The Relationship Between Corporate Social Responsibility and Customer Satisfaction: Literature Review

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18.1 Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been an important focus of companies and for the ones concerned about their sustainability. Despite being focused on improving society and their performance, organizations want their customers to be aware of their behaviour and be more satisfied with the brand.

Literature has researched about CSR, its concepts and use. Also, research focused on testing some consequents of CSR, but it could not be found a paper which summarized the main consequents of CSR. Furthermore, the focus of CSR has been on how it affects the brand, but further understanding of its relationship with customer satisfaction is required. Therefore, this chapter aims to analyze if literature shows if both constructs can be connected.

Through a systematic literature review of the main databases (Scopus and WOS), this research addresses CSR concept and consequents, leading the research to three major themes. The first theme is related to CSR and includes research on the concept, evolution, and dimensions, as well as CSR consequents – brand image, brand value, and consumer satisfaction.

In a second moment, two concepts will be analyzed, among them Brand Image and Brand Value, as well as the existing relations with CSR. To this end, it will be necessary to briefly present some studies by authors who have addressed these constructs. Lastly, research relating to Consumer Satisfaction will be exposed.

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18.2   Methodology

18.2.1 Research Agenda

The research agenda is about the consequents of CSR. The search key for finding articles, books, and documents related to the research agenda was, at first: CSR concept; importance of CSR; and CSR consequents. The main aim of the research is to understand the main consequents of CSR and its relationship with customer satisfaction. So, after a previous analysis of the papers, other keywords were added: Brand Image; Brand image and CSR: Brand value; Brand value and CSr; Consumer satisfaction; Consumer satisfaction and CSR; Antecedents of Consumer Satisfaction; Consumer satisfaction and Brand Image; and Consumer Satisfaction and Brand Value. These key works help to identify the articles which are most likely to explain the previously identified consequents of CSR.

18.2.2 Literature Search Criteria

In search of relevant articles, the search will consist of journal articles and conference proceedings and other relevant work with peer review. The search of literature will be conducted by using major multi-purpose databases such as Web of Science (Thomson Reuters), ProQuest, Emerald, Science Direct, and EBSCO. A search for more articles using the same search keywords will be conducted on the Internet using Google Scholar to increase the coverage of the literature search. The search criterion for the publication period is up to May 2022.

18.2.3 Literature Search Procedure

The initial searches revealed that a total of 475 articles were found from various sources. Then these articles' content would be analyzed for the relevance about CSR. When the articles were found to be relevant to the study agenda, they would be assessed in more detail of their purposes, methodologies, and findings. The citation criteria were applied to get the articles that are most valuable to the research topic. Research was conducted on the relationship between brand value and customer satisfaction and 104 papers were found; and brand image and customer satisfaction, where 380 papers were found. The same procedure explained before was implemented. When all four concepts were added, 17 papers were found and analyzed.

18.3   Corporate Social Responsibility

Currently, there are many definitions attributed to CSR. According to Dahlsrud (2008), they are mostly congruent and therefore the absence of a single universally accepted definition is not relevant. However, this absence caused by the broad nature of the concept and the different views of scholars (Brunk, 2010) causes the lack of a normative basis to explain, in practice, the concept of CSR. It is then necessary to create a common ground that relates the various concepts of CSR (Okoye, 2009).

Votaw (1972) mentions that CSR does not have the same meaning for everyone, since for some it means legal responsibility, for others it can be understood as socially responsible behaviour at the ethical level, and for others, it can mean responsibilities in general. The author also adds that CSR is often seen as a charitable contribution or as a duty that imposes higher standards of behaviour on entrepreneurs than on citizens in general.

The concept has, in fact, been studied by several authors. Carroll, in 1999, studied the evolution of the concept from the 1950s to the 1990s. Some of the definitions included in the literature are:

CSR can be understood as the obligations of businesspeople towards desirable decisions and attitudes, based on the goals and values of society (Bowen, 2013).

CSR is understood as the way in which companies act in the social system regarding certain issues other than economic, technical, and legal ones. The company should evaluate the effect of its decisions in order to obtain social benefits beyond the usual economic gains of the company (Davis, 1973).

CSR relates to a company's concerns for the needs and goals of society, beyond the economic, as it can only survive when embedded in a free and effectively functioning society (Eells & Walton, 1974).

In short, there are several aspects mentioned by different authors. In general, the authors associate CSR with economic, environmental, social, ethical, philanthropic, and legal factors, among others. Carroll (1999) concludes, in the study in question, that the concept is constantly under construction and that more attention needs to be paid to measuring the concept.

Subsequently, Lantos (2001), following on from the previously presented model, suggested three types of CSR: ethical, altruistic, and strategic. Briefly, ethical CSR is morally obligatory and goes beyond fulfilling economic and legal obligations. Altruistic CSR is equivalent to the philanthropic responsibilities that are described in Carrol's (2000) model and presupposes contributing to the welfare of stakeholders that exist in society, even if it means a loss in business profitability. On the other hand, strategic CSR involves business community service activities that fulfil certain strategic business objectives that will benefit the company through positive publicity and goodwill.

Still regarding the definition of CSR, Dahlsrud (2008) analyzed 37 definitions proposed by the literature from 27 different authors. The author grouped the definitions found into five different dimensions, including environmental, social, economic, voluntary, and stakeholder. The study concludes that all dimensions are important in defining CSR and that at least three dimensions are almost always

included in a random definition of CSR, making it impossible to separate the definitions in different schools of thought.

Thus, based on the aforementioned, the present research essentially relied on the research of Martínez et al. (2014), who studied the influence of CSR on brand image and loyalty in the hotel industry. For this, the author measured three dimensions of CSR, among them the environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

> The economic dimension is considered as the basic dimension because, without economic results, it would not be possible to implement practices in the other dimensions (Carroll, 1991). This dimension is associated with the fulfilment of companies' duties and obligations towards their economic activity, to promote growth and prevent possible problems with stakeholders (Torugsa et al., 2013). In addition to profit maximization, the firm is also expected to be profitable in the long term, ensure stable employment, and offer high-quality goods and services (Carroll, 1999; Currás-Pérez et al., 2018).
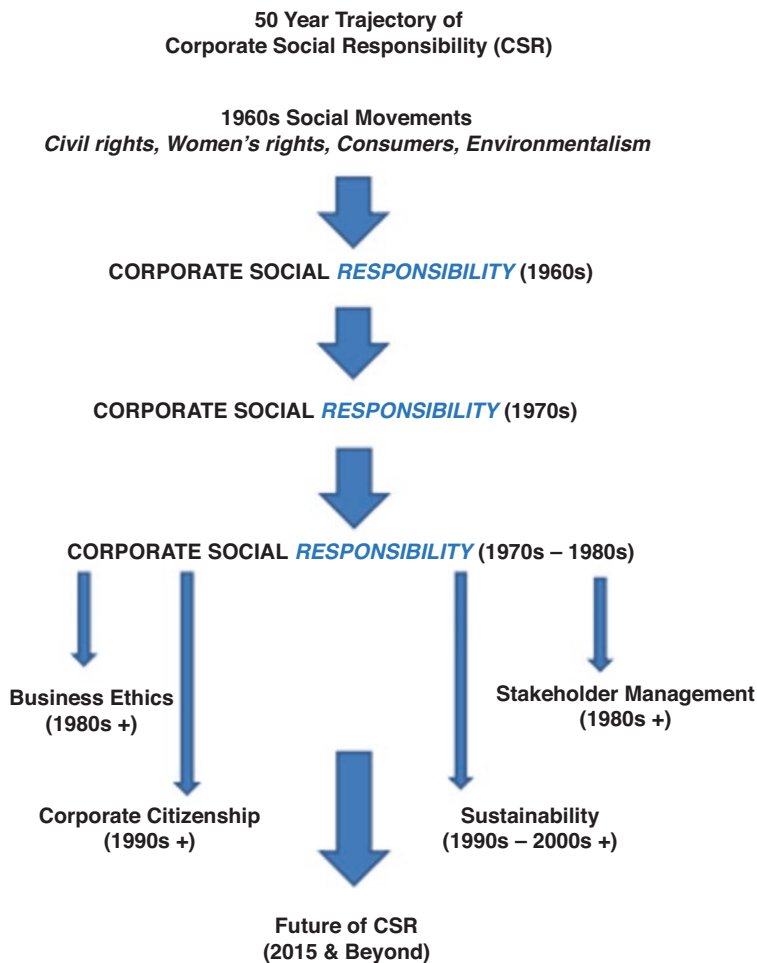
The social dimension refers to the company's relationship with the sociocultural environment, its support for social causes and also its involvement in community issues (Choi & Ng, 2011). Companies are increasingly aware of the needs of society and therefore these practices go beyond the need to comply with the mere law. Companies play an important role in solving social problems and implementing solutions aimed at increasing social well-being (Potočan et al., 2021). CSR practices at the social level can also bring benefits not only to the company but also to the stakeholders through the creation of a social dialogue that involves ethical and social issues of interest to both parties and is important in decision-making (Bansal, 2005). Thus, CSR activities can contribute to increased value and competitive advantage (Husted et al., 2015).

The environmental dimension of CSR can be seen as the environmentally 'friendly' behaviours, such as optimizing the use of natural resources, improving waste management, promoting product ecology, and others (Choi & Ng, 2011). Mijatovic et al. (2019) note that environmental practices aim to minimize environmental damage and promote environmental sustainability efforts beyond corporate boundaries.

According to Tate et al. (2011), companies implement voluntary environmental practices for two reasons: first, because they can gain a competitive advantage through better access to and management of natural resources, and second, because they want a positive reputation among stakeholders in addition to the competitive advantage they can achieve (Mijatovic et al., 2019).

The following table serves as a summary of the aforementioned and presents 23 variables proposed by the authors Chwiłkowska-Kubala et al. (2021) and organized into three major dimensions. Thus, for each dimension, the authors propose CSR practices respectively.

In 2015, Carroll studied the concept of CSR again through a paper entitled "Corporate social responsibility: The centrepiece of competing and complementary frameworks." The author noted that as long as the world economy is growing, so is CSR. Thus, it can be concluded that CSR has grown over the years and has

**50 Year Trajectory of
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

1960s Social Movements
Civil rights, Women's rights, Consumers, Environmentalism

CORPORATE SOCIAL *RESPONSIBILITY* (1960s)

CORPORATE SOCIAL *RESPONSIBILITY* (1970s)

CORPORATE SOCIAL *RESPONSIBILITY* (1970s – 1980s)

**Business Ethics
(1980s +)**

**Stakeholder Management
(1980s +)**

**Corporate Citizenship
(1990s +)**

**Sustainability
(1990s – 2000s +)**

**Future of CSR
(2015 & Beyond)**

Fig. 18.1 Evolution of the CSR concept. (Source: Carroll, 2015, p. 91)

accompanied the surrounding social context. Through Fig. 18.1, it is possible to analyze this same relationship in a schematic way.

This section aimed at exploring the concept and the evolution of the CSR concept with a brief consideration of what Carroll (2021) believes to be the future of CSR. In fact, Carroll (2021) highlights some of the most important principles and themes regarding CSR, including purpose, innovation, engagement, and collaboration with all partners, shared and integrated value, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

18.3.1 CSR Relevance

In recent years, CSR has been considered a good strategic marketing tool and, according to Porter and Kramer (2006), this is because consumers are increasingly demanding more from companies and expect more than a high-quality product at a low price. In fact, consumers bet on socially renowned brands when evaluating similar products. Several research studies on CSR focus on evaluating the relationship between CSR and other business parameters (such as financial performance). However, according to Aguinis and Glavas (2019), more recent studies highlight individual-level outcomes, such as attitudes, perceptions and behaviour, and satisfaction, among others and how they are currently proactive and intentional agents engaging in the CSR process. The change in consumers' attitudes towards environmental and ecological issues, social responsibility, and the changes in consumption habits force companies to seek new alternatives of action where the principles of CSR are integrated (Virvilaite & Daubaraite, 2011).

Moreover, the unpredictability of the environment is one of the aspects that represents a great threat for many companies. Studies show that the effect of CSR on risk reduction will be stronger in highly dynamic sectors and thus it is easier to deal with the volatility of some sectors. Therefore, to cope with unpredictability and changing environments, companies should allocate more resources to CSR (Sun & Cui, 2014).

Consumers are then an important part that affects these same initiatives, and by understanding consumers' reactions to them, companies can develop CSR strategies. Moving on to a more detailed analysis, Bhattacharya and Sen's (2004) research reveals three important findings. First, the authors concluded that there is significant heterogeneity among consumers when it comes to reactions to CSR initiatives, i.e., what works for one consumer segment may not work for another. The impact of CSR initiatives on outcomes considered internal to the consumer such as attitudes is significantly greater and easier to assess than the impact on external outcomes such as WOM. Finally, the authors found that the firm alone is not the only one that benefits from CSR initiatives, as both consumers and society in general, take advantage of these activities. Thus, the various CSR initiatives were grouped into six major domains:

1. Community support includes, for example, support for health programs or educational initiatives for economically disadvantaged individuals.
2. Support for diversity with, for example, gender and sexual orientation.
3. Support for workers with, for example, concern for safety and building union relations.
4. Support for the environment with, for example, environmentally friendly products and hazardous waste management.
5. Operations outside the United States, and this includes foreign labour practices and operations in countries with human rights violations.
6. Product support can be, for example, product safety and R&D practices.

Thus, the company is expected to develop CSR activities that reach one or more of these six domains, and to do so in a consumer-centric way, companies need to identify which CSR activities are most valued.

18.3.2 CSR Consequents

CSR has an influence on several aspects, including corporate reputation, consumer trust, and consumer loyalty (Stanaland et al., 2011). Furthermore, positive associations based on CSR contribute to a more favourable attitude of stakeholders towards the company (Sen et al., 2006). Several studies have been conducted in relation to CSR. As an example, Chauhary et al. (2016) studied consumers' perceptions of CSR activities and concluded that the antecedents of CSR are repurchase intention, consumer attachment and loyalty, and perceived corporate performance.

In general, a commitment to socially responsible actions leads to positive outcomes for a company. In fact, companies may be able to improve their reputation and corporate image through CSR activities (Waddock & Graves, 1997). In addition to brand image, based on the literature, there are reasons to believe that CSR can also positively affect brand value (Zhao et al., 2021).

According to Prayag et al. (2019), consumer satisfaction may also result from CSR activities and thus when they are successfully achieved, they positively affect consumer satisfaction (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018).

By analysing literature about CSR, several consequents have arisen. Therefore, the next chapters will discuss these and what previous research has found about the way they may be connected to customer satisfaction.

18.4 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the personality traits of a company or one of its brands operating in the market (Dong, 2016) and to consumer perceptions of that same brand and/or a product (Malmelin & Moisander, 2014) reflected through the associations stored in consumers' memory (Leone et al., 2006). Brand image is indivisible from the brand itself and reflects the strength and essence of the brand (Dong, 2016) relating, then, to a series of associations (Aaker, 1991).

Cho and Fiore (2015) studied brand image based on three dimensions: (1) cognitive associations that relate to consumers' personal beliefs, thoughts, and evaluations regarding a brand's attributes (Keller, 2001); (2) emotional associations that involve subjective feelings such as excitement, happiness, and joy (Keller, 2001); and, finally, (3) sensory associations that reflect the involvement of consumers' physical senses, i.e., sight, smell, touch, among others (Schmitt, 1999). The results confirmed the importance of including cognitive, emotional, and sensory items to measure brand image.

Meanwhile, Martínez et al. (2014), regarding brand image, studied two dimensions: the affective and the functional. The functional dimension is related to

tangible characteristics that can be easily measured, while the emotional dimension is associated with a psychological dimension manifested through feelings and attitudes towards the company (Kennedy, 1977) cited by Martínez et al. (2014). It should be noted that the present research was based on the study of these two dimensions to measure brand image.

Regarding CSR and its relationship with brand image, there are several studies that associate these two concepts (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2006). The level of the brand image of products or services is affected by CSR actions, that is, when CSR works for the benefits of society, environment and living conditions of its employees and society in general consumers favour the products and services created by these same companies and, consequently, there is a significant improvement in the brand image (Maldonado-Guzman et al., 2017) and in the retention of customers who express intentions to relate to it again (Othman & Hemdi, 2015). Thus, if the company's goal is to improve its brand image through CSR initiatives, it should take more into account the emotional and social aspects, such as ethics, community support, responsible environmental behaviour, and fair treatment of employees, among others, than the functional aspects, such as price and quality (Martínez et al., 2014). In addition to CSR improving brand image, it also provides financial advantages. From Sun and Cui (2014) perspective, CSR creates a positive image not only for customers but also for other stakeholders such as shareholders and debt holders.

In short, the existence of a brand whose image is attractive to consumers is a guarantee for the success of companies (Martínez et al., 2014).

18.5   Brand Value

The definition of brand value can be very broad. The concept first gained more importance in the 1980s when there was a need to define the relationship between brands and consumers and when it became apparent that the purchase price paid by many companies largely reflected the value of their brands (Leone et al., 2006).

The study of brand value is important for two reasons. First, one of the motivations relates to the financial area, as brand value provides information for accounting purposes or for merger, acquisition, or divestment purposes. According to Keller (1993), the study of brand value can be fundamental to improve marketing productivity, since costs are higher, there is greater competition and a decrease in demand in many markets.

For Aaker (1996), brand value supposes a set of assets and, therefore, brand management must invest in the creation and improvement of these assets. The brand creates value not only for consumers but also for the company itself through, for example, the brand name and symbol. The author conceptualizes brand value based on four dimensions: brand recognition, brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived quality. Burmann et al. (2009) define brand value as the present and future valuation of the brand. This value is explained by internal and external performance and includes three fundamental categories, among them brand value at the psychological, behavioural, and financial levels.

Brand value has a different meaning for different stakeholders. As an example, what is important to a brand owner may not be relevant to society (Naidoo & Abratt, 2018). Brand value is defined in various ways, depending on the specific purpose. Keller (1993) was another of the great scholars in this area. The author conceptualized brand value by basing it on the consumer so that managers have more specific data regarding the marketing program and how it increases the value of brands. Keller (1993, p. 8) regarding brand value states that: 'although the ultimate goal of any marketing program is to increase sales, it is first necessary to establish knowledge structures for the brand so that consumers respond favourably to the brand's marketing activity'.

Regarding brand value, Keller (1993) presents a model known as the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model, that is, it is based on the individual consumer's perspective. Thus, a brand has a positive or negative value (based on the customer) when consumers react favourably, respectively, to an element of the brand's marketing mix than to that same element when it is associated with a fictitious or unnamed version of the product or service. Thus, when there is a favourable consumer response, the brand can increase its revenues, have lower costs, and earn higher profits. There are two approaches to measuring customer-based brand value. The indirect approach assesses potential sources of customer-based brand value by measuring brand awareness and is useful in identifying them. As for the direct approach, it measures customer-based brand value by relying on the impact of brand awareness on consumer response to different elements of the company's marketing program and is useful in determining the nature of the differential response. These approaches are complementary and should be used together.

There are several models that explain the foundation of brand value. Burmann et al. (2009) propose a brand management approach based on brand identity and incorporating external and internal perspectives of value creation through the analysis of behavioural and financial variables. Leone et al. (2006) state that brand value can be assumed as the 'added value' of a product in the thoughts, words, and actions of consumers. This value can increase companies' profitability and consumers' loyalty (Beig & Nika, 2019).

Regarding CSR, it can be stated from the research conducted that, in general terms, CSR positively impacts brand value (Zhao et al., 2021). Esa et al. (2020) also analyzed the positive relationship between the three CSR activities (environmental, community, and labour activities) and brand value among the top 100 brands in Malaysia. The objective was to prove that brand value increases if the company communicates its CSR activities and operations. In addition to the aforementioned, the company starts to benefit from competitive advantages that lead to its success.

Lin and Chung (2019) studied the impact of CSR on brand value in the restaurant industry. The aspects of brand value studied were perceived quality, brand recognition, brand image, and brand loyalty and, according to the authors, companies that practice CSR activities gain advantages over companies that do not. It is also important to mention the study of Bhattacharya et al. (2020). The authors demonstrated that CSR plays an important role during economic downturns and has a positive effect on brand value.

18.6   Consumer Satisfaction

Most researchers do not provide a specific definition on the conceptualization of satisfaction (Prayag et al., 2019). However, satisfaction can be characterized as an emotional state that results from an evaluation that the consumer makes concerning a service or product and their response to it (Westbrook, 1987), and its totality can only be achieved when customers' desires and preferences are prioritized (Khudhair et al., 2019).

Giese and Cote (2002) note that all definitions share some common ideas, these being:

1. Consumer satisfaction is an emotional or cognitive response. However, more recent definitions attribute greater significance to the emotional response, since, according to the authors' study, 64% of respondents relate the concept of satisfaction with more affective terms. It should also be noted that this affective response varies in intensity depending on the situation, that is, it can range from strong to weak.
2. The response is based on a particular focus. The focus identifies the object of consumer satisfaction and usually involves comparing performance to a standard (which can be more specific or more general) and relates, for example, to a product, consumption experience, purchase decision, among others. Determining an appropriate focus for satisfaction varies from context to context, and without a focus, any definition of satisfaction has little meaning.
3. Response occurs at a particular point in time. Typically, consumer satisfaction is assessed after purchase, however, consumer satisfaction can occur before choice or even in the absence of purchase or choice. Thus, it can be concluded that none of the time frames mentioned are entirely appropriate, as satisfaction can vary dramatically over time. Thus, satisfaction is only determined at the time the evaluation occurs.

Although there are several definitions for the term, the model that Oliver (1980) developed, known as the expectation-disconfirmation model, remains a reference. According to the theory, consumer satisfaction with a product or service results from the subjective comparison between expectation and perception. In other words, consumer satisfaction depends on the comparison between initial expectations and actual results. Thus, satisfaction arises when expectations are confirmed, and dissatisfaction arises when these expectations are not met. In addition to the above, previous literature reviews have shown that, regarding satisfaction, there are also studies about other theories, including attribution theory, dissonance theory, and contrast theory.

The study of the main antecedents of satisfaction has become a strategic issue. In fact, consumers are increasingly autonomous, reflexive, and critical. Thus, the antecedents of satisfaction should be analyzed in a deeper way to predict some consumer behaviours and subsequently obtain a series of beneficial results for organizations, such as word of mouth (WOM) communication, loyalty, and financial profitability (Palací et al., 2019).

Szymanski and Henard (2001) based on Oliver's (1997) model present, in their article, the antecedents they consider to be important for consumer satisfaction. These include (1) expectations, which can be addressed at two different times: through anticipation or, later, through comparison. Regarding expectations now of anticipation, it can be mentioned that they have a direct influence on satisfaction levels, since there is no evaluation or comparison of the actual results. Another antecedent referred to in the study is (2) the disconfirmation of expectations which, through comparison, is evaluated relative to actual performance results, i.e., consumers are satisfied when results exceed expectations and are dissatisfied when expectations exceed results and, finally, they are only satisfied when results meet expectations. In addition to the above, the authors mention that (3) performance can affect satisfaction. This relationship is explained through the value–perception relationship, that is, consumers are satisfied when there is a good performance of the company that can be demonstrated through the ability to offer consumers what they need, want, or desire. Another antecedent referred to in the authors' study is (4) affect which, through the emotions aroused during consumption, is prone to leave affective traces in consumers' memories that are subsequently included in satisfaction evaluations. Finally, (5) fairness is also considered an antecedent of satisfaction, in that consumers consider themselves satisfied when their fairness ratio is proportionally higher than the ratio achieved by the reference person or the group.

The antecedents of consumer satisfaction were also studied by authors Prayag et al. (2019). Indeed, they addressed in their article four important antecedents of consumer satisfaction, among them (1) perceived justice and fairness, (2) emotions, (3) the influence of CSR, (4) sustainable practices, and, finally, (5) employee–customer interactions. Among these five antecedents, it is important to highlight the influence of CSR on consumer satisfaction. Thus, both CSR and organizational reputation have a positive impact on consumer satisfaction (Su et al., 2015) thus there is a relationship between CSR associations and consumer satisfaction (Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). Mohammed and Rashid (2018), based on Carrol's (1991) four dimensions of CSR, concluded that CSR positively affects consumer satisfaction.

Indeed, one of the main objectives of CSR is the possible advantages that companies can gain by being socially responsible towards stakeholders. However, consumers seem to need special attention, as CSR activities have a significant effect on consumer-related outcomes (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Currently, consumers are more satisfied with products developed by socially responsible companies. First, it is important to note that a company's actions appeal to the multidimensionality of the consumer as not only an economic agent but also a representative member of various stakeholder groups. Second, CSR activities create a favourable context that positively drives consumer evaluations and thus satisfaction. Finally, the antecedents of consumer satisfaction are also relevant, as consumers get a better perception of value and consequently a higher satisfaction with the product that is made by a socially responsible company (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006).

Hsieh et al. (2018), in their study concerning the catering field, studied the relationship between various concepts. In their research, they concluded that quality

service improves not only brand image but also consumer satisfaction. Still within the catering area, the author Cuong (2020) proved the influence of brand image of fast-food restaurants in Vietnam on consumer satisfaction. In fact, considering the results obtained, it can be stated that brand image is an antecedent of consumer satisfaction and positively impacts it (Cuong & Long, 2020).

In fact, consumers who recognize a positive brand image tend to believe that the brand succeeds in offering high satisfaction (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018).

Regarding value, Aaker (1992) states that it is important for consumer satisfaction in three aspects. First, brand value helps the consumer to interpret, process, and retrieve all the information related to products and brands. Then, it should be noted that brand value affects the consumer's confidence in the purchase decision, i.e., a consumer tends to choose a brand that he or she has already used and considers having the high quality or is familiar with. Finally, the author states that brand value, particularly perceived quality, and brand associations, provide value to the consumer, thereby increasing consumer satisfaction when the individual uses the product or brand.

18.7   Conclusions

To obtain a better understanding of CSR and how it may be important for companies, it is required to analyze its impact on several variables. This research aimed to understand which relevant consequents of CSR also impact customer satisfaction. According to the literature review, it could be said that Corporate social responsibility may have impact on consumers' perception towards the brand, especially on brand image and brand value. These important consequents may act as mediators on CSR impact on the brand. So, CSR may impact on consumer satisfaction towards the brand. Although some authors have developed research about this subject, further research may be developed to understand the relationship between CSR brand value and brand image and to understand if together they are able to explain consumer satisfaction.

This chapter aimed to be a theoretical one, so future research may focus on developing a model which tests the relationship between the suggested constructs, to verify if these can explain customer satisfaction.

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