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The Bi-Directional Relationship Between Digital Social Responsibility And Brand Image With A Mediating Role Of Consumer Trust And Moderating Role Of Consumer Awareness

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Abstract

The current study aimed to investigate the bi-directional connection between digital social responsibility and brand image with the mediating and moderating effect of consumer trust and consumer awareness with dependent and independent variables. However, for this purpose the collected sample comprised 300 participants, and the conducted analyses were descriptive analysis, Cronbach alpha reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis, regression analysis t-test analysis, One-way ANOVA analysis as well as Sobel test. The analysis suggested that all the variable's reliabilities lay in an acceptable range and the data was positively skewed. The obtained results indicated a positive correlation between the independent variable digital social responsibility and brand image. Whereas, positive relationships between other variables were also observed. Consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand image besides this consumer awareness also played a positive moderation effect between independent variable digital social responsibility and brand image.

Keywords: Bi-Directional, Digital Social Responsibility, Brand Image, Consumer Trust, Consumer Awareness

Introduction

CSR in business management has grown in recent years. Many firms are increasingly conscious of their social and environmental responsibilities and want to act responsibly. Thus, more than ever, they spend monetarily to improve their reputation. Shareholders and the media (such as news of French working conditions) might push them. Indeed, CSR may satisfy shareholders and stakeholders (suppliers, consumers, the government, the community) (Anser et al., 2020). CSR has become a competitive strategy for firms to improve revenues via customer happiness, loyalty, and brand positivity. Thus, various research have examined how social responsibility affects firm finances (Esposito & Ricci, 2021). Other researchers found that CSR may retain a competitive advantage (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014). Prior studies in marketing have looked at how

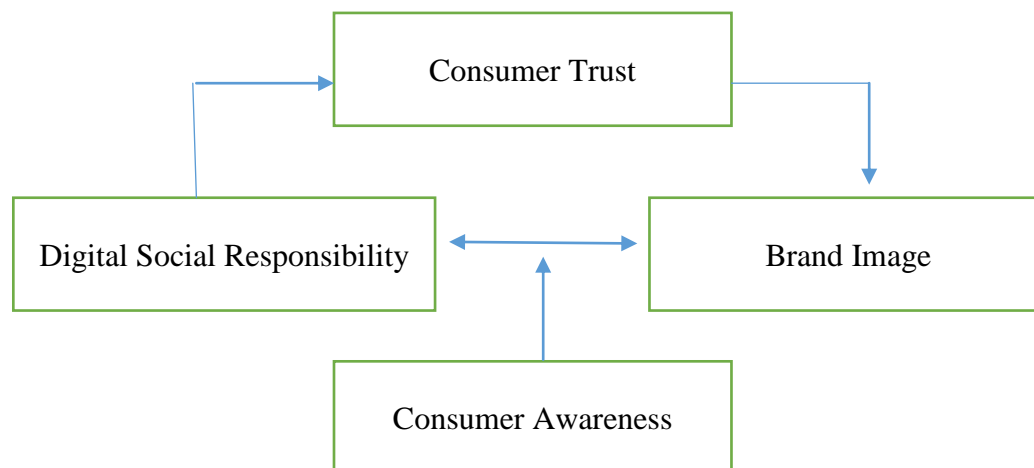
CSR affects consumer loyalty, trust, and satisfaction. Few studies have looked at the relationship between customer loyalty and CSR and customer satisfaction and trust (Marchand et al., 2021).

In contrast to earlier research that discovered a positive direct association with no mediating factors, recent studies indicate that business reputation, customer trust, and customer satisfaction play a mediating role between CSR and consumer loyalty. Our study looks at the direct and mediated impacts of DSR on brand image since prior research (Yousaf et al., 2021; Hichri & Ltifi et al., 2021) has shown that customer satisfaction and trust are important factors that determine customer loyalty.

Objectives

1. To study the bi directional connection in-between digital social responsibility as well as brand image
2. To investigate the consumer trust as mediating role in-between the relationship of digital social responsibility as well as brand image
3. To investigate the moderating effect of consumer awareness regarding the relationship between digital social responsibility as well as brand image

Conceptual Framework



Relevant Literature and Hypothesis

Digital Social Responsibility

DSR and CSR Most sustainability research has focused on CSR's concern for the environment, how to conserve natural resources, the causes and effects of global warming, and climate change (Jain et al., 2024). To analyze CSR, three fundamental perspectives may be applied: The economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic components are highlighted by the CSR pyramidal theory. Carroll (1979). 'Economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has

of firms at a specific point of time' are included in this definition of corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 1979). Theory of sustainable development from social, environmental, and economic angles. As to the definition provided, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business concept that is strategic, proactive, and context-specific. It necessitates that companies balance their brand image with economic, environmental, and social concerns. (Fatmawati & Fauzan, 2021). White (2009) made advantage of the sustainability idea from P&G. P&G is a global consumer goods firm that employs 138,000 people and has over 300 products sold in 180 countries. The company is making a significant effort to integrate sustainability into its operations. P&G considers sustainability in product design, manufacturing, employee participation, and stakeholder partnerships in addition to social investment programs. Sustainability is defined by White and P&G as "ensuring better quality of life, now and for generations to come" via social responsibility, economic advancement, and environmental preservation. According to Nguyen and Pervan (2020), stakeholders include customers, workers, shareholders, and the general public. CSR refers to all "company activities demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations, and in stakeholder interactions, also according to CSR ambition levels" (Nguyen & Pervan, 2020). Environmental and social sustainable development theory. Brown and Dacin (1997) examined CSR relationships that represent the company's social responsibility. Varadajarn and Menon (1998) examined cause-related marketing for firm exposure. Corporate social responsibility began as a reaction to societal issues and has now become an investment (Dörr, 2021).

H1: Digital social responsibility would be positively correlated with Brand Image.

Customers' trust

Marketing relies on satisfaction to predict repurchase, buy intentions, brand preference, and switching behavior. Studies have also demonstrated that a firm's ability to adapt to consumers' shifting demands and preferences determines its long-term performance (Takala et al., 2006). In marketing literature, contentment is defined differently. According to Oliver (1981), pleasure is the feeling one has after consuming something and reacting to both the real and expected performances or unexpected outcome. Customer satisfaction, as defined by Al-Omouh (2024), is an instantaneous emotional response to achievement. "Ultimately evaluation after purchase" is how Fornell (1992) defined contentment. According to Kotler (2000), contentment comes from comparing expectations with performance. Customers' total satisfaction with goods or services after consumption is also called satisfaction (Herden et al., 2021). Transaction-specific and cumulative customer pleasure may be distinguished (Zhang & Ahmad, 2021). After a purchase, consumers evaluate transaction-specific consumer satisfaction. Conversely, cumulative customer satisfaction evaluates the complete purchase and consumption experience with a product over time. The "disconfirmation of expectations paradigm" describes consumer satisfaction. According to this paradigm, consumer brand assessment compares actual performance to standards. This comparison might lead to three cases: 1- Confirmation: when performance meets requirements, neutral sentiments. 2- Positive disconfirmation: when performance exceeds expectations, resulting in pleasure. 3- Negative disconfirmation: poor performance causes discontent. Increasing customer happiness would save firms money, make money, and build reputations (Inusah, 2020). It may increase demand inelasticity and lower costs for acquiring new consumers and handling poor quality, faults, and complaints. Wu (2020) states that pleased clients will recommend the service provider to others. If customers are satisfied with a firm or brand, they will suggest it and wish it success (Wu, 2022).

Since all social interactions would fail or be unstable without trust, trust is crucial to creating a long-lasting bond between a business and its customers (Jain et al., 2024). (Patrick, 2002). Trust is the belief of one partner in the integrity and reliability of the other, according to Morgan and Hunt (1994). According to Crosby et al. (1990), "the product and the service provider can be trusted in a way that the customers' long-term interests will be served" is the definition of customer trust (Rizal et al., 2022). "Belief that the service provider will fulfill their promises, act in the customers' best interests, and not take advantage of the relationship" is how Ganesan (1994) described trust in the context of services. This last idea was used by Doney and Cannon (1997) to split trust into credibility (or performance) and compassion. Customers' faith in a company's statements and promises is called credibility (Jain et al., 2024). Customers' belief that a company's objectives and intentions benefit them is called benevolence.

Many research has shown that CSR affects trust (Sirichareechai, 2021). CSR actions reveal the company's character, although customer trust is impacted by shared principles (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). These actions boost organization trust (Utkutuğ, 2021). By incorporating ethical and responsible concepts into strategic decision-making, corporations may build stakeholder trust, especially consumer trust. Outside of contractual or regulatory limits, perceived CSR would foster trust-based interactions based on the perception that exchange partners' activities are trustworthy (Azhar et al., 2018) said that "the creation of trust is one of the most immediate consequences of a company's social performance". This study suggests the following based on the preceding considerations.

H2: Customer trust would be positively mediate the relationship between DSR and Brand Image.

Customer awareness

Researchers say cautious consumers may assume an understanding of future purchase effects. It holds that customer comprehension is necessary for a free market economy that promotes moral and ethical business operations and opposes immoral behavior (Al-Omouh, 2024).

While there is a dearth of research on consumer awareness, Chartrand's (2005) model of automated processes is often used. Based on the phases at which consumers make decisions, Chartrand (2005) distinguished three degrees of awareness: consequence, automated procedures, and environmental components. During the second stage of automatic information processing, consumers are prevented from reflecting on them by conscious neural processes (El-Menawy & El-Sayed, 2024). Customers may become aware of (a) environmental elements that influence their purchasing decisions, such as advertising, in-store marketing, and advancements, and (b) behavioral outcomes, if Chartrand's strategy is followed. Both of these elements should be used in the conceptualization and evaluation of consumer awareness.

Customers must first comprehend how outside influences impact their behavior. Customer susceptibility awareness is one aspect of consumer awareness (CA). The Consumer knowledge Scale (CSA) measures consumers' knowledge of how consumer culture and marketing tools like advertising, low-price offers, and point-of-sale incentives impact them. It is based on prior research on particular talents to deal with external influences (Arya et al., 2019).

Previous study supports CSA's importance. Zhang et al. (2022) argue that brand awareness improves customer behavior. Skeptical customers also say they use less advertising, verify the facts elsewhere, and are not encouraged to purchase a new product quickly.

Second, Customers may differ in their awareness of the implications of their behavior.

Customers' comprehension of how their regular purchasing decisions address problems is gauged by the second component of CA, known as consumer instrumentality awareness (CIA). When customers are unable to completely comprehend the links between their purchasing choices and the effects on the environment, Ye-guang and Bo (2018) observed that "heuristics and habit will become a stronger determinant of (non) pro-environmental behavior."

Many pro-environmental behaviors (such as green purchasing, recycling, and resource conservation) are driven by consumers' perception of their ability to affect environmental outcomes. According to Mi et al. (2018), consumers of eco-friendly products think their purchases will have a greater influence than those who don't.

H3: Costumer awareness would be positively moderate the relationship between DSR and Brand Image.

Brand image

The significance of branding for a company's performance has long been acknowledged in the literature (Helm & Jones, 2010). Numerous scholars have investigated brand governance from a number of angles, such as regional brand construction, brand co-creation and brand governance (Narteh & Braimah, 2020), and brand governance implications in managing brand instability and capital market reputation. Few research have looked at how individualism impacts the quality of goods and services. Madden et al. (2012) discovered that product quality has a stronger halo impact than CSR and strongly corresponds with brand. According to Social Identity Theory, consumers are drawn to reputable brands due to their perceived high quality, which can accelerate the process of self-definition, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement (Utkutuğ, 2021). In materialism, happiness and success presuppose that customers with greater material values see their belongings and affiliations as a path to live fulfillment. Wu (2021) discovered that materialists favor public consumption. Product/service quality is linked to belongings' usefulness, appearance, financial value, status, success, and prestige. Silverstein, 2004 demonstrate that people may buy luxury products for quality rather than status. Sharif et al. (2021) study how Korea's macro and micro national image and global consumers' materialism affect Korean cosmetics quality rating in four countries. Their results show that materialism strongly influences Korean cosmetics product quality judgments in Vietnam.

H4: Brand image would be positively correlate with digital social responsibility.

Methodology

This study utilizes a cross-sectional exploration plan to investigate the bidirectional connection between digital social responsibility (DSR) and brand image, with an emphasis on the intervening job of brand trust and the directing job of buyer mindfulness. This plan considers the concurrent assessment of these factors at a solitary moment, depicting their interrelationships. The review test comprises 300 members chosen through accommodation inspection. Members were selected through internet-based studies conveyed across web-based entertainment stages and email solicitations. To guarantee a different example, endeavors were made to incorporate people from different segment foundations. The DSR scale, adjusted by Kang and Hustvedt, comprises 5 things. This scale has shown a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, demonstrating high inward consistency. Members evaluated everything on a 5-point Likert scale going from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Brand Trust was surveyed utilizing a 4-thing scale in light of a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 shows Firmly Differ and 7 demonstrates Unequivocally Concur. This

scale estimates the level of trust members have in the brand, zeroing in on unwavering quality, respectability, and skill. The Brand Picture scale comprises 10 things estimated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 addressing Firmly Differ and 5 addressing Emphatically Concur.

This scale catches the members' view of the brand's credits, notoriety, and general picture. Customers Mindfulness was estimated utilizing a 10-thing scale on a 5-point Likert scale. Members evaluated their degree of mindfulness concerning the brand's advanced and social drives. Members were welcome to finish an internet-based review, which incorporated the previously mentioned scales. The overview was appropriated through electronic channels, and members were guaranteed the classification of their reactions. Information assortment occurred over a time of about a month.

Analysis

The analyses incorporated in the current study were descriptive analysis, Cronbach alpha reliability analysis, Pearson’s correlation analysis, regression analysis t-test analysis, One-way ANOVA analysis as well as Sobel test to check the reliability, normality, and mediator effect of the variables. Software used for analyses were SPSS and Sobel test calculator.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive analysis among study variables (N=300)

Variables	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
DSR	300	21.96	3.02	2.22	5.73
BIS	300	43.94	6.00	2.20	5.89
CTS	300	26.35	1.52	1.28	1.22
CAS	300	43.95	5.98	2.22	6.01

DSR = Digital Social Responsibility, BIS = Brand Image Scale, CT = Consumer Trust Scale, CAS = Consumer Awareness Scale

The illustrative measurements for the review factors give knowledge into their conveyance and inconstancy among the 300 respondents. DSR as well as BIS both show positive skewness, demonstrating that most of the respondents have lower scores, with fewer people scoring at the better quality. The two factors likewise show high kurtosis, recommending that their appropriations have weighty tails and sharp pinnacles, importance there are outstanding anomalies or outrageous qualities in the reactions. CTS, then again, shows lower inconstancy, with a mean score of 26.35 and a standard deviation of 1.52, demonstrating that respondents by and large have a predictable view of customer trust. The skewness for CTS is positive yet less articulated, and the kurtosis is generally moderate, recommending a fairly ordinary dissemination with less outrageous qualities. CAS has a mean score of 43.95 and a standard deviation of 5.98, reflecting moderate fluctuation in reactions. Like DSR and BIS, CAS additionally displays positive skewness and high kurtosis, showing that while most respondents' scores group around the mean, there are a few outrageous qualities present. Generally, the information uncovered that

respondents have shifted views of DSR, BIS, and CAS, with an inclination for some to display outrageous scores, while shopper trust shows more consistency.

Table 2

Reliability analysis among study variables

Variables	α
DSR	.79
BIS	.77
CTS	.75
CAS	.77

DSR = Digital Social Responsibility, BIS = Brand Image Scale, CT = Consumer Trust Scale, CAS = Consumer Awareness Scale

Table 2 shows the reliability analysis of study variables such as DSR has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, showing great unwavering quality, proposing that the things inside this scale reliably measure a similar hidden build. Essentially, the BIS as well as CAS both have Cronbach's alpha upsides of 0.77, which additionally reflect palatable unwavering quality and inward consistency. CTS shows a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75, exhibiting good dependability, however somewhat lower than different scales. All the reliabilities of study measures rely on a good acceptable range.

Table 3

Correlation analysis of study variables for study sample (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3	4
DSR	-	-	-	-
BIS	.96**	-	-	-
CTS	.17**	.15**	-	-
CAS	.96**	.99**	.15**	-

DSR = Digital Social Responsibility, BIS = Brand Image Scale, CT = Consumer Trust Scale, CAS = Consumer Awareness Scale

The third table reveals the correlations among the study variables the results show that DSR and BIS are exceptionally corresponded with a coefficient of 0.96, showing areas of strength for a connection between these two factors; as DSR increments, so does the apparent brand image. Essentially, DSR and CAS likewise show an extremely high relationship of 0.96, proposing that higher DSR is firmly connected with more noteworthy buyer mindfulness. The BIS and CAS impeccably corresponded with a coefficient of 0.99, featuring an uncommonly solid positive connection between brand image and CAS. CTS shows more fragile yet critical connections with DSR, BIS, and CAS, with coefficients of 0.17, 0.15, and 0.15, separately. These more fragile connections show that while customer trust is decidedly connected with different factors, its effect is less articulated as contrasted with the more vigorous connections seen among DSR, BIS,

and CAS. By and large, the examination highlights solid relationships among DSR, BIS, and CAS, while Consumer trust shows more unobtrusive associations with these factors.

Table 4

T-test analysis for gender differences on study variables

Variables	F	p	t	df	96% CL	
					LL	UL
DSR	1.22	.26	.83	298	.39	.98
BIS	1.68	.19	.95	298	.70	2.02
CTS	.01	.91	.34	298	.40	.28
CAS	1.52	.21	1.00	298	.66	1.05

DSR = Digital Social Responsibility, BIS = Brand Image Scale, CT = Consumer Trust Scale, CAS = Consumer Awareness Scale

Table 4 shows t-test analysis of study variables for gender differences. The t-test examination for distinctions in gender differences across the review factors uncovers no genuinely massive contrasts between gender differences for any of the deliberate developments. For DSR, the F-esteem is 1.22 with a p-worth of 0.26, showing that the noticed contrasts between sexual orientations are not measurably huge. Essentially, the BIS shows an F-worth of 1.68 and a p-worth of 0.19, further recommending that orientation doesn't fundamentally influence the view of the brand image. The CTS has an F-worth of 0.01 and a p-worth of 0.91, showing a shortfall of orientation-based contrasts in shopper trust. At long last, the CAS presents an F-worth of 1.52 and a p-worth of 0.21, which likewise focuses on no critical distinctions in gender differences. The certainty stretches (LL and UL) for all factors incorporate zero, building up that there are no critical orientation aberrations in how respondents see (DSR) Digital Social Responsibility, (BIS) Brand Image, (CT) Consumer Trust and Consumer Awareness

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA for DSR as Independent variable and BIS as dependent variable

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Between groups	10034.02	11	912.18	354.16	.00
Within groups	741.775	288	2.57		
Total	10775.79	299			

The One-Way ANOVA examination inspecting the impact of DSR as a free factor on BIS as a reliant variable uncovers an exceptionally critical relationship. The between-bunches amount of squares is 10,034.02, with a related mean square of 912.18 and a F-worth of 354.16. The p-

esteem is 0.00, demonstrating that there are genuinely huge contrasts in brand image scores across various degrees of advanced social obligation. This outcome recommends that varieties in DSR significantly affect how the brand image is seen. Interestingly, the inside bunches amount of squares is 741.775 with a mean square of 2.57, addressing the fluctuation of BIS scores inside each gathering. By and large, the huge F-worth and p-esteem exhibit that DSR essentially impacts BIS, featuring the significance of advanced social obligation in molding brand image discernments.

Table 6

Sobel test for mediating role of consumer trust between DSR as Independent variable and BIS as dependent variable

	B	β	F	t	p
Constant	2.04		3728.03	2.94	.00
DSRTOT	1.98	.96		61.05	.00
Constant	60.13		7.48	10.13	.00
CTSTOT	.61	.15		2.73	.00
Sobel test	t		p		
	2.72		0.00		

DSR = Digital Social Responsibility, CT = Consumer Trust Scale, CAS = Consumer Awareness Scale

The Sobel test examination evaluates the intervening role of CTS in the connection between DSR as the free factor and BIS as the reliant variable. The outcomes uncover a critical intervention impact. In particular, the relapse coefficients show that DSR affects BIS (B = 1.98, $\beta = 0.96$, $p < 0.001$), while Customer Trust likewise altogether influences BIS (B = 60.13, $\beta = 7.48$, $p < 0.001$). The Sobel test measurement is 2.72 with a p-worth of 0.00, affirming that consumer Trust fundamentally intercedes the connection between DSR and BIS. This implies that Consumer Trust somewhat makes sense of what DSR means for Brand Image, exhibiting that while DSR straightforwardly influences Brand Image, a piece of this impact works through its effect on Consumer Trust.

Discussion

The major aim of the current research was to study the bi directional relationship between digital social responsibility and brand image with a mediating role of consumer trust and moderating role of consumer awareness. The analysis performed in the current study supported the predicted hypotheses in the study. The One-Way ANOVA results affirm a powerful connection between DSR as well as Brand Image, demonstrating that varieties in DSR fundamentally influence the impression of brand image (Al-Omouh, 2024). This finding lines up with the comprehension that an organization's obligation to social responsibility can significantly impact its image notoriety (Jain et al., 2024). Elevated degrees of DSR are related to a better brand image, proposing that buyers are probably going to see marks decidedly when they see them as socially responsible. On the other hand, the bidirectional idea of this relationship suggests that a solid brand picture can likewise upgrade an organization's endeavors in computerized social

obligation. Brands with a positive standing may be more propelled to keep up with and improve their social obligation drives to support their ideal picture (Utkutuğ, 2021). This corresponding relationship features the unique transaction between how brands deal with their social obligations and how they are seen in the commercial center. The Sobel test results uncover that Customer Trust intercedes the connection between DSR and the Brand Picture. This intercession impact highlights the significance of trust as a component through which DSR influences the brand picture (Wu, 2022). The huge intercession shows that while DSR straightforwardly influences the brand picture, some portion of this impact is diverted through the trust customers place in the brand. At the point when organizations participate in significant social obligation exercises, they assemble shopper trust, which thusly decidedly impacts the brand picture (Arya et al., 2019). This finding accentuates that endeavors in advanced social obligation improve the brand's standing straightforwardly as well as cultivate trust, which further enhances the positive impression of the brand. Albeit the particular balance impacts of Buyer Mindfulness (CAS) were not tried exhaustively inside the given results, the overall speculation would recommend that CAS could impact the strength or bearing of the connection between DSR and Brand Picture (Zhang et al., 2022). High buyer mindfulness might actually reinforce the positive effect of DSR on the brand picture, as additional educated purchasers would better appreciate and esteem a brand's social obligation endeavors (Anser et al., 2020). On the other hand, in the event that customer mindfulness is low, the effect of DSR on the brand picture may be less articulated, as purchasers may not completely perceive or esteem the brand's social drives (Herden et al., 2021). This directing impact suggests that the permeability and comprehension of a brand's social obligation endeavors are vital for expanding their effect on brand discernment.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the above literature and proposed analysis in the current study that all the hypotheses were proved. The study was conducted to investigate the bidirectional connection between digital social responsibility (DSR) and brand image, with an emphasis on the intervening job of brand trust and the directing career of buyer mindfulness, the results showed a positive correlation among all the independent and dependent variables such that digital social responsibility positively impact the brand image whereas consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between independent variable (digital social responsibility) and dependent variable (brand image). The moderation analysis also proposed that consumer awareness positively played as a moderator between digital social responsibility and brand image. No significant difference was observed regarding gender between digital social responsibilities, brand image, consumer trust, and consumer awareness. It is concluded from the above literature and proposed analysis in the current study that all the hypotheses were proved. The study was conducted to investigate the bidirectional connection between digital social responsibility (DSR) and brand image, with an emphasis on the intervening job of brand trust and the directing career of buyer mindfulness, the results showed a positive correlation among all the independent and dependent variables such that digital social responsibility positively impact the brand image whereas consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between independent variable (digital social responsibility) and dependent variable (brand image). The moderation analysis also proposed that consumer awareness positively played as a moderator between digital social responsibility and brand image. No significant difference was observed regarding gender between digital social responsibilities, brand image, consumer trust, and consumer awareness.

Recommendation

For further study, it is suggested to conduct longitudinal research in comparison with cross-sectional research. Furthermore, the impact of demographic variables should also be examined in further studies and the effect of extraneous variables should also be studied. Another important aspect of any research is the cross-cultural aspect it is important to study this effect in further research because this aspect might affect the relationship between independent and dependent variables as well as moderation and mediation effects. It is suggested to study the impact of technological advancement further.

Limitation

The most important limitations of the current study were generalizability, consumer awareness variability, short term focus, and dynamic market conditions.

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