

THE IMPACTS OF CSR ON AIRLINE LOYALTY: MEDIATOR ROLE OF PASSENGER SATISFACTION, AIRLINE BRAND, AND AIRLINE TRUST: APPLIED TO EGYPT AIR $B\gamma$

Maryam Ahmed Fathallah

Nancy Mohamed Montaser

Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University

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Abstract:

Business sustainability is now heavily influenced by corporate social responsibility (CSR). The airline sector is an outstanding instance of this trend, as companies struggle to deal with extremely competitive market conditions. In the aviation industry in Egypt, corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities play a vital role as a survival strategy and a means of maintaining business viability through consumer loyalty. In order to obtain significant insights and offer appropriate results that airline specialists may use for business sustainability; this study aimed to investigate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on airline loyalty through significant mediators within the airline sector. Three important mediators between CSR and airline loyalty were identified in this study: passenger satisfaction, airline brand, and trust. Two online surveys were distributed using Google Forms to both staff members and passengers of Egypt Air; 84 employees and 360 passengers completed the surveys. The study's utilization of SPSS analysis allowed it to conclude that airline CSR initiatives have a major positive impact on passenger satisfaction, airline loyalty, brand, and trust. Additionally, all the mediators partially mediate the significant correlation between CSR and airline Based on the findings of this recommendations and consequences are also given for management and academia.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable development, airline brand, airline trust, airline loyalty.

أثر المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات على الولاء لشركات الطيران: الدور الوسيط لرضا الركاب، والعلامة التجارية لشركة الطيران، والثقة في شركة الطيران: بالتطبيق على مصر للطيران

تتأثر إستدامة الأعمال الآن بشكل كبير بالمسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات. وبعد قطاع الطيران مثالاً بارزاً على هذا الاتجاه، حيث تكافح الشركات للتعامل مع ظروف السوق التنافسية للغاية. في صناعة الطيران في مصر، تلعب أنشطة المسؤولية الإجتماعية للشركات دورًا حيويًا كإستراتيجية للبقاء ووسيلة للحفاظ على إستمرارية الأعمال من خلال ولاء المستهلك. من أجل الحصول على رؤى مهمة وتقديم النتائج المناسبة التي قد يستخدمها متخصصو شركات الطيران لإستدامة الأعمال؛ تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة تأثير المسؤولية الإجتماعية للشركات على الولاء لشركات الطيران من خلال الدور الوسيط لثلاث عوامل مهمه داخل قطاع الطيران وهم رضا الركاب، العلامة التجارية لشركة الطيران، والثقة. تم توزيع إستبيانين عبر الإنترنت بإستخدام Google Forms على كل من الموظفين والركاب في مصر للطيران؛ أكمل ٨٤ موظفًا و ٣٦٠ راكبًا الإستبيانات. وقد سمح إستخدام الدراسة لتحليل SPSS بإستنتاج أن مبادرات المسؤولية الإجتماعية لشركات الطيران لها تأثير إيجابي كبير على رضا الركاب وولائهم لشركات الطيران والعلامة التجارية والثقة بالإضافة إلى ذلك، لعبت العوامل الثلاثة دور الوسيط الجزئي في العلاقة بين المسؤولية الإجتماعية للشركات والولاء لشركات الطيران. وإستناداً إلى نتائج هذه الدراسة، يتم تقديم التوصيات و العقبات أبضاً للادارة و المجال الأكاديمي.

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is playing an increasingly significant part in corporate strategy planning because of its growing significance in promoting business sustainability. In the last few years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been widely embraced by business entities as a strategic method to mitigate adverse effects resulting from the external environment. These days, CSR is regarded as an integral component of corporate operations, and this development has an impact on several external issues, such as the environment, society, and consumer behavior (Matten & Moon, 2020). Additionally, a lot of businesses use CSR initiatives as a strategic move to boost revenue, satisfy customers, retention of customers, business reputation, and have favorable perceptions of their brands (Calabrese et al, 2016).

In 2015 the world witnessed the endorsement of the "Transforming our World" document by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which includes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in several sectors (United Nations, 2015). A total of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) were set by the 2030 Agenda (Hepp et al, 2019). Some of the SDG categories, such as goal 3 (good health and well-being), goal 4 (equality education), goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), and so on, will involve CSR activities, including environmental, social,

and economic responsibilities (United Nation Foundation, 2024). SGDs are influenced by the Egyptian airline sector in the same way that they affect CSR initiatives.

The airline sector can benefit from corporate social responsibility (CSR) as an approach to support business sustainability. A lot of significant studies have been done in several sectors on CSR and consumer behavior and loyalty. To the extent of the authors' knowledge, no study has applied a model that gives priority to the connections between brand, loyalty, satisfaction, trust, and CSR. Furthermore, most of the earlier research has examined CSR concerning financial success, customer satisfaction, customer behavior, and the reputation of businesses. The relationship between CSR and airline loyalty through the important mediators of satisfaction, trust, and brand in the Egyptian airline industry has not received much attention up to this moment.

The current study attempted to fill this gap by examining the relationship between CSR and airline loyalty via the previously indicated mediators, which are significant factors taken into consideration by the airline sector. This research offers seven hypotheses after reviewing the pertinent literature on CSR, brand, loyalty, and trust. The study model is subsequently presented incorporating details about the methodology, such as survey design, Population, sample, data collection procedures, and analysis. Next, it presents an in-depth assessment of the research findings using the Sobel test and SPSS analysis.

All hypothesis results are also indicated. Finally, a list of recommendations and conclusions is provided.

2. Literature view

2.1 CSR and the Airline Industry

According to deep concerns about environmental issues in every industry, the airline industry has a close link to these issues and recently, most of them are working for new standards and rules for more contributions that can be made towards the economic globalization movement and the worldwide sustainable development (Holden, 2006; Serhan et al,2018).

Besides, the number of consumers who have the desire to purchase products from socially responsible companies is rapidly increasing. Consequently, there is rising attention to corporate social responsibility (CSR) from all industries, particularly the aviation industry. In this context, CSR practices not only put the airlines on the way to sustainability but also guide them to fully incorporate environmental strategy which is reflected in their performance in the long term as well as their relationship and interactions with stakeholders, policymakers, competitors, and customers(Khairat &Maher,2014;Serhan et al,2018;So,2020).

According to Lho, et al(2019) and Kim, et al (2020), CSR among airlines can be identified as all activities that make a balance and inclusion between social development, environmental concerns, and economic progress with positive impacts on their employees, consumers, and all relevant stockholders.

CSR can affect positively the airlines' general performance and business operations according to all their business activities and markets that they are operating in. It can be beneficial to an airline's financial performance through increasing integrity with customers, its community, and employee relations.in addition, it can be helped to attract more customers by increasing employee efficiency, which in turn enhances revenue and ultimately strengthens its performance (Park, et al,2015; Serhan et al,2018; Islam, et al,2021).

Furthermore, CSR can result in improving operational efficiency by reducing the costs of environmental-oriented programs, and employee turnover. Applying CSR strategy results in the stockholders' feedback which can be a rich source for new ideas, products, and markets, besides building, improving, and enhancing some intangible values such as reputation and brand image, competitive advantage, trust and credibility, employee and customer loyalty(Selvarajh, et al,2012; Khairat&Maher,2014; Suki, et al,2016; Chung et al ,2022).

2.2 Airline Brand, Airline Trust and Passenger Satisfaction

Hu et al. (2009) said that services are considered a more complex customer experience than any other products, whereas high-quality services can affect directly the brand image and trust which leads to more sense of customers' value, satisfaction, and loyalty. And this is consistent with what Bezerra and Gomes (2019) and Song et al. (2019)

highlighted, the passengers' trust and satisfaction are attached strongly to a good brand it is important to build strong enough trust for dealing with the same airline again.

A brand is considered a subjective mental picture given to a product such that it takes on an identity by itself, providing a clear image to various customers. A brand can make a strong linkage between customers and service providers that helps to increase customer purchase intention and influence their preferences, this after that leads to creating high levels of trust and loyalty (Atulkar,2020; Dash & Chakraborty,2021)

Additionally, Law et al. (2022) mentioned that there is a positive correlation between service quality, customer happiness, and repurchasing intention. The airline brand is influenced by some critical factors (brand credibility, service quality and trust) according to Song et al. (2019). Siqueira et al (2023) and Chung et al (2022) added, in the airline industry there is a noteworthy effect between an airline's brand and the repeat purchasing intention which then can be related to airline loyalty.

Bishop (2022) and Dunlop & Reichheld (2022) explained that customer trust is the consumer's confidence in a specific company which reflects on his belonging to it, and dealing with it continuously; hence it is considered the critical key to boosting loyalty and business success. To build it, companies must show a commitment towards their customers through delivering on their promises and providing what is right for them, which forms the emotional relation between the company and their

customers, furthermore affected positively on customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as a measurement of how all company's products and services meet the customer expectations and make them happy. The high satisfaction reflects on customer retention besides the brand reputation, whereas it can help the company as an indicator to improve its performance and do its best in its provided service quality(Salah& Abou-Shouk,2019; Shamsudin, et al,2020).

According to previous studies, airline companies like many corporations, seek to achieve their customers' expectations by providing high-quality services that make their passengers happy with have positive attitudes toward the airline brand. Likewise, these positive feelings create high satisfaction that impacts airline trust and repurchase intention, which is linked to the airline loyalty (Shamsudin, et al,2020; Anant,2022; Chung ,et al ,2022)

2.3 Airline loyalty

In the airline industry, customer loyalty is identified as passengers' aptitude of sustaining the relationship with a specific airline based on his/her attitude and behavior, whereas it is a continuing connection between the airline and its passengers, appearing through passengers' desires to repurchase and deal with over again (Gao et al 2018; Anant, 2022)

Accordingly, it is considered an essential intangible and emotional asset to any airline and a satisfying experience impact that leads to build trust among passengers and the airlines(Jiang and Zhang,2016; Hapsari et al. 2017)

From the perspective of CSR, customer loyalty shows as a significant strategic tool and an important factor for affecting corporate success and profitability when they are faced with the external adverse environment such increasing competitive pressure (Srivastava and Rai,2018; Zhang,2022)

Consequently, Barcelos et al (2015), Gao et al (2018) and Servera and Piqueras (2019), confirmed that the applying of CSR not only reducing the impacts of business on society, but also adding value for customers and meeting their needs which generates more competitive advantage.

Therefore, passenger loyalty is one of the most essential consumers' behaviors that firms attempt to effect by using CSR as a marketing tool. In addition, it is one of the major indicators that effect on the competitive advantage in the airlines' market airline industry. and the share sustainability is mostly depending on passenger loyalty(Galant and Cadez, 2017; Luchmun, 2018; Nenem, et al ,2020; Chung ,et al ,2022).

Based on the overall previous literature review, it is found a positive correlation between CSR activities and customer behavior toward a corporation's provided services, that is linked to loyalty, besides what this study aims at, the following hypotheses were derived:

- (H1): CSR has a positive effect on passenger satisfaction.
- (H2): CSR has a positive effect on airline brand.
- (H3): CSR has a positive effect on airline trust.
- (H4): CSR has a positive effect on airline loyalty.

(H5): Passenger satisfaction mediates CSR and airline loyalty.

(H6): Airline brand mediates CSR and airline loyalty.

(H7): Airline trust mediates CSR and airline loyalty.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Population, sample, and data collection procedures

The respondents of this study are divided into two types, first, were passengers who have traveled via the stateowned flag carrier of Egypt "Egypt Air" and second were MS Employees There were 360 respondents of passengers, and 84 respondents of MS employees who met the specified sample size criteria and filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms, with mandatory questions, so 100% of responses were valid for analysis. Respondents were contacted via email, and different social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook direct messages. The number of Gore's respondents has met Weston and (2006)recommendation to have a minimum sample size of 200 for any Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis. SEM is mostly used for research that is designed to confirm a research study design rather than to explore or explain a phenomenon (Fan et al., 2016).

3.2 Construct Measurement and questionnaire

23 survey items were created for a quantitative approach based on the research model illustrated in Figure 1. This was managed by adding to and modifying items from previous research covering a wide variety of industries and relating to CSR, customer satisfaction, corporate brand, trust, and loyalty. A five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used as the measurement scale. All measurement items are shown in Table 1.

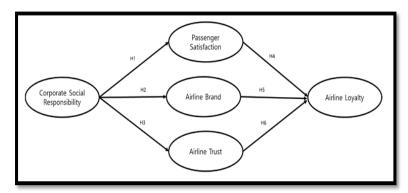


Figure 1: The Hypothetical Framework of the Study

Table 1	Constructs Mean and Standard Deviation		
Construct Items Mean		SD	
CCD	Egypt Air respects customers' privacy and protects their personal information	4.33	.896
CSR	Egypt Air makes an effort to reduce waste and use eco-friendly products	3.50	1.012
	Egypt Air carriers use energy and	3.45	1.034

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	resources efficiently.		
	Egypt Air encourages their		
	employees to participate in local	2.71	1.147
	communities as volunteers		
	Egypt Air supports sporting and	3.64	.977
	cultural events.	5.04	.977
	The companies of Egypt Air		
	Carriers make an		
	effort to contribute to society	3.38	1.221
	and the economy by investing		
	and generating profits.		
	The companies of Egypt Air		
	carriers make an effort to create	2.71	1.208
	new jobs		
	I feel happy after flying with an	3.56	1.241
	Egypt Air carrier.	3.30	1.241
Passenger	My choice to fly with an Egypt Air	3.64	1.178
Satisfaction	carrier is a wise one.	3.04	1.176
Satisfaction	Egypt Air carriers' services	3.56	1.108
	entirely fulfill my needs.	3.30	1.108
	Egypt Air's services entirely meet	3.33	1.076
	my expectations	3.33	1.070
	I think that Egypt Air has an	3.56	1.108
	excellent brand reputation	3.30	1.100
	The general public in Egypt thinks		
	that the brand reputation of	3.27	1.105
Airline	Egypt Air is excellent.		
Brand	In my opinion, the brand		
	reputations of Egypt Air are	2.93	1.291
	better than those of foreign	2.33	1.231
	carriers.		
	Some characteristics of the Egypt	3.42	1.087

	Air brand come to my mind quickly.		
	I trust that Egypt Air carriers are sincere in dealing with passengers.	3.69	1.073
Airline	I trust that Egypt Air carriers are very responsive.	3.62	1.019
Trust	I think Egypt Air carriers provide reliable information to passengers	3.67	1.076
	Products and services of Egypt Air are quality-assured and trustedworthy.	3.47	1.068
	I consider Egypt Air Carriers as my first choice when flying	3.53	1.277
Airline	I always say positive things about Egypt Air carriers to other people.	3.82	1.162
Loyalty	I intend to purchase a flight ticket from an Egypt Air carrier for my next flight.	3.42	1.455
	I would like to be a client of Egypt Air	3.64	1.387

3.3 Data Analyses

The SPSS program was used for the collected data analysis and hypothesis testing. The validity and reliability of the data were examined by Cronbach's alpha test (.894), which indicated that collected data have a high validity and reliability value (Hair et al., 2010).

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile

4.1.1 Passengers Demographic profile

The results revealed that most of the respondents were females (73.3%). Most of them(86.9%)were 18 to 47 years old. Besides, 37.8% of them had traveled with family, while 28.9% had traveled with friends. Meanwhile, most of them are college graduates (94.8%) and 77.8% are working full-time paid work.

Table 2 Demographic Profile				
Demographics of respondents (Passengers) F %				
Gender -	Male	96	26.7	
Gender	Female	264	73.3	
_	18-27	59	16.4	
	28-37	181	50.3	
Age Category	38-47	72	20	
	48-58	40	11.1	
	Over 58	8	2.2	
	Secondary Education	19	5.3	
Level of Education -	School			
Level of Education	Bachelor's degree	69	19.2	
	Post grade degree	272	75.6	
Current	Student.	24	6.6	
Current - Employment -	Full-time paid work.	280	77.8	
Status -	Part-time paid work.	48	13.3	
Status	Retired.	8	2.2	
Mode of Travel	Alone	64	17.8	

With Family	136	37.8
With work fellows	56	15.6
With Friends	104	28.9

4.1.2MS Employees Demographic Profile

The results revealed that most of the respondents were females (64.3%). Most of them (66.7%) were 38 to 47 years old. Besides, most of them hold post-grade degrees (83.3%) and all of them had more than 10 years of organizational tenure.

Table 3 Demographic Profile					
Demographics of res	Demographics of respondents (MS Employees) F %				
Gender	Male	30	35.7		
Gender	Female	54	64.3		
Age Category	38-47	56	66.7		
Age Category	48-57	28	33.3		
Level of Education	Bachelor's degree	14	16.7		
Level of Education	Post grade degree	70	83.3		
Organizational Tenure	10 years or more	84	100		

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

As shown in Table 4, the hypotheses testing revealed that all the relationships are significant with a value of 0,000 This means that the entire hypotheses shown in Figure 1 are supported. Passenger satisfaction, airline brand, loyalty, and trust were all directly impacted by CSR.

Furthermore, these results additionally confirmed the validity of the triple mediation effect: CSR affects airline loyalty via passenger satisfaction, airline trust, and brand. The results indicated that, although CSR was found to affect Passenger satisfaction, airline brand, loyalty, and trust directly were utilized as partial mediators in the relationship between them.

Table 4	Hypotheses testing		
Hypotheses		Asymptotic Significance	
(H1): CSR has a positive effect on passenger satisfaction.		.000	
(H2): CSR has a positive effect on airline brand.		.000	
(H3): C	(H3): CSR has a positive effect on airline trust000		
(H4):C	.000		

Note: Asymptotic Significance \Box 0.001 = high sig.

Table 5		Mediators testing		
Н	Indirect effect	Sobel Test	<i>P</i> -Value	Mediating Effect
Н5	CSR → Passenger Satisfaction airline loyalty	14.544	0.000***	Partial
Н6	CSR — ⇒ airline brand airline loyalty	10.432	0.000***	Partial
H7	CSR →airline trust airline loyalty	14.512	0.000***	Partial

4.3 Discussion

The collected data of this study revealed that CSR has a positive and highly significant impact on airline passenger satisfaction, airline brand, airline trust, and airline loyalty (H1, H2, H3, and H4). These findings confirm and reinforce the results of previous studies, which stated that CSR is a strong motivator for airline passenger satisfaction, airline brand, trust, and loyalty (Nasr Eldin & Elhassan, 2023; Kim & Hwang, 2023; Chung, *et al*, 2022; Khairat & Maher, 2016; He & li, 2010; Luo& Bhattacharya, 2006).

Other notable connections were noticed between CSR and loyalty through all the parameters, Findings showed that passenger satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between CSR and airline loyalty (H5) (Sobel test = 14.544, p < 0.001) as findings approved that there is already a positive and high significant correlation between CSR and airline loyalty.

Findings also found that airline brand has a partial mediating positive role in the relationship between CSR and airline loyalty (H6) (Sobel test= 10.432,p< 0.001) as findings approved that there is already a positive and highly significant correlation between CSR and airline loyalty.

Findings also confirmed that airline trust has a partial mediating positive role in the relationship between CSR and airline loyalty (H7) (Sobel test= 14.512,p< 0.001) as findings approved that there is already a positive and highly significant correlation between CSR and airline loyalty.

Based on hypothesis testing, all the study's hypotheses were approved. Thus, the study has clarified the positive effect of CSR on passenger satisfaction, airline brand, airline trust, and airline loyalty. This study also revealed the impact of CSR on airline loyalty by absorbing three key mediators: passenger satisfaction, airline trust, and brand.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Lately, the airline industry has sought to practice and support CSR initiatives, especially in environmentally conscious ways, that give better chances to boost customer retention rates and create a positive reputation and behaviors toward the airlines.

In conclusion, CSR is a critical part of businesses' efforts to increase customer loyalty and the aviation industry is no exception. Accordingly, this study provided an overview of CSR and its activities in the airline industry to investigate how they influence this business image in customers which is affected directly on customer loyalty. Furthermore, the correlations among brand, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and CSR in airlines corporate, applied on The Egyptian airline industry.

Based on the primary data, CSR has a positive effect on the airline brand, the airline trust, the passenger satisfaction and the airline loyalty. In addition to, the positive and strong impacts of CSR on airline loyalty through three key mediators: passenger satisfaction, airline trust, and brand.

Consequently, this study recommends that Egyptian airlines should seek to improve their CSR activities and

provide a new and updated whole approach by considering the following:

- 1- Analyze their current CSR practices by using the SWAT analysis for example.
- 2- investigate similar initiatives legislated by the competitors
- 3- encourage their sponsors and partners for financial support that they need
- 4- Make sure all their suppliers follow the same perspectives regarding applying the CSR initiatives
- 5- Put the environmental issues as a major part in the CSR approach
- 6- Try to commit the employees to CSR objectives' and activities' that it is definite to achieve due to avoid reputational harm.
- 7- Raise awareness of employees about the relations, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and CSR in airline corporate.
- 8- Use CSR to promote sustainable business practices by spending on solutions that make instant revenue without compromising long-term goals.
- 9- Increase focusing on the community needs to improve the impact of CSR activities, through designing projects and programs that help achieving these specific needs.
- 10-Increase the collaboration with the private sector and the local organizations to support the airlines in implementing their CSR's projects

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