



Corporate Social Responsibility Impact on Consumer Decision

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ABSTRACT

Background: The current fierce market environment obliges corporations to strive for success with every business strategy or tool to secure sustainability in the market. One approach that companies use is to operate and at the same time contribute to the well-being of the surrounding community, to safeguard the natural environment under which they operate, and to enhance the work force opportunities for growth. Such an approach has developed with time and is known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR strategy is one of the roadmaps that corporations may use, including the possible activities corporations' implementation, which may impact consumers' choice and decisions to deal with the said corporations. Nowadays, in Lebanon, the use of CSR strategy is moderately on the rise.

Objective: The current research aims to assess the extent that CSR strategy really affects consumers' decision making, and to determine which one of the CSR activities or tools involving social, economic, or environmental dimensions carries the highest impact on changing consumers' decision. Furthermore, this research will shed light on the Lebanese consumers' perception and attitude towards CSR, and to assess which applied activities/tools carries the highest impact on their decision-making process to buy a product or a service.

Materials and Methods: This research is exploratory, comparative and quantitative in nature, and uses a survey questionnaire distributed to 200 Lebanese consumers selected conveniently to study their perception of CSR strategy, and to identify which CSR tool they perceive as to be more effective in affecting their decision to buy a specific product/service.

Results: Results show that 74.3% of the respondents are aware of CSR activities and agree on the fact that CSR is beneficial to society, corporations, and individuals. Also, 83.5% of the respondents agreed that CSR impacts their decision to buy products, and 60.3% showed that it may even initiate a purchase not planned previously. Furthermore, results show that 46.2% of the respondents will buy more as of quantity and 76% may go into the substitution of products because of CSR. 75.2% of the respondents mentioned that CSR also may impact their feelings towards products and will increase their loyalty to CSR-applying corporations.

Conclusions: The outcomes of the research are used to support recommendations for Lebanese corporations to implement CSR strategy and the adequate activities needed to attract the Lebanese consumer.

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1. Introduction:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the way corporations view and apply their social, economic and environmental obligations to make decisions and actions that enhance, protect and promote the well-being of the whole society. Rochlin, Witter, Monaghan and Murray (2005) contend that

“by building a business strategy that aligns social, environmental, and economic performance with long-term business value, corporate responsibility becomes part of core business and is tied to long-term value creation for both business and society” (p. 8). To apply the aforementioned activities, managers must take a strategic decision to include CSR in their plan



of action because it involves special culture, training, commitment, and cost burden. Corporations differ in the execution of CSR strategy; the difference comes as the outcome of the corporation's commitment to such strategy and concept, ranging from low to high (Jones & George, 2009).

Markets nowadays are so competitive and impose great pressure on corporations all over the globe; they raise the bar for their sustainability and growth. Progressively, corporations are applying CSR strategy to leverage their competitiveness, image, reputation, and growth (Pohle & Hittner, 2008). Accordingly, CSR is one of the strategies that corporations may be thinking of applying in the market to gain the previously mentioned benefits (Golob, Lah, & Jancic, 2008), especially since business executives are starting to perceive CSR as a strategy for growth.

The corporate business environment is always under an extensive change in a multifactor dimension. When corporations are under stressful situations in business concurrently with the presence of competitors, business processes become harder, and scarcity of opportunities is on the rise. And when any management team is under stress of new competition or the new demanding environment, the search for new opportunities and strategies start: management teams will be always looking for new strategies along the way to gain a competitive edge over competitors. Such an edge will always supply corporations with sustainability advantage in the market.

Currently, CSR strategy implementation is on the rise in the Lebanese market; corporations are making use of it as an investment to leverage their position in the market and with stakeholders (Golob et al., 2008). In Lebanon, CSR concepts are in the initial phase of maturity as one only sees discrete activities by some corporations. When Lebanese managers, as a body, plan to execute CSR strategies, they will face many sub decisions that have to be made, including: Is it right to use CSR in Lebanon? Is it time to use CSR? Do Lebanese consumers know about CSR? Do consumers prefer corporations that apply CSR? If Lebanese corporations apply CSR, will they impact the decision of the Lebanese consumers? And what would the impact be like? These questions are valid, and it is logical to look for their answers.

Moreover, it is important to assess the Lebanese consumers' awareness of CSR as well as their background knowledge. Furthermore, it is of high importance to explore the impact of CSR on Lebanese consumers' decision making as related to their buying behavior. This research paper aims at shedding light on Lebanese CSR awareness and CSR impact on Lebanese consumers. On top of that, the paper will try to measure and rank order the top eight

preferred CSR tools or activities as perceived by the Lebanese consumer; this will provide beneficial pointers for corporations interested in applying a CSR strategy in Lebanon and which tool to use in their plan.

2. Literature Review:

CSR is one of the contemporary applied strategies; it is the concept that has gained vivid importance in current global business and economy. Hohnen (2007) provide a description of CSR as stated by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development; it states that CSR is "the contribution of business to sustainable economic development. Building on a base of compliance with legislation and regulations, CSR typically includes 'beyond law' commitments and activities pertaining to: corporate governance and ethics, health and safety, environmental stewardship, human rights (including core labor rights), human resource management, community involvement, development and investment, involvement of and respect for Aboriginal peoples, corporate philanthropy and employee volunteering, customer satisfaction and adherence to principles of fair competition, anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures, accountability, transparency and performance reporting, supplier relations, for both domestic and international supply chains" (p. 4, Para 4 & p. 5, Para.1). According to D'Amato, Henderson, and Florence (2009), "organizations are being called upon to take responsibility for the ways their operations impact societies and the natural environment" (p. 1).

Furthermore, corporations that apply CSR are seeking better recognition, reputation, value, growth, and relationships with consumers and other stakeholders. "The quality of relationships that a company has with its employees and other key stakeholders—such as customers, investors, suppliers, public and governmental officials, activists, and communities—is crucial to its success, as is its ability to respond to competitive conditions and corporate social responsibility (CSR)" (D'Amato et al., 2009, p. 1).

2.1. CSR Timeline:

According to Carroll (1999), "the concept of CSR has had a long and diverse history in the literature" (p. 291). Furthermore, Carroll asserts that Howard Bowen's (1953) book 'Social Responsibilities of the Businessman', stands out during this period. "It was proposed that Bowen deserves the appellation of the Father of Corporate Social Responsibility" (ibid). During the 60s and 70s, researchers attempted to focus further on CSR definition, attributes, implementation areas; as a

result, more labels appeared like, “Corporate Social Responsiveness”, “Corporate Social Performance”, and “Social Responsibility Disclosure scale” (Johnson, 1971; the Committee for Economic Development – CED, 1971; Steiner, 1971; Davis, 1973; Eells and Walton, 1974; Sethi, 1975; Preston and Post, 1975; Carroll, 1979; and Abbott and Monsen, 1979; all cited in Carroll, 1999, pp. 273-283). Carroll (1979) as a result of his review of the aforementioned authors proposed this conclusion: “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (p. 500).

The 1980s witnessed fewer original definitions of CSR; however, more attempts were made to measure and conduct research on CSR, and alternative thematic frameworks stood out (Jones, 1980; Drucker, 1984; Wartick and Cochran, 1985; and Epstein, 1987; all cited in Carroll, 1999, pp. 284-288). Furthermore, and according to Carroll (1999), “in the 1990s, the CSR concept transitioned significantly to alternative themes such as stakeholder theory, business ethics theory, CSP, and corporate citizenship. During that period, it should be noted that writers did not reject the CSR concept, but there were no new definitions added to the body of literature” (p. 292).

Katsoulakos, Koutsodimou, Matraga and Williams (2004) contend that the 2000s mark the maturity of CSR principles whereby the focus moved to “implementation developments by linking CSR to mainstream strategies and management frameworks” (p. 18). Moreover, the aforementioned researchers report that “many business surveys from Germany, UK, France, Italy, and other European countries indicate that the majority of public companies believe that responsible business practices are the key to the long-term success of the company” (ibid). On the other side of the globe, since the early 2000s, the Japanese CSR movement has been driven by global pressures. According to Tanimoto (2014), the Japanese corporations were initially hesitant to respond due to the blur in the understanding of global CSR standards and how to choose policies that match Japanese corporations. “As a result, most Japanese companies do what other companies are doing, keeping their CSR activities to the minimum requirements” (p. 6).

Furthermore, Carroll (2008) asserts that the 2000s are characterized by empirical research on CSR and related topics such as “stakeholder theory, business ethics, sustainability, and corporate citizenship” (p. 39). Several models were developed like the contingency theory of corporate social performance (CSP), CSR Public Recognition, the 3-

Domain CSR, CSR Best Practices, (Husted, 2000; Jones and Murrell, 2001; Schwartz and Carroll (2003); Kotler and Lee, 2005; Perrini, 2005; all cited in Carroll, 2008, pp. 39-42).

Since the mid-2000s, and amid the wave of research outcomes, many wondered about how the future of CSR around the world would be. Teach (2005) reports two sides to the issue: The optimistic perspective that is well depicted by Steven D. Lydenberg in his book ‘Corporations and the Public Interest: Guiding the Invisible Hand’ whereby Lydenberg sees CSR “as a major secular development, driven by a long-term reevaluation of the role of corporations in society, whereby this reevaluation is more evident in Europe, where the stakeholder responsibility notion is more readily assumed, but that US business people are more skeptical of this assumption” (Teach, 2005, p. 31).

On the other hand, Teach (2005) presents the pessimistic perspective argued by David Vogel in his book, ‘The Market for Virtue: The Potential and Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility’, in which he critiques CSR’s influence and success. According to Teach (2005), Vogel is very much of the mind that CSR will not be successful until mainstream companies begin reporting some aspect of CSR as being critical to the company’s past or future performance. In other words, “CSR is successful only to the extent that it adds to the bottom line and can be specifically delineated as having made such an impact. In reacting to Vogel’s skepticism, it must be observed that this convergence of financial and social objectives characterizes the trajectory that CSR has taken in the past two decades” (Carroll, 2010, p. 113).

Carroll (2008) suggests that CSR trends and practices lead to the conclusion that social responsibility has both an ethical or moral component as well as a business component. “In today’s world of intense global competition, it is clear that CSR can be sustainable only so long as it continues to add value to corporate success. It must be observed, however, that it is society or the public, that plays an increasing role in what constitutes business success, not just business executives alone” (p. 42).

Hejase, Farha, Haddad, and Hamdar (2012) offer a review of CSR during the last five years. The aforementioned review shows that CSR is seen as integrated corporate activities abiding by the legal regulations and going beyond compliance, and investing more in human capital, the environment and the relations with stakeholders; as the business pursuit of sustainable development and focus on economic, social and environmental aspects; and, as primarily concerned about the environmental protection and the wellbeing of employees, the community and civil society in general, from both short-term and long-

term perspectives (Hohnen, 2007; Isaksson and Steimle, 2009; Industry Canada, 2011; The International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2012; all cited by Hejase et al., 2012, pp. 2-3).

2.2. CSR in the Middle East:

The aforementioned section provided a brief summary of CSR evolution. Western countries have proven to have recorded the CSR experience, and how multinational corporations have capitalized on the concept to face the challenges and to assure their businesses' sustainability. Lebanese companies, like other Arab corporations, seek to develop their strategies and their operations, learning from the already proven tactics and practices recorded in the available secondary literature and the record of best practices around the globe. Many Lebanese corporations followed suit while facing intense competition in the market, and are in continuous demand for innovative strategies and tactics to gain a competitive edge over competitors and to secure sustainability. Many of the newly adopted principles match what many researchers have recommended, among whom this paper mentions Berkhout (2005) and Burke (2005).

Berkhout (2005) points out that CSR provides the starting point that businesses need to begin moving toward sustainability. Companies' potential is beyond seeking lowest short-term cost for the highest short-term gain. Berkhout identifies the following challenges that a company that wants to operate under the principles of CSR faces: "how to balance its social and environmental responsibilities with its clearly defined economic responsibility to earn a profit; how evolving norms and rules determine what constitutes acceptable corporate behavior; how CSR's glass ceiling is merely a reflection of society's expectations; how corporations are beginning to see a strategic value in CSR beyond improved public relations or the short-term bottom line" (cited in D'Amato et al., 2009, p. 16).

Furthermore, Burke (2005) presents creative solutions for corporations globally seeking socially responsible corporate citizenship. The new globalization era's effect on the relationship between companies and societies increases expectations and promotes new rules and tactics. "Companies are now expected to do the following: safeguard the environment; support human rights; eliminate child labor; adopt codes of ethics; enter into partnerships with NGOs; display openness and transparency in relationships with customers, employees, community groups, and governmental organizations; promote diversity in the workplace; help communities solve their social problems; and consult with community

residents on business plans and strategies" (cited in D'Amato et al., 2009, p. 22).

With the current extreme pace of globalization, Jamali and Sidani (2008) contend that Lebanese managers cannot but start implementing CSR concepts in their thinking and practice. "An empirical study of 119 Lebanese managers reveals that the majority of respondents (83 percent) are favorably inclined toward CSR" (pp. 329-330). Such finding gives an impression that more corporations and managers will adapt to the increasing demand of being socially responsible towards stakeholders. In another study, Jamali, Sidani and El Asmar (2009), assert that while assessing managerial perspectives towards CSR in three neighboring Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, through an empirical study involving 333 managers, they found "some commonalities in CSR orientations as well as minor divergences" (p. 173).

Furthermore, Arshad, Muhammad and Al Astal (2015) cite several researchers who investigated CSR, such as: Jahamani (2003) who reported that United Arab Emirates' managers are aware of green accounting which concentrates on CSR issues of environment; Kamla (2007) who assessed several CSR dimensions including environmental dimension, economic dimension, disclosure about general social issues dimension and social characteristic of the reports dimension. Her study was carried among nine of the Arab Middle East countries, which are Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt and Syria; Katsioloudes and Brodtkorb (2007) who surveyed 403 companies as to their awareness of the issue of corporate social responsibility, covering three dimensions, namely, environmental issues, consumer protection and community affairs. "The study concluded that the UAE companies are aware of the issue of CSR" (Arshad et al., 2015, p. 3). Rettab, Brik and Mellahi (2009) through a survey, found that there is a positive relationship between the disclosure of corporate social responsibilities and the firm's performance among 280 organizations from different sectors which worked in Dubai; and, Hossain & Hammami (2009) conducted their study on Qatar's disclosure of corporate social responsibility.

Hejase et al. (2012) report that "CSR is a new and relatively unknown phenomenon among SMEs in Lebanon as 42% of the respondent managers and employees (sample of 100 persons) indicated that they have only a little knowledge of the subject, and that they haven't done much to enrich their knowledge of or to participate in CSR programs or activities, though they seemed to have some idea of what CSR could mean for their companies" (p. 17).



Moreover, Hejase et al. assert that “perhaps the media attention on the subject has now aroused SMEs’ interest in something that they may have thought to be just applicable to large companies. Furthermore, 86% of the respondents believe that organizations will be more effective and successful if they establish and implement good CSR programs and activities that respond to the social and environmental needs” (Hejase et al., 2012, p. 17).

Alshareef and Sandhu (2015) contend that their research’s findings resulting from a qualitative case study, by conducting in-depth interviews with participants at various levels of board and management in petrochemical company which operate in Saudi Arabia, “suggested that the majority of participants consider Corporate Governance (CG), whose aim is to engage the Board of Directors (BOD) in supervising CSR activities and the process of integrating these practices into the company’s operations, is an essential foundation for sustainable CSR activities” (p. 1).

2.3. Process and Components:

To begin with, CSR must be incorporated into the core of manager’s strategy and thoughts in order to be translated into actions and activities. When management fully endorses such behavior and thoughts, this trend will be embraced by every employee, down the hierarchy, in the organization, resulting in corporations operating responsibly in every function (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). Add to the aforementioned, corporations usually follow a specific and tailored implementation framework to initiate CSR projects, keeping in mind that there is no "one fits all" because each corporation is unique and has specific criteria, constituents, and surroundings. In general, corporations may follow a roadmap containing guidelines and each will then adjust according to objectives, needs, and resources. “The road map consists of four main steps: planning, doing, checking, and improving” (Hohnen, 2007, p. 19).

Chandler and Werther, Jr. (2013) present a new framework for strategic CSR implementation. According to the authors, “there are four components that are essential to defining strategic CSR: First, that firms incorporate a CSR perspective within their strategic planning process; second, that any actions they take are directly related to core operations; third, that they incorporate a stakeholder perspective; and fourth, that they shift from a short-term perspective to managing the firm’s resources and relations with key stakeholders over the medium to long term” (p. 65).

2.4. Benefits:

Before addressing the benefits of CSR, one needs to mention the many factors which caused the

increase in interest in CSR. Sustainable growth is one of these factors. Pohle and Hittner (2008) contend that “68 percent of 250 business leaders worldwide are now utilizing CSR as an opportunity and a platform for growth” (p. 2).

Another factor is the global move towards retention of organization’s human talent manifested in motivational tools. CSR is pushing corporations to focus on human resource management, labor, health, and safety practices. International guidelines, processes, and recommendations by special groups and entities like the UN, Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) have forced business organizations to think seriously of applying CSR to their strategies (Hohnen, 2007, pp. vii-viii).

The corporate impact on society’s and nations’ development is another factor that has led to the increase in the importance of CSR in the everyday application by all size organizations because the bulk of organizations’ activities affect people and societies all over the globe. According to Werner (2009), “a socially-responsible firm holds a holistic view of itself in relation to its stakeholders and measures its performance via a triple bottom-line: economic/financial, environmental, and social. CSR seeks a path which advances all the three measures, none at the cost of the others” (Para 6). Werner’s definition describes a firm’s stance to improve its branding among the constituents of the community at large.

Financially, Hohnen (2007) asserts that “investors and financial markets are beginning to see that CSR activities that integrate broader societal concerns into business strategy and performance are evidence of good management” (p. 1).

Having had a brief view of the factors promoting CSR, the next step is to address the potential benefits of CSR implementation by corporations; these benefits are depicted in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1. *Potential benefits for firms implementing CSR (Hohnen, 2007, pp. 10-12)*

- **Better anticipation and management of an ever-expanding spectrum of risk.**
Considering the interests of parties concerned in a firm’s impact is one way of better anticipating and managing risk.
- **Improved reputation management.**
Organizations that perform well with regard to CSR can build their reputation, while those that perform poorly can damage brand and company value when exposed.

- **Enhanced ability to recruit, develop and retain staff.**

This can be the direct result of pride in the company's products and practices, or of the introduction of improved human resources practices. It can also be the indirect result of programs and activities that improve employees' morale and loyalty.

- **Improved innovation, competitiveness and market positioning.**

CSR is as much about seizing the opportunity as avoiding risk. Drawing feedback from diverse stakeholders can be a rich source of ideas for new products, processes, and markets, resulting in competitive advantages. Increasingly, mainstream advertising features the environmental or social benefits of products.

- **Enhanced operational efficiencies and cost savings.**

These flows in particular from improved efficiencies identified through a systematic approach to management that includes continuous improvement.

- **Improved ability to attract and build effective and efficient supply chain relationships.** Like-minded companies can form profitable long-term business relationships by improving standards, and thereby reducing risks. Larger firms can stimulate smaller firms with whom they do business to implement a CSR approach.

- **Enhanced ability to address change.**

A company with its "ear to the ground" through regular stakeholder dialogue is in a better position to anticipate and respond to regulatory, economic, social and environmental changes that may occur.

- **More robust "social Licence" to operate in the community.**

Improved citizen's and stakeholders' understanding of the firm and its objectives and activities translates into improved stakeholder relations. CSR can help build "social capital."

- **Access to capital.**

Financial institutions are increasingly incorporating social and environmental criteria into their assessment of projects.

- **Improved relations with regulators.**

In a number of jurisdictions, governments have expedited approval processes for firms that have undertaken social and environmental activities beyond those required by regulation.

- **A catalyst for responsible consumption.**

Companies have a key role to play in facilitating sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles through the goods and services they provide and the way they provide them.

2.5. Constraints:

There are several constraints to CSR strategy and anyone of them may delay or even stop the project totally. Lack of clear vision is a basic constraint that may hinder the success of any CSR strategy because if corporate vision is not clear and strategically poor, the corporate will not get to healthy goals; this is seen when regular level staff with no strategic experience manage such programs and take charge of them. Kaplan and Norton (2005) contend that "our research reveals that, on average, 95% of a company's employees are unaware of, or do not understand, its strategy. If the employees who are closest to customers and who operate processes that create value are unaware of the strategy, they surely cannot help the organization implement it effectively" (Para 2).

Shen, Govindan and Shankar (2015) identified twelve barriers to CSR which are depicted in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2. Twelve barriers to CSR

1 Lack of stakeholder awareness

In developing nations, the unhealthy establishment of CSR and the lack of ethical awareness keeps the stakeholders uninformed as to CSR implementation.

2 Lack of training

In order to practice CSR, managers, employees, and all other individuals in the organization should have relevant training to foster a strategic implementation of CSR.

3 Lack of information

Because CSR is potentially difficult to define, acquiring relevant information regarding CSR presents challenges and slows down effective implementation.

4 Financial constraints

Due to the lack of financial support, organizational managers find that implementing CSR cannot fit their budgets; the initial investment cost is too high.

5 Lack of customer awareness

Third world customers like Indian customers are more likely to go for economic profit rather than quality and other societal parameters. This motivates the manufacturers to focus on profits only.

6 Lack of concern for reputation

While some well-equipped organizations are aware of the importance of their industry's reputation and its impact on competitive advantage, some small scale and developing organizations do not realize the value of their reputation. As a result, they are not motivated to implement CSR.

7 Lack of knowledge

Due to the lack of training and information, the CSR practices are poorly understood in many organizations, and this lack of knowledge of CSR among practitioners creates challenges.

8 Lack of regulations and standards

Unlike EU and US, the rules and laws are not very clearly established in the developing countries which freely allow the stakeholders to avoid the CSR.

9 Diversity

CSR has multi faces, which change from origin to origin, nation to nation and so on. This diversity restricts the practitioners from understanding how to implement the CSR based on the practitioners' origin.

10 Company culture

Some organizations, relying on old company culture, are resistant to any change to new strategies like CSR.

11 Lack of social audit

Lack of social audit which allows the stakeholders to be exempt from CSR reporting is one of the barriers for CSR.

12 Lack of top management commitment

Some of the top-level managers only focus on financial profit rather than a societal benefit.

Source: Shen, Govindan, and Shankar, 2015, p. 3500.

Moreover, Hohnen (2007) recommends locating an organization's "pressure points" that highlight the need for CSR action; he asserts that a proper CSR assessment should provide an understanding of the aforementioned points. The authors of the current paper believe that if there are faults in these pressure points, then these faults become sources of negative implementation or barriers to CSR success. Therefore, the pressure points are labeled constraints in case of faulty assessment. Exhibit 3 depicts these points.

Exhibit 3. CSR pressure points for action

- The firm's values and ethics;
- The internal and external drivers motivating the firm to undertake a more systematic approach to CSR;
- The key CSR issues that are affecting or could affect the firm;
- The key stakeholders who need to be engaged, and their concerns;
- The current corporate decision making structure and its strengths and inadequacies in terms of implementing a more integrated CSR approach;
- The human resource and budgetary implications of such an approach; and,
- The existing CSR-related initiatives.

Source: Hohnen, 2007, p. 22.

Blok, Jennings, Leipziger and Roome (2006) identify ten corporate responsibility mistakes which, in this paper, are considered as barriers to the appropriate implementation of CSR initiatives. Exhibit 4 gives a brief summary of the top ten mistakes in CSR implementation.

Exhibit 4. Top ten barriers to sound CSR implementation**Lack of vision:**

Instead of asking "where are we now?" think about asking "where do we want to be in 10 years?"

The scale of change:

Some of the biggest business and sustainability opportunities will not be achieved by "bolt-on" approaches. Firms should remain open to radically new approaches and major change;

Sub-strategic management:

CSR managed at a staff level may fail to address key issues such as new business opportunities and the structure of incentives systems;

Risk/opportunity roles:

By bundling the risk and opportunity roles together, companies can fail to optimize the opportunities that a separate approach might offer;

Selective hearing:

Most organizations do not like criticism and tend to listen to some stakeholders more than others. It is necessary to engage in what some academics have described as "deep listening;"

Maintaining old structures:

Understanding and responding to the demands and opportunities of the future will not always be possible within old management structures;

"One World" approaches:

Real differences exist across a firm's activities, supply chains and customers. While common approaches for multinational firms have many advantages, they can disguise innovations and opportunities that might be possible at the local level;

Uneven approach:

Some firms have good policies in one sector or country, which are not being best used in other sectors and regions. This can also give the impression that CSR programs are image-driven;

Non-participative management:

"Top-down" CSR processes do not harness the skills and potential of employees. Creation of networks of "change champions" may offer better engagement and results; and,

Failure to see CSR as innovation:

Good CSR involves continuous innovation that links CSR to the firm's business model. It can use CSR to identify new technologies, markets, and approaches.

Source: Blok et al., 2006, pp. 40-42.

Much of the aforementioned literature review talked about the CSR concept from the corporate point of view as well as from the consumer's perspective. Lebanese consumer perspective on CSR is a new area to analyze and explore, having seen Lebanese corporations applying CSR strategies. The impact of the CSR projects on Lebanese consumers'

behavior is a new area to explore and it will be dealt with in this research. This paper will also rank CSR most appealing tools to Lebanese consumers, which may give corporations, in the future, a good lead or advice on which tool to choose and apply.

3. Materials and Methods:

This research is exploratory and explanatory in nature in the sense that it explores the Lebanese consumer's awareness regarding CSR and the impact of CSR initiatives on Lebanese consumer's behavior. Quantitative analysis is based on a survey, and all responses were entered into the SPSS version 23 program "Statistical Product and Service Solutions, an IBM product acquired by IBM in 2009 (Hejase & Hejase, 2013, p. 58). The study is performed using exploratory statistics; data tables including frequency and percentage distributions are used. Moreover, cross tabs and regression analysis are performed to study relationships between variables that may add value to the findings of the research.

3.1. Sample selection:

The sample of Lebanese consumers is chosen based on judgment and convenience as to the subjects' willingness to participate. They are colleagues at work, university students, relatives, friends and their acquaintances. A total of 250 survey questionnaires were distributed. The total number of filled survey questionnaires received was 200; 177 respondents filled the questionnaire in person on a hard copy and were collected afterward, and 23 filled the questionnaire on soft copy and were collected via email. Fifty questionnaires were disqualified, 32 of which were not filled adequately, 16 were half empty, and 2 were not returned. Therefore, the response rate is 80%.

3.2. Questionnaire Design:

The questionnaire begins with an introduction to the topic and its motivation, followed by another statement of confidentiality, in which the researchers pledge that the collected information is solely used for the research and that the anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed. The survey questionnaire consists of 44 questions divided into four sections. The first section deals with the general view of socially responsible activities and contains nine five-level Likert scale questions to assess the CSR awareness of Lebanese consumers. The second section contains eight questions intended to explore how the behavior of the Lebanese consumer will change if faced with a business applying a CSR strategy. The third section of the questionnaire addresses twenty CSR initiatives or tools and the respondents are asked to rank order the top eight that carry the highest impact as to their

importance to stakeholders. The fourth section is intended to assess the respondents' demographics, including age, gender, marital status, the field of work, annual salary range, and education. Finally, the questionnaire ends with one open-ended question that gives the respondents the opportunity to express themselves freely regarding the research subject.

3.3. Data Analysis:

All responses are entered into the SPSS version 23 program "Statistical Product and Service Solutions, an IBM product acquired by IBM in 2009 (Hejase & Hejase, 2013, p. 58). The study is performed using exploratory and descriptive statistics; data tables including frequency and percentage distributions are used and supported by their respective figures. Moreover, cross tabs and regression analysis to study relationships between variables that may add value to the findings of the research are performed.

4. Results and Findings:

The results and findings will represent a descriptive statistical analysis of the data collected.

4.1. Demographics:

Respondents are 50.3% females and 49.7% males, 62.8% of them are single and 32.1% are married. As for respondents' age, their mean average age is 30 years; they are split into four groups: 36% for the range 25 to 29 years old, 23.9% for 30 to 34 range, 21.8% for 20 to 24, and 18.3% for older than 35 years. Also, 59% of the respondents hold an MBA degree, 26.5% hold a bachelor degree, 8.5% hold a doctorate, and 2.5% are high school graduates.

In addition, results show that respondents work in the following fields: 21.1% in Finance and Accounting; 14.4% in Management; 13.9% in Information Technology; 10.8% in Sales; 10.8% in Marketing; and, the remaining 28.9% work in Telecommunications, Hospitality, and Insurance.

Furthermore, 37.5% of the respondents earn between 8,000 to 20,000 USD per year; 29.3% earn less than 8,000 USD; 22.8% earn between 20,000 and 40,000 USD; and, 10.3% earn more than 40,000 USD.

4.2. Knowledge:

Several statements have been assessed using 5-level Likert scale approach whereby the following codes are used— SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; D: Disagree; and, SD: Strongly Disagree. However, results are consolidated by adding SA and A as well as D and SD for simplicity and to clearly show the total extent of agreement or disagreement: hence, A stands for Agreement and D for



Disagreement. Results shown in Table 1 are depicted in percent.

Table 1. *Assessment of respondents' knowledge (percentage, %)*

Statement	A	N	D
Awareness of the socially responsible activities	74.6	20.8	04.6
Companies should apply non- profit (social and/or environmental) responsible activities (such as charity and donations/contributions to worthy causes)	92.0	06.5	01.5
CSR activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of their work nature	64.3	18.6	17.1
CSR is beneficial to society	96.0	03.0	01.0
CSR is beneficial to corporations	91.0	08.0	01.0
CSR is beneficial to me as an individual	86.8	11.70	01.5
CSR is logical from a cost perspective	57.6	30.8	11.6
CSR is applied in my company	43.4	35.9	20.7

Reflecting on Werner's (2009) definition which describes a firm's stance to improve its branding among the constituents of the community at large, and reviewing the current research respondents' views help the researchers to describe an actual stance that characterizes the Lebanese companies. According to Table 1, the respondents have an overall good knowledge of CSR activities (74.6%); however, when looking into the details, the participants manifest excellent knowledge of the triple bottom-line CSR dimensions whereby, 96% relate CSR to society, 91% relate CSR to the firms (financial/economic), and 92% relate CSR to social/environmental activities. However, an alarming result is the 43.4% agreement that the firm is applying CSR. Here, one observes that employees and managers are aware of CSR and that their companies are not applying it fully.

4.3. Attitude:

Results show that Lebanese respondents have a conscientious stance towards companies applying CSR practices. Respondents show a firm socially responsible attitude when taking decisions to buy products from companies which apply CSR activities (83.5%), switching to other suppliers based on CSR stance (76%), taking a stance toward products from CSR company (75.2%), increasing their loyalty to CSR companies (75.2%), and paying more for products pertaining to CSR companies (75.2%). Moreover, 60.3% agree that they will buy a product which is not planned for from a CSR company, and

52.5% will not be driven away from products produced by CSR companies. In fact, these results are in conformance with reported statistics from Cybergrants (2015), that show that global consumers have a firm personal accountability towards products offered by CSR companies. "90% of the over 10,000 consumers surveyed said they would switch to brands that supported responsible causes, and 84% bought responsible products when available. 71% of those surveyed said they would pay more for socially responsible goods and services, and 81% said they'd curtail wasteful spending if it would have a positive impact on environmental and social issues" (Para 4).

Furthermore, when Lebanese respondents were asked if their companies apply socially responsible activities, only 43.4% agreed in comparison to 85.5% who stated that they will apply CSR in their own businesses. The personal stance agrees with the level of personal awareness reported earlier.

4.4. Cross-tabulation results:

Cross-tabulation testing of the variable "are you aware of the socially responsible activities?" versus the variable "companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products" confirms statistically that respondents' awareness influences their decisions to buy products from CSR companies (Pearson Chi-Square =29.071, P. sig. = .004).

Moreover, cross-tabulating the variable "do you think these (CSR) activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of nature?" versus the variables "Companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products?"; "Does applying socially responsible activities initiate your buying a product not already in mind to be purchased?"; "Does applying socially responsible activities drive you to increase the quantity you are buying?"; and "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?" show the results that are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: *Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR firms and products*

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.(2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
"Are you aware of the socially responsible activities?" versus "Companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products?"	29.071	.004	(df =12, $\alpha=5\%$) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

"Do you think these activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of nature?" versus "Companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products?"	24.863	0.015	(df =12, $\alpha=5\%$)	$X_c > X_t$	21.03	Yes
"Do you think these activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of nature?" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities initiate your buying a product not already in mind to be purchased?"	32.585	0.008	(df =16, $\alpha=5\%$)	$X_c > X_t$	26.30	Yes
"Do you think these activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of the nature?" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities drive you to increase the quantity you are buying?"	28.744	0.026	(df =16, $\alpha=5\%$)	$X_c > X_t$	26.30	Yes
"Do you think these activities are applicable to all businesses regardless of the nature?" versus "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?"	31.610	0.011	(df =16, $\alpha=5\%$)	$X_c > X_t$	26.30	Yes

Table 2 shows that the tested values need to further discuss the statistical significance of the relationships. Therefore, for clarity, one full analysis for one relationship will be reported here. This approach is applicable to all other relationships. For example, the first case has a Pearson Chi-Square of 29.071, degrees of freedom = 12, and p-value under Asymp. Sig is 0.004. However, the tabulated value of Chi-Square corresponding to df = 12 at 5% level of confidence is 21.03.

From the above, the tested Chi-Square value = 29.071 is greater than Table Chi-Square value = 21.03; this indicates that the first variable fits the analysis of the other. The p-value is 0.004 less than 5%, which indicates that the relation between the two variables is statistically significant. This test shows a

significant correlation of CSR awareness impacting Lebanese consumers to buy products of corporations using CSR.

Similarly, applying the same analysis, one finds that all relationships are valid and statistically significant. This test shows a significant correlation between respondents' perception that CSR is applicable to all types of business irrespective of the nature of their products and influences their buying decisions. On the other hand, results show that CSR is capable of influencing the consumer to initiate a buying behavior of products not planned by the consumer or to buy more. CSR also may influence respondents' feeling to change attitude towards products. In fact, Cone Communications (2015), Ebiquity Global CSR Study, indicate that "consumers consider a company's social and environmental commitments before making important decisions like which companies they want to see doing business in their community (84%); what to buy or where to shop (84%); and which products and services to recommend to people (82%)" (p. 11). Other results show that "nearly three-quarters (72%) of global consumers believe their purchases make a moderate-to-significant impact on social and environmental issues" (p. 17). Furthermore, "citizens globally say they would be willing to consume or purchase fewer products (81%), buy a product from an unknown brand with stronger social or environmental commitments (80%) or pay more for a responsible product (71%) to address social or environmental issues" (p. 18). Tables 3 and 4 show Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR benefits to society and corporations versus decisions related to CSR products respectively

Table 3 shows that there exists a significant correlation between seeing CSR as beneficial to society and CSR driving consumers to increase the quantity they purchase. Also, the respondents' perception of society benefiting from CSR application is strongly correlated with changing how consumers feel about the products of the socially responsible corporation as well as their choice to increase their loyalty. The aforementioned results are congruent with Cone Communications (2015), Ebiquity Global CSR Study, whose results are depicted in Exhibit 5. Global citizens are highly concerned with CSR companies' practices and are ready to voice their opinions strongly.

Table 3. Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR benefits to society versus decisions related to CSR products

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
"Do you believe doing so (applying socially responsible activities) is beneficial for society" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities drive you to increase the quantity you are buying?"	31.439	0.012	(df =16, α=5%) 26.30	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe doing so (applying socially responsible activities is beneficial for society" versus "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?"	79.247	0.000	(df =16, α=5%) 26.30	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe doing so (applying socially responsible activities is beneficial for society" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities increase your loyalty to corporations or products?"	34.424	0.001	(df =12, α=5%) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

Exhibit 5. Global citizens' attitude according to the Cone Communications (2015), Ebiquity Global CSR Study

No.	Statement	Results, %
1	If I learned of a company's irresponsible or deceptive business practices, I would stop buying its products	90
2	If given the opportunity, I would buy a product with a social or environmental benefit	89
3	If given the opportunity, I would voice my opinion to a company about its corporate social responsibility efforts (e.g., provide comments on the company's website or blog; review products)	72

Table 4 shows that perceiving CSR as beneficial to corporations is strongly correlated with increasing respondent's loyalty towards corporations or products. These results correspond with those found by the US citizens: "CSR remains a key driver of enhanced reputation and favorability among U.S. citizens. Americans say when a company supports social or environmental issues, they have a more positive image (91%), more trust (87%) and more loyalty (87%) toward that business" (Cone Communications, 2015, p. 34).

The crosstabs depicted in Table 5 support statistically that the respondents' perception of CSR as beneficial to themselves is significantly correlated with the fact that companies applying CSR activities impact their decision to buy the corporations' products; change how they feel towards their

products; and, increase their loyalty to the companies or products. Cone Communications (2015) addresses the aforementioned relationship in studying "Trust and Favorability", whereby "consumers are likely to have a positive image (91% Americans vs. 93% global average) and willing to trust (87% American vs. 90% global average) and be loyal (87% American vs. 88% global average) when a company supports a social or environmental issue" (p. 35).

Table 4: Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR benefits to corporations versus decisions related to CSR products

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
"Do you believe CSR is beneficial for corporations?" versus "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?"	43.014	0.000	(df =16, α=5%) 26.30	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe CSR is beneficial for corporations?" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities increase your loyalty to corporations or products?"	27.793	0.033	(df =16, α=5%) 26.30	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

Table 5: Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR benefits to themselves versus decisions related to CSR products

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
"Do you believe CSR is beneficial for you as an individual?" versus "Companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products?"	33.153	0.000	(df =12, α=5%) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe CSR is beneficial for you as an individual?" versus "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?"	30.782	0.014	(df =12, α=5%) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe CSR is beneficial for you as an individual?" versus "Does applying socially responsible activities increase your loyalty to corporations or products?"	41.349	0.000	(df =12, α=5%) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

Table 6 shows that respondents who believe that CSR is logical from a cost perspective, also agree that companies applying socially responsible activities impact respondents' decisions to buy their products. They also agree that socially responsible corporation change how they feel towards the companies' products. Globally, Nielsen (2013) information shows that "the share of consumers interested in companies that have implemented programs to give back to society is growing. Willingness to spend more on products and services from companies that have given back increased in 43 out of the 58 countries Nielsen measured" (p. 11). Moreover, "citizens globally say they would be willing to consume or purchase fewer products (81%), buy a product from an unknown brand with stronger social or environmental commitments (80%) or pay more for a responsible product (71%) to address social or environmental issues" (Cone Communications, 2015, p. 18).

Furthermore, Table 7 shows more crosstabs as follows:

Crosstab Age*Awareness of the socially responsible activities:

The relation between the two variables is valid and statistically significant. Furthermore, 74.4% of the respondents are aware of socially responsible activities. These respondents are distributed as follows: 15.5% who are aware of socially responsible activities are 20-24 years old; 26.8% are 25 to 29 years old, 20% are 30 to 34 years old, and 12.4% are above 35 years old.

Table 6: *Crosstabs results pertaining to respondents' attitude towards CSR costs versus decisions related to CSR products*

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
"Do you believe CSR is logical to be applied from the cost perspective?" versus "Companies applying socially responsible activities impact your decisions to buy their products?"	22.521	0.032	(df =12, α=5%) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
"Do you believe CSR is logical to be applied from the cost perspective?" versus "Does socially responsible corporation change how you feel towards their products?"	62.171	0.000	(df =16, α=5%) 26.30	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

Crosstab Gender*Influence of applying socially responsible activities on buying a product not already in mind to be purchased:

Results show that the relation between the two variables is valid and statistically significant. Moreover, 33.67% female respondents versus 26% males agree that applying socially responsible activities influence their buying of product not planned to be purchased. On the other hand, 26.5% remain neutral about the issue, and 13.8% (3.1% females and 10.7% males) disagree.

Crosstab Marital Status*Influence of applying socially responsible activities on buying a product instead of another:

Results show that that the relation between the two variables is valid and statistically significant. A total of 76% of the respondents, irrespective of their marital status, agree that companies applying socially responsible activities influence their decision to buy one product instead of another. Of these respondents, 49% are single, 23.5% are married, and 3.5% are either divorced or widowed.

Cross tabulation "working function" * "If a corporation using socially responsible activities asks for a higher price for same product or service, would you pay more?"

Results show that the relation between the two variables is valid and statistically significant.

39.2% of the respondents distributed among the different business functions agree that they will pay more if a corporation using socially responsible activities asks for a higher price for same product or service.

Cross tabulation between annual salary and "Does applying socially responsible activities drive you to increase the quantity you are buying?":

Finally, results show that the relation between the two variables is valid and statistically significant. A total of 45.90% of the respondents, irrespective of their annual salary, agree that companies applying socially responsible activities drive their decision to increase the quantity they are buying. Of these respondents, 17.5% earn less than 8000 USD per year, 15.85% earn between 8000 and 20,000 USD per year, 9.30% earn between 20,000 and 40,000 USD per year, and 3.3% earn more than 40,000 USD per year.

Table 7. Crosstab demographic variables versus social responsibility and buying behavior

Correlation	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Pearson Chi-Square Tabulated	Relation Valid & Stat. Sig.
Age*Awareness of the socially responsible activities	26.199	0.010	(df =12, $\alpha=5\%$) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
Gender*Influence of applying socially responsible activities on buying a product not already in mind to be purchased	10.689	0.030	(df =4, $\alpha=5\%$) 9.49	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
Marital Status * Influence on applying socially responsible activities on buying a product instead of another	22.264	0.014	(df =10, $\alpha=5\%$) 18.31	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
Working function* If a corporation using socially responsible activities asks for a higher price for same product or service, would you pay more?	40.148	0.005	(df =20, $\alpha=5\%$) 31.41	$X_c > X_t$ Yes
Annual salary* Does applying socially responsible activities drive you to increase the quantity you are buying?	25.336	0.013	(df =12, $\alpha=5\%$) 21.03	$X_c > X_t$ Yes

Earlier in the literature review, Jamali, Mezher, and Bitar (2006) and Werner (2009) among others, addressed the triple bottom line for CSR, whereby companies take an integrative view on how to manifest their actions within the community at large. Therefore, the third section of the questionnaire addresses twenty CSR initiatives or tools used by companies to depict how they act responsibly towards their labor force, their surrounding society, the natural environment and economically in achieving their financial returns. Respondents are asked to rank order the top eight initiatives that carry the highest impact to stakeholders.

4.5. Top 8 CSR tool (initiatives) preference ranked by respondents out of 20:

In this research respondents are asked to rank order 20 CSR activities depending on their impact; they are also asked to rank the activities from 1 to 8 based upon importance of impact, that is, assigning "1" to the highest importance up to "8" for the lowest importance, or "not important at all". However, to select the rankings, only the top eight factors have been selected (8 out of 20), which indicate the highest impact assignments. The selection is based on the total frequencies or counts for the categories ("Most Important "1", Important "2", Somehow Important "3", and Important to a certain extent "4") assigned to each CSR activity. After collecting the data, the final rankings are depicted in Table 8.

Rankings reveal charity towards the poor to be ranked as number one among the 20 tools. Furthermore, charity towards orphans comes in second and charity towards disabled people came third. Charity towards the homeless got the fourth place followed by planting gardens and forests. Moreover, ranks six and seven are related to contribution for cancer research and prevention campaigns. Ranked eighth is the recycling strategy. And the table ends with a contribution for research on national projects.

Table 8. Ranking of CSR activities

CSR Activity	Rank	Scores
<u>Charity towards the poor</u>	1	91
<u>Charity towards the orphans</u>	2	79
<u>Charity towards the disabled people</u>	3	77
<u>Charity towards the homeless</u>	4	60
<u>Planting gardens and forests</u>	5	58
<u>Contribution to research on cancer</u>	6	56
<u>Cancer prevention campaigns</u>	7	40
<u>Recycling strategy</u>	8	33
Support of national reserve	9	29
Environmental friendly packaging	10	26
Special projects for distant villages to help unemployed people	10	26
No genetic modified food production	11	23
Charity towards war victims	12	22
Contribution to research on AIDS	13	21
Charity for regions that had suffered from a natural disaster	14	21
Low waste production	15	18
AIDS patients' assistance	16	17
CFC free products	17	14
Charity towards refugees	18	13
Contribution to research on national projects	18	11

Note: Scoring is based on adding the number of counts assigned by respondents to each initiative

using each of the first four rank categories namely, “1 to 4” as explained earlier.

Table 8 shows that respondents rank their companies’ CSR activities or initiatives along two dimensions: societal philanthropic and environmental perspective. Societal CSR initiatives are ranked from 1 to 4 and from 6 to 7, while 5 and 8 are environmentally related. Such categorization does not fit the CSR Triple Bottom Line integration, whereby according to Jamali et al. (2006), “the TBL approach is grounded in the simple realization that corporations can add value and should publicly account along three drivers, namely the economic, the environmental and the social drivers” (p. 399).

Results from Table 8 conform to Boutilier’s (2007) roles of social capital in poverty reduction and community development. He posits that corporations can contribute to sustainable development goals such as poverty reduction by linking the social capital to the community, and when stakeholder networks are identified. According to Gauntlett (2011), citing Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 119), “social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 2).

Similarly, Boyle and Boguslaw (2007) call corporate leadership to recognize and practice corporate citizenship, whereby a more explicit acknowledgement and framing of poverty is practiced; and, to take an active role in poverty reduction efforts. Furthermore, this research’s results show that the Lebanese respondents imply that their companies are practicing a modern paradigm of CSR. Jamali et al. (2009) contend that a modern paradigm of CSR is where “the responsibility of a business extends beyond making profits to include protecting and improving society’s welfare or the well-being of specific constituent groups within society” (p. 173).

5. Discussion:

CSR strategy is applied by many corporations; and, the reason for applying CSR differ from one corporation to another. Whatever is the reason of applying CSR, when it comes to consumer’s behavior, CSR will impact each consumer in a different way: directly or indirectly (Lin, Chen, Chiu, and Lee, 2011; Tian, Wang, and Yang, 2011). Consumers with higher social responsibility and awareness are more prone to experience higher impact on their behavior if exposed to products or services linked to CSR strategy application; it is not solely linked to their own personal interest (Mohr, Webb, and Harris, 2001).

This paper focuses on CSR strategy impact on Lebanese consumer’s behavior. The paper also deals with the CSR activities that Lebanese consumers prefer and how they perceive CSR activities.

Results have shown that 74.3% of the respondents are aware of CSR activities and agree on the fact that CSR is beneficial to society, corporations, and individuals. Also, when they were asked if CSR impacts their decision to buy products, 83.5% of the respondents agreed and 60.3% showed that it may even initiate a purchase not planned previously. Furthermore, results show that 46.2% of the respondents will buy more as of quantity and 76% may go into the substitution of products because of CSR. 75.2% of the respondents mentioned that CSR also may impact their feelings towards products and will increase their loyalty to CSR-applying corporations.

The aforementioned findings conform to global efforts where Nielsen (2013) shows “that the share of consumers interested in companies that have implemented programs to give back to society is growing. Willingness to spend more on products and services from companies that have given back increased in 43 out of the 58 countries Nielsen measured. Across demographic groups, too, social consciousness is a growing factor in the purchase process” (p. 11).

It is clear from the data collected that Lebanese consumer’s awareness of social responsibility significantly affects the impact of CSR application on consumer’s buying behavior; a fact that fits with what others have found. The more consumers are aware of CSR, the higher is their expectations of the corporations (Golob et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the surveyed Lebanese consumers think that CSR is applicable to all kinds of businesses, and this thought impacts their buying decision regarding initiation of purchase, increase in quantity purchased, change in feeling towards products and increase in loyalty for corporations or products. Respondents also agree that CSR is beneficial to society and this has driven them to increase the quantity purchased and their loyalty.

This change in feelings and loyalty is also linked to the perception that CSR is also beneficial to corporations and individuals; a conception that will change the consumer’s behavior because of the direct benefit gain. Cone Communications’ (2015) global report simply confirms the aforementioned observations. “The 2015 Cone Communications/Ebiquity Global CSR Study reveals a higher level of understanding, awareness, and support of corporate social responsibility efforts from the world’s consumers” (p. 52).



It is concluded from the CSR activity preference based on the impact of CSR on the Lebanese consumer that charity in general carries the highest interest in their minds, and the top four preferred social responsibility activities are all charity-type tools. From one side, the aforementioned observation fits Jamali et al.'s (2009) modern paradigm of CSR.

Surprisingly, in Lebanon, one notes the emphasis on economic and environmental initiatives and projects carried out by Lebanese corporations which insinuate classical CSR orientation. According to Hejase et al. (2012), "findings show that when respondents were asked about "which external factors do their organization's efforts relate to?" 56% of the respondents related their organizational efforts to economic forces, 22% of them related their organization's efforts to the environment, 17% of them related the efforts to social factors" (p. 14).

Such a fact was mildly observed among the top tools chosen by respondents of this research whereby two tools were identified and ranked 5 and 8. Such an observation may insinuate that some Lebanese corporations may not be applying CSR with the appropriate activities to impact Lebanese consumers. This also opens a question of inefficient budget spending, lack of stakeholder's awareness, disorientation in CSR strategy, poor prioritization and low innovativeness. Jamali et al. (2006) found similar findings earlier in their research. Their conclusion is summarized as, "the problem faced in the Lebanese and other contexts is the absence of a precise management framework that provides for the linking of these fundamental, yet seemingly disparate pillars of sustainability and for reconciling traditional financial performance with environmental and social contributions" (p. 410).

6. Recommendations:

Lebanese corporations that are thinking of applying a CSR strategy or revising their current CSR strategy must carry out an extensive CSR situation analysis to clearly assess the current status of their activities dedicated to achieve their financial viability amid the concern for the well-being of their stakeholders and the justification of their choice of actions. Then, the aforementioned companies necessitate the assessment of internal and external stakeholders. Internally, to make sure employees have assimilated the CSR concept and behavior, and externally, to assure consumers receive what they expect and want with special attention to their well-being. Hejase et al. (2012) recommend the following, "more effort on the part of Lebanese organizations must be demonstrated to promote CSR policies and programs and capitalize on them as a core

competency. Lebanese companies should recognize the need for CSR as an organizational goal that is aligned with societal and environmental needs, which result in a win-win situation for all stakeholders" (p. 19). Lebanese corporations will totally benefit from CSR awareness campaigns, which will increase consumer social responsibility knowledge and facilitate CSR projects outcomes and results (Mohr et al., 2001).

Lebanese corporations will benefit from innovative CSR initiative in the market because this will add more value and distinctiveness to the corporation and drive them away from the "me too" perception, which will not help them survive in fierce competition and will positively impact consumer's behavior to purchase environmental friendly or related products (D'Souza, Muthly, Taghian, & Costa, 2009).

It is highly recommended to execute CSR initiatives extremely well and to control the execution in many points with preset key performance indicators. It is beneficial also if corporations measure consumer's response after applying CSR initiatives; this can be easily done by surveys, simple questionnaires, feedback forms, or call centers. This will give corporations a practical compass to redirect the CSR project whenever there is a distraction, misleading information, or deviation from the plan and objectives. International practices abound using the aforementioned feedback tools (Nielsen, 2013; Cone Communications, 2015).

Lebanese corporations will benefit more from CSR initiatives if it is communicated well via the right channels. "Nearly nine-in-10 (88%) global consumers want companies to tell them what they are doing to operate responsibly and support important issues" (Cone Communications, 2015, p. 29). Any CSR activity, no matter how small, must be communicated to stakeholders immediately because this will automatically reflect positive impact on reputation and value, which will, in turn, pave the way for having more business partners, loyal consumers, growth potentials, revenues, and sustainable market stand (Waddell, 2007; D'Amato et al., 2009; Hejase et al., 2012; Hecht, Nielsen, and Sadlovska, 2015).

Lebanese corporations will benefit also from affiliations with international organizations, programs, or campaigns like: International Labour Organization (ILO), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), or World Bank-International Finance Corporation (WB-IFC), which will give corporations depth in understanding what to do. Furthermore, corporations will benefit from the vast experience of international bodies and will reflect

higher image and credibility (Labour Relations-Government of Canada, 2015).

Corporations may benefit from the preferred charity initiatives and fill the gap where the Lebanese government is deficient in funding citizens like in education and health sectors (Ararat, 2006). In this regard, marketing managers will play an important role in using such information and will initiate branding and marketing techniques using CSR as a strategy to reach corporate objectives (Hakim, 2011).

7. Limitations:

The current research has some limitations. Sample size and the judgmental convenience sampling is one of the limitations. Selection bias is another limitation, for the selected consumers belong to the researchers' circles of acquaintances. Consequently, one must not generalize the findings, although these findings are considered primary data and therefore important to the exploratory research presented herein. Furthermore, the limited number of CSR tools explored is a limitation as well, because if all CSR tools and initiatives were included and assessed, the delivered results and analysis would have been more comprehensive.

Regardless of the aforementioned limitations, this research does offer indispensable insight into how Lebanese companies deal with CSR and contribute to further understanding of the Lebanese consumers' views of CSR.

8. Future Work:

According to Cybergrants (2015) conducting future research involving consumers provide an "opportunity to engage consumers more fully in new CSR solutions and collaborate to push the boundaries of responsible consumption and lifestyle by giving consumers more opportunities to create individual impact while also developing corporate branding" (Para 6). Based on the fact that CSR is getting more attention from both corporations and consumers, the following points are worth investigating:

- 1) It will be great to have future works exploring the relation between consumers' expectations of CSR and the impact of CSR on their behavior, as well as the change that their opinion might undergo after being exposed to specific programs.
- 2) It is also wise to study the correlation between consumers' ethics and behavior to CSR initiatives.
- 3) It will be worthwhile to study how ready are the consumers to pay above the normal average price for environmental friendly products or CSR-linked product or service.
- 4) A study including and exploring consumers' preference for all CSR tools and initiatives.

5) The study of the feasibility of using social media to perform direct CSR marketing towards specific consumer-segments which are sensitive to companies' approach towards CSR.

6) To study the regional and cultural correlation of CSR impact on consumers' behavior.

7) To study which communication media is best suited to disseminate the different CSR initiatives to consumers.

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