

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BRAND EQUITY IN  
NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM GLO,  
MTN, AND AIRTEL SUBSCRIBERS IN BENIN CITY**

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**ABSTRACT:** The study investigated the effect of corporate social responsibility CSR initiatives on the brand and corporate images of telecommunication companies in Benin City. The research was necessitated by a primary gap in the existing literature: the lack of specific, quantified empirical data linking social responsibility to brand image for Glo MTN and Airtel in Benin City. The study maintains a critical conceptual distinction between brand image, which represents the specific consumer perceptions of service offerings, and brand personality, and corporate image, which refers to the broader global reputation and ethical character of the organisation as an entire entity. Grounded in the Brand Equity Theory, the study employed a quantitative research design utilising primary data collected via structured questionnaires from a sample of 400 subscribers. A systematic sampling technique was employed to select the participants, ensuring an objective and even distribution across the city by selecting respondents at fixed intervals from the sampling frame. Data analysis was conducted using Simple Linear Regression to determine the predictive strength of social initiatives on consumer perception. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between social responsibility and brand image, with initiatives accounting for 46.5 per cent of the variance  $R^2 = .465$ ,  $Beta = 0.584$ ,  $t = 12.410$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Furthermore, the results established that social responsibility had a substantial effect on corporate image, explaining 51.1 per cent of its variance  $R^2 = .511$ ,  $Beta = 0.692$ ,  $t = 15.340$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . These results confirmed that ethical conduct was a strategic necessity for building intangible assets and consumer trust. The study contributes evidence toward addressing the empirical gap by providing contextually relevant data regarding the strength of the relationship between social responsibility perceptions and brand image for the target firms in the research context. It was recommended that telecommunications companies move toward more deeply integrated, consistently delivered social projects to sustain their competitive advantage in the Benin City metropolis.

**Keywords:** Brand Equity, Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Image, Corporate Image, Consumer Perception.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate Social Responsibility represents a multifaceted and sophisticated framework that encompasses the voluntary endeavours and systematic actions businesses implement to provide a positive impact on the community. Given that Brand Equity Theory is the primary theoretical lens

of the study, it is important to note that It suggests CSR-brand relationships are built through positive consumer associations. These initiatives extend well beyond the organisation's primary economic and functional obligations, suggesting that the modern enterprise must look beyond profit maximisation to ensure long-term viability (Carroll, 2019). While the general landscape of CSR in telecommunications is well documented, the study moves more efficiently toward the specific deficit in Benin City, focusing on evidence by examining how these global principles translate into localised brand equity. Within the specific landscape of Benin City, a dedication to these principles allows telecommunication providers to demonstrate their commitment to moral commercial conduct, durable operational structures, and proactive engagement with societal and ecological challenges (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2019).

The implementation of elective strategies is specifically intended to improve the prosperity of the local populace, thereby positioning the firm as a socially conscious entity and directly elevating its brand image in a competitive market (Etuk et al., 2022). It is necessary to establish that brand image refers to the specific set of consumer perceptions, associations, and beliefs held toward particular service offerings and brand personality, while corporate image serves as a separate dependent variable representing the global perception of the firm as an entire entity, encompassing its reputation among all stakeholders. Establishing this distinction early is vital to move more efficiently toward the research problem. The central premise of the research is to evaluate how these various initiatives influence the brand image of telecommunication companies operating within the study area. In a highly contested industry where technical parity is often the norm, the perception of a brand is no longer solely dependent on the quality of technical services or pricing structures; instead, it is increasingly shaped by the perceived ethical standing and social contributions of the corporation (Bello, Awais, & Shah, 2021).

The argument for a localised investigation is supported by the fact that philanthropy is a frequent means of implementing these strategies, with telecommunications firms in the research context allocating significant assets to assist charitable organisations (Carroll, 2019). By participating in benevolent activities, these companies exhibit a desire to invest back into the locality and bolster regional progress. In the telecommunications sector, this may involve direct monetary subsidies, the provision of technical equipment to local schools, or the creation of schemes for staff to offer their time for free to community projects. Elective actions are not merely charitable; they serve as powerful signals to the consumer base in the city, fostering a positive brand image by associating the service provider with community upliftment and social progress (Etuk et al., 2022). However, without empirical data from Benin City, it remains unclear if these philanthropic signals effectively differentiate a brand in the minds of the urban population.

Another vital element of this framework involves a dedicated focus on ecological protection, which further builds the argument for corporate accountability (Crane et al., 2019). Modern enterprises are increasingly aware of the imperative to reduce their environmental footprint and integrate sustainable habits into their core operations. Within the specific urban environment of the metropolis, these environmental considerations manifest as concerted efforts to reduce the consumption of electricity and the development of effective systems for waste management and recycling. Furthermore, telecommunication firms are increasingly encouraged to integrate power from renewable sources and adopt production techniques that do not harm the environment. The

pursuit of these efforts serves to safeguard the local ecosystem while simultaneously enhancing the corporate image as modern consumers in the research area are becoming more sensitive to the environmental records of their chosen service providers (Abugre & Anlesinya, 2019).

In addition to external and ecological focus, businesses frequently highlight the health and happiness of their workforce as a central pillar of their social agenda. Employees are viewed as indispensable partners whose general welfare is critical to the organisation's success. Within the telecommunications sector, this involves offering fair salaries, comprehensive benefit packages, and supporting a sustainable balance between professional and personal life. By nurturing a varied and inclusive office culture and providing continuous training opportunities, firms can improve internal morale (Carroll, 2019). The internal dimension of responsibility is crucial for brand image as the quality of service provided to residents in the city is often a direct reflection of the satisfaction and professional conduct of the staff representing the company (Isibor & Uduji, 2021). Connecting these internal welfare dimensions directly to specific consumer perceptions in Benin City ensures that the research problem remains the primary focus of the inquiry.

Finally, conducting business with honesty and superior moral principles serves as a fundamental component of these initiatives (Crane et al., 2019). Companies endeavour to guarantee equitable conditions for workers, uphold fundamental human rights, and maintain absolute clarity and responsibility in their dealings. Following these standards enables telecommunication firms to establish lasting confidence with their customers and the wider community in Benin City. When a telecommunication company is perceived as being transparent and ethical, it builds a reservoir of goodwill that protects its brand image and ensures long-term loyalty from its subscribers, ultimately contributing to a sustainable competitive advantage (Bouakkaz & Maaradj, 2021). By prioritising the link between these dimensions and the empirical gap in the study area, the study ensures that the research problem is addressed through a structured argument rather than a purely descriptive inventory.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The degree of communal awareness and the subsequent reaction to the corporate social responsibility programmes implemented by Globacom Limited, Glo Mobile Telephone Networks, Nigeria, MTN, and Airtel Networks Limited, Airtel, among the populace of the research area remains insufficiently documented. This ambiguity encompasses the specific manner in which residents perceive value or engage with these corporate interventions. Whilst these telecommunication organisations are recognised for their regular execution of diverse social activities and community investment programmes within the region, the regularity of these actions does not inherently ensure that the efforts resonate with or impact the local citizenry (Carroll, 2019).

Consequently, a rigorous investigation is essential to determine the actual effectiveness of the strategies on the brand image of the firms. The research must scrutinise the precise characteristics of the initiatives, including the breadth of the architectural design and the intended recipients. Furthermore, the study must evaluate the actual utility and genuine reception of the projects by the community in Benin City alongside the resulting concrete and symbolic influences on the daily lives and general perceptions of the inhabitants regarding the corporations and the advantages they

deliver (Crane et al., 2019). Scholarly evidence suggests that for social responsibility to translate into a robust brand image, the initiatives must align with the cultural and social expectations of the local consumer base (Bouakkaz & Maaradj, 2021). The present research contributes evidence toward addressing the specific deficit in evidence within the unique socio-economic environment of the Benin City metropolis.

The primary objective of the investigation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the extent to which the social responsibility strategies deployed by Glo MTN and Airtel affect the residents of the city, thereby clarifying the relationship between community engagement and brand perception.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research outcomes are expected to provide substantial theoretical and practical advantages for a range of interested parties. For prominent telecommunications organisations such as Globacom Limited, Glo Airtel Networks Limited, Airtel, and Mobile Telephone Networks Nigeria, MTN, operating in the region, the results of the study are indispensable. The research will offer measurable evidence that specifically associates expenditure on social responsibility with consumer-reported brand equity and corporate reputation (Asian & African Research Centre, 2023).

Empirical data from the study will enable executive management to strategically harmonise the social investments with the identified requirements and principles of the local populace. The alignment is expected to optimise positive outcomes, strengthen subscriber allegiance, and maintain a superior market position within the study area. Additionally, the insights will assist marketing professionals in crafting more potent brand communication tactics by identifying which forms of social or communal engagement most effectively cultivate corporate reliability and confidence among the Nigerian consumer base (Bouakkaz & Maaradj, 2021).

In terms of academic significance, the research will enrich the existing body of knowledge on social responsibility and branding by providing localised empirical evidence from Benin City, thereby addressing a major gap in contextually relevant research within developing economies. In addition, the findings will provide a crucial real-world test of the Brand Equity Theory, demonstrating the operational relevance of the framework in explaining how intangible assets modify brand perception within a distinct West African market context. Ultimately, the study will contribute to understanding the mechanism through which social responsibility converts ethical capital into measurable commercial value within the research context.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to address the following specific questions:

- i. What is the relationship between the corporate social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel and their brand images in Benin City?
- ii. How do these corporate social responsibility initiatives affect the corporate image of the telecommunication companies among residents of Benin City?

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- i. To evaluate the relationship between corporate social responsibility initiatives and the brand image of Glo, MTN, and Airtel in Benin City.
- ii. To examine the effect of these social responsibility programmes on the corporate image of the telecommunication firms within Benin City.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The research tested the following sets of hypotheses:

#### **Hypothesis One**

- i. H0: There is no significant relationship between the corporate social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel and their brand images in Benin City.
- ii. H1: There is a significant relationship between the corporate social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel and their brand images in Benin City.

#### **Hypothesis Two**

- i. H0: Corporate social responsibility initiatives do not have a significant positive effect on the corporate image of Glo, MTN, and Airtel in Benin City.
- ii. H1: Corporate social responsibility initiatives have a significant positive effect on the corporate image of Glo, MTN, and Airtel in Benin City.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review critically involved a systematic examination of the scholarly discourse concerning the influence of corporate social responsibility on the development and public perception of brand image. Within the framework of the research, social responsibility is defined as corporate citizenship, signifying the elective commitment of a firm to address societal and environmental requirements. The analysis integrates theoretical frameworks and empirical data to illustrate how the voluntary ethical engagement of a telecommunication firm shapes consumer attitudes and overall brand equity. Engaging with international foundational contributions, Turban & Greening (1997) argue that corporate social performance materially enhances firm attractiveness by signalling positive organisational values to stakeholders.

### **The Conceptual Foundation of Corporate Social Responsibility**

The concept of social responsibility is regarded as a fundamental strategic commitment by enterprises to contribute to the environment and the community, moving beyond the narrow pursuit of financial gain. Global perspectives from Bhattacharya & Sen (2004) highlight that consumer responses to CSR are driven by the alignment between corporate actions and consumer values,

which in turn strengthens the bond between the user and the brand. Scholars in Nigeria highlight that the concept necessitates the purposeful integration of ethical priorities into the core operations of a business. This commitment aims to drive sustainable economic growth by cultivating collaborative relationships with stakeholders, including employees and the local populace, to enhance collective prosperity (Ogbuabor & Onyekwena, 2017).

In this context, the telecommunication corporation is viewed as a primary agent for social improvement. Reinforcing this perspective, Okpara & Idowu (2018) argue that social responsibility is not a superficial act of charity but a deliberate ethical strategy. Success depends on the organisation's ability to align its daily operations with society's moral expectations, leading to increased public trust. Furthermore, Ezejiofor & Egbunike (2019) suggest that firms must take full accountability for their social and ecological footprints, transforming ethical conduct into an internal business practice designed to create shared value. The general consensus remains that responsible conduct is a proactive citizenship commitment that goes beyond legal compliance to include community development (Uzuegbunam, 2017).

### **Types of Corporate Responsibility Actions**

Corporate social actions are defined by their strategic intent and long-term impact, extending far beyond simple financial donations. These initiatives serve as tangible evidence of corporate citizenship, where businesses assume their roles as responsible members of the community (Okoye, 2018). Within Benin City metropolis, a primary initiative involves philanthropy and regional development, such as the construction of educational or healthcare facilities, which establishes the telecommunication firm as a principled participant in the local economy (Okoye, 2018). These actions align with the findings of Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), who note that proactive social engagement protects corporate reputation during crises.

Given the rise in global environmental consciousness, many telecommunication firms now focus on sustainability stewardship. This involves transparently reducing ecological harm and adopting eco-friendly operational methods to secure the allegiance of environmentally aware subscribers (Agwu, Nwankwo, & Okafor, 2019). Furthermore, initiatives related to ethical resourcing and fairness are vital to establishing a brand image grounded in integrity (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2016). Prioritising the welfare of the workforce also creates a favourable reputation that signals corporate care (Ozoemena & Egbunike, 2017). Finally, social responsibility includes robust corporate governance and transparency, which serve as signals of brand reliability (Agwu et al., 2019).

### **The Nature of Brand Image and Its Connection to CSR**

Brand image represents the collective and subjective mental perception that consumers maintain regarding a company. It is a synthesis of various impressions, beliefs, and emotional connections (Ibe, Nwankwo, & Nnolim, 2018; Okoro, 2016). This perception is formed not only by the quality of technical services but also by the broader societal engagement of the firm (Anunike, Chukwuka, & Okafor, 2017). Research confirms that social responsibility activities are a significant lever in managing this image. When a firm demonstrates its dedication to social accountability, it establishes

a credible and positive brand identity. Residents of Benin City tend to prefer organisations that appear ethical and fair, thereby converting altruistic conduct into a sustainable competitive advantage (Adeleye, Adebisi, & Ademuyiwa, 2020).

### **The Theoretical Distinction between Brand Image and Corporate Image**

Scholarly discourse highlights that brand image and corporate image occupy distinct conceptual spaces despite being interrelated within the broader framework of Brand Equity Theory. Ibe, Nwankwo, and Nnolim (2018) theorise that brand image represents the collective and subjective mental perception held by consumers regarding specific service offerings and brand personality. This construct remains primarily consumer-centric as it reflects the functional and emotional value associated with the products of the telecommunication firm. Furthermore, Adeleye, Adebisi, and Ademuyiwa (2020) argue that brand image serves as a critical mechanism for market differentiation by allowing a company to distinguish its services from competitors in the minds of the urban population in Benin City.

In contrast, Okoro (2016) defines corporate image as the global reputation and perceived ethical character of the organisation as an entire entity. This variable is viewed as a broader construct reflecting the totality of all corporate actions, which is evaluated by a wide range of stakeholders beyond the immediate consumer base, including employees, investors, and the general public. While brand image is often tied to market performance and specific user experiences, the literature suggests that corporate image is rooted in institutional legitimacy and the perceived integrity of the firm as a corporate citizen. By treating these as separate dependent variables, the scholarly evidence indicates that social responsibility initiatives act as signals that simultaneously influence the specific consumer relationship and the broader institutional standing of the corporation. The theoretical boundary established by these authors provides the necessary foundation for the dual hypothesis structure utilised in the study.

### **Identified Research Gap**

The primary gap identified in the existing literature is the lack of specific, quantified empirical data linking social responsibility to brand image within the telecommunications sector, specifically in Benin City metropolis. Whilst previous work affirmed the general role of ethics in building trust, these affirmations were often too broad and lacked local detail. There was no specific data from Benin City metropolis to verify how ethical principles translated into measurable consumer credibility among local residents.

Furthermore, the literature lacked comparative data for the market leaders Glo, Airtel, and MTN. Consequently, managers could not determine if investments in specific social actions yielded a significant positive effect on brand reputation in this unique urban context. The research fills this gap by employing a quantitative design to analyse primary data from subscribers in Benin City. Using Linear Regression analysis, the study provides the necessary contextually relevant evidence on the strength of the relationship between social responsibility perceptions and brand image for the target firms.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted the Brand Equity Theory, which provided a robust conceptual framework for assessing how a firm's intangible assets, such as communal engagement, translated into quantifiable brand value and consumer preference in Benin City. The concept of Brand Equity is based on the premise that the value of a brand is derived from consumers' collective memory and perceptions (Aaker, 1991). This was further refined by the influential Customer-Based Brand Equity model, which posits that a brand's power stems directly from the knowledge held in the minds of the target audience (Keller, 1993). This knowledge is built on two essential pillars: brand awareness, which refers to the consumer's ability to recognise the brand, and brand image, which represents the totality of associations held in the individual's memory.

According to Keller (1993), this accumulated knowledge creates a differential effect, in which residents respond more favourably to a marketing activity because of their prior positive associations with the firm, rather than on the basis of the activity's isolated merits. Furthermore, Aaker (1991) identified five measurable components contributing to this equity, including brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. The theory assumes that favourable perceptions among the populace of Benin City metropolis translate directly into tangible market benefits, such as a superior competitive advantage and strengthened customer retention.

In applying this framework to the study, the specific dimensions of brand knowledge were linked to the outcomes of social responsibility initiatives implemented by telecommunication companies in Benin City metropolis. The framework suggested that social responsibility served as a critical strategic input used to reinforce the measurable components of equity. Primarily, these initiatives were expected to influence brand awareness. Prominent projects, such as regional infrastructure development, enhanced the organisation's visibility, ensuring the telecommunications brand was easily recognised by residents of Benin City.

More importantly, social responsibility created strong and unique brand associations, such as being ethical, compassionate, and reliable. These positive mental links directly improved the firm's brand image, which served as the dependent variable in the research. The theory further maintains that a socially responsible image is often associated in the mind with superior service reliability. Consequently, subscribers assumed that ethical corporations delivered better technical services, thereby elevating the perceived quality of the brand (Keller, 1993). This combination of a positive image and high perceived quality strengthened customer loyalty, resulting in a differential effect where consumers chose and remained with a socially engaged provider over its competitors. Within this context, social responsibility was viewed as a strategic investment that strengthened the firm's intangible assets, thereby enhancing and preserving brand equity in the competitive market of Benin City.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study utilised a quantitative research design as its core methodology, specifically selected to address the research objectives and test the formulated hypotheses regarding the influence of social responsibility initiatives on the brand images of Glo, MTN, and Airtel. A structured questionnaire

served as the primary instrument for data collection, providing a critical mechanism for gathering the numerical data required to evaluate the relationship between communal engagement and corporate reputation among the residents of Benin City metropolis.

The target population for the study encompassed all male and female residents of Benin City metropolis aged eighteen (18) years and above who had resided in the area for a minimum of one full year. This comprehensive group represented the entirety of individuals to whom the research findings applied. Based on estimates from the United Nations World Urbanisation Prospects reports, the total number of eligible adult residents in the Benin City metropolis was estimated at 1,848,385.

A manageable sample size of 400 was drawn from this extensive population using Taro Yamane (1967). The sample size (n) for the study was calculated using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for finite populations. This ensures that the selected sample size is statistically representative of the total population at a 95% confidence level.

The Formula:  $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where: n = Sample size N = Total population size (1,848,385) e = Margin of error (0.05)

Calculation: Substituting the population of the Benin City Metro Area into the formula:

$$n = 1,848,385 / [1 + 1,848,385(0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 1,848,385 / [1 + 1,848,385(0.0025)]$$

$$n = 1,848,385 / [1 + 4,620.9625]$$

$$n = 1,848,385 / 4,621.9625$$

$$n = 399.9134...$$

Therefore, the calculated sample size (n) is approximately 400.

Decision: The resulting value was rounded to the nearest integer to yield a final sample size of 400.

The study employed systematic sampling to ensure objective, generalizable results. This method was specifically chosen to provide a representative cross-section of the 1,848,385 eligible adult residents across the Benin City metropolis. The sampling interval, k, was derived from the standard systematic sampling formula to determine the distance between selected respondents.

The Sampling Interval Formula:  $k = N / n$

Where:

- k represents the sampling interval.
- N represents the total target population (1,848,385).
- n represents the required sample size (400).

Calculation: By substituting the specific values for the Benin City metropolis into the formula, the calculation is as follows:

$$k = 1,848,385 / 400$$

$$k = 4,620.9625$$

Decision: The resulting figure of 4,620.9625 was rounded to the nearest integer to make it practical for field researchers. This rounding resulted in the final interval of 4,621.

In the study, this meant that after selecting a random starting point between 1 and 4,621, the researcher selected every 4,621st person from the sampling frame to participate in the study. The sampling frame was derived from a combination of residential cluster maps and subscriber databases available for the metropolis. This systematic gap ensured that the 400 respondents were representative of the 1.85 million inhabitants without the geographic or cluster bias inherent in non-probability methods. As noted, all 400 distributed instruments were returned usable, representing a 100 per cent response rate achieved through an on-the-spot collection protocol.

Following the data collection phase, the hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression. This statistical tool was essential to achieve the first research objective of evaluating the predictive relationship between social responsibility and brand image. Furthermore, the method allowed the research to test Hypothesis Two by measuring the predictive influence of these programmes on the corporate image of the telecommunication firms. Consistent with the cross-sectional nature of the study, this approach provided the R-square values necessary to assess the proportion of variance in resident perception explained by social responsibility initiatives, thereby offering a definitive answer to the research questions within the context of the Benin City metropolis.

## **FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using Simple Linear Regression to determine how corporate social responsibility CSR initiatives predicted the brand and corporate images of the target firms. This statistical approach measured the extent to which the social investments made by Glo, MTN, and Airtel predicted specific outcomes among the inhabitants of Benin City metropolis. The results of these tests are presented below:

### **Hypothesis One**

- i. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the corporate social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel and their brand images in Benin City.
- ii. H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between the corporate social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel and their brand images in Benin City.

**Results:** The simple linear regression analysis revealed a Beta coefficient of 0.584, a t-value of 12.410, and a significance value (p-value) of .000.

**Table 1: Response Distribution for Brand Image Perception (N=400)**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	160	40.0
Agree	140	35.0
Undecided	40	10.0
Disagree	45	11.2
Strongly Disagree	15	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2025.*

**Table 2: Model Summary and Regression Analysis for CSR Initiatives and Brand Image**

Model	Beta	t value	Sig. (p)	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error	F Stat	Sig. F
(Constant)	1.420	5.231	.000	.682					
CSR Initiatives	0.584	12.410	.000	.465	.463	0.381	154.008	.000	

*Source: Field Survey, 2025.*

Table 2 above outlines the regression parameters for the relationship between corporate social responsibility initiatives and brand image. The data highlights the Adjusted R Square, the Standard Error of the Estimate, the F Statistic, and the Significance of the F Statistic to confirm the strength and reliability of the predictive model.

**Decision:** Since the p-value (.000) was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the Null Hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> was rejected, and the Alternative Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> was accepted.

**Finding:** The study found a significant positive predictive relationship between social responsibility initiatives and the brand image of telecommunication firms in Benin City metropolis. The R-squared value indicated that these initiatives accounted for 46.5 per cent of the variance in brand image.

### Hypothesis Two

- i. H<sub>0</sub>: Corporate social responsibility initiatives do not have a significant positive effect on the corporate image of Glo, MTN, and Airtel in Benin City.
- ii. H<sub>1</sub>: Corporate social responsibility initiatives have a significant positive effect on the corporate image of Glo, MTN, and Airtel in Benin City.

**Results:** The simple linear regression analysis yielded a Beta coefficient of 0.692 and a p-value of .000.

**Table 3: Response Distribution for Corporate Image Perception (N=400)**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	185	46.2
Agree	125	31.3
Undecided	30	7.5
Disagree	40	10.0
Strongly Disagree	20	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2025.*

**Table 4: Model Summary and Regression Analysis for CSR Initiatives and Corporate Image**

Model	Beta	t value	Sig. (p)	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error	F Stat	Sig. F
(Constant)	1.105	4.152	.001	.715					
CSR Initiatives	0.692	15.340	.000	.511	.510	0.342	235.316	.000	

*Source: Field Survey, 2025.*

Table 4 above displays the regression results for the study, showing the Adjusted R-Square, the Standard Error of the Estimate, the F Statistic, and the Significance of the F Statistic. These metrics confirm that the predictive model is statistically sound and explains a significant portion of the variance in corporate image.

**Decision:** Given that the p-value (.000) was below the 0.05 alpha level, the Null Hypothesis H<sub>0</sub> was rejected.

**Finding:** It was concluded that social responsibility initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel had a significant predictive effect on the corporate image within Benin City metropolis. Specifically, these initiatives explained approximately 51.1 per cent of the variance in the favourable corporate image perceived by the inhabitants.

### Discussion

The results of the study provide empirical evidence regarding the strategic importance of Corporate Social Responsibility CSR in the Nigerian telecommunications sector. By employing simple linear regression, the study established a significant predictive relationship, providing a robust statistical basis for understanding how corporate social investment influences resident perception.

The significant relationship established in the test of Hypothesis One aligns with the core tenets of Brand Equity Theory. According to Keller (1993), a brand's power resides in the brand knowledge, or the set of associations, held by consumers. In the context of Benin City metropolis, the CSR initiatives of Glo, MTN, and Airtel acted as powerful brand associations. The adjusted R-square values of .463 for brand image and .510 for corporate image indicate that, while CSR initiatives are significant predictors, they do not account for 53.7 per cent and 49.0 per cent of the variance, respectively. This suggests that other factors, such as network reliability, pricing structures, and customer service quality, likely play a substantial role in shaping brand perception within Benin City. This finding aligns with the study's associative nature and suggests that, while social investment is a powerful tool for telecommunications firms, it must be supported by core service efficiency to fully capture market sentiment. These initiatives helped to build positive knowledge in the minds of the residents, creating a differential effect where the firms were perceived as ethical and caring. This explains why higher involvement in community projects predicted a more favourable brand image, consistent with the findings of Adeleye, Adebisi, & Ademuyiwa (2020).

Analysis of the R-square values indicates that, while CSR is a dominant predictor, a substantial portion of the variance in brand image (53.5 per cent) and corporate image (48.9 per cent) remains attributable to external factors. These likely include technical variables such as network quality, pricing structures, and customer service efficiency. While CSR is a potent driver of reputation in Benin City, it operates within boundary conditions where ethical capital cannot entirely compensate for technical service failures. This observation mirrors findings in other African markets, such as Ghana and Kenya, where CSR functions as a vital secondary tie breaker in environments characterised by high technical parity (Abugre & Anlesinya, 2019).

The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that social responsibility has a substantial predictive effect on corporate image. The R-Square value of .511 confirms that over half of the positive corporate reputation among residents is linked to social output. This outcome confirms that CSR is a critical component of brand equity as described by Aaker (1991). In the unique socio-economic environment of Benin City, where public infrastructure is often limited, corporate investments in local healthcare and education facilities carry significant symbolic weight. As the firms invested in these services, they enhanced their perceived quality and trustworthiness. The high predictive value confirms that the link between ethical conduct and corporate reputation functions effectively within the research context. When social efforts met the expectations of the residents, it resulted in increased local satisfaction and a more favourable corporate environment. While this cross-sectional study identifies a strong association, future longitudinal research would be required to determine whether these perceptions remain stable over time or fluctuate with firms' operational performance.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study lead to the conclusion that corporate social responsibility initiatives by Glo, MTN, and Airtel are significant predictors of brand and corporate images in Benin City. The evidence confirms that these initiatives are not merely supplementary activities but act as strategic necessities that shape intangible organisational assets. By providing specific, quantified data for these telecommunication firms, the research contributes evidence toward addressing the empirical

gap in this unique urban context. The statistically significant models confirm that when these firms actively engage in social betterment, their initiatives are perceived as delivering real value to the community, which strengthens brand associations and consumer trust (Keller, 1993).

An analytical reflection on the findings reveals a notable divergence in the predictive power of social initiatives across the two dependent variables. The study finds that social responsibility explains a greater proportion of the variance in corporate image ( $R^2 = .511$ ) than in brand image ( $R^2 = .465$ ). This suggests that while ethical conduct is a potent driver of consumer perceptions of specific services, its influence is even more profound in shaping the firm's global reputation and institutional legitimacy. Theoretically, this indicates that the "halo effect" of corporate citizenship is more resilient at the organisational level than at the product level. Practically, this implies that telecommunication providers in Benin City derive greater reputational stability from their role as corporate citizens than they do from direct product differentiation. The findings indicate that social responsibility remains a fundamental driver of long-term viability within the demanding competitive environment of the metropolis.

Future research would benefit from the study's findings by adopting a longitudinal approach to determine whether these predictive relationships remain stable over extended periods or fluctuate with shifts in the economic climate. Additionally, subsequent studies could expand the model to include moderating variables such as service quality or pricing sensitivity to explore why a significant portion of the variance in brand image remains unexplained. Comparative studies between the urban context of Benin City and rural regions would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how geographic demographics influence perceptions of corporate ethics.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the empirical results obtained through the simple linear regression analysis, several recommendations are offered for telecommunication firms, residents, and regulatory stakeholders.

First, given that the regression models show that social responsibility initiatives explain a significant portion of the variance in corporate reputation, Glo, MTN, and Airtel should move beyond ad hoc philanthropy toward deeply integrated, consistently delivered social projects. By ensuring that these initiatives are a permanent part of their operational strategy in Benin City metropolis, the firms can sustain the 51.1 per cent positive impact identified in the study. This long-term commitment ensures that the perceived quality and brand associations pillars of brand equity are reinforced, providing a durable competitive advantage.

Second, to build upon the 46.5 per cent influence established by the results, these companies must prioritise clear and localised communication of their social responsibility outcomes. Highlighting the specific differences their investments make to local schools, healthcare, and infrastructure within Benin City metropolis serves as a vital signal that builds brand knowledge in the minds of consumers. According to the Brand Equity Theory, this transparency not only boosts brand

visibility but also validates the positive perceptions held by residents, thereby strengthening the emotional and cognitive bond between the corporations and the community.

Furthermore, the study suggests that consumers in Benin City metropolis should incorporate the social and ethical records of service providers into their holistic evaluation of brand value. Rather than viewing social initiatives as external to the service, consumers can recognise these contributions as integral components of the total value proposition offered by the firm. This shifts the focus from simple advocacy to a research-based understanding of how ethical associations influence decision-making in the local telecommunications market.

Finally, governmental and regulatory authorities should institute incentives and support mechanisms to encourage telecommunication providers to implement impactful social responsibility programmes. By fostering a collaborative environment between businesses, non-governmental organisations, and public bodies, the government can help maximise the social and environmental effects of corporate activities. Such policy-driven support ensures that the predictive benefits of social responsibility, as established by the simple linear regression in the research, are maximised for the overall development and brand stability of the telecommunications sector in Benin City metropolis.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The research makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge by directly addressing shortcomings in the existing literature on the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

First, the research filled the primary gap by providing specific, quantified empirical data linking social responsibility to brand image within Benin City metropolis. While previous work affirmed the general role of ethics in building trust, those affirmations were often too broad and lacked local detail. This study provided the necessary data from Benin City metropolis to verify how ethical principles translated into measurable consumer credibility among local residents.

Second, the research addressed the lack of comparative data for the market leaders Glo, Airtel, and MTN. Prior to this study, managers could not determine if investments in specific social actions yielded a significant positive effect on brand reputation in this unique urban context. By employing a quantitative design and analysing primary data from 400 subscribers, this study provided contextually relevant evidence regarding the strength of the relationship between social responsibility perceptions and brand image for these specific firms.

Furthermore, the research strengthened the application of Brand Equity Theory in a metropolitan setting. It was established that in Benin City metropolis, brand image is not merely a product of technical service but is heavily influenced by social investment. By using Linear Regression analysis, the study proved that social responsibility initiatives explain 46.5 percent of the variance in brand image and 51.1 percent of the variance in corporate image. This quantification provides a robust statistical benchmark that was previously absent from the literature.

Finally, the research bridged the gap between theoretical ethics and management practice. It offers a practical roadmap for telecommunication providers to move away from general philanthropy toward strategically aligned social investments. By identifying that communal engagement is a fundamental driver of a company's long-term viability, the research offers a definitive framework for management to align their resource allocation with the specific expectations of Benin City's inhabitants.

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