

Can restaurants achieve customer retention through CSR?

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to establish a comprehensive framework that combines the four dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Economic, Legal, Ethical, and Philanthropic Responsibility) with Environmental Responsibility. Additionally, the study seeks to assess the role of Corporate Image (CI) in mediating the impact of aspects of CSR on Customer Retention with the use of structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized conceptual framework. A total of 217 questionnaires were successfully gathered through an online platform from customers who patronized restaurants in the city of Tehran. The findings indicate that the legal, ethical, philanthropic, and environmental components have a favorable and considerable impact on CI. Moreover, the impact of the five dimensions of CSR on customer retention is mediated by the perception of the CI. This study provides a valuable contribution by expanding upon Carroll's dimensions that included environmental responsibility, and demonstrating that the inclusion of this factor can also enhance company image. Going forward managers may acquire the knowledge that enhances their environmental responsibilities can concurrently contribute to the enhancement of CI and positively impact customer retention.

Keywords: corporate image, corporate social responsibility, customer retention, environmental responsibility, restaurant industry, Iran

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Introduction

In the highly competitive restaurant industry today, restaurants must increase customer retention rates to secure their long-term viability (Hwang et al., 2020). However, as Chang (2017) noted, social practices and ethical viewpoints are now seen as crucial elements that might elicit a response from customers, replacing the previous competitive advantages of low prices and high-quality services and goods. Compared to previous decades, today's customers have different expectations; they are not content with receiving high-quality or reasonably priced goods and services from businesses (Chernev & Blair, 2015). Customers of today prefer to support organizations that fulfill their social obligations by purchasing their goods and services, and results in motivating other businesses to get more involved in the community (Barcelos et al., 2015). For example, up to 62% of restaurant patrons anticipate these organizations to be engaged in social issues and involved in CSR initiatives (Ozdemir et al., 2020). This means that these customers refuse to patronize restaurants that disregard social issues and do not fulfill their CSR obligations as a sort of punishment (Prendergast & Tsang, 2019). Thus, due to the shift in consumer attitudes, businesses have been putting a lot of effort and financial resources into CSR in recent years (Han et al., 2019).

Businesses in the hospitality sector influence a wide range of issues through their operations, for example, the economy, society, environment, culture, etc. Therefore, businesses in this sector must adhere to CSR activities (Kim et al., 2017). Based on its importance, a considerable number of businesses within the hospitality sector, especially eateries, are now actively engaged in CSR initiatives and activities (Han et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Park, 2019). This results in a company's brand and image being enhanced by its focus on social

issues and participation in CSR initiatives (Omidvar & Deen, 2023). A company's reputation may suffer if it disregards social issues and doesn't engage in CSR initiatives and research demonstrates that CSR has a substantial impact on customers' perceptions of a company and its image, confirming the correlation between CSR and CI (Chen et al., 2021; Plewa et al., 2015).

Carroll's four-level model is one of the well-known CSR models (Hamid et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Yilmazdogan et al., 2015). The previous few decades focused on this approach (Hamid et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Lo, 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Silva Junior et al., 2020) and Carroll has separated this paradigm into four categories (Baden, 2016; Hamid et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Lo, 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Silva Junior et al., 2020). On the other hand, environmental challenges have also garnered the interest of numerous scholars and the majority have given thought to environmental concerns for instance, consumers prefer to purchase from businesses that strive to minimize environmental harm in their processes of providing products and services (Han et al., 2019). Consequently, these businesses operate in a manner that minimizes their negative effects on the environment and works to preserve it (Han, 2021). Thus, we decided to investigate how the environmental dimension and the other dimensions in Carroll's CSR pyramid affected a company's reputation and its ability to retain customers.

In the available literature, CSR has been considered as a variable in several studies that are similar to this one (Lee et al., 2020; Srivastava & Singh, 2021) however, opinions on how the CSR factors affect a company's reputation and ability to retain customers are unclear. Furthermore, most of the studies were carried out in industrialized nations, except for a small number in developing nations, particularly in the Middle East (Al-Ghamdi & Badawi, 2019). In Iran, CSR has been under-researched and no comprehensive scientific or theoretical perspective exists on the subject. Therefore, carrying out this research can aid in enhancing the understanding of this issue among academics, managers, and customers (Saeidi et al., 2015). To close this gap, the objective of this paper is to investigate how Carroll's dimensions—in addition to the environmental dimension—affect customer retention and CI. The paper will be organized with a literature review which will involve an examination of the current body of literature to formulate hypotheses. Subsequently, the methodology will be discussed, an analysis will be conducted on the data gathered for this study, and an examination of the study's hypotheses will be undertaken. Finally, we shall deliberate upon the outcomes derived from the aforementioned segment about the methodology. The section on theoretical and managerial implications will elucidate the theoretical and practical ramifications of this research. To move on with further research, it is critical to accept the limitations of this study.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

One of the first scholars to address the social obligation of businesspeople and firms was Howard Bowen, who wrote the book "The Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" in 1953 (Li et al., 2020; Farrington et al., 2017). Though social issues have long been a source of concern, the subject of CSR has garnered significant interest from scholars and members of the academic community following the release of Boen's book and idea of CSR, which has changed significantly during the last few decades (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016).

Previous research has produced numerous definitions of CSR for example, a study that aimed to summarize the literature on CSR identified and examined 37 definitions ultimately indicated that there isn't a single accepted definition of CSR (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016; Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017; Rutkowska & Pakulska, 2021). It can be established that CSR is a group of business initiatives that are ultimately good for society, enhance society's conditions, and are intended to benefit stakeholders, particularly customers (Han et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2019). These days, CSR is a topic that is discussed everywhere and has significantly increased in prominence among the academic communities (Bian et al., 2020). Moreover, CSR has gained popularity recently as many businesses today engage in CSR initiatives because they found that these initiatives can help them retain their current clientele and build a positive reputation among the public and community (Han et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2021). The reason is that consumers exhibit a keen interest in enterprises that demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling their societal obligations and have the potential to generate value for customers and exert an impact on consumer behavior (Alhouti et al., 2016; Barcelos et al., 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

CSR and its effect on Corporate Image (CI) and Customer Retention

Pérez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2015) state that an intangible asset that influences consumer behavior, loyalty, and future purchase intentions is a company's CI and this may influence customer retention. In an earlier study, Huang et al. (2014) investigated the correlation between CSR, CI, and buying intentions. These findings indicate that CSR has a notable beneficial impact on CI and purchase intentions. Later, Kim et al. (2017) showed that ethical CSR has the greatest impact on the CI, over and above the economic and philanthropic aspects of CSR. However, it is noteworthy that only the philanthropic dimensions exhibit a substantial and direct impact on customers' behavioral intentions.

Economic Responsibility

Business enterprises are the fundamental economic entities within a given society, tasked primarily with producing many of the commodities and services that cater to the needs of consumers and the broader community. Business enterprises play a key role in meeting the needs and demands of consumers by providing a wide range of goods and services. Firms derive advantages from fulfilling consumer demands in a manner that ensures profitability (Carroll, 2016). According to Carroll (2016, 2021), successful organizations can be identified by their ability to maximize earnings per share, maintain a competitive edge, and sustain continuous profitability. Consequently, economic responsibility emerges as a crucial component of CSR (Paliwadana et al., 2016). Park (2019) indicates that assuming economic responsibility, encompassing initiatives such as employment creation within the societal framework and fostering national economic progress, exerts a favorable influence on the reputation and image of the organization. Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 1. Economic CSR positively affects the CI.

Legal Responsibility

Legal CSR entails the adherence of firms to all applicable laws and regulations within the societies in which they conduct their operations (Mohammed & Rashid, 2018). The general public, societal entities, and consumers expect firms to adhere to societal norms and regulations without engaging in actions that contradict them (Carroll, 2016; Kim et al., 2020; Uhlig et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that various dimensions of legal CSR efforts have a favorable impact on the CI (Al-Mubarak, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 2. Legal CSR positively affects the CI.

Ethical Responsibility

The concept of ethical responsibility pertains to the obligation of companies to adhere to the moral standards prevailing throughout society. In other words, it can be posited that societies expect for firms to adhere to their moral values, hence establishing the ethical obligation of companies (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2019). Several studies have demonstrated a noteworthy correlation between CSR and CI (Huang et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2020; Kolour & Eskandari, 2019). Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 3. Ethical CSR positively affects the CI.

Philanthropic Responsibility

Philanthropic activities encompass endeavors that transcend ethical considerations and societal conventions undertaken freely by corporations (Hossain et al., 2017). These initiatives aim to enhance the overall well-being and standard of living within communities (Chen et al., 2019), and provide opportunities for corporations to establish an ethical and moral mantra from within their organization (Mandina et al., 2014). A corporate responsibility and corporate reputation study conducted by Dutta and Imeri (2016), found that philanthropic responsibility showed a significant relationship with company reputation, and even the employees within the Gulf Petroleum & Investment Company participate wholeheartedly towards voluntary and charitable

activities toward their surrounding communities. Whilst Mandina et al., (2014) also found that philanthropic activities do enhance a company's image and the relations with the community surrounding the organization. Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 4. Philanthropic CSR positively affects the CI.

Environmental Responsibility

Professionals have shown an increased level of interest over the past few years, particularly those in the field of tourism, regarding environmental concerns (Han & Hwang, 2015; Han et al. 2019; Kim & Hall 2020; Rashid et al., 2015). A company's commitment to preserving and advancing the environment through a variety of programs and activities is referred to as environmental CSR (Han et al., 2019). In contemporary times, an increasing proportion of consumers are making their purchase choices contingent upon the environmental responsibility exhibited by companies (Han et al., 2019; Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). The extent to which a the company demonstrates a commitment to environmental CSR can have a substantial impact on customers' assessment of the quality of its services and subsequently enhance their desire to make a purchase (Han et al., 2020). Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 5. Environmental CSR positively affects the CI.

Corporate Image (CI)

The CI is a manifestation of the overall assessment of a corporation by the general populace (Huang et al., 2014). CI also refers to the collection of thoughts and impressions held by individuals regarding an organization (Dowling, 2016; Zhang, 2015). Huang et al. (2014) demonstrated a substantial correlation between CI and customer intentions. Moreover, existing evidence demonstrates that the CI has a substantial impact on customer retention (Wu, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). Consequently, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H 6. CI positively affects Customer Retention.

Conceptual Model

Based on the review of the literature discussed above on CSR and its dimensions and CI, a conceptual model is proposed to demonstrate and test the relationships between the variables of CSR, CI, and customer retention.

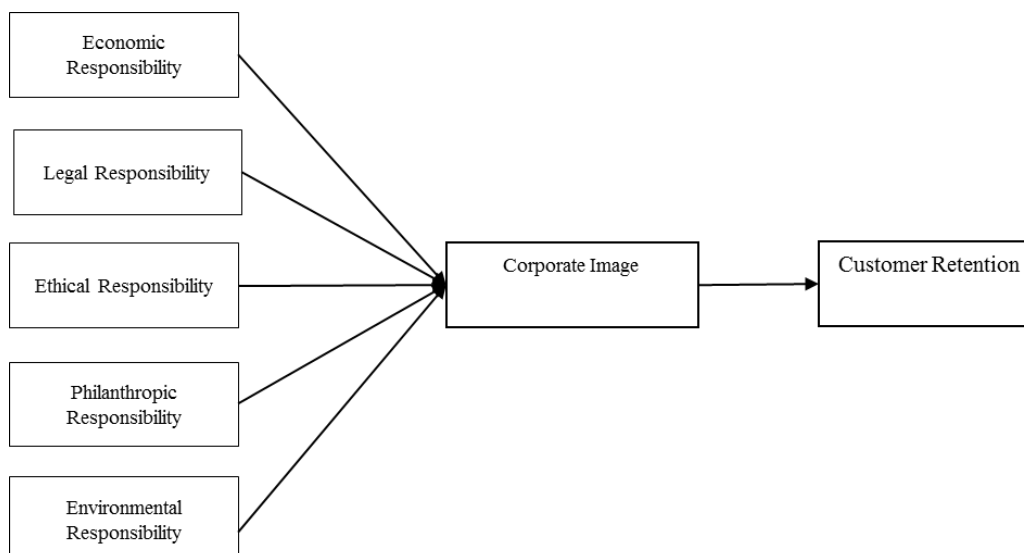


Figure 1. A proposed conceptual model

A conceptual model has been developed to achieve the objective of this study. This framework encompasses the four elements outlined in Carroll's CSR model aspects. Additionally, it incorporates the environmental CSR dimension, CI, and customer retention as key components. Figure 1 displays the framework that we have developed.

Methodology

The study employed the quantitative approach research design with the use of online questionnaires. Quantitative research assists with the collection of large samples thereby can be generalized to larger populations (Price & Lovell, 2018). Kline (2015) recommends employing multiple elements to measure a structure, rather than relying on a single item. Thus, the questionnaire was developed based on the extant literature using three items to measure the research structures for each variable to test the conceptual model. More specifically, three items for each CSR dimension (Han et al., 2020), three items for CI (Kim et al., 2017), and three items for customer retention (Kim et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2020). When selecting the variable items for each construct from the existing literature it followed three criteria for reliability purposes. 1) The questions must have been previously used in studies published in reliable journals. 2) The questions must be up-to-date and taken from new and tested studies. 3) The questions should be appropriate to Iran's specific research environment. Thus, the survey and its items were slightly modified to improve understanding for all respondents. The instrument items were then evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 denoted "completely disagree" 3 — "neither disagree nor agree", and 5 — "completely agree". The reason for selecting these tools, such as the quantitative design and the instrument, is that both are used in studies with high and rigorous statistical analysis and results (Ali et al., 2020).

The study focused on the client base of restaurants in Tehran who had engaged in dining experiences inside the city in recent months. Using the convenience sampling technique, the questionnaires were made available on an online platform, and individuals residing in Tehran were invited to participate. After approximately one month, a total of 312 questionnaires were successfully attained. From this total, a subset of 217 questions met the criteria for inclusion in the final analysis, satisfying the minimum sample requirement of 200 respondents for effective use of structural equation modeling (Nunkoo & So, 2016).

According to available literature indicates that SEM is a more appropriate approach for researching CSR compared to standard regression analysis (Kraus et al., 2020). Therefore, the statistical analysis and testing of the proposed conceptual model, SEM was employed. To achieve the objective of the study the data was analyzed in two stages. The initial evaluation of the measurement model was conducted through the utilization of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), before the assessment of the suggested conceptual framework. The second stage included SEM analysis to test the hypotheses and the model fit. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21 and AMOS version 24 software.

Results and Discussions

The demographic data of survey respondents is shown in Table 1. From the 217 responses, 54.4% of the respondents (n=118) were men and 45.6% of the respondents (n=99) were women. Also, 6.5% of respondents were less than 21 years old, 38.7% were 21-29 years old, 32.3% were 30-39 years old, 17.1% were 40-49 years old, and 5.5% were over 50 years old. Also, 11.5% of the respondents had a diploma, 37.3% had a bachelor's degree, 46.1% had a master's degree, and 5.1% of the respondents had a doctorate.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Total (N = 217)	
	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	118	54.4
Female	99	45.6
Age		
less than 20 years old	14	6.5

20 – 29 years	84	38.7
30 – 39 years	70	32.3
40 – 49 years	37	17.1
50 years or older	12	5.5
Education		
Diploma	25	11.5
Bachelor's degree	81	37.3
Master's degree	100	46.1
Doctorate	11	5.1

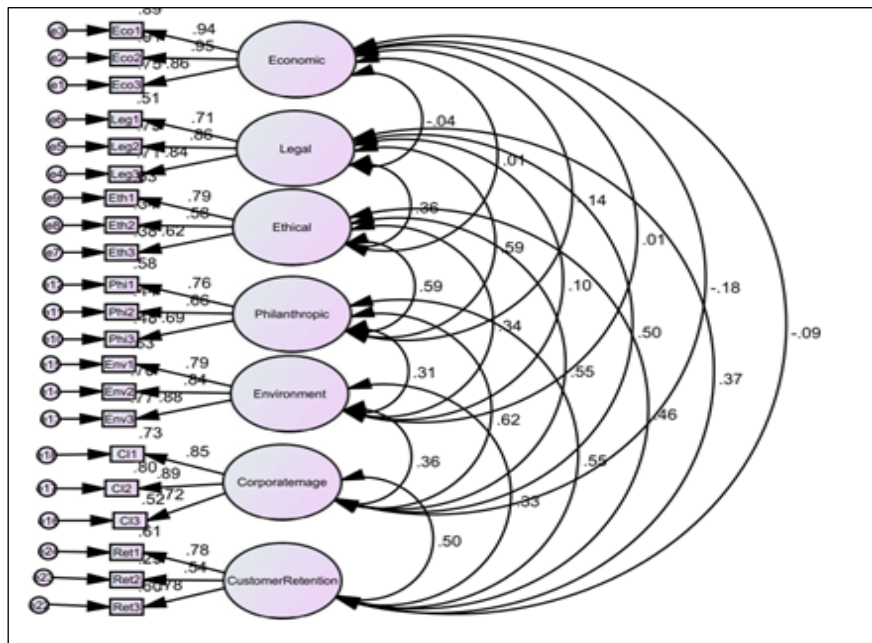


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Figure 2 demonstrates the confirmatory factor analysis and the result of the measurement model test showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 300.231$, $df = 168$, $p = 0.00$, $\chi^2/df = 1.787$, $RMSEA = 0.060$, $PNFI = 0.707$, $GFI = 0.889$, $AGFI = 0.847$, $CFI = 0.944$, $IFI = 0.945$, $TLI = 0.930$.

The factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability (CR), and Average variance (AVE) are shown in Table 2 as well the standardized factor loadings of the measurement model are presented in this Table. All of these loadings exceed the recommended threshold value of 0.5, as stated by Hair et al. (2019), and are found to be statistically significant. Cronbach's alphas are also greater than 0.70, which is higher than the threshold suggested by (Taherdoost, 2016). Table 2 also shows the CR and AVE. Based on Hair et al. (2019) CR above 0.7 indicates a high level of internal consistency, and as shown in the table, all the numbers related to CR are higher than 0.7.

Table 2. Properties of the measurement model

Measurement items	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
Economic Responsibility (Han et al., 2020)		0.942	0.989	0.889
This restaurant needs to be committed to being as profitable as possible.	0.941			
This restaurant needs to maintain a strong competitive position.	0.955			
This restaurant needs to be defined as one that is consistently profitable	0.856			
Legal Responsibility (Han et al., 2020)		0.843	0.956	0.706
This restaurant needs to perform in a manner consistent with the expectations of government and law.	0.714			
This restaurant needs to be defined as one that fulfills its legal obligations.	0.857			
This restaurant needs to provide goods and services that at least meet minimal legal requirements.	0.841			
Ethical Responsibility (Han et al., 2020)		0.712	0.899	0.446
This restaurant needs to perform in a manner consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical	0.795			
This restaurant needs to prevent ethical norms from being compromised to achieve corporate goals.	0.579			
This restaurant needs to be defined as good corporate citizenship and known as who does what is expected morally or ethically.	0.620			
Philanthropic Responsibility (Han et al., 2020)		0.752	0.873	0.517
This restaurant needs to perform in a manner consistent with the philanthropic and charitable expectations of society.	0.764			
This restaurant needs to allocate some of its resources to philanthropic activities (e.g. fine/performing arts and sports).	0.664			
This restaurant needs to assist voluntarily with those projects that enhance a community's "quality of life.	0.689			
Environmental Responsibility (Han et al., 2020)		0.873	0.957	0.755
This restaurant needs to perform in a manner consistent with protecting the environment.	0.794			
This restaurant needs to offer environmentally friendly products/services.	0.836			
This restaurant needs to make every effort to protect and preserve the environment.	0.878			
Corporate Image (Kim et al., 2017)		0.858	0.945	0.640
I think this restaurant is a fair company.	0.852			
I think this restaurant emphasizes the rights of customers.	0.893			
In my opinion, this restaurant has a good image in the minds of consumers.	0.723			
Customer Retention (Kim et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2020)		0.738	0.920	0.591
This place will be my first choice when it comes to choosing a restaurant.	0.781			
I am planning to eat at this restaurant in the future.	0.536			
I am a loyal customer of this restaurant	0.777			

According to an earlier study by Hair et al. (2017) to achieve an acceptable level of convergent validity, the AVE of each latent construct should be greater than or equal to 0.50. As shown in Table 2, the AVE of 5 variables is higher than 0.5, but the AVE of 1 variable is less than 0.5. Studies suggest that if the AVE is below 0.5, but the CR above 0.6, it can be

concluded that the construct exhibits acceptable levels of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019; Taherdoost, 2016). The construct demonstrates adequate levels of convergent validity.

Table 3. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio

	ECO	LEG	ETH	PHIL	ENV	CI	CR
ECO							
LEG	-0.036						
ETH	0.005	0.453					
PHIL	-0.141	0.453	0.412				
ENV	0.010	0.453	0.714	0.539			
CI	-0.182	0.453	0.125	0.620	0.427		
CR	-0.105	0.453	0.425	0.550	0.334	0.501	

Note. ECO = economic CSR; LEG = legal CSR; ETH = ethical CSR; PHIL = philanthropic CSR; ENV = Environmental CSR; CI = Corporate Image; CR = Customer Retention

In Table 3, the numbers related to the evaluation of (Henseler et al., 2015) are given. Based on these researchers' guidelines (Henseler et al., 2015) HTMT greater than 0.90 demonstrates a lack of discriminative validity. As shown in Table 3, all the numbers related to this rate are lower than this stipulated amount.

Hypotheses Testing and Structural Equation Model

The maximum likelihood estimation results provided a good fit with the data) $\chi^2 = 316.689$; $df = 173$; $p = 0.00$, $\chi^2/pdf = 1.831$, $RMSEA = .062$, $PNFI = 0.723$, $GFI = 0.884$; $AGFI = 0.844$, $IFI = 0.940$, $TLI = 0.926$, $CFI = .939$). As it is clear from this analysis, the fitting values of these indices are all within an acceptable range. Table 4 and Figure 3 presents the results of SEM.

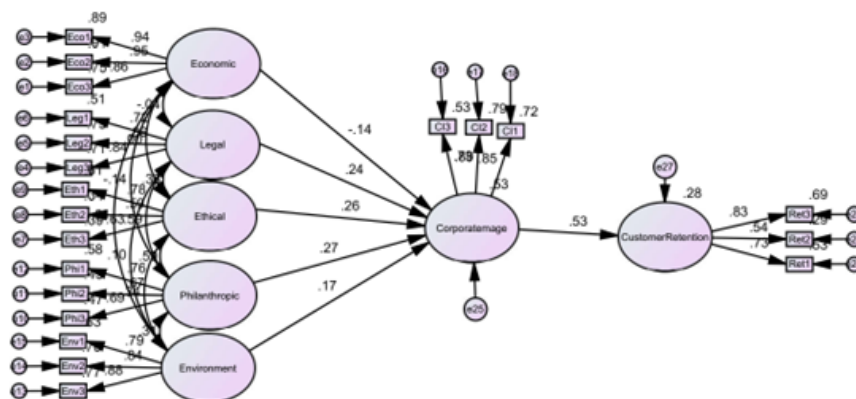


Figure 3. Structural equation model result

According to the Standardized coefficients, t-value, and p-value in Table 4 and Figure 3, economic CSR has an inverse and significant effect on CI ($\beta = -0.137$, $p > 0.05$). This result rejects hypothesis 1. Legal CSR has a significant effect on CI ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.01$). This result supports hypothesis 2. While ethical CSR has a significant effect on CI ($\beta = 0.258$, $p < 0.01$). This result supports hypothesis 3. Philanthropic CSR has a significant effect on CI ($\beta = 0.267$, $p < 0.01$). This result supports hypothesis 4. Environmental CSR has a significant effect on CI ($\beta =$

0.173, $p < 0.01$). This result supports hypothesis 5 and CI has a significant effect on customer retention ($\beta = 0.527$, $p < 0.01$) therefore, result hypothesis 6 is supported.

Table 4. Results of SEM

Paths	Standardized coefficients	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses
Hypothesis 1. Economic CSR positively affects the corporate image.	-0.137	-2.293	0.022	Not supported
Hypothesis 2. Legal CSR positively affects the corporate image.	0.243	2.860	0.004	Supported
Hypothesis 3. Ethical CSR positively affects the corporate image.	0.258	2.618	0.009	Supported
Hypothesis 4. Philanthropic CSR positively affects the corporate image.	0.267	2.278	0.000	Supported
Hypothesis 5. Environmental CSR positively affects the corporate image.	0.175	2.597	0.000	Supported
Hypothesis 6. Corporate image positively affects Customer Retention.	0.527	6.284	0.000	Supported

Note. R-square (R²): Corporate Image (0.529); Customer Retention (0.278)

Table 4 shows the R-square (R²) value for CI is 0.529 which means that the CSR dimension could affect the CI variable by 52.9% while the remaining 47.1% was the influence of other variables which were not included in this study. Finally, the R-square (R²) value for customer retention is 0.278 which means that CI could affect the customer retention variable by 27.8% while the remaining 72.2% was the influence of other variables which was not included in this study.

This study not only incorporated environmental responsibility into the CSR paradigm, but also demonstrated the impact of all five aspects of CSR on the CI, and customer retention within the restaurant industry. The findings of this study demonstrate a significant negative relationship between the economic dimension of CSR and company image. This issue may arise due to customers harboring a negative disposition towards prioritizing profitability exclusively, and instead expressing a strong inclination for restaurants to also prioritize their social duties and diligently adhere to them. This study additionally demonstrates that the legal dimension of CSR has a noteworthy and favorable impact on CI. The significance of adhering to laws and meeting minimal legal criteria may stem from its importance to consumers. The results of this study align with the previous arguments made by Kim et al. (2020) that legal obligations have a substantial and beneficial impact on the perception of a company's reputation. Ethical CSR also had a substantial impact on the overall CI. Hence, it is imperative for restaurants to proactively meet the ethical demands of consumers and society while promoting their corporate social responsibility initiatives and engaging in business operations. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that the ethical dimension exerts a favorable and statistically significant influence on the CI (Kim et al., 2017; Kim et al. 2020).

The factor of Philanthropic CSR has a substantial influence on the CI. According to Lee et al. (2019), the inclusion of a charitable factor has been found to have a favorable and statistically significant impact on a CI, which aligns with the results of this study. The environmental factor of CSR also had a considerable impact on the CI. This phenomenon can be attributed to the growing consumer awareness and concern for environmental conservation. Regarding Hypothesis 6, the results indicate a statistically significant relationship between CI and client retention. This present discovery opposes the outcomes reported by Lee and Lee (2018).

Conclusions

This work provides a substantial contribution to the body of literature currently available by investigating the impacts of individual dimensions of CSR on company image and customer

retention within the restaurant industry. The distinct incorporation of environmental engagement as an independent facet of CSR is particularly notable, considering the growing significance of environmental sustainability in contemporary society.

The analysis of the mediating effects of CI between the five aspects of CSR and customer retention gives rise to many theoretical implications. This study aimed to examine the influence of individual dimensions of CSR on the overall business image. The existing body of literature about the restaurant business has examined the influence of CSR on several aspects, including CI. While prior studies have explored the collective impact of CSR dimensions, limited research has specifically addressed the individual effects of each CSR component. Hence, the findings of this research provide a clear understanding of the specific dimension of CSR that can influence both the business image and customer retention.

Furthermore, previous studies examining the correlation between various facets of CSR and customer behavior factors have incorporated CSR dimensions such as economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic considerations. In this study, the researchers incorporated environmental participation into Carroll's notions of CSR and examined the inclusion of a fifth dimension in the CSR framework. The heightened significance of environmental challenges has garnered substantial academic and managerial focus in contemporary times. This study further validates the significance of explicitly considering environmental sustainability.

The results obtained from this investigation indicate that the environmental aspect of CSR exerts a favorable and statistically significant influence on the business image. Moreover, contemporary studies provide evidence for the correlation between duties, including legal, ethical, and environmental obligations, and business image. Furthermore, the results of this study substantiate the presence of a correlation between aspects of CSR and customer retention, with CI serving as a mediator.

This research further contributes to the understanding of the existing body of literature regarding the influence of CSR on customer behavior. Moreover, the current investigation was conducted in a country distinguished by distinctive economic circumstances, hence providing fresh insights and possible advancements to the established corpus of knowledge. This study demonstrates that the prioritization of profitability by restaurants is not a significant concern for customers, and in fact, an excessive emphasis on profitability by restaurants may potentially have adverse consequences for customers. Conversely, this study demonstrates that the degree to which restaurants adhere to various aspects of CSR is positively and significantly associated with the perception of their CI by customers. This, in turn, can potentially enhance the likelihood of customer retention. Moreover, this study enhances the existing body of knowledge by showcasing that not all CSR initiatives yield the same level of effectiveness. The findings indicate that philanthropic CSR had the most significant influence on the perception of Iranian customers towards the CI of restaurants, compared to the other four dimensions of CSR that were examined. In addition, the results validate the idea that Iranian consumers are starting to utilize CSR data for assessing eateries.

Additionally, the results of this study offer valuable insights for restaurant management. For example, it has been observed that economic CSR exhibits a detrimental impact on the overall perception of the business image. It is imperative to acknowledge that while profitability plays a crucial role in the sustenance of restaurants, the perception of customers perceiving restaurant managers as solely prioritizing profitability can have detrimental effects on the overall CI. Therefore, restaurant management needs to affirm with their clientele that their concerns extend beyond mere financial considerations and encompass a broader range of topics. Restaurant managers should demonstrate their commitment to issues such as sustainability, ethical sourcing of ingredients, and fair treatment of employees. Managers can do this by creating advertising campaigns that highlight their efforts in these areas. By demonstrating their commitment to these values, they build their customers' trust and create a sense of loyalty that keeps them coming back. In today's competitive market, restaurants cannot afford to ignore these issues. Customers are increasingly looking for businesses that align with their values, and businesses that don't risk being left behind. For example, by showing that their restaurant is more than just a place for customers to dine and make money, managers can create a reputation that will attract new customers and keep existing customers loyal for years to come.

Therefore, restaurant management needs to affirm with their clientele that their concerns extend beyond mere financial considerations and encompass a broader range of topics. This aspect can be effectively demonstrated in their advertising campaigns.

This study also establishes that customers place significant emphasis on legal compliance and hold the expectation that restaurants will adhere to governmental regulations. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that restaurant managers understand the significance of following established rules to maintain the reputation of their establishment. Any deviation from the prescribed laws can lead to severe consequences that may tarnish the image of the restaurant. Managers must ensure that all staff members are well-trained and informed about the standard operating procedures, as even a minor mistake may have detrimental effects on the establishment's credibility. Therefore, restaurant managers must emphasize the importance of adhering to the rules and take all necessary steps to ensure compliance. Furthermore, this research posits the significance of restaurants' commitment to ethical values about customer satisfaction, which in turn can have both direct and indirect implications for the establishment's reputation.

In addition, this study suggests that there exists a potential correlation between consumers' perception of a restaurant's adherence to ethical principles and their likelihood to revisit that establishment. In today's society, customers expect ethical principles to be upheld by all businesses, including restaurants. The failure to do so can have detrimental effects on a company's reputation and image. This issue becomes more significant in Muslim countries like Iran, as religious principles are just as important as moral principles to many customers. As a result, customers in Iran expect restaurants to respect their religious beliefs, especially when it comes to the food they offer. This means that restaurants must ensure that the meat used in their dishes is halal, as it is of great importance to Iranian customers. Adhering to these ethical and religious principles not only shows respect to the customers but also strengthens the restaurant's reputation in the community.

Likewise, the results obtained from this investigation indicate that engagement in philanthropic endeavors has the potential to enhance the perception of a restaurant in the minds of its customers. Customers expect that restaurant managers should actively partake in activities that contribute to public welfare and philanthropy. It is commonly expected that restaurant managers should go beyond just running their businesses and actively participate in activities that contribute to public welfare and philanthropy. This could include organizing events that raise awareness about social issues, volunteering time and resources for charitable causes, or even donating a portion of their profits to support community projects. Such initiatives not only help restaurants build a positive reputation in the eyes of their customers but also contribute to creating a healthier and more compassionate society. By demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility, restaurant managers can inspire their employees, customers, and peers to do their part in making the world a better place.

Thus, this study postulates that buyers exhibit a heightened level of attentiveness towards environmental concerns. In the modern world, restaurants are judged not only by the quality of their food but also by their adherence to certain standards. A crucial factor that has recently become a significant concern is environmental sustainability. With the rise of social media, people have become more aware of the environmental impact of the food industry, and this has resulted in a shift in consumer behavior. As a result, restaurant managers have been forced to take steps to ensure that their businesses are eco-friendly. In the past, traditional Iranian cuisine heavily relies on meat-based dishes, but recent studies suggest that animal husbandry has a significant impact on the environment. Water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions linked to the production of meat have surpassed those of the agricultural sector. Restaurant owners have been quick to adapt to this new reality and incorporate vegetarian options into their menus. This trend is growing, and more and more eateries are offering plant-based dishes to their customers.

Additionally, as a restaurant manager, it is crucial to establish a set of business rules and tactics that align with core ethical principles. This means considering factors such as fair treatment of employees, responsible sourcing of ingredients, and sustainable business practices. In addition, it is important to foster an environment that motivates other restaurant employees to contribute

towards cultivating a positive perception among consumers regarding the restaurant's ethical standards. This can be achieved by promoting open communication, providing opportunities for training and development, and recognizing and rewarding ethical behavior. Ultimately, by conforming to the ethical principles of society, restaurant managers can not only establish a positive reputation for their business but also contribute towards building a better, more sustainable future for all.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not exempt from constraints. The scope of this study is confined to the restaurant industry, hence limiting its generalizability to other sectors. Hence, it is imperative to use caution when interpreting our findings, and any attempt to extrapolate these findings to other businesses, including those closely associated with tourism and hospitality, necessitates meticulous consideration. Furthermore, the study was carried out exclusively in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. To enhance the comprehensiveness of the findings, conducting the research in many nations would be useful. Moreover, it is worth noting that Iran is classified as a developing economy. Consequently, future studies could be undertaken in developed economies to facilitate a comparative analysis of their findings. In this study, we have examined the influence of various characteristics of corporate social responsibility on both corporate image and customer retention. Hence, it is recommended that forthcoming studies investigate these dimensions of phenomena such as recurring visits or matters about the restaurant brands, such as brand image and attitude. Additionally, the mediating role of the corporate image among different dimensions of CSR and customer retention has not been investigated. Future studies can examine the mediating role of corporate image or other variables between different dimensions of CSR and customer retention.

Moreover, it is recommended that future studies incorporate longitudinal designs or experimental designs to establish causal links between the variables. Moreover, the incorporation of control variables or covariates in the model might enhance the internal validity of the study and mitigate the likelihood of alternative explanations. It is imperative to acknowledge that experiments possess certain merits, such as the capacity to change variables and account for extraneous circumstances. However, it is crucial to recognize that their feasibility and practicality may not always be guaranteed. When examining restaurant consumer behavior, conducting experiments can provide challenges due to the inherent difficulties of effectively controlling all the variables that may impact behavior within a naturalistic environment. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies direct their attention toward examining particular categories of restaurants or specific contextual factors to enhance the applicability of the results. For instance, scholars may investigate the impact of environmental accountability on consumer behavior inside various types of dining establishments, such as fast food restaurants, upscale dining establishments, or restaurants that possess distinct cultural or regional attributes.

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