

A REVIEW OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSUMER TRUST IN SEAFOOD PRODUCTS: A GLOBAL OVERVIEW

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Abstract

The relationship between consumer trust and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the global seafood industry is thoroughly reviewed in this study. The research investigates how CSR practices such as environmental certifications, ethical sourcing, labour rights, and transparency affect consumer views and purchase decisions by examining current literature, industry reports, and case studies across various geographical and cultural contexts. The research highlights the importance of reliable certifications and eco-labels in building customer trust and loyalty by identifying important trends, geographical variances, and best practices in CSR implementation. The study also looks at the knowledge gaps that currently exist, especially with regard to the efficacy of CSR programs in various markets, and suggests future lines of inquiry and policy formation. Overall, the results highlight the value of strategic CSR integration as a seafood company's competitive advantage, fostering ethical sourcing, sustainability, and consumer trust in a world market that is changing quickly.

Keywords : Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Consumer Trust , Seafood Industry, Sustainability Certifications , Ethical Sourcing.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, one of the most important and contentious issues has been the CSR, which has continued to expand .One of the most demanding study topics for academics and practitioners is CSR(Caroll, 2016). CSR programs, including environmental and social certifications, have a substantial impact on consumer impression and trust. Certifications connected to environmental responsibility, such as "Dolphin Safe" and "Friend of the Sea," raise consumers' willingness to spend and favourably influence their preferences, indicating increased faith in the product's sustainability claims. These labels act as indicators of product accountability and environmental stewardship, boosting consumer confidence. In contrast, social responsibility certificates, such as "SA 8000," while having less impact on market prices, still affect customer choice and contribute to perceived ethical standards of enterprises, promoting trust in their social practices.(Del Giudice et al., 2018) CSR is crucial for establishing consumer confidence in seafood goods since it shows a company's dedication to moral and sustainable business practices. Seafood businesses can reassure customers about the sustainability, safety, and quality of their products by actively participating in ecologically conscious initiatives including pollution reduction, sustainable resource use, and biodiversity protection. In the end, this accountability and openness improve the company's reputation and competitiveness in the market by fostering consumer confidence, loyalty, and preference for brands that place a high priority on social and environmental responsibility.(Tram, 2023). Consumer-driven CSR is defined as CSR initiatives made possible by customers of a company's goods and services, to the point where customers expect the company to provide them with credible CSR practices and products, and the company is forced to do so in order to remain competitive in the market. (Malik & Foss, 2016) .Businesses can demonstrate to customers their commitment to ethical sourcing and worker rights by putting CSR strategies into place, such as implementing voluntary standards and certifications that take social responsibility into account in addition to environmental issues. These CSR programs can promote trust, legitimate claims of responsible sourcing, and connect industry practices with customer expectations for ethical products by ensuring transparency and responsibility.(Teh et al., 2019). The majority of food manufacturers and processors today participate in some kind of corporate social responsibility (CSR), promoting their initiatives via various media channels and

product labeling.(Del et al., 2018) Although a company's decision to embrace CSR is voluntary, adoption costs are nevertheless incurred (Stranieri et al., 2017a). However, these expenses may vary according on the certification type used, and it's unknown how much of these expenses are passed on to final customers directly through market pricing.(Del et al., 2018). t. Many international customers now demand for the necessity that products must satisfy CSR certification systems such as SA8000, BSCI, COSTCO, SMETA, METRO, WALMART, BAP, ASC, etc. Thus, the implementation of CSR becomes one of the conditions for seafood enterprises to export their products to the world market. In order to create a better competitive advantage and to be capable for sustainable development of export business activities, in addition to economic criteria, businesses need to pay attention to the implementation of social responsibility with stakeholders, especially with employers, suppliers, customers and communities in seafood processing and exporting activities, meeting the standards on social responsibility requested by customers (Turker,2009).

OBJECTIVES

1. To review and synthesize existing literature on the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and consumer trust in the seafood industry.
2. To identify and categorize the main CSR practices adopted by seafood companies globally and evaluate their reported impact on consumer trust.
3. To analyze regional and cultural variations in consumer responses to CSR initiatives in the context of seafood products.
4. To highlight gaps in current research and suggest directions for future studies on CSR and consumer behaviour in the seafood export sector.

METHODOLOGY

This review's methodology comprised a thorough examination of the body of research on the connection between consumer trust in the seafood industry and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Regional and cultural differences in customer reactions to corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, such as environmental sustainability, ethical sourcing, and transparency initiatives, were methodically investigated in this study. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of current practices and perceptions, data was gathered from a variety of sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, theses, industry publications, and more, using online resources like Google Scholar, Springer, Researchgate, and Scopus. The goal of the investigation was to find common trends, industry best practices, and obstacles that seafood companies encounter when putting CSR policies into effect around the world. The assessment also evaluated how different certification labels and eco-labels affected customer attitudes and purchase decisions, pointing out knowledge gaps and offering ideas for future research to improve industry CSR efficacy and consumer trust.

SCOPE

A thorough analysis of how corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices affect customer trust in seafood goods across various markets and geographical areas globally is included in the research scope of "A Review on CSR and Consumer Trust in Seafood Products: A Global Overview. To comprehend the various facets of corporate social responsibility (CSR), including labour rights, ethical sourcing, environmental sustainability, and transparency, as well as their impact on customer attitudes and purchasing decisions, this study examines the existing literature, industry reports, and case studies. The study covers both developed and developing nations, emphasizing regional variations in consumer expectations, legal frameworks, and CSR adoption. It seeks to pinpoint prevalent patterns, industry best practices, and obstacles to fostering customer trust in the seafood export sector through CSR programs. The study also investigates how consumer decision-making is impacted by corporate disclosures, eco-labels, and third-party certifications. For seafood exporters, politicians, sustainability activists, and researchers interested in promoting ethical and sustainable seafood consumption through successful CSR strategies, this paper offers a worldwide perspective that offers insightful information.

RESEARCH GAP

According to the research, there is a substantial knowledge vacuum regarding how CSR policies affect customer trust in the global fish business across many nations and cultural contexts. Even though CSR programs like environmental certifications, ethical sourcing, and transparency policies are becoming more and more popular, there isn't much thorough study on how effective they are at building global customer confidence. Instead of offering an integrated viewpoint, the studies that are now available are frequently fragmented, region-specific, and concentrate on distinct aspects of CSR. Furthermore, the creation of universally successful CSR methods is hampered by the incomplete understanding of differences in consumer knowledge, perceptions, and communication strategies. This disparity emphasizes the necessity of doing methodical, cross-regional research in order to pinpoint best practices, comprehend customer reactions, and create regulations that foster trust in a variety of marketplaces.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the growing importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the global seafood sector, there is still a paucity of information about how these policies affect customer trust across countries and cultural contexts. While many seafood exporters have implemented CSR initiatives, such as environmental certifications, ethical labour procedures, and openness in sourcing, consumer impressions of these efforts vary greatly. Inconsistent CSR implementation, low consumer knowledge, and inadequate communication of CSR activities frequently undermine the desired trust-building objectives. Furthermore, existing research on the relationship between CSR and consumer trust is fragmented, regionally specific, and frequently focuses on specific components of CSR. This presents a key gap in finding global patterns, best practices, and areas that need policy or business action. As a result, a systematic study is required to integrate current knowledge, assess the efficiency of CSR methods in fostering consumer trust, and inform future research and practical decision-making in the seafood export business.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVIEW

The review "A Review on CSR and Consumer Trust in Seafood Products: A Global Overview" is important because it clarifies the crucial connection between consumer confidence and ethical business practices in a highly sensitive and internationally traded sector. Customers are getting more aware of the origin and manufacturing methods of the products they buy due to rising environmental concerns, demands for ethical sourcing, and an increase in labour abuse and seafood fraud charges. In order to comprehend how CSR initiatives—such as sustainable fishing, traceability, fair labour standards, and community engagement—can directly affect customer trust and loyalty toward seafood businesses and exporters, this review is important since it gathers and examines a variety of international findings. Businesses can use it as a useful knowledge source to match their CSR initiatives with customer expectations, giving them a competitive advantage in both domestic and foreign markets. Policymakers and certification organizations can also find loopholes in existing rules and communication tactics that could impede the development of trust thanks to the review. Ultimately, by providing guidance for future research and action in both academic and industrial circles, the study advances the more general objectives of sustainability, moral business practices, and educated consumer behaviour.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

For several seafood industry stakeholders, the review "A Review on CSR and Consumer Trust in Seafood Products: A Global Overview" has multiple useful ramifications. The findings highlight how crucial it is for seafood companies and exporters to strategically incorporate strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices into their business models. These practices include sustainable harvesting, fair labour practices, ethical sourcing, and transparent reporting. This is especially important in international markets where ethical consumption is on the rise. According to the assessment, businesses are more likely to acquire market credibility and client loyalty if they actively convey their CSR commitments through eco-labels, third-party certifications, and traceability tools. In addition to supporting small-scale producers and exporters in implementing socially responsible practices through incentives, training, and access to certification programs, the study emphasizes the necessity for policymakers and regulatory agencies to enhance monitoring and enforcement of CSR standards throughout the seafood supply chain. The research reinforces the relevance of consumer awareness in promoting responsible corporate behaviour by offering customers insight into how CSR initiatives by businesses might direct more moral and informed purchase decisions. Furthermore, the review is a useful resource for academics and researchers, assisting in the identification of gaps in current material and promoting further empirical investigations on the effects of CSR on various locations, consumer groups, and markets. Overall, the research emphasizes the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a competitive need in an increasingly cognizant global seafood market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

NO	TITLE	CSR PRACTICES ADOPTED	SOURCE
1.	Social Responsibility for the Environment of Seafood Enterprises in Vietnam	Environmental CSR Practices	(Tram, 2023)
2.	The role of human rights in implementing socially responsible seafood	Monterey Framework, MSC Certification	(Teh et al., 2019)
3.	Corporate Social Responsibility certifications influence consumer preferences and the seafood market price	Social Certifications & Eco- Labelling	(Del et al., 2018)
4.	Sustainable Seafood and Corporate Social Responsibility	MSC Certification & International Non-Profit Certification	(Aguirre, 2005)
5.	Determinants of corporate sustainability: Thai frozen	Environment & Social CSR activities	(Setthasakko, 2007)

	seafood processors		
6.	Evolving Perspectives of Stewardship in the Seafood Industry	Seafood Industry Stewardship Initiative (SISI)	(Blasiak et al., 2021)
7.	Ecolabeled seafood and sustainable consumption in the Canadian context: issues and insights from a survey of seafood consumers	Eco-Label Certifications	(Winson et al., 2022)
8.	Impact of corporate social responsibility on business reputation: evidence from small and medium enterprises of the seafood processing industry in Khanh Hoa	CSR activities focusing on sustainable development	(Đặng Hoàng Xuân Huy, Nguyễn Ngọc Duy, n.d.)
9.	Are Consumers Really Informed on Corporate Social Responsibility Labels for Fishery Products? Results of an Italian Case Study	Eco-Labelled certifications like Dolphin Safe, Friend of the Sea, MSC etc	(Varesi(B) & , Anna Claudia Pellicelli, 2022)
10.	Social responsibility of fish processing companies located in Portugal and Spain	Social CSR practices	(Weyandt et al., 2012)
11.	Corporate Social Responsibility in Swedish Food Retail: The Case of Tiger Shrimp	Social & Environmental CSR activities	(Llewelyn, R. and Williams, 1996)
12.	The role of salmon aquaculture eco-certification in corporate social responsibility and the delivery of ecosystem services and disservices	Eco- Certification	(M. E. Rector et al.,2024)
13.	Shifting focus: The impacts of sustainable seafood certification	MSC Certification	(Van Putten et al., 2020)
14.	Fair trade fish: consumer support for broader seafood sustainability	Eco –Labelled Certification	(L.McClenachan, et al ;2016)

TABLE - 1

According to a study by Lee and Jung (2016), sales and the adoption of corporate social responsibility were positively correlated. Numerous studies on large-scale businesses have verified this association (Aras et al., 2010; Murillo & Lozano, 2006); however, medium-, small-, and super-small-sized businesses have not been the subject of many investigations. However, when looking at financial results, financial activities have a negative impact when implementing social responsibility, which is in contrast to the findings of López et al. (2007).

The term "corporate social responsibility" is still used and discussed in a variety of ways. Carroll (1979, 1999, 2000, 2001) argues that corporate social responsibility encompasses the societal expectations for corporations at a given moment with regard to economic, legal, ethical, and charitable issues. He developed four categories of corporate social responsibility in 1991, which together make up the entire concept. These categories are the economic, legal, ethical, and charitable aspects, which are represented by the pyramid in Figure 1.(Vu et al., 2020) . To record the present practices of the participating companies, examine how managers of current fishing enterprises view the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR), and develop a suggestion for how these organizations could adopt and profit from CSR.(Weyandt et al., 2012)



Fig: 1

Source: CSR by Carroll 1991

The products with environmental certifications are priced higher than regular non-certified products, while those with social certifications are priced similarly to regular products. With regards to consumer choice, canned tuna with environmental or social

certifications is preferred as opposed to the non-certified product, with both types of certifications showing a similar willingness to pay (Del et al., 2018). Building positive relationships with local communities and exhibiting environmental responsibility are the two main ways that CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) contributes to the development of customer trust in seafood goods. According to the study, businesses that participate in CSR activities like environmental management, community service, and upholding good neighbour relations improve their reputation and credibility, all of which are critical for gaining the trust of customers. In the context of seafood products, the results also imply that international buyers currently place a higher priority on product quality, safety, and price than on environmental and social effects. This suggests that consumer trust in CSR may have a greater influence at the local and community levels rather than directly influencing international buyers' purchasing decisions. (Setthasakko, 2007). The CSR labels rely on certification programs, which are procedures that ensure goods and services are manufactured or rendered in compliance with pre-established criteria. One of the most important features of the CSR label is that, because these QMs have adoption costs, their use is limited because smaller fisheries frequently cannot afford the high certification costs and are therefore unable to apply (B & A, 2016). In certain countries, the absence of certification may also be a trade barrier. (Erica Varese, 2020). Buyers frequently consider certification programs to be a guarantee of sustainability. Nevertheless, only 20% of the seafood caught worldwide comes from certified or assessed fisheries (Potts.J et al., 2016) and there is a sizable demand for uncertified goods worldwide (FAO, 2016). There is evidence to support the idea that these programs have improved producer practices and changed consumer purchasing decisions (N. L. Gutiérrez et al., 2012). However, detractors contend that these plans are unable to reach a critical mass of customers (Bush, S. R. et al., 2013). Consumer preferences and willingness to pay (WTP) for seafood with a sustainable label are the subject of several recent research. (Chen et al 2015) carried out a choice experiment in France, (Uchida et al; 2014a) and (Uchida et al; 2014 b) conducted experimental auctions and a choice experiment in Japan, (Roheim et al; 2011) used UK scanner data, and (Hallstein, E., & Villas-Boas, 2013) investigated a sustainable traffic light advisory that was put into place by a regional retailer in California. These studies are similar in that they concentrate on consumers' decision between seafood that is labeled as sustainable and seafood that is not. Although consumers are ready to pay a 26% premium for seafood with a sustainability label, according to (Uchida et al; 2014a), (Hallstein, E., & Villas-Boas, 2013) find no impact on the demand for the red-labelled. These contradictory findings show that while customers favour sustainable seafood, many of them give sustainability little thought while making seafood purchases. According to (Xu P. Zeng Y et al; 2012), (Gutierrez, A., & Thornton, 2014), (Jacquet, J. L., & Pauly, 2007), (M. Fabinyi et al; 2016) & (A Hanson et al; 2000) brand recognition varies globally from the standpoint of the consumer, but the MSC is more well-known than other programs in the US and Europe. The original and later iterations of the theory of change rely on certification of sustainability for the market to encourage market participants (consumers, retailers, and buyers) to select sustainable seafood. Any future theory of change in the sustainable seafood movement will continue to focus on the financial incentives that producers and governments receive as a result of improving regulatory and environmental performance. (Roheim et al., 2018)

FINDINGS

According to the study, consumer trust and purchase decisions in the seafood business across many international marketplaces are greatly influenced by corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies. By acting as reliable markers of ethical sourcing and environmental stewardship, eco-labels and certifications pertaining to environmental sustainability, like "Dolphin Safe" and "Friend of the Sea," boost consumer confidence and increase their willingness to pay more for certified goods. Similar to this, social responsibility certificates such as "SA 8000" help to shape opinions about moral behaviour and business ethics, however they might not have as much of an effect on market prices. Trust is built via transparency in CSR programs, and certifications and sustainable practices that are effectively conveyed promote competitive advantage and brand loyalty. Regional variations in consumer awareness, cultural norms, and legal frameworks might, however, affect how effective these CSR initiatives are. In general, establishing consumer trust and promoting the sustainable expansion of the seafood industry depend heavily on incorporating genuine CSR tactics, open communication, and reliable certification systems.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the review titled "A Review on CSR and Consumer Trust in Seafood Products: A Global Overview" emphasizes the importance of corporate social responsibility in moulding consumer trust in the global seafood business. As customers expect greater transparency, sustainability, and ethical sourcing, CSR has emerged as a critical influencer of purchasing behaviour and brand loyalty. According to the report, good CSR measures, such as environmental protection and fair labour treatment, as well as product traceability and third-party certifications, not only improve a company's reputation but also provide a competitive advantage in foreign markets. The analysis does, however, emphasize regional differences in CSR implementation, as well as the need for more knowledge, regulation, and access to CSR frameworks, particularly for small and medium-sized exporters. Finally, this worldwide review underlines that connecting corporate operations with socially responsible ideals is critical for long-term sustainability, consumer confidence, and industry reputation. It encourages continuing collaboration among enterprises, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and consumers to build trust and ensure responsible growth in the seafood export sector.

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