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BUILDING BRAND VALUE THROUGH INNOVATIVE CSR PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to measure the impact of various CSR techniques on the brand image and to analyze the inputs of CSR initiatives as a catalyst to the increased brand value. The study is Primary data based conducted on a sample of 40 respondents in Meerut-Modinagar region. The findings show that the customers tend to become more loyal for the organizations which are engaged in societal development activities. It was also found that the customers need to be made more aware about the CSR practices to stimulate their ability to identify CSR focused organizations. Corporate Social Responsibility has evolved various ways for the organizations to develop and sustain in the dynamic environment where the brand image of an organization or a brand is not limited to the product's quality or price only. CSR has now become a value proposition tool for the companies which endeavor to contribute to the under privileged sections of the society catering to their developmental needs through assisting and uplifting them. Such an effort makes a direct positive impact on the loyalty status of a customer or a potential customer towards the brand which helps the organizations boosting their brand value. The major findings of the study strengthen the need of incorporating customer educational programs by the organizations to make this value-proposition tool more effective and fruitful for them.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, customer loyalty, value proposition, brand equity.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility is not mere a term but a deep rooted concept through which companies are trying to prove their worth through sharing a part of their profit with the society they operate in. As the market is more value-centric now, the organizations exert to build and enhance value of the organization in the eye of the customer they deal with. Corporate Social Responsibility has evolved various ways for the organizations to develop and sustain in the dynamic environment where the brand image of an organization or a brand is not limited to the product's quality or price only. Customers, now-a-days see the brand as a whole and keep all the related aspects in mind before making a purchase. CSR has now become a value proposition tool for the organizations which endeavor to contribute to the under privileged sections of the society catering to their developmental needs through assisting and uplifting them. Such an effort makes a direct positive impact on the loyalty status of a customer or a potential customer towards the brand which helps the organizations boosting their brand value. The customers, as observed through previous studies, are becoming socially responsible and are willing to follow ethical codes and try to behave eco-friendly. Using socially responsible brands is a way to make them deliver tier stake to the society. Socially responsible Organizations/Brands are putting more concern to strategic CSR rather than philanthropic CSR. They are using innovative ways to contribute to the CSR requirement on one hand and, on the other hand, they are attracting customer through value-positioning. Further, Mandatory CSR by the Govt. of India is a welcome step which would enhance customers' trust in the products. This compulsion would give rise to the need of bringing more innovative practices in order to make your brand noticed by the customers. In a market, where all the brands are projecting themselves as socially responsible, there would be a dire need of differentiation and the brands would need to focus on strategic CSR practices rather than philanthropic CSR practices. The channels of communication too would need to be redesigned in order to keep the customers updated about a brand's CSR performance. Improved CSR performance and its timely projection would build goodwill of the brand in the mind of the customers and will improve its reputation in the market.

Many studies have suggested that there is a positive impact of increased CSR practices on the brand image which determines the general perception of the customers and prospects but which practices make more profit to the company in terms of customer repurchase or increased customer loyalty, this still needs to be studied. This study is focused to find such practices which derive more benefits to the organization and to make the organizations put their funds in the neediest sections for the overall development of the economy. The study differentiates between Strategic and Philanthropic CSR and brings out the core of both the approaches. Further the study extends to find out the relative efficiency of various communication channels adopted by the organizations to communicate their CSR efforts to the customers. As it is seen that many companies, who have extensive CSR structure do not pay much attention to publicize their efforts which leads to their failure in building reputation in the eye of the general public. To overcome such problems, the brands should focus on personalized publicity.

METHODS OF DOING CSR

CSR activities are not limited to the needy sections of the society. The phenomenon is diversified into various groups, each of which create a different impact on the minds of the customers. This is to be noted that these CSR activities are recorded from the global perspective (not specific to India) as India has made CSR statutory and listed only particular activities to be treated as CSR initiatives under section 135 of Companies Act, 2013. Some of the diversified areas in which CSR strategies can be implemented are as follows-

1. Customers- The customers provide the most important base to CSR activities as it is directly communicated and needn't be promoted. It, therefore has the direct impact on the customer. In order to increase the customer loyalty, the brands may adopt following strategies-
 - i. Focusing on the quality of products and services is widely accepted as the most effective practice of CSR to meet the customer expectation. If a brand becomes reliable in terms of quality of the product, the customer makes repurchase and spread the message through word-of-mouth communication. Attractiveness of a product makes sales but the quality assurance build the life-long loyalty.
 - ii. The development of feedback and easy redressal of issues is the another aspect a brand can consider as CSR initiative. Most of the online marketing companies are getting benefitted by following the process.
2. Employees- The brands which are taking CSR initiatives in the area are reaping the fruits of increased goodwill. Brands like Tata steel, Aditya Birla grp, TCS, ADP etc are focusing on the employee segment which in turn are contributing to their growth. Satisfied employees help in increasing goodwill of the company and dedicate their efforts towards their employer
3. Societal development- Providing funds and/or assistance to develop the needy sections of the society or helping them overcoming any loss caused by natural calamity or disaster is another very popular form of CSR. CSR activities can be done in the areas in following ways-
 - i. Free education for a particular community/Age-group/gender of a particular region/ state/ country.
 - ii. Donation to the schools for the affordable education of poor children.
 - iii. Village adopting in case of any natural calamity like flood, Drought or earthquake.
 - iv. Generating awareness among the mass population about any national/political/ environmental issue
4. Environment Protection- This time, when the whole earth is facing issues with environment conservation like, scarcity of water, dearth of natural resources etc., an initiative in this regard is the need of the hour. Environment Protection Following steps can be taken in this regard-
 - i. Utilization and reprocessing of waste.
 - ii. Use of environmentally healthy fuel

- iii. Gentle handling of electricity and water.
- iv. Optimum utilization of resources like double side printing and copying.
- v. Contributing to the research and development in the area.

SCOPE OF THE WORK

The research aims at analyzing the CSR practices of an organization as a value proposition tool and building brand equity and loyalty with the help of innovative CSR practices. The study also focuses on measuring the differential impact of various CSR techniques and various communication channels used by an organisation on its brand value. The study is primarily focused to measure the impact of various CSR initiatives on the increased brand value which is shown in the form of change in product repurchase behavior and increased customer retention. The researcher aims to find out the innovative practices in the area and their relative impact on the customer base so as to enable the organizations more competitive and more strategic in framing the CSR initiatives. The study is a primary research to be conducted on the customers of Meerut-NCR region.

Questions the study would answer-

- 1) Are the customers actually aware of the socially responsible behavior of the organizations? If yes, how do they categorize the activities as 'socially responsible' or 'ethical obligation'? If No, what are the various ways to make the generate awareness about the brand's social contribution in order to improve the reputation of the company?
- 2) Would the customer like to pay more for a brand which has made social contributions in the form of donations given to the needy sections of the society?
- 3) Does the investments made in CSR practices help the companies in promoting its brand through its customers?
- 4) To what extent social networking helps the company communicate its CSR efforts to its customers? What are the other good channels of communication for the purpose?
- 5) What are the innovative tools which can be added to the list of modern CSR practices?

Questions which require further exploration-

1. Do the companies consider CSR investments as a responsibility, a value enhancing tool or a burden?
2. Would the government regulation of making CSR investments mandatory for the organizations make an adverse impact on the customer perception of the brand being socially responsible?

LITERATURE REVIEW

From time to time researchers have attempted to analyse the importance of Corporate social responsibility for the sustainable development of the organization. Here the researcher has attempted to find the major studies done in the field in the Indian and overseas market. The end results of various studies have been mentioned. Corporate social responsibility (CSR)—voluntary social and environmental efforts of a company—is one of the most discussed and influential strategic business tools in the 21st century (Holstein 2008; Kanter 2010; Karnani 2010; *The Economist* 2009).

Kitchin, T. (2003) Corporate social responsibility: A brand explanation, Klein, J. & Dawar, N. (2004)- Corporate social responsibility and consumers' attributions and brand evaluations in a product-harm crisis, Atilgan, E., Akinci, S., Aksoy, S. & Kaynak, E. (2009)- Customer-based brand equity for global brands: A multinational approach etc are the few major studies done in the context in the overseas market.

Anna Torres, Tammo H. A. Bijmolt Josep A. Tribó in their study 'Generating Global Brand Equity through Corporate Social Responsibility to Key Stakeholders have argued that socially responsible policies have positive short-term and long-term impact on equity of global brands. We find that corporate social responsibility towards all stakeholders, whether primary (customers, shareholders, employees and suppliers) or secondary (community), have positive effects on brand equity value, where the secondary stakeholders are even more important than primary stakeholders. (Anna Torres, 2009),

Simone Staudt, Chris Y. Shao, Alan J. Dubinsky, Phillip H. Wilson in a group study found that if a customer perceives the CSR efforts of a company as high, the positive impact on CBBE (Customer based Brand Equity) is higher than if a customer perceives such efforts as relatively low. In addition, if CSR is perceived as relatively low, the impact on CBBE is still positive, but less than if CSR efforts are viewed as high. The findings of their study provided support to previous propositions and findings that CSR efforts influence the level of a company's CBBE (e.g., *Hoeffler & Keller 2002; Lai et al. 2010; Torres, Bijmolt, & Tribó 2010*).

Researchers Raj Sisodia, David Wolfe & Jag Sheth have the opinion that the companies with humanistic approach make great companies. They have called such firms as 'Firms of Endearment'. Their findings suggest that the Firms of endearment actually spend less on marketing as a percentage of sales yet earn greater profits, as the customers do most of the marketing (*Raj Sisodia, David B. Wolfe and Jag Sheth, 2007*).

In Indian context, comparatively fewer studies in the area have been reported, although some researchers have laid down remarkable ways for the organizations to improve their brand perception with the help of CSR efforts.

A study of India's top 500 companies about how they conduct their CSR practices. The study reveals that although companies consider their interaction with stakeholders and impact of its business on society, many companies are making token gestures towards CSR and only few companies have structured and planned approach. (*Richa Gautam and Anju Singh, 2010*)

Another study done by Indian researchers shows that The correlation between CSR and firm performance indicated that a more favorable aggregate CSR towards all the six stakeholders – employees, customers, investors, community, environment, and suppliers – resulted in a higher industry-adjusted ROA (Return on assets), FP (Financial Performance) and NFP (non-financial Performance) of the firms. (*Supriti Mishra & Damodar Suar, 2010*)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study Corporate Social Responsibility as a value proposition tool in order to increase customer-based brand value.
2. To find out the major areas for the companies to put their CSR investments in, so as to make optimum results in the form of increased brand value.
3. To ascertain the limits of various CSR practices to be regarded as 'socially responsible effort' from the viewpoint of the customers.
4. To find out the relative efficiency of different communication channels to create more customer awareness about the brand's social initiatives and activeness.
5. To enable the organizations to develop innovative ways to contribute to the overall societal development thus by generating more value to the customers.

METHODOLOGY

- a) Primary Sources/ Field work- The researcher has conducted sampling of the customers of Meerut-Modinagar region. In order to get unbiased results, the researcher has distributed the area evenly keeping into consideration the awareness level of the customers of the particular area.
- b) Instrument- The visitors of the shopping malls have been surveyed through a structured questionnaire. The responses were taken on a 5- point scale to understand the extent of each response. The questionnaire comprises of both open-ended & close-ended questions.
- c) Geographical area- The shopping malls and the retail stores of Meerut-Modinagar Region have been surveyed with the help of a structured questionnaire. 'Shopprix Mall', Vishal Mega-Mart store in Meerut and Easy Day in Modinagar were the prime locations. The researcher has surveyed 40 respondents (Sample Size = 40).
- d) Research Design- The major focus of the research is to study the customer loyalty for a brand with respect to its CSR practices. The researcher aims to find out the key areas where a brand seeking customer loyalty should invest its funds. It is, therefore, decided to use exploratory design which fits into the pattern of the study. The customer responses are intended to be recorded with the help of a questionnaire and to be analysed on a five point scale in order to measure the length and depth of the impact created by the CSR initiatives of the company. The research is exploratory in nature which intends to find out the relationship between CSR activities of a brand and the brand loyalty of a consumer for that brand.

HYPOTHESES

The study tries to test the following hypotheses-

H1- CSR is an effective value proposition tool for a brand seeking loyal customers.

The hardcore loyal customers are not just attracted by any single factor but are attached to the overall performance of the brand. The brands exert to build reputation by following 'Customer is the king' mantra and try to resolve all the issues related to the product/brand and try to focus on Customer Relationship Management. Such efforts build a one-to-one relationship between the brand and the customer and customer pays loyalty by repurchasing and recommending further. The hypotheses tests that how CSR is a long term value proposition tool for a brand and how, unlike selling strategies, it's not limited to a single purchase. H2- Different CSR practices create different customer perception about the brand thus having different levels of impact on the customer loyalty towards the brand. In the present scenario, when the customers are more willing to know the brands' social engagement, customers have their selective preferences for CSR efforts too. Some of such efforts are called the priority efforts and are considered more realistic than the others. No matter if two companies are employing same amount of the funds in the CSR practices, the one with the efforts in the 'priority' area would make a better impact. Besides, different CSR efforts earn the brand a different title. Some activities position them as reliable and trustworthy, whereas, some make them called socially active. The categorization of putting the CSR efforts in customer centric areas or employee/shareholders related areas or with the society at large makes the change in the perception of the customers about the company. The hypotheses testes that how differently people think about different CSR practices and what different impact do they create on customers' purchasing decision.

H3- The customers have the scope of categorizing CSR practices as 'Social responsibility' or 'Social obligation' and thus make their brand perception accordingly. The customers may not always take CSR practices as a positive effort of a company. Some customers are of the view that contributing to the societal development is the duty of any brand who is taking resources from the society. The term 'responsibility' is replaced by 'obligation' and is treated as the requirement of the brand by such customers. They do not make their brand choices on the basis of the fact if the company is responsible or not. Further, when India has made it mandatory for every company to contribute to CSR, it would be tough to analyse if a company is actually volunteering contribution or is bound by the law to do so. It will also generate competition when all the brands would be using the same value-proposition tool on the same floor. The hypotheses testes if the customer loyalty is affected by their perception of a brand of being socially responsible or merely fulfilling obligation.

H4- The choice of communication channels has a major impact on the awareness level of the customers about the brand's social initiatives.

The communication channels play a major role in framing the image of the brand. It is widely seen that most of the customers are not aware of the CSR initiatives or efforts of those brands who have been contributing to the society through such activities since long. The brands were either not marketing their efforts or were choosing a wrong platform to access the public to market their efforts. The hypothesis testes the comparative impact of using the different communication channels to communicate CSR efforts.

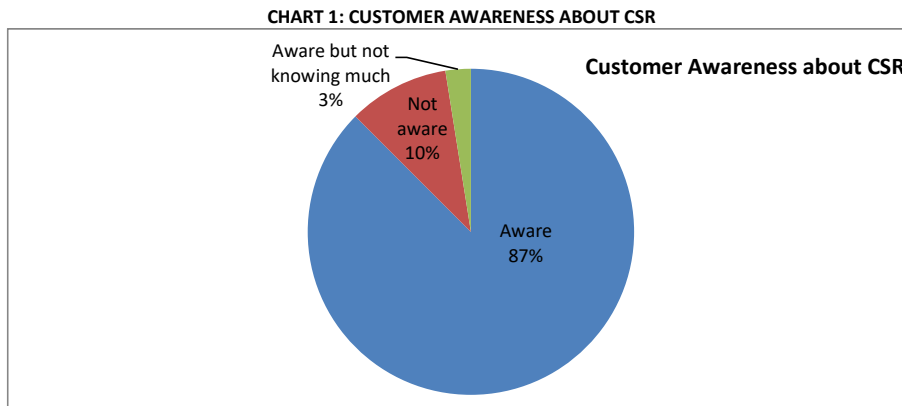
H5- Innovative CSR practices help the organization to gain more advantage as compared to the traditional practices.

The companies practicing CSR are not limited to philanthropic CSR but are evolving new ways to have the 'two in one' effect. They, on one hand are fulfilling their social obligations and on the other hand, they are retaining the existing customers by positioning themselves as the 'caring brand'. In the present scenario when CSR practices are being made mandatory, in order to use CSR as positioning tool, the brands would have to find innovative ways to get noticed. The brands are required to find out the key areas they should put their efforts in. In order to get more connected to the world, they are required to develop practices which suit their brand specifically and position them rightly. The hypothesis is tested to find out testes the new and innovative ideas to attract the customers through CSR initiatives.

ANALYSIS

The responses were taken from a sample of 40 respondents. The respondents were sampled through simple random sampling. The major segment of the sample respondents lies in the age group of 21-35 years, although different age-groups didn't show any significant difference in their responses. The responses were then coded and tabulated. The codes were then analysed on the basis of the percentage responses for each code. The analysis is given below-

Q. 1 Do you keep yourself aware about how responsible a company is towards the society?

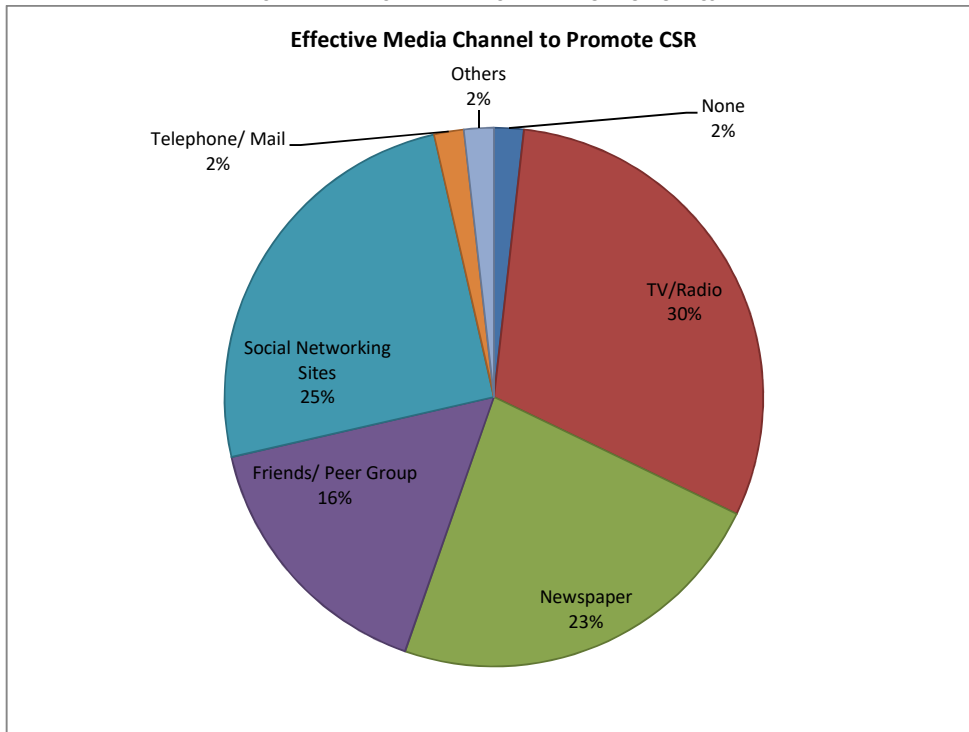


Out of 40 respondents, a big segment of 87% customers have responded positively while rest 13% is either not aware or don't bother about it.

Q.2 Through what media you get aware of company's social contributions?

- a) Television/ radio
- b) Newspapers
- c) Friends/ Peer Group
- d) Social Networking
- e) Telephone/ Mail
- f) Others

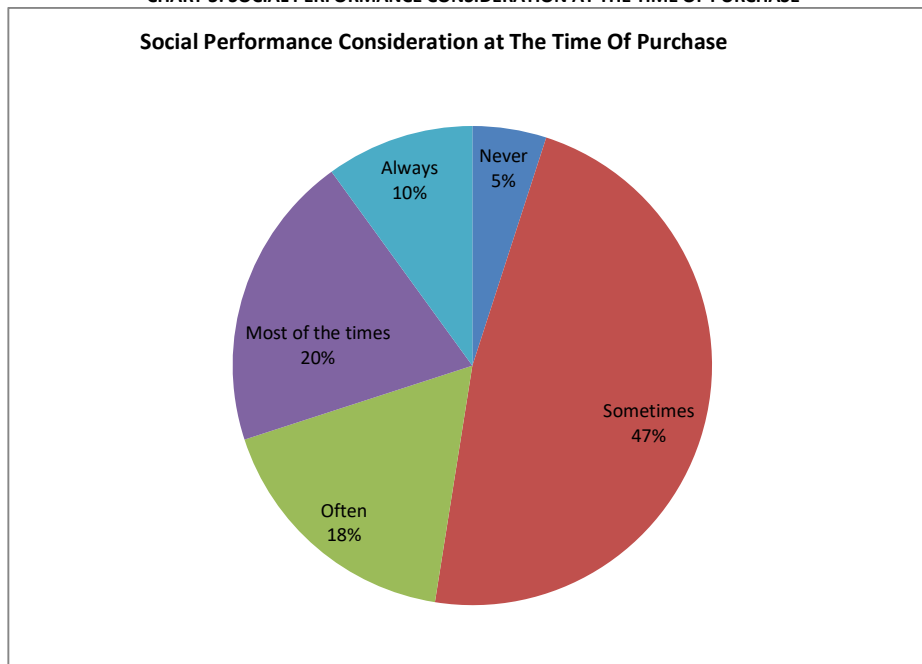
CHART 2: EFFECTIVE MEDIA CHANNEL TO PROMOTE CSR



The effective media channels having almost equal level of spreading awareness are Television, Social Networking sites, Newspaper and Word of mouth communication through Friends/ Peer group whereas TV advertisements were proven to be the best communicator. The companies are required to keep the customers aware through developing E-mail/ Telephonic Communication. The reason why the Email and telephonic medium are not as successful as others is that the customers do not pay much attention to promotional emails and telephonic calls unless the message has some unique feature in itself.

Q. 3 While making purchase decisions, how often do you consider the fact if a company is socially active or not?

CHART 3: SOCIAL PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATION AT THE TIME OF PURCHASE

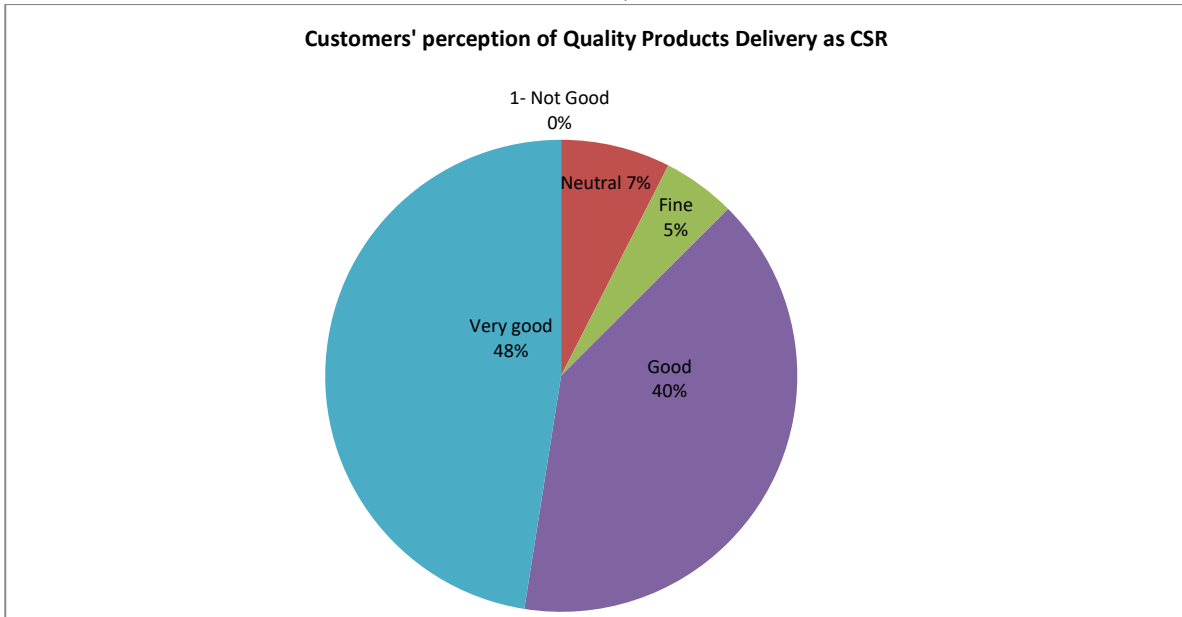


Only 10% respondents treated social responsibility as the priority check and consider the social involvement of the brand while making purchase decisions. A large segment of 47% respondents do not take it as the priority but if they are duly informed, they do consider it.

Q.4 How would you rate the brands/organizations on the basis of following social activities?

- a) The brand/organization is committed towards its customers and delivers quality products

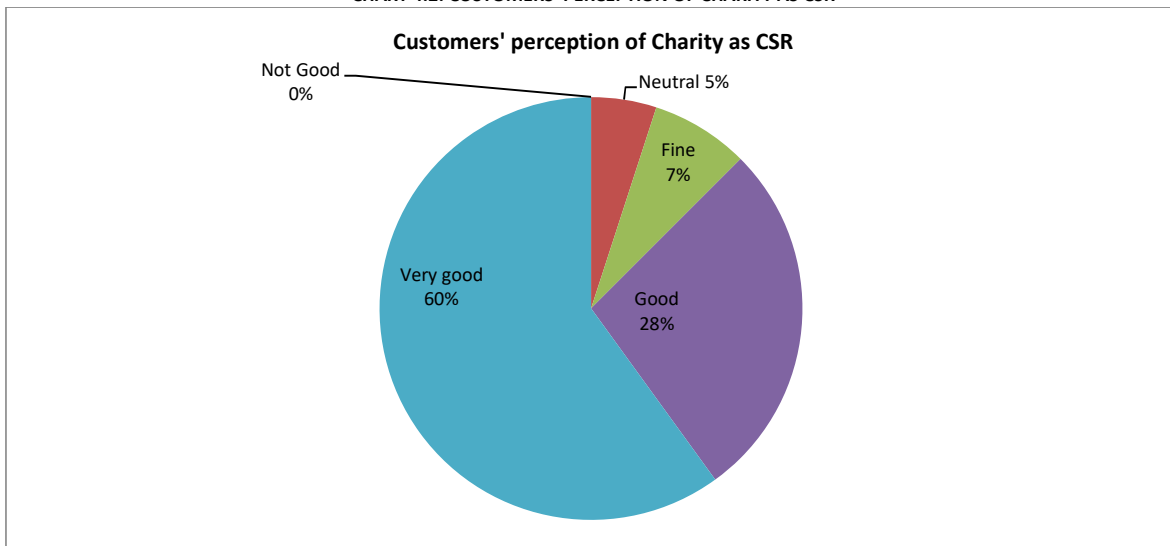
CHART 4.1: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF QUALITY PRODUCTS DELIVERY AS CSR



The assurance that a particular brand would deliver quality products is one of the most affective reasons of product repurchase or Brand loyalty. 88% customers consider it as the priority basis for being loyal to a brand. Out of 88% customers, 48% were of the view that if a brand is delivering quality, the brand is categorized as 'very good' and rest 40% considered it as an important basis to analyse the brand equity and categorized such brands as 'Good' in terms of performance.

- b) The brand/organization donates a part of its profit to the weaker sections/needly areas of the society-

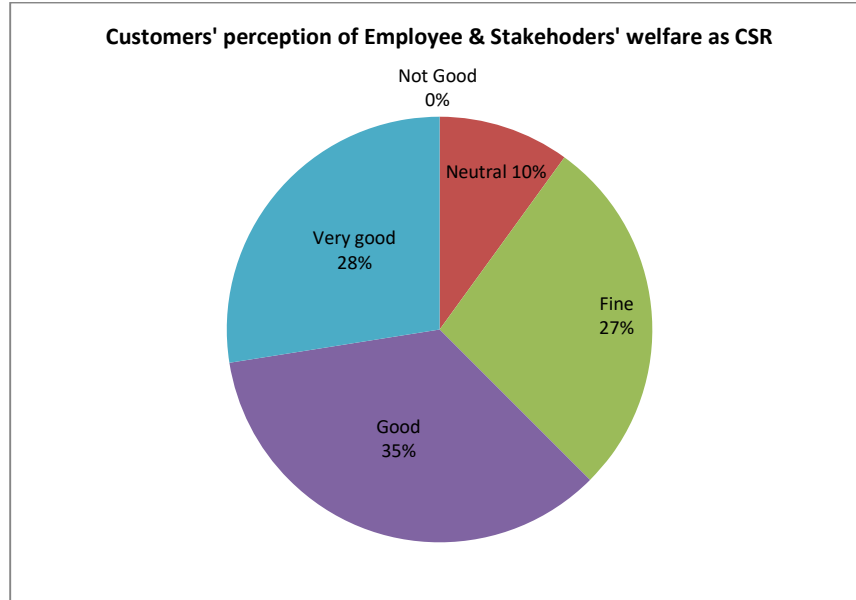
CHART 4.2: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF CHARITY AS CSR



Donating funds through charity to the needy areas /weaker sections of the society by the companies/organizations has been in practice since long. A mass population still prefers this method of CSR over other methods. While 60% of the respondents have categorized such organizations (who contribute to the needy/weaker sections of the society) as 'very good' and 28% as 'good', it is shown that a big segment favors the method.

c) The brand/organization ensures the welfare of its stakeholders/ employees

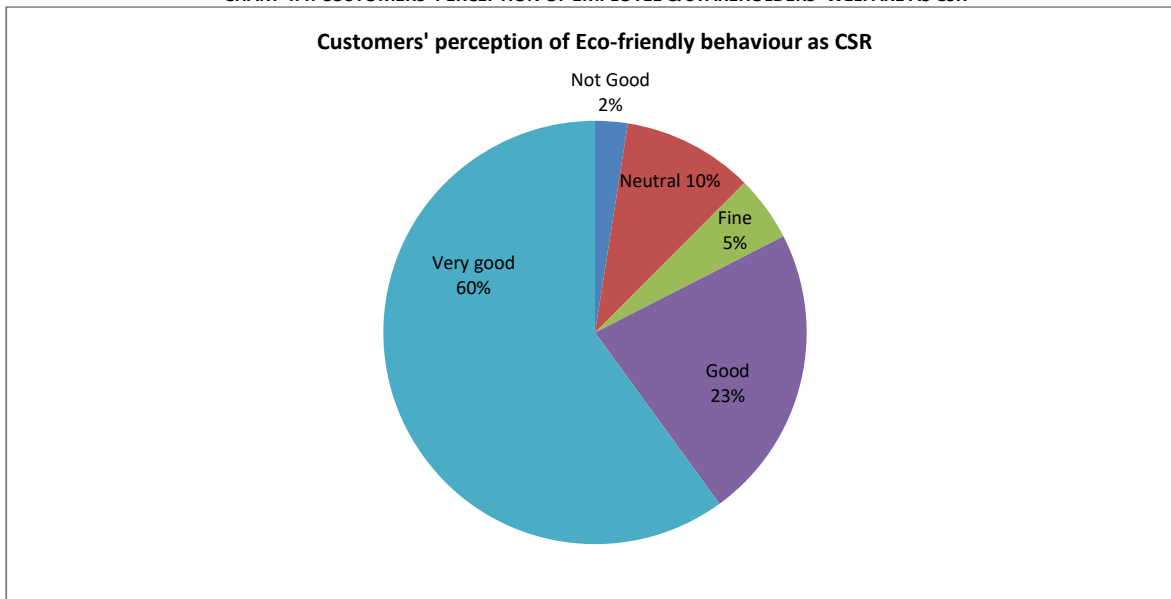
CHART 4.3: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE & STAKEHOLDERS' WELFARE AS CSR



The idea is not very much appreciated by the customers. Only 28% respondents consider it as a needed effort while 35% respondents were of the view that if a company is doing so, it will be categorized as a good company. A relatively large segment of 37% respondents were either neutral or had no signification consideration for it. The reason of this ignorance can be that the customers do not treat the shareholders /employees of the company as the part of their society but the part of the company. Hence, from their point of view, if a brand is doing any such welfare, they are not favoring the society but themselves.

d) The brand/organization is socially responsible and takes care of preventing social/environmental hazards like Pollution Control and Eco-friendly behavior

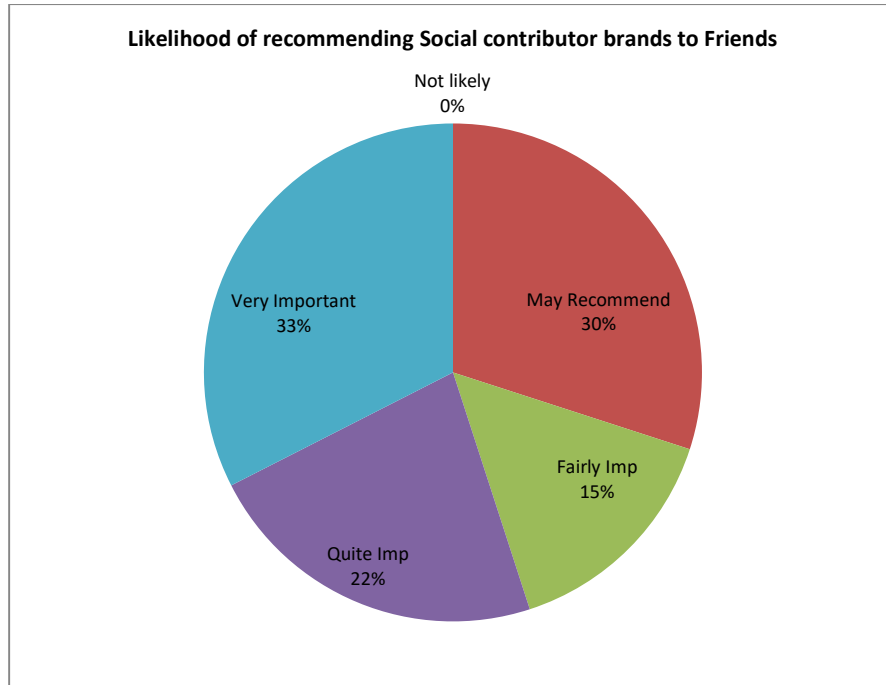
CHART 4.4: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE & STAKEHOLDERS' WELFARE AS CSR



60% of the respondents were taking the environment protection efforts by the brands/companies as a sign of very responsible company while 23% too consider it as one of the important areas to employ your funds in. 5% have a positive feeling while 10% were neutral considering no significant effect of the effort. 2% respondents had the view that putting money into this segment is not attractive at all.

5. How likely it is that you recommend socially responsible brands to your friend?

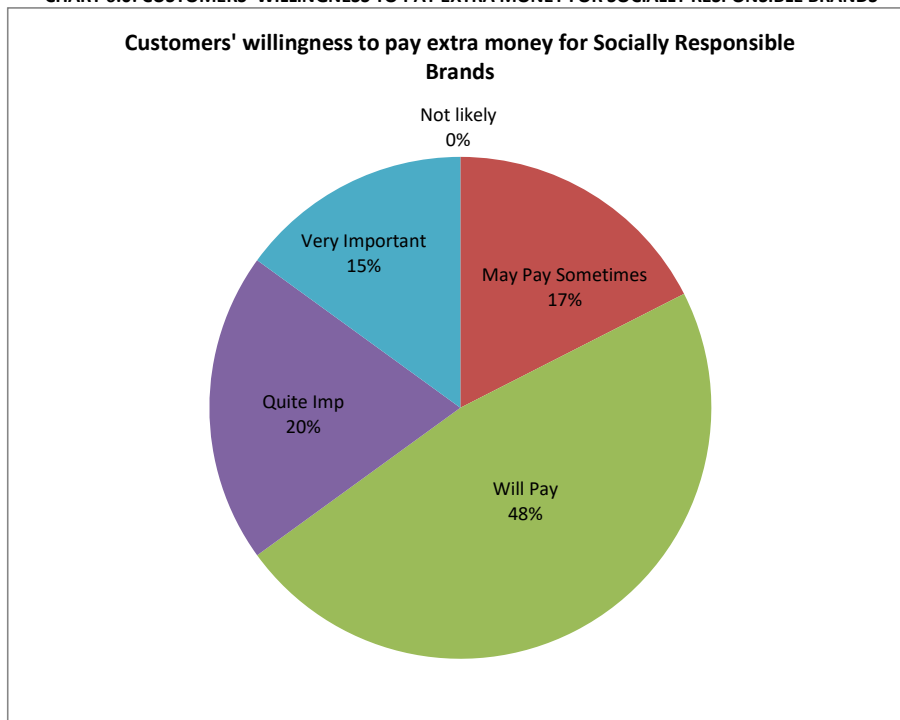
CHART 5.0: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE & STAKEHOLDERS' WELFARE AS CSR LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING SOCIAL CONTRIBUTOR BRANDS TO FRIENDS



A mixture response was recorded for the importance of considering the recommendation of social contributor brands to the fellows. Although none of the respondents were of the view that they don't recommend such brands. While 33% considered it as very important, 22% too had a strong likelihood of recommending it and considered it quite important. Rest 30% have not taken it as important but would like to consider it sometimes.

6. Would you like to pay a little extra amount for a product which contributes its profit share to the societal development?

CHART 6.0: CUSTOMERS' WILLINGNESS TO PAY EXTRA MONEY FOR SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BRANDS

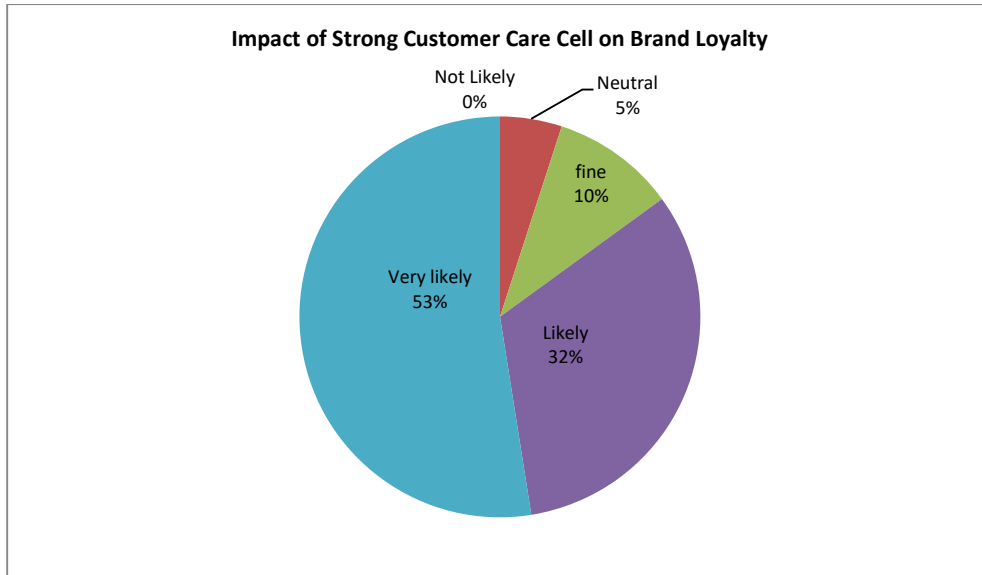


Almost half of the no. of respondents (48%) were ready to pay extra for socially responsible brands. 15% of the respondents took it as very important and 15% considered it as important provided if brands have a transparent methodology. 17% of the respondents could allow to lose their pockets sometimes for the reason.

7. Rate the advanced social activities that make you more loyal for a company/ brand-

a) The brand/organization has a strong customer care cell and solves most of the issues-

CHART 7.1: IMPACT OF STRONG CUSTOMER CARE CELL ON BRAND LOYALTY



53% respondents think that if a brand maintains a strong customer care cell, it is perceived as a very good brand, 32% have the opinion of it being a good brand. For 10% of the respondents it is not that important a feature for a brand being very good, though creates a positive impact. For 5% respondents, it has a neutral effect.

b) The brand/organization emphasizes on quality of products and services-

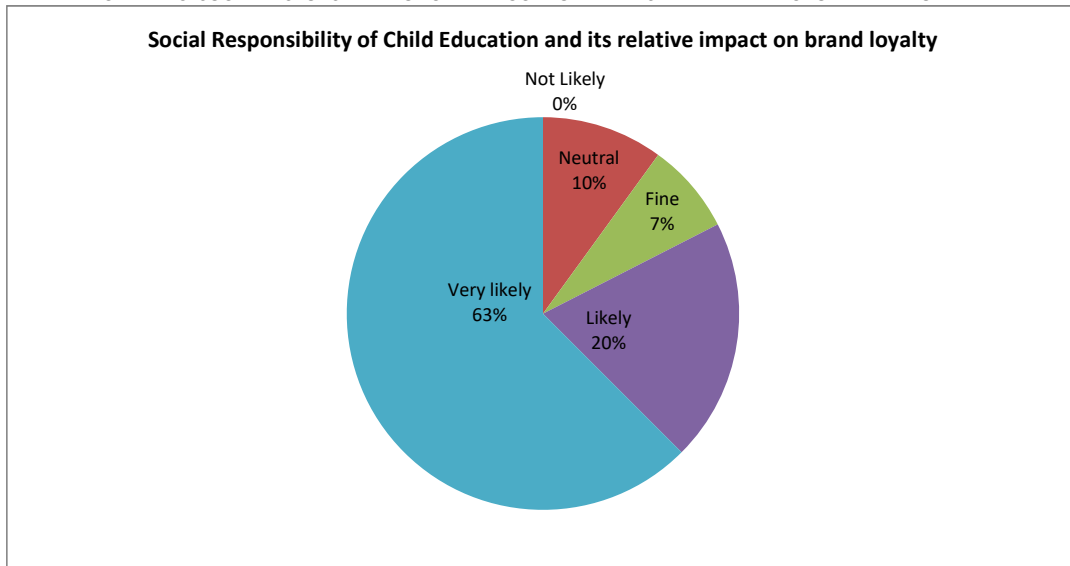
CHART 7.2: IMPACT OF GOOD QUALITY PRODUCT ON BRAND LOYALTY



Indian customers are considered to be price sensitive. Still a big segment of our society prefer quality over price. Brands with good quality products like Myntra, Dell, etc. are preferred by more than 80% shoppers. 60% respondents consider such brands as very good ones, 28% as good and 10% as fine. 2% respondents do not consider this feature as effective. For them, quality comes with higher price. Hence, an average quality product will go better.

c) The brand/organization is participating actively in child education and its promotion-

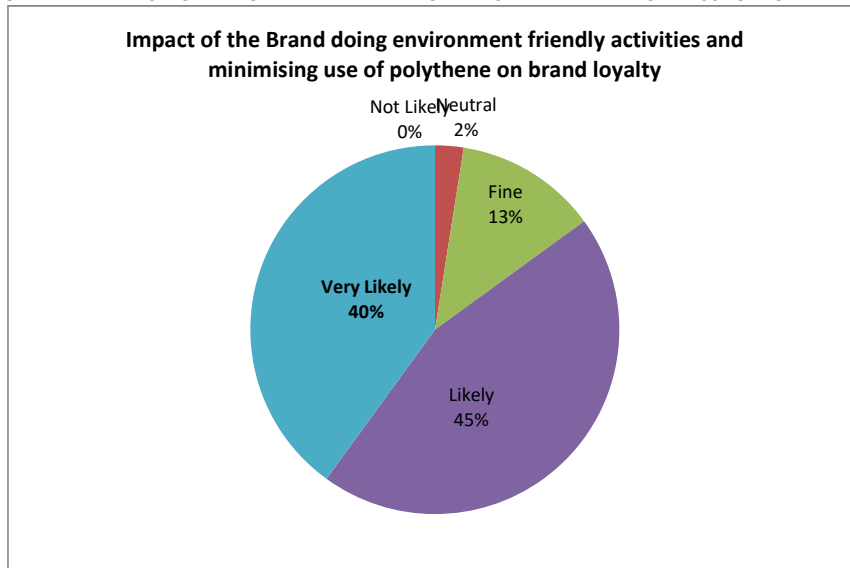
CHART 7.3: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF CHILD EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIVE IMPACT ON BRAND LOYALTY



63% are very likely to be a loyal customer of a brand which is contributing to poor child education or is assisting or promoting the idea. 20% lie on a comparatively low point on the scale yet belong to the category of likely prospects. It's fine for 7% of the respondents to stick loyal to such a brand while 10% of the respondents have a neutral impact.

d) The brand/organization is practicing on being environment friendly by minimizing the use of polythene-

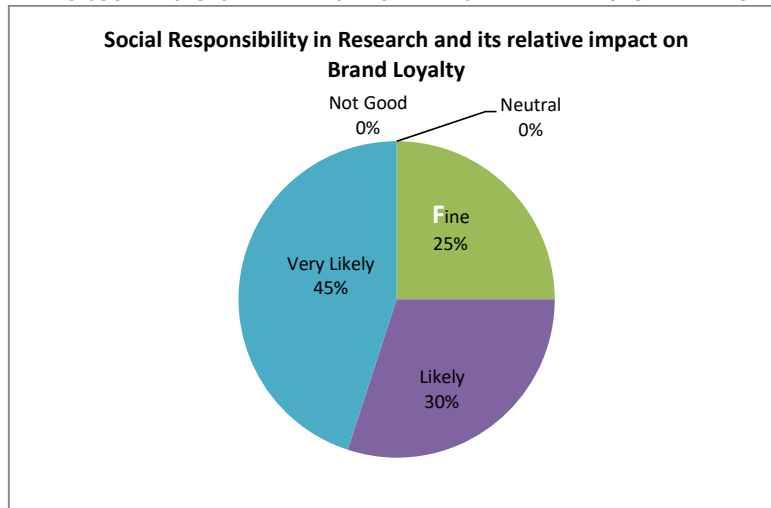
CHART 7.4: IMPACT OF THE BRAND DOING ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES AND MINIMIZING THE USE OF POLYTHENE ON BRAND LOYALTY



Ban on polythene has been made mandatory in India recently. Most of the customers are aware of the negative impact of its use on the environment. While 40% respondents ranked it as very important factor for increasing brand loyalty, 45% as important, a big segment of more than 45% respondents were in favour. Although 13% respondents were just fine with the idea and 2% were neutral.

e) The brand/organization is spending a significant part of its profit on research activities to innovate more eco-friendly methods (Like solar energy use) for the development of the society-

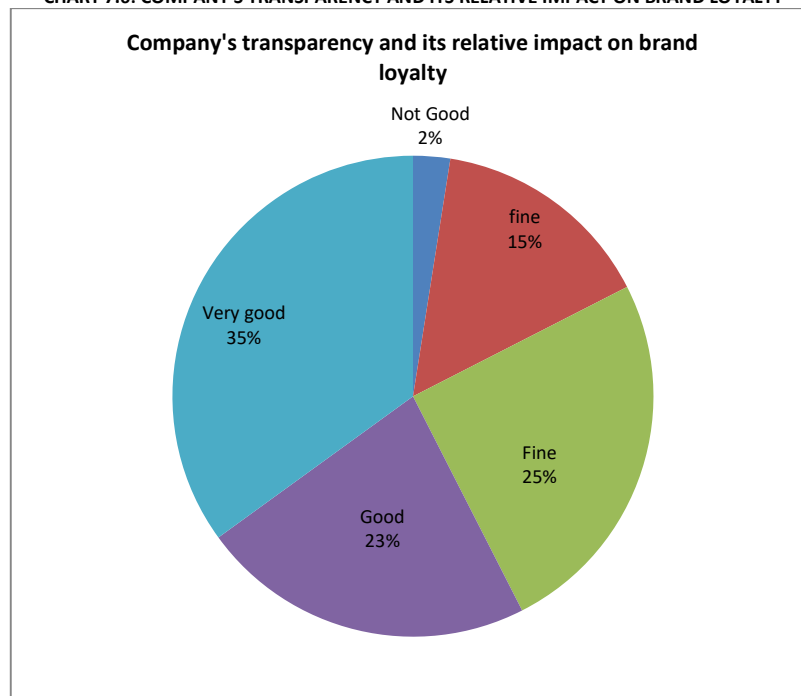
CHART 7.5: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN RESEARCH AND ITS RELATIVE IMPACT ON BRAND LOYALTY



The Indian customers know the importance of research. While none of the respondents have neutral or negative viewpoint for the effort made by the brands of doing CSR through doing research developing environment conservation methods, 45% treated it as very important factor for creating brand loyalty, 30% as important and 25% as fine.

f) The brand/organization is transparent in its operations-

CHART 7.6: COMPANY'S TRANSPARENCY AND ITS RELATIVE IMPACT ON BRAND LOYALTY



The idea is not favoured much by the respondents. If a company is transparent in its operations and produce accounts of its operations, it is not very much attractive a method as other CSR methods is. While 35% of the respondents have the viewpoint that it can be very important method for increasing brand loyalty, 23% considered it as important, 25% as fine, 15% were neutral about it. Rest 2% respondents didn't find it attractive at all.

FINDINGS

The analysis can be interpreted as below-

1. The CSR activities have a positive impact on the minds of the customer. Customers are becoming more aware of the social contribution made by the organizations and are considering the fact at the time of purchase, thus making themselves loyal or disloyal to a brand.
2. Different CSR practices create different impact on the minds of the customers. The findings show that while putting CSR funds in poor child education attract the customers more, no such response was made for the brands which invest their CSR efforts for the welfare of their employees/ Stakeholder.
3. The customers have a good sense of socially responsible efforts and can easily differentiate between 'responsible' effort and 'forced' effort. The brands which are faking CSR and are either not doing it or doing it because of the compulsion made by law, are easily identified by the customers. The respondents were of the view that the brands must show their social engagement and should put their efforts in the required areas rather than putting funds in traditional methods just to earn customer loyalty
4. It is very important for a brand to choose the right channel for communicating its CSR activities. The findings show that advertisements through social networking sites and through Television media have been the best channels to communicate the CSR activities to the mass public. As most of the aware shoppers lie in the age range of 20-45 years, it is easy to spread awareness to these customers through Facebook, Twitter and blogspot. Besides, the entertainment channels & reality shows are the other targets where we can target the customers easily.

5. The findings show that innovative practices attract more customers rather than traditional ones. Strengthening customer care cell, Quality assurance, Reliability of not being cheated by the brand, Using Eco-friendly methods in its processes attract customers rather than traditional CSR through donating money to a needy segment.
6. The study shows that the customers do not show much interest in recommending such brands to their fellows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The practice of using customer-centric approach in CSR creates the direct and immediate effect on the minds of the customers as they experience it. The companies should position themselves as customer-friendly by developing their customer care and improving customer experience.
2. Customers do not always recommend brands to fellows unless the brand is actually focusing on quality. Hence, the brands need to provide benefits to the customers for each recommendation.
3. The brands should focus on choosing the right communication channels. As the customers are usually not very interested in reading a pamphlet while hanging around with friends with family or at the time of shopping, they should be informed on social networking sites where there are more chances of a customer going through a written content. They can be targeted on TV entertainment or sports or news channels.
4. CSR is not only important but a very effective way to attract the customers. Brands are required to keep innovating newer practices in order to keep the charm. Some innovative strategies are as follows-
 - i. In order to make the customers ready to pay extra for the CSR activities, the extra amount shouldn't be added to the price of the product. Now-a-days when companies are offering bonus points to their existing customers, the extra amount for CSR activities should be charged from this amount asking the customers if they are ready to pay a part of their bonus points for social contribution. Customers will feel no burden allowing the brands to do so as they do not own that money. They would feel privileged instead having donated money for the noble cause. An additional advantage of the strategy is its three in one effect- 1- The brand is generating funds from the customers' account. 2- The brand is communicating its social efforts to the customers through direct communication over messaging or e-mail. 3- The brand is satisfying the 'transparency' requirement of the customers and making them convinced that the brand is actually contributing funds to social dearth.
 - ii. Employing CSR funds in environment conservation projects and communicating it through advertisements.
 - iii. Donate money to a particular/specific needy section and shoot your advertisement with the group instead of giving money to an actor/performer to promote your brand. The Customer connects more with the ordinary man. Increasing popularity of reality TV shows clearly depicts that customers prefers realistic approach now-a-days and the method is never lasting.
 - iv. Keep CSR efforts transparent. When a brand promotes itself by assuring donation to the weaker/ poor sections of the society, customers do not generally believe the fact for the reason that there exist many such fraudulent projectors. In order to differentiate one's brand from others and to convince the customers, transparency in CSR activities must be maintained.
 - v. Enhancing customer experience through assistance cell
 - vi. Adopt green marketing. If the brand actually shows its social concern in its activities, the effort creates the double impact and gives the customer a realistic feeling.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that CSR is the only value-proposition that makes the customer feel connected to the brand and motivates him to make a repurchase. In a country like India, where a lot of development is required, any brand which is helping the government by sharing its burden of developing the country, it automatically occupies a soft corner in the minds of the customers. It does generate a positive image of the brand and if the brands put a little effort in maintaining its reliability in terms of quality and assistance, it earns the loyalty of the customers. Every brand needs to develop its innovative CSR practices according to its targeted customer segment. The customers are more conscious about the environmental and social issues now-a-days. Any effort made by the brands make them associated with the brand. Hence, by adopting some of the aforesaid measures and by educating customers about such programs, a brand can generate life-time loyalty of the customers for itself. Through this value-proposition strategy, the brand can survive in adverse market conditions.

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