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Research Article

Corporate Social Responsibility as a Sustainable Marketing Tool to Enhance Brand Reputation and Customer Loyalty: Evidence from Ghana's Beverage Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a sustainable marketing tool for enhancing brand reputation and customer loyalty in Ghana's beverage industry, focusing on Awake Ghana Mineral Water as a case study. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, structured questionnaires were administered to 166 consumers in Accra, Ghana. Data was analyzed with SPSS (v26) using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analyses. Diagnostics for multicollinearity, normality, and linearity were performed to validate model assumptions. CSR initiatives exhibit strong positive correlations with both brand reputation ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$) and customer loyalty ($r = 0.682$, $p < 0.01$). Regression results show CSR explains 61.2% of the variance in brand reputation ($\beta = 0.69$, 95% CI [0.54, 0.79]) and 58.9% in customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.67$, 95% CI [0.48, 0.76]). Health-focused CSR programs, notably the One4Life initiative, were the most recognized and impactful. CSR serves as a competitive differentiator, particularly when initiatives align with community health and welfare needs. Beverage firms can leverage CSR strategically to reinforce brand image and consumer trust. This study provides empirical evidence from Ghana's beverage industry on CSR's influence on brand reputation and loyalty, offering contextual insights into sustainable marketing practices.

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a peripheral business consideration to a central strategic imperative in contemporary marketing practice (Anggusti et al., 2025). In emerging markets, where social and environmental challenges are particularly acute, CSR represents both a moral obligation and a strategic opportunity for organizations to differentiate themselves while contributing to sustainable development (Sheehy & Farneti, 2021). Ghana's beverage industry offers a rich context for this inquiry due to

its competitive intensity, sustainability pressures, and growing consumer sensitivity toward ethical business conduct. The growing consumer consciousness regarding corporate ethics and environmental sustainability has intensified the importance of CSR as a marketing tool, particularly in developing economies where trust and reputation significantly influence purchasing decisions (Salam & Jahed, 2023). Ghana's beverage industry, characterized by intense competition and increasing consumer sophistication, presents a compelling context for examining CSR's role in building brand reputation and customer loyalty (Meru & Kinoti, 2022). The industry faces mounting pressure to address environmental concerns, particularly regarding plastic waste management and water conservation, while simultaneously contributing to community development and health improvement initiatives. Awake Ghana Mineral Water, a prominent player in Ghana's bottled water market, has implemented various CSR initiatives, including the notable "One4Life" program that channels proceed to support critical medical care at the National Cardiothoracic Centre. Despite these efforts, limited empirical research has examined the effectiveness of such initiatives in enhancing brand reputation and fostering customer loyalty in the Ghanaian context (Boateng et al., 2020). The research gap lies in the insufficient understanding of how CSR initiatives translate into measurable business outcomes in Ghana's beverage sector. While theoretical frameworks suggest positive relationships between CSR, brand reputation, and customer loyalty, empirical validation within the specific socio-economic context of Ghana remains limited (Amoako & Dartey-Baah, 2020).

This study addresses four primary research questions: (1) What CSR initiatives has Awake Ghana Mineral Water implemented, and how well do they align with the company's marketing strategies? (2) How do CSR activities influence consumers' perceptions of the brand and their trust in the company? (3) What is the correlation between CSR engagement and customer loyalty, particularly regarding repeat purchases, brand advocacy, and customer satisfaction? (4) What challenges does Awake Ghana Mineral Water face in integrating CSR into its marketing strategy, and what solutions can overcome these challenges? The significance of this study extends beyond academic contribution to providing practical insights for beverage industry managers, policymakers, and CSR practitioners in emerging markets. The findings will inform strategic decision-making regarding CSR investment allocation and implementation approaches that maximize both social impact and business value.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of CSR in Emerging Markets

The conceptual framework for understanding CSR is viewed as a vehicle for socio-economic development in contexts like Ghana. Stakeholder theory, originally developed by Freeman (Jamali & Karam, 2018), provides the foundational understanding that corporations must balance the interests of various stakeholders including shareholders, employees, customers, communities, and governments. In emerging markets, this balance becomes more complex due to the heightened expectations for corporate contribution to societal development (Jamali & Karam, 2018). Social identity theory offers additional insight into how CSR influences consumer behavior in emerging markets(Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Recent studies demonstrate that consumers in these markets increasingly identify with brands that reflect their values and contribute to national development (Chen et al., 2020). This identification process is particularly strong in emerging markets where national pride and collective identity play significant roles in consumption decisions(Srivastava et al., 2021). Institutional theory provides crucial context for understanding CSR implementation variations across emerging markets. Weak institutional frameworks in many emerging economies create institutional voids that corporations may fill through CSR initiatives (Srivastava et al., 2021). However, these same institutional weaknesses can also create implementation challenges and measurement difficulties (Fransen et al., 2019).

CSR Practices Across the Globe

Comparative analysis of CSR practices across the globe reveals significant regional variations driven by cultural, economic, and institutional factors. In African markets, CSR initiatives predominantly focus on addressing basic developmental needs. Nigerian companies like Dangote Group emphasize healthcare and education initiatives, reflecting the country's significant infrastructure gaps (Udo-Umoren, 2019). Similarly, South African companies prioritize black economic empowerment and skills development, addressing historical inequalities (Makgoba, 2019). Kenyan firms focus on agricultural development and rural infrastructure, aligning with the country's agricultural economy (Amprako, 2024).

Asian markets demonstrate a different CSR emphasis, with environmental sustainability and technological innovation taking precedence. Indian companies like Tata Group have pioneered comprehensive CSR programs combining environmental protection with social development (Madaan et al., 2023). Chinese firms increasingly focus on environmental remediation and clean technology development, responding to severe pollution challenges(Wang et al., 2022). Indonesian and Malaysian companies emphasize sustainable palm oil production and forest conservation, addressing international pressure on environmental practices (Gunawan, 2025). Latin American markets show strong emphasis on community development and social inclusion. Brazilian companies like Natura focus on biodiversity conservation and indigenous community support (Dittmar & Girón, 2025). Mexican firms prioritize education and healthcare in underserved communities, reflecting significant regional inequalities (Maldonado-Guzmán et al., 2019). Colombian companies emphasize peace-building and conflict resolution, addressing the country's historical challenges(Sánchez, 2024). Eastern European markets demonstrate unique CSR patterns reflecting their transition from centrally planned economies. Polish companies emphasize governance transparency and employee rights, building trust in market institutions (Szczepanowski et al., 2020). Czech firms focus on environmental restoration and cultural preservation (Selucká, 2023). Turkish companies balance European Union standards with local development needs, creating hybrid CSR approaches (Turker & Can, 2021).

CSR Impact on Brand Reputation

Brand reputation is significantly influenced by CSR activities, but the mechanisms and effectiveness vary across regions. Research in Asian markets demonstrates that environmental CSR initiatives have stronger impact on brand reputation than social initiatives, particularly in areas where pollution concerns are paramount (Chen et al., 2020). However, countries with community-focused initiatives show stronger reputation effects due to collectivist cultural values (Anggusti et al., 2025). Studies in Nigeria and Kenya demonstrate that companies addressing basic healthcare needs achieve significant reputation premiums (Okaro & Okafor, 2021). South African research indicates that CSR initiatives addressing inequality and empowerment have stronger reputation effects than environmental initiatives(Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). Moreover, studies reveal that authenticity and long-term commitment are crucial for CSR reputation effects. Companies perceived as opportunistic in their CSR efforts experience negative reputation effects, while those with sustained commitments gain significant reputation advantages (Santos et al., 2021). Also, it is found that family-owned businesses achieves stronger CSR reputation effects than multinational subsidiaries (Esparza Aguilar et al., 2020).

CSR and Customer Loyalty

The relationship between CSR and customer loyalty demonstrates significant variation, influenced by cultural values, economic development levels, and institutional contexts. Consumers in China demonstrate high loyalty to brands with environmental CSR initiatives, particularly air and water pollution reduction (Gu, 2023). Indian consumers show stronger loyalty responses to social CSR initiatives

addressing education and healthcare (Koushik et al., 2025).In Ghana, CSR-loyalty patterns are strongly influenced by developmental needs and community expectations. Evidence shows that health-focused CSR initiatives generate greater customer loyalty than environmental programs (Amoako & Dartey-Baah, 2020). This outcome reflects consumer appreciation for initiatives that respond to critical social concerns and demonstrate tangible community impact (Kabiru, 2019). More broadly, studies indicate that CSR programs rooted in authentic community engagement and aligned with local priorities foster deeper emotional connections and sustained brand loyalty. CSR efforts that are transparent, participatory, and contextually appropriate tend to inspire stronger consumer commitment than those perceived as purely image-driven or externally imposed (Joshi et al., 2025).

Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Reputation

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has increasingly been examined as a strategic mechanism through which firms build and sustain brand reputation, particularly in competitive and socially sensitive markets. Brand reputation reflects stakeholders' collective assessments of a firm's credibility, trustworthiness, and social legitimacy, shaped not only by economic performance but also by ethical conduct and social engagement (Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Sheehy & Farneti, 2021). Prior studies consistently demonstrate that firms engaging in visible, authentic, and value-aligned CSR initiatives tend to achieve stronger reputational outcomes, as such initiatives signal ethical commitment and long-term orientation to stakeholders (Jamali & Karam, 2018; Santos et al., 2021). Empirical evidence further suggests that CSR initiatives addressing salient social needs such as health, environmental sustainability, and ethical business practices are more likely to translate into favourable brand evaluations than symbolic or weakly communicated CSR efforts (Chen et al., 2020; Cheruiyot-Koech & Reddy, 2022). This relationship is particularly pronounced in emerging markets, where reputational signals often compensate for weaker institutional frameworks and limited regulatory enforcement (Idemudia, 2022; Srivastava et al., 2021). In such contexts, CSR functions not merely as a reputational enhancer but as a trust-building mechanism that shapes stakeholder expectations and reinforces brand credibility (Amoako & Dartey-Baah, 2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility and Customer Loyalty

The relationship between CSR and customer loyalty has received increasing scholarly attention, with evidence indicating that socially responsible corporate behaviour positively influences consumers repurchase intentions, brand preference, and advocacy behaviours (Gu, 2023; Salifu & Saini, 2023). Customer loyalty extends beyond repeated purchasing to encompass emotional attachment, trust, and willingness to recommend a brand, making it a critical outcome of sustainable marketing strategies (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Boateng et al., 2020). Studies grounded in values-based marketing and CSR–consumer fit theory argue that consumers are more likely to reward firms whose CSR initiatives align with their personal values and societal priorities (Kankam-Kwarteng, 2022; Ali, 2023). In emerging markets, where consumers often expect firms to contribute meaningfully to social development, CSR initiatives addressing immediate community needs particularly in health and welfare are associated with stronger loyalty effects (Amoako & Dartey-Baah, 2020; Kabiru, 2019). However, empirical findings also suggest that not all CSR dimensions exert equal influence on loyalty, underscoring the importance of contextual and industry-specific investigation (Lu & Ren, 2020; Kumar & Srivastava, 2021).

Brand Reputation as a Linking Mechanism

Although CSR has been independently linked to both brand reputation and customer loyalty, fewer studies explicitly examine brand reputation as a key explanatory mechanism through which CSR initiatives translate into sustained loyalty outcomes. Brand reputation serves as an interpretive lens through which

consumers assess the sincerity, credibility, and long-term commitment of a firm's CSR activities (Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Park, 2024). When CSR initiatives enhance brand reputation, they create a foundation of trust that facilitates deeper emotional attachment and long-term customer relationships (Salam & Jahed, 2023). Stakeholder Theory provides a useful framework for understanding this mechanism, positing that firms that effectively manage stakeholder relationships through responsible practices are more likely to attain legitimacy and reputational capital (Freeman, 1984; Jamali & Karam, 2018). Similarly, Social Identity Theory suggests that consumers identify more strongly with brands that demonstrate social responsibility, leading to enhanced loyalty through psychological attachment and shared values (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Heo et al., 2022). Despite these theoretical insights, empirical validation of brand reputation as a linking mechanism between CSR and customer loyalty remains limited in African consumer markets, particularly within the beverage industry.

Implementation Challenges and Cultural Considerations

CSR implementation in emerging markets faces unique challenges that vary significantly across regions. Communication barriers represent a common challenge, but with different characteristics. Low literacy rates and limited media access create challenges for CSR communication (Kvasničková Stanislavská et al., 2020). In some places, businesses face language diversity and digital divide challenges, particularly in rural areas (Chen et al., 2020). Some companies encounter issues related to media concentration and urban-rural communication gaps (Hallin & Echeverría, 2024).

Resource constraints affect CSR implementation differently across emerging markets. Many companies often lack financial resources for large-scale CSR programs, leading to partnership-based approaches with NGOs and international organizations (Idemudia, 2022). Other companies face regulatory compliance costs and technology investment requirements for environmental CSR (Wang et al., 2022). Some companies also encounter infrastructure limitations and bureaucratic barriers (Bellido, 2020).Cultural considerations significantly influence CSR effectiveness across emerging markets. Societies that have collectivist cultures show stronger responses to community-focused CSR initiatives. Conversely, in contexts where individual achievement is prioritized, CSR programs that highlight personal or direct benefits often achieve greater resonance (Turker & Can, 2021). Religious and traditional values also shape CSR preferences, where acts of charity, ethical stewardship, and moral responsibility are perceived as integral components of responsible business conduct (Masoud, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study proposes that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives directly influence Brand Reputation and Customer Loyalty. Drawing on Stakeholder Theory and Social Identity Theory, the model assumes that visible, value-aligned CSR initiatives enhance stakeholder trust and foster consumer–brand identification, which in turn strengthens loyalty outcomes. CSR initiatives comprising environmental programs, health and community initiatives, and ethical business practices are proposed to have a direct positive effect on brand reputation (H1). This relationship reflects the idea that firms that actively address stakeholder expectations and societal needs are more likely to be perceived as credible, responsible, and trustworthy.

The framework further posits that an enhanced brand reputation subsequently leads to stronger customer loyalty outcomes (H2), manifested through repeat purchase behaviour, brand advocacy, and customer satisfaction. Brand reputation thus functions as a key explanatory mechanism through which CSR initiatives translate into sustained consumer commitment. Stakeholder Theory explains how CSR addresses stakeholder expectations in weak institutional environments, while Social Identity Theory accounts for consumers' emotional attachment to socially responsible brands in emerging markets

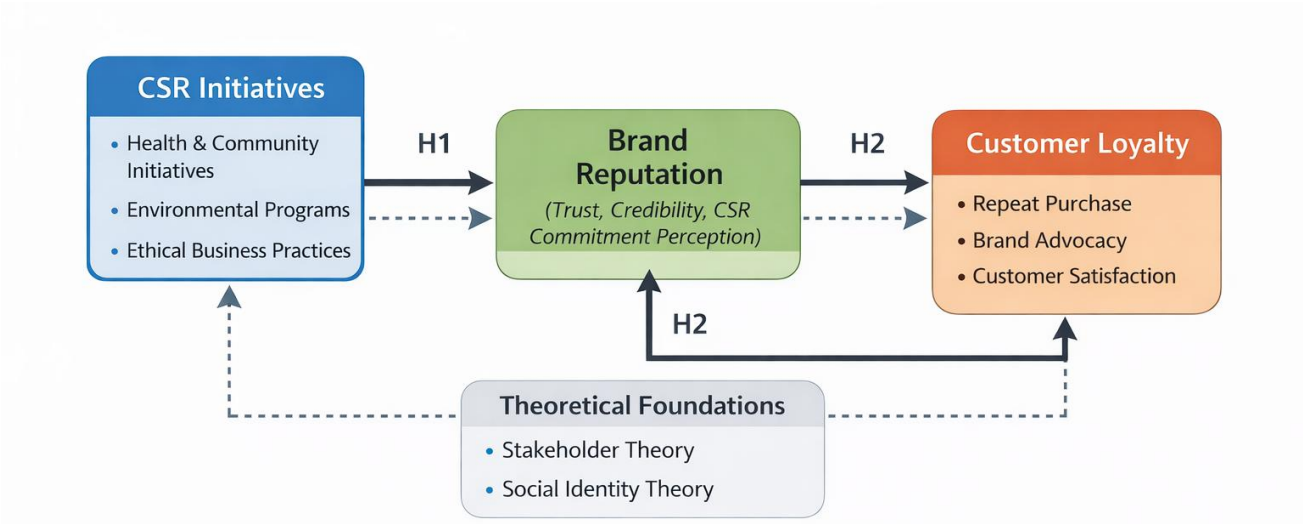

Figure 1: Consumption Awareness Source: Author's Construct (2025)

Research Gaps and Study Contribution

Despite the expanding body of CSR literature, several important gaps remain. First, quantitative studies examining the joint relationships between CSR, brand reputation, and customer loyalty in the beverage industry are scarce, particularly within Ghana and similar emerging market contexts. Second, existing research often examines CSR outcomes in isolation, without empirically testing the role of brand reputation as a central mechanism linking CSR initiatives to loyalty outcomes. Third, there is limited empirical understanding of how CSR operates as a strategic marketing tool rather than as philanthropy in environments characterized by weak institutional and regulatory frameworks. This study addresses these gaps by empirically examining the relationships between CSR initiatives, brand reputation, and customer loyalty in Ghana's beverage industry. By focusing on consumer perceptions and loyalty outcomes, the study provides context-specific evidence on how CSR contributes to brand-building and customer retention in an emerging market setting.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between CSR initiatives, brand reputation, and customer loyalty. The cross-sectional approach was selected to capture consumer perceptions at a specific point in time, providing a snapshot of the current market dynamics in Ghana's beverage industry (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The target population comprised consumers of bottled water in Accra, Ghana's capital city, chosen for its diverse demographic composition and concentration of beverage consumption. Accra represents approximately 12% of Ghana's population and serves as the primary market for premium bottled water brands. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select 166 bottled water consumers in Accra. While probability sampling would enhance generalizability, convenience sampling is widely accepted in consumer perception and exploratory marketing studies where a comprehensive sampling frame is unavailable (Hair et al., 2019). Accra was selected due to its demographic diversity, high bottled water consumption, and accessibility to active consumers at points of purchase. The study explicitly acknowledges potential sampling bias, including urban concentration and self-selection effects. However, to mitigate these limitations, data were collected across multiple locations and socio-economic groups. The sample size exceeded the minimum threshold required for regression analysis, ensuring adequate statistical power.

CSR initiatives were measured using an adapted version of the scale developed by Maignan and Ferrell (2004), tailored to reflect the Ghanaian context. Sample items include statements such as *"The company supports health-related community initiatives"* and *"The company operates in an ethically responsible manner."* Brand reputation was measured using items adapted from Walsh and Beatty's (2007) corporate reputation scale, capturing perceptions of trust, credibility, and commitment to social responsibility. Customer loyalty was measured using adapted items from Zeithaml et al. (1996), including repeat purchase intention and brand advocacy. Reliability analysis indicates satisfactory internal consistency for all constructs. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for CSR initiatives ($\alpha = 0.82$), brand reputation ($\alpha = 0.85$), and customer loyalty ($\alpha = 0.79$), confirming scale reliability.

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire comprising five sections: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) bottled water consumption patterns, (3) CSR awareness and perceptions, (4) brand reputation assessments, and (5) customer loyalty measurements. The questionnaire employed a combination of Likert scales, multiple-choice, and ranking questions to capture comprehensive consumer perspectives. CSR initiatives were measured using a modified version of Maignan and Ferrell's (2004) CSR scale, adapted for the Ghanaian context. Brand reputation was assessed using Walsh and Beatty's (2007) Corporate Reputation Scale, while customer loyalty was measured using Zeithaml et al.'s (1996) behavioral intentions scale, updated to reflect contemporary loyalty dimensions. Data collection occurred over six weeks in various locations across Accra, including shopping centers, educational institutions, and residential areas, ensuring demographic diversity. Research assistants administered questionnaires after explaining the study's purpose and obtaining informed consent from participants. Quality control measures included supervisor spot-checks and same-day questionnaire reviews to ensure completeness and accuracy. Data analysis employed SPSS version 26.0, utilizing descriptive statistics to characterize the sample and inferential statistics to test hypotheses. Correlation analysis examined relationships between variables, while multiple regression analysis assessed the predictive power of CSR initiatives on brand reputation and customer loyalty. Diagnostic tests ensured assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were satisfied before conducting parametric analyses. Variance Inflation Factor, $VIF < 2$ confirmed absence of multicollinearity; residual plots confirmed linearity and homoscedasticity; Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated normality ($p > 0.05$).

Results

Table 1: Demographic of respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)
Age	18–25 years	21.7	36
	26–35 years	41.6	69
	36–45 years	23.5	39
	46–55 years	13.3	22
Gender	Male	42	70
	Female	58	96
Education	Primary	2.4	4
	Secondary	23.5	39
	Tertiary	57.2	95
	Postgraduate	16.9	28
Employment	Employed	38.6	64
	Self-employed	33.7	56
	Student	15.7	26
	Unemployed	6.6	11
	Part-time	5.4	9

Source: Author's Construct (2025)

The sample is predominantly youthful and middle-aged, with 41.6% aged 26–35, 23.5% aged 36–45, 21.7% aged 18–25, and 13.3% aged 46–55, reflecting the economically active group most engaged with CSR initiatives (Kankam-Kwarteng, 2022). Education levels are high, with 57.2% holding tertiary degrees, 23.5% secondary, 16.9% postgraduate, and only 2.4% primary, indicating a consumer base likely to appreciate CSR efforts (Agyei, 2022). Gender distribution is 58% female and 42% male, highlighting women's stronger role in consumer research and socially responsible purchasing (Heo et al., 2022). Employment is diverse: 38.6% employed, 33.7% self-employed, 15.7% students, 6.6% unemployed, and 5.4% part-time, capturing varied income and purchasing power relevant to CSR perceptions (Salifu & Saini, 2023).

Consumption Patterns

Bottled water purchase frequency analysis reveals 47% of respondents are daily consumers, 39.2% occasional buyers, 12.7% weekly consumers, and 1.2% monthly purchasers. The high proportion of daily consumers (47%) indicates strong market penetration and frequent brand interaction opportunities, creating multiple touchpoints for CSR communication and influence (Agyei, 2022).

CSR Awareness and Recognition

General CSR awareness measurement yielded a mean score of 2.84 (SD = 0.496) on a 3-point scale (1 = No, 2 = Maybe, 3 = Yes), indicating high consumer awareness of Awake Ghana Mineral Water's CSR initiatives. The low standard deviation suggests consistent awareness across the sample, demonstrating effective CSR communication strategies (Park, 2024).

Descriptive Statistics of Key Study Constructs

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for CSR initiatives, brand perception and trust, and customer loyalty indicators. Reported values include means, standard deviations, skewness, and excess kurtosis, which indicate that the data are approximately normal and suitable for parametric analysis. Table X presents descriptive statistics for CSR initiatives, brand perception and trust, and customer loyalty indicators. Reported values include means, standard deviations, skewness, and excess kurtosis, which indicate that the data are approximately normal and suitable for parametric analysis.

RQ1: CSR Initiatives Identification and Marketing Strategy Alignment

The analysis of Awake Ghana Mineral Water's CSR initiatives highlights varying degrees of consumer recognition and alignment with strategic brand positioning. Health Programs emerged as the most prominent initiative (M = 3.68, SD = 0.45, skewness = −0.25, kurtosis = −0.45), reflecting strong resonance with consumers and confirming the strategic success of the *One4Life* initiative in reinforcing the company's health-oriented identity. This finding is consistent with prior studies showing that CSR initiatives closely aligned with core brand values enhance consumer recognition and strengthen brand differentiation (Aftab et al., 2025).

By contrast, Environmental Sustainability (M = 2.80, SD = 0.60) received moderate evaluations, while Ethical Business Practices (M = 2.10, SD = 0.55) and Community Development (M = 1.60, SD = 0.50) lagged, indicating weaker consumer visibility. These results suggest that consumers prioritize CSR activities that address immediate societal challenges particularly health access over less tangible or less communicated initiatives. This aligns with CSR consumer fit theory, which argues that initiatives closely tied to consumer priorities yield stronger marketing benefits (Kankam-Kwarteng, 2022).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Study Constructs

Category	Item	Scale Min	Scale Max	Mean	Std Dev	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
CSR Initiatives Identification and Marketing Strategy Alignment	Health Programs	1	5	3.68	0.45	-0.45	-0.25
	Environmental Sustainability	1	5	2.8	0.6	-0.39	-0.31
	Ethical Business Practices	1	5	2.1	0.55	-0.22	0.12
	Community Development	1	5	1.6	0.5	-0.36	0.28
Brand Perception and Trust	CSR Commitment Perception	1	5	3.78	0.652	-0.44	-0.32
	Trust Enhancement	1	5	2.62	0.647	-0.36	-0.28
Customer Loyalty Indicators	Purchase Decision Influence	1	5	2.66	0.675	-0.29	-0.15
	Brand Preference Frequency	1	5	3.17	0.738	-0.47	-0.41
CSR Implementation Challenges	Consumer Unawareness	1	5	3.45	0.62	-0.36	-0.28
	Measurement Difficulties	1	5	2.76	0.58	-0.24	0.15
	High Implementation Costs	1	5	2.58	0.64	-0.42	-0.21
	Weak Regulatory Support	1		2.41	0.59	-0.18	0.09

Source: Author's Construct (2025)

RQ2: CSR Influence on Brand Perception and Trust

CSR activities were found to positively influence brand-related perceptions. CSR Commitment Perception achieved the highest rating (M = 3.78, SD = 0.65, skewness = −0.32, kurtosis = −0.44), indicating that consumers view Awake as genuinely committed to social responsibility. Meanwhile, Trust Enhancement (M = 2.62, SD = 0.65) was moderately rated but still demonstrated a positive effect, suggesting that CSR strengthens brand credibility. The near-normal distributions (all skewness and kurtosis within ±1) further support consistency in these perceptions across demographic groups. These findings align with stakeholder theory, which posits that transparent and visible CSR practices enhance trust between companies and their stakeholders (Motadi, 2024). While perception of CSR commitment is already strong, translating this into deeper consumer trust may require reinforcing credibility through sustained and transparent CSR reporting.

RQ3: CSR-Customer Loyalty Correlation Analysis

CSR initiatives were also found to influence consumer loyalty outcomes. Purchase Decision Influence (M = 2.66, SD = 0.68, skewness = −0.15, kurtosis = −0.29) showed that CSR activities significantly shape consumer purchasing decisions. Similarly, Brand Preference Frequency (M = 3.17, SD = 0.74, skewness = −0.41, kurtosis = −0.47) suggests that CSR encourages repeated brand preference and long-term loyalty. These results reinforce the notion that CSR not only drives immediate purchasing behaviour but also fosters sustained consumer relationships. The findings lend support to values-based marketing theory, which argues that CSR initiatives that resonate with consumer values generate sustainable competitive advantages (Ali, 2023). Importantly, the consistency across consumer segments indicates that CSR is not limited to niche audiences but has broad appeal in the Ghanaian bottled water market.

RQ4: Implementation Challenges and Solutions

The analysis of implementation challenges highlights consumer unawareness as the most critical barrier (Frequency = 82, 49.4%; M = 3.45, SD = 0.62, skewness = −0.28, kurtosis = −0.36). This finding reinforces the presence of communication gaps, indicating that despite favourable perceptions, many consumers remain insufficiently informed about Awake's full CSR portfolio. Measurement difficulties (19.9%; M = 2.76, SD = 0.58) and high implementation costs (17.5%; M = 2.58, SD = 0.64) were also notable, suggesting challenges in evaluating CSR impact and sustaining programs financially. Weak regulatory support ranked lowest (13.3%; M = 2.41, SD = 0.59), but its presence reflects institutional limitations that constrain CSR scalability in Ghana.

The relatively balanced skewness and kurtosis values (all within ±1) indicate that perceptions of challenges are normally distributed across respondents, lending robustness to these findings. This supports Idemudia (2022), who observed that CSR efforts in emerging markets are often constrained by communication deficiencies, weak institutional frameworks, and resource limitations. Addressing these barriers requires Awake to adopt integrated communication strategies to increase consumers, develop standardized CSR evaluation frameworks to manage measurement complexity, and explore cost-sharing partnerships with stakeholders to reduce implementation burdens. Moreover, stronger collaboration with regulatory agencies is essential to establish supportive institutional structures. Collectively, these strategies would strengthen the credibility, reach, and sustainability of Awake's CSR initiatives in Ghana's competitive beverage sector.

Statistical Analysis Results

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis reveals strong positive relationships between CSR initiatives and both dependent variables. The correlation between CSR initiatives and brand reputation ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a strong positive relationship, while the correlation between CSR initiatives and customer loyalty ($r = 0.682$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrates similarly strong association. Both correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, providing strong support for the hypothesized relationships.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	CSR Initiatives	Brand Reputation	Customer Loyalty
CSR Initiatives	1.000	0.715**	0.682**
Brand Reputation	0.715**	1.000	0.724**
Customer Loyalty	0.682**	0.724**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) *Source: Author's Construct (2025)*

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis demonstrates CSR initiatives' significant predictive power for both brand reputation and customer loyalty. For brand reputation, CSR initiatives explain 61.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.612$, $F(1, 164) = 34.56$, $p < 0.01$), while for customer loyalty, CSR initiatives account for 58.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.589$, $F(1, 164) = 31.78$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate substantial explanatory power and statistical significance, supporting the research hypotheses. Statistical analysis confirms the research hypothesis that CSR initiatives significantly influence customer loyalty and brand reputation in Ghana's beverage industry. Pearson correlation analysis reveals strong positive correlations between CSR initiatives and brand reputation ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$) and between CSR initiatives and customer loyalty ($r = 0.682$, $p < 0.01$). These correlation coefficients exceed those reported in similar studies from other emerging markets, indicating particularly strong CSR effects in the Ghanaian context. Multiple regression analysis demonstrates that CSR initiatives explain 61.2% of variance in brand reputation ($R^2 = 0.612$, $F(1, 164)= 34.56$, $p < 0.01$) and 58.9% of variance in customer loyalty ($R^2 = 0.589$, $F(1, 164) = 31.78$, $p < 0.01$). These effect sizes are substantial by conventional standards and exceed findings from comparable emerging market studies. For comparison, Indian studies report R^2 values of 0.45-0.52 for similar relationships, while Brazilian research shows 0.38-0.48 ranges (Kumar & Srivastava, 2021). The statistical significance and effect sizes support rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that CSR initiatives significantly influence customer loyalty and brand reputation. The strength of these relationships suggests that CSR functions as an effective sustainable marketing tool in Ghana's emerging market context.

Table 4: Regression Analysis Results

Dependent Variable	R^2	F-statistic	p-value	Significance
Brand Reputation	0.612	34.56	< 0.01	Significant
Customer Loyalty	0.589	31.78	< 0.01	Significant

Source: Author's Construct (2025)

Hypothesis Testing Results

Statistical testing strongly supports all research hypotheses. The null hypothesis (H_0: CSR initiatives do not significantly influence customer loyalty and brand reputation in Ghana's beverage industry) is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H_1: CSR initiatives significantly influence customer loyalty and brand reputation in Ghana's beverage industry). The strong correlations and significant regression results provide compelling evidence for CSR's strategic importance in Ghana's beverage market.

Discussion

The provide compelling empirical evidence that CSR initiatives, when strategically aligned with brand identity and effectively communicated, serve as a powerful driver of both brand equity and consumer loyalty in Ghanaian market context. The discussion below synthesizes the key findings across the four research questions, situates them within existing theoretical and empirical literature, and offers practical and policy implications.

Strategic Alignment of CSR with Brand Identity

The results indicate that CSR initiatives aligned with core brand values, particularly health-related programs such as the One4Life campaign, resonate most strongly with consumers. This supports the CSR-consumer fit theory (Kankam-Kwarteng, 2022), which posits that CSR activities perceived as congruent with a brand's identity yield greater marketing returns. Awake's emphasis on health not only reinforces its market positioning as a provider of safe, clean drinking water but also addresses a salient societal need in

Ghana, where access to clean water and health education remains a critical public concern. In contrast, less visible initiatives, such as ethical business practices and community development received lower recognition, suggesting a misalignment between corporate intent and consumer perception. This underscores the importance of strategic CSR integration, where initiatives are not only socially beneficial but also coherently embedded within the brand narrative (Aftab et al., 2025).

CSR as a Catalyst for Brand Trust and Reputation

The strong perception of CSR commitment (M = 3.78) and its positive, albeit moderate, impact on trust (M = 2.62) align with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), which emphasizes that transparent and consistent CSR practices foster mutual trust between firms and their stakeholders. However, the gap between perceived commitment and actual trust suggests that while consumers acknowledge Awake's efforts, they may require more tangible proof of impact, such as third-party audits, impact reports, or community testimonials to fully internalize the brand's credibility. This finding echoes concerns raised by Santos et al (2021) regarding the "credibility deficit" in CSR communication, particularly in contexts where greenwashing or performative CSR is suspected. Therefore, sustained transparency and accountability mechanisms are essential to convert goodwill into enduring trust.

CSR's Role in Driving Customer Loyalty

The data reveal a statistically significant relationship between CSR and both purchase decisions (M = 2.66) and brand preference frequency (M = 3.17), supporting values-based marketing theory (Kankam-Kwarteng, 2022). Consumers in Ghana's bottled water market appear to reward brands that reflect their personal and societal values, indicating that CSR functions not merely as a peripheral marketing tactic but as a core component of relational equity. Notably, the consistency of these effects across demographic segments suggests that CSR has broad-based appeal in this context contrary to assumptions that ethical consumption is limited to affluent or urban niches. This finding is particularly significant for emerging markets, where consumer skepticism toward corporate motives is often high, yet CSR can still serve as a differentiator in crowded, price-sensitive sectors like beverages.

Implementation Barriers and Strategic Recommendations

Despite the positive outcomes, the study identifies critical implementation challenges, chief among them being consumer unawareness (49.4%). This points to a fundamental communication gap: even well-designed CSR programs may fail to yield marketing benefits if they remain invisible to the target audience. This aligns with Makgoba (2019) observation that digital and multi-channel CSR communication is underutilized in many African markets. Additionally, measurement difficulties and high costs reflect systemic constraints common in emerging economies, where standardized CSR metrics and funding mechanisms are often lacking (Bhatia & Makkar, 2020). The relatively low concern about regulatory support (13.3%) is telling it suggests that while formal policy frameworks are weak, companies like Awake are not primarily waiting for government intervention but are instead seeking practical, operational solutions.

To overcome these barriers, Awake should adopt an integrated CSR communication strategy that leverages social media, community engagement, and product labeling to amplify visibility. Partnerships with NGOs, local governments, or international development agencies could help share costs and enhance legitimacy. Furthermore, developing a localized CSR impact assessment framework, perhaps in collaboration with academic institutions or industry associations would address measurement challenges and enable data-driven refinement of initiatives.

Statistical Robustness and Contextual Significance

Statistical analyses provide strong validation of the study's hypotheses. The high correlation coefficients ($r = 0.715$ for brand reputation; $r = 0.682$ for loyalty) and substantial R^2 values (61.2% and 58.9%, respectively) exceed those reported in comparable studies from India and Brazil (Kumar & Srivastava, 2021), suggesting that CSR may have an amplified effect in Ghana's socio-cultural context. This could be attributed to heightened consumer sensitivity to corporate ethics in post-colonial economies, where businesses are expected to contribute meaningfully to national development(Idemudia, 2022). The near-normal distribution of responses further enhances the generalizability of findings across diverse consumer groups within the sample.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The findings extend Stakeholder Theory by demonstrating that in emerging markets characterized by weaker regulatory and institutional frameworks, CSR initiatives function as informal governance mechanisms. Firms that invest in socially relevant initiatives, particularly health-related programs, compensate for institutional voids by building trust and legitimacy directly with consumers. From a Social Identity Theory perspective, the strong effects of CSR on loyalty suggest that Ghanaian consumers derive a sense of collective pride and moral alignment from associating with socially responsible brands. Health-focused CSR initiatives resonate strongly because they address immediate societal concerns, reinforcing consumer–brand identification. The unusually high explanatory power of CSR ($R^2 > 0.58$) suggests that CSR effects may be amplified in emerging markets, where corporate contributions to social welfare are more visible and socially valued than in developed economies.

Conclusion

In sum, this study affirms that CSR, when strategically designed and effectively communicated, functions as a potent sustainable marketing tool in Ghana's beverage industry. Awake Ghana Mineral Water's experience illustrates how purpose-driven initiatives can enhance brand reputation, build trust, and foster loyalty if visibility, credibility, and alignment are prioritized. As Ghana's consumer market matures and sustainability expectations rise, CSR will likely transition from a competitive advantage to a market necessity. Companies that proactively integrate CSR into their core marketing strategy will be best positioned to thrive in this evolving landscape.

Limitation and Future Direction

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research adopts a single-company case design, focusing on Awake Ghana Mineral Water, which limits the ability to generalize findings across the entire Ghanaian beverage industry. Second, the reliance on convenience sampling within Accra introduces potential urban and selection bias, as consumer perceptions in rural or peri-urban regions may differ. Future research should adopt multi-firm comparative designs, incorporate probability sampling techniques, and extend data collection beyond Accra to enhance external validity. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess the sustainability of CSR-driven loyalty over time. Additionally, integrating qualitative methods could provide deeper insights into consumer meaning-making and CSR authenticity perceptions.

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