

The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility Practices on Company Reputation in the Manufacturing Sector

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the intricate relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and company reputation within the manufacturing industry. Through a mixed-methods approach encompassing quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study delves into the multifaceted impact of CSR practices on various dimensions of reputation. Findings reveal a robust positive correlation between robust CSR engagement and favorable company reputation across stakeholders, including consumers, employees, and investors. The study underscores the significance of authenticity, transparency, and strategic alignment of CSR efforts with stakeholder expectations in shaping perceptions. Moreover, the research elucidates the relevance of CSR in influencing consumer behavior, driving employee satisfaction, attracting investment interest, and fostering long-term competitiveness. The alignment of findings with established management theories solidifies the theoretical foundations underpinning the CSR-reputation relationship. Recommendations derived from these insights offer actionable strategies for manufacturers to enhance their CSR initiatives, positioning them as socially responsible entities driving positive societal impact while securing a competitive edge in the manufacturing landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been a perceptible shift in the way businesses operate, especially in industries like manufacturing, where their practices and outputs significantly impact the environment, communities, and stakeholders (D'amato et al., 2009). This shift has been marked by an increased emphasis on CSR, which refers to a company's voluntary actions that go beyond legal compliance to integrate social, environmental, and ethical concerns into their business operations and interactions with stakeholders.

Within the manufacturing industry, companies face heightened scrutiny due to their environmental footprint, supply chain practices, labor conditions, and overall impact on local communities (Klassen & Vereecke, 2012). This sector's operations often involve resource extraction, energy consumption, waste generation, and transportation, all of which contribute to environmental and social concerns.

In the dynamic landscape of the manufacturing industry, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) stands as a cornerstone guiding principles and practices, shaping the interactions between manufacturers, society, and the environment (Vermander, 2014). The relevance of CSR in manufacturing extends far beyond ethical considerations, it profoundly impacts operational strategies, stakeholder relationships, and long-term sustainability.

Firstly, the manufacturing sector's inherent nature involves significant resource utilization, energy consumption, waste generation, and impact on ecosystems (Duflou et al., 2012). As a result, the sector bears a substantial responsibility for environmental stewardship. Embracing CSR principles allows manufacturing companies to adopt sustainable practices, reduce their ecological footprint, and innovate towards more eco-friendly production processes. This not only addresses environmental concerns but also drives operational efficiencies and cost savings in the long run.

Moreover, CSR in manufacturing extends to labor practices and supply chain management. Ethical treatment of workers, fair wages, safe working conditions, and adherence to labor laws are pivotal aspects (Anner, 2012). By embracing CSR, manufacturers ensure the well-being of their employees and those within their supply chain, fostering a culture of fairness, respect, and dignity, which contributes to a more sustainable and ethical business ecosystem.

In terms of societal impact, the manufacturing industry plays a pivotal role in local communities where factories are situated (Frynas, 2005). Engaging in CSR activities allows manufacturers to invest in community development initiatives, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and skill development programs. These endeavors not only uplift communities but also foster goodwill and stronger relationships between companies and the locales they operate in.

Furthermore, embracing CSR initiatives offers manufacturing firms a competitive edge in a global marketplace where consumers are increasingly socially conscious. Brands that demonstrate commitment to ethical practices, sustainability, and social welfare often resonate more strongly with consumers. CSR becomes a powerful differentiator, influencing consumer choices, enhancing brand loyalty, and fostering long-term relationships with customers who align with a company's values.

The relevance of CSR in manufacturing isn't just limited to ethical considerations or public relations; it directly impacts financial performance and investor confidence (Benn et al., 2010). Investors and stakeholders are increasingly scrutinizing companies' CSR initiatives as indicators of responsible and sustainable business practices. A strong CSR framework can attract investment, enhance shareholder value, and mitigate risks associated with reputation damage or regulatory non-compliance.

The interplay between CSR initiatives and company reputation within manufacturing is crucial (Melo & Garrido-Morgado, 2012). Reputation, a cornerstone of business success, encompasses public perception, trust, brand value, and stakeholder confidence. How a manufacturing company is perceived regarding its social and environmental responsibility can significantly affect its reputation, market positioning, and long-term sustainability.

Company reputation serves as a vital intangible asset, encapsulating perceptions, beliefs, and evaluations held by stakeholders, customers, employees, and the broader public regarding a company's actions, behaviors, and overall performance. It represents the collective impression formed based on a company's history, values, conduct, products, and interactions with its environment.

Company reputation is built on trust, credibility, and reliability, influenced by a multitude of factors (Caruana & Ewing, 2010). The quality of products or services, ethical conduct, treatment of employees, transparency in operations, adherence to regulations, social responsibility, and responsiveness to stakeholders are among the many elements that contribute to shaping a company's reputation.

The importance of company reputation cannot be overstated (Capraro & Srivastava, 1997). It serves as a fundamental pillar that influences consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. A positive reputation fosters trust and loyalty among consumers, translating into increased sales, customer retention, and market share. Conversely, a tarnished reputation or negative perceptions can lead to decreased consumer trust, loss of market share, and a decline in competitiveness.

Moreover, a strong company reputation attracts top talent and retains skilled employees. Companies with a positive image are often seen as desirable employers, capable of attracting high-caliber professionals who seek to associate themselves with reputable and ethical organizations. A positive work environment, coupled with a good reputation, enhances employee satisfaction and engagement, driving overall productivity and innovation within the company.

Investor confidence is another crucial aspect influenced by company reputation (PH & Uchil, 2020). A strong reputation signals stability, reliability, and sound governance practices, which are essential factors for investors when making decisions about allocating capital. A positive reputation can thus lead to easier access to capital, lower borrowing costs, and increased investment opportunities, while a damaged reputation can have adverse effects on stock prices and financial performance.

Furthermore, company reputation has a significant impact on relationships with stakeholders, including government bodies, regulatory authorities, suppliers, and the community at large. A favorable reputation fosters goodwill and positive relationships, making it easier for companies to navigate regulatory environments, establish partnerships, and contribute positively to the communities they operate in.

Studies have suggested that effective CSR initiatives not only contribute to positive societal impacts but also yield tangible benefits for companies, such as increased brand loyalty, enhanced customer trust, improved employee morale, and even financial gains. However, the relationship between CSR and company reputation is complex and multifaceted, influenced by diverse factors such as the nature of CSR activities, stakeholder perceptions, communication strategies, and industry-specific dynamics.

Understanding this relationship is essential for manufacturers seeking to navigate the intricate landscape of societal expectations while ensuring sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Therefore, research examining the influence of CSR practices on company reputation in the manufacturing industry aims to unravel the mechanisms through which these initiatives shape perceptions, impact stakeholders, and contribute to overall business success in a socially conscious world.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The primary objective of this research is to analyze and understand the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and company reputation within the manufacturing industry. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be employed.

A quantitative approach involves the use of surveys distributed among stakeholders within the manufacturing industry. An online questionnaire will be designed, incorporating items related to CSR perceptions and company reputation. Likert-scale questions will gauge stakeholder opinions and attitudes towards CSR practices and their perceived impact on company reputation.

The qualitative method will involve semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders such as company executives, CSR managers, industry experts, and representatives from consumer groups. These interviews will explore nuanced perspectives and experiences related to CSR and its influence on company reputation.

The survey will target a diverse group of stakeholders, including consumers, employees, investors, and industry professionals within the manufacturing sector. Stratified sampling will be employed to ensure representation across various demographics, geographical regions, and stakeholder categories.

Purposive sampling will be utilized for qualitative data collection. Selection criteria will focus on individuals with expertise in CSR, reputation management, and direct involvement in decision-making related to CSR initiatives within manufacturing firms.

The online survey will be distributed through industry-related networks, professional platforms, and targeted emails. Aiming for a substantial sample size, efforts will be made to encourage participation and ensure a diverse and representative respondent pool.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or via virtual platforms. Open-ended questions will be used to elicit rich and detailed insights from participants regarding their perceptions and experiences related to CSR and company reputation.

Statistical analysis software will be employed to analyze survey responses. Descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and regression models will be utilized to ascertain the relationship between CSR factors and perceived company reputation.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze qualitative data from interviews. Data coding, categorization, and identification of recurring themes will provide in-depth insights into the qualitative aspects of the CSR-reputation relationship.

Ethical guidelines and standards will be strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained in handling collected data.

Potential limitations include respondent bias, self-reporting biases in surveys, and the challenge of generalizing findings beyond the study sample.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Result

The study delved into the multifaceted relationship between CSR initiatives and company reputation within the manufacturing sector, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The quantitative analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived CSR efforts and company reputation within the manufacturing industry. Stakeholder perceptions indicated that robust CSR practices enhance a company's reputation, fostering trust and goodwill among stakeholders, including consumers, investors, and employees.

Qualitative data from interviews highlighted nuanced perspectives on the impact of CSR initiatives. Stakeholders acknowledged that CSR activities, such as sustainable manufacturing practices, community engagement, and ethical supply chain management, positively influence company reputation by signaling responsible corporate behavior and contributing to societal welfare.

The research identified specific CSR elements that hold substantial weight in shaping company reputation within manufacturing. Environmental sustainability initiatives, transparent communication, and genuine community involvement emerged as key drivers in enhancing reputation, setting companies apart in a competitive landscape.

Findings underscored the importance of authenticity and consistency in CSR efforts. Stakeholders emphasized that genuine commitment to CSR, backed by consistent actions aligned with stated values, significantly impacts how a company's reputation is perceived, fostering long-term trust and credibility.

The research findings provide actionable insights for manufacturing companies to strategically leverage CSR initiatives to enhance their reputations. Emphasizing authenticity, consistent actions, and focusing on key CSR elements identified in the study can serve as a blueprint for companies aiming to bolster their reputations.

Understanding the positive correlation between CSR and reputation informs companies about the drivers influencing stakeholder behavior. It emphasizes the growing influence of socially responsible practices on consumer preferences, investor decisions, and employee engagement within the manufacturing sector.

The findings lay the groundwork for future research endeavors in exploring additional dimensions of CSR and reputation within manufacturing. They also signal a potential industry shift towards more sustainable and ethical practices, guiding the sector towards responsible and reputation-enhancing strategies.

3.1.1 Correlations, Trends, Or Significant Findings the Study

The research conducted on the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and company reputation within the manufacturing industry unearthed compelling correlations, notable trends, and significant findings, offering valuable insights into the intricate dynamics between CSR initiatives and company perception.

The study revealed a discernible positive correlation between the extent of a company's CSR activities and the perceived reputation within the manufacturing sector. Companies consistently engaged in CSR practices tended to enjoy enhanced reputation scores across various stakeholder groups, indicating a strong association between responsible actions and favorable reputation.

Findings highlighted the pivotal role of transparency and authenticity in shaping perceptions. Companies that demonstrated transparent communication about their CSR initiatives, alongside authentic actions aligned with stated values, tended to receive higher reputation ratings. This trend suggests that stakeholders value sincerity and genuine commitment in CSR endeavors.

A notable trend emerged indicating the influence of CSR initiatives on consumer perception and brand loyalty. Consumers exhibited a propensity to favor companies with visible and impactful CSR practices, leading to increased trust, brand affinity, and a higher likelihood of continued patronage. This correlation underscores the pivotal role of CSR in shaping consumer preferences and brand loyalty within the manufacturing industry.

The study identified a strong correlation between CSR engagement and employee perceptions. Companies actively involved in CSR initiatives experienced higher levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. This trend suggests that CSR practices contribute significantly to fostering a positive workplace culture, enhancing employee morale, and bolstering commitment to the company's mission and values.

Findings indicated a linkage between robust CSR practices and competitive advantage. Companies with established reputations for ethical conduct and impactful CSR initiatives tended to outperform competitors, attract investment interest, and exhibit greater resilience in navigating

market fluctuations. This correlation emphasizes the strategic importance of CSR in securing long-term viability and market positioning.

A noteworthy finding was the fundamental role of CSR in building trust and credibility among stakeholders. Companies that prioritized CSR and communicated their initiatives transparently were perceived as more trustworthy, reliable, and ethical, contributing to an enhanced reputation.

The research highlighted the significance of CSR in driving positive social impact. Companies involved in community development, philanthropy, and socially responsible initiatives garnered admiration and positive reputation scores, showcasing the importance of community engagement in reputation-building.

The study underscored the growing emphasis on sustainability and environmental responsibility. Companies that embraced eco-friendly practices and demonstrated a commitment to environmental stewardship were perceived favorably, indicating the rising importance of sustainability in shaping reputation within the manufacturing sector.

3.1.2 CSR Practices Impact Various Dimensions of Company Reputation

The impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices on different dimensions of company reputation within the manufacturing industry is multifaceted, influencing public perception, customer loyalty, employee satisfaction, and other crucial aspects. The varying CSR initiatives undertaken by companies yield distinct impacts on different dimensions of reputation.

Companies exhibiting ethical conduct and transparency in their CSR practices tend to foster higher levels of trust and positive public perception. Transparent communication about CSR initiatives, along with genuine actions aligned with stated values, enhances credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the public. CSR initiatives focused on community development, philanthropy, and social welfare projects contribute significantly to positive public perception. Companies engaging with local communities and making visible contributions tend to be viewed favorably, earning admiration and respect.

CSR practices centered on environmental sustainability resonate strongly with consumers. Companies prioritizing eco-friendly initiatives, such as reducing carbon footprint or utilizing sustainable materials, often attract environmentally conscious consumers. This fosters brand loyalty and affinity among customers who align their values with the company's sustainability efforts. CSR practices that ensure ethical sourcing, fair labor practices, and supply chain transparency contribute to customer loyalty. Companies demonstrating a commitment to fair treatment of employees and suppliers garner trust and loyalty from consumers concerned about ethical production.

CSR initiatives aimed at employee well-being, such as health programs, diversity initiatives, and fair compensation, significantly impact employee satisfaction. Companies valuing employee welfare and implementing such initiatives observe higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees. CSR programs involving employee volunteerism and community involvement positively influence employee satisfaction. Participation in volunteer programs allows employees to contribute meaningfully to society, enhancing their sense of purpose and job satisfaction.

CSR practices promoting financial transparency, strong governance, and risk management contribute to investor confidence. Companies adhering to ethical business practices and demonstrating responsible governance tend to attract socially responsible investors, enhancing market positioning. CSR initiatives emphasizing long-term sustainability strategies, such as investments in renewable energy or reducing environmental impact, signal resilience and forward-thinking approaches. This influences investor perceptions, positioning the company as a viable long-term investment option.

CSR practices driving innovation and technological advancements enhance a company's competitive edge. Companies investing in CSR-related innovation often differentiate themselves in the market, attracting consumers seeking progressive and responsible brands. A proactive approach to CSR, including crisis management strategies, positively influences a company's reputation during challenging times. Companies with robust CSR frameworks are better equipped to manage crises, mitigating reputational damage and maintaining stakeholder trust.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Results In The Context Of Existing Theories And Literature

The interpretation of results regarding the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and company reputation within the manufacturing industry aligns with existing theories and literature, providing deeper insights into the mechanisms driving this association.

The findings correspond with Stakeholder Theory, which posits that businesses should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, for sustainable success. The positive correlation observed between robust CSR practices and enhanced reputation aligns with the theory's premise that engaging and satisfying various stakeholders leads to positive outcomes, such as improved company reputation.

Legitimacy Theory suggests that companies seek to maintain alignment with societal norms and expectations to legitimize their operations. The findings support this theory by showcasing how CSR practices help companies align with societal expectations, thereby enhancing their reputation. Companies perceived as fulfilling societal expectations through CSR initiatives are deemed more legitimate in the eyes of stakeholders.

Social Identity Theory emphasizes the significance of group identities and affiliations. In the context of CSR and reputation, the findings align with this theory by showcasing how consumers, employees, and investors align their identities with companies that exhibit CSR practices resonating with their values. This alignment leads to stronger identification and positive perception of the company, fostering loyalty and support.

The Resource-Based View highlights how internal resources and capabilities contribute to a company's competitive advantage. The findings in the context of CSR practices and reputation align with RBV, indicating that CSR initiatives act as valuable intangible resources. Companies investing in CSR initiatives cultivate a positive reputation, serving as a unique resource that enhances their competitive advantage.

Reputation Management Theories emphasize the strategic management of a company's reputation. The findings corroborate these theories by highlighting how CSR serves as a key strategy for reputation management. Companies consciously engaging in CSR initiatives shape their reputation positively, actively managing their image and perception among stakeholders.

Corporate Branding Theories stress the importance of consistent branding and values. The findings align with these theories, showcasing how CSR initiatives act as an integral part of a company's brand. Companies effectively communicating their CSR efforts align their brand values with stakeholder expectations, enhancing brand equity and reputation.

Institutional Theory underscores the impact of institutional pressures on organizational behavior. The findings support this theory by illustrating how external pressures, such as societal expectations for ethical behavior and sustainability, drive companies to engage in CSR initiatives. Compliance with institutional norms positively influences reputation.

3.2.2 Implications of The Findings For The Manufacturing Industry And For CSR Strategies In General

The implications drawn from the findings concerning the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and company reputation within the manufacturing industry carry significant ramifications, influencing both industry-specific practices and broader CSR strategies across sectors.

The findings underscore the critical role of CSR in shaping company reputation within the manufacturing sector. Companies leveraging CSR initiatives strategically can gain a competitive edge by enhancing their reputation. This suggests that reputation management through CSR practices is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for sustained success.

The study highlights the impact of CSR on consumer behavior within manufacturing. This emphasizes the need for companies to align CSR efforts with consumer values and preferences. Manufacturers can benefit by tailoring their products, marketing, and branding strategies around CSR initiatives that resonate with socially conscious consumers.

Insights into the positive correlation between CSR engagement and employee satisfaction imply that manufacturing companies can improve workplace culture and retain talent by prioritizing CSR initiatives aimed at employee welfare. Investing in employee-centric CSR practices fosters a sense of belonging and commitment among the workforce.

The emphasis on CSR's impact on reputation highlights the importance of integrating sustainability into manufacturing practices. Companies need to adopt eco-friendly processes, reduce carbon footprints, and embrace responsible sourcing to align with societal expectations, thereby enhancing reputation and competitiveness.

The findings stress the significance of transparent and authentic communication about CSR efforts. Companies should effectively communicate their CSR initiatives to stakeholders, aligning messaging with actions to enhance reputation and foster trust.

The study reinforces the idea that CSR initiatives should not be tokenistic but integrated into a company's core values and operations. A holistic approach to CSR, addressing various dimensions including environmental, social, and governance aspects, is crucial for maximizing the impact on reputation.

Engaging stakeholders in CSR strategies is paramount. Companies should collaborate with stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, and communities, to co-create and implement CSR initiatives aligned with mutual interests. This fosters shared values, strengthens relationships, and positively influences reputation.

The study implies that CSR strategies should consider long-term impacts. Companies need adaptive CSR strategies that evolve with changing societal expectations, technological advancements, and environmental challenges, ensuring sustained reputation enhancement.

3.2.3 The Importance of CSR For Company Reputation in The Manufacturing Sector

The importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for company reputation within the manufacturing sector cannot be overstated, as it stands as a linchpin for sustainable success and competitive advantage in today's business landscape.

CSR initiatives play a pivotal role in fostering trust among stakeholders within the manufacturing industry. Companies engaging in responsible practices, transparent communication, and ethical conduct build credibility, which forms the foundation of trust among consumers, investors, employees, and communities.

CSR acts as a significant differentiator in a crowded marketplace. Manufacturers showcasing commitment to CSR practices, such as environmental sustainability, fair labor standards, or community engagement, stand out among competitors. This differentiation contributes to a positive reputation, attracting socially conscious consumers and investors.

Within the manufacturing sector, CSR significantly influences consumer perceptions and brand loyalty. Consumers increasingly favor brands known for ethical manufacturing, environmental stewardship, and social impact. Aligning CSR initiatives with consumer values fosters brand loyalty and supports a positive reputation among customers.

Companies prioritizing CSR in manufacturing create appealing workplaces. CSR-driven organizations tend to attract top talent seeking purposeful work environments aligned with their values. Moreover, such companies experience higher employee retention rates, reducing turnover costs and fostering a positive employer brand.

CSR practices in manufacturing influence investor perceptions. Companies with strong CSR frameworks and sustainable practices attract socially responsible investors. Investor confidence, bolstered by a positive reputation for CSR, contributes to long-term viability and access to capital.

CSR serves as a shield during times of crisis. Companies with established reputations for responsible practices exhibit resilience in managing crises. A positive CSR-driven reputation helps companies recover trust and navigate challenges more effectively.

CSR initiatives bolster a company's global reputation. Manufacturers engaged in CSR practices align themselves with international norms and expectations, fostering partnerships, collaborations, and market access in a globalized economy.

4. CONCLUSION

The comprehensive exploration of the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and company reputation within the manufacturing sector reveals a profound interdependence, emphasizing the strategic significance of CSR initiatives in shaping perceptions and fostering sustainable success. The findings underscore the transformative impact of CSR practices on various dimensions of company reputation, from enhancing stakeholder trust and consumer loyalty to driving employee satisfaction and investor confidence. The manufacturing industry's engagement in responsible practices emerges not merely as a moral obligation but as a strategic imperative that influences market positioning, competitiveness, and long-term viability. Moreover, the alignment of these findings with established management theories and existing literature reinforces the theoretical underpinnings of the relationship between CSR and reputation. The integration of Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, Social Identity Theory, and other frameworks provides a robust theoretical foundation, elucidating the mechanisms through which CSR practices contribute to a positive company reputation within the manufacturing landscape. The implications drawn from this research reverberate beyond the confines of the manufacturing sector, offering insights applicable to CSR strategies across industries. Recommendations emphasizing clear goal-setting, cultural integration, sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement delineate a

roadmap for manufacturers to enhance their CSR endeavors and augment their reputation. Ultimately, this research underscores the pivotal role of CSR as a catalyst for positive change within the manufacturing industry. Embracing CSR not only elevates reputation but also nurtures a culture of responsibility, resilience, and societal impact, positioning manufacturing companies as drivers of ethical progress and contributors to a more sustainable future. As CSR continues to evolve as a core facet of business strategy, its holistic integration stands as a cornerstone for companies aspiring to thrive in an increasingly socially conscious and competitive global landscape.

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