

Consumers' Perception towards Corporate Social Responsibility and Repurchase Intention: A Study of Consumer Industry in Vietnam

QuyVo Thi*

Head of Finance and Banking Department, International University (IU), Vietnam National University HCMC,
HCM City, Vietnam

Phung Le Van

Director of Phu Long TSCCompany, HCM City, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a critical factor influencing customers' buying intention. The study conducted aims to explore the relationship between customers' perception towards CSR and their repurchase intention. The data was collected by using survey questionnaires from 320 individual customers living in Ho Chi Minh City and processed in SPSS software. The research results showed that among CSR components, economic and charitable responsibilities have a positive impact on Vietnamese customers' repurchase intention at the significance level of 1% and the two other factors at 10%. The findings assume that CSR components have become factors explaining customers' repurchase intention, especially for consumer goods, and firms should enforce their corporate social responsibility to capture customers' repurchase intention and in turn increase their customers' loyalty.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR), Repurchase Intention, Consumer Goods, Vietnamese Customers

* Corresponding Author, E-mail: vtquy@hcmiu.edu.vn

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, we have experienced changing in customer's behavior; "green consumption" is the primary trend of consumption around the world. Not only do consumers desire using high quality products but also they crave for safe and friendly products which are produced by a highly reputable and responsible company. Environmental problems become social problems (Firman, 1991). 1990s was called as "Earth decade" (McDaniel and Rylander, 1993) or "Environmental decade" (McDougall, 1993). Several studies also indicated the concerning to individual environment (Chan, 1996; Donaton and Fitzgerald, 1992; Kerr, 1990; Ottman, 1993; Schlossberg, 1992; Wall, 1995) and awareness towards

consumer environment (Ellen, Wiener and Cobb-Walgren, 1991; Kim and Choi, 2005; Verhoef, 2005) affecting positively to purchasing intention of consumers.

In Vietnam, although the concept of Corporate Social Responsibilities is still fresh one, activities of consuming corporations and reactions of consumer in recent years have reflexed that the term Corporate Social Responsibilities is an issue getting a lot of attention from communities. The "The Corporate Social Responsibilities Award" is organized annually to appreciate corporations which perform well Corporate Social Responsibilities. Besides, customers are willing to boycott corporations because of violating Corporate Social Responsibilities. For instance, Vedan's products and Coca-Cola Vietnam are stayed away by consumers due to polluting

Thi Vai River and transferring price incidentally during a decade to avoid paying governmental tax, respectively. Therefore, based on the trend of consuming “cleaning and green”, whether the perception of consumers impact to their purchasing intention or not? Hence, this research is conducted to investigate the relationship between the perception of consumer’s purchasing intention on Corporate Social Responsibilities in consuming industry and repurchasing intention of consumers in Vietnam. The purpose of the study is to find out valuable applications for managers to support their planning strategies and marketing campaigns that are suitable for trending clean and green consuming.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

There are several definitions for the term “Corporate Social Responsibilities.” According to the European Commission (2002), the meaning of Corporate Social Responsibilities is a corporation combines environmental and social elements during operational activities and the interaction with related parties based on the voluntariness. The World Bank defines “Corporate Social Responsibilities” as corporations’ commitments contribute to the sustainable development of economy, labors and their families, local communities and societies. Moreover, corporations also improves standard of living, which is useful for business operations as well as general developments. Corporations need taking responsibilities for not only their shareholders but also related parties (Van Marrewijk, 2003). The related parties are organizations or individuals affecting or being affected by corporations’ objectives (Freeman, 1984).

Recently, Corporate Social Responsibilities’ point of view has been inherited and supported. A corporation is a part of a society in which the corporation is running. Furthermore, corporations’ activities influence on societies. Therefore, it should be responsible for its impacts to societies. Firms should meet and adapt the requirements from the society (Marrewijk, 2003: 97). Corporations performing well as Marrewijk defines are considered as “Good organizational Citizen” (Waddock, 2004; Nielsen and Thomsen, 2007: 28). Mohr and partners (2005) specifically explained that Corporate Social Responsibilities mean the commitment of corporations to minimize or eliminate negative impacts and maximize its benefits to society. A business organization must behave ethically, support to non-profit organizations, have equal behavior and lessen almost environmental influences. Generally, Corporate Social Responsibilities are corporations’ responsibilities in contribution to the sustainable development of economy, environmental protection and developing human resources as two main patterns for society. Therefore, the approaching target and corporate responsibilities are included not only quantity, profit and customers. Business organization is accountable to all its own business operations in an area

or a specific location as well as expressing its contribution as a part of the community.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility Components

In fact, Corporate Social Responsibilities’ activities perform through campaigns and activities that firms carry out, for example, philanthropic contributions for society, especially environmental protections, equal genders, improving working conditions, protecting employee’s benefits, developing qualifications and communities (CA TALYST Consortium, 2002; Pohle and Hittner, 2008; Cacioppe *et al.*, 2008). However, different firms in different economies and different countries exhibit dissimilarly point of views from acknowledging and performing corporate social responsibilities (Bùi, 2008). There are several opinions on contents and obligations of corporate are responsibilities but they are not the same.

The concept Corporate Social Responsibilities is a wide definition. According to Archie Carroll (1979), Corporate Social Responsibilities present based on 4 components: Economic Responsibilities, Legal Responsibilities, Ethical Responsibilities, and Philanthropic Responsibilities. Bùi (2010) researched components of corporate social responsibilities in Vietnam. The results indicate that consumers also pay more attention to Economic Responsibilities, Philanthropic Responsibilities and Legal Responsibilities; however, customers in Vietnam are concerned with Environmental Protection Responsibilities instead of Ethical Responsibilities as Archie Carroll mentioned.

2.2 Repurchase Intention

According to Ajzen (2002b), intention is a signal of an individual are willing to continue performing particular behavior considered as a background affecting directly to behavior. That is based on subjective criteria. Keller (2001) defined repurchase intention as consumers carry on buying a product or service when it is useful. Samin *et al.* (2012) also explained that intention is a motivation of someone when he or she wants to perform his or her behavior. Repurchase intention is also defined as something customers think they are going to purchase (Park, quoted in Samin *et al.*, 2012). Dodds and colleagues (1991) supposed that repurchase intention representatives for the consumers’ probability of maintain buying a product. Long and Ching (2010) summarized repurchase intention stands for which clients keep on purchasing in the long-term.

• *Influences of corporate social responsibilities on consumers’ repurchase intention*

The relationship between Corporate Social Responsibilities’ behaviors with perception, attitude and repurchase intention of consumers is conducted on recent researches. Hartmann *et al.* (2013) concluded that corporate social responsibilities’ activities affect to consumers

and their repurchase intention. A millennium survey was conducted on 25,000 respondents in 23 countries. Mori (2000) indicated components, impacting to consumers' perspective to a corporation, involve in corporation's behavior towards labors, social commitments, ethical business, environment and they relate to corporate social responsibilities. Recently, global study as Nielsen (2008) or national studies Landor and Burson Marsteller (2009); program Do Well Do Good (2010a, 2010b) in America; Dawkins (2009) in British; Icon (2010) and Sempora (2008) having been expressing that most of consumers concern with how business organizations perform their corporate social responsibilities. Besides, customers also consider corporate social responsibilities of a firm before consuming. Furthermore, purchasers are willing to be charged at higher price for products that meet corporate social responsibility's requirements and are friendly with the environment (Sempora, 2008; Seven One Media, 2009; DLG, 2010). The result in censuses and explorations showed that how much consumers are interested in corporate social responsibilities and how these responsibilities influence on purchasing of clients (Smith, 2009; Mohr *et al.* (2001).

Other researches explained that besides positive impacts (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2001; Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2006), activities of corporate social responsibilities still affect to consumers' belief, attitude and purchase intention negatively since customers think these activities aim to increasing profits or the level of performing corporate social responsibilities is low (Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2006). In addition, the study of Becker-Olsen *et al.* (2006) also proved that consumers are more sensitive with adverse corporate social responsibilities' information rather than positive facts (Creyer and Ross, 1996; Folkes and Kamins, 1999; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2001; Klein and Dawar, 2004; Mohr and Webb, 2005).

According to Klein and Dawar (2004) and Eisingerich *et al.* (2011) corporate social responsibilities can support corporations to build-up reputation. When a business organization performs well corporate social responsibilities, negative notifications can be reduced. On the contrary, a disreputable firm would bear a burden when experiencing crisis.

In conclusion, there is a significant correlation between corporate social responsibilities and perception, attitude and purchase intention of consumers. Customers' feeling about corporate social responsibilities affect strongly to their attitude as well as behavior. Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003) investigated that relating parties evaluate corporate social responsibilities' strategies based on their own priority, value and characteristics. Green and Pelozo (2011) assumed that consumers commonly appraise corporate social responsibilities' if they relate to their benefits. In other words, customers' perception towards corporate social responsibilities relies on customers' evaluation of corporation's activities instead of these activities.

2.3 Hypothesis Development

To examine influence of a firm's corporate social responsibility activities in consuming industry based on consumers' perception on repurchase intention behavior, hypotheses were developed as below:

- H1: The positive perception of consumers towards corporate economic responsibilities impacts positively significantly on their repurchase intention for firm's products.
- H2: The positive perception of consumers towards corporate legal responsibilities impacts positively significantly on their repurchase intention for firm's products.
- H3: The positive perception of consumers towards corporate philanthropic responsibilities impacts positively significantly on their repurchase intention for firm's products.
- H4: The positive perception of consumers towards corporate environmental responsibilities impacts positively significantly on their repurchase intention for firm's products.

2.4 Measurement Scales

Pilot test and deep interview were employed to develop the latent variables' primary measurement scales of 19 items. In analyzing matrices, factors with loadings below 0.3 suppressed resulted in 16 items remaining. Items with low factor loadings should be eliminated because they do not converge properly with the latent construct they are designed to measure (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Then, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to 16 items measuring the customers' perception of corporate social responsibilities. Factor analysis attempts to identify underlying variables, or factors, that explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables. Using varimax rotation factor analysis to identify the structure of a set of variables and provide a process for data reduction of economic responsibility, of legal responsibility, of philanthropic responsibility and of environmental responsibility. Doing this to demonstrate which contingent items load on the same factor or construct. The factor analysis of the 3 repurchase intention items resulted in one construct similar to the original scale. All items have factor loading higher than 0.5 accounted for 77.17 percent of the total variance. The factor analysis of the 16 corporate social responsibility items resulted in the four constructs similar to the original subscales. All items have factor loading higher than 0.5. These constructs accounted for 66.64 percent of the total variance. The factor analysis results are shown in Table 1.

The reliability test indicates appropriate internal consistency of all constructs' scales with Cronbach's alpha above 0.7, and the results is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Factor analysis of corporate social responsibility scales

| Constructs and items | Factor loading | | | |
|---|----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| <i>Construct 1: Economic Responsibility</i> | | | | |
| EC01-Products of corporation X have high consistent qualify. | 0.839 | | | |
| EC03-Corporation X explains clearly and provides sufficiently information and origin of its products. | 0.815 | | | |
| EC05-Manufacturing processes of corporation X follow Vietnamese and/or international standards. | 0.765 | | | |
| EC02-Products of corporation X are good for consumers' health, hygienic and safe. | 0.746 | | | |
| EC04-Corporation X commits strongly for its product quality. | 0.592 | | | |
| <i>Construct 2: Environmental Responsibility</i> | | | | |
| EN03-Corporation X uses recycled materials to for packaging. | | 0.859 | | |
| EN05-Corporation X takes part in environmentally activities that aim to protecting and improving natural environment's quality. | | 0.720 | | |
| EN04-Products of corporation X are friendly with the environment. | | 0.647 | | |
| EN01-Corporation X invests in developing technology to consuming renewable energies like solar, wind and hydroelectric power. | | 0.639 | | |
| EN02-Corporation X invests in constructing modern waste water treatment systems. | | 0.548 | | |
| <i>Construct 3: Philanthropic Responsibility</i> | | | | |
| PH03-Corporation X organizes charitable activities, supports society and campaigns staffs participating. | | | 0.796 | |
| PH02-Corporation X contributes to campaigns and projects (health, education, protecting environment, improving infrastructure ...) to enhance prosperity and social welfare | | | 0.793 | |
| PH01-Corporation X tends to sustainable development (commit performing effectively: economic development, equal society and protecting environment) and considers future generations. | | | 0.659 | |
| <i>Construct 4: legal responsibility</i> | | | | |
| LE02-I have never heard any information about avoiding governmental tax or losing report or transferring profit to foreign countries of corporation X. | | | | 0.830 |
| LE01-I have never heard any information about labor strike at corporation X. | | | | 0.818 |
| LE03-I have never heard any information of corporation X about using unsafe materials during business operation. | | | | 0.664 |

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha of corporate social responsibility and repurchase intention scales

| Factors | Number of items | Cronbach Alpha | Item deleted |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Economic Responsibility | 4 | .854 | EC04 |
| Environmental Responsibility | 5 | .804 | - |
| Philanthropic Responsibility | 2 | .810 | PH01 |
| Legal Responsibility | 2 | .741 | LE03 |
| Repurchase Intention | 3 | .846 | - |

2.5 Data Collection

Data were collected by using survey questionnaires including 19 items through Google doc and face-to-face interviewing MBA students at Ho Chi Minh Economic University (UEH). This research applied convenient sampling method result in 320 valid questionnaires account for 75%.

2.6 Sample Description

Of 320 valid questionnaires, 43.1% was surveyed with male and 56.9% with female. Most of respondents are staffs working for private firms (59.1%), belong to the age from 18 to 30 years old (90%); and have monthly income from 5 to 10 million (53.8%). Their profile is presented in Table 3.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Correlation Test

All factors correlate strongly with the remaining other factors at the 0.01 level with Pearson correlation coefficient presented in Table 4. The test also results in all CSR factors correlate with repurchase intention posi-

Table 3. Respondent profile

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Sex | |
| Male | 43.1 |
| Female | 56.9 |
| Total | 100.0 |
| Working Position | |
| Staff working for private firms | 59.1 |
| Staff working for public firms | 20.0 |
| Entrepreneur | 04.7 |
| Specialist | 04.4 |
| Others | 11.8 |
| Total | 100.0 |
| Age | |
| From 18 to 30 years old | 90.0 |
| From 31 to 40 years old | 08.8 |
| More than 40 years old | 01.2 |
| Total | 100.0 |
| Income | |
| Less than 5 million VND | 30.3 |
| From 5 to 10 million VND | 53.8 |
| Above 10 to 15 million VND | 10.6 |
| Above 15 million VND | 05.3 |

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

| Variables | Mean | SD | I_RPI | CSR_EC | CSR_PH | CSR_EN | CSR_LE |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| I_RPI | 4.693 | .873 | (.84) | | | | |
| CSR_EC | 4.779 | .711 | .523** | (.85) | | | |
| CSR_PH | 4.376 | .916 | .442** | .451** | (.81) | | |
| CSR_EN | 3.699 | .816 | .362** | .380** | .556** | (.80) | |
| CSR_LE | 4.591 | 1.110 | .266** | .317** | .247** | .152** | (.74) |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Cronbach alpha is in bracket.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules of thumb: “_ > .9-Excellent, _ > .8-Good, _ > .7-Acceptable, _ > .6-Questionable, _ > .5-Poor, and _ < .5-Unacceptable” (p. 231). Thus, all measurement scales are reliable to use for studying.

Table 5. Relationship between Corporate Social responsibility components and repurchase Intention

| | Beta (β) | Sig. | VIF |
|------------------------------|----------|------|-------|
| Economic responsibility | .419 | .000 | 1.372 |
| Philanthropic responsibility | .176 | .001 | 1.627 |
| Environmental responsibility | .096 | .083 | 1.494 |
| Legal responsibility | .062 | .081 | 1.129 |

Adjusted R² = 0.331; R² = 0.339; F = 40.433, Sig = 0.000; Durbin Waston = 1.885.

tively significantly at the 0.01 level, and the coefficients range from 0.152 to 0.523. Corporate social responsibility variables could be expected as the explanatory factors of repurchase intention.

3.2 Hypothesis Test

Liner regression test was conducted to test research hypotheses, and the results are presented in Table 5 below:

The test results indicate that Linear Regression model is suitable with the data set and CSR components explain 33.9% of customers' repurchase intention for consumer goods. VIF < 2 claims that there is no multicollinearity phenomenon in the data set. Testing research hypothesis figures out that H_1 and H_3 are accepted at the significance level of 1%. Otherwise, H_2 and H_4 are accepted at the significance level of 10%. In other words, the perception of consumers towards corporate social responsibility influences positively and significantly on their repurchase intention for consumer products.

4. DISCUSSION

Economic responsibility activities of corporations associated with qualitative products, food safety and hygiene, products' origin those impacts directly to safe consumption of consumers and they can test through certificates, information on the package. The demand of safety of consumers has increased nowadays because of their income improved. In addition, it is simple for them to change suppliers because there are a lot of substitution products in the marketplace. As a result, perception towards corporate economic responsibilities is a key component to repurchase intention of consumers. That result is the same as research result of Kim and Chung (2011) in Korean market, Ramasamy and Yeung (2008) at China market, Arli and Lasmono (2010) at Indonesia market, and Patricia Martínez García de Leaniz *et al.* (2012) at Spain market.

The key part of the tendency of current green consumption is the increase in consumers' concern with social issues, and communities. People currently desire devoting even though a small part to social development and equality. Hence, a corporation which is perceived participating actively in social activities will build a beautiful image in customers as "Be good, be responsible" and caring for "other people." By this way, the corporation can create sympathy and trust for products' quality of this corporation. Consumers believe that using more products of a corporation is good way to increase contributing to social activities. Moreover, involving energetically in philanthropic activities also presents that the company has stable finance. Hence, the firm is able to invest in modern technological manufacturing and adapt requirements to produce product quality. This result is similar to results from studies of Mohr and Webb, 2005; Peixoto, 2004; Barone and collaborators, 2000; Strahilevitz, 1999; Maignan and Ferrell (2004). They concluded that there is a positively direct relationship between corporate social responsibilities and consumer's loyalty towards the corporation's products/services.

Thus, this research provided additional empirical evidence of the influence of consumers' perception toward corporate social responsibility on their repurchase intention in Vietnamese market. The research findings also contributed to existing body of knowledge that CSR

has become a critical factor explaining consumers' purchasing behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

These research findings provide evidence of the perception and reaction of customers towards corporate social responsibilities through examining the relationship between customers' perception towards corporate social responsibilities and their repurchase intention in consuming industry. Research results imply that performing well economic responsibility and philanthropic responsibility of a corporation will impact positively and significantly to repurchase intention. Corporation in consuming industry should develop marketing based on components of corporate social responsibilities to enhance their trademark in consumers' perception and change their mind from perception into purchasing products. Customers raise their interest in corporations they perceive to be responsible for society. Therefore, companies should implement their economic responsibilities, such as transparency in the origin of the product, the commitment of product quality, of providing full information about their product and enterprise, as well as feedback channels for customers. Companies also should carry out activities for charitable responsibility, such as organizing or participating in programs supporting the poor, seniors, students in remote areas, and the programs for public health.

There are some limitations of this study needed to clarify. First, the study is based on one industry; therefore the result may not be generalized to other industries. Next, this study does not control for consumers' characteristics in their perception toward CSR. Therefore, the further research should consider including these factors as control variables in the analysis, and extend to other industries such as service or banking and finance. Finally, 90 per cent of respondents are young people with age lower than 30 years old; therefore the research findings may be representative for Vietnamese young consumers only.

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