

Exploring Male and Female Consumers' Perceptions of Clothing Retailers' CSR Initiatives in South Africa

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Abstract : This study delves into the intricacies of male and female consumers' perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the South African clothing retail sector, a sector experiencing increasing consumption, yet facing significant environmental and social challenges. The aim is to discern between male and female consumers' perceptions of clothing retailers' CSR initiatives based on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which evaluates organizational sustainability across social, environmental, and economic domains. Methodologically, the study is embedded in a quantitative research paradigm adopting a cross-sectional survey design. A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit male and female respondents from a diverse South African demographic background. A structured questionnaire was developed and included established consumer CSR perception scales that were adapted for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire was distributed via online platforms. The data collected from the online survey, were split by gender to allow for comparison between male and female consumers' perceptions of clothing retailers' CSR initiatives. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted on each of the datasets. The EFA for females revealed a five-factor solution, whereas the male EFA presented a six-factor solution, with the notable addition of an Economic Performance dimension. Results indicate subtle differences in the gender groups' CSR perceptions. While both genders seem to value clothing retailers' focus on quality services, females seem to have more pronounced perceptions surrounding clothing retailers' contributions to social and environmental causes. Males, on the other hand, seem to be more discerning in their perceptions surrounding clothing retailers' support of social and environmental causes. Ethical stakeholder relationships emerged as a shared concern across genders. Still, males presented a distinct factor, Economic Performance, highlighting a gendered divergence in the weighting of economic success and financial performance in CSR evaluation. The implications of these results are multifaceted. Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse on CSR by integrating gender insights into the TBL framework, offering a greater understanding of consumers' CSR perceptions in the South African clothing retail context. Practically, it provides actionable insights for clothing retailers, suggesting that CSR initiatives should be gender-sensitive and communicate the TBL's elements effectively to resonate with the pertinent concerns of each segment. Additionally, the findings advocate for a contextualized approach to CSR in emerging markets that aligns with local cultural and social differences.

Keywords : consumer perceptions, corporate Social responsibility, gender differentiation, triple bottom line

Conference Title : ICCSR 2024 : International Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility

Conference Location : Athens, Greece

Conference Dates : October 17-18, 2024