

# A CASE STUDY OF APPLE RECYCLING PROGRAM and GREEN POLICIES

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**ABSTRACT:** The general purpose of this study is to address the potential impact of marketing related corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on consumer behaviour, the importance of communication of CSR in achieving a positive behaviour/attitude change, the feelings, and perception of consumers regarding the green and sustainable policies of technology companies as well as the levels of awareness and responsiveness among the consumers towards environmental sustainability.

The research focuses on the aforementioned targets in relation to the computer giant Apple who has an impressive foothold within the industry brought by its revolutions under reinventions of personal computers, mobile phones, digital music players, and future mobile media devices. The company's particular 'Recycling Programme' as an example of corporate social marketing (CSM) together with its green policies conveyed through its environmental footprint are investigated by means of an online questionnaire.

The responses gathered from 30 participants across 7 different countries are analysed through individual and cross-dimensional perspectives. Results show that CSM promotes positive behaviour/attitude change including participation, word-of-mouth, and customer confidence all of which contributes to consumer's own evaluation that is enriched by being informed about the cause and being convinced about the difference made. In conclusion, CSM influences consumers' perception of CSR, comprehension of green policies, attachment to environmental sustainability, awareness and responsiveness that are incorporated in customers' beliefs.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Corporate Environmental Sustainability, Corporate Social Marketing (CSM), Green Policies in Technology, Consumer Perception, Awareness and Responsiveness in Green Consumption, Apple Recycling Programme, Apple Environmental Footprint.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present explanatory answers to the basic questions such as what, why and how throughout the research process. The area that the investigation will take place is chosen to be marketing which windows the core concepts constituting the trends of the evolving world.

Having been discussed for over five decades (Tolhurst et al., 2010), CSR can be defined as a controversial subject since the perspectives are threefold: some authors think it is irrelevant to business, some of them consider it as a bad idea for business and some believe that it is strategically important (Asongu, 2007). This research takes the side of the final approach and conveys that CSR, which might appear either explicitly or implicitly (Parkes et al., 2010), is effective on the grounds that people are informed about the issue and also convinced that the cause makes difference. These can be achieved by good communication of CSR which should be handled delicately due to the diversity in thoughts as stated above.

Being closely linked to CSR, sustainability (Moore, 2010), is another significant point of this research regarding environmental concerns. The global changes in the climate and earth impose regulatory alterations to the businesses such as green policies as well as to the governments while requiring the people to be reactive in terms of being aware and responsive about reducing their impact on the environment. This study targets the devices commonly used in everyday lives of the people and relies on the fact that users can contribute to the betterment of the environment by supporting CSR initiatives concerning these gadgets and making use of recycling.

Visualisation of a simple upside down triangle, having CSR, environmental sustainability, and the consumer on each vertex, helps attaching the core concepts of this particular research. Successively, the first angle gauges the betterment of the society whereas the second records the betterment of the planet. Then, the third one combines these two as the human factor interferes with both the society they belong to and the planet they live in.

Consequently, the research questions to be answered by this research places a focus on each edge that aggregates the aforementioned points especially the ones indicating the human factor. What is the potential impact of marketing related CSR initiatives on consumer behaviour? Why is the communication of CSR important in achieving a positive behaviour/attitude change? How are green and sustainable policies of technology companies perceived by consumers? What are the levels of awareness and responsiveness among the consumers towards environmental sustainability? These questions constitute the backbone of this research as well as the research background. In the following chapters, the answers will be provided either in theory or in practice depending on the nature of the area of investigation.

## Aim and Objectives

The objectives of the research are listed below:

- To compare marketing related CSR initiatives company-wise as well as individually and to discover which is more preferred among consumers.
- To evaluate and interpret the value of CSM as a CSR initiative with regards to consumers' perception and demographic profile.
- To identify the level of difficulty perceived by the consumers when purchasing green products.
- To analyse green policies of Apple and to expose the feelings of consumers regarding the company's environmental footprint together with their enthusiasm for the Recycling Programme.
- To critically examine the behavioural change of the consumers in relation to their perspectives on Apple's green policies as well as on environmental sustainability.
- To explore the impact of green initiatives on current and prospective customers of Apple.
- To determine whether aforementioned CSR initiatives serve marketing purposes, or not.

## Hypothesis

The association between the marketing related corporate social initiatives and consumers' perception of green and sustainable policies of technology companies has a countable potential on customers' purchase decisions; however, the influence is underestimated and not yet pervasive enough, therefore the awareness and responsiveness of the people need to be enriched by well communication of CSR initiatives to ensure positive behaviour/attitude change.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The birth of this new era has been noticed by Frederick (1994, cited in Singh et al., 2008) who foresaw the openness of the area towards maturity (Singh et al., 2008). By now, the extensive studies on CSR reveal that the definitions vary according to the discussions of what is being focused on.

According to the work of Samy et al. (2010), the definition of corporate social responsibility, which can also be referred as CSR1 by Frederick (1986, cited in Samy et al., 2010), is an investigation of corporations' obligation for the sake of social betterment. Then, starting from 1970, CSR1 has begun to move to corporate social responsiveness namely CSR2 - as called by Frederick (1994, cited in Samy et al., 2010) - which is defined to be the capacity of a corporation to respond to social pressures. Thereafter, Frederick (1994, cited in Samy et al., 2010) decided to add more ethical base to the definition which he termed as CSR3, highlighting the need for an ethical anchor that will provide a systematic approach to business' impact upon human consciousness, human community and human continuity.

Having explored the general motivation behind the communication of CSR, the work of Morsing and Schultz (2006) examines the three types of strategies that are engaged by companies with respect to their stakeholders.

The first strategy to be investigated is stakeholder information strategy, which requires telling but not listening, and therefore categorized to be a one-way communication that goes from the organization to its stakeholders. The ways of communication can be through media, magazines, or brochures, etc. since the intention is to inform general public so that the company ensures positive stakeholder support (Morsing and Schultz, 2006).

The other two strategies have something in common on the grounds that they are both based on a two-way communication model. Engaging CSR into an organization is no random process. In other words, the company needs to select a cause or issue that fits reasonably well with its core values and competencies in addition to realizing virtues of sincerity, accuracy, modesty and such (Ven, 2008).

The destined change in the environment within the recent years has alerted both governments and businesses which led the amount of research and development carried out for innovation of green products to rise. According to Dangelico and Pujari (2010), whose study is based on the reasons and the ways of integrating environmental sustainability into companies, the intention to conduct new lines of products obeying sustainability has grown independently from regulations alone since the debate for environmental value and social good is fostered by the introduction of new technologies and market-driven products.

It has been a common subject matter for the marketers that demographics had influence on green consumers' behaviours; however, research indicate that there is no such relationship between factors regarding being male/female, educated/not educated, young/old and attempt towards using green products as put forward by Straughan and Roberts (1999, cited in McDonald and Oates, 2006). This outcome is further supported by Peattie (1998, cited in McDonald and Oates, 2006) who suggested that the focus should be moved from individual consumer to individual purchase.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Having stated the crucial points, it can be concluded that this research will employ both exploratory and descriptive designs since the former one will contribute to acquire insight as well as to develop understanding of the impact of marketing related CSR initiatives, whereas the latter will help to describe the potential effect of green policies on consumer perception through the analysis of their behaviours, attitudes and habits.

## Data Sources and Collection Methods

### Secondary Data

Even though secondary data has many sources to be accessed from, it stands for some other purpose which may be of no use to the researcher. Besides, it is among researcher's duties to evaluate carefully and to make certain that the data gathered from secondary research is relevant, accurate, current and impartial (Kotler et al., 2008). In other words, the data collected from secondary sources need to be reliable as well as up-to-date and have to fit in the requirements of the research. Above all, it should be objectively gathered so that the research yields fair results. On the other hand, secondary research is occasionally favourable since access time is relatively short and it is less expensive to acquire than primary data (Wegner, 2008).

Relying on the aforementioned facts, the secondary data that are available in academic journals, reviews, books, conference proceedings, Apple's reports (Appendix B, Appendix C), Apple's official website as well as online databases (i.e. accessible libraries, EBSCO, Biz/edPremier, Emerald, Wiley, IEEE etc.) will be used throughout this research. Nevertheless, there will also be other methods employed to collect primary data.

### Primary Data

For a marketing research, important types of primary data include but are not limited to attitudes, opinions, awareness, knowledge, intentions, motives, and the behaviour of people and organizations (Wiid and Diggines, 2009). These will be addressed throughout this research since the aspects of people are crucial for the development and support of the arguments.

### Questionnaire

In order to gather primary data, a questionnaire that ultimately aims to expose the rate of consumers' awareness and responsiveness to CSR initiatives will be conducted. There will be 20 questions in the survey consisting of four major categories of demographics, general acquaintance of the topic, consumer perception on CSR, and consumer perception on Corporate Environmental Sustainability. The questions will be of both qualitative and quantitative type.

### Sampling

For this particular study, it is appropriate to employ purposive sampling with a breeze of snowball sampling under non-probability methods. The distribution of the survey will start from the respondents within the author's social network and then, it will be further distributed to others who are suggested by the participants. Besides, the questionnaire will be published on relevant pages of social communication sites on the internet in order to access wider ranged respondents. Hence, the judgement of the sample is made by the researcher which makes it purposive sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, the respondents will be prompted to identify other participants that would be interested, which makes it snowball sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). Also, the sample size to be selected is planned to be no less than 40 people with as equal as possible weight over the demographical factors.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Introduction

Hardy and Bryman (2009) summarize the process of analyzing data, which involves information sorting as well as logical pattern identification, to make 'sense' of the data. Comparatively, in this part of the study, previously revealed findings will be analysed by sorting, classifying, reducing and combining them so that the research questions are answered, the objectives are served and the hypothesis is tested.

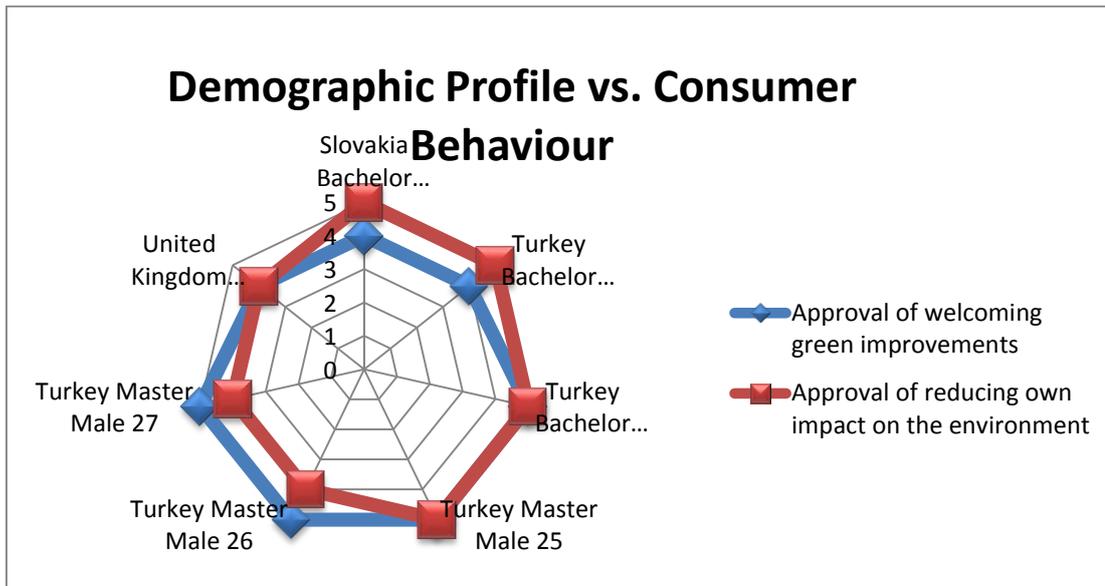
### Analysis of the Questionnaire

As noted before, the survey has been divided into four sections addressing the same kind of information. In the part below, the sections of the questionnaire will be analysed both individually and cross-dimensionally. For such analysis, literature review residing in Chapter 2 will be consulted.

### Section 1: Demographics

The demographic profile of the sample population has been brought forward in order to compare and contrast the primary data with the secondary data. From marketing aspects, consumers' age, gender and education level have been important factors in influencing their behaviours theoretically; however, in practice it has been declared that usage of green products has no relationship with the demographic profile of the consumers. In that case, the focus should be moved from individual customer to individual purchase as outlined in the literature. Therefore, the ambient elements that have impact on the individual purchase need to be closely examined which are addressed in the following parts of the analysis.

Chart -1 Analysis of demographic profile in terms of behavioral



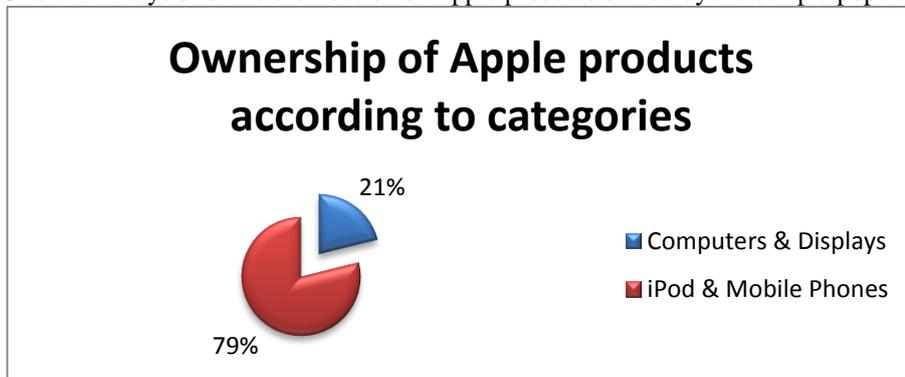
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 Source: Created by the author

Chart -1 employs specifications such as age, gender, education level and country of residence. The participants depicted in the chart have answers in common such as being affected by environmental sensitivity, being less prejudiced in welcoming green improvements, and being willing to reduce own impact on the environment. As shown, respondents from either Turkey or the UK or Slovakia, having completed degrees of either Bachelor or Masters and being at the age of 23, 24, 25, 26 or 27 have indicated that they are likely to go under a behavioral change in terms of welcoming green improvements and reducing their impact on the environment. Expressively, there is not a distinctive pattern that can be categorized in order to serve a general marketing strategy since all types of profiles of different properties have stated close opinions. Consequently, demographic outline of the sample population, displaying the features of being 27 years old on average, having completed at least 4 years of university degree, mostly residing in the UK and Turkey, and being 60% male, does not constitute any requirements of this research which is independent from marketing related CSR initiatives. Nevertheless, the profile might be helpful to analyze the relationship between humans and technology for future research.

**Section 2: General Acquaintance**

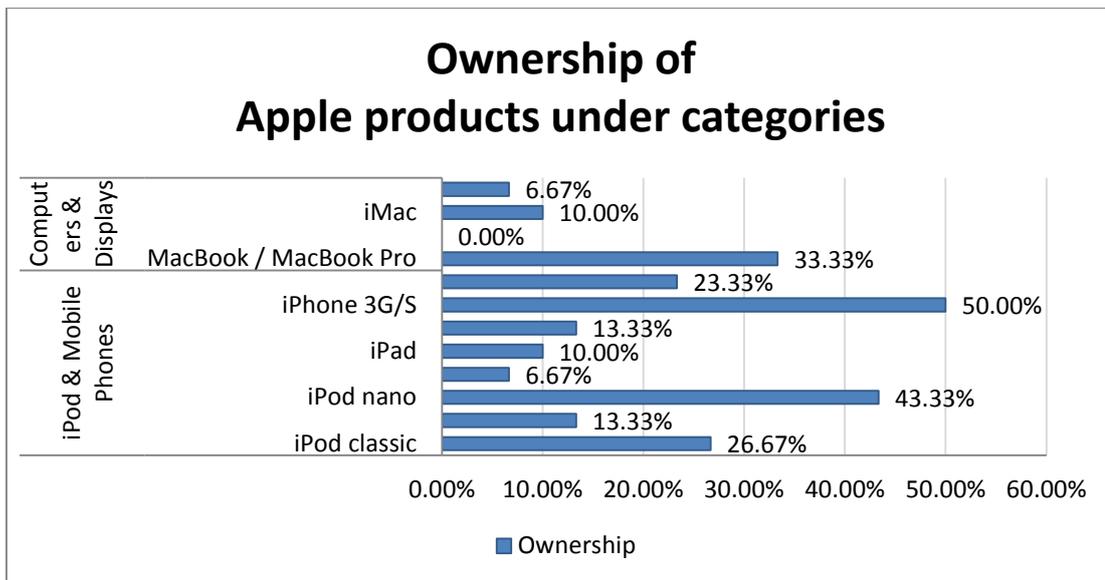
When studying marketing, it is essential to have clues about the customers’ background in terms of their owned as well as desired product portfolios. For this purpose, participants were asked to specify which Apple products they owned either in the past or in present along with which Apple product(s) they were planning to purchase. The ownership percentages according to the two categories and details of analysis are outlined in Chart -2 and Chart -3. It can be clearly observed that 79% of the products owned by the sample population belongs to the iPod & Mobile Phones category, which supports the justification for selecting this particular company. Besides, the analysis helps identifying the penetration rate of such devices which are mostly owned more than once in a lifetime either sequentially or mutually.

Chart -2 Analysis for the distribution of Apple products owned by the sample population according to categories



Source: Created by the author, 2010

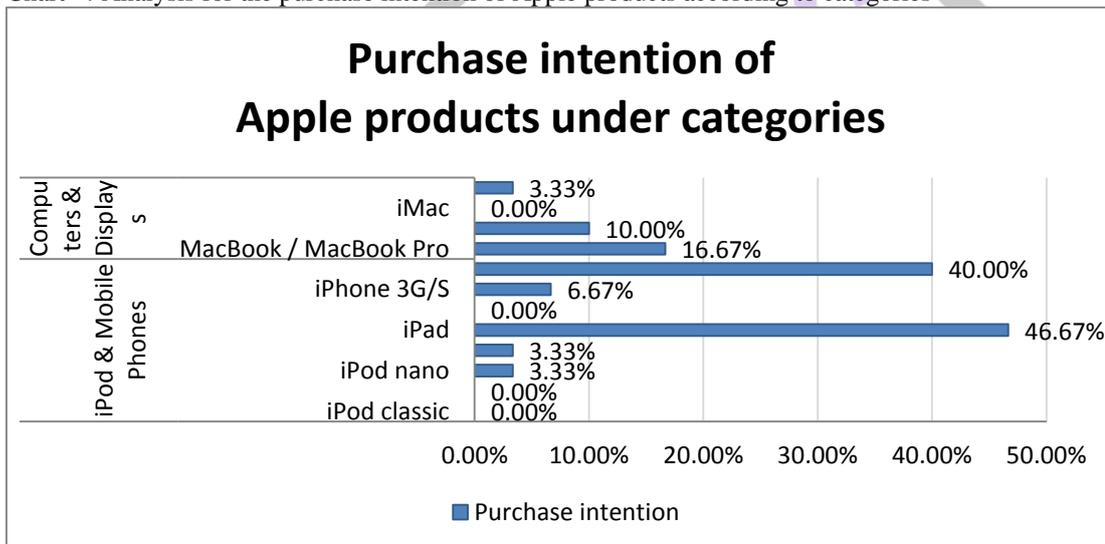
Chart -3 Details of the analysis for the ownership of Apple products according to categories



Source: Created by the author

A similar analysis can be applied on products that consumers plan to purchase. Chart -4 visualizes that nearly half of the participants have the intention to purchase iPad. Also, 40% of the sample population desires to own iPhone 4G. These two devices together outperform the rest in both categories.

Chart -4 Analysis for the purchase intention of Apple products according to categories



Source: Created by the author, 2010

The reason behind the analysis of categories and the distinction between Apple products is that all of the devices have different amount of impact on the environment with regards to manufacturing, transportation, energy usage and disposal (Appendix B and Appendix C). As the size, functionality and version varies, the weight of the material used in design and packaging changes accordingly. Furthermore, greenhouse gas emissions generated by different type of products when plugged into power are divergent. As partially analysed in the 6<sup>th</sup> question of the survey aimed to evaluate the characteristics of Apple where the most distinctive feature of the company has found out to be its design. This comes as no surprise since Apple makes a considerable use of marketing initiatives highlighting their smart and one-of-a-kind conceptions. Undoubtedly, the company is the first to enter to comparatively more people’s lives with their inventions which bring design and functionality together in an exclusive way. In contrast, participants do not favour Apple’s environmental footprint as much as they favour the company’s other features. The reason for that might be threefold: the marketing initiatives employed by the company are inadequate and yet the consumers except the ones that seek related information on their own might not be aware of Apple’s green policies and Recycling Programme; or, even if they have knowledge about the cause, they do not completely internalize the issue meaning that they do not change their behaviours and they believe their acts will not make any difference; or rather, they are not satisfied with the campaign offered.

In fact, the results of the next two questions shed some light on this phenomenon whilst giving rise to other complications which will be discussed later. For instance, partial analysis applied to these questions , states that nearly 64% of the participants have heard about Apple Recycling Programme, whereas 36% have admitted that they had no clue. Besides, the number of respondents, who voted for environmental sensitivity category of CSR, outperforms the rest as they constitute 70% of the sample population. The

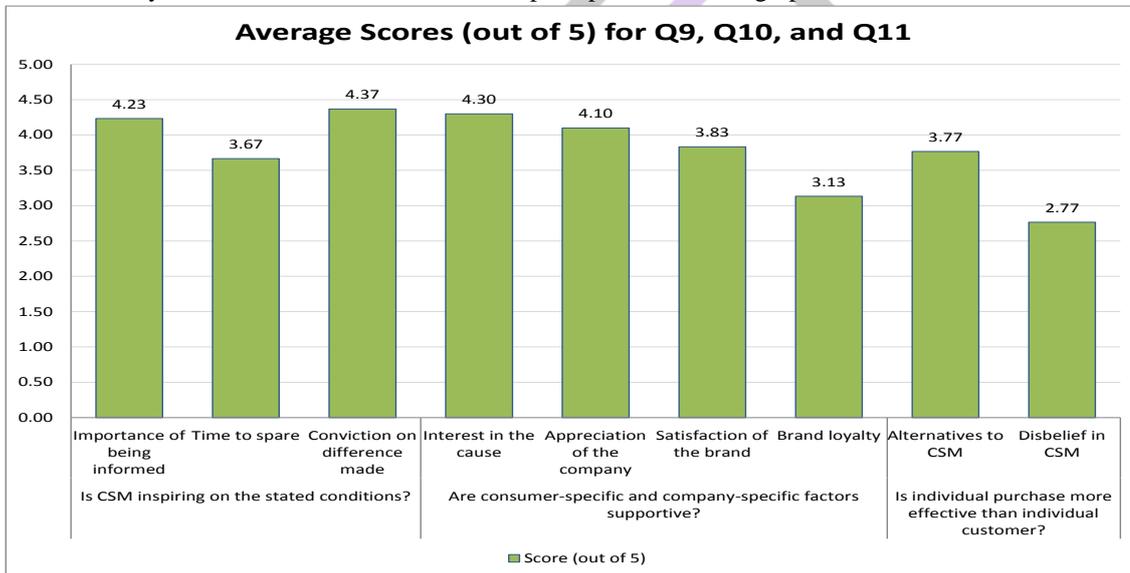
answers have a balanced match; therefore, the first reason implying that consumers might not be aware seems to have lost its validity.

In contrast to the above constructive findings, it is clearly revealed that none of the respondents, although being mostly influenced by environmental sensitivity, has participated in any one of the CSR initiatives. This outcome supports the second reasoning which suggests that the population has irresponsible attitudes. However, the indicated reason might not be the only one to bring explanation to the above phenomenon; hence, the third reason might also underlie the situation which will be clarified by the help of results collected from qualitative type of questions.

**Section 3: Consumer Perception on CSR**

Unquestionably, successful value creation of a business connects its stakeholders to itself whilst attracting many more benefits by the magnetism of competitive advantage. However, the key to success lies in the perception of the stakeholder rather than in the way of communicating the value. Having discussed the Stakeholder Theory, CSR communication ways and marketing related CSR initiatives, this part of the survey aims to explore how things are interpreted on the other side. CSM, referred to be the ‘best of breed’ by Kotler and Lee (2005), is the focus of this research since Apple’s implementation of Recycling Programme fits into this category of CSR initiatives. It is hidden in the following statements, which incrementally go deeper to reach the perceived value, whether the aforementioned type of marketing truly inspires consumers as it is meant to do so, or not. At the same time, the declarations address consumer perception on CSR via factors being either consumer-specific or company-specific. The former suggests individual support, whereas the latter introduces crucial variables like corporate image, customer trust and loyalty.

Chart -5 Analysis of combined CSM value, CSR perception and demographics

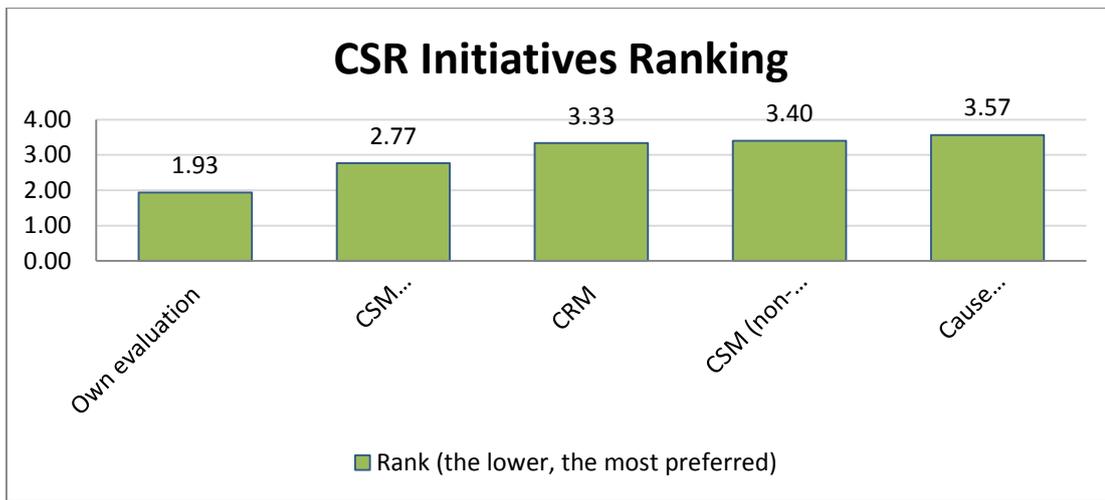


Source: Created by the author

The analysis that takes place in Chart-5 helps answering the stated questions which are combinations of key aspects in evaluating the consumer perception. It can be deduced that the participants agree (4.23 out of 5, between tend to agree [4] and agree[5]) on being inspired by CSM if they are informed about the issue/cause. In accordance to laddering stages, even if they have knowledge about the intentions of the campaign, they stay more than being neutral (3.67 out of 5, between neutral [3] and tend to agree[4]) as they tend to agree on sparing time for such activities. Lastly, granted all the conditions, they agree (4.37 out of 5) on being convinced that the difference will be caused by their actions. The overall inference concludes that CSM is inspiring on the stated conditions, hence it supports the value of marketing in CSR. The examination of CSM outshining the other CSR initiatives will be performed later via a comparison between CSM, cause promotions and CRM.

Next group of results inspect the circumstances of supporting the company involved, by employing two factors of consumers’ perception on CSR. As of consumer-specific factors, the respondents have agreed (4.30 out of 5) to support the company in charge given that they are concerned about the subject. That is to say, their perception regards their level of interest in the issue/cause. Another consumer-specific factor concerning the attendants’ satisfaction is also involved in interpretation of CSR. These two results deduce that consumer-specific factors are highly important in supporting CSR, thereby pointing out the effectiveness they cause in the eyes of the consumer. Likewise, company-specific factors such as appreciation and satisfaction are exposed to be comparatively less important than consumer-specific factors in CSR perception. In other words, the sample population stated that they agreed (4.10 out of 5) to support the company on the grounds that they liked the brand/institution. Also, some of them claimed that they might change their current brand as they remained neutral (3.13 out of 5) about the related statement. Consequently, perception of CSR seems to be more consumer-oriented no matter how companies communicate their responsible initiatives. Yet, the mutual benefits are undisturbed by this judgement since persuasion is an exhaustive triumph and the people have not digested CSR completely.

Chart -6 Analysis of CSR initiatives and welcoming green features



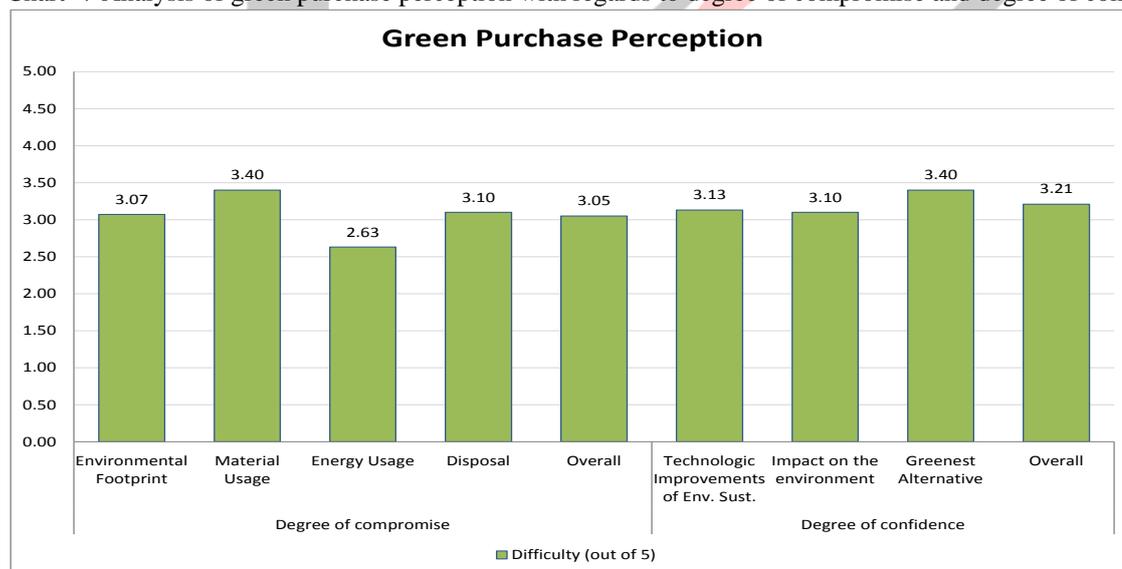
Source: Created by the author

Last question of this section justifies to the previously mentioned argument that CSM outshines the rest of CSR initiatives. This outcome can be deduced from Chart-6 which illustrates the average ranking (1 means the first choice) of detailed social responsibility actions. However, questioning of what will happen when own evaluation of the consumer is included yields a big difference for all categories of CSR initiatives, yet a small difference for CSM (campaigned). As seen in the graph, consumers count more on the products that they believe has the best quality/price/value regardless of green features since they go for those as a first choice (1.93 on average is interpreted to be the hit of the list). All of the CSR initiatives follow and it is clearly depicted that products that are campaigned by their green features are ranked as second (2.77 on average is interpreted to be number 2) choice of consumers. At this point, there has been a -minor on paper but major in terms of marketing practices- differentiation.

#### Section 4: Consumer Perception on Corporate Environmental Sustainability

As introduced in the last question of the previous section by means of welcoming green features, corporate environmental sustainability is the third and the last core concept of this research. Also formerly drawn, this part of the survey relates to the individual purchase in which perception is investigated from a green viewpoint with regards to the degree of compromise and the degree of confidence. Already stated in the literature, consumers find green initiatives difficult to engage into their behaviours since the product differentiation increases in the market and they struggle in their decision making process where practical environmental strategies interfere with their knowledge. Moreover, for an environmental consideration to carry full responsibility, it needs to integrate the entire lifecycle of the product which employs the phases from design until disposal.

Chart -7 Analysis of green purchase perception with regards to degree of compromise and degree of confidence

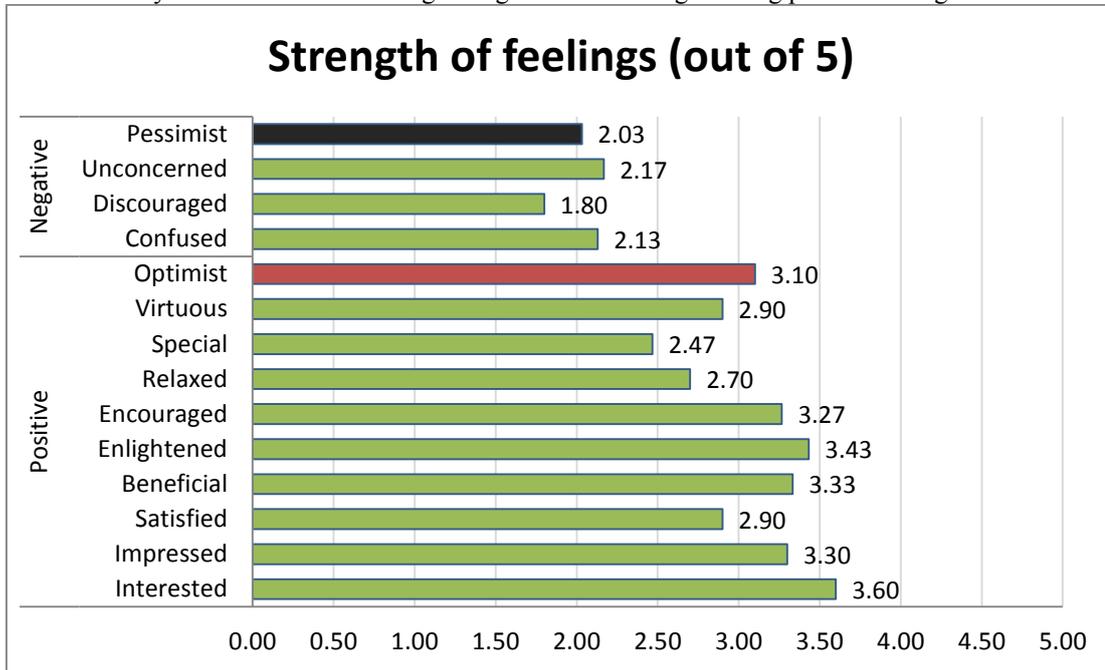


Source: Created by the author

13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> questions of the survey address general reaction of the consumers regarding individual purchase from the aspects of effort taken and difference made, which are the counterparts for degree of compromise and degree of confidence, successively. As illustrated in Chart-7, the average results reveal that paying attention to an electronic product's energy usage is perceived as easy (2.63 out of 5, between easy[2] and acceptable[3]), indeed the easiest when compared to the other details of green products. Moreover, the effort taken for considering the details of a green product and also the company's environmental footprint is interpreted to be acceptable by the sample population. Likewise, the attendants find it relatively more acceptable (3.10 out of 5,

between acceptable[3] and difficult[4]) to comprehend the impact of an electronic product on the environment. In other words, they tolerate the complexity of the environmental difference caused by their actions. Altogether, the recorded outcomes contradict with the arguments discussed in Chapter 2 where consumers were pronounced to be confused with the complications of green purchases. However, this might be an evidence for respondents' tendency to give positive answers thereby causing the researcher to face conflicts.

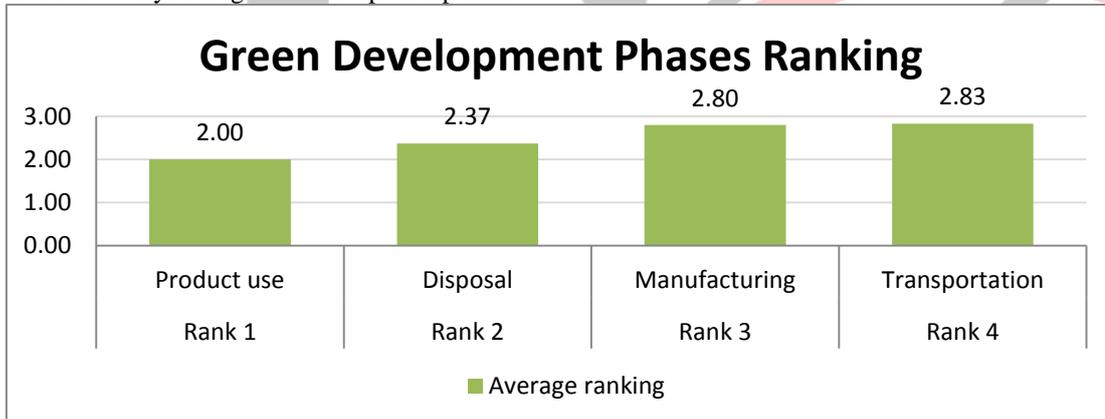
Chart -8 Analysis of consumers' feelings categorized according to being positive or negative



Source: Created by the author

In order to shed some light on this contradiction, consumers' feelings after viewing an illustration of Apple's environmental footprint have been grouped as positive and negative. Depicted in Chart-8, there is a tendency to be optimist with an average strength of 3.10 out of 5, whereas the pessimistic views have an average strength of 2.03 out of 5. Hence, further analysis will show whether there truly is a attitude/behaviour gap in the market as suggested in the literature.

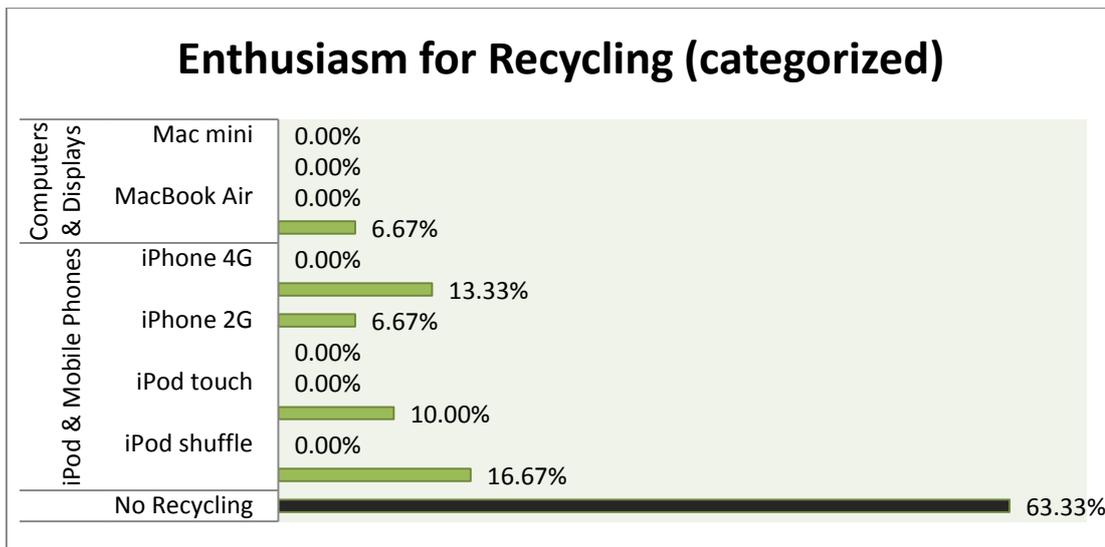
Chart -9 Analysis of green development phases



Source: Created by the author

The next question of the survey aims to bring about a precise assessment of the green development phases portrayed in the environmental footprint of the company. According to the appreciation of the sample population, using less energy (product use) has been placed on the first rank indicating that it makes the most difference in terms of environmental sustainability compared to others. As shown in Chart 5-9, the remaining order has been determined to be using recyclable material (disposal), using less material in design (manufacturing) and using smaller packaging (transportation), sequentially. The outcome of this particular evaluation relates to the awareness of the participants in an implicit way. As they encounter information in their daily lives, they build up knowledge with their experiences. For instance, in a case of purchasing a new washing machine, related social marketing initiatives, which promote the appliance with its energy saving features, inform the consumer accordingly. Similar to the mentioned simple example, it is expected in this research that people will wise up by getting wind of green features and CSR initiatives. In fact, 36% of the sample population who stated that they had no clue about Apple Recycling Programme have now been notified by just participating in the survey.

Chart -10 Analysis of recycling Apple products



Source: Created by the author

three reasons have been mentioned regarding why the participants rated Apple’s environmental footprint relatively low. The last of those will be justified by looking at the answers gathered from the following qualitative type of question. As listed in Chapter 4, 30% of the population provided ideas for not making use of recycling even after seeing the campaign. According to the reasonings, it is probable that they do not like the programme for either monetary concerns or design issues. Some of them prefer to keep the old electronics until they are completely useless, some of them think they are pieces of art and should not be recycled. On the other hand, some of them prefer to wait until they can afford an upgrade, and some of them intend to sell it as it will save them when compared to Apple’s 10% discount offer. Among the ones who stated that they would recycle, it is observed that most of them do not need the devices anymore. For instance, iPhone users do not necessitate their iPods since iPhone performs all and more of the functionalities of an iPod. Also, upgraded versions of electronics attract more attention and the results in Chart 5-10 reveal that the enthusiasm for recycling in iPod & Mobile Phones category outperforms the willingness for recycling in Computers & Displays. This might be due to the fact that iPod & Mobile Phones market is much more circulative than Computers & Displays. Hence, consumers might feel the need to get rid of their worn out devices in a responsible way, as some of them stated that they would make use of recycling in order not to pollute the environment. On the contrary, the amount of people who does not favour recycling (63.33%) is massive and needs further attention.

In the next two questions, behavioural change, which takes place among the aims of CSM, is addressed from two points of view. The first one focuses on green initiatives in Apple to assess the objectives of this research, whereas the other approaches to the population’s potential of adjustment regarding environmental sustainability. To summarize, the results are comprehended and put into the following graph.

**Interpretation, Discussion & Summary**

The above analysis mainly elaborates the primary data with minor referrals to the secondary data. Conclusively, a reflective framework has been created in order to interpret all the information converted from the raw data into knowledge. The mentioned framework is drawn in accordance to the purpose of focusing on the objectives and the research questions.

Figure-1 illustrates the results embedded in the framework. Demographic profile has been found out to be independent from the rest on the grounds that it has no derived effect. Hence, individual purchase is highlighted instead of individual customer. The most effective drivers of individual purchase has been detected to be own evaluation and campaigned CSM which involves a complex decision making process. The factors that affect this process have been grouped into two as the effort taken and the influence made. According to the analysis based on the findings, understanding a product’s energy usage is discovered to be the least effort taking activity. Similarly, it is perceived as the most effective in terms of environmental sustainability which is followed sequentially by disposal, manufacturing and transportation.

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and link the pieces of the overall research process. Starting with the findings and analysis, a reflective summary of both will be discussed with connections to the core concepts. In accordance to the nature of the research, recommendations will be made taking advantage of the particular findings which have failed to meet the facts of the literature. Finally, research limitations and the recommendations for future research will be outlined in the light of previous chapters.

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