



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONTEXT

Aniebiet Etuk¹, Joseph A. Anyadighibe², Edim Eka James²
and Ekpe Bassey Bassey²

¹Department of Marketing, Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria

²Department of Marketing, University of Calabar, Nigeria

Email: jamesedim@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

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ABSTRACT: *This study centered on corporate social responsibility and customer patronage in the telecommunications context. It was conducted to examine the effects of community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services. The study adopted survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from 246 telecommunication service subscribers. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics while hypotheses testing was carried out using multiple linear regression. The findings of the study revealed that corporate philanthropy ($\beta = .444$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) had the highest significant positive influence on customer patronage of telecommunication services, followed in order of relative importance by environmental responsibility ($\beta = .384$; $p\text{-value} = 0.003 < 0.05$), community development ($\beta = .352$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$), ethical responsibility ($\beta = .301$; $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$) and legal responsibility ($\beta = .210$; $p\text{-value} = 0.001 < 0.05$). On the basis of these findings, therefore, the study provided practical implications for possible implementation.*

KEYWORDS: Corporate social responsibility, Customer patronage, Telecommunications, Social exchange theory



INTRODUCTION

Every business exists within an environment or society to which it owes certain social responsibilities, that if consistently fulfilled can improve its corporate image and long-term sales performance (Akhmetshin, Polyanskaya, Prodanova & Zhiltsov, 2017). Barnett (2019) maintained that even though, business activities have resulted in an improved standard of living, job creation, economic growth, and wealth creation in the society, companies have also made negative impacts on the environment such as pollution, environmental degradation, disregard for legal legislations, carbon emissions, among other ills. This reality has led business leaders, industry practitioners, governments and society generally to hold businesses to higher standards by requiring them to fulfil certain obligations or responsibilities to the society in which they operate, thereby birthing the concept of corporate social responsibility (Dent & Randall, 2020). According to Ioannou and Serafeim (2015), corporate social responsibility is a corporation's initiatives aimed at assessing and taking responsibility for the impact of its operations and activities on environmental and social wellbeing by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. It generally applies to efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environmental protection groups. The emergence of the concept of corporate social responsibility has tremendously changed the way organisations do business and refocused their attention from merely pursuing profit at the potential detriment of society to an approach that considers the adverse effects of business operations on society (Carroll, 2015). As a consequence, some business organisations today are striving to contribute positively to society in such a way that society benefits as business organisations prosper. Social responsibility requires business organisations to preserve, protect and improve the environment in which they operate because their organisational success depends on the continued existence and sustainability of the environment (Hofman, Moon & Wu, 2017).

The necessity of the practice of corporate social responsibility came to the fore when a survey report released by Forbes (2017) revealed that 89 percent of the participants of the survey would prefer to patronize and do business with companies that are perceived to be socially responsible than those that are not. Another survey report by Business Insights (2019) projected that by 2025, only companies committed to environmental sustainability will dominate the business world as world leaders and communities move closer toward the goal of reducing carbon emissions and rolling back the spectre of climate change. This speaks to the increasing importance attached to the practice of corporate social responsibility by today's consumers. The practise of corporate social responsibility is gradually gaining traction in Nigeria as several Nigerian companies are striving to live up to their social responsibilities so as to project themselves in a positive light before the public (Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2019). This was a fact evident during the COVID-19 induced total lockdown of the Nigerian society in which companies across industries engaged in corporate philanthropy, and community development initiatives such as donations of palliative and empower materials to Nigerian communities to cushion the adverse impacts of the pandemic (African Business, 2020). Also, Usman and Amran (2015) observe that during times of natural disasters such as floods and infernos on a massive scale, Nigerian companies in collaboration with government agencies such as the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), have lived up to their responsibilities by donating relief materials, healthcare services, food, clothing and cash to local community residents and leaders to enable them to rebuild. Telecommunications companies such as MTN, have also been observed engaging in some corporate social responsibility initiatives in Nigeria. For instance, in 2015, the MTN Foundation offered free eye consultancy and treatment services



to 6000 patients in Ondo State alone. During the first phase of the initiative, a total of 33,364 patients in Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, Abia, Delta and Osun states were treated for cataracts and other eye diseases (Afolabi, 2015).

This study was a fact-finding survey that sought to determine the effect of telecommunication companies' involvement in corporate social responsibility initiatives on customer patronage of their offerings. An objective assessment of the Nigerian telecommunications industry reveals that in 2020, under its "What Can We Do Together (WCWDT)" initiative, MTN Foundation has upgraded, commissioned and handed over a number of projects, including the provision of school learning materials, the upgrading of primary healthcare centres, and the installation of pipe-borne water facilities (MTN, 2020). Geared towards developing grassroots communities through the nominations by its subscribers, WCWDT has, since its launch in 2017, seen over 10 million Nigerians in 347 local government areas benefit from various interventions, with 40 communities receiving 500KVA transformers and another 40 communities receiving 650ft boreholes (MTN, 2020). This information reveals that the practice of corporate social responsibility is not a new phenomenon to most telecommunication companies in Nigeria, as these companies have sought to project themselves as socially responsible by engaging in various corporate social responsibility programmes across various Nigerian communities. However, the fundamental core of this study was to determine whether or not the implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives by telecommunications companies in Nigeria has significantly enhanced customer patronage of their services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study is the social exchange theory propounded by Homans (1961). The social exchange theory is rooted in the rational choice theory, which sees human behaviour as being guided by the hedonistic principle or pleasure-seeking. The basic premise of the theory is that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs (Homans, 1961). According to the social exchange theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships before initiating relationships with each other. In that sense, if the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship; but if the rewards outweigh the risks, they will become committed to the relationship in the long run (Homans, 1961). The theory suggests that most relationships are made up of a certain amount of give-and-take, but this does not mean that they are always equal. The social exchange suggests that it is the valuing of the benefits and costs of each relationship that determine whether or not we choose to continue a social association. The relevance of the social exchange theory to this study is that it suggests that customer patronage of telecommunications companies derives from a social exchange relationship between companies and customers. The theory assumes that a positive relationship resulting in customer patronage of telecommunications products and services will exist if the rewards of such a relationship outweigh the costs during a cost-benefit analysis done by customers. In the event where the costs of maintaining a business relationship with telecommunications companies are higher than benefits, the theory suggests that customers would terminate or abandon such a relationship, thereby leading to a decline in customer patronage. Conversely, if the rewards obtainable from such a relationship outweigh the costs,



then customers would be committed to long-term relationships with telecommunications companies. Furthermore, the theory suggests that telecommunications companies may improve the rewards offered to customers in the exchange relationship if they consistently fulfil their corporate social responsibilities (including community involvement, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility, ethical responsibility and corporate philanthropy). That way, customers would develop positive perceptions of telecommunications companies, believing that the rewards of patronizing their products and services will outweigh the costs, thereby encouraging customers to increase their patronage of telecommunications products and services.

Community development and customer patronage

Community development is the sustained efforts of a firm aimed at bringing positive development and growth to the community in which the firm operates (Henry & Karl, 2018). It entails a situation in which a firm engages in several efforts and initiatives that preserve its business environment and facilitate the growth and sustainability of its business environment. Desatnik (2018) refers to community development as the various methods companies use to establish and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the communities in which they operate. The underlying principle of community development is that when a company accepts its civic responsibility and takes an active interest in the wellbeing of its community, it then gains several long-term benefits in terms of community support, loyalty and goodwill. Community involvement builds public image and employee morale and fosters a sense of teamwork that is essential in long-term success (Kwateng, 2013). Community development initiatives such as the provision of basic infrastructure, resolution of communal violence, granting of scholarships and employment opportunities to local residents, can create goodwill and build cordial relationships between an organisation and its host community, thereby enhancing customer patronage and retention. This premise is supported by the study of Muden and Isa (2018), which revealed that community development significantly influenced customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Ghana. The premise is also corroborated by the study of Nazir and Al-zawahiri (2017), which revealed that community development had a significant positive correlation with customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis.

Corporate philanthropy and customer patronage

Corporate philanthropy refers to the ways in which companies achieve positive social impacts through the strategic and generous use of their finances, employee time, facilities or their own products and services to help the community and support social causes and goals that benefit the community (West & Joan, 2019). It generally includes charitable donations from the profits and resources of the organisation to promote positive social causes in the society in which it operates. It is the act of a corporation or business promoting the welfare of its stakeholders, generally through charitable donations of funds or time to non-profit organisations. It includes the charitable donations of profits and resources given by corporations to non-profit organisations (Graham, Grey & Anastasia, 2015). The voluntary involvement in philanthropic activities by business organisations tends to project companies in a positive light and create the perception that they care not just about profitability; but also, about the welfare and wellbeing of the community with whom they do business. Corporate philanthropy creates a positive corporate image for organisations and leads customers to react in favourable ways towards organisations in terms of patronage, loyalty and recommendation (Hogan, Olson & Sharma,



2014). The foregoing viewpoint suggests that engagement in corporate philanthropic programmes could improve customer patronage of business organisations. This viewpoint is supported by the study of Usman and Amran (2015), which revealed that corporate philanthropy had a significant positive effect on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The viewpoint is also backed by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that corporate philanthropy had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State.

Environmental responsibility and customer patronage

Environmental responsibility is an international obligation of corporate organisations requiring them to engage in activities and initiatives that promote or maintain the sustainability of the environment (Glavas, 2016). It calls on business organisations to incorporate environmental considerations into their operations as they implement business processes in order to prevent environmental pollution or degradation (Mehralian, Nazari, Zarei & Rasekh, 2016). In an age of heightened environmental concerns and extensive efforts by world communities and governments in partnership with the private sector to protect the environment and prevent further environmental degradation, corporate environmental responsibility could not be more important (Rashid, Rahman & Khalid, 2014). The general assumption is that for governments to effectively reverse the ravages of climate change and better protect the planet, the business sector must actively be involved in environmental preservation initiatives. This further underscores the need for a collaborative effort by the public and private sectors on behalf of a cleaner, safer and healthy environment for future generations (Hirose, Lee & Matsumura, 2017). Companies, therefore, that live up to their environmental responsibility to protect and preserve the environment are perceived as environmentally friendly and worthy of customer patronage. The implication of the foregoing is that customers are inclined to patronize the products and services of companies that fulfil their environmental responsibilities through green initiatives and other environmental protection practices. This premise is substantiated by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that environmental responsibility had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. The premise is also supported by the study of Agyamfii, Sangama and Kwabina (2019), which revealed that environmental responsibility had a significant influence on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ghana.

Legal responsibility and customer patronage

Corporate legal responsibility is the obligation of business organisations to adhere to and comply with all necessary laws, rules, regulations, standards and legal requirements of the government mandate for the conduct of business operations (Malik, Ali & Ishfaq, 2015). It encompasses the responsibilities a business owes to the constituted legitimate authority governing the business operations within a sovereign territory. In open and transparent civilized societies such as Europe, Asia and the Americas, information on companies' levels of compliance with legal requirements and standards of the government is publicly available for the public to evaluate in order to determine which companies are fulfilling their legal responsibilities (Lee, 2019). In such a society, customers can tell at the click of a button that a company is not legally responsible and will definitely avoid patronizing its products and services. However, companies that perform their legal responsibilities are perceived as good corporate citizens that should be rewarded with patronage from society. This entails that being



legally responsible enhances a company's level of customer patronage. This assumption is reinforced by the study of Nazir and Al-zawahiri (2017), which revealed that legal responsibility had a significant positive correlation with customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis. The assumption is also reinforced by the study of Mudén and Isa (2018), which revealed that legal responsibility significantly influenced customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Ghana.

Ethical responsibility and customer patronage

Ethical responsibility is a notion that corporate organisations should engage in morally correct initiatives in their internal and external interactions with stakeholders. It calls on businesses to establish standards of behaviour guiding their activities and interactions with stakeholders (Henry & Karl, 2018). Park, Kim and Kwon (2017) maintained that ethical responsibility is about looking after the welfare of the employees by ensuring fair labour practices for the employees and also the employees of their suppliers. Being ethically responsible enables a company to create positive impressions in the minds of its public, thereby allowing the company to project its missions and operations as morally, socially and ideally acceptable by society at large (Park, Kim & Kwon, 2017). By successfully creating such a positive perception in the minds of the target market, the company will be in a stronger position to influence customers to patronize its products and services because it is living up to the highest possible ethical standards and norms guiding business activities in the society. This implies that fulfilling ethical responsibility enables a company to enhance customer patronage. This premise is supported by the study of Usman and Amran (2015), which revealed that ethical responsibility had a significant positive effect on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The premise is also substantiated by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that ethical responsibility had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State.

Empirical review and conceptual model

Mudén and Isa (2018) conducted a study on "Appraising the marketing implications and potential of corporate social responsibility in Ghana." The study aimed to determine the influences of legal responsibility, community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, ethical responsibility on customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Accra, Ghana. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 311 mobile subscribers of 5 of the major cellular firms in Accra Metropolis of Ghana. The data was analyzed using correlation and multiple regression analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15). The findings of the study revealed that corporate social responsibility (legal responsibility, community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, ethical responsibility and consumer education responsibility) significantly influenced customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Ghana. Therefore, the study concluded that corporate social responsibility has a significant influence on customers' preferences and patronage in the Ghanaian cellular industry.

Nazir and Al-zawahiri (2017) conducted a study on "Corporate social responsibility and customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Jordan". The purpose of the study was to establish the correlation between corporate social responsibility practices (legal responsibility, community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility,



and ethical responsibility) and customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis. The study adopted a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire to obtain primary data from 320 respondents in Amman Metropolis. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to analyze the data obtained. The study revealed that legal responsibility, community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, and ethical responsibility had significant positive correlations with customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis. Therefore, the study concluded that there is a significant positive association between corporate social responsibility and customer patronage in the Jordanian telecommunications industry.

Usman and Amran (2015) examined "Corporate social responsibility practice and corporate financial performance: Evidence from Nigeria companies." The study aimed to examine the effect of economic responsibility, corporate philanthropy, ethical responsibility, and environmental responsibility on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The study adopted a semi-structured research questionnaire to collect primary data from 158 customers and personnel of selected manufacturing companies in Lagos State. Multiple linear regression was adopted to test the hypotheses developed for the study. The findings of the study revealed that all variables tested (economic responsibility, corporate philanthropy, ethical responsibility, and environmental responsibility) had significant positive effects on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. Hence, the study concluded that corporate social responsibility had a significant positive effect on corporate financial performance in the Nigerian manufacturing industry.

Ojimba and Yinka (2017) investigated the "Impact of corporate social responsibility practices on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State". The study aimed at determining the impact of corporate social responsibility practices (corporate philanthropy, community development, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility) on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. Primary data were collected from 168 respondents in Ogun State using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 13). Consequently, the findings revealed that corporate philanthropy, community development, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility had significant impacts on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. Hence, the study concluded that corporate social responsibility had a significant impact on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ogun State.

Furthermore, Agyamfii, Sangama and Kwabina (2019) investigated the "Influence of corporate social responsibility on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Legon, Ghana". The purpose of the study was to explore the influence of corporate social responsibility (economic responsibility, ethical responsibility, community development, environmental responsibility and corporate philanthropy) on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ghana. Primary data were obtained from 138 customers of textile manufacturing companies in Legon, Ghana with the aid of a personally-administered questionnaire. The data obtained were prepared and analysed using multiple regression statistical tools. Subsequently, the findings revealed that economic responsibility, ethical responsibility, community development, environmental responsibility and corporate philanthropy had a significant influence on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ghana. Hence, the study concluded that

corporate social responsibility had a significant influence on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ghana. Based on a review of existing relevant studies, we have hypothesized the existence of a causal relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer patronage in the context of telecommunications. The conceptual model in Figure 1 has been adapted from Carroll (1991) to graphically demonstrate this hypothesized relationship in the context of this study.

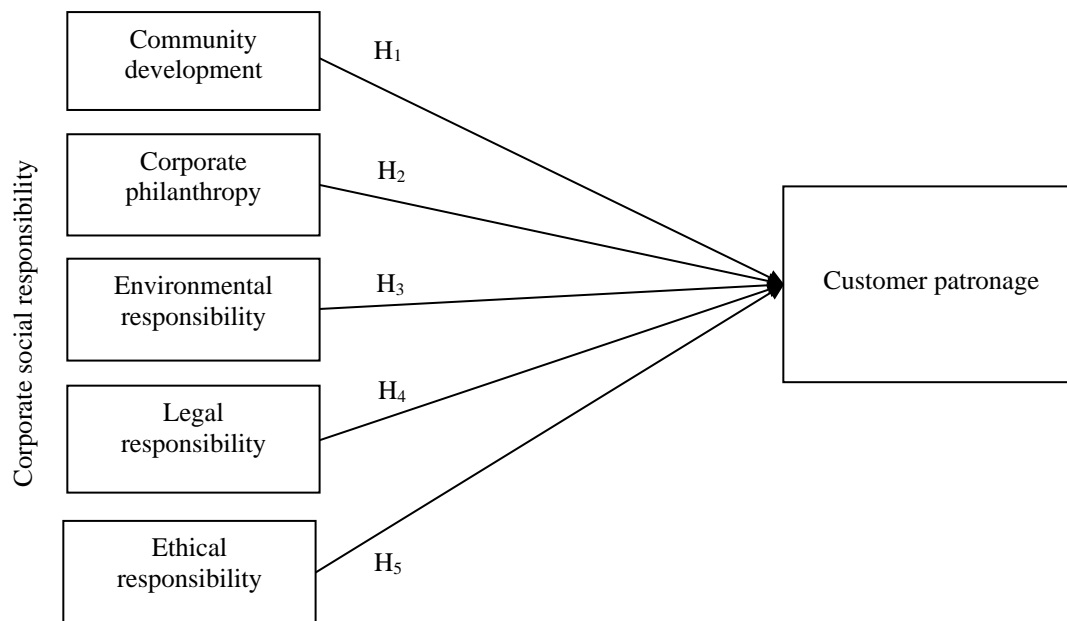


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Adapted from Carroll, A. B. (1991). The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Towards the moral management of organisational stakeholders. Business Horizons 34(4), 39-48

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design by using a questionnaire to obtain primary data from telecommunication subscribers in Calabar, Nigeria. The survey research design enabled us to obtain first-hand data from respondents without premeditated or incidental manipulation since the questionnaire copies were independently filled by the respondents with guidance from research assistants. The population of the study comprised all telecommunication service subscribers in Calabar, Nigeria, which was numerically unknown. Consequently, the Topman sample size determination method was applied to statistically estimate a sample size of 310 subscribers for the study. We applied convenience sampling to select service subscribers to participate in the questionnaire survey. To obtain primary data from respondents, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered with the aid of research assistants. Prior to field administration, the questionnaire was checked and confirmed for validity and reliability



through content validity and Cronbach's alpha reliability methods respectively. Convinced of the instrument's validity and reliability status, we recruited 3 research assistants to administer copies of the questionnaire to telecommunication service subscribers in Calabar Metropolis, Nigeria. The data obtained during the survey were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics, whereas the hypotheses of the study were subjected to statistical testing using multiple linear regression with the following model:

$$\text{CSPAT} = a + \beta_1\text{COMDEV} + \beta_2\text{CORPHIL} + \beta_3\text{ENVRESP} + \beta_4\text{LEGRESP} + \beta_5\text{ETHRESP} + e$$

Where:

a	=	The intercept (or constant)
COMDEV	=	Community development
CORPHIL	=	Corporate philanthropy
ENVRESP	=	Environmental responsibility
LEGRESP	=	Legal responsibility
ETHRESP	=	Ethical responsibility
$\beta_1\text{COMDEV}$	=	Coefficient of community development
$\beta_2\text{CORPHIL}$	=	Coefficient of corporate philanthropy
$\beta_3\text{ENVRESP}$	=	Coefficient of environmental responsibility
$\beta_4\text{LEGRESP}$	=	Coefficient of legal responsibility
$\beta_5\text{ETHRESP}$	=	Coefficient of ethical responsibility
e	=	Error margin (5 percent)

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

To obtain data for this study, a total of 310 copies of the questionnaire were administered to telecommunication service subscribers, out of which 246 copies representing 79.4 percent were correctly completed and returned, while 64 copies representing 20.6 percent were not returned, thereby resulting in a total response rate of 79.4 percent.

Table 1: Summary of respondents' demographic characteristics

Age	Frequency	Percent
18 – 24 years	57	23.2
25 – 31 years	55	22.4
32 – 38 years	55	22.4
39 – 45 years	48	19.5
46 years or above	31	12.6
Total	246	100.0



Gender		
Male	106	43.1
Female	140	56.9
Total	246	100.0
Marital status		
Single	130	52.8
Married	116	47.2
Total	246	100.0
Highest educational qualification		
FSLC	109	44.3
SSCE	52	21.1
First University Degree	47	19.1
Post-graduate Degree	38	15.4
Total	246	100.0
Occupation		
Student	109	44.3
Businessman/woman	96	39.0
Civil servant	41	16.7
Total	246	100.0

Source: Authors' computations via SPSS (2022)

Table 1 above presents data on respondents' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualifications and occupation. With respect to age, the data shows that out of the 246 respondents surveyed, 57 respondents representing 23.2 percent were between the ages of 18-24 years, 55 respondents representing 22.4 percent were between the ages of 25 – 31 years, 55 respondents representing 22.4 percent were between the ages of 32 – 38 years, 48 respondents representing 19.5 percent were between 39 – 45 years, while 31 respondents representing 12.6 percent were 46 years or above. With respect to gender, out of the 246 respondents surveyed, 106 respondents representing 43.1 percent were male, while 140 respondents representing 56.9 percent were female. On marital status, the data shows that 130 respondents representing 52.8 percent were single while 116 respondents representing 47.2 percent were married. On highest educational qualifications attained, out of the 246 respondents surveyed, 109 respondents representing 44.3 percent had FSLC, 52 respondents representing 21.1 percent had SSCE, 47 respondents representing 19.1 percent had First University Degree, while 38 respondents representing 15.4 percent were post-graduate degree holders. Finally, concerning occupation, the data revealed that 109 respondents representing 44.3 percent were students, 96 respondents representing 39.0 percent were businessmen/women, and 41 respondents representing 16.7 percent were civil servants.



Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis one: Community development has no significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Hypothesis two: Corporate philanthropy has no significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Hypothesis three: Environmental responsibility has no significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Hypothesis four: Legal responsibility has no significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Hypothesis five: Ethical responsibility has no significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Decision criteria: Accept the alternative hypothesis if ($P < .05$) and reject the null hypothesis, if otherwise

Table 2: Model summary of the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.496 ^a	.246	.230	.73043

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility

Source: Authors' computations via SPSS (2022)

Table 3: ANOVA^a of the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.673	5	8.335	15.622	.000 ^b
	Residual	128.048	240	.534		
	Total	169.720	245			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility

Source: Authors' computations via SPSS (2022)



Table 4: Coefficients^a of the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.636	.602		4.381	.000
	Community development	.317	.175	.352	4.236	.000
	Corporate philanthropy	.156	.176	.444	2.736	.000
	Environmental responsibility	.139	.262	.384	1.624	.003
	Legal responsibility	.112	.376	.210	2.163	.001
	Ethical responsibility	.403	.160	.301	6.668	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

Source: Authors' computations via SPSS (2022)

Interpretation

Tables 2, 3 and 4 present the multiple linear regression results of the effect of corporate social responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services. The model summary presented in Table 2 shows that the relationship between the independent variable (corporate social responsibility) and the dependent variable (customer patronage) is 49.6 percent (as can be seen in the R column), thereby indicating that there is a fairly strong degree of correlation between the study variables. The R^2 (coefficient of determination) value of 0.246, signifies that up to 24.6 percent of the variation in the dependent variable (customer patronage) can be explained by the independent variable (corporate social responsibility). Hence, a unit change in corporate social responsibility practices of telecommunication companies will affect customer patronage of their services by up to 24.6 percent when other factors are held constant. The F-test (15.622, $P < 0.05$) statistic in Table 3 signifies that the overall prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is statistically significant; therefore, implying that corporate social responsibility has a significant effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

Table 4 (the coefficients table) shows that all the corporate social responsibility practices tested (community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility) were found to significantly predict or explain customer patronage of telecommunication services, because their p-values [community development (p-value = 0.000), corporate philanthropy (p-value = 0.000)], environmental responsibility (p-value = 0.003), legal responsibility (p-value = 0.001) and ethical responsibility (p-value = 0.000)] are less than the error margin of 0.05. Furthermore, the standardized beta coefficient column in Table 4 shows that the highest contributing variable to the model is corporate philanthropy, with a beta coefficient of 0.444 (44.4 percent). The second highest contributing variable to the model is environmental responsibility, with a beta coefficient of 0.384 (38.4 percent). Also, the third-highest contributing variable to the model is community development, with a beta coefficient of 0.352 (35.2 percent). The fourth highest contributing variable to the model is an ethical responsibility, with a beta coefficient of 0.301



(30.1 percent), while legal responsibility is the least contributing variable to the model, with a beta coefficient of 0.210 (21.0 percent). Therefore, we concluded that community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility have significant positive effects on customer patronage of telecommunication services.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis test revealed that community development has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services. This finding is backed by the study of Mudén and Isa (2018), which revealed that community development significantly influenced customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Ghana. The finding is also supported by the study of Nazir and Al-zawahiri (2017), which revealed that community development had a significant positive correlation with customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis. This finding implies that as a corporate social responsibility practice, community development possesses the capacity to significantly enhance customer patronage of telecommunication services.

The second hypothesis test revealed that corporate philanthropy has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services. This finding is substantiated by the study of Usman and Amran (2015), which revealed that corporate philanthropy had a significant positive effect on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The finding is also backed by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that corporate philanthropy had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. This finding implies that as a corporate social responsibility practice, corporate philanthropy possesses the capacity to significantly enhance customer patronage of telecommunication services.

The third hypothesis test revealed that environmental responsibility has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services. This finding is supported by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that environmental responsibility had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. The finding is also supported by the study of Agyamfii, Sangama and Kwabina (2019), which revealed that environmental responsibility had a significant influence on customer patronage of manufacturing companies in Ghana. This finding implies that as a corporate social responsibility practice, environmental responsibility possesses the capacity to significantly enhance customer patronage of telecommunication services.

The fourth hypothesis test revealed that legal responsibility has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services. The finding is reinforced by the study of Nazir and Al-zawahiri (2017), which revealed that legal responsibility had a significant positive correlation with customer patronage of telecommunications companies in Amman Metropolis. The finding is also reinforced by the study of Mudén and Isa (2018), which revealed that legal responsibility significantly influenced customers' perception and patronage of cellular firms in Ghana. This finding implies that as a corporate social responsibility practice, legal responsibility possesses the capacity to significantly enhance customer patronage of



telecommunication services. Finally, the fifth hypothesis test revealed that ethical responsibility has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of telecommunication services. This finding is substantiated by the study of Usman and Amran (2015), which revealed that ethical responsibility had a significant positive effect on corporate financial performance (customer patronage, sales revenue and profitability) of manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The finding is also reinforced by the study of Ojimba and Yinka (2017), which revealed that ethical responsibility had a significant impact on customer patronage of Dangote Nigeria Plc in Ogun State. This finding implies that as a corporate social responsibility practice, ethical responsibility possesses the capacity to significantly enhance customer patronage of telecommunication services.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted to examine corporate social responsibility and customer patronage in the telecommunications context. Its specific aim was to examine the effects of community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility on customer patronage of telecommunication services. Primary data were obtained from telecommunication service subscribers using a structured questionnaire while data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility had significant positive effects on customer patronage of telecommunication services. These findings implied that customer patronage of telecommunication services could significantly be improved through the implementation of corporate social responsibility practices such as community development, corporate philanthropy, environmental responsibility, legal responsibility and ethical responsibility. Therefore, the study concludes that corporate social responsibility has a significant positive influence on the performance of telecommunication companies, if consistently fulfilled by companies.

To that end, we put forward some practical implications which could be implemented by practitioners in the telecommunications industry. First, telecommunication companies should engage with their host communities by providing employment opportunities, educational scholarships and essential facilities such as schools, health clinics and potable water in order to build a positive corporate image and gain public goodwill through enhanced customer patronage. Second, telecommunication companies should embrace their philanthropic responsibilities to their stakeholders through financial and/or material donations to support them in times of need such as a natural disaster or key events. Such donations will create positive perceptions in the minds of the target stakeholders and encourage customer patronage of telecommunication firms' products and services. Third, telecommunication companies should ensure to consistently fulfil their environmental responsibility by offering products and services that are environmentally friendly and maintaining an effective waste management system that prevents environmental pollution or degradation. Fourth, it is essential for telecommunication companies to meticulously fulfil their legal responsibilities by obtaining appropriate licenses from appropriate authorities, avoiding illegal practices, and ensuring consistent compliance with regulatory guidelines and requirements of the government in order to guard against disruptions of commercial operations and provide confidence to customers required to enhance patronage. Finally, telecommunication companies should uphold the



highest levels of professional and ethical standards in their operations by ensuring that customers' personal identities are protected, customers' privacy is respected and customers' consent is sought before products or services are activated on their lines. Being ethically responsible in the eyes of consumers will improve the corporate image of telecommunication companies and improve customer patronage of their offerings.

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