

# The Influence of the Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility on Trust toward the Brand

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to study the influence of the perceived corporate social responsibility activities on trust toward the brand, on one hand, and to study the moderating role of personal support various causes, in the other hand. An empirical study conducted in the agribusiness sector revealed that the perceived corporate social responsibility activities have a positive and significant influence on trust toward the brand. Empirical results also showed that the levels and degrees of involvement of consumers in the different causes defended by a company play a moderating role in the relationship between the perceived activities of social responsibility and trust.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility (CSR), trust, personal support for various causes.

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## Introduction

The multitude of economic crises and global environmental alerts, the massive denunciation of overflows at work and the rise of consumerist associations participated in the growth of socially responsible practices on the part of companies (Barone *et al.*, 2000). These practices which involve the respect of NGOs for human rights, are signs of

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good management for shareholders and of a thorough social policy for employees. They are characterized by the transition from a classical vision dominated by the search for profits to a sustainable vision that integrates social and environmental aspects (Martinet and Reynaud, 2004).

According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), corporate social responsibility (CSR) assumes the pursuit of commercial success while respecting ethical values, people, communities and the natural environment. Thus, socially responsible business activities appear as a fulfillment of the integration of ethical bearings in the areas of business. This represents a conciliation between ethics and economics within a company (Ben Yedder and Zaddem, 2009), a way of reflecting a better image of the brand (Orsoni, 1995) and an instrument to extend power by giving added value to the brand (Lipovetsky, 1992).

All these initiatives aim to brighten the company image and enhance consumer trust (Capron and Quairel-Lanoizelée, 2004; De La Broise and Lamarche, 2006). This image, which reflects commitment to a cause, is meant to secure competitive positions on the market (Foster *et al.*, 2001) and the development of lasting relationships between the various stakeholders.

The first academic research works focused mainly on the extent of the financial and economic benefits of CSR (eg. McGuire, Sundgren, and Schneeweis, 1998; Dejean and Gond, 2004; Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006, etc.). Afterwards, researchers endeavored to examine the impact of the social responsibility of the company on consumer behavior by demonstrating the existence of a link between socially responsible initiatives and the positive, emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses of consumers (eg. Murray and Vogel, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008). The current research particularly examined the relationship between socially responsible initiatives and their impact on prices (Creyer and Ross, 1997), on perceived quality (Folkes and Kamins, 1999), on the overall evaluation of companies (Brown and Dacin, 1997), on purchase intentions (Murray and Vogel, 1997; Swaen and Vanhamme, 2004, 2005; Mohr and Webb, 2005; BeckerOlsen, Cudmore and Hill, 2006) and on the brand image and the brand equity (Parguel and BenoîtMoreau, 2007).

However, the impact of consumer perceptions related to the activities of corporate social responsibility on trust towards the brand is relatively little investigated and is even less so in emerging and developing countries. Nonetheless, the literature and the field attest to an increase in the manifestations of this trend in consumer behavior.

Thus, relying on these observations, our research will attempt to provide some answers related to the impact of the consumers' perceptions of socially responsible activities on trust towards the brand, in the specific context of the food industry sector. It will equally attempt to study the role of personal support to various causes in this impact.

To address this problematic, we propose to start with the presentation of the conceptual framework of the research. We will then present the research methodology

and the results of the empirical study. We will conclude with a discussion of the main results, contributions, limitations and future avenues of the research.

## **Conceptual background**

### *Corporate Social Responsibility*

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has its origins in the works of Bowen (1950). Its definitions have not stopped evolving ever since “from a classic vision dominated by the search for financial profitability to a sustainable vision integrating social and environmental aspects” (Martinet and Reynaud, 2004). Indeed, as in Carroll (1979), social responsibility includes the whole set of “economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic expectations that society may have towards a company”. It covers all the various obligations of the company in relation to the management of relationships with the various stakeholders, whether internal or external. Thus, social responsibility has a “voluntarist and interactionist” nature, as it is manifested in the development of actions among different stakeholders (Pasquero, 2007). Crépin (2012) pointed out that the concept of social responsibility suggests that the company takes into account the social, environmental and economic concerns in their operations and their interactions with their customers, employees and shareholders.

According to Freeman (1984), all the definitions of social responsibility mentioned in the literature are based on two principles. The first principle relies on the responsibilities of companies that integrate economic, legal and social aspects. The second principle refers to the commitments and responsibilities of a company that must be directed to the partners of the various business activities and centered around three main issues, including the environment, the social aspects and the issue of governance (Bhattacharya et al., 2007).

Most research works on the concept of CSR are based on the three-dimensional model of Wartick and Cochran (1985); (Carroll, 1979). Yet, researchers are not unanimous about the number and the different dimensions that compose it. Carroll (1991), for example, developed an image of the dimensions of CSR in the form of a pyramid, which is based on the economic component and which furthermore incorporates the legal, ethical and philanthropic aspects.

Similarly, Uddin Hasan and Tarique (2008), relying on the works of Zahra and LaTour (1987), identified three main dimensions, namely the environmental dimension, the social dimension and the economic dimension. To these, Dahlsrud (2002) added the stakeholders and the philanthropic dimensions.

Despite this diversity in the conceptualization of CSR, the dimensions that are most referred to are the following:

- The company’s environmental responsibility: it is defined as being a set of beneficial practices and actions for the protection and improvement of the environment, and which are consistent with the interests of the company (Huckle, 1995, cited by Cunningham, 2009).

- The company's economic responsibility: it is "the foundation of all professional responsibilities" (Carroll, 1991).

- The social dimension of CSR: it includes accountability to consumers (security-related issues and sustainability of products or services), to employees (ensuring good quality working conditions), to the community (the protection of the community's health, stability and prosperity), to stakeholders (suppliers, customers, employees, investors, local community).

- Philanthropic responsibility: It consists in devising programs or financial contributions to promote the well-being of the community and of humanity.

### *Trust toward the brand*

The concept of trust has emerged in the field of psychology (Deutsch, 1958), and then crept into all the disciplines related to the Humanities (Audrain and Evrard, 2001) to become a key aspect of inter-organizational issues (Bidault and Jarillo, 1995; Sako, 1998). Many works in Marketing have been devoted to the study of trust in the relationship between companies (e.g. Andaleeb, 1996; Morgan and Hunt, 1994, etc.) and in the relationship between the company and its consumers (e.g. Sirieix and Dubois, 1999; Frisou, 2000; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Gurviev and Korchia, 2002; etc.).

A review of the literature on Marketing showed that trust is a complex construct and that several definitions have been proposed to present it (Gatfaoui and Lavorata, 2001). Indeed, trust has been likened to a belief (eg. Anderson and Narus, 1990; Sirieix and Dubois, 1999; Gatfaoui and Lavorata, 2001; Georges and Decock Good, 2004, etc.), to an expectation (eg. Frisou, 2000; Gatfaoui and Lavorata, 2001; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002, 2006; etc.), to a predisposition (eg. Gurviev, 1999; Gurviev and Korchia, 2002), to a desire (eg. Moorman *et al.*, 1992; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), or to a behavioral intention (eg. Sirieix and Dubois, 1999).

Besides, the literature revealed various objects of the consumer's trust. Among these, we cite trust towards the brand (Sirieix and Dubois, 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001; Gurviev and Korchia, 2002). Thus, trust towards the brand has been defined by Sirieix and Dubois (1999) as "confidence in the brand ahead of the intention of buying. It relies on the credibility of the company that owns this brand and its interest in its customers". According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), trust in the brand is "the consumer's willingness to rely on the brand's ability to fulfill its expected duties".

The literature shows that there was no consensus in previous research works on the number of dimensions of trust. Indeed, some researchers like Morgan and Hunt (1994); Fournier (1994) defined it as a one-dimensional concept. Others, like Sirieix and Dubois (1999); Georges Decock and Good (2004); Opsomer and Kaabachi (2006); Doney *et al.*, (2007), equated it to a two-dimensional concept. It was equally considered - especially in the works of Frisou (2000); Abbes-Sahli (2001); Gurviev and Korchia (2002) - as a three-dimensional concept that integrates the dimensions of credibility (the belief in the partner's skills and expertise), integrity (the belief in the partner's honesty), and benevolence (belief in the partner's good intentions).

## Research hypothesis

### *The influence of perceived CSR activities on trust toward the brand*

The literature has widely argued that “the first result of CSR activities is the creation of trust among stakeholders” (Pivato *et al.*, 2007). These activities are attempts, by corporation, to gain and maintain trust and credibility by meeting society’s expectations (Bentele and Nothhaft, 2011). Thus, and according to Jarvis (2009), “many companies are turning to corporate social responsibility as a strategy to win back the trust of their stakeholders and customers. Indeed, trust is the currency of social capital, and the bond that creates integrity and believability for CSR”.

Similarly, Swaen (2004) establishes a link between corporate citizenship activities and trust. According to the author, "corporate citizenship activities make customers trust the ability of companies to fulfill the terms of trade, deliver the expected performance, and prove that consumers have more confidence in the integrity, honesty and sincerity of the companies which develop civic activities".

Herault (2012) stressed the need to communicate effectively in matters of the company’s social responsibility. The consumer’s relationship with the brand in terms of attitudes toward the brand, on the one hand, and in terms of trust in the brand, on the other are strengthened in cases where the arguments released are perceived as convincing. The author equally noted that the socially responsible behavior of companies has a significant positive influence on the evaluation of and trust in the brand.

We note that socially responsible actions communicate to stakeholders the whole set of shared ethical values. Therefore, the integration of ethical values in the strategic decisions of the company leads to build confidence in stakeholders (Hosmer, 1994). Hence, ethics become a possible way to restore consumer confidence (Gatfaoui and Lavorata, 2001). Morgan and Hunt (1994) have confirmed that the values shared by a company with its customer influence the confidence of the latter. Besides, Kennedy *et al.* (2001); Lagace *et al.* (1991) demonstrated empirically that the perceptions of the ethical principles of an organization impact on its customers' trust.

Previous research by Swaen and Vanhamme (2004, 2005); Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008); Vlachos *et al.* (2009) showed that consumer perceptions of CSR activities have a positive impact on consumer trust. Thus, we propose to set out the first hypothesis of the research:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** “The consumer’s favorable perceptions of the activities of corporate responsibility implemented by a company have a significant and positive influence on trust in the brand”.

As mentioned before, the activities of a socially responsible company integrate the four dimensions of respect of the environment, philanthropic activities, respect of the consumer, and respect of workers (Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008). We suggest, hereafter, to state the following research hypotheses:

**H<sub>2</sub>**: “The Company’s respect for its environment positively influences trust in the brand”.

**H<sub>3</sub>**: “The Company’s respect for its consumers positively influences trust in the brand”.

**H<sub>4</sub>**: “The philanthropic activities of a company positively influence trust in the brand”.

**H<sub>5</sub>**: “The Company’s respect for its workers positively influences trust in the brand”.

*The moderating role of the personal support for various causes:*

The notion of “personal support for various causes” has its origins in the work of Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). They showed that it plays a crucial role in consumer emotions towards socially-responsible actions undertaken by the company. Indeed, consumers who have a high degree of support for a company’s socially-responsible activities experience greater harmony with the company in terms of common attributes.

According to Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008), the moderating role of the variable personal support for various causes in the perception of the socially-responsible activities of a company has “implicitly” been the object of several previous research works. However, its role in consumer reactions has been discussed along different forms, such as “the affinity with the cause” in the works of Drumwright (1996 cited by Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008), “the personal importance of the issue considered” in the works of Haley (1996 cited in Swaen and Chumpitaz, 2008), or “the degree of personal relevance” in the works of Creyer and Ross (1997).

We propose to test the moderating role of this variable in the specific context of the application area of our research, relying on the works of Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008) which showed that the relationship between perceived CSR activities and trust are stronger for consumers demonstrating a high level of support for various causes. Hence, **H<sub>6</sub>** hypothesis states that “The positive and significant effect of the favorable perceptions of socially responsible activities on trust in the brand is stronger for consumers who are more deeply involved in supporting the various causes defended by the company”.

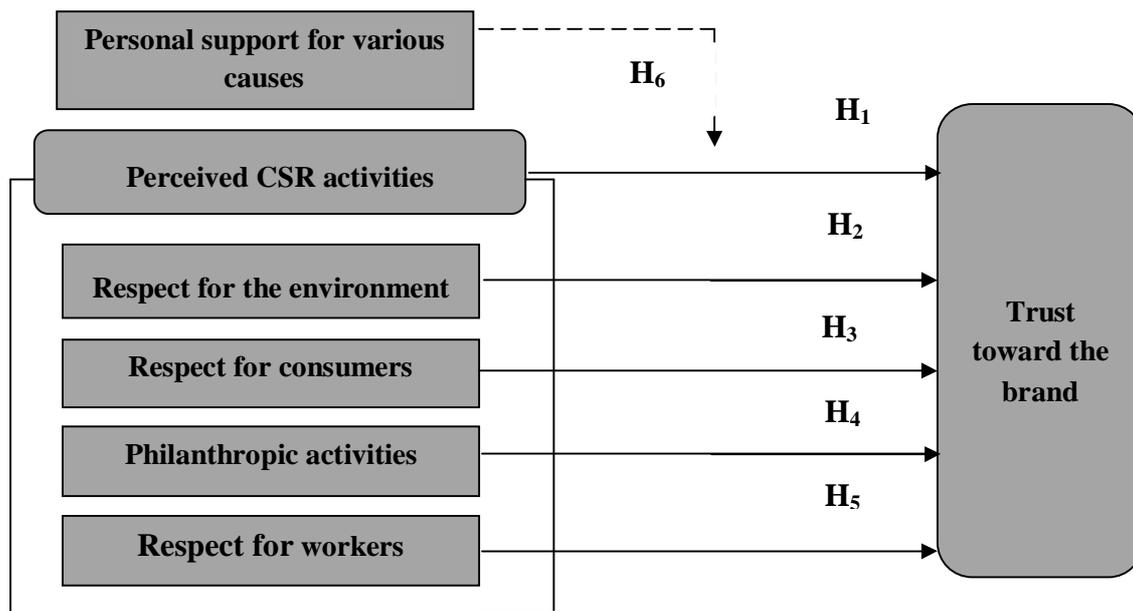


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

## Research methodology

The choice of the sector of the food industry as a field of investigation is mainly explained by the importance of CSR activities in the performance of agribusinesses. Indeed, this is an area of activity that is deeply concerned by consumer confidence, on the one hand, and by brand image on the other, which is sought through a remedial program adopting CSR-related activities. Moreover, “professionals in the food industry are highly concerned about the problem of consumer loss of trust” (Sirieix and Morrot, 2001).

Several studies in the field of the food industry (e.g. Gurviez, 2001; Muraro, 2003) emphasized the growing importance of consumer trust in food consumption in the concerns of manufacturers, distributors and all the parts involved in the food chain.

For our research, we selected *Délice Danone* as a brand of food products. This choice followed an exploratory study conducted on a group of consumers (having different characteristics in terms of age, gender, socio-occupational class and education) to identify the set of companies investing in social responsibility activities.

We note that while the study was underway, *Délice Danone*, which has just suffered boycott operations following the closure of some of its factories in France, has strongly invested in CSR activities by giving a sum of money for each product sold to the Red Cross.

Data collection was performed through a survey which consisted in submitting a face to face questionnaire to 206 consumers who were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement on a set of items on a 5-point Likert scale. This sample (87 women and 119 men) involved 69 respondents aged between 18 and 34, 101 respondents aged between 35 and 54; and 36 respondents aged over 54.

To measure the consumers' perceptions of CSR activities, we used the scale developed by Swaen and Chmpitaz (2008), which contains 18 items shared among the four dimensions: respect for the environment, respect for consumers, respect for workers and philanthropic activities. Trust in the brand was measured through the scale of Gurviez and Korchia (2002), developed as part of the large food distribution. This scale comprises eight items and three dimensions, namely: credibility, integrity and benevolence. Finally, to measure consumers' personal support to different causes, we chose the one-dimensional scale developed by Sen and Bhattacharya (2001).

## **Empirical study**

### *The measurement scale of perceived CSR activities*

To validate the measurement scale of perceived CSR activities, we carried out an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) by means of a number of principal component analyses (PCA). 4 items, with representation qualities below 0.5, were deleted after an iteration of 5 PCAs. The results of the CFA revealed a four-dimensional structure of the concept with good internal consistency of each dimension (0.836; 0.875; 0.860; 0.878).

This factorial structure was subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis with the structural equations method (SEM), using the maximum likelihood method (ML) to estimate variables. We note that compliance with the normality rule was not respected because the Mardia index largely exceeded the value of 3. Thus, and in order to ensure that the violation of the normal distribution had no effect on results, we compared the difference between the Chi-square probability of the model without bootstrap with that of the model with bootstrap through the Bollen-stine bootstrap procedure (N = 2000).

Since the discrepancy was not significant, we checked the stability of the data by examining the parameter values estimated by the ML method and those assessed by the bootstrap method (N = 250). Biases were below 0.001. This allowed us to interpret the ML results.

Examination of the fit indices revealed that the measurement model the perception of CSR activities fits fairly well (Table 1). In addition, we used the approach of Larker and Fornell (1981) in order to check the reliability at the confirmatory level as well as the convergent and discriminant validity (Table 2).

Reliability at the confirmatory level was checked with the Rho indices of Jöreskog, showing values above the 0.6 threshold set by Bagozzi and Yi (1988, cited in Akrouf, 2010). In addition, values of the Rho indices of convergent validity are above the 0.5 threshold recommended by Roussel *et al.* (2002). Finally, the values of the extracted variances, which are higher than the square of the correlation between the different dimensions, confirm the discriminating validity of our model.

Table 1: model fit indices

Chi-Square	GFI	AGFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	TLI
3.567	0.939	0.936	0.042	0.044	0.946	0.949	0.959

Table 2: Reliability and validity of the CSR perceived activities measurement scale

	Reliability at exploratory level	Reliability at confirmatory level	Convergent validity (Fornell and Larker, 1981)	Discriminant validity			
	Cronbach's Alpha	Rh $\hat{o}$ of Jöreskog		1	2	3	4
Respect for the environment	0.836	0.816	0.671	<b>0.671</b>			
Respect for consumer	0.875	0.822	0.683	0.286	<b>0.683</b>		
Philanthropic activities	0.860	0.819	0.678	0.359	0.402	<b>0.678</b>	
Respect for workers	0.878	0.828	0.687	0.258	0.105	0.309	<b>0.687</b>

*The measurement scale of the trust toward the brand*

The results of an EFA conducted on the scale measuring trust showed a three-dimensional structure of the concept with good internal consistency for each dimension (Table 4). This factor structure was subjected to a CFA. Results showed that the data normality conditions were not met. We settled this problem by following the same approach used previously.

The model of measuring trust has satisfactory fit quality (Table 4). In addition, the scale has a good reliability at the confirmatory level with Rho indices of Jöreskog exceeding 0.8. We also checked the convergent and discriminating validity by examining the Rho values of the convergent validity that are above the 0.5 threshold advocated by Roussel *et al.* (2002), and the values of the extracted variances that are higher than the square of the correlation between the different dimensions (Table 4).

Table 3: model fit indices

Chi-Square	GFI	AGFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	TLI
3.178	0.899	0.893	0.034	0.037	0.906	0.909	0.912

Table 4: Reliability and validity of the trust measurement scale

	Reliability at exploratory level	Reliability at confirmatory level	Convergent validity	Discriminant validity		
	Cronbach's Alpha	Rh $\hat{o}$ of Jöreskog		1	2	3
Credibility	0.882	0.867	0.791	<b>0.791</b>		
Integrity	0.886	0.871	0.797	0.369	<b>0.797</b>	
Benevolence	0.889	0.874	0.799	0.250	0.327	<b>0.799</b>

*The measurement scale of personal support for various causes*

The results of an EFA revealed a single dimensionality of the scale with a satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.757). The measurement model of the scale indicate globally a satisfactory goodness of fit (Chi-square/df =2.637; GFI=0.925; AGFI=0.929; RMR=0.023; RMSEA=0.029; NFI=0.968; CFI=0.962; TLI=0.969). The reliability and the convergent validity of the scale are satisfactory with a value of the Rhô of Jöreskog equal to 0.746 and a value of Rhô of the convergent validity equal to 0.627.

*Reliability and validity of the global measurement model*

The global measurement model presents a good goodness of fit (Chi-square/df = 2.536; GFI = 0.896; AGFI = 0.902; RMR = 0.032; RMSEA = 0.031; NFI = 0.909; CFI = 0.915; TLI = 0.909). The reliability at a confirmatory level was checked with the Rhô of Jöreskog values that are superior than the threshold 0.6 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988, cited in Akrouf, 2010) (see Appendix 4, Table 1). Furthermore, the values of Rhô of the convergent validity are superior than the threshold 0.5 recommended by Roussel and al. (2002) (see Appendix 4, Table 1). And finally, the extracted variances values, which are superior to the squared correlations between the different dimensions, confirm the discriminant validity of our model (see Appendix 4, Table 2).

Table 5: Reliability and convergent validity of the variables of the global measurement model

	Rhô of Jöreskog $P\xi$	Rhô of the convergent validity $(\rho_{vc})$
1. Environment for the respect	0,787	0,685
2. Respect for consumer	0,785	0,683
3. Philanthropic activities	0,782	0,680
4. Respect for workers	0,780	0,678
5. Credibility	0,789	0,687
6. Integrity	0,786	0,684
7. Benevolence	0.783	0.681

Table 6: The discriminant validity of the measurement model

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Environment for the respect	<b>0,685</b>						
2. Respect for consumer	0,220	<b>0,683</b>					
3. Philanthropic activities	0,254	0,121	<b>0,680</b>				
4. Respect for workers	0,225	0,221	0,320	<b>0,678</b>			
5. Credibility	0,303	0,151	0,132	0,201	<b>0,687</b>		
6. Integrity	0,163	0,277	0,117	0,534	0,292	<b>0,684</b>	
7. Benevolence	0,099	0,176	0,404	0,248	0,363	0,381	<b>0,681</b>

### *Causal model and hypothesis tests*

The causal model of our research indicate a satisfactory goodness of fit (2.529; GFI = 0.926; AGFI = 0.928; RMR = 0.021; RMSEA = 0.020; NFI = 0.988; CFI = 0.990; TLI = 0.992). To test the research hypothesis, we used the Structural Equations Method (AMOS 18). The results of the causal links between the trust, the CSR perceived activities and its dimensions are presented in the table 7. Hypothesis H.1, H.2, H.3, H.4 and H.5 are validated. Consequently, the CSR perceived activities and each of her dimensions have positive and significant influence on trust.

Table 7: Tests of hypothesis

Relations		CR	P	Conclusions
Trust	← CSR Perceived Activities	16.493	0.000*	H <sub>1</sub> is validated
Trust	← Philanthropic Activities	14.397	0.000*	H <sub>2</sub> is validated
Trust	← Respect for the environment	14.214	0.000*	H <sub>3</sub> is validated
Trust	← Respect for workers	14.946	0.000*	H <sub>4</sub> is validated
Trust	← Respect for consumers	14.894	0.000*	H <sub>5</sub> is validated

### *Moderating role of personal support for various causes*

To test the moderating effects of personal support for various causes, we used a multi-group analysis with the modeling method by structural equations. We begin by dividing the sample into two groups according to the classification of dynamic clusters: a group of consumers who are most involved in supporting various causes defended by the company and a group of individuals with consumers who are least involved in supporting various causes defended by the company.

The test of Chi-square difference between the free model and the constrained model is significant (Chi-square=12.836; df=11; p=0.000). Thus, personal support for various causes exerts a moderating effect on the relationship between the CSR perceived activities and trust. In addition, the influence of the CSR perceived activities exerted on trust are much stronger in the group of individuals with a high level of personal support for various causes (see Table 8). This allows us to validate hypothesis H.6.

Table 8: Results of the moderating effect of personal support for various causes

	G1 : A higher level of personal support for various causes			G2 : A weak level of personal support for various causes		
	Estimate	CR	P	Estimate	CR	P
Trust ← CSR perceived activities	0.719	8.439	0.000	0.626	7.585	0.000

### **Results and discussions**

The concept of corporate social responsibility is becoming more and more interesting for researchers and marketers since it helps to promote sustainable development and

provides companies with a new way to differentiate themselves by improving their image and by gaining consumer confidence.

Some studies have highlighted the importance of several specific aspects of the concept such as the protection of the environment (Drumwright, 1994). However, only a few studies focused on the concept as a whole. Thus, we devoted our research to test the causal relationship between the components of consumer perceptions of socially responsible business and consumer confidence in the brand. We have also stressed the moderating role of the variable personal support to different causes in the relationship between consumer perceptions and trust towards the brand.

The results of an empirical study carried out in the food industry sector and particularly on the "*Délice Danone*" brand in Tunisia, showed that favorable perceptions of socially responsible business activities and of its dimensions positively impact trust in the brand. This allowed us to validate the first five research hypotheses. These results converge with those reported in the literature, namely in the works of Swaen and Vanhamme (2004, 2005); Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008); Vlachos *et al.* (2009).

As a matter of fact, on observing consumer reaction to advertising non-citizens acts on the part of companies, Swaen and Vanhamme (2004, 2005) showed that accusing the company of an irresponsible activity generates a negative attitude on the part of the consumer towards the company and its products, and alters his buying intention as well as his trust in the company (Parguel et Benoit-Moreau, 2008). Similarly, Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008) showed that, when perceived positively, activities of social responsibility have an impact on credibility and corporate integrity. Vlachos *et al.* (2009) showed that "consumer perceptions of a firm's motives for engaging in corporate social responsibility actions (eg. Strategic stakeholders and value-driven motives) positively influences the consumer trust".

Empirical results also showed that the levels and degrees of involvement of consumers in the different causes defended by *Délice Danone* play a moderating role in the relationship between the perceived activities of social responsibility and trust. This allowed us to validate the sixth hypothesis of the research. These results are in perfect agreement with the findings of Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008).

By focusing more deeply on the different facets of the concept of perception of corporate socially responsible activities, we found that each of its dimensions enhances confidence in the brand. We also found that the contributions of each dimension into trust are more or less equal. Therefore, philanthropic activities and activities relating to respect of the environment, workers and consumers are all equally important for consumers who are sensitive to socially responsible actions.

### **Contributions, limitations and futures researches**

The main theoretical contribution of our research is that it is centered on the concept of the perception of socially responsible activities as a whole and on its different facets. Moreover, the interest of highlighting the role played by the concept of consumer trust is mainly accounted for by the limited number of previous research works. Our research

is equally interesting in that it identified the different aspects of the perception of socially responsible activities which contribute to the building of trust. It seems, indeed, that philanthropic activities and activities relating to respect of the environment, workers and consumers play an equal role in enhancing consumer confidence.

On a managerial level, our research findings allow agribusiness marketers to have an idea on consumer perceptions of CSR activities, which in turn represent a tool to manage consumer perceptions of the brand in question. Furthermore, communication on CSR activities allows practitioners to make use of a strong potential for a policy of development and consolidation of long-term relationships of trust between the consumer and the brand.

Our research has some limitations, though. These should be mentioned to be exploited and improved in future research avenues. It is mainly the fact that the research focused on only one brand, *Délice Danone*, of an only one sector of investigation: the food industry. It would probably be interesting to extend research to other fields of industry. This will probably enable us to conduct comparative studies and thus generalize results.

It should also be noted that other variables may be introduced as moderating variables in the causal relationship between the activities of perceived social responsibility and trust. These could include for example the occupational category of respondents, consumer expectations, or the brand's reputation.

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