INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) INITIATIVES ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AMONG GENERATION Z IN KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Loyal customers and stakeholders are essential assets to companies, making it crucial to identify measures that promote loyalty within the business. This study explores the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in fostering loyalty among students and other stakeholders. Notably, the extent to which CSR initiatives influence loyalty in private higher education institutions has received limited academic scrutiny. To bridge this gap, the research examines how CSR activities related to social, environmental, and ethical responsibilities shape stakeholders' attitudes and behavioural intentions. A survey was conducted with 405 respondents, gathering their perceptions of CSR activities and their loyalty towards private higher education institutions that actively engage in these initiatives. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability tests, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between CSR initiatives and stakeholder engagement in private higher education institutions. The study confirms that institutions with a strong commitment to implementing and showcasing responsible CSR practices can enhance loyalty among their students and stakeholders. These insights emphasise the importance of incorporating CSR into the strategic framework of private higher education institutions. When executed effectively, CSR not only builds loyalty but also strengthens the institution's competitiveness in the long term. This research highlights the value of aligning CSR initiatives with stakeholder expectations to ensure consistent engagement and support in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Background of Research

A competitive education environment forces institutions to adapt and continuously enhance their performance. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices are among the strategies employed by organizations, including private higher education institutions, to improve their

image and reputation. According to Stobierski (2021), CSR represents the idea that businesses have a responsibility to the society in which they operate. In Malaysia, awareness of CSR began to emerge in the early 21st century, but it gained significant traction only in recent years. Wong (2019) highlights that sustainability reporting became mandatory for all publicly listed companies in Malaysia starting in 2016.

Historically, CSR was closely associated with large corporations due to the substantial resources required to implement and disclose CSR activities effectively. However, private higher education institutions have increasingly recognized CSR as a vital strategic element to address current trends and challenges (Ayu et al., 2024). By engaging in CSR, private higher education institutions can bring in several benefits, including enhanced brand reputation, stronger stakeholder relationships, and improved competitive performance. Unlike large firms, these institutions are often better positioned to build strong, personalized relationships with their students and the local community. Consequently, they can effectively leverage CSR initiatives to strengthen these relationships.

Modern consumers place significant importance on ethical and socially responsible practices, underscoring the need to understand how CSR influences stakeholder behaviors. Today's students and stakeholders are more aware of the societal and environmental implications of their choices, coupled with an expectation for institutions to champion socially responsible initiatives. For private higher education institutions, this shift represents an opportunity to distinguish themselves in a competitive market.

Examples of impactful CSR policies for private higher education institutions include sustainable practices, active community engagement, and adherence to ethical labor standards. These initiatives not only foster trust but also cultivate loyalty, which goes beyond repeat engagement to include advocacy and endorsements (Muhamad & Salleh, 2019).

Problem Statement

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a fundamental aspect of institutional operations, with increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners in education. While existing literature on CSR is extensive, its specific impact on customer loyalty within private higher education institutions remains underexplored. Many private higher education institutions face difficulties in identifying effective CSR strategies that can successfully boost customer loyalty while benefiting the institution overall. Lindner (2024) notes that 90% of multinational corporations engage in CSR initiatives, compared to only 67% of private higher education institutions. Furthermore, only a small proportion of these institutions assess the impact of their CSR activities on customer loyalty, particularly in the Klang Valley. Much of the existing research emphasizes large corporations, leaving a gap in understanding CSR dynamics within private higher education institutions.

This study aims to investigate the influence of CSR initiatives on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions, focusing on Generation Z in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights into the strategic implementation of CSR initiatives within private higher education institutions. Additionally, the study seeks to offer practical recommendations for enhancing institutional outcomes in the Klang Valley.

Research Objectives

To examine the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

Research Questions

i. To what extent does corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative influence customer loyalty in private higher education institutions?

ii. Are there specific demographic or institutional factors that moderate the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions?

iii. Which corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are most effective in building customer loyalty towards private higher education institutions?

Research Hypothesis

H1: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have a positive influence on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between ethical business practices and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

H3: Environmental initiatives positively influence customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

H4: Customer communication and transparency about corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives positively impact customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

Significance of Study

The knowledge of the effects of CSR on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions will be of great benefit to these outfits in a big way as identified below. It is thus imperative that private higher education institutions comprehend the effects of CSR concerning customer loyalty as a way of improving the overall bond between the institutions and their customers in the competitive market. This research will be useful to private higher education institutions since it will demonstrate how CSR activities can be strategically applied to strengthen customer commitment to an institution and ultimately increase profitability.

Specifically, in light of the changes and alterations driven by the pandemic crisis, especially with reference to the consumers' perceptions of institutions' CSR activities, this research will provide valuable insights for the strategizing of private higher education institutions. Understanding the factors influencing customer loyalty such as ethical business practices, environmental initiatives, and customer transparency would assist this research in

developing an appreciable appreciation from private higher education institutions of the applicability of CSR as a competitor acclivity that should be inseparable from their key business strategies.

Furthermore, the recommendations that are available in the result part of this research will help private higher education institutions to improve CSR strategies to achieve the company's goals of acquiring and maintaining a recognisable clientele. This shall in the long run help in the sustenance of these private higher education institutions as they continue growing in a more competitive environment. The knowledge derived from this study shall also help the policymakers to encourage the practice of CSR among private higher education institutions and thus achieve a strategic development of socially responsible institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is essential for the success and long-term sustainability of private higher education institutions. Studies emphasize that customer loyalty plays a crucial role in the success of private higher education institutions by driving higher sales, encouraging repeat business, and generating favorable word-of-mouth recommendations. Devoted patrons are more inclined to overlook sporadic errors and are less responsive to fluctuations in prices, so affording private higher education institutions a consistent source of income and a competitive advantage (Le, 2022).

The influence of customer loyalty for private higher education institutions is substantial, as it has a direct effect on the institution's performance. Customers who are loyal to a firm have a greater lifetime value, as they consistently frequent the same business over an extended period of time (Boateng, 2022). This not only enhances revenue but also diminishes the expenses linked to gaining new clients. In addition, devoted clients can act as brand ambassadors, endorsing the institution's offerings to others, creating more business prospects and expansion.

According to Le (2022), there is a favorable correlation between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions. Research suggest that implementing CSR practices might improve a company's image and reputation, hence resulting in heightened consumer loyalty. When private higher education institutions participate in social responsibility initiatives, such as promoting environmental sustainability, implementing ethical labour standards, and engaging in community involvement, it is more probable that customers will have a favorable opinion of the institutions. This can cultivate a feeling of confidence and benevolence, prompting clients to maintain their loyalty to the institutions (Boateng, 2022).

According to a study by Goh et al. (2017), it is indicated that customer loyalty in private higher education institutions has a varied impact due to several factors. Private higher education institutions rely heavily on fostering student loyalty to ensure their long-term sustainability and competitiveness. This is crucial for sustaining consistent revenues and preventing substantial volatility. Customers who choose to become permanent are likely to independently promote the institutions' services, which is more dependable than any form of

advertising. This underscores that PHEIs must prioritize enhancing the overall student experience to build lasting loyalty and maintain their edge in a competitive educational landscape.

Based on the study (Kyurova & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, 2021), customer loyalty is crucial for the sustained success of small and medium-sized firms, particularly in the context of globalization and heightened competition. Multiple studies conducted by different authors have demonstrated that loyalty is a crucial marketing tactic focused on customers and is directly influenced by their happiness. Customer loyalty is significantly impacted by product quality, pricing strategy, and effective communication between businesses and customers. The primary objective of strategic corporate marketing planning is to cultivate loyalty, which is essential for client retention. The implementation of a loyalty strategy in business operations is essential for boosting consumer engagement and encouraging repeat purchases, hence increasing overall product consumption, and stimulating a desire for additional purchases. When addressing the issue of customer loyalty, researchers examine the aspects that influence it and emphasize the following as the most significant: satisfaction, trust, commitment, customer value, and service quality.

Ethical Business Practices

Effective implementation of Quality Management Practices is essential for private higher education institutions due to the high level of competition they face in both local and international markets. Therefore, it is crucial for private higher education institutions to acknowledge Quality Management Practices as an essential strategic business instrument for developing a durable competitive advantage and organizational performance, especially in a difficult economic climate (Younus et al, 2022). According to Caldera et al. (2022), urgent attention in private higher education institutions is required to address the complicated global challenge of environmental degradation, as they collectively contribute significantly to global pollution. Private higher education institutions that are contemplating sustainability and reducing their environmental impact need to promptly change their strategy and operations. They should focus on adopting practices and systems that can restore the ecosystems necessary for the success of their institutions.

The implementation of ethical business practices in private higher education institutions significantly influences multiple facets of their operations and overall performance. Implementing and upholding ethical principles can greatly improve the reputation of a Higher Education Institution promoting trust and loyalty among customers, employees, and other individuals or groups with an interest in the institution. The establishment of trust is essential for cultivating enduring connections, which have the potential to foster continuous company expansion and steadfastness. Consumers are placing greater importance on ethical factors when deciding where to spend their money. Private higher education institutions that show a dedication to ethical practices can attract and maintain a loyal client base, which is crucial for generating steady revenue (Sagita et al., 2024).

According to Younus et al. (2022), private higher education institutions that operate ethically are also less prone to encountering legal problems, as ethical practices typically involve following laws and regulations. This can lead to a reduction in penalties, legal conflicts, and harm to the company's image, all of which can incur significant expenses and consume

valuable time. Moreover, adhering to ethical practices can enhance connections with stakeholders, partners, and the community, resulting in more advantageous terms, partnerships, and support.

From a market standpoint, private higher education institutions that prioritize ethical practices are in a more advantageous position to fulfil the increasing need for corporate responsibility. Investors and other financial stakeholders are progressively taking ethical practices into account when making decisions, and private higher education institutions that value ethics may experience greater ease in obtaining finance and investments. In addition, ethical practices can foster innovation, as organizations endeavour to satisfy elevated benchmarks and discover novel, sustainable methods of conducting business (Otto et al., 2023).

Environmental Initiatives

It is crucial to increase awareness regarding climate change, its consequences, and the steps that individuals can take. Advocacy endeavours possess the capability to exert influence on policymakers and industries, compelling them to accord higher priority to sustainable practices and allocate resources towards the development of environmentally friendly solutions. Tackling climate change is an intricate and pressing issue that needs a comprehensive strategy involving individuals, communities, corporations, and governments together to decrease emissions and construct a more sustainable future (Adhana & Rashmi, 2023).

According to Nygaard et al. (2022), it is clear that many environmental programs in private higher education institutions are seen as significant and are being included in institutional strategies due to the evolving educational landscape and the increasing focus on sustainable development and the impact of institution operations on the environment. Environmental efforts are crucial for private higher education institutions to undertake since they offer significant advantages for education, including cost savings, enhanced reputation, compliance with legislation, and improved relationships with external and internal stakeholders.

Examining the internal operations of private higher education institutions and their environmental initiatives can aid in identifying these effects. Successful sustainability institutional strategies encompass energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and sustainable procurement. Implementing these strategies can enable private higher education institutions to save costs and enhance their competitiveness in the region. In addition to benefiting the economy of the country where the institution is based, these initiatives also improve environmental factors such as reducing carbon emissions and resource usage. This, in turn, has a positive impact on the institution's reputation as it aligns with global changes and embraces environmental transformation (Gallo et al., 2023).

Moreover, adopting environmentally friendly practices can assist institutions in complying with legal requirements and adhering to environmental legislation, preventing disturbances, penalties, and other legal ramifications. Furthermore, it is worth noting that institutions that prioritize the establishment of an environmental management system see elevated levels of employee satisfaction and attendance. This is due to the perception that working for an ecologically conscious institution is considered respectable. Overall, the choice to implement environmental initiatives is advantageous for private higher education institutions

as it helps them construct a sustainable institutional model that is suitable for long-term growth, stability, and has a positive impact on the environment (Nygaard et al., 2022).

Customer Communication and Transparency about CSR

According to Zuo et al. (2022), currently, firms can expand and attract more customers by promoting customer citizenship behaviour among their consumers. Due to heightened customer awareness of companies' social and environmental responsibilities, private higher education institutions are implementing appropriate measures to enhance their business innovation and corporate social responsibility. On the contrary, businesses require a strong customer base to not only generate revenue but also to obtain valuable information, feedback, and improvement suggestions. This enables firms to enhance their performance and deliver superior results. Thus, according to Zuo et al. (2022), it is concluded that in order for a corporation to increase its client base, it must exhibit a greater degree of business innovation and a higher level of ethical and social responsibility towards society. This results in the augmentation of the company's corporate reputation and enhancement of its brand image in the market. Conversely, when customers believe an institution to have a strong reputation, it enhances their willingness to engage in positive behaviours. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the significance of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Informing consumers about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its associated activities is a beneficial practice that enhances the credibility of an institution. CSR activities need a dedication to ethical standards that are extensively studied for their influence on customer choices. When private higher education institutions effectively convey these initiatives, it enhances their reputation (Geng et al., 2022). By adopting corporate social responsibility, private higher education institutions can establish themselves as proactive contributors to improving society. They can tackle urgent environmental issues and promote responsible decision-making. Private higher education institutions may bolster their brand's credibility and make a positive impact on society through these acts.

According to Yu et al. (2022), customer engagement in brand environmental responsibility is crucial for firms and consumers to collaboratively generate value. Corporate environmental responsibility encompasses a comprehensive process that includes goal setting, strategic planning, measuring actions, disclosing information, and communicating with stakeholders. It also involves building a brand based on green and low-carbon management. This process emphasizes the importance of consumer participation in order to collaboratively create value for sustainable development. If consumers do not connect with the brand's environmental responsibility efforts and fail to endorse corporate environmental responsibility objectives, all attempts may be futile (Al et al. 2023).
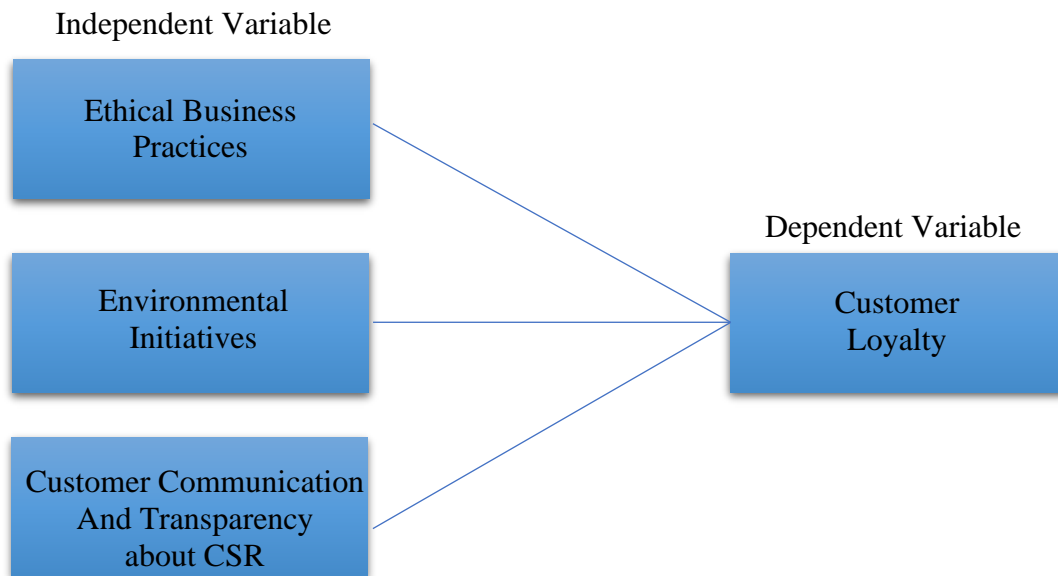
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: The research conceptual framework on "The influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions in Klang Valley, Malaysia."

METHODOLOGY

This study will utilize a quantitative research methodology. Quantitative research relies on verifiable data that can be measured or represented using numbers. The term "statistics" refers to the core approaches used to analyse numerical data. Statistical techniques involve several aspects such as the arrangement, examination, understanding, and demonstration of numerical data. Quantitative research, as described by Mehrad and Tahriri (2019), is based on deductive reasoning, which follows a logical development from the general to the specific. This study aims to examine the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions among generation Z in Klang Valley, Malaysia. A questionnaire will be employed in this investigation. Based on the data from DOSM (2024), Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1998 and 2010, comprises 29% of Malaysia's population, which is roughly 9,949,472 people, whereby the Gen Z population is estimated to be 2,500,380 in Klang Valley, Malaysia.

The sample size in a research study refers to the total number of participants. It is often separated into demographic categories, such as age, gender, and geography, to ensure that the sample accurately represents the entire population. Estimating an appropriate sample size is a critical component of statistical analysis (Kibuacha, 2021). Based on the data provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample for this survey will consist of 384 respondents.

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

(Source: Krejcie and Morgan,1970)

Figure 2: Krejcie and Morgan Table

The data gathering methodology used in this study will involve the application of probability sampling. Probability sampling methods are commonly acknowledged as the most efficient strategy in sampling methodology because they increase the potential to generalize study findings to the target population. Probability sampling is a method that guarantees every individual in a specific group has an equal chance of being selected as a participant in a study (Acharya et al., 2013). In this study, data will be collected by the distribution of questionnaires using the approach of simple random sampling.

The research will be done utilising a questionnaire as the primary method of data collection, which will be provided to the participants. The provided information is suggestive of the original data. As stated by Surbhi (2020), primary data is information that is gathered directly by the researcher, whereas secondary data is information that has been previously acquired or produced by other individuals or organizations. The ongoing investigation will employ a questionnaire as the primary method of data collection, which will be provided to the participants. The provided information is suggestive of primary data. As stated by Surbhi (2020), primary data is information acquired directly by the researcher, whereas secondary data is pre-existing content received or generated by others.

The research will be carried out using a questionnaire created using Google Forms. The choice of this instrument was made considering its cost-effectiveness, ready availability, and ecological friendliness. A questionnaire is a frequently used research instrument designed to collect data from a group of individuals. A questionnaire often consists of a series of questions that include both closed- and open-ended formats (Survey Planet, 2022). An online survey will be administered to a representative sample of 384 individuals who are from Generation Z. The survey will be distributed through Course Networking (CN), email, and various social media platforms including WhatsApp, X.com (formerly known as Twitter), and Instagram.

The questionnaire for this study incorporates modified items from prior research. The questionnaire is segmented into five components. Section A will serve as the screening question. The purpose of this requirement is to verify that the participants are Gen Z, past,

present or potential private higher education institutions' customers, and live in the Klang Valley region. The study specifically targets Gen Z population in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Section B will consist of the demographic information of the respondents, including their gender, age, education level, occupation, and monthly income. Section C and Section D will contain multiple statements pertaining to the dependent variable and the independent variables. Respondents will be required to provide their answers utilizing the Likert Scale Method. The Likert scale is a frequently used measuring instrument that consists of a range of either five or seven points. The goal of this tool is to enable folks to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a certain statement.

Data Analysis

To test working hypothesis about the effects of CSR ventures on customer loyalty within the private higher education institutions, the data for this study were subjected to several statistical tools. The main research data analysis software was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) that is known for its efficiency when it comes to data analysis of survey results. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to analyse the reliability of the scales, and the Descriptive Statistics and Correlation analyses were used to measure the degree and nature of the relationship that existed between pairs of variables and to test the study's hypotheses. Such statistical tools offer an overall picture of the data and are handy in coming up with conclusion based on the relationship of CSR with customer loyalty.

Descriptive Analysis

Exploratory data analysis was used to create a profile of main features of the respondents to the survey conducted amongst 405 participants. The findings of this study revealed the respondent's demographic characteristics and their general perception of CSR programmes and customer loyalty. The respondents' views were measured by the Likert Scale, which reflects the level of the latter's consensus in a set of statements regarding CSR and customer loyalty on the scale from 1 to 5 – strongly disagree and, correspondingly, strongly agree. Subsequently, the mean scores for each of the variables were computed where less than 3 depicted low agreement, 3 to 4 moderate agreement and more than 4 depicted high agreement. By examining general patterns in the provided data, this analysis contributed to the understanding of the respondents' attitudes towards CSR programs and their effect on customer retention.

Reliability Test

Table 3.1 Internal Consistency based on Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent (High-stakes testing)
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good (Low-stakes testing)
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

In as much as the structural validity of the survey data was ascertained through confirmatory factor analysis, reliability testing was also conducted through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This statistical measure gives the extent of internal consistency of the questionnaire; that is, whether the items in the various scales are measuring the same construct in this study, for achieving the reliability of the data, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0. Larger than or equal to 70 showed that the survey instrument is reliable according to the scale used for females answer responses larger than or equal to 70 were acceptable within the results. It was discovered that all the variables analysed possessed a Cronbach's Alpha figure above the prospective value, the uniqueness of results thus being corroborated. If any of the variables had presented an Alpha value less than 0. 70, it would have suggested that certain items should be modified or deleted in order to increase the reliability of the actual scale.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3.2: Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

< 0.2	Very weak relationship
0.2 – 0.4	Weak relationship
0.4 – 0.6	Moderate relationship
0.6 – 0.8	Strong relationship
> 0.8	Very strong relationship

The correlation analysis was carried out with a view of establishing the nature and extent of the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer loyalty. The degree of this relationship was determined using Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation that ranges from -1 to + 1. Positive correlation means that if one variable goes up, the other also goes up while negative means that if one goes up, the other goes down. Further, in order to understand the nature and strength of the link between the variable of interest (CSR initiatives) and the key outcome variable (customer loyalty), the correlation coefficients were tested to check whether the relationship obtained is statistically significant. The significance level during the analysis was set at the 2-tail and thus a p-value of less than 0. However, the correlation coefficient value of 0.5 clearly suggests a fairly strong positive relationship. The correlation findings helped to determine the

nature of the relationships between the evaluated variables, which indicates the presence of systematic relationships between them.

Regression Analysis

The present study therefore utilized multiple regression analysis to examine the impact of CSR activities on customers. It also helps to determine the relationship between the fluctuations of one or several independent variables (CSR initiatives) and the dependent variable (customer loyalty) while excluding the influence of other factors, and that's why this technique can be employed. Applying the above regression model, it is learned that which particular CSR projects are most effective at influencing customers' loyalty. The obtained findings were described and analyzed using the p-value, with a significance level of 0.05 employed to understand the significance of each factor obtained from the respondents. A p-value ≤ 0.001 is considered highly statistically significant, but current research standards accept values up to 0.05 as statistically significant. A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates a lack of significant impact. The findings were central to improving the understanding of the CSR activities being performed by the private higher education institutions, and what drives customer loyalty amongst them.

Normality Test

Yet, a normality test was performed to check such a hypothesis in order to justify the usage of the correlation and regression analyses, that require records to meet certain conditions. This test is very crucial in ascertaining that the sample data is actually from a population that is normally distributed. In this study, the skewness and kurtosis of the data were analysed, with skewness values between the range of -3 and +3 were taken to have a normal distribution. The normality test further supported the fact that the variables under study were normal, implying that the findings of the specified analysis using parametric statistics were acceptable. This step was done in order to confirm the assumptions that have been made concerning the statistical tools used on this investigation with the aim of ascertaining the credibility of the research results.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In this section, tests we conducted to examine theories related to CSR activities and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions. We used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis focusing on information and key variables of the study. Descriptive analysis was utilized to outline the characteristics of the collected data allowing us to describe respondents' profiles and attitudes toward CSR initiatives and customer loyalty. The survey factors were also assessed for consistency to ensure the reliability of the gathered data. Additionally, Multiple Linear Regression, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and Normality tests were employed to evaluate relationships between dependent variables. These analyses helped uncover patterns and connections that are thoroughly discussed in this chapter to assess the impact of CSR policies on customer loyalty, in private higher education institutions.

Demographic Profile

Throughout the distributed questionnaire, respondents receive screening to ensure that their responses are considered authentic only if they meet the following criteria:

a) Residing in Klang Valley
b) Part of Gen Z

4.1.1 Do you reside in Klang Valley

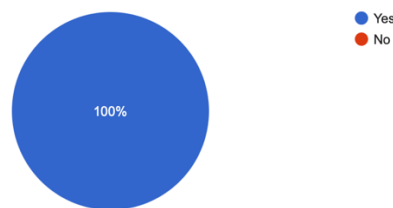**Table 4.1: Do you reside in Klang Valley**

Figure 4.1: Do you reside in Klang Valley Pie Chart

Since this research focuses on the Klang Valley, the participants must indicate their residential region. According to the data presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 above, 405 respondents, which accounts for 100% of the total, reside in the Klang Valley.

4.1.2 Are you Gen Z?

Table 4.2: Are you Gen Z?

Screening Q2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	406	100.0	100.0	100.0

Are you Gen Z?
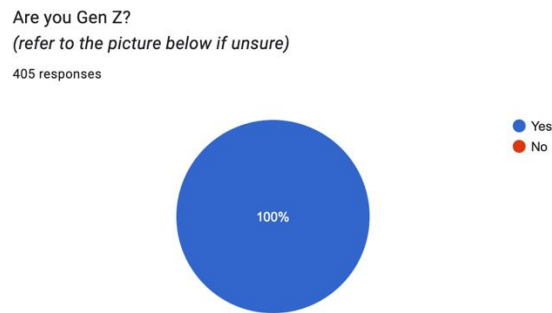*(refer to the picture below if unsure)*
405 responses

Figure 4.2: Are you Gen Z Pie Chart

Since the research is focused on individuals who are Gen Z, the respondents are asked to indicate whether or not they are. According to the data presented in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 above, 405 respondents, accounting for 100% of the total, are Gen Z.

4.1.3 Respondents' Gender

Table 4.3: Respondents' Gender

Gender

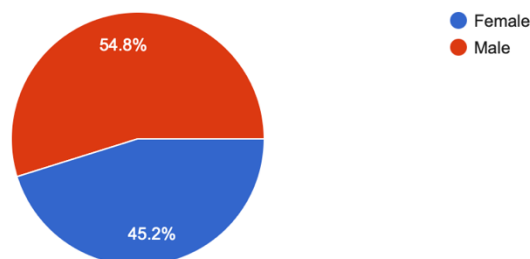|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	183	45.1	45.1	45.1
	Male	223	54.9	54.9	100.0
	Total	406	100.0	100.0	

What is your gender?
405 responses

Figure 4.3: Respondents' Gender Pie Chart

Within the demographic profile area, responders must indicate their gender. The gender of the respondents in this study work is depicted in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 above. The findings demonstrate that 223 (54.8%) of the 405 participants are male, while the remaining 183 (45.2%) are female. The number of male respondents somewhat exceeds the number of female respondents in total.

4.1.4 Respondents' Age Range

Table 4.4: Respondents' Age Range

Age

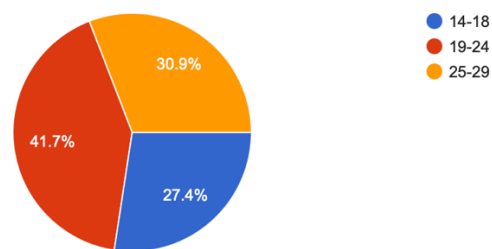|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14–18	111	27.3	27.3	27.3
	19–24	170	41.9	41.9	69.2
	25–29	125	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	406	100.0	100.0	

How old are you?

405 responses

Figure 4.4: Respondents' Age Range Pie Chart

Within the demographic profile area, responders must indicate their age. The age of the respondents collected is displayed in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4 above. The age groupings have been categorised into three distinct groups. The applicable age ranges are under 29, 14-18, 19-24, and 25-29. Based on the gathered data, 170 individuals (41.7% of the total respondents) belong to the age bracket of 19 to 24, establishing it as the age range with the highest number of participants. Subsequently, 125 individuals (30.9% of the total respondents) are into the age range of 25-29, while 111 respondents (37.4%) are aged between 14 and 18.

4.1.5 Respondents' Education Level

Table 4.5: Respondents' education level

Education Level

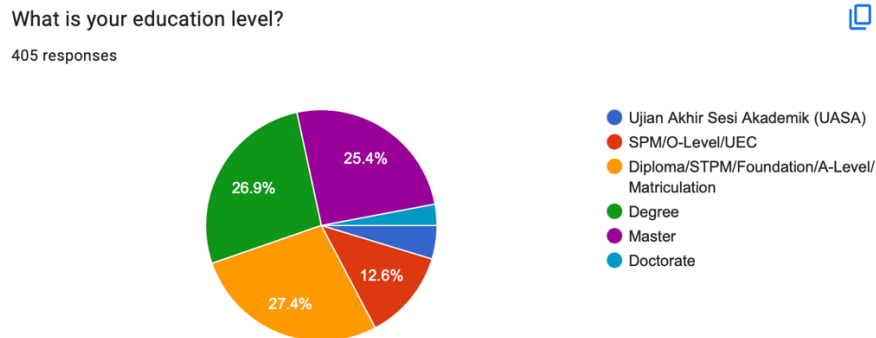|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Degree	109	26.8	26.8	26.8
	Diploma/STPM/Foundation/A–Level/Matriculation	112	27.6	27.6	54.4
	Doctorate	12	3.0	3.0	57.4
	Master	103	25.4	25.4	82.8
	SPM/O–Level/UEC	51	12.6	12.6	95.3
	Ujian Akhir Sesi Akademik (UASA)	19	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	406	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.5: Respondents' education level Pie Chart

In the demographic profile section, respondents are asked to indicate their education level. Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5 display the education level of the respondents. This question includes six categories, with education level UASA to PhD. Based on the data collected, the majority of respondents (112 or 27.4%) have studied Diploma and/or its equivalent. Additionally, 109 respondents (26.9%) have studied up to Degree. The next highest category is respondents with Masters, accounting for 103 respondents (25.4%). 51 respondents (12.6%) have finished SPM or its equivalent. Only 19 respondents (4.7%) have done UASA, followed by 12 respondents (3%) who have done Doctorate (PhD).

4.1.6 Respondents' Occupation

Table 4.6: Respondents' occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Other	40	9.9	9.9	9.9
	Student	366	90.1	90.1	100.0
	Total	406	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.6: Respondents' occupation Pie Chart
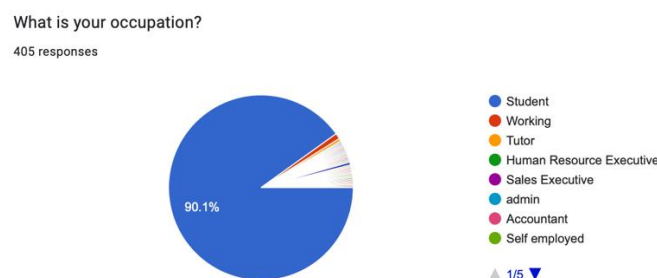
As for the demographic profile, respondent was asked for their occupation to indicate whether they are students or working adults. According to the data presented in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.6 above, 366 respondents, accounting for 90.1% of the total, are students, whereas 40 respondents, representing 9.9% of the total, are working adults, self-employed and/or business owners.

4.1.7 Respondents' Monthly Income

Table 4.7: Respondents' Monthly Income

Monthly Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	RM 1,000 – RM 1,999	118	29.1	29.1	29.1
	RM 2,000 – RM 2,999	130	32.0	32.0	61.1
	RM 3,000 & Above	63	15.5	15.5	76.6
	RM 500 – RM 999	95	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	406	100.0	100.0	

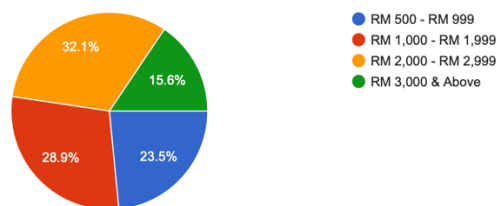What is your average monthly income?

405 responses

Figure 4.7: Respondents' Monthly Income Pie Chart

In the demographic profile section, respondents were asked to indicate their monthly income. Table 4.7 and Figure 4.7 display the respondents' monthly income. This question includes four categories, with salaries ranging from RM 500 to above RM 3,000. Based on the data collected, the majority of respondents (130 or 32.1%) have an income from RM2,000 to RM2,999. Additionally, 118 respondents (28.9%) have an income between RM1,000 and RM 1,999. The next highest category is respondents with salaries ranging from RM 500 to RM 999, accounting for 95 respondents (23.5%). Only 63 respondents (15.6%) have an income above RM3,000.

Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's Alpha

The table provided presents the statistical data for the dependent and independent variables in the context of reliability.

Table 4.8: Summary of Reliability Test

Variables	No of Items	Code	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
Ethical Business Practices	5	IV1	**0.835**	GOOD
Environmental Initiatives	5	IV2	**0.826**	GOOD
Customer Communication and Transparency about CSR	5	IV3	**0.832**	GOOD
Customer Loyalty towards PHEIs	6	DV	**0.818**	GOOD

According to Table 4.8, Cronbach's Alpha for Customer Loyalty towards private higher education institutions' CSR actions is 0.818. The reliability coefficients of the scale ranged from 0.7810 to 0.810, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The dependability of the independent variables, ethical business practices, environmental initiatives, and consumer communication and transparency regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) is measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which yields values of 0.835, 0.826, and 0.832, respectively. All the independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) in this study have a Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.70. This indicates that the measuring items used to assess the idea are reliable and valid since the validity indices for the total number of items are 0.70. It is worth noting that none of the variables acquired a Cronbach's Alpha value below 0.70. This indicates that no modifications are necessary for the instruments used to fulfil the study data collection tools, as they are deemed dependable.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

The diagrams below illustrate the correlation between the dependent variable and the independent variable.

4.3.1 Correlation between Ethical Business Practices and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.9: Result of Ethical Business Practices and Customer Loyalty towards CSR

Correlations

		IV1	DV
IV1	Pearson Correlation	1	.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	362	362
DV	Pearson Correlation	.587**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	362	362

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.9 shows a strong positive correlation of 0.587 between ethical business practices and customer loyalty towards corporate social responsibility (CSR). This indicates that 58.7% of consumer loyalty towards private higher education institutions is influenced by the value of 0.587 ethical business practices, while the remaining 41.3% is influenced by other factors. The 2-tailed significance, or p-value, is less than 0.001, indicating that the correlation is extremely significant. This result is lower than the often used threshold of 0.05. The data obtained indicates a strong correlation between ethical business practices and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions, highlighting the significant impact of ethical practices on customer loyalty. Therefore, the null hypothesis is disproven while the alternative hypothesis is supported in this study.

H01: There is a significant negative relationship between ethical business practices and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

HA1: There is a significant positive relationship between ethical business practices and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

4.3.2 Correlation between Environmental Initiatives and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.10: Result of Environmental Initiatives and Customer Loyalty

Correlations

		IV2	DV
IV2	Pearson Correlation	1	.655**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	362	362
DV	Pearson Correlation	.655**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	362	362

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the data in Table 4.10, there is a strong positive relationship of 0.655 between environmental initiatives and customer loyalty towards private higher education institutions. The environmental effort contributes 0.587 to consumer loyalty towards private higher education institutions, accounting for 65.5% of the overall impact. The remaining 34.5% is influenced by other factors. The 2-tailed significance, or p-value, is less than 0.001, indicating that the correlation is extremely significant. This result is lower than the often used threshold of 0.05. According to the gathered data, there is a strong correlation between environmental initiatives and consumer loyalty towards private higher education institutions. Environmental initiatives have a significant impact on customer loyalty, resulting in a positive association between the two. Therefore, the null hypothesis is refuted and the alternative hypothesis is supported in this study.

H01: Environmental initiatives negatively influence customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

HA1: Environmental initiatives positively influence customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

4.3.3 Correlation between Customer Communication and Transparency about CSR and Customer Loyalty

Table 4.11: Result of Customer Communication and Transparency about CSR and Customer Loyalty

Correlations

		IV3	DV
IV3	Pearson Correlation	1	.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	362	362
DV	Pearson Correlation	.729**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	362	362

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the data in Table 4.11, there is a strong positive relationship of 0.729 between customer communication and transparency regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR), and customer loyalty towards private higher education institutions. According to the data, 72.9% of customer loyalty towards private higher education institutions is influenced by customer communication and transparency regarding CSR, while the remaining 27.9% is influenced by other aspects. The 2-tailed significance, or p-value, has a value of less than 0.001, which is lower than the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the correlation is very significant. The data collected indicates that customer communication and transparency regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR) have a significant impact on consumer loyalty towards private higher education institutions. This suggests a positive correlation between customer communication, transparency about CSR, and customer loyalty towards private higher education institutions. Therefore, the null hypothesis is disproven while the alternative hypothesis is supported in this study.

H01: Customer communication and transparency about corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives negatively impact customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

HA1: Customer communication and transparency about corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives positively impact customer loyalty in private higher education institutions.

Multiple Linear regression

Table 4.12 Model Summary of Multiple Linear Regression

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.765[a]	.586	.582	.35615	.586	168.643	3	358	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), IV3, IV1, IV2

The provided model summary assesses the degree of correlation between the independent factors and the dependent variable. The R square value quantifies the degree to which the predictor factors impact the variability of the outcomes in this study. Based on the data shown in Table 4.12, the correlation coefficient (R value) is 0.765, suggesting a robust positive association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In addition, the R Square value is 0.586, indicating that 58.6% of the independent variables are correlated with the dependent variable. Future research could go into the remaining 41.4% of unknown variables.

ANOVA

Table 4.13 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	64.175	3	21.392	168.643	<,001[b]
	Residual	45.411	358	.127		
	Total	109.586	361			

a. Dependent Variable: DV

b. Predictors: (Constant), IV3, IV1, IV2

The F-statistic, which is associated with the p-value, is reported as the result of the ANOVA test, which assesses the overall significance of the model. The results presented in Table 4.13 indicate that the model used in this research is suitable, as evidenced by the F-value at 168.643 and the significance level of 0.000. The conceptual framework is applicable for comprehending the correlation between the independent components and dependent variables in this study due to the significance level being below 0.05. It is deemed suitable for analysis as a consequence.

Normality Test

An illustration of the normal distribution for the dependent variable and the independent variables can be found in the following diagrams.

Table 4.14: Normality test

Descriptive Statistics

	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Mean Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Skewness Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Kurtosis Std. Error
I consider my relationship with PHEIs as a loyal relationship between myself and PHEIs.	362	1	5	3.93	.036	.687	-.326	.128	.481	.256
I feel satisfied choosing the same Private Higher Education Institution.	362	2	5	3.71	.040	.761	-.059	.128	-.412	.256
I think studying at Private Higher Education Institutions is enjoyable.	362	1	5	3.96	.038	.732	-.579	.128	.973	.256
I intend to keep choosing my go-to Private Higher Education Institution.	362	1	5	4.11	.037	.713	-.579	.128	.676	.256
If I could do it over again, I'd still choose Private Higher Education Institutions.	362	1	5	3.98	.036	.690	-.538	.128	.993	.256
I will encourage my friends and relatives to choose my favourite Private Higher Education Institutions.	362	2	5	3.98	.035	.665	-.146	.128	-.235	.256
I think it is important to have ethical business practices.	362	2	5	4.01	.034	.642	-.070	.128	-.360	.256
I feel business ethics should only be determined by law.	362	2	5	3.98	.037	.708	-.255	.128	-.219	.256
I feel business ethics is based in individual's morals only.	362	1	5	4.04	.037	.697	-.447	.128	.586	.256
I think ethical business practices is a reason for me to continuously choose PHEIs.	362	2	5	4.14	.034	.651	-.327	.128	.048	.256
I feel ethical business practices contributes my loyalty towards PHLIs.	362	1	5	3.76	.039	.745	-.138	.128	.128	.256
I feel good when I choose PHEIs that organises environmental initiatives.	362	1	5	3.71	.044	.836	-.097	.128	-.486	.256
I feel satisfied when my favourite PHEIs contributes to environmental initiatives.	362	2	5	3.97	.035	.657	-.030	.128	-.498	.256
I think it is important to participate on environmental initiatives.	362	2	5	4.04	.034	.650	-.278	.128	.189	.256
As a Gen Z, I feel my generation is more eco-conscious.	362	2	5	4.02	.034	.651	-.262	.128	.158	.256
I think environmental initiatives keep me loyal to one PHEI.	362	1	5	3.86	.035	.667	-.179	.128	.328	.256
I feel PHEIs need to give importance to customer feedback.	362	2	5	3.93	.036	.678	-.072	.128	-.411	.256
I feel satisfied with Private Higher Education Institutions giving importance to Corporate Social Responsibility.	362	2	5	3.99	.035	.662	-.052	.128	-.527	.256
I feel I can see how PHEIs are trying to be as transparent they can be about CSR.	362	2	5	3.92	.038	.732	-.338	.128	-.043	.256
Valid N (listwise)	362									

(Source: Primary data)

The values in Table 4.14 were obtained using the normality test. Descriptive statistics are utilised in research to concisely explain the research findings by characterising them. The study encompassed a total of 485 participants. According to Wulandari (2018), if the sample size is

more than 300, a skewness value over 2 and a kurtosis value higher than 7 can be utilised as indications to identify severe non-normality. There are a total of three independent variables (IV) and one dependent variable (DV). Using the 385 sets of valid data in the collection, a normality test was conducted on a total of 19 items. The data presented in Table 4.14 shows that out of the 29 items, the lowest skewness value was -0.579, while the highest skewness value was -0.030. Furthermore, the minimum kurtosis value observed was -0.527, and the maximum kurtosis value was 0.993. Given that both the skewness and kurtosis values are within the acceptable range, the collected data can be categorised as normally distributed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In addition to analyzing the significant relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables, the purpose of this research is to investigate the impact that corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities have on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley. According to the hypothesis, elements like customer communication, environmental initiatives, ethical business practices, and transparency about corporate social responsibility all have a beneficial impact on consumer loyalty. A significant number of people who are in favor of CSR programs will profit from this research. Additionally, private higher education institutions will benefit from the study because it will assist them in comprehending the desires of their clients, thereby enabling them to maintain and expand their customer base. There was a total of 405 people who responded to the survey, all of whom live in the Klang Valley area.

The questionnaire was circulated over social media using a Google Form. For the purpose of carrying out this research on a quantitative basis, this was utilized. For the purpose of generating the tests and results that are required to support the hypothesis of the study, it was determined that the data from 405 responses were valid for use in the process of data collecting from the participants. Following that, analytical procedures such as the Descriptive Analysis, the Reliability Test, the Normality Test, Pearson's Correlation Analysis, and the Linear Regression Analysis were utilized to examine the data. The findings, which were accepted because the p-value was less than 0.05, demonstrated that five out of the five hypotheses were supported. Furthermore, the findings were accepted. To summarize, the four independent variables exhibit a positive association, with the variables having an influence. Customer loyalty among private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley met both the research question and the research purpose.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that a comprehensive approach is essential for private higher education institutions to effectively leverage CSR initiatives to enhance customer loyalty. The data collected from a survey of 405 respondents provides valuable insights into customer perceptions and the impact of CSR activities. By understanding these responses, private higher education institutions can craft CSR strategies that resonate with their customer base. Specifically, focusing on environmental sustainability, community involvement, and transparent communication can significantly bolster customer loyalty. Implementing eco-friendly practices, actively engaging in community support, and maintaining clear communication about CSR efforts will not only meet customer expectations but also contribute positively to society. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of CSR strategies to align with evolving customer values and preferences. By doing so, private higher education institutions can ensure long-term

success and sustainability. Overall, fostering customer loyalty through targeted CSR initiatives is an ongoing journey that requires dedication and a genuine commitment to social and environmental responsibilities.

Limitations of the study

However, it is also necessary to point out some of the study limitations in regard to the examination of the connection between CSR activities and customer loyalty in private higher education institutions. Firstly, the research focuses on a particular area, which means that its results cannot be generalized to other regions or countries. Since the extent of cultural, economic, and social differences was evident across different regions, they may affect CSR implementation, and therefore, the results may not generalize to other areas. Also, the study utilizes the survey method, which is based on the respondents' self-report data, which could be influenced by social desirability or recall bias. Also, the study mainly considers the aspect of CSR from the customer's end viewpoint which may leave out other critical views such as employee engagement in CSR activities or impacts of other external players. Last but not least, the cross-sectional study design restricts the possibility of gauging the accumulated effects of CSR on customer loyalty keeping in view the fact that the collected data reflect only a specific time period and not the changes over a period of time. The following findings might be the focus of future research to mitigate the limitations of this study: first, incorporating data collected across a larger geographical area may shed more light on CSR's impact on customer loyalty in private higher education institutions than the current study's sample of only one state in Malaysia; second, future research can employ a longitudinal design to examine the impact of CSR on customer loyalty over a longer period; third, as the current study relied on the customers' survey data, future research could benefit from incorporating perspectives from other stakeholders, such as employees, faculty members, and external partners, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the broader impacts of CSR activities in private higher education institutions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations could therefore be made based on the research findings and the analysis related to CSR and customer loyalty among private higher education institutions: first, it is necessary to underline that private higher education institutions should exercise a policy of openness and provide customers with clear information about the institution's activities and CSR projects. This can be realized by the use of appropriate communication and customer contact points on social media platforms and the institution's websites to create and enhance the public perception of the institution hence increasing the level of trust by the customers. Also, private higher education institutions must see CSR in a way that aligns its goals with the values that customers expect from it. Hitting directly the hearts and souls of the customers, by addressing local community needs or worldwide problems customers understand can make the ideas of loyalty paramount. In addition, it is suggested that private higher education institutions should engage in the re-evaluation of their CSR strategies more frequently to address alterations in the expectations of consumers as well as other relevant changes. Perhaps this would involve the development of occasional customer surveys or feedback meetings to assess the CSR effects and modifications that may be needed.

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