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### **RESEARCH PAPER**

# The Impact of CSR Activities on Consumer's Purchase Intentions: A Study of Consumer packed Goods (CPG) Industry of Pakistan

### <sup>1</sup>Tahira Umair \*, and <sup>2</sup>Sadia Butt

- 1. Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences, Comsats University Islamabad (CUI) -Lahore Campus Pakistan
- 2. PhD Scholar, Department of Management, Dr Hasan Murad School of Management, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

\*Corresponding Author:

F2018051001@umt.edu.pk

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the impact of corporate socially responsible (CSR) activities (using Carroll's four dimensions) on consumer's purchase intentions (CPI) in Pakistan's consumerpackaged goods (CPG) industry. A structured questionnaire is employed and a random sampling technique is used. Furthermore, analysis of data was done through correlation and regression tests. Overall results showed that all the CSR dimensions have an impact on consumer buying intentions except economic and legal responsibilities which have little influence on the purchase intention of Pakistani consumers. This research study is beneficial for managers, practitioners, and strategists to know the attitude of consumers in Pakistan towards CSR and also enable them to plan and implement CSR strategies accordingly.

### **KEYWORDS** Consumer's Purchase Intentions, CPG Industry, CSR, Pakistan

#### Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is explained as "the strategies that organizations deploy to conduct their business in a way that is ethical, environmentally friendly, and beneficial to the community in terms of development" (Ismail, 2009). Presently, it has become a vital element of organizational practice of their businesses. Organizations that are engaged in CSR initiatives, such firms have exhibited improvement in terms of reputation, financial returns, attractions and retentions of the investors, and workforce engagement (Ishtiaq et al., 2017; Butt et al., 2022). Companies supporting CSR earn benefits on account of the good actions as well as enhance their brand recognition and satisfaction level of consumer and their employees (Alawamleh & Giacaman, 2020). According to the findings of previous studies, it has significant influence on the financial performance of a company (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016) increases market values, helps in positive company evaluation, higher purchase intentions, and provides a competitive advantage (Mackey, Mackey, & Barney, 2007). This trend is rapidly increasing among companies as they begin to realize the potential benefits of dedicating their resources to the well-being of society, the community, and their customers across the globe (Arif & Shabbir, 2019).

Moreover, Pokorny (1995) asserted that organizational progress is appraised through company's contribution towards its society. The consumers are becoming more knowledgeable and aware amidst globalization and technological developments. Thus, the customers usually support those companies that are practicing and showing socially responsible behaviors. (Farah & Newman, 2010). Additionally, CSR initiatives help organizations in developing an image of doing well by strengthening their relationship with their entire stakeholders predominantly society and consumers at large (Ali, 2011).

In the current era of competition, sellers must generate an effectual brand persona through generating a positive image of their brand. In developed countries, CSR activities have a positive impact on developing or sometimes uplifting the image of the brand (Arslan & Zaman, 2014). In past 5 year, extensive growth is observed in published CSR research however, major proportion of these researches are carried out in progressed nations

particularly paying attention to Western countries (Fatma et al., 2015). Consumers living in developed and underdeveloped countries have different perspectives on CSR activities due to differences in economic, cultural, and political conditions. Hence, this study focused on finding out the impact of CSR activities in Pakistani society as it is not certain that findings of other countries can be applied to Pakistani consumer perspective (Chapple & Moon, 2005). This research paper aims to identify the effect of CSR activities on CPI towards CPG industry in Pakistan. The CPG industry was selected due to its huge and swiftly increasing share of market. In prevailing decade of extreme rivalry, CPG firms have experienced a 17% increase in sales, reaching Rs. 334 billion, and a 40% increase in profits, reaching Rs. 24 billion. The sales of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies grew at a compound annual rate of growth (CAGR) of 18 percent, whereas profits have grown at 20 percent CAGR from 2008 to 2012 which now reaches above 20 percent (Haq, 2015).

Moreover, Consumer packaged goods (CPG) contain less expensive and low-engagement products, thus during purchasing decision in other product categories that need more involvement and cost, if clients acknowledge social actions by organizations, in that case this will facilitate to observe the relationship of CPI to CSR initiatives about high category products in future studies. Additionally, past studies largely paid attention to the Telecommunication industry in Pakistan (Ali, 2011). Thus, there is a need to study the CSR's influence on CPI as well as consumer's intention is even more essential to determine when competition is tough and products are homogeneous (Hussain, 2013) as in the case of CPGs.

Increasing requirement for FMCG has attracted huge amount of dollar investments in Pakistan. The mounting middle class requires CPG from various product brands. Keeping in view about current situation in the country, many FMCG giants have publicized their investment plans (120 to 150 million dollars) to broaden their operations in different Pakistani regions. Extensive progress in consumer's products sales has driven further industries (like retailing, advertisement, media, and entertainment. sports, and E-commerce etc.) Prevailing retailing market's size of Pakistan is approximately 152 billion dollar, and this is projected to grow 8.2 percent per year (from 2016 to 2021) as disposable average earning is now double since the year 2010 (Daily Times, 2016).

Moreover, Marquina Feldman and Vasquez-Parraga (2013) indicated that CSR research may be growing, but CPIs toward activities of CSR haven't been thoroughly investigated. Most of the scholars claimed that the researches regarding consumer's responses to activities of CSR association are yet arguable. Few researches show the positive association between consumer's response and actions of CSR in the organization (Carvalho et al., 2010) while others report, this association is "not always direct and evident" (Fatma et al., 2015; Valor, 2005). Furthermore, results of many studies investigating this association haven't reached the unanimous decision (Butt, 2016). Preceding studies indicate that various dimensions of CSR may impact differently on response of the consumers. Hence, this research utilizes Carroll's (1979) CSR categorization to check customer's purchase intention (CPI).

The purpose of current study is to investigate what is the response of consumers towards various CSR dimensions/forms. Furthermore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature regarding the socially responsive behavior of Pakistani consumers towards consumer-packaged goods (precisely convenience goods) industry in Pakistan.

### **Literature Review**

### **Corporate Social responsibility (CSR)**

According to Bowen (1953), "corporate social responsibility (CSR) communicates a basic morality in the way a company acts toward society". This notion drew huge attention in late 1960's when large conglomerate firms stared expanding and became more popular in 1980s (Bowen & Bowen, 2013). In twenty first century, its environmental part became

considerably stronger and society's increased awareness regarding natural issues which gives another picture to CSR activities (Kaur, 2013).

There is no universally acknowledged definition of CSR. Defining the socially responsible behavior of an organization has been a debate since its birth (Ahmad, 2006) according to understanding of researchers and academicians and frequently changes with passage of time (Butt, 2016). CSR is a model of business which is self-adjusting and it facilitates companies in the social accountability towards society, organizational stakeholders and to themselves (Alawamleh & Giacaman, 2020). The European Commission (2011) defines CSR as "the responsibility of firms for their effects on society". Naqvi et al. (2013) define it as, "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) speaks of the reaction of an organization to social plans". Mohr et al. (2001) described CSR as, "it is a company's devotion to lessen or take out the harmful effects and expand its longer term beneficial impact towards the society." The notion of CSR relates to the ways organizational businesses contribute to support refinements through societal, economic and environmental advantages for its stakeholders. Fundamental aim of CSR is sustainability of the operations of organizational business and creating shared value for organizational businesses or for the society (Butt et al., 2022).

In this research article, researchers have adopted the Carroll's model of CSR and used it in knowing the purchase intention of Pakistani consumers. Carroll (1979) defined CSR as, "Corporate Social Responsibility incorporates the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary desires that society has of corporations". Furthermore, he described it as the social agreement between organization and their stakeholder and a valuable instrument for society and organizations for corporate decision making (Andreasen & Drumwright, 2001; Safi, 2013). The four dimensions of CSR are recognized as 'Carroll's CSR Pyramid' (Carroll, 1991; Safi, 2013), and this is recognized among the most cited literature terms (Dusuki, 2005).

The main reasons behind selection of this model include: 1) This model defines CSR comprehensively encompassing all the aspects/dimensions of business responsibilities (Hussain, 2013); 2), the literature extensively recognizes this definition (Mohr et al., 2001). This model extensively supports to the beginners to take part in activities of CSR and offers the helpful guideline to organizations to understand its fundamental conception (Belal, 2008).

### **Economic CSR (ER)**

Carroll (1979) considers firms as fundamental economic unit of the society. So, ER is the foremost obligation of firms (i.e. ER dimension of the CSR). While, other three dimensions also rely on the ER because it is doubtful to call an organization socially responsible without economic dimension of CSR (Hussain, 2013). A research conducted in US pointed out that it is dangerous for an organization to claim itself socially responsible if its economic accomplishments are not better (Maignan & Fairwell, 2004). ER is not just to maximize the interest of shareholders, but stakeholders' interest as well (Safi, 2013).

### Legal CSR (LR)

Whereas firms are perceived to follow their ER, but at the same time it is expected from the companies to comply the law to attain their economic goals (Fadun, 2014). This CSR dimension (i.e ER) encompasses that "the organizations must fulfill the legal requirements for conducting business" (Carroll, 1991, 1979). ER and LR interrelate and the society demands from a company to attain its economic objectives while obeying the law (Goddard, 2005). For becoming socially responsible, an organization must follow rules and regulations which the Govt. imposes on the organization (De Schutter, 2008). Many research analysts argued that in developing countries most of legally irresponsible behavior which companies exhibit is evading taxes. Hence, such companies oppose the claim of being socially

responsible (Christensen & Murphy, 2004). Therefore, it is important for an organization to fulfill other lawful commitments such as client's protection laws, paying taxes, employee welfare and pollution control (Safi, 2013).

### **Ethical CSR (ETR)**

ETR is referred as the activities that are perceived as moral and ethical in a society (Carroll, 1979, 1991). An ETR consists of norms and standard values that societal members completely accept. To become responsible ethically, companies are supported to

Honor and comply these ethical values. ETR may go beyond and above the enacting law through formulating code of ethics which business can follow (Solomon, 1994).

### Philanthropic CSR (PR)

Philanthropy involves corporate actions towards wellbeing of humans and society in large by the companies in order to make a good society (Fadun, 2014). Carroll (1991) argues that all the employees should contribute in benevolent and voluntary actions, especially the ones improving lifestyle quality in a society. PR are the benevolent and elective part of CSR and are not expected in an ethical or moral sense (Ferrell, 2004). Likewise, firms aren't thought as dishonest if organizations don't achieve PR objectives. Though financial revenues may not be generated by PR, yet the PR gives competitive gain in longer period through building positive image and improving both workforce and customer's loyalty in a company (Fombrun et al., 2000).

# **Consumer Behavior towards Corporate Social Responsibility**

"Consumer's behavioral intents (CBI) evaluate the ability of an individual's intents for performance of a particular behavior" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), CBI associate to ability of providers of services to make their consumers satisfied and speaking positively about their services (Tran & Le, 2020; Butt, 2021). Customers' behavior influence consumer's choice/decision to avail a (product) or service. Several scholars (like Sousa et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019) highlight that consumer's behavior positively effects consumer's intents for continuing a (product) or a service (Butt & Umair, 2023). Numerous researchers explored link between CSR and consumer behavior, however the question remained unanswered till date that "whether CSR activities of companies positively influence consumer buying behavior or not?" Few previous researchers (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Mohr et al., 2001) examined this relation and identified direct impact of CSR on consumer's buying behavior. Their investigations also identified significant association between these two constructs. Similarly, Creyer and Ross (1997) argued that consumers consider firm's ethical behavior a significant matter at the time of buying decision.

Many other researchers assert, firms must acknowledge CSR in the corporate decision due as CSR positively impact the consumer's behavior (Kashif et al., 2015; Maignan, 2001; Ali, 2011). On the other hand, some researchers have also concluded that corporate social responsibility has no impact on consumer buying behavior. According to them customers do not consider organization's contribution towards society in their buying decisions (Ali et al., 2010). Alawamleh and Giacaman (2020) empirical research in Jordan and Palestinian context identified that CSR positively impacts the consumer's purchasing/buying behavior. Additionally, firms executing CSR activities in the operational procedure, can improve competitive gain.

This research study try to examine that whether the purchase decisions of the consumers about daily use products in Pakistan are based on corporation's CSR initiatives or not. In addition to this, this study also aim to identify that which type of CSR component

based on Carroll's pyramid of CSR will have significant impact on consumers' buying behavior.

By using Carroll's dimensions discussed under literature review, following hypotheses are formulated:

**H1:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) positively impacts the consumer's purchasing intentions (CPI) towards convenience goods in CPGs.

**H1a:** Economic responsibilities impact the CPI towards convenience goods in CPGs

**H1b:** Legal responsibilities impact the CPI towards convenience goods in CPGs

**H1c:** Ethical responsibilities impact the CPI towards convenience goods in CPGs

H1d: Philanthropic responsibilities impact the CPI towards convenience goods in CPGs

The hypothetical framework of this study is as follows:

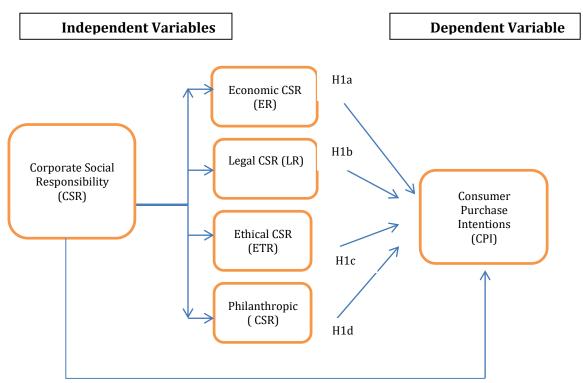


Figure 1. Research Framework

#### **Material and Methods**

# **Research Design and Study Sampling**

Methodology is key aspect which impacts the results/outcomes. Methodology contains study objectives, subject type and hypothesis (Umair & Butt, 2023). This study employs cross sectional design and quantitative approach. Quantitative technique utilizes statistical methods for analyzing data, and thereafter conclusions or results are derived (Akhtar & Butt, 2022; Akhtar et al., 2024; Tajammal, & Butt, 2024). This research examined association between CSR dimensions and consumer's purchase intentions. Study data were obtained from consumers of Fast-moving consumer goods from Lahore city, Pakistan. A random sampling method was used to collect data for this research. The major reason for selecting Lahore as a sample unit is due to the high awareness level about CSR activities in

an urban area as compared to rural areas. Study sample comprised of two hundred and fifty respondents (250) and sample size was determined through criteria recommended by Hair et al. (2009). These researchers suggested that percentage of sample shouldn't be lesser than the ratio of 1:5 (Ahmed et al., 2024).

### **Research Instrument for Data Collection and Analysis Technique**

In this study, were adopted used already existing scales developed by Maignan (2001) and research instrument contained three sections. First section included demographic information of respondents. Second section included items/statements regarding consumer's behavior towards CSR activities used by the convenience goods manufacturing companies on four dimensions (legal, economic, philanthropic and ethical). Section three contained items pertaining to respondents' response to CSR related activities and actions of the organizations to impact on their purchasing intents during purchasing the products offered. The 5 point Likert scale was utilized for recording response of study participants. After pilot testing, the questionnaire was circulated to respondents by researchers for collecting the study data. In this study, researchers used SPSS software for data analysis. Moreover, researchers applied descriptive statistics, correlation, and reliability analysis and regression tests for analyzing the study data.

# **Reliability Statistics**

Coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was employed to check measurement scales' reliability. The test statistics reported its value above .70. The alpha reliabilities of all the scale items were above 0.7. According to the criteria recommended by Nunnally (1978), A value of Alpha above [.70] supports the good reliability of the scale and is in acceptable range (Butt & Yazdani, 2023; Umair et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2024).

### **Results and Discussion**

# **Demographics Analysis**

Table 1 showed that sample of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents included majority of females (60 percent). Marital status showed that majority of respondents were unmarried (62.4 percent). Qualification levels indicate that majority of respondents (42 percent) were bachelor degree holders. Additionally, majority of the participants were non-professional (34.4 percent).

Table 1
Demographics analysis

Demographics analysis						
Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)			
Gender	Males	100	40.0			
Gender	Females	150	60.0			
Marital status	Unmarried	156	62.4			
Maritai Status	Married	94	37.6			
	Intermediate	17	6.8			
	Bachelors	105	42.0			
Qualification	Masters	90	36.0			
	Ph. D	10	4.0			
	Diploma	28	11.2			
	Professional	75	30.0			
Occupation	Non-Professional	86	34.4			
Occupation	Housewife	77	30.8			
	Student	12	4.8			

### **Correlation Analysis**

Pearson Correlation analysis was performed and value of the co-efficient of correlation ® lies between (+1 to -1) plus one to minus one (Butt & Yazdani, 2023). Table 2 results show that ER and PR have positive correlation with all other variables. But, ER and LR dimensions of CSR have negative correlation with consumer purchase intention (CPI), but positive to all other variables. Correlation between CPI and economic and legal responsibilities was -0.141 and -0.83 respectively which showed both the variables are negatively correlated. Whereas, the correlation between CPI and ethical and Philanthropic responsibilities was significant and positive significant. This reveals that CPI positively associates to ER and PR.

Table 2
Correlation Analysis

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	ER	LR	ETR	PR	CPI	
ER	1					
LR	.550**	1			_	
ETR	.343**	.416**	1		_	
PR	.440**	.433**	.502**	1		
CPI	141*	083	.500**	.422**	1	

### **Descriptive Statistics:**

Table 3 results indicate that most of respondents agree with all items/statements of the questionnaire. As in all dimensions of CSR, they responded favorably and the mean values were above '3' on a five point scale. Scores were highest (above 4) in ETR .Results show that participants have found the four CSR dimensions equally significant for the organization's business.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
ER	3.548	.683
LR	3.697	.633
ETR	4.071	.740
PR	3.835	.707
CPI	3.757	.683

# **Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis technique (Table 4) was performed to examine the effect of four dimensions of CSR on CPI. Regression results showed that four .ER dimension had highest effect (b=41.7 percent) followed by PR (b= 39.4 percent).

Table 4
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI) Model Parameter Estimates

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Т	Sig.
	_	В	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.723	.331		8.216	.000
	ER	.277	.079	.264	0.741	.009
	LR	.219	.084	.188	3.624	.007
	ETR	.417	.082	.345	0.852	.000
	PR	.394	.079	.246	1.501	.001

a. Dependent Variable: CPI

Table 4a
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI) Model Parameter Estimates

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		_
1	(Constant)	2.719	.368		7.385	.000
	CSRD	.140	.095	.393	1.475	.001

a. Dependent Variable: CPI

### **ANOVA**

Table 5 presents ANOVA results which was conducted to test if a statistically significant linear relation existed between the overall CSR dimensions and CPI. Results show the model of CPI was significant (p-value < .05).

Table 5 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	35.656	4	8.914	16.412	$.000^{b}$
Residual	133.069	245	.543		
Total	168.725	249			

### **Model Summary**

Value of R2 (Table 6) indicates that variation of .090 in consumer's purchase intention (CPI) is explained by the significant variables of CSR in the consumer packed good industry of Pakistan. Value of adjusted-R2 value indicates that variation of .086 existent in model for CPI was explained by the linear relationship of 'predictor variables'.

Table 6 Summary of Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.300	.090	.086	.787

### **Discussions**

This study was conducted purpose of this research paper was to analyze the influence of CSR activities and its dimensions on the consumer's purchase intentions (CPI) in CPG industry of Pakistan. Analysis results highlight that CSR and its dimensions positively impact on CPI. Moreover, 'ethical' dimension of CSR is identified as the highly significant one which impacts the CPI, followed by 'phianthropic' dimesnion. But, consumers do find economic and legal responsibilities important for a business but they do not consider them as CSR activities.

The study results are consistent with few earlier researchers (like Maignan, 2001). The results of these researchers suggested that 'economic' dimension of CSR wasn't equally significant (as compared to remaining CSR dimensions) in societies which are collectivist. Similarly, Pakistan scores very low i.e. 14, on 'individualistic' cultural dimension (indicating Pakistan as the 'collectivist' society). Hussain (2013) also argued that CSR four dimensions were not equally significant for consumers globally. Pondar & Golob (2007) argued that these CSR dimensions were not part of CSR perceived by the consumer. In addition, value system vary across nations as each country and nation of the world has set its own cultural values and norms. Thus, have exclusive patterns of behavior that govern individuals' attitude in a specific country of the world (Sirmo & Lane, 2004). Study findings are also consistent with findings of earlier researchers (Hussain, 2013; Podnar & Golob, 2007) who identified that ER and PR were most influential dimensions of CSR on CPI.

### **Conclusion**

This research has made a contribution to understand the role of CSR and its dimension on consumers' buying behavior. The results of the research are beneficial to both MNCs and national firms (operational in Pakistan). As the results will help comparing to develop understanding about consumers' behavioral intents in Pakistan towards different dimensions of CSR at the time of buying. The study results will also aid companies to develop/ formulate and execute strategy and policy of CSR in their operations and practices of the firm business.

### Recommendations

This study has recommendations for organizational management. Companies should follow ethical and societal concerns in their business operations to enhance CPI for buying their products/goods. Organizations must should produce such goods/ products which are 'environment friendly' .Companies should also follow ethical code of conduct in order to attain corporate goals. Additionally, companies must engage in philanthropic initiatives in order to reflect that organization is concerned about development in the society.

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