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Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Equity in the case of Public Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of corporate social responsibility on the brand equity of public universities in Eastern Ethiopia. With a sample size of 204, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized to perform this study. Economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities were employed as independent variables. The research employed explanatory research designs. Using a questionnaire, data were obtained from primary sources and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The independent variables (Economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities) examined in the study had a substantial effect on the dependent variable of brand equity. In order to boost band equity, the researcher advises that public universities improve their corporate social responsibility though high engagement.

Keywords: Brand equity; Economic ethical; legal; philanthropic responsibilities

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1. Introduction

Currently, CSR initiatives serve as a source of competitive advantage on a global scale (Eyasu & Arefayne, 2020; Nave & Ferreira, 2019). Customers identify positively with a company that engages in CSR activities. Organizations and institutions use CSR methodologies as a tactic to garner public support for their presence in global markets (Marakova, Wolak-Tuzimek, & Tučková, 2021; Mehmood & Hanaysha, 2022; Arega, 2019). This initiative creates advantages for businesses in the form of increased consumer identification with the company and will aid in the development of brand equity. Brand equity is essential for building brand image and increasing a company's market competitiveness. (Rhou, Singal, & Koh, 2016; Belachew, 2021). CSR is a remarkable way to increase brand equity, promote a company's positive image, and attract current and potential customers (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020; Solomon, 2017; Robertson, 2009). .

The majority of previous research has demonstrated how CSR activities can benefit an organization and garner positive responses from their stakeholders (Kang & Namkung, 2018; Abdolvand, 2013). The finding demonstrates that companies that invest in CSR activities enjoy strong consumer loyalty, as well as healthy profits and a stable market position.

According to Selam Solomon (2017), Ethical; Philanthropic Responsibility, and consumer protection have a favorable and substantial effect on consumer satisfaction. Although other finding indicated social performance has a favorable impact on brand equity (Kellow & Kellow, 2021). Bedside, brand equity can be boost by utilizing CSR as a strategic instrument for positioning distinction (Gulema & Roba, 2021; Kassa, 2018). Economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic duties must be examined to determine organization are seen by their customers and activate brand equity (Degie & Kebede, 2019; Ying, Tikuye, & Shan, 2021). The execution of corporate social responsibility policies develops a relationship of trust that facilitates the commitment of stakeholders to the firm through actions such as supplier investments, consumer loyalty, and stockholder capital investments latter on affects organizational overall performance (Ying, Tikuye, & Shan, 2021).

A number of studies are done in In the Ethiopian context, (Belachew, 2021; Degie & Kebede, 2019; Kellow & Kellow, 2021; Eyasu & Arefayne, 2020)) however, except Belachew the rest scholars focus on the attitude of companies toward corporate social responsibility,, financial performance customer satisfaction in the manufacturing and other business sectors, but no studies were conducted on the perspective of public universities, with the exception of

Helen's (2017) study on Addis Ababa University. Thus, the goal of the study would be to analyze the impact of CSR on brand equity for eastern cluster public higher education institutions.

2. Review Literature

2.1. Introduction

Early in the 20th century, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was developed (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016; Madrakhimova, 2013; Bowen, 2013; Sethi, 1979). Bowen 1953 explicitly defined business ethics as "the responsibility of businesspeople to adopt those policies, make those decisions, and follow those paths of action which are desirable in terms of our society's goals and ideals" (Freeman & Dmytriyev, 2017; Sethi, Martell, & Demir, 2017). Sethi (1979) categorizes CSR into three categories (social obligation, social responsibility, and social responsiveness) and eight dimensions: search for legitimacy, ethical/norms, social accountability for corporate actions, operating strategy, response to social pressures, activities pertaining to governmental actions, legislative and political activities, and philanthropy.

2.2. CSR Theories

In the literature on corporate social responsibility, various authors have established distinct theories. This entails the stakeholders approach, Carroll's pyramid, legitimacy theory, ISO 2600, and so forth (Low, 2016; Bimir, 2016; Pappalardo, 2016; Carroll, 1999). In response to Friedman's criticism and the general accountability uncertainty among academics and managers, Carol's CSR Pyramid initially established the CSP paradigm. Carroll suggested that the complete responsibility of business should involve the simultaneous satisfaction of economic, legal, ethical, and charitable dimensions (Fernández Manuel, 2018; Carroll A. B., 2018). According to Carroll (1999) the obligations of enlighten firm are restricted to being profitable for shareholders, providing decent jobs for employees, and generating high-quality products for customers. Similarly, Company's obligations include adhering to the law and playing by the rules (obeying the regulations that govern the conduct of businesses inside the country) as well as making voluntary contributions to society and donating time and money to charitable causes.

The stakeholder theory is useful for identifying the stakeholders of the case under study, describing the corporate characteristics of the case, and, most importantly, explaining the extent to which the case institution applies either instrumental or normative attitudes, or both, to its relationships with its respective stakeholders (Jamali, 2008; Jones, Harrison, & Felps, 2018; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Donaldson and Preston share a similar structure (1995). Inform the reader that the theory can be used as a basis for analyzing the groups to whom the organization should be accountable. The third idea is the Legitimacy theory, which posits that organizations always strive to "guarantee" that "their operations are acceptable" to society (Bowen, 2013; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Diemont, Moore, & Soppe, 2016). Society analyzes the usefulness and legitimacy of an organization's actions since it depends on social resources that could be used for other purposes.

2.3. Brand equity

Brand Equity is the additional value that a brand confers on a product (Chang & Liu, 2009). It is a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name and symbol, which add or detract from the value provided to a firm and/or its customers (Bellia & Ingrassia, 2022). Studies shows that CSR has a positive effect on customers' tendencies and attitudes toward a company and its products. In other words, CSR can be used as a strategy to convert a brand into a competitive advantage. Few studies have examined the effect of CSR trends on brand equity elements (Belachew, 2021; Abdolvand, 2013; Kang & Namkung, 2018; Chung, Yu, Choi, & Shin, 2015). Brand loyalty, brand name recognition, perceived brand quality, brand associations; perceived quality, and other proprietary of brand assets are the sources of brand equity (Belachew, 2021; Kang & Namkung, 2018; Eyasu & Arefayne, 2020; Alam & Rubel, 2014). Corporate social responsibility performance cannot be successful unless the management of an organization supports it through brand enhancement (Asemah, Okpanachi, & Olumuji, 2013; Iguodala, 2018; Elobeid, Lele, & Kaifi, 2016; Rahman, Castka, & Love, 2019; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

2.4. Corporate Social Responsibility practices Vs Customer Satisfaction

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) investigated when, how, and for whom particular Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities are successful. Customers reacted positively to a company's CSR program when there was a similarity between the company's personality and its CSR operations. Alam and Rubel (2014) evaluated the impacts of service quality, consumer happiness, and corporate social responsibility on consumer purchase intentions and, ultimately, customer loyalty. The study revealed no correlation between corporate social responsibility awareness and buying intent. Nonetheless, a substantial correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction was identified. According to Chung et al. (2015), CSR influences customer satisfaction and loyalty favorably, while customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty positively.

2.5. CSR influences on brand equity

Diemont, Moore, and Soppe (2016) hypothesized that different literature studies have demonstrated a positive association between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the brand equity of businesses; however, there is no comprehensive study analyzing the relationship between CSR and brand equity. Thomson (1995) shown that when companies perform charitable activity or contribute to the public good, their brand spirit is boosted. Creyer and Ross (1997) shown a positive correlation between CSR performance and consumer perception of the brand.

Corporate social responsibility increases brand credibility in a controlled, informed approach (Barnes, 2011). The firm's reputation is the strongest link between CSR and marketing (Gulema & Roba, 2021). CSR publicity helps people remember the company (Elobeid, Lele, & Kaifi, 2016) ; promotes consumer brand recommendations, brand choice, and positive brand and product assessments, which benefits the firm economically (Eyasu & Arefayne, 2020; Belachew, 2021; Amin-Chaudhry, 2016).

Hasebur (2014) as mansion in Belachew (2021) show that there have been positive significant relationship observed between brand image and corporate social responsibility; customer satisfaction and corporate social responsibility and customer satisfaction and brand value relationship (Belachew, 2021) studied a research focused on the impact of corporate social responsibility on perceived product performance in scenarios in which the domain of a company's prosocial behavior was unrelated to its core competencies and the functional performance of its products.

CSR programs, which pertain to economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic concerns, have been found to have a low to medium influence on image and reputation (Eyasu & Arefayne, 2020; Gulema & Roba, 2021). Other shows socially responsible activities of a firm enhance the brand image of the firms' goods as well as the general image of the firm (Fernández Manuel, 2018; Gulema & Roba, 2021; Rahman, Castka, & Love, 2019). Beside, Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) identified CSR helps build a satisfied customer base and that customer satisfaction partially mediates the financial returns to CSR.

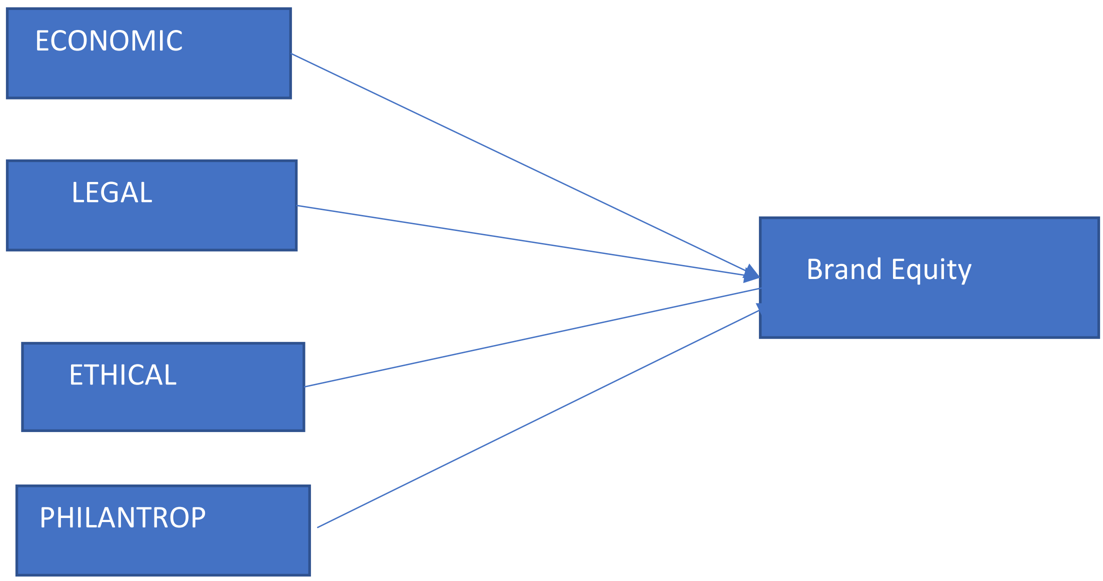

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

3. Material and method

3.1. Research Design

Explanatory research design were used for the current study in order to examine the effect of CSR's dimensions on brand equity. According to educational statistics, as of 2022, there are 83 private universities, and 42 public universities, and more than 35 institution of higher learning in Ethiopia. The study population included four public HEIs which were located in Dire Dawa administration. Those public HEIs namely Dire Dawa University, Haromaya University, Odabultum University and Jigjiga University From the above HEIs 600 customers of the HEIs included using multi stage sampling technique that was determining using Yamane (1967) sample size determination at 95% confidence level and with 0.05% level of precision. Self-administered questionnaires was prepared in the form of Likert scale to measure effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Equity.

3.2. Methods of Data Analysis

The researcher used multiple linear regression analysis method to examine the relationship between dependent (Brand Equity) and independent variables (Corporate Social Responsibility).

4. Data analysis

4.1. Introduction

Sample of 240 questionnaires were distributed to students of 4 public HEIs in eastern Ethiopia. A total of 204 questionnaires were returned from the respondents fully filled and was conducted with 85% response rate which is indicated as an excellent level.

Table .1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Valid Percent
Sex	Male	128	62.75%
	Female	76	37.25%
Age Group	18-25	118	57.84%
	26-50	86	42.16%
	Above 50	0	0
Level Educational Program	TVET Diploma	99	48.5%
	Degree	77	37.8%
	Master Degree	28	13.7%
Enrollment Year	first year	74	36.3%
	second year	77	37.8%
	third year	53	25.9%

Source: Survey data, 2023

As shown in Table 1 below, the majority 128 (62.75%) of the respondents are males, and 76(37.25 %) are females. With regard to age of the respondents, 118 (57.84%) of the respondents are in the age category of 18-25 years while 86 (42.16%) of the respondents are in the age category of 26 to 50 years. Therefore, the result shows that majority of the students were within the range of 18-25 age groups. Considering to the educational level they are studying, the lion's share 99 (48.5%) of respondents were Diploma level/program students, followed by those respondents who were studying Degree program which accounts to 77 (37.8%). The least proportion of respondents who accounts 28 (13.7%) were studying Master program. Regarding the year of enrollment of the respondents, the 2nd year students who account for 77 (37.8%) have the major share followed by the 1st year students which were 74 (36.3%). The 3rd year students have least proportion among the respondents which was 53 (25.9%).

4.2. Descriptive analysis for dimension of corporates social Responsibility

Economic responsibility indicators mean score of shows the HEIs are at the range of agree, above 4.10. The mean values for the indicators of legal responsibility are above 4.00, suggesting the respondents agree on the existence of the legal responsibility in the PHEIs. From this the researcher infers that the PHEIs respects the norms defined in the law, PHEIs are concerned to respect and protect their natural environment, the PHEIs abides by good moral principle in conducting business, and there is no discrimination in their service delivery. As presented in a table 2. Mean score for ethical responsibility indicators is at a range of agree. This shows that PHEIs ensures honesty and quality in all their services, PHEIs have good code of conducts, PHEIs are trustful institutions, PHEIs registers and resolves complaints from students, and PHEIs behaves ethically and honestly with their students. The minimum mean is computed for statement that PHEIs are trustful institutions with the value of 4.07. This suggests that PHEIs comply their institution's ethical responsibility as perceived by the students.

Table 2:- Dimension of social responsibility

Economic	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***
HEIs try to obtain maximum profits from CSR activities.	204	4.10	.547
HEIs always try to improve its economic performance through CSR activities.	204	4.10	.510
HEIs try to obtain maximum long term success with customers.	204	4.22	.598
HEIs provide quality education.	204	4.38	.643
HEIs ensure customers satisfaction.	204	4.37	.642
The ability to deliver what they promise.	204	4.18	.577
HEIs are successful organizations.	204	4.05	.532
Legal Responsibility	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***
HEIs respects the norms defined in the law.	204	4.05	.441
HEIs are concerned to respect and protect their natural environment.	204	4.11	.551
HEIs abide by good moral principle in conducting business.	204	4.21	.648
There is no discrimination in the service delivery.	204	4.16	.566
Ethical Responsibility	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***
HEIs ensure honesty and quality in all their services.	204	4.12	.525
PHEIs have good code of conducts.	204	4.16	.619
The PHEIs are trustful institution.	204	4.12	.578
PHEIs register and resolve complaints from customers.	204	4.21	.601
HEIs behave ethically and honestly with their customers.	204	4.15	.571
Ethical Responsibility	***N***	***Mean***	***Std. Deviation***
HEIs direct part of their budget to donations and social work.	204	4.30	.654
PHEIs participate in local community activities.	204	4.25	.578
PHEIs gives financial support to local community activities and projects	204	4.24	.688
HEIs provide sponsorship for activities that support society.	204	4.17	.530
HEIs are concerned to improve general wellbeing of society.	204	4.30	.663

Source: survey data, 2023

The mean score for ethical responsibility indicators is at a range of agree. This shows that PHEIs direct part of their budget to donations and social works, PHEIs ensures honesty and quality in all their services, PHEIs have good code of conducts, PHEIs register and resolve complaints from customers, and PHEIs behaves ethically and honestly with their customers. This suggests that PHEIs comply the ethical responsibility as perceived by the customers.

4.3. Brand Equity

Mean value for the indicators of brand equity is in the range of agree from 4.09 to 4.30. This suggests that students prefer their current university s or university to others, students respect other students/peoples who wear their institution's brand, prefer to learn at the institution even have same features, prefer to learn at this institution if another is as good as other, and the Seems smarter to learn here if another is not different.

Table 3:- Brand Equity

	N	*Mean*	*l. Deviation*
CSR is a concept where university manages its social activities for the wellbeing of the society.	204	4.22	.546
I am aware of CSR activities done by this University.	204	4.09	.699
I would prefer a university which is involved in CSR activities.	204	4.11	.551
CSR activities done by the university improves its brand image.	204	4.30	.623
I can recognize this university /brand among other competing brands.	204	4.15	.703
Some characteristics of this university come to my mind quickly.	204	4.26	.679
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of this university.	204	4.11	.682
I respect those students/peoples who wear the university's brand.	204	4.27	.613
It makes sense to be customer of this university instead of any other university s, even if they are the same.	204	4.18	.618
I would prefer to learn/work at this university, even if another university has same features as this one.	204	4.16	.600
If there is another university as good as this one, i prefer to learn at this university.	204	4.18	.577
If another university is not different from this one in any way, it seems smarter to learn at this university.	204	4.29	.628
Total	**)4**	**4.19**	

Source: survey data, 2023

4.4. Multiple Linear Regressions

In this study multiple linear regressions were conducted in order to examine the effect of corporate social responsibilities on brand equity. Before running of the regression assumptions of regression were checked.

4.4.1. Assumption Tests of Regression Analysis

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) quantifies how much the variance if inflated. If the value of tolerance is less than 0.1 & simultaneously, the value of VIF are 10 and above, then the multi-collinearity is problematic. It is to mean that, If the VIF value lies less 10, then there is no multi-collinearity and if the tolerance< 0.1orVIF>10, then there is multi-collinearity. Based on the coefficients output collinearity statistics, obtained VIF less than or equal to of 1.959, meaning that the VIF value obtained is less than 10, it can be concluded that there is no multi-collinearity symptoms.

Table 4. Multi-Collinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
ant)		
conomic Mean	.609	1.641
egal Mean	.489	2.043
thical Mean	.646	1.549
hilanthropic Mean	.511	1.959

Source: survey data, 2023

4.4.1.1. Residual Normality and linearity Test

Test of normality

One of the classical linear regression models assumptions is the error term should be normally distributed or expected value of the error term should be normally distributed or expected value of the errors terms should be zero (E(UT))=0). The researcher used histogram to identify normal distribution of residuals and the result indicates that standard residuals are a little bit far away from the curve, many of the residuals are fairly close more to the curve and the histogram is bell shaped. This implies that the majority of scores lie around the center of the distribution (so the largest bars on the histogram are all around the central value. Therefore, this indicates that the residuals are normally distributed.

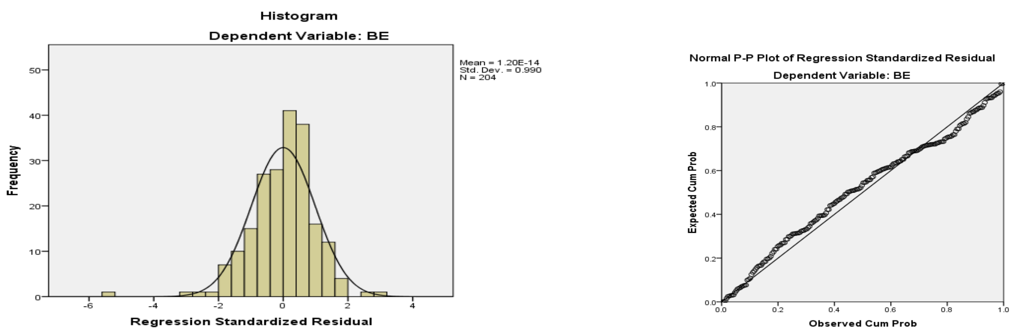

Fig.2. Residual Normality and Linearity Test
Source: survey data, 2023

Tests of linearity

As it is shown in the figure 4.2, the P-P plot of residuals reveals no large deviation in the spread of the residuals that almost all residuals lay on the linear straight line. Therefore, this indicates that the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is linear.

4.4.2. Model summary

In order to see contribution of corporate social responsibility domains in affecting the brand equity, multiple linear regression analysis was employed. Brand equity was used as the dependent variable while domains of corporate social responsibility were used as the independent variables. The findings presented in the following table.

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	**.746[a]**	**.556**	**.547**	**.22700**

a. Predictors: (Constant), CSR Economic Mean, CSR Legal Mean, CSR Ethical Mean, CSR Philanthropic Mean

Source: survey data, 2023

The model summary is used to identify overall effect of CSR on brand equity. As it is shown in the table, R squared is 0.556 suggesting that 55.6% variation in dependent variable is explained by independent variables used in the model. This implies that 55.6% variation in brand equity is affected by CSR.

Table 6. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) table

Model		**n of Squares**	**Df**	**ean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	**12.842**	**4**	**3.211**	**62.305**	**.000[b]**
	Residual	**10.254**	**199**	**.052**		
	Total	**23.097**	**203**			

a. Dependent Variable: BE

b. Predictors: (Constant), PHCSR, ECCSR, LCSR, ETHCSR

Source: survey data, 2023

The above ANOVA table shows the overall significance/acceptability of the model from a statistical perspective. As p-value is (.000), which is less than $p<0.05$, this indicates that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance. The results from the study are presented in the ANOVA table (see Table 6). The F value serves to test how well the regression model (Model 1) fits the data. If the probability associated with the F statistics is small, the hypothesis that R-square = 0 is rejected. For this study, the computed F statistic is 62.305, with an observed significance level of $P<0.005$. Thus, the assumption that there is no linear relationship between the predictors and dependent variable is rejected and that the independent variables significantly affected Brand equity. This shows the regression equation is strong enough to explain the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. $H0 = \beta1 = \beta2 = \beta3 = \beta4 = 0$ At least one of the coefficients is different from zero.

4.4.3. Test on Individual Regression Coefficients

In section 4.4.3 we showed that there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Now we interested in testing hypotheses on the individual regression coefficients. These tests are helpful in determining the value of each of the repressors in the model. To further test the causality between the independent and dependent variables, regression analysis has also been applied here. Based on this the following model has been developed:

$$\mathbf{BE} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\, \mathit{CSR}\textbf{Economic Domain} + \beta_2\, \mathit{CSR}\textbf{Legal Domain} + \beta_3\, \mathit{CSREthical\ Domain} + \beta_4\, \mathit{CSR}\textbf{Philanthropic } \mathit{Domain} + \epsilon$$

Table 7. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.969	.214		4.537	.000
CSR Economic Mean	.163	.056	.177	2.931	.004
CSR Legal Mean	.208	.058	.240	3.557	.000
CSR Ethical Mean	.146	.050	.170	2.897	.004
CSR Philanthropic Mean	.254	.052	.320	4.840	.000

Source: survey data, 2023

This study has identified that economic responsibility has significant positive effect on brand equity of PHEIs at significance level of 5%. This suggests that complying the economic responsibility that include creating maximum long term success with customers, providing quality education, ensuring customer satisfaction, delivering what it promises, success organization and responsiveness to the complaints of its customers, resulted on brand equity.

Legal responsibility has significant positive effect on brand equity of the PHEIs at 5%. This suggests that legal responsibility of the PHEIs has resulted on brand equity for the PHEIs. From this the researcher infers that improving legal responsibility compliance results on higher brand equity that PHEIs respects the norms defined in the law, the PHEIs are concerned to respect and protect their natural environment, the PHEIs abides by good moral principle in conducting business and there is no discrimination in the service delivery.

Since ethical responsibility is statistically significant at significance level of 5%, the researcher cannot accept the null hypothesis that ethical responsibility does not affect brand equity instead reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis that ethical responsibility has positive effect on brand equity. The PHEIs ensures honesty and quality in all its services, the PHEIs have good code of conducts, the PHEIs are trustful institutions, the PHEIs register and resolve complaints from customers, and PHEIs behaves ethically and honestly with their customers that positively affects the brand equity.

Philanthropic Responsibility has positive effect on brand equity at 5% in PHEIs since the PHEIs participates in local community activities, the PHEIs give financial support to local community activities and projects (e.g. charitable donations), The PHEIs provides sponsorship for activities that support the society, and the PHEIs are concerned to improve general wellbeing of society.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study was conducted with an objective of identifying the contribution of corporate social responsibility on brand equity of HEIs. Based on the finding of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. Corporate social responsibility significantly affects the band equity of HEIs. It has about ---5% of contribution on band equity. Economic responsibility has positive effect on brand equity of the HEIs at 5% through complying the economic responsibility that include creating maximum long term success with customers, providing quality education, ensuring customer satisfaction, delivering what is promised and successful institutions. Legal responsibility has positive and significant effect on brand equity at 5%. Improving legal responsibility compliance by respecting the norms defined in the law, abiding moral principle in conducting business, and avoiding discrimination in the service delivery has positive role on brand equity of the HEIs. Ethical responsibility has significant positive effect on brand equity of HEIs at 5% that HEIs ensures honesty and quality in all their services, has good code of conducts, they are trustful companies, register and resolve complaints from customers, and behaves ethically and honestly with their students. Philanthropic responsibility has positive contribution to brand equity of HEIs at 5%.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions reached, following recommendations are provided to HEIs. Since corporate social responsibility has positive and significant effect on brand equity, the PHEIs are recommended to improve corporate management on social responsibility to attract and earn enough customers to their maximum capacity. Economic responsibility of the PHEIs must be improved to build band equity institutions. The HEIs are recommended to create stronger partnership with customers, providing quality of new and existing services that ensures customer satisfaction, improve financial performance of the HEIs and responsiveness to the complaints of its customers. Further the HEIs is recommended to improve legal responsibility by respecting the law, abiding moral principle, respecting and protecting their natural environment, and avoiding discrimination in the service delivery. Ethical responsibility has significant positive effect on band equity. Therefore, it is recommended to be more ethical in the view of the current and potential customers by good code of conducts and being trustful institutions. Since philanthropic responsibility has significant positive effect on brand equity, the researcher recommends corporate governance for the PHEIs to involve social activities that highly develop brand equity.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, without any financial, institutional, or personal interests influencing the study's design, execution, or findings.

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