The influence of sustainable development goals (SDGs) on customer-based store equity (CBSE)

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Abstract

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) commenced globally in 2015. The execution of the SDGs is described as "Localizing the SDGs" to emphasize the role of local establishments and local players. The concern of SDG-related issues and concepts appears to be rising and is in line with the appreciation of its considerable potential. During the last decade, the concept of brand equity has been considerably utilized (or localized) in the context of the store, which is termed customer-based store equity (CBSE). We contribute to this localizing viewpoint by studying how the inclusion of the SDGs, particularly corporate social responsibility (CSR), influences local store equity. We propose eight major means by which the SDGs play a key role in creating CBSE, including 1) building store awareness; 2) developing consumer-self imagery; 3) engaging with store personality; 4) enhancing perceived store credibility; 5) enriching store reputation; 6) evoking store feeling; 7) cultivating store trust and loyalty; and 8) improving store perceived quality. We discuss the implications of our research propositions and provide directions for future research.

Introduction

There is a growing interest for implementing social actions related the sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Drumwright 1996; File and Prince, 1998; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Research indicates that the SDG-related activities can be used to satisfy multiple objectives; and thus several outcomes could be expected from successful implementation of the SDGs, including differentiating firms from the competition (e.g., Burt and Sparks, 2002; Pivato, Misani, and Tencati, 2008); building an emotional, even spiritual bond with consumers (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig, 2004; Meyer, 1999); improving employee morale (Lee et al., 2012); and increasing sales revenue (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Moreover, SDG-related initiatives could lead to the construction of a positive corporate/brand image/equity (Godfrey, 2005; Hsu, 2012; Melo and Galen, 2010), and they may provide a reservoir of goodwill that would protect negative publicity and criticism from an unexpected event or tragedy (Dawar and Piliutla, 2000).

By engaging in SDG-related activities, it can be seen that the SDGs are not only the "right thing to do but also the smart thing to do" (Smith, 2003, p. 52). Many studies have linked firms' sustainable actions (e.g., social responsibilities and environmental concerns) with consumer behaviors at the product level (e.g., brand preferences and willingness to pay a price premium) (Creyer and Ross, 1997). However, the discussion on how such actions may contribute to customer-based store equity is varied and limited. The aim of this paper is to study how the inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), influences Customer-Based Store Equity (CBSE).

Discussion

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Plan for Sustainable Development, agreed by all United Nations Member States in 2015, delivers a blueprint for peace and prosperity for humankind and planet earth, now and into the future (UNSDGs, 2019a). They hold that terminating poverty and other deprivations should be dealt with hand-in-hand with approaches that enrich health and education, decrease inequality, and stimulate economic development – all while tackling climate change and progressing to safeguard our oceans and forests (UNSDGs, 2019a). It has been well-defined from the beginning that the SDGs cannot be achieved without major corporate engagements (IISD, 2019). IISD (2019) illustrates that two SDG features are imperative in describing corporate engagement: their actionability and the ethical obligations that they convey. On actionability, certain SDGs could be progressive within an establishment's (value chain) operations, while others demand that all social sectors collaborate (UNSDGs, 2019b). On ethical obligations, regarding ethical duties, there are SDG targets that seek to pre-empt negative impacts on society, which we call "avoiding harm" targets, while other targets actively seek to "do good" by intending to make additional contributions to the well-being of people and the planet (IISD, 2019).

In this paper, we particularly study the influence of the SDGs that are CSR related on the concept of CBSE. CSR denotes ''policies and practices of corporations that reflect business responsibility for some of the wider societal good'' (Matten and Moon, 2008, p. 405). Enderle and Tavis (1998, p.1130) view corporate social responsibility as "the policy and practice of a corporation's social involvement over and beyond its legal obligations for the benefit of the society at large". According to the definition by Angelidis and Ibrahim (1993, p.8), corporate social responsibility is "corporate social actions whose purpose is to satisfy social needs". Lerner and Fryxell (1988) propose that CSR expresses the extent to which firms' results are coherent with social principles and expectations. The devotion to CSR initiatives is also recognized to be a foundation of competitive edge and an approach to improve company performance (Hsu, 2012; Porter and Kramer, 2006). Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) have illustrated that the outcome of CSR initiatives on customer awareness or attitudes, which are ''internal'' effects, is significantly superior to the outcome that are ''external'' to the consumers, such as purchase action. Socially responsible firms are differentiated from their competitors and thus socially responsible activities positively affect consumer attitudes towards the firm and heighten customer satisfaction (Pivato, Misani, and Tencati, 2008). Luo and Bhattachary (2006) described the direct impact of CSR on customer satisfaction, in which a socially responsible firm fulfills customer demands via above average levels of company-consumer identification. This can strengthen the tendency of consumers to support the establishment (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) proposed that consumers who enthusiastically identify themselves with a firm tend to trust and forgive the firm's misconducts. Therefore, the more a firm is recognized to be socially responsible, the more consumers will identify with and support the firm (Lichtenstein, Drumwright and Braig, 2004).

The functions of CSR and SDGs

CSR as green marketing

Green marketing encompasses a wide range of activities, including new product development, manufacturing method, packaging modification, and advertising. Yet explaining green marketing is not an easy task (Polonsky, 1994). The very first description—which defined green marketing as the study of the positive and negative features of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion, and non-energy resource depletion (Henion and Kinnear, 1976)—has three key elements, 1) it is part of the complete marketing body; 2) it involves both positive and negative activities; and 3) it examines a restricted series of environmental concerns. While this conceptualization is a meaningful opening point, it needs to be more broadly defined. Polonsky (1994, p.2) suggests a broader definition of green marketing: "Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment". This definition integrates the established elements of the marketing definition, which are activities created to establish and enable any exchanges

aimed to fulfill human needs or wants (Stanton and Futrell, 1987). Therefore, this ensures that the benefits of the establishment and its customers are covered, as voluntary exchange would not exist except when both the buyer and seller mutually gain (Polonsky, 1994). This description also embodies the safeguarding of the natural environment, by exerting effort to reduce the detrimental effect such exchange has on the environment. Therefore, green marketing should be perceived as "less environmentally harmful" rather than "environmentally friendly".

CSR as societal marketing

The early formal description of social marketing was proposed by Kotler and Zaltman (1971, p. 5): "Social marketing is the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research". Andreason (1994) argued that such a definition is confounding in some ways, such as whether its practice was restricted to social and nonprofit marketers, and it limits its intention to impacting "the acceptability of social ideas". He later suggested that social marketing is the adjustment of commercial marketing technologies to procedures designed to encourage the voluntary conduct of target audiences to develop their own welfare and that of the societies in which they live.

CSR as cause-related marketing

The general definition of cause-related marketing (CRM) is the process of creating and executing marketing activities that are illustrated by donating a certain amount to a selected nonprofit organization that, in turn, influences consumers to participate in revenue-generating exchanges (Mullen, 1997). It could create the long-term value required for a firm to survive and reach competitive edge (Collins, 1993). Mullen (1997) proposed that CRM is a creative approach to develop brand equity as it generates the greatest value added and most directly influences financial performance. CRM has a vast potential in aiding marketers to stay in tune with the mood of society, as it is more considerate, trustworthy, and relevant to public (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997). When properly implemented, CRM markets products, improves image, and motivates employees (Bronn and Vrioni, 2015).

The linkage between CSR and SDGs

How the three functions of CSR relate to SDGs is discussed as follows. SDG 6 proposes to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" (UNSDGs, 2019c). In this particular SDG, the aim is to preserve and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes. Furthermore, it aims to increase international collaboration and capacity-building in order to reinforce water- and sanitation-related efforts in developing nations, such as water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling, and reuse technologies, and to facilitate the involvement of local communities in water and sanitation management (UNSDGs, 2019c).

The goals of SDG 8, committed to respecting human rights, encouraging sustainable markets, and acquiring skills, are the foundation to all stores. "In illustrating this commitment, the British Retail Consortium (BRC) (2018a) reported that the aim was to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". SDG 9 aims to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (UNSDGs, 2019c)". As the mainstream of construction and engineering work around the world is carried out by SMEs, they have a significant role to play in fulfilling the goal. The manufacturing, agro-industries, and industrial processing sectors are also very relevant in this context (Joon, 2018).

In addressing SDG 12, the BRC (2018b) recognized "all products are dependent on the environment and communities where the materials are sourced" and "as populations grow the availability of these resources will become increasingly constrained". As such, "production and consumption patterns need to be made more sustainable to enable for the regeneration of resources" (BRC, 2018b). A number of industry goals were set up to 2020, namely reducing the volume of waste sent to landfill, measuring water usage, and pursuing responsible sourcing practices for key raw materials. Here, potential benefits were seen to include financial savings generated by more efficient waste and water management, a reduction in green-

house gas emissions, the development of greater resilience and security in supply chains, the preservation of environmental ecosystems and bio-diversity, and the development of a more circular economy (Jones and Comfort, 2018).

SDG 15 aspires to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss" (UNSDGs, 2019d). It purposely ensures the preservation, restoration, and sustainable utilization of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecologies and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains, and drylands, along with duties under international agreements. It also endorses the employment of sustainable management of all kinds of forests, the cessation of deforestation, the restoration of degraded forests, and it significantly enhances afforestation and reforestation worldwide (UNSDGs, 2019d).

Finally, SDG 17 expresses that the public must "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Joon, 2018)". This goal emphasizes the significance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in enhancing and expanding development cooperation by actualizing "effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships (UNSDGs, 2019c)". SMEs have a great role to play in this respect, particularly in bridging the digital divide between the developed and developing world (Joon, 2018). The aforementioned SDGs are convinced to fit to most retailers' daily operations and capabilities. These SDGs are also applicable to the three forms of CSR initiatives mentioned earlier.

SDGs in Stores

In March 2018, the BRC (2018c) announced the takeoff of Better Retail Better World under the headline "the retail industry is taking action to build a better, more prosperous and sustainable world". More expansively, the BRC argued (2018c) "put simply, this action will mean further safeguards against people falling into the modern slavery trap by paying to get a job, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and waste sent to landfill and more support for people from under represented demographics to progress in employment". Twenty-six of Britain's leading retailers including, Aldi, Asda, Boots, IKEA, John Lewis Partnership, Kingfisher, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Next, and Sainsbury's and Wilko, (although not Tesco, Britain's largest retailer), signed up to the initiative. The British Retail Consortium (2018d) declared "retail is one of the first industries to take collective action in this way" and reported "as part of the project, retailers will share knowledge and best practice, and publicly disclose progress on these goals".

A number of the stores advertised posters, banners, and leaflets about their approach to sustainability. In the Marks and Spencer store, for example, posters and notices proclaimed "our best value sustainable sourced denim ever"; "we've been giving grocers a fair price for their tea and coffee since 2006"; and "our goal is to make sure our key raw materials come from the most sustainable sources available to us". Wilko displayed a water filter with a sign that said, "Saves on Water and Better for the Environment" and B&Q promoted its "Community Reuse" program, which offers "unsellable products and materials" for reuse. Asda presented four-paged leaflets regarding its "Fight Hunger: Create Change" program proposed to "help us to fight hunger in our local community" and declared to be giving "500,000 people access to fresh food every week". The further illustrations of SDGs embody in business core strategy in practice are Air Salvage International, Saver, and Diamond Safety. Air Salvage International is the largest plane dismantler in Europe and a major player in the booming secondhand market for aircrafts, which totaled $2.5 billion from 2009 to 2011; vintage clothes shops, such as Savers, resell 2.5 billion pounds of used clothing annually; Diamond Safety buys finely ground used tires and then makes and sells playground covers and athletic fields.

At the same time, in emphasizing "SDG Washing", the guide counsels caution that where "companies use the SDGs in their communication to expand the corporate value and sales of their own company, there is a danger that the company will receive criticism and suggestions for improvement from each stakeholder due to mistaken methods of communication" (Dentsu Aegis Network, 2018). Here, the guide describes clear parallels with Greenwash, the environmentally pejorative term operationalized

when green communication messages are deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization's products, aims, or policies are environmentally friendly. As such, the guide suggests that SDG Washing impacts both "the relationship of trust between consumers and individual companies" as well as "the appeal of the company as an investment and loan destination" (Jones and Comfort, 2018). Corporate "SDG washing" (positively contributing to some of the SDGs while ignoring the negative impact of others) is a substantial risk that may restrict a firm's optimal contributions to the SDGs (Eccles and Karbassi, 2018). An organization may initiate large-scale renewable energy projects in support of Goal 7 — Affordable and Clean Energy — but displace communities and subvert rights to food, access to water, health, culture, and livelihoods in the process. Under the guise of supporting the SDGs, tunnel vision (designing and measuring success against a single goal) and myopia (setting a strategy without understanding the long-term sustainability agenda) may deliver weak or counterproductive contributions to the goals and community as a whole (Eccles and Karbassi, 2018).

The Conceptualization of Customer-Based Store Equity (CBSE)

Keller (1993, p.1) views Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand". Keller's (1993) CBBE conceptualization has been applied to the store context with some variations (e.g., Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers, 2003; Pappu and Quester, 2006; Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009). Building customer-based brand equity requires the creation of a familiar brand that has favorable, strong, and unique brand associations (Keller, 1993). This can be done both through the initial choice of the brand's identity—such as the brand name, logo, or symbol—and through the integration of the brand's identity into the supporting marketing program (Keller, 2003).

The term Customer-Based Store Equity (CBSE) is defined as consumers' overall assessment of a retailer's channels as strong, attractive, and unique (Hartman and Spiro, 2005). CBSE is known to affect retailer performance and consumer behavior (e.g., Grewal et al., 2009). CBSE is also called retailer equity or store value (Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers, 2003; Pappu and Quester, 2006). The main managerial implications relate to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage through a differentiation strategy in a rapidly changing and highly demanding environment (Rintama̋ki, Kuusela, and Mitronen, 2007). Hence, the result of successful inclusion of the CBSE concept to store operation may create differential effects or value added to the store which results in better overall performance, more positive and favorable customer behavior towards the store, and stronger store loyalty relationships that are both intense and active (Burt and Sparks, 2002; Hartman and Spiro 2005; Jinfeng and Zhilong 2009).

Customer-Based Store Equity Model and its constructs

Store awareness

From the assessment of existing evidence, researchers in the field have widely accepted that store awareness is significantly related to the creation of store equity (Hartman and Spiro 2005; Pappu and Quester 2006; Jinfeng and Zhilong 2009; Swoboda, Schramm-Klein, and Morschett, 2009). Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers (2003) applied Keller's (1993) conceptualization in the store context and defined it as the ability to recall and recognize the store. In other words, the term is defined as the familiarity of the retailer name perceived by consumers; such awareness relates to the ease in which a retailer name comes to mind. Many studies followed the same conceptualization as Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers (2003) while the expressions of the term used may be different such as store awareness (Hartman and Spiro, 2006), retailer awareness (Pappu and Quester, 2006; Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009), awareness/association (Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011), and awareness (Gil-Saura et al., 2017).

Appling the conceptualization of CBBE, two important indicators of store awareness are recognition and recall. Store recognition implies the ability of the customer to remember prior exposure to the store, whereas store recall implies the unassisted retrieval of the store from memory (Keller, 1993). In addition, store awareness can be viewed from two key perspectives: depth and breadth. While depth of store awareness is the ease that consumers could recall or recognize the store perspectives, the breadth of store awareness is the collection of buying and consuming transactions in which the store comes to mind (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002).

Store Association

The general definition of association in the store context is anything that is linked to customer memory about the particular store (Pappu and Quester, 2006). Some apply cognitive processes from the psychology literatures to explain the connection between awareness and association. In this line of research, memory is constituted of pieces of information represented by nodes and connections between the nodes, which is called a schema (Hartman and Spiro, 2005; Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011).

Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) argued that association in the store context has a positive relationship with store loyalty as it affects commitment and choice of store in repeated visiting behavior. Yoo, Donthu, and Lee (2000) have influenced many CBSE studies implying that strong associations have positive impact on equity. Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers (2003) emphasized that association in the store context should be store specific; in other words, depends on particular store marketing strategies and tactics.

Other constructs relating to association have been suggested, such as product quality and perceived quality (Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers, 2003), institutional factors (Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009), liking and pride (Pappu and Quester, 2006), convenient facilities (Pappu and Quester, 2006, Jinfeng and Zhilong 2009, Fuentes-Blasco et al., 2017), store atmosphere (Hartman and Spiro, 2005, Pappu and Quester, 2006, Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009, Fuentes-Blasco et al., 2017), the variety of products (Pappu and Quester, 2006), trust (manufacturer) (Pappu and Quester, 2006, Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009), trust (store) (Pappu and Quester, 2006; Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009; Beristain and Zorrilla, 2011), attitudes towards a particular brand that the store carries (Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers, 2003, Hartman and Spiro, 2005), and attribute (Gil Saura, 2017).

Furthermore, both Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) agree that awareness and association are conceptually different. However, Beristain and Zolrrilla (2011) argued that awareness and association are interrelated and can be combined together as a single construct (Chowdhury, Reardon, and Srivastava, 1998). While the argument was supported by Yoo and Donthu (2001)'s findings, there is no validity test found in Beristain and Zolrrilla (2011). Moreover, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2005) have forewarned that further investigation related to awareness and association is required as the findings may vary from context to context. Nevertheless, most of the researchers appeared to agree upon the Keller (1993) argument that awareness is the launchpad leading the consumers to process other elements of brand equity (e.g. Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 1996, Tasci, 2018). Figure 1 illustrates the CBSE model and its construct.
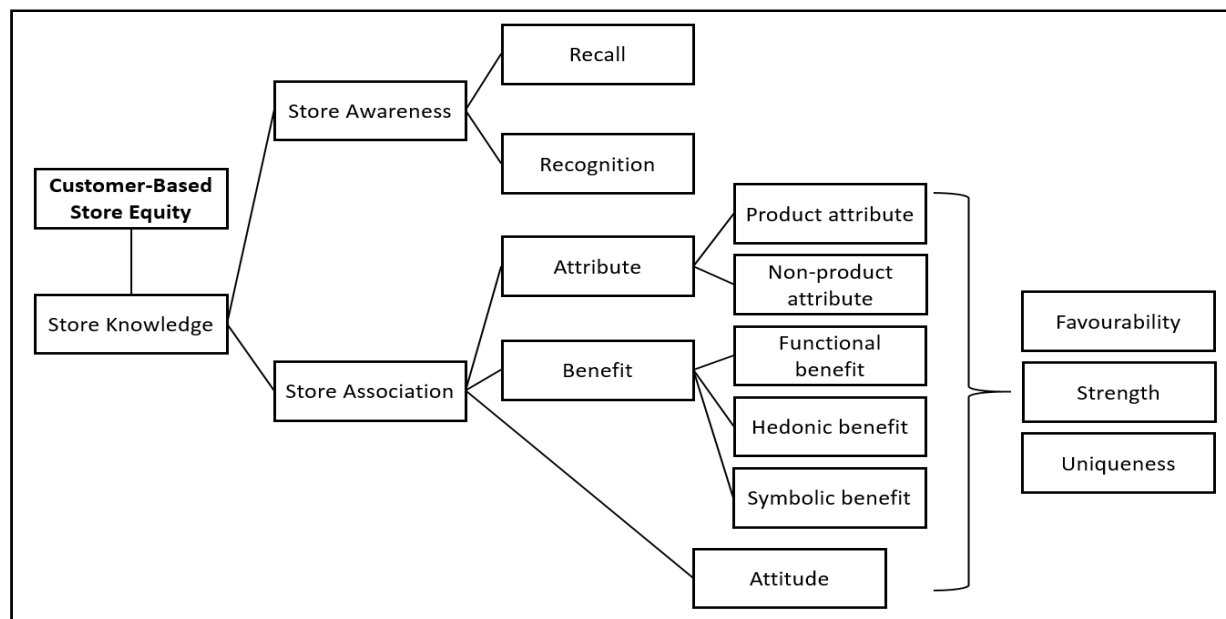

Figure 1 CBSE Model

SDGs and CSBE

Developing solid store equity is the goal of many retailers due to the vastly potential benefits that may result. The task for marketers in constructing solid store equity is ensuring that consumers have strong awareness and association with the store and its accompanying marketing activities. The inclusion of SDGs could potentially deliver many key linkages to the store. In the following sections, we emphasize how the SDGs could help build and strengthen CBSE in the store context.

SDGs Builds Store Awareness

In various circumstances, due to the nature of store exposure, SDGs seem to be the launchpad of developing recognition for a store, but not essentially recall (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Brand recall depends more deeply on developing the proper relationship between the store and usage (Ghodeswar, 2008). Most SDGs are not suited towards developing these forms of relations, as they are not meant to incorporate much store-related information. At the same time, exposure to the store could literally be recurring as a result of SDG-related activities, which aids store recognition (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002).

The impact of SDG-related activities on consumer awareness, attitudes, and attributions, which are ''internal'' effects or psychological outcomes, is significantly stronger than their "external" effects or visible outcomes, such as purchase behavior and word-of-mouth (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). Particularly, a store's overall marketing strategy and the position of the SDGs within it is likely to influence the extent to which its SDG-related activities translate into positive internal outcomes (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004).

Proposition 1: The embodiment of SDGs will encourage awareness in the aspect of recognition. The degree of such influence depends upon the store's overall marketing strategy and the way in which the SDGs are incorporated.

SDGs strengthens Store Association

Developing store association involves creating meanings of what the store is and how it is portrayed—largely, what it should embody in the memory of the target audience (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). In most situations, associations related broadly to more functional (performance-related) or more abstract (imagery-related) aspects may become linked to the store (Keller, 1993). Specifically, to create CBSE, it is important that the store have some strong, favorable, and unique store associations (Hartman and Spiro, 2005). The SDGs could arguably pose several means for developing such favorable store differentiations. As discussed earlier, most SDGs do not incorporate much store-related information; hence, the SDGs may not have a significant influence on more functional (performance-related) aspects. On the contrary, many types of imagery-related associations could be linked to a store through the embodiment of the SDGs.

Developing Consumer-Self Imagery

One aspect of store imagery associations is the kind of individual who uses the store. Such imagery may result in a psychological portrayal by consumers of actual consumers or a more idealized identity (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Associations of a store or idealized store customer could be based on descriptive demographic variables or more abstract psychographic variables (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). The SDGs embodiment to the store could support customers to portray a positive image of store users which they also idealize, such as being helpful to the society or doing good things.

Proposition 2: The more positive user imagery related to the SDGs is used in the marketing program, the more likely it is that store association will be strengthened.

Engaging with Store Personality

Martineau (1958, p.47) proposed that stores have a personality illustrated as "the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes". Stores may also take on personality traits and values such as sincerity, similar to people (Martineau, 1958). Such store credibility could be considered as one attribute as part of the store association. Store personality is frequently linked to more user imagery but engages in a much stronger,

more contextual manner (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). The SDGs could reinforce the sincerity dimension of a store's personality such that customers would portray the customer of the store as caring and genuine (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). This may suggest store-customer's congruity.

The store's promotion of the SDGs should enhance the store's awareness and association as discussed earlier. Association is improved if customers appreciate SDG-related efforts and think of the store in a new light (e.g., more caring). Yet there are no positive product-related associations that are transferred to the store. Instead, it is the imagery-related associations, focused on the image of the store, that are more likely to be transferred.

Proposition 3: Imagery-related associations are more likely to be transferred from a cause to a store than product-related associations.

Enhancing Perceived Store Credibility

Store credibility has a significant role in store association in the form of consumers' attitudes towards a store (Bobinski, Cox, and Cox, 1996). As part of imagery creation, SDG embodiment may elicit several kinds of judgments and feelings from customers. Appling the CBBE conceptualization, store credibility refers to the magnitude by which the store is recognized as credible in forms of three dimensions: expertise (e.g., being competitive, and being a market leader), trustworthiness (e.g., consistently consider consumer interests), and likability (e.g., being interesting and worth spending time with) (Keller and Aaker 1992). SDGs could affect all three elements, as customers might see a store eager to devote effort in making the environment and society better, as well as the tendency for "doing good things".

Proposition 4: SDGs embodiment stimulates the store to be recognized as credible, which enhance positive perceived attitude towards a store.

Enriching Store Reputation

Based on corporate concepts, store reputations reflect stores' relative success in satisfying the expectations of multiple stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Fombrun, 1996). Reputation can be viewed as part of the secondary association (Keller, 1993). Various studies investigate the influence of SDG-related activities on perceived corporate reputation (e.g., Toms, 2002; Brown, Guidry, and Patten, 2010; Cho, Guidry, Hageman, and Patten, 2012; Patten and Zhao, 2014). The results demonstrated that the more an establishment contributes to societal welfare, the better its reputation. Kay (1993) suggested further that reputation, intimately linked with awareness, could facilitate store differentiation and ultimately help a store achieve (through a good reputation) a competitive advantage. Fombrun and Shanley (1990, p.235) argued that "Well-reputed firms have a competitive advantage within their industries, but poorly reputed firms are disadvantaged".

Proposition 5: The role of the SDGs in store value could facilitate store association through positive reputation in the form of secondary attributes.

Evoking Store Feeling

From the perspective of store feeling, two categories of feelings are specifically appropriate to SDG-related activities: 1) social approval and 2) self-respect (Kahle, Poulos, and Sukhdial, 1988). These two kinds of feelings are significantly diverse in terms of how they are shaped and, in their implications, (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002).

Social approval refers to when the store results in customers having good feelings towards the responses of others—that is, when customers convince others to look positively on their appearance, behavior, and so on (Keller, 2003). This feeling might be an outcome of others' direct recognition of the customer interacting with the store (Keller, 1998). To the extent that customers are convinced that the SDGs form part of the store's mission, favorable user imagery and social approval may develop for the store (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). To heighten these kinds of feelings, the role of the SDGs play in the store's identity may deliver customers with external symbols to explicitly "advertise" or signal their affiliation to others—such as the neck tie, pen, and brooch (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). The process of

relating the store to the SDGs in order to facilitate social approval is delicate for stores that struggle to generate these kinds of feelings (Graeff, 1996).

Proposition 6: Heightened levels of feelings of social approval would be formed if the SDGs deliver customers with external symbols to explicitly advertise or signal their affiliation to their surroundings.

On the other hand, self-respect exists when the store cultivates sensations of honor, achievement, or fulfillment amongst customers (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). To heighten these kinds of feelings, SDG-related activities could enable customers to believe that they are doing a good thing and that they should feel proud about themselves for having done so. External symbols in this particular circumstance might not be as significant as the formation of "moments of internal reflection" during which customers are able to experience these kinds of feelings (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). Marketing programs that encourage the positive results associated with the cause program—and an approach based on customer involvement leading to that success—could aid in generating these types of feelings.

Proposition 7: Heightened feelings of self-respect will be achieved when the SDGs deliver customers with moments of internal reflection that support good results with respect to the cause program and the manner by which their efforts provided that success.

Cultivating store trust and loyalty

Referring to Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, Yoo and Donthu (2001, p.3) conceptualized brand loyalty as ''the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice''. Similarly, Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers (2003, p.163) suggested that brand loyalty can be defined as ''a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior''. Many researchers in CBSE applied this construct in their models using different terms such as retailer loyalty (Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers, 2003; Pappu and Quester, 2006, Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009), store loyalty (Hartman and Spiro, 2005; Swoboda, Schramm-Klein, and Morschett, 2009), store brand loyalty (Beristain and Zolrrilla, 2011), and loyalty (Gil Saura, 2017). Loyalty, however, is not included in Keller's (1993) CBBE model; rather it is treated as the outcome of association through strong positive attitude, which he called "trust".

One concrete sign of store loyalty is when consumers are wishing to devote time, energy, money, or other resources into the store such as spreading positive word-of-mouth, providing a positive review for the store webpage, and so on (Torres et al., 2012). Taking part in a cause-related program, as the SDGs do provide for a store, may be one of the approaches facilitating active engagement. As part of cause-related marketing in relation to SDG activities, consumers may become store evangelists and/or ambassadors that convey the store's message and heighten the store bonds with others (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). SDG-related activities of "strategic volunteerism" could also be employed to encourage customers to be actively involved with both the cause and the store (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002; Plewa et al., 2015).

The function of trust as a mediating variable has been investigated in many fields, including management (Blomqvist, 1997), psychology (Luhmann, 1979), philosophy (Hosmer, 1994), and marketing. From the customer perspective, trust is perceived as customer acceptance that the store will operate in a way consistent with their expectations (Park, Lee, and Kim, 2014). Trust is a foundation in developing and maintaining a long-term relationship between consumers and the store (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Generally, it involves values a store shares with consumers (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Referring to the social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976), consumer trust towards the store enriches societal embodiment of the consumer-store relationship to enhance consumer commitment towards the store. The key for survival of a store is to develop trust perceived by customers, especially when direct interaction between consumers and the store is low. Hiscock (2001, p. 1) suggested that "The ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond between the consumer and the brand, and the main ingredient of this bond is trust".

Initiating SDG-related activities promotes information about a store's values that may enhance its trustworthiness. Hosmer (1994) suggested that involving ethical or social values in an establishment's strategic decision-making process enhanced the ability of the store to develop trust among stakeholders.

Pivato, Misani, and Tencati (2008) noted similarly that customer trust in an entity's ethical approaches is one of the most immediate results of the entity's social performance and significantly impacts how customers react to CSR initiatives. SDG-related activities are perceived as pro-social activities that safeguard and enhance the welfare of society as a whole along with shielding the interest of the store and thus developing trust among customers (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). These studies generally suggest that customers hold a strong degree of trust for stores that are perceived to be socially responsible.

In the marketing literature, there is evidence that consumer beliefs—concerning ethics, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability—influence personal outcomes including preference, loyalty, and trust. Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Braig (2004) noted that consumers of a grocery chain with stronger ethical, social, and environmental sustainability beliefs tend to be more loyal to that chain. Similarly, Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2007) implied that visible SDGs would contribute to a stronger store identification, loyalty, and advocacy. Overall, consumer loyalty related to SDGs represents an imbedded insurance, which is highly important for the store in a competitive environment, subject to changing social expectations.

Proposition 8: The SDGs as part of the store will enhance store competitiveness through customer-store loyalty mediated by trust. Such SDGs must be visibly promoted.

Improving Store Perceived Quality

Perceived quality could be viewed as attitude towards store (Zeithaml, 1988), which consists of three pillars, including emotional value (describing the feeling of customers after experiencing something) (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), social value (sense of belonging of reference groups) (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991), and functional value (price offer and quality offer) (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). While perceived quality has been incorporated in many store equity studies, the term used, and contextual focus are relatively varied. Arnett, Leverie, and Meiers (2003) characterized perceived quality as service quality, whereas Pappu and Quester (2006) called it retailer perceived quality to represent perceived quality in the store context. While store brand perceived quality is the term used by Beristain and Zorrilla (2011), Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) use employee service to explain retailer perceived quality. All these constructs were operationalized based on Aaker's (1991) definition. More importantly, the construct would require an assessment on three perspectives which are favorability, strength, and uniqueness (Keller, 1993). Perceived quality is also treated as a part of brand association in Keller's (1993) CBBE model.

A number of marketing studies have found a link between SDG initiatives and perceived quality in various contexts. Garcia de los Salmones, Crespo, and del Bosque (2005), for example, found that consumers' perception of CSR behavior can have direct consequences in their assessment of the quality of a particular entity. It is argued that the SDGs' effectiveness on a store's valuation is significantly reduced if the perceived quality was found to be inferior (Folkes and Kamins, 1999). Rummell (1999) investigated the Body Shop to demonstrate that its utilization of natural ingredients and environmentally sustainably practices had positive relationship with customer assessments of its offer (Poolthong and Mandhachitara, 2009). The evidence shows that customers are sensitive to the practices of SDG-related activities and the store's capability to go beyond expectations (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). The degree of devotion in certain SDG-related activities, in which consumers expect the store to participate, are suggested to impact perceived quality of the store (Poolthong and Mandhachitara, 2009). It is noted that perceived quality is positively associated with loyalty and commitment mediated by trust (Poolthong and Mandhachitara, 2009).

Proposition 9: SDGs embodiment has positive relationship with the perceived quality of a particular store. Such positive perceived quality enhances trust and positive attitude, thereby strengthening store association.

Conclusion

We have discussed the research implications of incorporating SDG-related initiatives, specifically relating to CSR activities, on CBSE conceptualization. The potential influence of the SDGs on CBSE has been postulated by referencing to the existing literature mainly on sustainability and social marketing

(CSR: green marketing, social marketing, and cause-related marketing) as well as brand and store equity (CBBE and CBSE). Even though the discussion regarding the influence of SDGs on CBSE is based only on the customer-centric perspective, this paper represents an endeavor to theorize the relationships between SDGs and CBSE, or in other words "localizing SDGs" in the context of independent retail store.

Further Research Directions and Limitations

The efficacy of SDGs embodiment construct

Future research needs to conduct empirical research to develop measures for operationalizing SDGs embodiment as well as assess the measure(s) for their efficiency. This would help future researchers to understand the validity of the construct; thus, it is convinced that developing measures of SDGs embodiment with store would be invaluable to future pure and applied business and sustainability research.

Understanding SDGs and Lasting Competitive Advantages

One important question is "Can SDG embodiment create sustainable competitive advantages for stores?" While many studies have discussed the existence of a pioneering advantage for new product introductions, a significant distinction appeared surrounding the definition of a pioneer. It seems that being the first may not be enough. To achieve a "pioneering advantage", stores may require massive trials in the marketplace (Golder and Tellis, 1993). Analogously, for stores to truly achieve lasting store-based advantages through SDG initiatives, they may need massive corporate commitment and considerable consumer awareness. A relevant long-term issue of the SDGs is that once a store publicly commits its responsibility to a cause, can it ever "win" if the problems to be remedied by the cause are never solved? How much effort should be invested before there is store equity impact? Will there unavoidably be an effect on store image or tarnished reputation if the store abandons the cause or shifts to another cause?

Understanding the Return on Investment for SDGs and Alternative Store Strategies

SDGs embodiment is the investment required; therefore, the return on investment is one important issue to be further investigated. It may be important to realize whether the benefits and different means by which SDGs can influence store equity can be achieved with optimal budgets. How difference in expenditures patterns on SDGs yield disproportionate financial gains or escalation in store equity? How is that contingent on the store strategy embodied? The theoretical mechanisms and possible range of effects recognized should help guide measurement efforts in a more effective investigation of the impact of SDG embodiment.

The two directions mentioned above may be carried out under the perspectives of strategic prioritization of the SDGs, issues of measurement and metrics, communicating the retailers' position on the SDGs to consumers and stakeholders, the retailers' financial commitment to the SDGs within a difficult trading environment, and fundamental tensions between sustainability and economic growth.

"SDG Washing"

We mentioned briefly SDG Washing in an earlier section. There can be no doubt that the "market" as a basis for social organization has proven to be one of the most efficient mechanisms for human development. As the public has recently given a lot of attention to the sustainability issues in multiple senses, there are incentives for organizations to adopt a sustainable marketing strategy to promote their own equity rather than devote their efforts to actually promote sustainability actions for the good of society. We acknowledge the limitation of our suggested concept on how SDG Washing may affect the public perception on a particular store that actually embodied the SDGs in their core value. We are convinced that SDG Washing would be worth further investigating as it is suspected to have significant effects on the implementation of SDG practices in the store context in multiple perspectives.

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