revenue Corporation with a nonrevenue association, planned to endorse the corporation's creation or check and to lift cash for the nonrevenue, is called the Cause-related Marketing (Washburn & Plank, 2002).

2.2.9. The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility with many features can be considered as an affecting target. Carroll has calculated "the pyramid of social responsibility" in order to understand the different levels of the topic in a better way. The pyramid is divided into four groups, which include lawful concerns, economic, charitable accountability, as well as moral of commerce performance. This can be demonstrated with the help of a figure given underneath. These four categories are not equally intended to be seen as a range on one hand with communal issues and on the other hand with the economic concerns (Melewar & Wooldridge, 2001).

Though to be able to work at the same time, at least two of the responsibilities have to be met, such as for a firm, it is not possible to just include the economic requirements but also lawful requirements have to be taken into account. The character of the commerce as well as the essential role of every association is basically the financial accountability. In our society, business is regarded as a finance organization before anything else. It is basically accountable to produce goods as well as services that are basically required. The country's rules and regulations in which the business is likely to operate are basically laid down by the lawful responsibilities as well

as the basic rules. It can be difficult to deal with the moral responsibility particularly as the limitations of commerce principles are balanced and they make it hard to tell the truth if there is anything wrong.

On the other hand, in the media, this responsibility has been highlighted and it can be seen that society is optimistic about this aspect. If the public has more knowledge or information on the subject, their hopes will be higher. The conclusion is to act in a sure way so that charitable accountability is intended and is not synchronized by rule nor in general or moral anticipation. In house programs, basically for drug abusers, an example can be accomplished. It can be said that the corporation goes one-step ahead of what is predicted as a moral duty.

CSR can be thus defined by Jones(2003) that “the communal accountability of commerce comprises of the financial, lawful, moral as well as charity hopes that civilization has on businesses at a given point.” The factor for which Carroll’s definition gets differs from other definitions at the instant is basically that he includes the economic side of the business. He fulfills the traditional financial principle by declaring that the essential role of every business is basically the economic accountability and one has to touch the prior one, in order to shift to the next level of the pyramid.

2.2.10. The Increasing Importance of CSR

There are many reasons that can be identified as to why corporate social responsibility has risen so quickly up the business agenda. These can be summarized as: Technology – information and communications technology has developed exponentially in recent years. This has not only enabled the rise of the global, Multinational Corporation but also given individuals unprecedented access to information by means of the Internet. There is a much higher degree of visibility and exposure of business actions. Now it is even possible to observe military action by means of video cameras showing what is happening in real life. Technology has delivered similar advances in the areas of production, manufacturing, medicine, transport and in many other ways that affects the lives of individuals.

- Globalization - the rise of technology, the lower cost of international communications, travel and trade and changes in the world order together with the collapse of communism have seen globalization and liberation develop alongside each other. Some brands are now truly global in their reach and provide icons or disgust depending on your perspectives. This has enabled the trend from the manufacturing to move from high wage, Western economics to lower – cost Pacific Rim countries and China. India is rapidly emerging as a services provider with a high level of education and English widely spoken.
- Affluence and education – Has led to a society that is much more questioning of business and demanding of rights with clearly communicated expectations. Pressure groups now have the power to confront the largest companies on the world and the purchasing power of individuals can be used to directly influence companies alongside other forms of direct and indirect actions.
- Rights and entitlement – there is now an increasing trend for society to be aware of its rights, with numerous pressure groups representing increasing fragmented groups. Each of these groups considers that it has an entitlement to certain privileges. At the same time it has been suggested that those who do not receive their anticipated entitlement are therefore victims giving rise to the victimization philosophy.

2.3. Different Aspects of CSR Theories

The Corporate Social Responsibility offers backgrounds of theories as well as approaches that are basically notorious, multifaceted and indistinct. The country desires are basically planned in their articles, i.e., Corporate Social Responsibility, in order to explain the condition by categorizing the main hypothesis as well as the approaches into four groups that are economic, political, communal incorporation as well as morals or principles. Basically, these four features exist in every communal atmosphere.

1. Instrumental theories: Generating wealth is the only and the basic accountability of an association. Economic feature is the only aspect taken into consideration. Also, if the communal behaviors lead to wealth generation then they are only accepted. There are three key groups of instrumental theories that can be recognized. 1) Exploiting shareholders worth; a temporary profit is led by this point of view. 2) Focus on attaining competitive benefits; basically this leads a long-term profit direction. 3) Cause-related advertising, which is strongly in relation to the second group.
2. Political theories: “Connections and associations between commerce and civilization is also on the authority, and the situation of commerce as well as its intrinsic accountability are basically focused on in the political theory”. Corporate constitutionalism and corporate citizenship are basically the two main approaches that can be illustrated.
3. Integrative theories: For survival, stability and development or growth of an association is basically dependent on civilization, and the social demands are therefore incorporated in it. The essential plan in this hypothetical approach basically comprises of matters of Management, the main beliefs of Community Accountability, Stakeholder Management as well as Corporate Social Performance.
4. Ethical theories: In moral values, the connection between associations and civilization is entrenched. Associations should acknowledge communal accountabilities as a compulsion above any other consideration. This group such as Universal Privileges, Sustainable Growth as well as The Ordinary Fine Approach incorporates different plans.

2.3.1. Strategic CSR

When a firm likens the provision of a public good to the sale of their products, what it does is to capture value and this is referred to as strategic CSR (Baron, 2001). Social responsibilities will appear to benefit a business directly in the form where the firm communicates CSR practices frequently and fully with investors, shareholders, customers, and employees in order to gain their support. This can be

ties to the concept of CSR advertising. Another benefit created for the firm occurs when a communal spirit and respect for the dignity of persons is created within the firm. This nurtures motivation, teamwork and fulfillment in employees, which ultimately leads to productivity. Finally, Strategic CSR also takes the form in which the firm accepts some responsibility for the television programs including other media environments in which they advertise. However, in sponsoring programs, firms or companies should avoid sponsorships of programs that are associated with sex, violence and that criticize religion (Novak, 1996 in Lantos, 2001). Some telecom companies in the industry are emulating this aspect of strategic CSR by taking some responsibility for some television programs or major events. MTN Ghana for instance, is the main sponsor of the Soccer Academy that is aired on Metro TV, a local station in Ghana. It is also the main sponsor of the South African World Cup tournament that is set to take place in June 2010. Another example is the sponsorship of Mentor reality show that is also aired on TV3 by Vodafone Ghana.

Bagnoli and Watts (2003) find that the tendency of firms to engage in strategic CSR depends on two factors: the intensity of competition in the market and the extent to which consumers are willing to pay a premium for social responsibility. The first factor can be said to exist in the telecom industry in Ghana. The competitive nature of the industry as a result of the presence of multinational telecom company in a relatively small Ghanaian market is probably one of the reasons for the engagement in CSR activities by most companies in that industry. The second factor can however not be established in the context of Ghana without the support of a research work.

An analysis of the provision of public good by private firms is an addition to the management literature on CSR, and has been primarily concerned with answering the following question do firms “do well by doing good”? Showing that a firm does well by doing good is often referred to as making the business case for CSR. Therefore, understanding the relationship between social performance and firm performance is very significant. A deeper understanding of CSR requires that one take into consideration other stakeholders as well. The understanding of CSR should be extended to an examination of the strategic use of CSR activities. Investing in CSR serves as a means of differentiating a firm from one that does not invest in CSR, thus giving it a means of competitive advantage (Fomburn and Shanley, 2012). For this reason, McWilliams and Siegel (2011) suggest that CSR activities be included in strategy formulation.

2.3.2. Morality in CSR

It is almost implied that firms cannot be successful in the long run if they consistently disregard the interests of key stakeholders. However, the fact still remains that firms that behave responsibly will perform well financially in the long run (Norman and MacDonald, 2004). “Responsibly” here refers to the ongoing obligation by firms to behave morally while ensuring that the quality of workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large are improved (Boon and Ababiob, 2009). This commitment is undertaken more in response to moral convictions rather than legal obligations (Boon and Ababiob, 2009). As described by Donaldson (1990 in McWilliams et al., 2005) to be where managers “do the right thing” owing significance to moral conviction without regard to how such decisions affect firm performance. Even though there is no national policy framework that guides the implementation of CSR in Ghana (Boon and Ababiob, 2009), it has generally been accepted by most people in and out of the corporate world that firms have a variety of obligations to stakeholders to behave responsibly.

2.3.3. Measurement of Social Performance

According to Norman and MacDonald (2004), to improve a firm’s social and environmental performance, the responsible behavior of the company should be measured, calculated, audited and reported to the public. This belief has increasingly been part of mainstream management theory. This began the concept of the “Triple Bottom Line” (3BL) paradigm, which is attracting the interests of management, consultants, investors, and NGOs (Norman and MacDonald, 2004). The 3BL paradigm proposes that a corporation’s ultimate success or health should not just be measured by the traditional financial bottom line, but also by its social, ethical and environmental performance.

This is in line with the act of MTN Ghana as it launched its first Newsletter on 3rd March 2010. This newsletter publicizes the social (and environmental) activities of the company among others and gives customers and other stakeholders the opportunity to assess the social, ethical and environmental performance of the company. Through this, the firm improves its positive impact on communities. Presumably, social impact should therefore, influence the well-being of a firm. The challenge therefore is to develop CSR programs that maintain goodwill.

Company and address the long-term developmental needs of communities in a sustainable way (Boon and Ababiob, 2009). After these CSR programs have been designed and implemented, the firm should report the result of its social performance to improve its social and environmental performance. Firms that do this can expect to do better financially in the long run (Norman and MacDonald, 2004).

2.3.4. Brand Equity

The study of Brand Equity has been gaining much popularity recently and according to some researchers, brands are the most worthy and precious assets that a company might have. Bendall et al (2003) have also mentioned that the higher the brand equity is the more it is likely to be purchased and be a preference of consumers; it also leads to increased stock income (Besser & Miller, 2001).

The term “Brand Equity” was first used by the marketing professionals and practitioners in the 1980s (Castka et al, 2004). Today, the importance of brand equity has broadened even more and the marketing practitioners have further realized its importance. In this paper, the scope and definitions of brand equity have been brought into the limelight through various pragmatic and literary studies. The two parts of this paper include journalism on brand equity, which is discussed in the first part, and structure of brand equity,

which is highlighted in the second part. This part focuses on customer-based context, those that involve various aspects of brand equity.

In this whole review of literature about brand equity, we have to know that brand equity has a huge magnitude and means a lot to the organizations. This study also includes the different concepts that exist that of brand equity as well as how it is defined. Brand equity is perceived to have 5 elements: Accessory, Value, Social image, Performance and Honesty.

Brand equity is considered to be the customer loyalty, brand's potential price premium, alleged brand leadership, high comparative quality, differ from other brands, consumers' perceived trust, admiration and reliability of the brand, brand awareness, the alleged worth of the brand, its market share, its character as well as its functional advantages.

There has been a lot of research in the field of brand equity in the last few decades, which has resulted in the various dimensions of brand equity as well various modes of measurement of brand equity (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Hence, we can say that customer-based brand equity includes four major aspects that are brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness and the perceived quality.

2.4. Five Dimensions of Brand Equity: The Proposed Model

2.4.1. Brand Awareness

One of the important elements in this model is awareness (Mackay, 2001). According to him, awareness means being able to distinguish and recollect the brand; it also includes recognizing the brand even in odd circumstances and the ability to associate the logo, name and other such aspects of the brand to some specific relations. He includes brand knowledge, brand supremacy, top-of-mind and brand estimation. The complete set of brand associations is brand knowledge about the brand.

2.4.2. Brand Associations

The majority conventional feature of brand equity is brand relationship. Associations symbolize the basis for brand devotion and for purchase choice. Brand relations contain all brand-related opinion, awareness, approaches, attitudes, experiences, images, (Kotler & Keller, 2006) and or whatever thing is related in memory to a brand. The two type of brand associations that is classified by Chen in 2001 are organizational and product association.

2.4.3. Product Associations

According to Chen (2001) Product Association includes both functional attribute association and non-functional associations. The touchable features of an item for consumption are functional attributes. The brand wills has short stage of brand equity, if it does not carry out the functions for which it is future

2.4.3.1. Social Image

According to Bendixen et al. (2004) that social image is a concept where the company has some kind of social standings in the society. Moreover, social image means that the consumer is aware of the fact that the brand is well liked and popular among the social groups one belongs to.

2.4.3.2. Perceived Value

Similarly perceived value is cleared as the apparent brand value in relation to its value for money as perceived by the consumer and the image of the brand in the society or social group and how much can be spent to acquire it. Obvious equilibrium among all its utilities and the price of a product are the thing on which the customer option of a brand depends. Due to the higher brand equity, a consumer is excited to give better prices.

2.4.3.3. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of an invention is a significant quality in calculating the strengths of a brand that is primarily experiential in brand equity models (Kim et al., 2010). Trustworthiness is the self-assurance that a customer holds concerning the specific brand and brand association as well as the awareness about the brand events.

2.4.3.4. The Stakeholder Theory

Here, we are going to present a brief overview of the Freeman's Stakeholder theory and debate between Freeman and Friedman. Managing and integrating the relationships among stakeholders like employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders is the main objective of the Stakeholders' Theory that imposes a positive impact on the long-term growth of a firm. The word "stockholder" is clearly influenced by the stakeholder approach and the designed framework elaborated in the field of strategic management beyond the conventional economic roots. Phillips (Phillips, 1997 in Freeman et al., 2001) believes that a stakeholder approach can be seen as *the principle of fairness*.

2.4.3.5. Definition of Stakeholder Theory

Let's take a look on the conventional definition of Stakeholders Theory. The traditional definition of a stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 2004). The definition has given a new idea of redefining an organization that what it should be like and Friedman & Miles (2006) explained that an organization is a composition of stakeholders, and purpose of an organization should be to be able to handle its own interests, viewpoints and

requirements. It depends on the type of firm that stakeholders may include suppliers, customers, shareholders, community and environmental groups etc. The figure below highlights different examples of stakeholders.

2.4.3.6. The Evolution of Stakeholder Theory

The inventor of Stakeholder Theory is R. Edward Freeman and his publications are *Strategic Management – A Stakeholder Approach* in 1984. Unexpected levels of problematic environment and changes that managers were facing became the reason for building this framework. It came into existence to address the concerns of the managers. The prevalence of this approach was quite high in the 80's even though the idea was old. This term was firstly used in the 1960s during the genuine work done in Stanford Research Institute (Freeman et al. 2001). There has been a great amount of growth so far in the scope of this approach and recent researches conducted in the four sub-fields; Corporate Social Responsibility and Performance, Strategic Management, Normative theories of Business, Governance and Organizational Theory.

Donaldson and Preston (Donaldson and Preston 2005 in Freeman et al. 2007) described that Stakeholder theories could be divided into descriptive, instrumental and normative point of views. The descriptive theory implies the stakeholders that a firm possesses; instrumental view entails the consideration of stakeholders by the firms and they remain successful and last but not the least normative approach focuses on the reason why a firm should take into consideration the stakeholders.

2.5. Discussion among “Freeman vs. Friedman”; the Stakeholder

Friedman (1962) in (Coelho et al., 2003) stated that every business has one social responsibility so as to utilize its assets and resources and do what it takes to maximize profits as far as the rules of the game are not violated, which means that it holds open and free competition without getting involved in to tricks or cheating. He also stated that engaging in some unacceptable practices could badly damage the establishment of a free society due to the negligence of the corporate officials who are interested in making money for their stockholders (Friedman 1962 in Carroll 2009). An increase in the firm's wealth is the responsibility of firm's agents, which is entrusted by its shareholders (Coelho et al., 2003). Both Freeman and Friedman are good in terms of ethics and taking responsibility. Friedman said that no responsibility takes place in organizations beyond the legal constraints. Fiduciary responsibility must be on the top with remaining in the societal limits in order to meet different kinds of social practices.

According to Adam Smith (Smith 1776 in Coelho et al. 2003), people buy products upon the condition that their prices justify their value in a free market. There is always an invisible hand in normal circumstances that works for the public interests to push profit by self-interested business people. If we take the stakeholder model as Friedman did, we won't find any conflict among managers and search for profits to accomplish fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders.

Edward Freeman is on the other corner, with his book “Strategic Management- A Stakeholders Approach 1984”. He believed that one finds different changes in the environment and needs some particular framework to deal with. The stakeholder approach revolves around the word stockholder, and pushes the concept of strategic management beyond the boundaries of conventional economics (Freeman et al., 2001). The managers get encouragement from this theory to devise a long-term strategy to build healthy relationships with the stakeholders through consistent commitment. Another finest thing about the Stakeholder Theory is the imposition of “faces and names” to stakeholders, which creates easiness during the process of analyzing strategies.

2.6. Stakeholder Theory in Relation with CSR

Global brands are everywhere in multiple chains of the markets. They started focusing more on building global brands, like Unilever is doing, instead of local brands. To be more proactive in CSR is expected of these organizations (Holt & Quelch, 2004). If CSR is applied properly in any organization, it will build a strong bond between the organization and its stakeholders in terms of more commitment, trust, customer loyalty and investments by the suppliers and stockholders (Garbarino & Johnson, 2009; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

A firm's involvement and initiatives in social and environmental areas possess a great amount of importance in building its image inside and outside the country. It shows the concern of a firm towards the internal and external environment and imposes a healthy effect in building a good image of the firm. Predatory behavior has been observed by the global brands, and they are not showing much concern.

Moreover, self-interested CSR practices observed by the global companies like Coca Cola and BP. BP have been involved in massive global repercussions in their oil operations. Coca-Cola confronted the strong protest by the UK and USA customers because of low-standard environmental practices in India and also confronted the human rights allegations in Colombia (Hills & Welford, 2005). The main core of the stakeholder theory is the belief that stakeholder relationships are the most important factor that managers have to take care of. However, CSR addresses those responsibilities that a business needs to fulfill. We may conclude that both the concepts are interrelated but the level of abstraction differs on the subject of CSR. The Stakeholder Theory is an effective gauge to measure the performance of the firms and CSP.

2.6.1. CSR as an Independent Variable

2.6.1.1. Environment

Environment means the external environment, where we need to assess the behavior of companies. We need to assess their roles being a part of this environment and analyze how much they are integrated with each other and involved in CSR, what are the environmental standards they have developed and what are the ones they have already been following. Being proactive towards dealing with

environmental concerns creates a positive image of a firm or it does not make any impact. These are the questions that we are going to address further.

2.6.1.2. Labor

Labor has been facing many challenges in different parts of the world. They do not have freedom of choice and face lack of health & safety standards. They become a victim of discrimination, and child labor is also increasing massively. Addressing these concerns creates a positive impression in their minds and it also imposes a good impact on the productivity and commitment.

2.6.1.3. Local Community

One must admit that today organizations are facing many challenges. It has become quite difficult to progress without the assistance of local communities. Collaboration and harmony in any industrial environment help to develop a good name in the market. They also help to build and implement standards, policies and procedures.

2.6.2. Competitive Advantage as a Dependent Variable

Competitive advantage is a core competency that a company possesses. It can be anything that no other company possesses like technology, knowledge, skills, quality standard not easily imitable products etc. Here, competitive advantage is dependent on CSR or any other particular factor, or we can say how much a company involved in any particular area of corporate citizenship.

2.6.3. Brand Equity as a Dependent Variable

Normally, brand equity depends on overall operations, product quality and features, company's image, stakeholders' relationships and number of other factors. It takes years to build an optimum level of brand equity. Here in this research, brand equity is working as dependent variable since it depends on the companies that how much they are involved into CSR activities.

2.7. From Social Responsibility to Strategic Competitive Advantage

When the firm recognizes a firm's moral compulsion to the civilization, it can be said that there has been a transfer of Corporate Social Responsibility to Corporate Social Performance (CSP). In order to make a society an improved place, the firm is contributing much. An analysis has been done in order to investigate the constructive and unconstructive effects of CSP as well as the competitiveness of associations, from which the following results were discovered.

2.7.1. Positive Effects

The development of stakeholder associations was the most sustained constructive outcome. It has been argued by the respondents that CSP results in inspiration, contentment, faithfulness as well as confidence among the workers and the consumers (Melewar, 2002). Associations that contribute to civilization as well as the natural surrounding result in having a fine corporate image; and this is basically the next main constructive effect. Some of the other constructive effects mentioned are that the respondent's think that CSP is supportive when rising/civilizing the business firm and that saving can be increased by lessening the use of energy and also by decreasing the manufacturing waste (Sayman et al., 2002).

2.7.2. Negative Effects

The most ordinary unconstructive effect given from CSP in accordance with this study or analysis is that concentration to the "core" business is taken away by it. Let us take an example that if we give power to the stakeholders to get part in the decision making then it might result in lack of attention on the "core" business as well as disagreement of concentration between the stakeholders and managers. Secondly, it is also a most feared effect of CSP that if the plan were implemented poorly then it would lead to destruction of the organization's reputation. In actuality, the plan may have an unconstructive effect on the corporation if the directors or managers have assured more and the stakeholders have anticipated more.

2.8. Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Equity

Brand fairness has an interior dimension, which is loyalty. According to the point of view of critics, loyalty has many dissimilar levels. According to the point of view of old researchers, loyalty that is linked to the behavior of customers in the marketplace is called behavioral loyalty; behavioral loyalty can be indicated by the number of frequent procurers or, according to the point of Oliver, the promise to re-buy the product as the first option. The highest stage of consciousness is closely connected to the cognitive loyalty, where attention in the product is the major issue in a known group, which the customers are reminded of initially. According to cognitive loyalty, a product should be capable to become the respondents' first option and should be consequently obtained, which is behavioral loyalty. In the point of view of Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) product faithfulness is in a straight line connected to product cost. In their point of view, the essential point of faithfulness is to recognize cost quality, the quantity a client will give for the product in contrast with another product contributing comparable profit.

2.9. Relationship of Marketing Ethics and Brand Image

Now, more and more customers are concerned about things that are far more than the narrow self-benefits. Customers have a long-term vision and more desire for environmental issues, sustainable development, and social responsibility. Customers expect that with the developing of telecommunication, and telecommunication decisions could contribute to the sustainable developing of society.

Moreover, the Internet has been popularized throughout the society; customers communicate and share experiences with each other through the Internet. The network users have high distinguishing information ability; any Telco's false information cannot deceive them. This is a trend, managers will gradually lose the dominant position for propagating brand, at the same time consumers are not only as subscribers, but also are the marketers of company brand.

Figure 2 (Ye & Ye 2005) shows that customers are the core to analyze the relationship between marketing ethics, customer's satisfaction and brand image. The customer satisfaction level has a direct relationship with enterprise, with higher marketing ethics that enterprises get higher customer satisfaction, conversely, customer satisfaction will be low (Ye & Ye 2005, 266). Brand reputation and corporate reputation is conducive to establish a good corporate image and brand image in the minds of consumers (Economic Management 2006). In others words, brand reputation comes from the customer's satisfaction, only if the customers are satisfied with marketing ethics of the brand, they publicize the brand image in positive side, otherwise, complaint will decrease the brand image. Offering high product quality and service integrity, enterprises can get more customer satisfaction; this corporate has positive brand image, and customers are willing to promote this kind of brand.

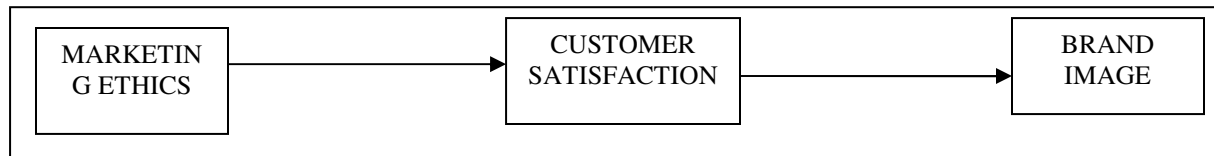


Figure 1: The relationship between marketing ethics, customers' satisfaction and brand image

In order to better understand the relationship between marketing ethics and brand image, the 3i model from Kotler (2005) could bring some inspiration (see Figure 2). Kotler redefined marketing as a consonant triangle of brand, positioning and differentiation, with the 3i's: brand identity, brand integrity, brand image to complete the triangle.



Figure 2: the 3i Model

Positioning is a mere claim that alerts consumers to be cautious of an inauthentic brand. Differentiation is the brand's DNA that reflects the true integrity of the brand. It is a solid proof that a brand is delivering what it promises. It is essentially about delivering the promised performance and satisfaction to your customers. Differentiation that is synergetic to the positioning will automatically create a good brand image. Moreover, marketing is selling the intrinsic value that is integrity, when enterprises lose integrity, at the same time; they also lose the ethics (Yang 2005, 114). In a word, marketing ethics and brand have close relationship. The establishment of an enterprise brand image requires many factors, as culture, history and quality, but ethics is one of the most important factors (The construction of spiritual civilization 2003, 10). Marketing ethics could impact customer's satisfaction, thereby impacting hotel brand image. Simultaneously, the brand image with ethical rules will not only improve the competitiveness in market, but also increase the revenue of company.

2.9.1. The Tangible Content of Brand Image

Brand image includes the tangible content and the intangible content, this thesis researches ethics' issues impact on hotel brand image through the tangible content. The tangible contents of brand image are product image, environmental image, social image, staff image and performance image (Brand Image 2009). In this thesis, there is no marketing research about how ethics impact on performance image. Because the performance image relates with the scale of operation and profitability of the brand, mainly constituting by sales, ratio of profit to capital and return on assets (ROA), researching the effects is complex and time-consuming, but also related to

financial privacy. Through the medium of consumer, business ethics could impact brand image from the aspects of product issue, environmental issue, social issue and staff issue. To evaluate the impact there are many methods, the most effective and direct way is to evaluate the brand reputation. Brand reputation is one of the brand powers, meaning the degree of customer's satisfaction and trust for the brand. (Ding 2007).

2.9.1.1. Product Image

In telecom industry, ethics issues affecting product image are mainly reflected in three aspects: quality, price and innovation. Telecom product mainly is service; the standard service is the basic manifestation of ethics. Customers buy products or services from the telcos, it is the result of the good feelings and trust for these services, or they are the requirements of honor, preferences and other factors. The transactions between the companies and customers are voluntary, and respective party obtains its benefits, there are inevitable obstacles if the company does not have business ethics. (Zou 2004). From this can be seen when company cannot provide standard services to satisfy customers, the transactions will be broken up, and resulting that customers lose trust of that brand. Price issue of marketing ethics includes price fraud and price discrimination some serious behaviors have even gone beyond the ethical bottom line, belongs to the scope of the law.

2.9.1.2. Environmental Image

Ethics' issues impact on environmental image mainly is the design. The company can be built above the affordability of the ecological environment; the company design applies energy-saving system, through energy-saving, water-saving, rational utilization of natural resources, slowing down the depletion of resources, reducing the generation and emissions of solid waste and garbage. During the production and consumption process, to promote the company, products or services are compatible with the environment, from production aspect the environmental hazards risk must be reduced, in addition, the use of plastic products must be avoided, the packaging of soap and cup reduced, and telecom companies must not supply uncontaminated items or recycled items to customers. Kotler (2010) pointed out that with climate change and the increasingly serious environmental problems, consumers are increasingly concerned about environmental protection. Company's energy-saving system does not only increase the brand image on the ethical level, from the long-term considerations, also reduces the energy costs.

2.9.1.3. Social Image

Social image of brand is through the non-profit social behaviours or the social behaviours of the public nature of the relationship to create a good brand image. Many firms try hard to align their philanthropy with marketing and brand image (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 64). Charitable activities are the manifestation of marketing ethics, but also it is a good way to improve the brand image in the telecom industry. Charitable activities reflect enterprises' care about the community construction, human activities, it is the business philosophy of social contribution, enterprises sponsor philanthropy to enhance the affinity of brand, and create a good brand image (Huang 2005). For the telecom industry, having a well-known brand, choosing the charitable activities is an effective way to achieve a win-win between companies and society. Charitable activities can display not only a sense of social responsibility and ethics of the company, but also that it contributes to sustainable development of the society. As a service industry, the advantage is exposed to a wide range of customer groups every day; it is like a window for philanthropy.

2.9.1.4. Staff Image

The staff has more direct contact with customers than the senior manager; good staff image could help to shape the brand image. Therefore, the company must rely on the self-discipline of all the staff to protect the brand image, to avoid the loss of brand image due to the unethical behavior of staff. In this situation, the self-discipline can be understood as marketing ethics, it is the exemplification of staff ethics. In their daily work, many of the services are difficult to effective evaluation, more customer needs is the processing of the staff, ethical behavior of the staff provides standard services and meets the needs of customers, thus improving the customer satisfaction, and ultimately have a positive effect on brand image. When senior marketing managers have professional and ethical rules, which can enhance the brand centripetal force and the public trust, when the front-line staff as the receptionist or customer service have professional and ethical rules, can enhance the cohesion and competitiveness of the brand, both are effectual for laying a solid foundation that is the long-term development of brand image (Ye 2006). So, staffs are the main parts of brand production and management activities, and they are the direct shapers of the brand image.

2.10. *Managing Brand Success*

Apart from the benefits of brand equity motivating an organization to better manage its brands as discussed in the preceding section (Keller 2000), changes in environmental forces (de Chernatony 2009) and organizational management structures (Low and Fullerton 1994; Shocker et al. 1994) during the 1990s also impacted brand management practices. The task of brand management became more complex as a consequence of globalisation, deregulated markets rapid changes in technology, the increasing power of consumers and distributors, and higher investor expectations with regard to brand equity (Shocker et al. 2004). Given that a strong brand contributes to the future success of the organisation, possessing a buoyant brand became one of the main aims of organizations (Norris 2012). Whilst it was previously believed that mergers and acquisitions were the best method of gaining possession of a strong brand, it was suggested in the 1990s that a successful brand could also be organically developed and managed (Wood 2000). The key factors contributing to brand success delineated in the following section include: (i) managing brand identity, personality, and value/essence

(Urde 2009); (ii) communication (Keller 2000); (iii) commitment from top management (Wood 2000); (iv) integration across functions within the organisation (Wood 2000); and (v) a long-term performance focus (Keller 2000).

First, in relation to brand success, it is apparent that consumers select a brand based on its promised functional and symbolic attributes (de Chernatony and Dall' Olmo Riley 2008), yet it is the brand identity and brand personality that is emphasised in communication (Blackett 2008; de Chernatony 2013). The associations, essence, identity and personality of a brand need to be strategically structured, as conveying mixed messages of what a brand stands for can create confusion in the minds of consumers and other stakeholders (Keller 2009). In choosing a brand identity, an organisation needs to be certain that it is consistent with the organisation's core strategy (Rooney 2005). For instance, if an organisation decides to project its brand identity as being environmentally friendly, this should be reflected in all its operational procedures, including procurement processes, logistics and raw materials used (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 2008).

Although brands are principally designed to appeal to consumers, Keller (2009) suggested that brands are potentially just as valuable when communicated internally employee stakeholders. Brand mantras, defined as "short three to five wordphrases that capture the irrefutable essence or spirit of the brand positioning" (Keller 2009), can build a unique brand positioning among organisational members.

For example, Nike uses „authentic athletic performance as its brand mantra, describing how the products of Nike are truly appropriate for athletic purposes (Keller 2009). Each word used in a brand mantra is designed strategically to describe different attributes of the brand, illustrated in the case of Nike whereby „authentic“ refers to the „emotional modifier“, „athletic“ to the „descriptive modifier“, and „performance“ to „brand functions“ (Keller 2009). The primary purpose of brand mantras is to communicate the essence of the brand to organisational members, thereby encouraging them to act as brand ambassadors conveying key messages to external audiences (Keller 2009).

Second, for brand success to occur, once brand identity is determined, it is important to consistently communicate that identity through repeated exposures, either by traditional means such as advertising or more contemporary means such as sponsorship (Keller 2000). The temptation to reduce marketing communication activities after achieving a dominant market position should be resisted as it can result in loss of market share (Keller 2000). In addition, if an organisation chooses to employ more than one channel of communication, synchronisation is needed to make sure the brand identity is presented in a consistent manner (Urde 2004).

Third, brand success requires that brand management should ultimately be the responsibility of a company's top management because of the financial importance of brands to the organisations, which own them (Rubinstein 2006; Wood 2000). It is acknowledged that the priorities of the marketing and finance departments can sometimes be in conflict (Rubinstein 2006). While an adequate advertising and marketing budget is needed to ensure consistent exposure for the brand, the finance department is naturally inclined to call for reduced budgets in order to meet short-term financial objectives (Rubinstein 2006). It is therefore left to top management to align the understanding of branding across different functions within the organization (Wood 2000).

Fourth, a misalignment of brand objectives across different functional areas can destroy brand success and the organisation itself. This has been illustrated by the case of a shoe retailer who promised to deliver products within 24 hours of ordering, but was not able to keep up, resulting from a failure in warehousing and distribution (Rubinstein 2006). This suggests that before making a brand promise, an organisation needs to assess that all relevant functions within the organisation are capable of delivering the promise.

Lastly, in managing a brand and its success, it is important to focus on long-term as opposed to short-term objectives (Keller 2003). Managers of the world's top 100 brands often take a long-term view based on brand success, image and positioning, whereas the less successful brands only concentrate on increasing their sales volume (Hankinson and Hankinson 2009).

In summary, managing brand success requires the creation of a clear brand identity (Berry 2002; Elliott and Wattanasuwan 2008), effective and consistent communication (Keller 1999; 2000), the commitment of top management (Rubinstein 2006; Wood 2000), the integration of all functions within the organisation as part of brand management (Rubinstein 1996; Shocker et al. 1994; Wood 2000), and a focus on the long-term view (Hankinson and Hankinson 2009; Keller 2000). Given the broad organisational implications of these key success factors, it is unsurprising that they have led to a growing level of interest in the concept of branding the organisation as a whole – not merely individual products and services (Balmer 2005; Brown and Dacin 2007; Urde 2009). The next section will therefore discuss the concept of company or corporate branding

2.10.1. Corporate Branding

The tendency for branding to be managed at the organizational level is demonstrated in the preceding section (de Chernatony 2009; Urde 2009). The call for „corporate branding“ has become wider given that organisations often possess more than one brand, sometimes with an overall umbrella brand (Montgomery and Wernerfelt 2002), in addition to brand extensions splintering from existing portfolios (Rooney 2005). Moreover, new branding strategies were introduced in the 1990s to encompass additional stakeholder groups, such as suppliers in ingredient branding (Norris 2002) and competitors and business partners in brand alliances and co-branding initiatives (Shocker et al. 2004). King (2001) noted that it would be unlikely for a stand-alone brand to become successful in the 1990s and beyond, highlighting the trend towards „company branding“ which was later referred to as the „corporate brand“ (Balmer 2001b). This thesis refers to both terms interchangeably.

The conceptualisation of corporate branding in the 1990s was underdeveloped, and based largely on existing brand concepts (de Chernatony 2009; King 2001). For instance, King (2001) conceptualised company branding through a service-based approach and identified some differences between company and traditional product brands. The first difference acknowledged was that while mass production was feasible and suitable for a product brand, customers and other stakeholders of company brands expect to be treated individually. Secondly, differences exist when developing a product because innovation is needed so as to create additional time

before the product can be copied by a lookalike brand; whereas services can be rapidly copied (as in the case of the banking industry). Thirdly, differences exist because employees become the key point of contact for company brands emphasizing the importance of multiple channels of communication both personal (i.e., face-to-face) and impersonal (e.g., publicity). Finally, whilst it is relatively straightforward for customers to form attitudes towards traditional product brands as they experience the product itself, this becomes more difficult with corporate brands as stakeholders take time to make their evaluations (King 2001). In response to these differences, King (2001) suggested an internal brand-building approach for company brands, emphasising internal communication, employee training programs, and an enlarged role for human resources departments as well as the company's leaders in creating a common understanding of its behaviour and personality.

While King (2001), mentioned that consumers were beginning to recognise the cultural aspects of companies, including employee skills, behaviours, and social values; this premise was more fully examined by Brown and Dacin (2007). Their study examined values associated with the company, such as corporate ability (CA) and corporate social responsibility (CSR), seeking to identify the effects of these intangible values on consumer responses to company products (Brown and Dacin 2007). It was concluded that consumers are more likely to purchase products if they hold positive evaluations of the corporation, which produces them (Brown and Dacin 2007).

Although the concept of corporate branding in the academic literature remained at an introductory stage in the 1990s, a number of constructive suggestions relating to its conceptualisation were made including the importance of intangible company values and associations, and the management of employees (Brown and Dacin 2007; de Chernatony 2009; King 2001). From 2000, scholars began to refer to company values and associations in terms of the communication of corporate identity, and as components in the corporate brand building process (Balmer 2005; Balmer and Gray 2003; Knox and Bickerton 2003). In the following section, the confusion caused by the interchangeable use of the terms „corporate brand“ and „corporate identity“ is clarified (Balmer and Greyser 2003). Despite the areas of apparent overlap, both concepts have been classified as subsets of an overarching concept referred to as „corporate-level marketing“ (Balmer and Greyser 2003). Moreover, in the 2000s, different conceptualisations of corporate branding have been proposed, while corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices have been extensively viewed as adding value to the corporate brand (Brønn 2006; Brønn and Vrioni 2001; Knox and Bickerton 2003; Knox and Maklan 2004; Polonsky and Jevons 2006).

2.11. CSR as an Independent Variable

- Environment - Environment means the external environment, where we need to assess the behavior of companies. We need to assess their roles being a part of this environment and analyze how much they are integrated with each other and involved in CSR, what are the environmental standards they have developed and what are the ones they have already been following. Being proactive towards dealing with environmental concerns creates a positive image of a firm or it does not make any impact. These are the questions that we are going to address further.
- Labor - Labor has been facing many challenges in different parts of the world. They do not have freedom of choice and face lack of health & safety standards. They become a victim of discrimination, and child labor is also increasing massively. Addressing these concerns creates a positive impression in their minds and it also imposes a good impact on the productivity and commitment.
- Local Community - One must admit that today organizations are facing many challenges. It has become quite difficult to progress without the assistance of local communities. Collaboration and harmony in any industrial environment help to develop a good name in the market. They also help to build and implement standards, policies and procedures.

2.11.1. Competitive Advantage as a Dependent Variable

Competitive advantage is a core competency that a company possesses. It can be anything that no other company possesses like technology, knowledge, skills, quality standard not easily imitable products etc. Here, competitive advantage is dependent on CSR or any other particular factor, or we can say how much a company involved in any particular area of corporate citizenship.

2.11.2. Brand Equity as a Dependent Variable

Normally, brand equity depends on overall operations, product quality and features, company's image, stakeholders' relationships and number of other factors. It takes years to build an optimum level of brand equity. Here in this research, brand equity is working as dependent variable since it depends on the companies that how much they are involved into CSR activities.

3. Research Methodology

3.0. Introduction

This section of the chapter presents the method that was used to collect, analyze and present the data for the study. It consists of the research study, population, sampling, data collection and analysis.

3.1. Purpose of the Study

This thesis is identified as an exploratory and relational research that seeks to explore and examine whether or not CSR contributes in building equity of a company's brand. It also aims to examine the relationship between CSR and brand equity. This will help the marketer gain a greater understanding of two main variables under study: CSR and Corporate Brand Equity. This research will help to analyze whether or not corporate brand awareness moves the consumer closer towards purchasing a product or service of the brand

that he or she is aware of. For these reasons the consumer's point of view on the issue of CSR and corporate brand equity from will be the focus of the study.

3.2. Research Design and Approach

Research design can be categorized into three namely: exploratory, descriptive, and casual. Whenever a research is badly understood, it is said to be (more or less) exploratory research design that is adequate. Besides, the key element in exploratory research is mostly the ability to observe, extract information, and make a meaningful explanation i.e. theorizing. For descriptive research, the problem is structured and well understood and the key features of descriptive research are; well structured precise rules, and procedures. In casual research, the problems under scrutiny are structured as well. However, in contrast to descriptive research, the researcher is also confident with "cause and effect problems" (Ghauri, Gronhaug and Kristianslund 1995).

A descriptive survey method is regarded as a type of quantitative research, which incorporates careful description of a phenomenon in question beginning with a theoretical or applied research problem, and ends with empirical measurements and data analysis (Neuman 2006). Its main purpose is to collect original data for describing or measuring the attitudes and orientation in a large population (Babbie 2005). This method is relevant for this study in order to establish the relationship between CSR and creation of brand equity. The method is used because it allows the researcher to ask many questions at one time, measure many variables, and test hypotheses in a single survey.

3.3. Identified Population

Since the research was limited to Alsale services, the population for this research from which the sample was drawn was the total number of Alsale customers and staff that is over 1000. It was therefore very difficult to collect data from all members of the population due to the enormity of its size and the lack of resources. For this reason a feasible sample size of 120 was drawn in order to carry out this research.

3.4. Selection of the Sample

A sample is a sub-group or representative selection of a population that is examined or tested to obtain statistical data or information about the whole population (Encarta Dictionary; Saunders et al 2007). Sampling on the other hand is the process of selecting a group of people, items or cases to be used as a representative or random sample (ibid).

The sample consisted of selected customers and some staff of Alsale Services in Accra. Among the several sampling methods, the 'convenience sampling' technique was used to select the respondents. As the name suggests the respondents are selected based on convenience, which could be associated with time and cost. Hence customers within the Accra metropolis were considered for the study. A sample of 60 customers and some staff of the company were chosen for the study.

Convenience sampling was employed because the entire population cannot be covered for two reasons. The logistical cost is high and the population is dynamic in that the individuals making up the population may change over time. The second reason being that, data collection is faster, and since the data set is smaller it is possible to ensure homogeneity and to improve the accuracy and quality of the data.

3.5. Data Collection

Data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. This was based on the assertion by Bliakie (2000), argued that using multiple sources of data reduces the peculiar biases of each one. There will be two main sources of data classified under primary and secondary. Primary data will consist of the information obtained through interviews, questionnaires. Secondary data will consist of information obtained from related studies, existing literature, reports of the various telecommunication companies.

3.6. Research Instruments

3.6.1. Questionnaire

The study sought to explore the relationship between CSR and corporate brand equity from the view of the customer. The use of questionnaires was therefore, the best instrument for this research. This provided a means of acquiring primary data that is quantified to be used in the analysis process in order to draw conclusions based on the sample.

In designing the questionnaire, questions were kept short, simple and clear to ensure proper understanding of the questions and ease of answering the question. Questions were asked on all levels of awareness and equity (Bornmark, 2005);

The questionnaire also examined the extent to which respondents can match the message or concept to the brand, the extent to which respondents have favourable opinions of the brand and the likelihood of respondents considering purchasing the service of a brand. A few open ended questions were asked as a way to examine unaided recall, thus showing the top of the mind awareness of a brand. In addition, the questions examined the level of the respondent's familiarity with CSR activities and their level of familiarity with a brand as a result of CSR activities.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed to the various respondents at their shops. It was felt easy and convenient for the researcher to reach the various classes of customers. Customers usually walk-in customer service points to address issues of grievances, and product challenges etc. It is at this point that the researcher approaches some of them. They are asked to spare a moment of their time so that

they can be taking through the questionnaires to give their views on the subject matter on voluntary purposes. Some volunteered whilst others refused to join in the research and walked away.

The researcher also seeks permission from some management staff of the company and an in-depth interview was conducted with such persons.

3.8. Data Analysis Methods

SPSS, a research analysis tool was used to analyze the results for this research. With the help of this tool, data was presented as proportions (%), Bar chart, pie chart was used to compare and analyze the responses to some of the questions asked.

3.9. Reliability and Validity

Yin 1994 states that the efficiency and effectiveness of data collection relies on the careful planning of the researcher to adequately contain the difficulties with collecting data from an uncontrolled environment. For the establishment of validity, Walsham (1995) indicates that the researcher should present a coherent, persuasively argued point of view to readers by describing in detail how research results were arrived at. The credibility therefore can be achieved regardless of the researcher's philosophical perspective or choice of research methods. Based on this viewpoint, the validity and reliability of this study will be based on the level of objectivity with which data is collected and analyzed. It will also be based on the correct use of the prescribed research design and methodology.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

It is essential to gain the permission of people in authority to provide access to participants in a study (Creswell, 2003; Bryman, 2000). In order for the researcher to have access to the respondents, the representatives will be notified of the purpose and duration of this study in order to gain entry into the community. Moreover, informed consent of study participants is very important in research (Bryman, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Osuola, 2001; Yin, 2003). To do this, the nature and purpose of the research will be explained to respondents prior to interviews. Respondents who are selected will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that no one should grant the interview against his or her will. The respondents will also be informed that they are free to end their involvement at any time during the study. Furthermore, the anonymity of research participants will be guaranteed through the assigning of pseudonyms to respondents in the research report. Keeping data secured and using it only for the purpose for which it would be collected will ensure confidentiality. The research will be conducted in line with the guidelines of the academic community to which the researcher belongs.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.0. Introductions

The fourth chapter of the study presents the background analysis of data and proceeds to present the results and its interpretation in the light of the research objectives in the same sequence as listed in chapter one. The chapter continues by linking the findings of the study to the literature reviewed in chapter two. This chapter has been divided into sections. Section A examines the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents; Section B identifies the CSR activities of Alsale service. Section C analyzes the awareness level of customers about CSR of Alsale Services; and Section D addresses how CSR create brand equity for Alsale services. The uses of tables are employed to give more meaning to the findings and the analysis. All the data in this section are primary source (that is first-hand information) gathered by the researcher.

4.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

The behavior and perception of people are to large extent influenced by their socio-demographic background. This statement reinforces the widespread contention of sociological models noted by Mainoo (2011) that people emanate from and are influenced by their background. Therefore, the researcher decided to give credence to the socio-demographic features of the respondents. These include age, sex, how long respondents have known the company and the feedback from the product usage. These features were considered in order to give the researcher an insight into different people's take on the activities of CSR.

4.1.1. Sex Distribution of Respondents

The statistics shown in table 1 below indicates that (65%) of respondents were males as against (35%) of females. These percentages were gotten from 39 males and 21 females respectively. This would make the study devoid of gender inequality. Therefore, sex of respondent was useful as the researcher was able to know the gender balance so as to make constructive analysis devoid of gender disparity. Though the females were relatively small it was significant since the popular local assertion that women's abode is the kitchen is refuted. This is because 21 women arguable is a justifiably significant number to make a claim.

4.1.2. Age Distribution of Respondents

The table 1 below illustrates the data collected from the field and the respondents who participated in the survey and responded to issues raised had majority of them thus 28 (46.7%) between the age range of 36-45 years staff, this was followed closely by those who were between 46-55 years forming 13 (21.7%). Also, 10 (16.7%) were 55 years and lastly 9 (15%) were between the age ranges of 25-35 years. The age of respondents helped the researcher to differentiate between the different categories of respondents. Moreover, the

majority of the respondents dominated by 36-45 years signifies that there quite matured people in the organization and therefore decision-making is done effectively. That is if we believe in the school of thought that, old age corresponds with maturity.

4.2. The Awareness Level of Customers about CSR of Alsale Services

This objective delved into finding out whether respondents are familiar with Alsale as an institution. The variable considered included respondents knowledge of the company and the length of time participants have used their company's product

4.2.1. Respondents' Knowledge of the Company

Yet another significant feature of the respondents the study explored was how long they (respondents) have known the company. Significantly, 25 (46.7%) respondents emphasized that the organization has been in existence between (4-6) years. closely followed by this revelation is 14 (23.3%) who identified that the organization had been in existence for between (1-3) years. Participants who indicated that they had known the company for less than a year and between (7-10) years were 9 (15%) and 12 (20%) respectively. Convincingly, for majority of the respondents to indicate that the organization has been in existence for (4-6) years implies that it is a credible entity and it is ready to operate as a corporate institution.

4.2.2. How Long Respondents have been using the Product

The study explored how long the respondents have used the product of Alsale. Interestingly, 27 (45%) affirmed that they have used the product for 4-6 years. Next to that, 22 (36.7%) confirmed that they have used the product for 1-3 years. The least years users 11(18.3%)of the product have used it is less than a year. A whopping majority indicating that they have used the product for (4-6) affirms that the product is quality and has therefore come to stay.

		N	%
Gender	Female	21	35.0
	Male	39	65.0
	Total	60	100.0
Age group	25-35	9	15.0
	> 55	10	16.7
	46-55	13	21.7
	36-45	28	46.7
	Total	60	100.0
How long have known the company	less than a year	9	15.0
	7-10years	12	20.0
	1-3years	14	23.3
	4-6years	25	41.7
	Total	60	100.0
How long have been using the product	less than a year	11	18.3
	1-3years	22	36.7
	4-6years	27	45.0
	Total	60	100.0

Table 1: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Source: Field Data, 2015

4.3. The Cooperate Social Responsibility Activities at Alsale Services

4.3.1. Employee Variables explaining the CSR activities

This objective unearths the special activities of Alsale services from the perspective of cooperate social responsibility. In trying to find out whether Alsale supports employees who want to acquire additional education, the study identified 35 (58%) who expressed their agreement that the company indeed support employees' educational pursuit. However, 12 (20%) respondents disagreed to that notion while 13 (21.7%) strangely averred their neutrality. The majority of the respondents affirming that the educational pursuits of the employees is a concern of (Alsale) reinforces Brand (2009), the product image, environmental image, social image, staff image (education) and performance image are characteristics of organization that ensures effective corporate social responsibility (CSR)

In addition, the study sought to explore in-depth information regarding employees career development which is a function of cooperate social responsibility. Impressively, a majority of 35 (75%) averred that the company's policies encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers. Conversely, only 5 (8.3%) participants disputed this notion while 10 (16.7%) remained mute over this

assertion. Once again, with the majority of the respondents affirming their support for this assertion, Brand (2009) is highlighted in this context as he advance that company's policies encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers.

Succinctly, the study further explored how the company's policies are flexible to provide good work-life balance for employees. The study realized 35 (58.3%) respondents who indicated that Alsale have flexible policies that address employees' welfare. However, 18 (30%) refuted this assertion that there exist a policy that address employees' welfare. Interestingly, 7 (11.7%) belonged to either side. For respondents from the same organization to have divergent opinions as to the existence of a particular welfare policy indicates that the policy requires enforcement and efficient implementation.

Concerning the managerial functions of corporate social responsibility, it was identified that 52 (87.7%) were in support of the fact that management of the company is primarily concerned with employees need and wants. Conversely, 3 (5%) and 5 (8.3%) flatly denied this phenomenon respectively. It is quite surprising to observe such a scenario. This could be attributed to individual character differences since the difference is insignificant. Yet again, it was identified that the managerial decision regarding the welfare of the employees are always favourable. Statistically, 55 (91.6%) convincingly intimated their agreement to that assertion. That notwithstanding, 2 (3.3%) and 1 (1.7%) denied categorically that they are not in tune with management decision about employee's welfare.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
• This company supports employees who want to acquire additional education	1 (1.7)	11 (18.3)	13 (21.7)	26 (43.3)	9 (15.0)
• This company's policies encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers	2 (3.3)	3 (5.0)	10 (16.7)	32 (53.3)	13 (21.7)
• This company has flexible policies to provide good work-life balance for employees	11 (18.3)	7 (11.7)	7 (11.7)	14 (23.3)	21 (35.0)
• The management of the company is primarily concerned with employees need and wants	- -	3 (5.0)	5 (8.3)	24 (40.0)	28 (46.7)
• The managerial decisions related with the employees are usually fair	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	2 (3.3)	32 (53.3)	23 (38.3)

Table 2: Employee Variables explaining the CSR activities
Source: Field Data, 2015

4.3.2. CSR Ethical Issues in Alsale

The ethical issues regarding corporate social responsibility were explored in-depth and the statistics on the table below present the findings of the respondents' remarks. As to whether the company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers, 37 (61.7%) averred that indeed the company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers. In contradiction, 21 (31.7%) were divergent in opinion to that effect while 4 (6.7%) were unconcerned about the issue. Considering the rights of consumers, which is a key ethical feature in corporate social responsibility, majority of 37 (61.7%) respondents intimated that Alsale Company respects consumers' rights beyond the legal requirements. However, a significant 19 (31.7%) respondents disproved this ethical practice as non-characteristic of the Alsale Company while 4 (6.7%) were fair in their response.

Consumer satisfaction is paramount in every organization. If an organization satisfy the interest of its consumers, it breeds higher demand for that product and by so doing achieve competitive advantage. This study sought to identify the extent to which Alsale care about its consumers. Impressively, 32 (53.4%) of the respondents affirmed their agreement to the fact that, Customer satisfaction is highly important for this company. That notwithstanding, 10 (16.7%) respondents averred their disagreement to that effect while surprisingly, 18 (30%) half way more than the majority respondents were fair to this assertion. According to Dawkins (2004) CSR is a consistency of firms to act ethically, increasing economic development, and improvement in the lives of their workforce and their families and playing a role in the development of the society. This solidly affirms the majority response of this assertion. It was also realized that the company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers. This was statistically revealed by 37 (61.7%) respondents. however, 22 (36.6%) opposed the existence of such ethic while insignificantly only 1 (1.7%) was neutral to the response of that ethic.

Once again, the study identified that Alsale Company emphasizes the importance of its social responsibilities to society. Emphatically, 40 (66.7%) intimated that indeed there exists effective communication between the company and its customers. Inconsistently, 16 (21.7%) were divergent about existence of this ethic in the company while 4 (6.7%) were neutral.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
• This company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers	4 (6.7)	15 (25.0)	4 (6.7%)	33 (55.0)	4 (6.7)
• This company respects consumer rights beyond the legal requirements	4 (6.7)	15 (25.0)	4 (6.7)	33 (55.0)	4 (6.7)
• Customer satisfaction is highly important for this company	4 (6.7)	6 (10.0)	18 (30.0)	28 (46.7)	4 (6.7)
• This company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers	20 (33.3)	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	33 (55.0)	4 (6.7)
• This company emphasizes the importance of its social responsibilities to society	4 (6.7)	12 (25.0)	4 (6.7)	36 (60.0)	4 (6.7)

Table 3: Ethical Variables explaining the CSR activities
Source: Field Data, 2015

4.3.3 CSR legal Practices in Alsale

Legally, there are principles an institution has to adhere to if the company is purposed to ensuring corporation social responsibilities in the society. The study explored the activities of Alsale regarding the legal practices in ensuring corporate social responsibility. Indisputably, the table 7 below gives the statistical findings of the responses of the study. An overwhelming majority 26 (43.3%) of the respondents indicated that they were uncertain as to whether as part of the legal conditions of Alsale Company mandate them (Alsale) to create employment opportunities. Strangely, 25 (41.7%) also averred their disagreement to the assertion that the company endeavours to create employment opportunities company endeavours to create employment opportunities. This according to Jones (2003), is out of place since the community's benefits comprises of employing the inhabitants. The reliability of the Alsale product was sought for to establish quality of the product from the company. Impressively, 36 (60%) pointed out that their product was reliable.

One is tempted to ask whether for the first time one would give a bad account of himself. The point being made is that since the respondents double as the employees of the company; there was no way they could give a bad account of their products. A strong defense could be advanced that since the initial discussion identified the respondents as consumers of the product, it is equally not bias if the employees adduce that the product is quality and for that matter very reliable.

The study again sought to find out the features of the products offered by Alsale Company. Interestingly, majority 50 (83.3%) of the respondents indicated that their product is of good quality. Again majority of 47 (78%) indicated that Alsale is a credible company and 13 (22%) refuted this assumption. Just as customer satisfaction is a priority in almost every organization Alsale is no exception. Majority 32 (53.4%) of the respondents adduced that customer satisfaction is highly important for the company while a minority of 28 (21.7%) indicated otherwise.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N(%)	N (%)	N(%)	N %	N %
• This company endeavours to create employment opportunities	- -	25 (41.7)	26 (43.3)	6 (10.0)	3 (5.0)
• The Alsale brand is very reliable	10 (16.7)	8 (13.3)	6 (10.0)	36 (60.0)	- -
• The Alsale brand has good quality features	3 (5.0)	4 (6.7)	3 (5.0)	3 (5.0)	47 (78.3)
• Alsale is a credible company	5 (8.3)	7 (11.7)	1 (1.7)	18 (30.0)	29 (48.3)
• Customer satisfaction is highly important for this company	4 (6.7)	6 (10.0)	18 (30.0)	28 (46.7)	4 (6.7)

Table 4: Legal Variables explaining the CSR activities
Source: Field Data, 2015

4.3.4. The Economic Indicators of CSR in Alsale

Assessing the economic issues of corporate social responsibilities in Alsale Services, majority (61.7%) of the respondents indicated that the company has implemented special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment. Again, it was discovered that Alsale has participated in activities that aimed to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.

Nonetheless, quite a number of the respondents refuted these assertions that Alsale has to put in place special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment and has been participating in activities aimed to protect the quality of the natural environment. The study delved into finding out whether Alsale has made investment to create a better life for future generations. An overwhelming 47 (78.3%) respondents admitted that Alsale has made investments that seek to better the life of future generations. However, 12(20%) of the respondents said that Alsale has not made such investment to create a better life for future generations, while 1 (1.7%) remain neutral to the assertion. The table 5 below presents the economic variables that explain the CSR activities in Alsale Services.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
• This company implements special programs to minimize its negative impact on the natural environment	20 33.3	2 3.3	1 1.7	33 55.0	4 6.7
• This company participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment	4 6.7	15 25.0	4 6.7	33 55.0	4 6.7
• This company targets sustainable growth which considers future generations	3 5.0	4 6.7	3 5.0	3 5.0	47 78.3
• This company makes investment to create a better life for future generations	5 8.3	7 11.7	1 1.7	18 30.0	29 48.3

Table 5: Economic Variables explaining the CSR activities
Source: Field Data, 2015

4.4. The CSR Brand Equity for Alsale Services

4.4.1. Brand Equity Elements in Alsale

Brand is of distinct fascination to firms. To numerous marketing researchers like Aaker (1991, 1996), Mudambi et al.,(1997), Srivastava and Shocker (1991), "Brand Equity is a considered set of assets and liabilities linked to a company's brand name and symbol that either augments or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a company's customers". This means that if corporate social responsibility is understood to be core competencies, which strengthen intangible and temporarily inimitable assets such as integrity, credibility, reputation, and human or social capital, it enables companies to create innovation, develop new markets, clearly differentiate themselves from competitors, or influence the competitive environment to their benefit when it becomes an integral element of a company's strategy. It is thus important that CSR is observed from the perspective of successful brands (Deigendesch, 2009). The table 6 gives an even representation of variables brand assume that had better clarify the CSR exercises completed by Alsale to its appreciated clients.

The study asked if Alsale offers a product with a constant quality level. Slightly higher than half (56.7%) of the respondents gave indication that Alsale offered them a product with a constant quality level with 21.7% disclosing disagree. However, 20% of them stayed neutral. Majority (60%) of respondents agreed that Alsale has been helping to solve any problem they do have with the product. In contrast, 13.3% and 16.7% respectively disagree and strongly disagree. Most respondents (61.7%) indicated that Alsale values its customers, since their satisfaction with the product is very important in ensuring continuous existence of Alsale. The result confirms the position of Ding (2007) that brand reputation is one of the brand powers, meaning the degree of customer's satisfaction and trust for the brand. Also, majority of respondents (83.3%) agreed to the notion that Alsale often recommends and advises them on how they can make utmost use of its products where as 11.7%disagreed.However,5%stayedneutral.In addition to the above, it was realized that Alsale offered new products to meet their customers' needs, even though a few proportion of the respondents expressed their disagreement to such assertion.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N %	N %
• Alsale will offer me a product with a constant quality level	1 1.7	13 21.7	12 20.0	24 40.0	10 16.7
• Alsale will help me solve any problem I could have with the product	10 16.7	8 13.3	6 10.0	36 60.0	0 0.0
• Alsale will be interested in my satisfaction	20 33.3	2 3.3	1 1.7	33 55.0	4 6.7
• Alsale will value me as a consumer of its products	4 6.7	15 25.0	4 6.7	33 55.0	4 6.7
• Alsale will offer me recommendations and advice on how to make the most of its products	3 5.0	4 6.7	3 5.0	3 5.0	47 78.3
• Alsale will offer me new products I may need	5 8.3	7 11.7	1 1.7	18 30.0	29 48.3

Table 6 : Variables of Brand Trust explaining the CSR activities Source: Field Data, 2015

4.4.2. Dimension of Customer-Based Brand Equity

Customer-Based Brand Equity, according to Aaker (1991) has to do with the strength a brand gains or loses based on what value perceptions resides in customers' minds. This value is adapted from what customers have felt, learned, seen, or heard about a brand as a result of their experiences over time (Aaker 1991; Vázquez et al., 2002). Characteristic dimensions of Customer-Based Brand Equity are, for instance, brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Yoo and Donthu, 1997). This analysis was done to examine how CSR efforts of Alsale have impacted higher customer-based brand equity. The table 7 shows the various dimensions of brand equity resulting from the CSR efforts of Alsale.

In the course of the study, most respondents indicated that they could recall the Alsale brand and found the Alsale brand very reliable. This was not unanimous as a small section of the respondents could not recall the Alsale brand and as such did not find the brand very reliable. In responding to the statement that the Alsale brand has good quality features. Most respondents (83.3%) strongly agreed that the Alsale brand has good quality features with 11.7% of them disclosing their disagreement to this notion. However, 5% of the respondents remained unconcerned to whether the Alsale brand has good features or not.

Although, majority of the respondents stayed neutral to the issue of their attachment and loyalty to the Alsale brand, the study however found that the respondents would recommend the brand to prospective customers at all times. The study further asked if the company's responsibilities affect the customers' purchase decisions. Majority (60%) of the respondents were not interested in disclosing their position on the issue with 36.7% agreed, whereas 3.3% disagreed. An increase in the firm's wealth is the responsibility of firm's agents that is entrusted by its shareholders (Coelho et al., 2003). On this premise, the study inquired whether the company communicates its activities and engagements to its stakeholders or otherwise. Majority of the respondents (55%) agreed that Alsale communicates its activities and engagements to its shareholders and 26.7% strongly agreed. On the contrary, 11.7% and 3.3% respectively disagree and strongly disagree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
	N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
• I can easily recall the Alsale brand	1 1.7	13 21.7	12 20.0	24 40.0	10 16.7
• The Alsale brand is very reliable	10 16.7	8 13.3	6 10.0	36 60.0	0 0.0
• The Alsale brand has good quality features	3 5.0	4 6.7	3 5.0	3 5.0	47 78.3
• Alsale is a credible and reliable company	5 8.3	7 11.7	1 1.7	18 30.0	29 48.3
• I will recommend the brand to prospective customers at all time	0 0.0	5 8.3	4 6.7	50 83.3	1 1.7
• I am loyal to the brand	15 25.0	3 5.0	23 38.3	15 25.0	4 6.7
• I am very much attached to the brand	13 21.7	9 15.0	19 31.7	13 21.7	6 10.0
• The company's responsibilities affects my purchase decisions	0 0.0	2 3.3	36 60.0	21 35.0	1 1.7
• The company communicates its activities and engagements to the stakeholders	2 3.3	7 11.7	2 3.3	33 55.0	16 26.7
• I will place the Alsale brand on top of other brands	18 30.0	18 30.0	11 18.3	7 11.7	6 10.0

Table 7: Dimensions of brand equity explaining the CSR activities

Source: Field Data, 2015

4.5. The Relationship between CSR and Brand Equity

The table 8 below explains the relationship between cooperate social responsibility and brand equity. The table indicates that there is a strong relationship ($r = .461$; $P < 0.01$) between brand equity and employee welfare, which is a characteristic of corporate social responsibility. The relationship is also significantly positive indicating that as an organization attends to its employee's welfare, it will also increase its social responsibility process. The table 8 also portrays a positive significant relationship ($r = .420$) between brand equity and ethical issues of corporate social responsibility and the relationship is noted to be significant at ($P < 0.01$). This implies that the organization, which enhances its legal attributes also, will improve its brand equity.

Again, a weak positive insignificant relationship ($r = .014$; $P > 0.01$) is observed between brand equity and the legal attributes of corporate social responsibility. This implies that though there exist a relationship between brand equity and legal attributes of CSR, the relationship is non-significant. So as the legal attributes of CSR is enhanced the corresponding increase in brand equity is very marginal and insignificant. A moderately significant positive relationship ($r = .352$; $P < 0.01$) exists between the economic attributes of corporate social responsibility and brand equity. This implies that as an organization strives in enhancing its economic operations, there is a corresponding marginal improvement in its brand equity. Last but not the least, the sort of relationship that exist between

that exist between brand equity and brand trust. This is quite interesting because as it is observed empirically, there is always a strong positive relationship between the two variables but this study proves otherwise. The relationship is again not significant ($P > 0.01$).

	1. Employee	2. Ethical	3. Legal CSR	4. Economic CSR	5. Brand Trust	6. Brand Equity
1	1.000					
2	.650**	1.000				
3	.457**	.459**	1.000			
4	.130	.230	.085	1.000		
5	.242	.416**	.471**	.063	1.000	
6	.461**	.420**	.014	.352**	.146	1.000

Table 8: Correlation Matrix establishing the relationship between CSR and brand equity

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section summarizes the major findings collected from the field in relation to the research questions or objectives in the same sequence as listed in chapter one. The second section focuses on the conclusion of the study and the final section looks at recommendations thought up by the researcher.

5.2. Summary of Major Findings

The summary of findings of the study is presented per the objective of the study as follows;

5.1.1. Background of the Respondents

The gender distribution of the study revealed more males than females. The study revealed that though the females were relatively small it was significant since the popular local assertion that women's abode is the kitchen is refuted. The dominant age of the respondents was between the ages of (36-45) which implied that there were matured people in the organization and therefore decision-making is done effectively. That is if we believe in the school of thought that, old age corresponds with maturity.

5.1.2. The Awareness level of Customers about CSR of Alsale Services

Significantly, majority of the respondents emphasized that the organization has been in existence between (4-6) years. While minority participants indicated that they had known the company for less than a year. Convincingly, for majority of the respondents to indicate that the organization has been in existence for (4-6) years implies that it is a credible entity and it is ready to operate as a corporate institution. The study discovered that majority of the respondents had used the product for used the product for between 4-6 years while the least years users 11(18.3%) of the product have used it is less than a year.

5.1.3. CSR Activities of Alsale Services

The study revealed that all the indicators explaining corporate social responsibility from the perspective of the customers apparently indicated that Alsale Services Limited as a IT Solutions company satisfies its numerous corporate social responsibilities despite the few respondents who indicated the contrary and neutral respectively.

5.1.4. Impact of CSR Efforts on Brand Equity

At the end of the study, it was realised that most respondents adduced to the assertion that Alsale offered them a product with a constant quality level, and often attempted to solve any problem they do have with the product. Alsale is very interested in the satisfaction of its customers. As a result of this, majority of the respondents felt highly valued by Alsale. To many respondents, Alsale Service recommends and advises them on how to make the best use of its products. Further, the study examined the relationship between corporate social responsibility and brand equity of Alsale Service. It was therefore evident in the research findings that all the various forms of CSR were positively correlated with brand equity of Alsale Services. It was established that employee's welfare, ethical and economic issues of corporate social responsibilities have significant positive correlation with brand equity, whereas legal issues of CSR and brand trust were insignificant and positively correlated to brand equity of Alsale Services.

5.3. Conclusions

It is obvious from the findings of the study that corporate social responsibility is inherent in Alsale Company. The study can conclude that gender equity is practised in Alsale. The product offered by Alsale product is patronized by majority of its employees and have used the product for several years.

Again, the study concludes on the awareness of level of Customers about CSR of Alsale Services. The majority of the respondents indicated is aware of the product and hence have used the product for years. This implies that the product has received public

acceptance and therefore has come to stay. However, the study put forward that though this revelation is coming from the employees who double as respondents of study, the element of bias does not affect the precision of this finding.

The types of CSR activities of Alsale services were explored to unearth the legal, ethical, and economic and employee dimensions of enhancing CSR. The employee variables of Alsale identifying the company as practicing CSR wholly indicate that indeed the company factors the welfare of its employees in the execution of its CSR functions. Particularly, the study concludes that the company supports employees to advance in education. Again, it was realized that the company urge employees to develop both skills to enhance their carriers. This, the study can affirm is in the right direction since when employees have the required skill will work effectively. The study moreover, established that Alsale is endowed with flexible policies to provide good work-life balance for its employees. The study concludes that since the employees attested to the fact that they (employees) are treated well, they will continue to work with Alsale. The management of the company is primarily concerned with the needs and wants of the employees. Moreover, managerial decisions are fair in relation with employees.

The ethical dimensions indicating CSR in Alsale affirms that the company provides full and accurate information about its products to consumers, respects consumer rights beyond the legal requirements, makes customer satisfaction their priority, provides full and accurate information about its products to consumers and highlight the importance of its social responsibilities to society.

Consequently, the study's conclusion on the legal dimensions of CSR in Alsale presented quite encouraging results. The conclusion made is that the company ensures that it creates employment opportunities for the society as part of its corporate social responsibilities. Reliability of Alsale brand is a key task of the company and always endeavors to present quality product to the market. Credibility of every organization is an added advantage and a key to remain in business. The findings of the study present Alsale as a very credible organization hence dealing with the company is harmless.

5.4. Recommendations

From the above findings and discussion, it is of significance that we present practical implications to the sector. The study therefore makes some recommendations to Alsale and to the IT Solutions industry practitioners in general. This will improve the services that the sector provides to the general Ghanaian society.

5.4.1. Recommendations Based on the Research Findings

The study revealed that all the indicators explaining corporate social responsibility from the perspective of the customers apparently indicated that Alsale Services Limited as a IT Solutions company satisfies its numerous corporate social responsibilities despite the few respondents who indicated the contrary and neutral respectively. It is therefore suggested that companies should incorporate CSR in their business strategy and strategic decision-making processes, as well as the alignment in a company's operating functions, since it can play an important role in a company's success.

Managers should also be cognizant that some CSR activities might only lead to a low value creation for consumers if they only pertain to an expected normal level in that business or industry. As stated previously, customers often expect a certain level of socially and environmentally responsible behavior of companies, and as a result, not being involved in such activities can lead to adverse consequences for the company. Customers' expectations might also differ, for example, based on the customer group itself or the industry of the company.

The study as part of its findings identified a significant positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and brand equity. It is therefore recommended to entire IT Solution industry that the approach to enhance brand equity is to attach great importance to corporate social responsibility; thus industry players have to serve their customers well and the community within which they operate and by so doing the brand equity of the organization will be improved.

5.4.2. Recommendations for Further Studies

The results of this study provided support to the previous propositions and findings that concluded that corporate social responsibility has significant positive impact on brand equity. Future research should therefore focus on the relationships between corporate social responsibilities and brand equity in general, not specific industrial company. Again, since corporate social responsibility helps to create brand equity, it is suggested that future research should be centered on how an organization can manage its brand equity.

6. Dedication

I humbly dedicate this work to my family whose support cannot be emphasized. This work also goes to my friends and to you Dr. Henry Mensah I say thank you for your positive influence.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am an MBA student from KNUST conducting a research on the topic “The Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Equity. The research is for academic purposes and therefore confidentiality of information provided is guaranteed. Please take few minutes of your time to respond to the following questions.

Thank you for your time.

1. Section A: Demographic Characteristics

- i. Sex Male [] Female []
- ii. Age
- iii. How long have known the company?
- iv. How long have been using the product?

2. Section B: Work-Family Challenges

Given below are number of statements on the study .Please read them carefully and indicate the appropriate response by ticking the appropriate option in each statement where

SA = Strongly Agree, D = Disagree, F = Fair, A = Agree And Sd = Strongly Disagree,

Employee Variables		Sd	a	f	d	sa
1	This company supports employees who want to acquire additional education					
2	This company's policies encourage the employees to develop their skills and careers					
3	This company has flexible policies to provide good work-life balance for employees					
4	The management of the company is primarily concerned with employees need and wants					
5	The managerial decisions related with the employees are usually fair					
Ethical Variables						
6	This company provides full and accurate information about its product to consumers					
7	This company respects consumer rights beyond the legal requirements					
8	Customer satisfaction is highly important for this company					
9	This company emphasizes the importance of its social responsibilities to society					
10	This company contributes to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of the society					
Legal Variables						
1	This company endeavours to create employment opportunities					
2	This company always pays its taxes on a regular and continuing basis					
3	This company complies with legal regulations safely and promptly					
4	This company would co-operate with its competitors on social responsibility projects					
5	This company avoids unfair competition					
Economic Variables						
1	This company implements special programs to minimise its negative impact on the natural environment					
2	This company participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment					
3	This company targets sustainable growth which considers future generations					
4	This company makes investment to create a better life for future generations					
Brand Trust						
1	Alsale will offer me a product with a constant quality level					
2	Alsale will help me solve any problem I could have with the product					
3	Alsale will be interested in my satisfaction					
4	Alsale will value me as a consumer of its products					
5	Alsale will offer me recommendations and advice on how to make the most of its products					
6	Alsale will offer me new products I may need					
Dimensions of brand equity						
1	I can easily recall the Alsale brand					
2	The Alsale brand is very reliable					
3	The Alsale brand has good quality features					
4	Alsale is a credible and reliable company					
5	I will recommend the brand to prospective customers at all time					
6	I am loyal to the brand					
7	I am very much attached to the brand					
8	The company's responsibilities affects my purchase decisions					
9	The company communicates its activities and engagements to the stakeholders					
10	I will place the Alsale brand on top of other brands					